

## **Mike's Message**

### **The season of Remembrance and Hope**

It's November. The year is already drawing towards it's close. Within a week or so of this magazine being published the German Christmas Market will be open in the City Centre. Christmas seems to sneak up on us earlier each year. But there's a lot to do before then.

November starts with a time of remembering. It's a time when the Church has traditionally thought, during the season of All Saints and All Souls, of those who have died. Then comes Remembrance, as we recall those who have died in conflict; long ago, more recently and in current combat. Next year, in 2018, Remembrance Sunday will fall on 11th November itself, exactly 100 years since the Armistice that brought the First World War towards it's end at the Treaty of Versailles in 1919.

As November draws to it's close we will still have that beautiful and reflective season of Advent ahead of us. Advent is very short this year, as the Fourth Sunday of Advent is Christmas Eve. We'll be holding a Study Group during Advent but, to get four sessions in, we'll be starting early. Join us on Tuesdays at 11.00am (28th November, 5th, 12th and 19th December) as we ask 'So what are you waiting for?' It looks at time and our attitude towards it. In

Advent we not only look back through time to the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, but also look forward towards his return at the end of time.

Then it'll be Christmas with all of it's excitement and reflection. There'll be special services and special events. A time of enjoyment and family. But of course for some it's a time of loneliness and fear, of memories of things past and hardships of the present. Together we all hope for the gift of Peace and Goodwill for all the earth.

Writing a magazine letter to cover this season of Remembrance and Hope brought to mind the following poem. It was written at Christmas 1916 by Leslie George Rub, an Australian soldier who had experienced the horrors of the Battle of the Somme. That particular battle had finished a month earlier but hazards still remained. Rub's sarcastic poem epitomises both the horror and futility of war. Rub ridicules both the war and his own officers in a forthright way maybe that's why it's not as well known as the world of some others:

#### ***Christmas Day On The Somme***

'Twas Christmas Day on the Somme  
The men stood on parade,  
The snow laid six feet on the ground  
Twas twenty in the shade.

Up spoke the Captain 'gallant man',  
"Just hear what I've to say,  
You may not have remembered that  
Today is Christmas Day."

"The General has expressed a wish  
This day may be observed,  
Today you will only work eight hours,  
A rest that's well deserved.

I hope you'll keep yourselves quite clean  
And smart and spruce and nice,  
The stream is frozen hard  
But a pick will break the ice."

"All men will get two biscuits each,  
I'm sure you're tired of bread,  
I'm sorry there's no turkey  
but there's Bully Beef instead.

The puddings plum have not arrived  
But they are on their way,  
I'll guarantee they'll be in time  
To eat next Christmas Day."

"You're parcels would have been in time  
But I regret to say

The vessel which conveyed them was  
Torpedoed on the way.  
The Quartermaster's got your rum  
But you may get some yet,  
Each man will be presented with  
A Woodbine Cigarette."

"The Huns have caught us in the rear  
And painted France all red,  
Pray do not let that trouble you,  
Tomorrow you'll be dead.

Now ere you go I wish you all  
This season of good cheer,  
A very happy Christmas and  
A prosperous New Year."

Leslie George Rub  
<http://www.greatwar.nl/frames/default-christmaspoem.html>

Private Leslie George Rub died on 23rd September 1917 in  
the Third Battle of Ypres (Passchendaele).

May this season be for you one of reflection and hope as  
we prepare to welcome the Prince of Peace.