

**The Introduction to the City of Coventry Remembrance Sunday
Service at the War Memorial on 11th November 2018
by the Bishop of Coventry**

Lord Mayor, Lord Lieutenant, Members of the City Council, Members of Parliament, Members of Her Majesty's Armed Forces and other uniformed bodies, People of Coventry: I invite you to prepare for our city's Remembrance Service.

One hundred years ago, at this very minute, the guns of the battlefields of Europe and much of the world, still raged but they were about to fall silent. The toll in death and injury had been unprecedented. 1 million British deaths, of them 800,000 military personnel, and a total of 6 million military deaths among the Allies. 75,000 were from what was then undivided India. Remembering their sacrifice, I proudly wear the Khadi Poppy, spun with cotton cloth made famous by Mahatma Gandhi.

The war caused around 1 million deaths in Africa, 24,000 of them Kenyans. And so I am delighted we are joined today by my brother Bishop, Paul Korir, from Kenya, who's own grandfather fought for our freedom.

On this day, when we remember the end of this terrible war, it is especially fitting to be joined by our guests from Germany: the City President of Kiel and the Deputy Mayor of Dresden with other distinguished colleagues from our twin cities. *Wir sind so froh, dass Sie bei uns sind.* We are so glad you are with us. In common grief, we remember the nearly two and half million dead or injured among your military in the First World War.

In memory of all those who died in that war across the world, I wear today the newly made cope, designed by artist Terry Duffy. It depicts Canadians, Australians, Indian and British soldiers, Christians, Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus together with German soldiers, among them German Jewish soldiers, all of them caught up in the horror of war.

We carry together this day the memory of some 40 million people killed or injured in the Great War. The numbers are staggering and beyond our imagining.

But our minds will dwell this day on those whose memory we especially treasure – relatives of whom we have heard but never knew. I think of my own uncle George, who died in the trenches. And I remember my own grandmother, who died from an air raid over London in 1918.

This day we hold in solemn remembrance those three and a half thousand Coventrians who gave their lives for our peace and freedom, to be followed by so many more in later wars and conflicts whom we remember today with great respect.

Perhaps among the carnage of the First World War, our thoughts can centre on one young man born in Day's Lane – Private Horace McKnight, who died 100 years ago on this Armistice Day, from wounds inflicted in the final advance on Picardy. The day last for Coventry's brave soldiers to die in the days of that war to end to end all wars.

As we remember Horace, let us honour his sacrifice with a renewed commitment to confront the causes of conflict and defeat what makes for war. Our great city has played its part in fighting for freedom and defending the world from tyranny, and it has paid the price in broken bodies and ruined buildings. But its spirit has never been broken. Inspired by the story of Jesus Christ, whom the violence of the world killed and whom the more powerful love of God raised from the grave, Coventry triumphed over the terror of war with a commitment to peace and a challenge to enemies to reconcile and become friends.

And in that spirit, I invite the sub-Dean of Coventry Cathedral and the Dean of Kiel to lead us in the Coventry Litany of Reconciliation in German and English. Please turn to your order of service and join in the words, 'Father, forgive'.