



## **Pastor's Page** ***"Down Memory Lane"***

It was afternoon tea at Lily's. As we chatted it didn't take long for my neighbour to start reminiscing. I listened with interest as she talked about the 50+ years that she had lived in her current home. Then she said, "Do you know how this road got it's name?" "No" I "replied hoping that she wouldn't say "No, neither do I" But she didn't she started to tell me the story. Many years ago there was a small school located about half way up the present lane where I live in what is now a small cul-de-sac off the road. During the First World War as the conflict intensified and the casualties increased the hospitals could not cope with the thousands of young men needing medical attention. As a temporary solution many schools and other public places were quickly transformed into makeshift "hospitals". The school up our road was one such "hospital" The classrooms used to "patch-up" these battle-weary heroes were called "WAR WARDS" (I don't think I ever mention the road where I live now without remembering the reason for it's the name)

Today is a day for remembering. The poppy, as well as the name of my lane, aids this process. It's impossible for most of us to imagine what it's 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 scarred 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 so we might live in freedom and peace. Secondly for 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 remember the evil nature of war and ask God to help us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us, knowing that Jesus' way is the way of forgiveness and not revenge. "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 bring 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)

11<sup>th</sup> November 2007