

2018-11-11 ... Remembrance Sunday Morning ... Revd Canon Judy Hunt

Isaiah 2:1-4; John 15: 9-17

'What is Remembrance for?'

Well in advance of this year's Remembrance Service, I contacted our Secondary School, Sir John Talbot's, to see if they would like to be involved.

We're now going to hear from Ben Fry – head boy and Hannah Smith – head girl

Ben: At Sir John Talbot's school we have undertaken an "SJT Remembers" project to mark the 100 years since the First World War ended. This year in particular we wanted every student to understand how every sector of society and the wider world was affected by the war. We therefore gave each year a different group to create a form project about. This included: a local Whitchurch soldier, women who cared for the sick on the front lines, the people on the homefront and those in the wider British empire (who are often forgotten) that fought alongside our men too.

Hannah: As a school, even after the centenary we want the students to have empathy for those who came before us and a firm awareness of the world around them. Form groups approached their project from different perspectives, including dramatic pieces, clay artworks and sentimental poems. One form group in particular chose to think about the theme of 'remembering' and how they as individuals would like to be remembered by the wider world. We have been proud of the work produced by the students, and some is here in the church on display for you to look at.

You can find those displays in and near the Lady Chapel – this corner of church – and also near the main door. The four ones chosen as winners are illustrated in the centre pages of the service booklet

We have two students from form 7EB to tell us more: Grace Clutton and Lily Hannah Chidlow – they were involved in the one based around the figure of the soldier:

Grace Clutton: Hello. My Name's Grace and I'm from 7EB at Sir John Talbot's School. For our remembrance project we focused on a soldier called Alfred Roberts who grew up and lived in Whitchurch. He died 100 years ago on 9th August 1918 at the age of 32. Our cardboard cut-out became Alfred and we each made a poppy about remembrance. As a form we tried to link remembering Alfred, with the idea of Remembrance Day in general.

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Lilly-Hannah Chidlow: As a form we all talked about remembering someone special, and how we would want to be remembered. Some things we came up with were: an amazing friend, someone who stood up for others, someone who inspired change, and just generally a positive person to be around were ones that we chose. We then used our large poppy to record how as an individual we would like to be remembered. Our small poppies are dedicated to the information we learnt about Alfred.

Thank you very much indeed.

A phrase that has struck me for this year's Special Remembrance Service is this:

"If Remembrance ... remembering .. doesn't change us ... it hasn't been proper Remembrance"

I can't honestly recall if I made the phrase up – or if I heard it from some other source!

"If Remembrance ... remembering .. doesn't change us ... it hasn't been proper Remembrance"

This is a strong understanding within the Jewish and Christian traditions: when we remember what has gone before – God can be at work in us to help us to learn, to help us – where necessary to change our attitude.

The two Bible readings we had – they are not just in the service so that we know what the prophet Isaiah wrote or so that we know what St John recalls of the words of Jesus ... they are there so that – in remembering what was written or spoken – our understanding, our attitudes can mature, change ... a different understanding of relations between nations and a deepening understanding of what love is and does.

Think of re-membering as being the opposite of dis-membering ... putting back together with the right relationships, behaviours and attitudes.

This kind of remembering is clear within the SJT projects – something to celebrate on this 100th Anniversary of the World War One armistice ... and something each of us can gain from.