

2015 Anzac Weekend Easter Four.

Jeremiah 31: 7-9, Revelation 21: 1-4 and John 10: 11-18

On this special weekend we remember all who have died in war. John's Gospel reaffirms the Resurrection life gifted to us all – an abundant life of loving and supportive relationships in a diverse and interdependent community. A wonderful vision worth hold on to and praying for.

Have you a story in your family from the First World War? Perhaps you had relatives at Gallipoli?

What are your concerns as we commemorate that great defeat? Let us share a little.

Looking back to that time in our history we can see many mistakes that were made by different authorities, before, during and after the Great War, including the spreading of the influenza epidemic which killed more people than the war itself when the armed forces returned home, spreading it in Samoa on the way. We continue to learn from those times. You will have listened to or seen stories this weekend that will have drawn emotions from you. Perhaps you wanted to cry, be angry or laugh or be disbelieving. You may have preferred to go for a walk with your own memories and enjoy living in a time of relative peace.

John was surprised on Anzac Day to find people outside the Mall wondering why it was closed.

The traditional poetry I shall read includes the Ode.

The English poet Laurence Binyon wrote 'For the Fallen' in the early days of the First World War, after the British Expeditionary Force had already suffered severe casualties.

I will read verses 3 and 4.

Then 'In Flanders Fields' by John McCrae written in 1915 and a response 'We shall keep the faith' by Moina Michael in 1918.

I want to tell you a war story about Harry Cloebourn. Harry loved animals and shifted to Canada, training to be a vet. He set up an animal hospital there.

The war started and Harry volunteered to help with the horses. Trains took horses and people from Winnipeg to the Atlantic Ocean, from where they would sail to Europe. Harry insisted that the train stop regularly to exercise the horses. At one train stop Harry met an old trapper holding a baby bear. Its mother was dead. Harry cared for the little bear, naming her Winnie. The soldiers helped care for her and she travelled on the ship to London. There Harry took her to London zoo, thinking that taking her to war would be too dangerous.

Winnie was very friendly and people visited the zoo especially to see her, including a writer named Mr. Milne and his animal loving son named Christopher. How many of you have read the 'Winnie the Pooh' stories? One good thing to come from the Great War. In some ways the good bear keeper was similar to the good Shepherd.

We listened to a reading on the Good Shepherd. As followers, as sheep, we learn to follow the shepherd's voice. We are known by name and are led or walked beside. The early Church described their leaders as shepherds and today we try to care for each other so we all have a good quality of life, as a flock and as a community. We worry about Christians suffering around the Mediterranean and Middle East and our hearts and prayers go out to them.

May we use this Remembrance time to thank God for all who have given life to us, re-affirming our commitment to strong humanitarian values in harmony with our Christian faith.