



Create a peaceful space to pause, and allow yourself to feel God's presence alongside you, as near to you as your own breath. In following the reflection below, as a church we will draw closer to God and to one another as we grow in faith and deepen our sense of belonging to God.

Isaiah 65: 17-18, 23-25 'A Vision of a New Creation'

¹⁷ For I am about to create new heavens
and a new earth;
the former things
shall not be remembered or come to mind.

¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice for ever
in what I am creating;
for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy,
and its people as a delight.

²³ They shall not labour in vain,
or bear children for calamity;
for they shall be offspring
blessed by the Lord –
and their descendants as well.

²⁴ Before they call I will answer,
while they are yet speaking I will hear.

²⁵ The wolf and the lamb shall feed together,
the lion shall eat straw like the ox;
but the serpent – its food shall be dust!
They shall not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain, says the Lord.

Before entering ministry, I used to teach history in Banbury. When we covered the First World War at 'O' or 'A' Level, I always tried to impart a moral (or maybe theological) message to my students, so that they did not limit themselves simply to events, or even causes and results, as it were. So we looked at Rupert Brooke's idealism: "If I should die, think only this of me: that there's some corner of a foreign field that is for ever England", and compared it to Siegfried Sassoon's bitter reflection at the Menin Gate: "Who will remember, passing through this Gate, the unheroic dead who fed the guns? Who shall absolve the foulness of their fate – those doomed, conscripted, unvictorious ones?". I don't know who took the photograph opposite, but I cherish the picture of a German soldier lighting a British 'Tommy's' cigarette. I wonder what led up to that poignant little incident? And did *they* remember that moment in after years?

Some people believe that these days we're much more sensitive to the horrors of war, because we see instantly and graphically what's going on in the world. Others, however, think (like I do) that the reverse is true, because we're bombarded by such scenes with such regularity that we can become de-sensitised to it all. So often we hear the sanitised language of leaders in the press conferences of recent conflicts. We hear phrases like: 'a successful strategic strike' or that there has been 'little collateral damage' – which probably means that a missile had hit and wiped out its target, which inevitably included innocent human beings.

Above all, our remembering should be part of our striving for peace *in* our time. In his *Three Miles an Hour God*, Kosuke Koyama reminds us that, whereas Buddhists value timelessness, Christ values timefulness – filling time with peace-making acts of love. Surely true, because there is no way to peace, but peace *is* the way.

Prayer: Holy God, your Son came to us as the Prince of Peace.

Help to remember – and never forget – the loud and awful language of war. May each of us become instruments of peace, and may our prayers always find a grounding in what we say and do, and in the way in which we live out the Gospel of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

