

Holidaying in France a few years ago, my husband and I got a bit lost. Somehow between us, we found ourselves in the Somme. We hadn't planned to be there, but in hindsight I am grateful for our map reading mistakes! We stopped at a small military cemetery, commemorating soldiers who had lost their lives in both world wars. So many young people from all over the world, commemorated in that small space, surrounded now, not by battlefields and trenches, but by the wide expanses of 21st century farming. It was the end of summer, with many bright poppies in the fields. Where so many had suffered and died, this little flower, pushing up through the dark soil, spoke not just of sacrifice made but also of a new life and a new hope.

Remembrance brings with it many emotions. It's a time for gratitude: in the words of John Maxwell Edmonds, "When you go home, tell them of us and say/For their tomorrow, we gave our today." It's a time of sadness we remember those who have died or who still suffer the consequences of war through physical or mental injury or bereavement. In recent months, we think of the millions displaced by war, particularly in the Middle East. It's a time when we can look at the world around us and pray that we can learn to live in peace with one another. It's a time for sowing the seeds of hope.

Those poppies in the Somme reminded me of God's love and of the hope that we see in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The hope of God's new Kingdom, that one day all the wrongs will be made right, that justice, mercy, compassion and peace will rule and that the light of Christ will shine in the dark places of the world. Do join us on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> when there will be an Act of Remembrance at the War Memorial at 10:45 am, followed by a service at St Swithun's Church.

Plenty is happening at St Swithun's Church in the coming months. Please see the website for more details and don't forget Messy Church on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup>. As you may be aware, we said a fond farewell to our retiring rector Rev Pam McKellen last month, who is leaving after 12 very fruitful years. Until a new vicar arrives, Glynis, Tony and I, together with a number of others, will do our best to make sure that it is business as usual. The main contact number will remain: 01235 554739.

— Rev Alison Mathew