

ST. MICHAEL'S AND ST. WILFRID'S

ARLEY

Meeting Needs, Bringing Hope, Sharing
Love



LEST WE FORGET

November 2020 Newsletter

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Deputy Warden Vic Murray

Rev John's Jottings for November – A month to remember!

This month is often regarded as a time of Remembrance. In fact, this year has been the 75th anniversary of VE Day and VJ Day which brought to an end the 2nd World War. Despite the Covid restrictions, partial remembrance services and laying of wreaths by war memorials have taken place around the villages. We have offered our respects and thanks to the armed services in defending our nation from tyranny. As the number of veterans diminish, will the practise of Remembrance Day lose its place in society? It seems improbable, especially as there are more wars and conflicts taking place today than at any other time in history. We still don't seem to learn from the past. There is a Psalm in the Bibles which says, 'Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?' (Psalm 2) We can identify many, many reasons for this. Ultimately, it boils down to the human heart. From the wisdom of the Bible we are told that, 'Out of the mouth the heart speaks'. This can lead to what is described as the tongue being like a fire. 'It is a small part of the body that makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark'. Each person in the world has the capacity to use their tongue for good or evil. May it be on this month of remembrance that we all play our part not to forget the cost involved in bringing peace and may we speak words of peace not hate. Wishing you a very peace-filled month of remembrance.

Rev. John

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IMPORTANT UPDATE on the future.

I am now able to let you know the outcome of recent consultations with the Diocese regarding the immediate future plans for the churches in the benefice and my own position with you. My placement has been extended until the end of June 2021. Following the assessment of my Learning Outcomes as a curate, I choose to be assessed as an Assistant Minister rather than a full incumbent, due to the protracted confusion of the last year. The next 8 months will provide an opportunity for reflection, planning and action for the future of the churches which I hope you will all play a part.

Archdeacon, Rev. Barry Dugmore, will be confirming this information in writing to the churchwardens and PCC members. Rev John

Praying each day during November:

Dear God, fill me with your Spirit so that I can persevere when I feel pressured to give in. I want to honour You, by standing strong.

1	Praying for Rev.John and Frances, for continued strength and keep them well as they work constantly around our parishes
2	Praying for all struggling to come to terms with this Covid 19 – help us dear Lord to keep safe and well, as we pray for Your healing
3	Father,thank you for being the Author and Perfecter of my faith
4	Jesus thank you for all your creation, may your life flow through me
5	Help me have quiet time with you today Gracious Lord
6	Father forgive me when I find it hard to forgive others
7	Lord help us to demonstrate that love is far stronger than hate
8	Let us remember those gone before us this Armistice Day
9	Faithful God thank you that you're always with me. I trust in You
10	Father, guide us to someone who might need our encouragement today
11	Lord, fill us with your mercy that we may serve those in need cheerfully
12	Forgive us for the times we lose sight of You in the midst of difficulties
13	Amazing Lord,you always hear our prayers because we are precious to you
14	Praying for residents in Stewart Court, Meadow Croft & Rowland Court
15	Sovereign God,help us to serve You in the sacred calling You have given us
16	Father,forgive us when we are impatient - show us your plan and purpose
17	Thank you Jesus for giving Your life away so that we might live
18	We Pray today for healing for those who are sick in body, mind and spirit
19	Bring comfort and peace to all those who mourn the loss of a loved one
20	Father, Your peace calms the most troubled hearts in their struggles.
21	Transform our hearts Lord, and show us how to give freely
22	Jesus, thank you for loving everyone and offering us eternal life
23	Dear Lord, thank you for creating us and giving us breath – and hope
24	Almighty God, help us to place you first in our lives and serve you best
25	Loving God,when surrounded by pain & injustice, we ask for your healing
26	Abba Father, thank you for your kindness, faithfulness and blessings
27	Lord, use us as a light in the dark spaces of this world
28	Thank you for our Churches and Church Families Lord
29	Gracious Lord fill us with hope and vision for the coming months
30	Thank You Lord for loving us

I'd like to sit down and tell you everything's ok
And have the strength enough to pull you up through another day
I'd like to help you to believe that this will be alright
And that you will not have to spend another sleepless night

I'd like to hold your hand and wipe the teardrops from your eyes
And help you just to sort things out while you question why.
I'd like to try and lift the load and carry it for you
And truly help you understand just what you're going through

I'd like to have the words to make this trouble disappear
And give you peace of mind, so you won't shed another tear
I'd like to have the magic touch to take away your pain
And help you see the blue sky just beyond this blinding rain.

But sometimes what we say or do just cannot be enough
To ease another's passage through a trail so dark and rough
There's one thing I know will help you much more than I can say
And rest assured that I will do it, when I kneel and pray

I will take your name before the Father as I see His face
And ask Him to enfold you in his arms of warm embrace
There is no-one who can comfort you quite like the Father can
And surely carry you across this dark and frightening span

Although I dearly care for you and want to help so much
I know that what you really need is in the Fathers touch.
So I will pray for you and ask Him for His care
I know he will deliver, when I speak your name in prayer

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To everything there
is a season



Ecclesiastes 3:1

What is Armistice Day and why is it important?

Armistice Day remembers the agreement between the Allies and Germany on November 11, 1918, to stop fighting which marked victory for the Allies and defeat for Germany. It was signed in Compiègne in Northern France and came into effect at 11am. The armistice forced the Germans to evacuate invaded countries and territories within two weeks. They also had to surrender a significant amount of war material, including five thousand guns, 25,000 machine guns, 1,700 planes.

Germany, exhausted by war and with a nation of hungry citizens, reluctantly accepted the terms. Although hostilities continued in some areas, the armistice essentially brought an end to four years of fighting in the First World War. **The 2 minute silence is meant to be a time for people to remember those who lost their lives fighting for their country.**

According to reports, in a letter published in the London Evening News on May 8, 1919, an Australian journalist, Edward George Honey, had proposed a respectful silence to remember those who had given their lives in the First World War. This was brought to the attention of King George V and on November 7, 1919, the King issued a proclamation which called for a two-minute silence. Armistice day is always on November 11.

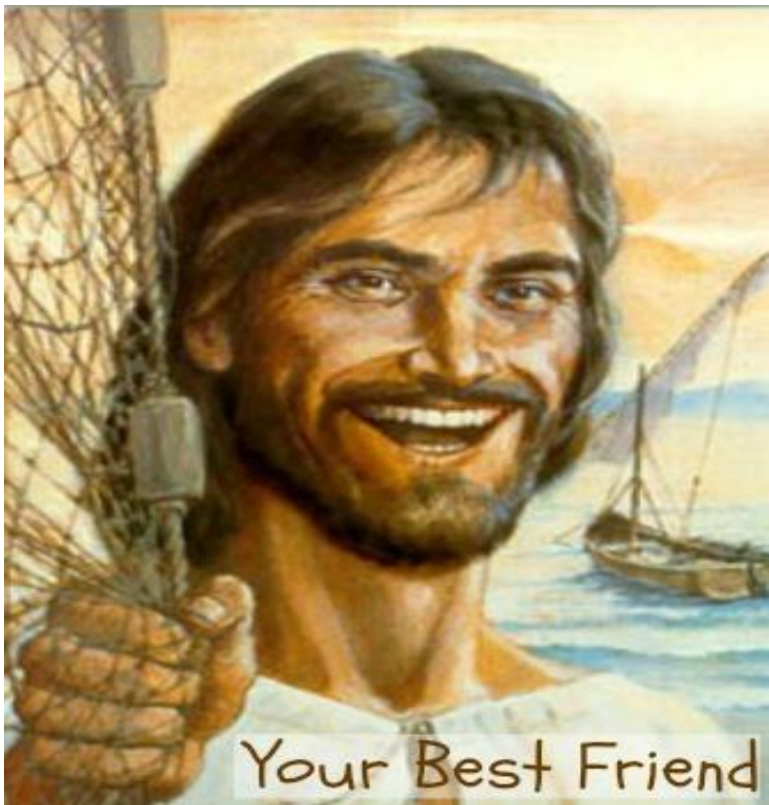
Remembrance Sunday is always on the second Sunday in November, but the date will change yearly - this year it's on November 8th, 2020.

A **two-minute silence is often acknowledged** at schools, offices and churches around the country.

A National Service of Remembrance is held at The Cenotaph in Whitehall in London every year on the Sunday.

Members of the Royal Family and the Government attend the service alongside representatives from the Armed Forces. There may be restrictions with the public this year.. **Another two-minute silence is held at 11am** before a number of wreaths are laid down.

NB: SERVICE AT OLD ARLEY CENOTAPH STARTS AT 10.30am OUTSIDE AT THE MEMORIAL. WREATHS TO BE LAID. PLEASE KEEP YOUR DISTANCE WHEN ATTENDING FOR EVERYONE'S SAFETY..



LORD – Thank you for Loving Us

Oh, how we love our friends. They love us, too, even when we make mistakes. They encourage us, and tell us we can be successful. They even correct us when we're wrong (in a loving way of course). When we find a true friend, they will stick with us even when others don't. That's how it was with David and Jonathan. They were BFFs (best friends forever). They had an unspoken commitment, a bond they hoped would never be broken. BFFs love one another with a God-inspired love. They're pretty much inseparable. Everyone needs friends like that, don't they?

Lord thank you for our friends. They inspire us! What a blessing they are in our lives. We are grateful for each and every one of them. Amen

Little Quips:

The Hand of God Little Philip was spending the weekend with his grandmother after a particularly trying week in infant school. His grandmother decided to take him to the park on Saturday morning. It had been snowing all night and everything was beautiful. His grandmother commented, 'Doesn't it look like an artist painted this scenery? Did you know God painted this just for you?' 'Yes,' replied Philip, 'God did it and he did it left handed.' This confused his grandmother so she asked him, 'What makes you say God did this with his left hand?' 'Well,' said Philip, 'we learned at Sunday School last week that Jesus sits on God's right hand.'

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Noah opens up the ark, lets all the animals out, telling them to 'Go forth and multiply'. As he closes the doors to the ark he notices 2 snakes sitting in a dark corner So he says to them, 'You can go now, go forth and multiply'. 'We can't', say the snakes. 'We're adders'.. Noah goes to God and tells Him, 'the snakes won't do as you have directed'. God says. 'don't worry. Find some trees, saw them into logs and create a platform sitting on the 4 legs'. 'Then put the snakes on the platform' 'But how will that help the snakes?' asks Noah. 'Silly man', replies God. 'everyone knows even adders can multiply using a log table!'.
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'In Italy for 30 years under the Borgias they had warfare, terror, murder and bloodshed, but they produced Michelangelo, Leonard da Vinci, and the Renaissance. In Switzerland, they had brotherly love; they had 500 years of democracy and peace, and what did they produce? The cuckoo clock'.
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You can tell a lot about a person by the way they handle these three things: a rainy day. Lost luggage, and tangled Christmas tree lights
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Better an ounce of happiness than a pound of gold.
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There is no situation so chaotic that God cannot from that situation create something that is surpassingly good. He did it at the creation. He did it at the cross, and He is doing it today!
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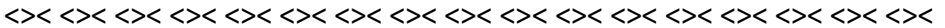
There are two key principles for the compassionate person – giving and forgiving.



Mr. President, about the masks you've sent so far..



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An old man goes to the doctor. 'Doctor', he says pointing to different parts of his body, 'when I touch my arm it hurts. When I touch my neck it hurts. And when I touch my stomach it hurts. Do I have some rare disease?' 'No' says the doctor, 'you have a sore finger'.

Filled with a new vision, the young man went to Moffat and asked, 'Would I do for Africa?' The student was David Livingstone. Workers are still needed today!.

We can reach out to a world in need with the Word it needs.

A little while ago Owen very kindly gave me his memories of Arley which I aim to include in our monthly church magazine.

ARLEY:

ARLEY – I believe the name means 'clearing in the Forest of Arden' Long have gone the days when the man appointed to be in charge of the accounts of the village was requested to pay four pence per score for Small Birds, one penny each for Crows, Magpies and Jays. One pound a year to the man catching mole – this was increased in 1851 to One Pound Ten shillings a year upon condition that he attends his duty by catching them properly. In 1854 it was agreed that 4 cottages should have their rent increased" ONE to TWO POUNDS TEN SHILLINGS, one to ONE POUND FIFTEEN SHILLINGS, and two to ONE POUND FIVE SHILLINGS per annum.

Getting to the time of my lifetime in the village – I was born at 7 Rectory Cottages in 1926, the year of the General Strike, and can now well imagine the real hard times my parents and of course the rest of the community of the village had. At this time of course it was a Mining Village with the pit being sunk in the early 1900's.

It is my guess our era has seen the biggest advancement of life of all times – from houses with tile floors and table tops to be scrubbed every day and pegged rugs to be shook clean if this was possible. Of course there were no water toilets, there being buckets in a shack

Up the garden – to wall to wall carpeting and of course the amazing feat of man landing on the Moon – it was only the cow that jumped over the moon in the old days.

Getting back to the past days everything revolved round the Colliery – employment when required of course and housing – most of these belonging to the Colliery and therefore one had to work at the pit to be considered for one. We were bought up to acknowledge this and to respect the leading lights of the village such as Mr. Knox the Managing Director, Mr. Turner the Secretary of Arley Colliery Co. The Parson Cannon King and of course the Doctor – Dr.Cowan.

I don't think anyone of the village failed to acknowledge him when he passed in his car from the youngest to the oldest.I hasten to add we all respected one another – a closely knit community and

everyone knew each other and help was just around the corner no matter who.

(NEXT EPISODE IN NEXT MONTH'S CHURCH MAGAZINE).

Continued memories from Anne about Whitacre Village

Every Sunday promptly at 2 O'clock my mother would stand us up in turn and wash us down in an enamel bowl(same water for us all) and then dress us up in our tidiest clothes, we had finally to brush our hair(Janets and mine) and tied big ribbon bows on either side of our heads. At this point our Brother david would have to have his ribbon in too to quieten him. Mum would tie a ribbon on his little curls, put his cap on and send us off clutching our pennies for the plate. Arriving in church, David, like every well bought up child of his generation would remove his cap. Most times I could remove the ribbon without him noticing, but on one occasion the ribbon must have been tied more than usual and when I tried to scratch the ribbon off I pulled his hair. He yelled blue murder, so I hastily retied the ribbon. Another time he was standing on the pew and we were singing 'Onward Christian Soldiers'. He would insist on singing Baa Baa Black Sheep, and when I turned to question him I noticed he had a split in his little velvet trousers and his tail was sticking out. I was mortified and wanted to strangle him.

There was a girl called Janet White who had been evacuated to a farm just below our house. She was about three years old and so sweet. At the time I loved little children and I used to take her to Sunday School each week. The little creature was soon bored and would wander up and down the aisle. The rector said, 'If I couldn't keep her still she would have to sit with a bigger girl. I hated the Rector that day. I'm sure if he could have made his services more interesting the children would have paid more attention. When Aunty Phyllis and her family stayed they had gone to the chapel in the village and taken me with them. I loved the singing and the informality of the service and I asked my mother if I could go to the Methodist Sunday School, but she wouldn't let me. I thought the children there got a better deal than us, they sang nice tuneful hymns, wore pretty dresses for the anniversary and went on an outing every year. We had a nice party at Christmas and were presented with attendance prizes of books of bible stories and suchlike but that was all. However, I loved collecting the stamps we received each week depicting a bible scene which we stuck in our attendance cards.

Any event that occurred with the church was well attended. No bride ever was married at Whitacre Church without most of the 'top end' turning out to see her wed and wish her well. Even funerals were of great interest to us all because they were conducted in full view of our classroom windows and though we were warned not to look through the windows we usually contrived to need something from the window sills we could have a quick peep.

Our church has only one real claim to fame and that was that there was a tablet in church erected to the memory of Charles Edward Jenner who was the man who discovered a vaccine for smallpox.

Many years after my Sunday School days I took my first born son to arrange his christening. 'Are you rich my dear?' asked the Rector. Thinking in material terms I replied 'No rector, we're not rich'. He looked into my little boys face and said, 'Oh yes you are' Indeed I was, for that baby gave me a wonderful daughter in law and three delightful grandchildren – my little stake in eternity.

Daily Life:

Life took on a certain normality in those war years because we knew nothing else. We never had fruit other than the fruit that grew in our garden and hedgerows. We gathered loads of blackberries in the autumn, some made jam but most were eaten, grubs and all I suppose that helps our protein intake. When I first tasted a banana after the war I thought it was so bland and tasteless. I thought bananas would be sweet and juicy. People made the most of what they had or could get, and in the country we were more fortunate than most. We had hens for eggs, grew our own vegetables and were allowed to kill a pig once a year. In our kitchen was hung bacon and hams which my father cured. When a pig was killed for ourselves or for a neighbour we had a joint of pork and some fry (liver, kidneys, sweetbreads etc) and I've never tasted meat like that since. Mum used to render the pig loaf down. The first rendering gave lovely white lard. By the time the loaf had been rendered a few times you were left with pork scratchings which we ate with relish sprinkled with salt. Dad loved chitterlings, but Mum wasn't keen on cleaning them, they were after all the pigs intestines and were not pleasant to clean for the pot.

Thank you Anne for our trip down memory lane. Maureen x

An old lady of 95 goes to the gym and asks if she can join the aerobics class. 'Ooh I don't know,' says the instructor. 'I'm not sure whether that's a good idea.' He looks her up and down and asks, 'How flexible are you?' 'Oh, very ,' replies the old lady. 'But I can't do Wednesday mornings'.

BANDING TOGETHER IN PRAYER:

(Where two or three have gathered in My name, I am there in their midst. Matthew 18:20)

I want to say how vital , even crucial, I believe it to be for us to band together with other believers in prayer. We are His children. We unite our hearts as a faith family, bringing our heart cries to him. Jesus modelled for us the role of group prayer support as he implored the disciples to help bear his burden and pray for him as he entered the Garden of Gethsemane.

The early church met regularly to pray together and to experience the growth of each person's faith in the company of one another. For us to bear one another's burdens requires sharing, requesting prayer support, and allowing ourselves to be vulnerable in each other's presence. In these ways we build one another up and further the work of the church. There's power in corporate prayer.

Paul reminds us in Ephesians 6:18, 'Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other's spirits up so that no-one falls behind or drops out'. There is no doubt we need to pray together, and by the same token, there is no doubt that when we are alone, we need to believe God hears us as clearly as he hears the giants of faith.

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WE ARE BLESSED: ___ What does it mean to be blessed.? Does it mean that you receive special favours that others don't? Does it mean that you're the most special kid in the family and that others get overlooked? To be blessed simply means that God pours out all that He has on you. It's like being a kid on Christmas day, only Christmas comes 365 days a year. The blessings never stop. God doesn't withhold His blessing's. He doesn't say, 'I'll



Part taken of Rev. John's sermon from .BIBLE SUNDAY.

Very soon we will be considering Remembrance Sunday, when we remember to look back at conflicts past as well as present. It was during those times that the Word of God seemed to be much more relevance in peoples' lives than it has been over the last decades. At previous times of crisis, the nation was captivated by hearing God's Word and the explanation of what God's Word meant for their lives. In our Covid19 pandemic, because of lockdowns and restrictions, the opportunity to hear God's word seems to be less possible than ever before, although modern technology and social media has been able in some areas to redress the balance. Our reading from Nehemiah speaks of a similar moment of crisis in Israel's history. God had given the promised land to Israel, but because they had turned away from God, God had exiled them from the land. By the grace of God, the people returned to the land and began to rebuild. This moment of rebuilding – of lives, of homes, of a nation –was actually the key to the rebuilding of Israel's faith. And that rebuilding came through a return to God's Word. As our nation and world tries to rebuild during and after Covid19 will we see a return to God and His word? In many respects we are in the same place in our nation as Israel was in their history– our nation is facing many different crises. Politically: there have been various referendums, an exit from Europe the terms of which are uncertain Globally: There is also the threat of global instability with Covid19 terrorism, wars, hunger, environmental disasters. Economically, we are in crisis for those very reasons. Socially, we are in Crisis – e.g. a report has come out that divorce is the highest since 2009. Alcoholism has increased by at least 50% because of Covid19 Morally we have been declining for decades. Spiritually the situation appears to be no better, although people are searching for meaning, purpose and satisfaction in life, churches in our country have been declining dramatically. At times of national and personal crisis the Bible tells us that the remedy is always the same. Look to the Lord! Return to His Word! And hear God speak into life.

Children's Corner: BONFIRE NIGHT NOV 5TH.

(If you are celebrating Bonfire Night – please keep safe.

Some of you no doubt may be attending a civic organised fire.

If you decide to have a small one to burn your leaves etc., take note below.

ADULTS TO BE IN CHARGE:

1. Leave plenty of space. Build your **bonfire** away from your home and any sheds and fences. ...
2. Take care when lighting the fire. Always ensure that there are no sleeping animals hidden in amongst the branches of the **bonfire**. ...
3. **Protect** your pets. ...
4. Be savvy with sparklers. ...
5. Clear up after the display

Recipe for Toffee Apples.

These are best made with the small slightly sour apples available at this time of year.

Ingredients:

1lb Sugar. 2 tablespoons water
4oz Butter 12 small apples approx.

I also add 2 tablespoons of syrup.

Flat sticks to hold apples.

Method:

Wash the apples put a clean stick into each so that it feels firm.

Put all ingredients for toffee in strong saucepan – and allow sugar to dissolve slowly over a low heat. Boil to the 'small crack' degree (290deg F) Dip each apple into bowl of cold water, then into the toffee and then into the cold water. Put onto oiled slab or buttered paper to set. Use immediately as they go sticky on keeping.

Ummm!

OUR HOPE AND STRENGTH .

Father, we praise you that when we are weak, we can rely on your strength. When we are poor in spirit, you fill us with joy.

When we are empty, you flood our lives with peace.

When we are hurting, you hold us in your care.

When we are lost or losing our way, you find us and welcome us home.

When we are in the wrong, you love us still.

When we are defeated by life, you give us victory in the power of the Spirit.

When we are breaking or broken, you make us whole.

When we turned our back on you and your will for us.

When we were filled with selfishness and sin, you sent Jesus to live our life, to die in our place.

When we felt we could go no further and everything seemed empty and hopeless, Christ showed us his hands and his side, and you called us to worship and begin again

We praise you, Father, for your all – sufficient grace. We now know that there is nothing we can say or does that will mean you will stop loving us. We know too that no matter what we face or what we are trying to cope with or what battles we are fighting, your love is sufficient for all our needs.

We ask that your Spirit will guide, protect and empower us and that all we say and do will bring honour to your name, for Christ's sake. Amen

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IT PAYS TO GIVE: The rent was due, but the landlord's tenants couldn't pay. The husband had lost his job and his wife couldn't find extra work. Then Covid19 struck, with everyone in their area ordered to stay home.

Thus all, including the landlord faced bills, but no-one could leave home to earn money. After praying however, the landlord waived his tenants rent. He said he'd hate to see his tenants get sick trying to go out and make money to pay him. Grateful to God for providing for his own family, the landlord passed on practical love to his tenants. Result?-Total peace and joy Helping others always benefits the giver.

Compassionate God, encourage me to open my hands and give help to others sharing the loving bounty you provide to me. Amen

PERSEVERANCE:

Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him(James 1:12)

How do you keep going when everything inside of you tells you to stop? How do you get out of bed in the morning when you would rather pull the covers over your head? How do you go on, day after day, when you've been faced with trial after trial? There's really only one answer to all of these questions: perseverance. To *persevere* means you move forward, even when moving forward seems impossible. How do you do this? Only by the power of the Spirit. God can accomplish through you what you could never do for yourself. And when you persevere, the payoff is amazing! You will eventually reach the finish line if you don't give up. So, make up your mind today. Don't quit. Get out of bed. Put one foot in front of the other. Keep moving, even if it makes no sense. Persevere.

Father, there are days when we feel like giving up. We know You've called us to keep going, so that's what we choose to do. It's hard, Lord. Help us, we pray. Amen.

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Have you ever pondered the word always? When you say you will always do something, it means you won't walk away and forget. Unfortunately, we don't always remember to *always* do what we say. We're forgetful people! Aren't you glad God is an *always* God? He brings to mind the things we forget to remember, like praying for specific people at specific times. What an honour, to lift someone up in prayer as they're walking through tough situations. And how good of the Lord, to bring them to mind at just the right moment. Our prayers have a rebound effect,too. Those very people we are praying for are the ones who lift us up when in need. What a lovely prayer circle, and what a wonderful God, to remain at the centre of it all.

I love our prayer circle, God. We are surrounded by people praying for us, and we pray for them as well. Thanks for bringing to mind the folks who need our prayers today. Amen

Armistice Word search:

Remembrance Day Wordsearch

Find these Remembrance Day words in the grid

below:

ARMISTICE
BUGLE
CENOTAPH
FLANDERS FIELDS
HEROES
HONOUR
LAST POST

MEDALS
MEMORIAL
NOVEMBER
PARADE
POPPIES
POPPY
REMEMBER

REMEMBRANCE
SACRIFICE
SERVICE
SILENCE
WAR
WREATH

E	S	W	G	C	E	N	O	T	A	P	H	E	D
R	V	A	E	H	O	N	O	U	R	N	I	M	R
C	I	R	S	H	Y	L	U	C	M	R	N	E	A
F	L	A	N	D	E	R	S	F	I	E	L	D	S
H	A	T	O	E	E	H	E	Y	S	M	H	A	A
E	M	T	V	L	L	M	L	A	T	E	M	L	C
R	L	H	E	P	O	P	P	Y	I	M	S	S	R
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A	S	V	S	R	E	M	E	M	O	R	I	A	L



NOVEMBER RECIPE: (Serves 4)

HUNTER'S CHICKEN WITH SMOKED CHEESE SAUCE.

Ingredients:

4 Chicken Breasts, boneless and skinless
4 Tablespoonful BBQ or Hunters Sauce
100 grams (3.1/2 oz.) Mushrooms wiped and sliced
1 x 175grams tub of Applewood Spreadable cheese.

Method:

1) Preheat oven to 200degC/400degF/ Gas Mark 6.

2) Cut a deep pocket into each chicken breast – without cutting right through – and place them on to an ovenproof tin or container.

3) Push the prepared mushrooms into the cut pocket and then spoon over the BBQ sauce, and then the tub of Applewood Spreadable cheese.

4) Bake in the preheated oven for 30 minutes or until the chicken is cooked and the sauce is bubbling hot and golden brown in places.

Serve with mashed potatoes and seasonal vegetables.

Tasty, warming meal for this time of year.

Enjoy.

Jesus, Our True Shepherd:

For generations, the Rebanks family has tended sheep in northern England. In his remarkable book 'The Shepherds life', James Rebanks recounts how their family cut a farm out of marginal acreage overrun by rushes and thistles. Only hearty shepherds can do this type of work. The Rebanks work hard to keep their Herdwick sheep alive through the long, dark winters when ice and cold threaten and grazing is sparse. All year round they strive to defend the sheep from disease and fight off predators. They watch over the Herdwick with relentless diligence, tender affection and gruelling tenacity. The Rebanks, like most shepherds, are doggedly caring and generous, giving all they have for their sheep. James Rebanks' account dismantles and idyllic, romantic vision we might have of attending sheep. Shepherds don't spend their days merely frolicking through the lush countryside, doting on cute creatures. They stand at the brink of danger. Consider the world of Psalm 23. This well-known prayer presents this comforting truth: the Shepherd watches over us. The psalmist says, 'I lack nothing', this line provides the foundation on which the whole psalm and our entire lives rest. These words don't ignore the grim realities most of us face, because we have a Good Shepherd we possess everything we need. He guides us into verdant green pastures and alongside quiet, healing waters. He refreshes our weary and anxious souls. Unfortunately, it's still true that we must, as the psalmist says, 'walk through the valley of the shadow of death,' and yet, even here we rebuff fear – not because we have everything under control but we have encountered the Shepherd whose reliable, faithful presence consumes every dread.' I will fear no evil' – 'for you are with me'.

In the past two weeks, I received a desperate message from a friend who was rushing her husband to hospital with a life-threatening illness. I had a conversation with another friend who was about to lose his flat because he couldn't pay the rent. I watched the news, along with the rest of the world, as COVID-19 threatened the life we knew. Everywhere many of us are in need of real help, and yet, even with genuine terrors the psalmist tells us not to fear. Our Lord is generous, always providing for us. He is always wise, knowing what we truly need. He is powerful, defending us from whatever threatens to harm us. Jesus is relentless in pursuing us with his love. Because Jesus is our good Shepherd, He brings us into rest. He restores our broken hearts. We, the sheep, are at peace, and safe in the care of our Shepherd.

God in the Garden – November:

At this quieter time of the year, when the growing season is coming to an end, perhaps you could build a rock garden. Rock gardens are the perfect growing environment for alpine plants – plants that originate from high mountainous regions. These types of plants require good drainage but often thrive in purpose-built rocky environments. Mountains and hills are mentioned over 500 times in the Bible. In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of mountains; and exalted above the hills, and people will stream to it. Mountains in the Bible are places where people connect with God, but they also symbolise holiness, blessings, strength and greatness.

MOUNT CARMEL: This range runs parallel to the Mediterranean Sea. Here, Elijah gained victory over the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18: 19-39) after which the people shouted, 'The Lord, he is God'.

MOUNT ARARAT: Is where Noah's Ark came to rest after the flood (Genesis 8:4). On this mountain God showed Noah a rainbow and promised never to flood the earth again. **THE MOUNT OF OLIVES:** its name comes from olive groves which cover its slopes. On this mountain Jesus was carried up into heaven after giving the great commission to his disciples. All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. **MOUNT ZION:** This hill is south west corner of the old walled city of Jerusalem, and seen as a place of great strength. **MOUNT NEBO:** Moses standing on the heights of Mount Nebo, was shown the Promised Land. **MOUNT HERMON:** Psalm 133.3 speaks of the dew of Mount Hermon descending upon the mountains of Zion.

MOUNT TABOR: This mountain rises majestically from the plain of Jezreel, a few kilometres south east of Nazareth. **MOUNT SINAI:** Here Moses received the Ten Commandments.

MOUNT MORIAH: Here Abraham placed Isaac upon the altar (Genesis 22:9-14). The northern side was cut away to provide Jerusalem with a better defensive structure. This defensive cutting is Golgotha, where Jesus was crucified.

Thank you Lord for the times in my life when I can feel close to you. Many of these times take place in the garden.

Tasks this week: Planting hedges, Heathers and Fruit Trees.

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

Lt.Colonel John McCrae

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