Memories

I have two reasons for writing this piece. One is to recall and explore memories from Remembrance Sundays past. The other is to encourage other members of our congregation - in other words YOU - to look at your memories, of hymns, Bible passages, or other writing and share them, and their messages with us.

If any Sunday calls out for memories, it is Remembrance Sunday, the second Sunday in November. My memory here is of the service in the Anglican parish church in the small Derbyshire village where I grew up. During the service, the names of those from the village who had died in the two World Wars was read out. My memory here is that many of the names were those I saw above shop fronts and met in the village school. Families were less mobile in the first half of the 20th century. This is where I met the hymn 'O Valiant hearts, who to your glory came', which is the hymn I intended to write about. I re-read the hymn, and find I can no longer agree with much of it, nor can I sing it with any enthusiasm. I read what others had thought about it and discovered why I had never heard it sung at Earlsdon, or at any other Remembrance Sunday service in recent years. So much of the hymn, reading it again now, is too much of its time to find a place in the 21st century. Do look at it, easily available on-line, and see why I have changed my mind.

Reading around the hymn I found a much more appropriate hymn for the world of today. This is a hymn commissioned by Coventry Cathedral , written by Fred Kaan, and it appears in 'Singing the Faith' (Number 698). With this hymn, sung to the same tune, my memories are intact. I can still see the full church, and the medals, so proudly worn. I can still hear the silence and the bugle call that ended it with the 'Last Post'. The old hymn has little meaning or message for us now, but this new one has a message for today and the future, as well as meanings we can all explore.

This is not the piece I set out to write! I have been taken down a different path, but, I hope, one leading to new memories and new meanings. I look forward now to reading more memories, meanings and messages from all of you who, I know, have much to share.

Mike Spokes

God! As with silent hearts we bring to mind
how hate and war diminish humankind,
we pause – and seek in worship to increase
our knowledge of the things that make for peace.

Hallow our will as humbly we recall
the lives of those who gave and give their all
we thank you, Lord, for women, children, men
who seek to serve in love, today as then.

Give us deep faith to comfort those who mourn,
high hope to share with all the newly born,
strong love in our pursuit of human worth:
'lest we forget' the future of this earth.

So, Prince of Peace, disarm our trust in power,
Teach us to coax the plant of peace to flower.
May we, im-passioned by your living Word,
remember forward to a world restored.

Fred Kaan