



Introduction

Remembrance Sunday and related issues can be a challenge for teachers. Fewer and fewer people have any direct experience of living through a war; while at the same time there may be older members within some families in the local community for whom this can be a very emotional occasion. Increasingly, church and civic services for Remembrance Day include mention of wars more recent than the two major world wars of the last century, in particular the present-day fighting in the Middle East. They also include prayers for members of the armed forces, especially those who are part of peacekeeping initiatives in a number of world trouble spots. Although this special day is called Remembrance Sunday, there is also an increasing desire to complement the looking back with hopes and prayers for peace in the future.

The following material includes some ideas as possible inspiration for a class group to present something special in an act of Collective Worship to mark this day.

Preparation

Read through what it is here and decide whether you might like to use any of these approaches with your class. Each suggestion includes directions as to any additional materials that are needed.

Development

1. For most children Remembrance Sunday is identified most easily as Poppy Sunday. Both in church and in school at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month the customary two-minute silence may be observed in order to remember those who died during wars. With the children and also with their parents - who, thankfully, have not been part of a war that affected lives as directly as did the First and Second World Wars for at least two generations in the UK - it is useful to direct thoughts and any prayers towards the theme of 'making peace'.
2. *The Poppy*

People see the poppy in a variety of ways:

- It is, of course, the symbol of a charity fund that still cares for those who were bereaved or injured in wars.
- It is also a way of remembering the sacrifice made by many who fought against those who would take away democratic freedoms from our world.
- It is a sign of hope, inspired as it is by the poppy fields in Belgium, where the flowers grew on the very land that had during the First World War been battlegrounds.

It can also be seen as a 'vote for peace'.

Some useful verses from the Bible to supplement the traditional poem ('they shall not grow old' and



so on) are:

Psalm 46: 9-10 (NIV):

*(The Lord) makes wars to cease to the ends of the earth.
He breaks the bow and shatters the spear,
he burns the chariots with fire.*

Be still, and know that I am God.
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.

For Christians each Sunday is a Remembrance Day. It is the day when they remember the sacrifice of Jesus, who won for the entire world a different and deeper kind of peace. The following Bible verses could be used in this connection.

James 4: 1, 6-7 (NIV):

*What causes fights and quarrels among you?
Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?
God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.
Submit yourselves therefore to God.
Submit yourselves, then, to God.*

Christians believe that God's 'peace gift' to the world is Jesus. He gives a peace with God, which needs to be passed on by people who become peacemakers and peace-givers. Christians are challenged to be peace-bringers.

Matthew 5:9 (NIV):

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God.

3. A True StoryBelow is a reading from the Old Testament that is often used at a Remembrance Day service in churches. It comes from Micah 4:1- 4 (NIV):

In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.' The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. Every man will sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid, for the Lord Almighty has spoken.

Some people have taken this prophecy from the Old Testament about swords being turned into ploughs very literally. The country of Mozambique was torn apart by war for many years but in recent times, following an initiative that came from the Christian Church, people have been



encouraged to bring in their weapons and have them melted down and turned into useful tools and machines. Some of these weapons have even been turned into pieces of art, which have been displayed in exhibitions around the world.

To illustrate this, hand out some long pieces of garden twine wire to some children. Ask them first to sculpt them into swords or guns. Some will need little encouragement! The challenge then is to unbend the twine and turn those swords and guns into something useful or beautiful. This exercise could be used alongside the reading from Micah above to explore the promise of peace that is given.

Another way to handle this through words would be to ask a group of older children to change the word s-l-i-n-g (as one example of an old-fashioned weapon) into the word p-e-a-c-e by changing only one letter at a time but always making each time a new word. Instead of slinging insults at each other how do we bring peace between people?

Here's one solution to this word challenge:
sling-slang-slant-plant-plane-place-peace

4. *An Illustration*

In the Bible Jesus is described as 'our peace' (Ephesians 2:14). Christians believe that he is the one who breaks down the walls of hostility that we build between each other as nations and individuals.

To illustrate this, ask the children to get into groups of three. Two of the three should then mime being angry or even fighting each other but then freeze the scene (without any physical contact!) so that the room is full of pairs of children frozen in hostility. Now invite the third member of each group to come and put themselves in between the two who are 'at war' by stretching out their hands to keep them apart or reaching out to each to try and bring them together. This third person is the peacemaker like Jesus. Freeze these groups of three and then ask the two who were fighting to sit down. The ones left standing will all be in some sort of frozen cross-shape. Christians believe that it was at the cross that Jesus stretched himself out to make peace between the world and God, and between us and each other.

5. *A Discussion Starter*

When Jesus came to Jerusalem for the last time it says in Luke's Gospel (19: 42) that he not only wept over the city but also sighed and said 'If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace.'

What things do make for peace between people?

In twos or threes ask the children to list the sort of things that make peace rather than war. To take this exercise further, then ask those groups to think what sort of statues commemorate peacemaking? There are plenty of statues in our big cities around the world that commemorate those who fought in the wars and those who were war heroes, but what does a monument to peace or a statue of a peace hero look like?

6. *A Visual Reflection*

Obtain a large world mat (such as the one available from the Early Learning Centre for the game of world twister!) or world map and lay this out in the middle of the children. In an assembly it may need to be held up or a version could be displayed on a screen.

Talk about what sort of wars are going on today around the world. Identify the parts of the world where there is fighting, perhaps using some newspaper pictures and headlines to put on or against the map.

Now invite some children to place some poppies on those different parts of the world and turn this into a short time of prayerful reflection. Some classes might like to make their own poppies cut from card and stuck to short garden sticks. If this is done, each of the three petals could represent the different sorts of peace that Christians believe we all need – peace inside ourselves, peace between each other and peace with God.

7. *A Globe Activity*

Use a large blow-up globe and ask the children to think of different places in the world where there are still wars and where there is a great need for peace. As they put their hands up with suggestions, toss the globe to them and ask them to hold it high while you or they say a short prayer or keep a brief silence so people can lift up that part of the world to God.

8. *A Folk Tale*

There is a story that comes from the Middle East and is a sort of parable such as the ones that Jesus told. Perhaps this story could even be about Jesus himself and how he makes peace as well as about ourselves and how he wants us to be peacemakers. However, leave it with the children to work out for themselves what it might mean.

You could make this tale visual by printing off a series of 18 clip-art camel pictures and mounting them (first only 17 and then later add the 18th) upright in a slit along a long cardboard tube. This will help make the mathematics of the story easier to grasp!

Once upon a time there was a rich man who lived in the deserts of the Middle East. You could tell how rich he was because of what he owned and especially how many camels belonged to him. In fact he was so rich that he owned not two, not four, not eight, not 16... but 17 camels.

*He had led a peaceful and prosperous life and so when he was very old and near to death he wrote his will, explaining how he intended to leave his wealth to his only son, his grandson and to his one nephew. The terms of the will were these:
one half of his riches should go to his own son; one third should go to his grandchild and one ninth of his wealth should go to his nephew.*

This seemed fair. Soon after this the rich man died. Now when it came time to dividing up the



camels according to the will, the three beneficiaries ran into a problem!

Demonstrate the following with your visual aid.

If half the camels were given to the son, then he should get eight-and-a-half camels, which would mean killing a camel!

If a third of the camels were given to the grandson, that would mean again killing a camel so he could get five and two thirds!

And when it came to the nephew, there was no way he could get his share unless another camel was killed.

The three of them became frustrated and soon got very angry with each other. They shouted and quarrelled and argued and even threatened to go to war over the camels. Secretly they began stockpiling their weapons and plotting their battle campaigns.

Nearby there lived a very poor man. You could tell he was very poor because he only had one camel. Although he was so poor and seemed to have no influence, he still felt he should do something to help. He wanted to stop war breaking out. He wanted to be a peacemaker. But what could he do?

He decided to offer his one and only camel into the rich man's inheritance to help sort out the problem. It was a huge sacrifice. The inheritance now consisted of 18 camels.

Demonstrate the following by adding a camel and then re-doing the maths as below!

The three sat down and did the sums.

Half of 18 would go to the son, so he took nine camels.

One third of 18 would go to the grandson so he took six camels.

And one ninth of 18 would go to the nephew, so he took two camels. After each had taken his allotted number, to their great surprise there was one camel left over!

The poor man received his camel back! He had made peace by his willingness to give up all he had and it had made all the difference and he had not lost out in the end!

I wonder what you think this story is saying to us about making peace? And about Jesus who is described as the Prince of Peace?

9. A Song

Possible songs to sing for an assembly include:

'Make me a channel of your peace'

'Peace I give to you'

'All over the world the Spirit is moving'

'Peace is flowing like a river'