



## Pastor's Page

### *We will Remember*



It was Easter Monday and my father was just yards from his house when he heard a distinctive noise overhead. Looking up he saw a solitary plane and assumed it was British. But as the aircraft turned he noticed, to his horror, that it bore the unmistakable sign of the Swastika on the underside of its wings. Rooted to the spot he watched open mouthed as the plane, now directly overhead, suddenly released 5 bombs! At fourteen years of age he thought his time had come, he truly believed that his house was going to be bombed. To his relief the bombs missed both him and his house but hit A.V. Rowe a local aviation factory. A.V. Rowe, located about a mile from my father's house, was the place where the famous Second World War *Lancaster Bombers* were built and this was the Luftwaffe's intended target. The incident happened in spring 1941 but my Father will never forget it because for him it brought home the stark realities of war.

It's impossible for most of us to imagine what it must be like to live through the horrors of war. This is how one correspondent reflected on the 1914-18 war "The area of Northern France known as Flanders and Picardy saw some of the worse fighting in the First World War. There was complete devastation. Buildings, roads, trees, and natural life simply disappeared. Where once there were homes and farms there was now a sea of mud – a grave for the dead where men still lived and fought. Only one other living thing survived – The poppy - flowering each year with the coming of the warm weather, bringing life, hope, colour, and reassurance to those still fighting". So moved was John McCrea (A doctor serving with the Canadian forces) that in 1915 he wrote a poem which began "In Flanders fields the poppies grow". When the First World War ended and the guns fell silent on the battlefields of Europe, thousands had died and thousands more had been scared by their experiences. Thanks to Moina Michael (an American war secretary) the tradition of wearing a poppy emblem to remember the dead and raise money for their families and ex-servicemen in need was born.

Today we should remember too. Firstly remember with gratitude all those who gave their lives in two World Wars in order that we might live in freedom and peace. Secondly remember those who are losing their lives today in Iraq, parts of Africa and Afghanistan (to name three) in various conflicts. We should pray for the families of these soldiers and civilians caught up in warfare and pray that peace may come soon. We should also remember the evil nature of war and ask God to help us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us, remembering that Jesus' way is the way of forgiveness and not revenge. Finally we should remember Jesus' words; "Greater love has no-one that this, that he lays down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Jesus himself made this ultimate sacrifice, laying down his life in order that we might be free from sin and death. And just as those blood red Poppies sprung up in Flanders fields bringing a sign of hope and life amidst the stench of death so the cross of Jesus offers hope to all as the Saviour of the world dies and rises again in glorious victory.

I'll wear a poppy today because it helps me to remember with gratitude the sacrifice made for me and it also challenges me to consider the sacrifice that Jesus calls me to make for him. (Matthew 16:24-25)

12<sup>th</sup> November 2006