



Diocese of Ely
THREE RIVERS GROUP
Chippenham, Fordham, Isleham, Kennett, Snailwell

Service for the 75th Anniversary of VE Day

The Greeting and Introduction

Heaviness may endure for a night:
But joy comes in the morning.

God has been our refuge and our strength:
A present help in time of trouble.

Dear friends, we have come together on this day to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe, when the sounds of war fell silent on this continent.

We come together conscious of our need for God's forgiveness for the sin and the desire to dominate others that leads to conflict between people, and war between nations.

And as we remember the many soldiers, sailors, and airmen who gave their lives restraining evil and opposing tyranny, so we also come in thanksgiving for the years of peace that the nations of Europe have enjoyed since the Second World War. We gather joyfully today, as those who gathered on that first Victory day, glad of each other's company, and grateful for the laughter and love that follows times of sadness and loss.

But above all things, let us pray that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven, as we join our voices together and say:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkTrFQLy6js>

Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided:
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

Lord, for that word, the word of life which fires us,
speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,
teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us:
Lord of the word, receive Your people's praise.

Lord, for our world when we disown and doubt him,
loveless in strength, and comfortless in pain,
hungry and helpless, lost indeed without him:
Lord of the world, we pray that Christ may reign.

Lord for ourselves; in living power remake us -
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne,
past put behind us, for the future take us:
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

Old Testament Reading Micah 4.1–4

In days to come the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains and shall be raised up above the hills. Peoples shall stream to it, and many nations shall come and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore; but they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.

Responsory

Your salvation is near to those who fear you,
that glory may dwell in our land.

Mercy and truth have met together;
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

that glory may dwell in our land.

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;
steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.

Your salvation is near to those who fear you, that glory may dwell in our land.

Address

<https://youtu.be/tCLfVRZiLjQ>

The bible is a rich treasury of all sorts of different texts and the text from Micah which we have heard today is a reasonably common archetype. A vision of a more perfect future. A promise of a perfect world in the full presence of God. A time when everyone comes together in unity to worship God, where war will come to an end and

we can all live in a time of peace. A good reading to think about as we mark 75 years since the cessation of hostilities in Europe in the second world war.

In his announcement to the nation, on that first VE day, Churchill noted that "We may allow ourselves a brief period of rejoicing; but let us not forget for a moment the toil and efforts that lie ahead." Days of celebration like today will always be days like that, giving thanks for something good, whilst acknowledging that there is always more to be done. Churchill knew that there was still plenty of work to be done in the far east, still many service personnel putting themselves in danger, but that the time was right for a celebration to boost morale and to congratulate those who had defeated the might of fascism in Europe.

Thinking about the celebrations surrounding Captain Tom Moore's 100th birthday felt a bit like that. He has brought a welcome respite from the gloomy news which seems to be everywhere we turn. He has shown a wonderful example of fortitude and reminded us of the best that his generation offered.

The large amount of money he has raised (just under £33 million when the justgiving page was closed to new donations) shows the appreciation we have for all those who work in health services, alongside those other essential workers who keep us fed, watered, healed, connected, heated, clean, taught and cared for.

We have our weekly appointment at the end of drives to show our appreciation for all those who continue to work on the "front line". These moments of celebration even joy are about celebrating all that is good, in the knowledge that we are still a way off returning to normal.

We are still in the midst of lockdown, waiting for the scientists to find a vaccine, for ways of living which will prevent further peaks and minimise further spreading.

At the heart of Christian faith is the now and not yet. The promise of heaven, the promise of dwelling place within the house of the Lord. We acknowledge that the world is not yet that perfect place but we are called to make the world more perfect. By doing all we can to prevent conflict and working to build peace, by caring for our neighbours in times of need, by bringing joy into the world. All these small acts in the now, help us towards becoming the place that is not yet, that place which we might call heaven, the dwelling place of the most high, the God whom we adore.

We are probably still a long way from turning all the spears into pruning hooks, swords into ploughshares, upcycling Kalashnikovs into furniture, turning jet fighters into humanitarian transport. VE day gives us hope that we can bring conflicts to an end and work to build a lasting peace between the nations. That we might all be able to sit at table together, sharing in the fruit of the vine and grains of the earth.

We pray too for the small celebrations on the way as we go through our current crisis, thanking those who are risking their lives by staying safe at home to halt the spread.

Hymn 'Now thank we all our God.' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s99dNPKYtHk>

Now thank we all our God, with heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done, in whom this world rejoices;
Who from our mothers' arms has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in His grace, and guide us when perplexed;
And free us from all ills, in this world and the next!

All praise and thanks to God the Father now be given;
The Son and Him who reigns with Them in highest Heaven;
The one eternal God, whom earth and Heaven adore;
For thus it was, is now, and shall be evermore.

Prayers

Let us pray for all who suffer as a result of conflict, and ask that God may give us peace:

For the service men and women who have died in the violence of war, each one remembered by and known to God; may God give peace.
God give peace.

For those who love them in death as in life, offering the distress of our grief and the sadness of our loss; may God give peace.
God give peace.

For all members of the armed forces who are in danger this day, remembering family, friends and all who pray for their safe return; may God give peace.
God give peace.

For civilian women, children and men whose lives are disfigured by war or terror, calling to mind in penitence the anger and hatreds of humanity; may God give peace.
God give peace.

For peacemakers and peacekeepers, who seek to keep this world secure and free; may God give peace.
God give peace.

For all who bear the burden and privilege of leadership, political, military and religious; asking for gifts of wisdom and resolve in the search for reconciliation and peace; may God give peace.
God give peace.

O God of truth and justice, we hold before you those whose memory we cherish, and those whose names we will never know. Help us to lift our eyes above the torment of this broken world, and grant us the grace to pray for those who wish us harm. As we honour the past, may we put our faith in your future; for you are the source of life and hope, now and for ever.
Amen.

An Act of Commitment

Let us pledge ourselves anew to the service of God and our fellow men and women: that we may help, encourage and comfort others, and support those working for the relief of the needy and for the peace and welfare of the nations.

**Lord God our Father,
we pledge ourselves to serve you and all humankind,
in the cause of peace,
for the relief of want and suffering,
and for the praise of your name.
Guide us by your Spirit;
give us wisdom; give us courage; give us hope;
and keep us faithful now and always. Amen.**

O Lord our God, as we remember, teach us the ways of peace. As we treasure memories, teach us to hope. As we give thanks for the sacrifices of the past, help us to make your future in this world, until your kingdom come.
Amen.

Almighty God, from whom all thoughts of truth and peace proceed: kindle in the hearts of all people the true love of peace; and guide with your pure and peaceable wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth; that in tranquillity your kingdom may go forward, till the earth is filled with the knowledge of thy love; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Almighty God, the fountain of all goodness, bless our Sovereign Lady, Queen Elizabeth, and all who are in authority under her; that they may order all things in wisdom and equity, righteousness and peace, to the honour of your name, and the good of your Church and people; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The National Anthem <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3dR7u7TPNo>

God save our gracious Queen! Long live our noble Queen!
God save the Queen!
Send her victorious, Happy and glorious,
Long to reign over us, God save the Queen.

Thy choicest gifts in store on her be pleased to pour,
Long may she reign.
May she defend our laws, and ever give us cause,
To sing with heart and voice, God save the Queen.

The Blessing

God grant to the living, grace; to the departed, rest; to the Church, the Queen, the Commonwealth, and all people, peace and concord; and to us and all his servants, life everlasting; and the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, come down upon you and remain with you always. **Amen.**