

SILENT NIGHT, HOLY TRUCE

Worship resources for services recognising and commemorating
the Christmas Truces for the centenary of World War 1



MARTIN LUTHER KING



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INTRODUCTION: NARRATING WORLD WAR I

We wish you all
a Happy Xmas and New Year
success, Victory, and
safe return.



Xmas, 1914.

from
Lady Rawlinson
and
The friends of the
4th Corps.

Between 2014 and 2018 the UK will mark the centenary of the First World War. That more than 15 million people died in a conflict marked by new forms of weaponry and warfare is widely accepted, but interpretations of the war continue to divide. Was the war a 'futile' waste of a generation? 'Lions led by donkeys'? - A clash of imperial powers driven by the desire to accumulate capital? 'Organised murder, nothing else,' as Harry Patch, Britain's last veteran of the war, described it? Or was it a just war to check German militarism and liberate Belgium? - Or (from the other side) a just war to peg back the British Empire and defeat the threat of secularist France to Christian civilisation? Given these debates, it is unsurprising that plans in Britain to mark the war have been contentious from the beginning. In 2012, when announcing significant funding for four years of commemoration, Prime Minister David Cameron caused controversy by saying that he looked forward to "... a commemoration that captures our national spirit, in every corner of the country ... that, like the Diamond Jubilee celebrations this year, says something about who we are as a people."

The purpose of this resource is to help church leaders negotiate these debates by using the commemorations to tell a specifically *Christian story*. It is not the church's job to adjudicate historical debates. What then is the church's task during periods of war memorial? Anglican Bishop George Bell helps us in his classic essay written in 1939 in which he asks, 'What is the church's function in war-time?' The answer he gives is simple: 'It is the function of the Church at all costs to remain the Church', that organisation which is the trustee of the 'gospel of redemption,' and 'the pillar and ground of the truth' (1 Timothy 3:15, KJV). This suggests that the primary purpose of commemorating World War 1 in churches is not to tell a 'national' story, but to tell a Christian story - it is to proclaim 'the Gospel of peace' (Ephesians 6:15), made possible by the incarnation of Christ that first Christmas. This pack is designed to help church leaders do that through one of the most remarkable events in the annals of modern warfare... the December 1914 Christmas Truces.



A HOPEFUL BIT OF HISTORY

Christmas Eve 2014 marks the 100th anniversary of the unofficial Christmas Truces of 1914. Although they have acquired a mythic quality, the fact that the truces actually occurred is attested to by numerous written records of the time, not least the diaries and letters home of those who participated. The truces commonly began with German soldiers and officers putting up Christmas trees, shouting or writing Christmas greetings, and singing songs recognisable to their British counterparts such as *Stille Nacht*. From these beginnings, troops met in no-man's land to bury their dead, exchange gifts and souvenirs, share festive food and drink, give cigarettes and cigars, sing and entertain each other, swap names and addresses, take photographs of each other, play football (according to some letters home), and conduct joint bilingual Christian services. These were not isolated incidents but were widespread right down the front from the North Sea to Switzerland.

Crucially, they were made possible by shared traditions of Christian celebration of the birth of 'The Prince of Peace,' whose death and resurrection brings humanity 'peace with God' (Romans 5:1), thus making 'one new humanity' out of former enemies (Ephesians 2:14). The truces were quashed by orders backed by threats, and by replacing troops with men 'untainted' by the truce, including soldiers from the wider Empire who didn't share the tradition of celebrating Christmas.

Although the most famous, the Christmas truces weren't isolated incidents. They followed weeks of unofficial fraternization by soldiers who discovered that, rather than being monsters, the other side were men like themselves with a preference for staying alive rather than dying. Common humanity oftentimes broke through the propaganda images perpetrated by both sides. Throughout the entire war

many combatants managed, through the so-called 'live-and-let-live' system, to reduce discomfort and risk of death by complicated local truces and tacit understandings that enraged the high commands on both sides. Nonetheless the truces are a key moment in the history of the period that reopened the possibility of a Europe based on peace and solidarity rather than imperial violence and nationalism.

We do not claim that the truces authentically represent the soldiers' or churches' opinion at that time about the war. Many men felt the war was just and was their duty. Christian churches in combatant nations were, to our shame, often vocal cheerleaders for this war – a fact that turned many combatants against the church.

Nonetheless we argue that the impromptu Christmas worship services held in no-man's land offer a

glimpse of the church as it is meant to be, a new nation of peacemakers uniting former enemies in love and friendship as they celebrate the coming to Earth of the Prince of Peace. It reminds us of Isaiah's prophetic vision of the Gospel age that God, 'will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore' (Isaiah 2:4). Citing this in his famous mid second-century defence of the Christian faith, Justin Martyr saw the formation of the church out of former enemies as a fulfilment of that prophecy. He said that Christians who once were:

filled with war, and mutual slaughter, and every wickedness, have each through the whole earth changed our warlike weapons – our swords into plowshares and our spears into implements of tillage – and we cultivate piety, righteousness, philanthropy, faith and hope, which we have from the Father himself through him who was crucified.



The fragile Christmas Truces can help us to tell a story of what the 'Gospel of peace' does, and illustrate that the Kingdom of God pays no heed to national divisions. They can be interpreted as a glimpse into the future, when the Christ child born as a baby in Bethlehem returns at the end of the age and makes an end of war forever. In short, they can help us tell the Christian story, rather than the stories of Britain and Germany. The purpose of this pack is simply to help church leaders – or those organising carol services during this period – to do that.



THE MARTIN LUTHER KING PEACE COMMITTEE

These resources were put together by Andii Bowsher on behalf of and with the help and encouragement of the Northumbria and Newcastle Universities Martin Luther King Peace Committee, of which he is co-convenor. Rev. Dr King came to Tyneside in 1967 to receive an honorary degree. The Committee commemorates his visit and exists to 'build cultures of peace' by drawing on his example of pursuing justice through non-violent enemy love.

What does this have to do with World War I? King's distinctive Christian philosophy of nonviolent resistance was decisively influenced by the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FoR). The FoR grew out of a pact made at the outbreak of the war in August 1914 by Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze (from Germany) and Henry Hodgkin (from Britain), who were attending an international meeting of Christian leaders in Germany. As they said goodbye on the platform of Cologne railway station, they pledged, "We are one in Christ and can never be at war."

King himself had little to say about World War I in particular. However for him humans were 'caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny', and so the campaign for justice and peace in the USA was organically linked to the campaign for justice and peace everywhere. King believed that the church should be known as a champion of justice and peace through nonviolent enemy love. However as he acknowledged with sadness shortly before his murder in preaching 'A Christmas Sermon on Peace':





“In a world gone mad with arms build-ups, chauvinistic passions, and imperialistic exploitation, the church has either endorsed these activities or remained appallingly silent.

During the last two world wars, national churches even functioned as the ready lackeys of the state, sprinkling holy water upon the battleships and joining the mighty armies in singing, ‘Praise the Lord, and pass the ammunition.’”

King’s concern was that the church should tell the gospel story rather than telling the nationalistic stories of whichever belligerent nation it happened to find itself in – and that this story would change the world. During the December 1914 truces, the celebration of the birth of the Prince of Peace occasioned an extraordinary moment whereby men stopped fighting for their nations and gathered in the name of a much older story. Those extraordinary events can help us re-tell the Christian story today.

Typographic conventions:

Emboldened words are to be said together.

Words in *black italics* are explanatory or suggesting usages.

ABOUT THESE RESOURCES

This pack contains four types of resources, all linking Christmas today with the extraordinary Christmas Truces of 1914.

Part 1 is a traditional carol service to be used over Christmas during the World War 1 centennial commemorations. It weaves the story of the 1914 Christmas in no-man's land into the Biblical story of the first Christmas.

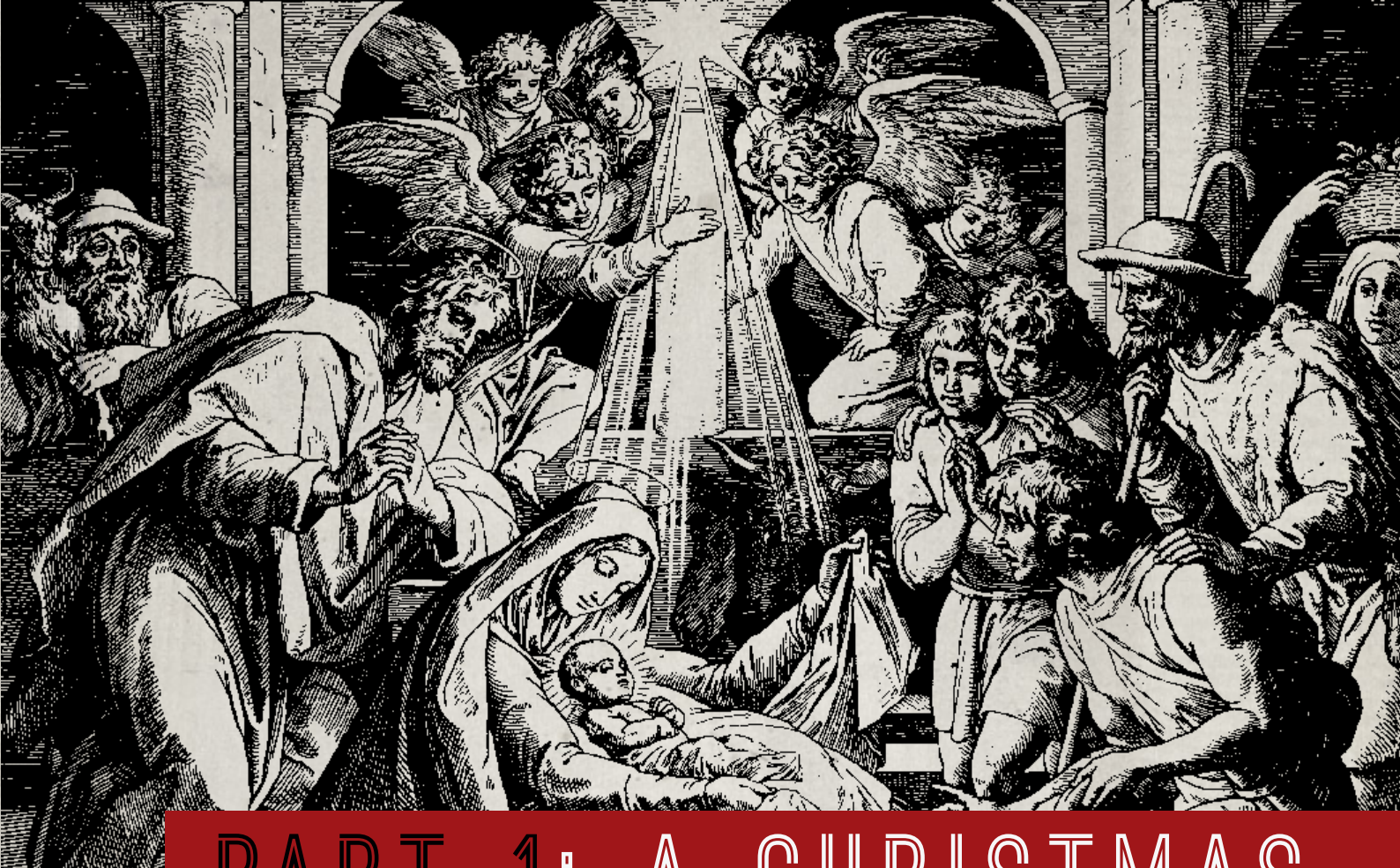
Part 2 sets out material for a range of services that use the December 1914 truces to explore Christian ideas of peace in a violent world. They could be used at any time during the World War 1 centennial commemorations, or indeed beyond them. The prayers, reflections and ideas for corporate actions in this booklet are intended either to be used 'off the peg' or to be adapted for local usage. Whilst intended primarily for a formal church service, they could be readily adapted for more informal small groups.

Part 3 provides sample carol, communion and preaching services using the material provided in Part 2.

Part 4 is a Sunday School session with a range of alternative activities. Based around the memory verse of Galatians 3:28, it uses the Christmas Truces to teach the idea that being a Christian is more important than our nationality.

In addition to the pdf resource pack, a text version of these resources can be freely downloaded and edited at will from our website – www.mlkpc.org. The website also contains a Christmas Truces Sunday School PowerPoint slideshow (for use in Part 3 and for school assemblies) and the full texts of all liturgies, prayers and poems contained in this pack.





PART 1: A CHRISTMAS TRUCE-THEMED CAROL SERVICE

This is envisaged as a fairly traditional Carol Service with readings and carols interspersed. For the most part it does not propose specific carols or other music except for *Silent Night* which is suggested early on in the service to recall the fact that in many places it played an important part in creating the conditions for the truces to happen. As well as Christmas story Bible passages, the service suggests readings of extracts from first hand soldiers' accounts of the truces. These are arranged in such a way as to tell the story of the start, conduct and end of the truces through the course of the service. This service is likely to take between 70 and 90 minutes. There is a shorter carol service outline in Part 3 of this pack.



Carol I

Procession: white flags could be paraded in at the start of the service and placed prominently to preside over the service. It would be best to explain them as flags of truce rather than surrender; a sign that this service is one of peace. National flags of Britain, (Imperial) Germany and France could also be used. It is recommended that should national flags be used they are all used together, rather than just one, for example, the British flag/s, so as not to promote one nation over another.

Opening Prayer, Welcome and Soldier's Recollection

Year by year we gather for the remembrance of Christ's birth. When we do, we recall together his title as Prince of Peace, we take to heart the angels' song of 'Peace on Earth and goodwill to all people' and we remind ourselves of the mission of the Messiah to 'guide our feet into the way of peace'.

This year we also remember that one hundred years ago our nations began a war so terrible that it was called the War to End all Wars. Tonight we also remember that one hundred Christmases ago, in no-man's land on the western front, peace broke out spontaneously. They sang songs of Christ's birth and held bilingual worship services to hail his Lordship. Enemies briefly became friends, festive gifts were given, football matches were played, and addresses were swapped with promises to write after the war. These truces are not myths, and nor were they isolated events: they followed weeks of fraternization, and are well-attested by first-hand accounts and occurred right down the Western front from the North Sea to Switzerland. Though the truces were short and broken by those in command, they remain a hopeful reminder that we human beings are not born to war and that the Prince of Peace still works in this world.

So, in a few moments of quiet now, pray with us for the peace of the world, for fairness and justice; that wars may cease. *[A time of quiet recollection and prayer may be kept.]*

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.

Before singing our first carol, we listen to the first-hand account of the beginning of the truces as recorded by Sergeant Frank Sumter, London Rifle Brigade:

"After the 19th December attack, we were back in the same trenches when Christmas Day came along. It was a terrible winter, everything was covered in snow, everything was white. The devastated landscape looked terrible in its true colours - clay and mud and broken brick - but when it was covered in snow it was beautiful. Then we heard the Germans singing 'Silent night, Holy night', and they put up a notice saying 'Merry Christmas', and so we put one up too.

While they were singing our boys said, 'Let's join in,' so we joined in and when we started singing, they stopped. And when we stopped, they started again. So we were easing the way. Then one German took a chance and jumped up on top of the trench and shouted out, 'Happy Christmas, Tommy!' So of course our boys said, 'If he can do it, we can do it,' and we all jumped up. A sergeant-major shouted 'Get down!' But we said, 'Shut up Sergeant, it's Christmas time!' And we all went forward to the barbed wire."

Carol 2

Many of the accounts of the Christmas Truces mention hearing singing, and *Stille Nacht* is one of the songs mentioned, it being familiar to both German and British troops. The basic idea here is to sing some, at least, of the carol in German (see Appendix I). This might be done by singing one of the verses in German all together (perhaps a bit of help with pronunciation might be needed) or to invite those who can read German to sing one or more verses in German. It might be effective to light the tree lights as this is sung, to remind us that in many places the truces began with the singing of *Silent Night* and the lighting of candles on little Christmas trees.

Reading 1: Isaiah 9: 2-7 The Prophet foretells the coming of the Saviour.

Soldier's account: Company-Sergeant Major Frank Naden of the 6th Cheshire Territorials:

"On Christmas Eve as each fireball went up from the German lines our men shouted 'Hurrah' and 'Let's have another'. They also sang 'Christians Awake' and other Christmas hymns. On Christmas Day one of the Germans came out of the trenches and held his hands up. Our fellows immediately got out of theirs, and we met in the middle, and for the rest of the day we fraternised, exchanging food, cigarettes and souvenirs. The Germans gave us some of their sausages, and we gave them some of our stuff. The Scotsmen started the bagpipes and we had a rare old jollification, which included football in which the Germans took part. The Germans expressed themselves as being tired of the war and wished it was over."

Carol 3

Reading 2: Isaiah 11: 1-9 The Prophet foretells the peace that Christ will bring.

Soldier's account: a soldier from Gateshead wrote:

"One [German soldier] has given me his address to write to him after the war. They were quite a decent lot of fellows I can tell you. I know this seems an unbelievable story but it is fact. I am sure if it was left to the men there would be no war."

Carol 4

Reading 3: Luke 1:26-35; 38 The Angel Gabriel visits Mary

Soldiers' account: 19 year-old Arthur Pelham-Burn, a lieutenant in the 6th Gordons who was planning to study to become a church minister after the war, took part in a joint service on Christmas Eve, and wrote home that:

"The mass burial of the dead was awful, too awful to describe so I won't attempt it, but the joint burial service was most wonderful. Chaplain Adams arranged the prayers and the twenty-third psalm etc... and an interpreter wrote them out in German. They were read first by our Padre and then in German by a boy who was studying for the ministry. It was an extraordinary and most wonderful sight. The Germans formed up on one side, the English on the other, the officers standing in front, every head bared. Yes, I think it was a sight one will never see again."

Prayers

Not all carol services include prayers, but for those that do there is a form of prayer given below. You might like to consider other ideas alongside these prayers. For example, placing decorations on the tree representing prayers, lighting candles with prayers (perhaps in front of a nativity scene), or something like placing flowers (poppies?) in the barrels of symbolic rifles.

At the end of each section, it may be appropriate to use a brief response such as:

*"Lord, in your mercy; **Hear our prayer**"*

Jesus said: 'Blessed are the peacemakers'. As we remember the Christmas Truces of 1914, let us ask God to bless all those who

work to bring peace in our world and to give that gift of peace wherever it is lacking in the world.

Let us pray for ourselves. Give us the imagination, the words and the gestures which can bring peace where there is none, even in our own families and school.

We ask for making friends where there is conflict; for peace where there is fighting. We remember today especially [*name situations of oppression or violence in the news at the moment ...*]

We bring to mind all who work for peace and justice and take risks for peace. We ask God's blessing today especially on the work of peacemakers working in places of danger. May they have good ideas, courage, and success in their efforts to help people understand one another and make a way together without resorting to war.

The Lord's Prayer may be said in English, French and German (see Appendix I). It would be advisable to find someone who speaks French and German to lead those prayers.

Final Prayer: Lead us, Father, to the Great Feast of your Kingdom and help us to share that joy with all who are in need. Hear these, our prayers, which we make through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Choir: *Anthem, motet or other item*

Reading 4: Luke 2:1, 3-7 The story of the birth of Jesus

Soldier's account: Corporal Robert Renton, Seaforth Highlanders, in a letter to his parents:

"I never thought we would spend Christmas Day the way we did. On Christmas Eve, the Germans were in front of us started singing what appeared to be hymns. We were shouting out for encores - their trenches are only about 150 yards in front of us. They kept the singing up all night. On Christmas Day some of them started to shout across to us to come over for a drink. It started with one or two going over halfway and meeting the Germans between the two lines of trenches. Then it got that there was a big crowd of Germans and British all standing together shaking hands and wishing each other a merry Christmas. They were giving us cigars and cheroots in exchange for cigarettes, and some of them had bottles of whisky. They seemed to be a decent crowd, those in front of us. They were all fairly well dressed and the majority could speak broken English. Some of them could speak it as well as I can myself. They said they were not going to fire for three days. They kept their word too."

Sermon/message

Carol 5

Reading 5: Luke 2:8-16 The shepherds go to the manger

A Poem: We Interrupt This War

See Appendix IV for the modified text of the poem 'We Interrupt This War' by Cappy Hall Rearick. This reading could be very effective as a dramatized reading at this point.

Soldier's account: Sergeant George Ashurst, 2nd Battalion, Lancashire Fusiliers, wrote:

"Eventually, we got orders to come back down into the trench, 'Get back in your trenches, every man!' The order came round by word of mouth down each trench. Some people took no notice. .. Anyway, the generals behind must have seen it and got a bit suspicious, so they gave orders for a battery of guns behind us to open fire and a machine-gun to open out, and officers to fire their revolvers at the Jerries. That started the war again."

Soldier's account: Lance-Corporal George Dyce, who participated in the truces:

"[The Germans] don't want to fight any more than we do; they are as fed up of this game as we are fit to be. They told us that they would not shoot if we did not, so we have had a holiday for the last two days we were in the trenches... I thought peace was proclaimed, but no such luck."

Reading 6: Matthew 2:1-12 The wise men are led to Jesus.

Blessing and dismissal

Carol 6

Recessional: the flags could be taken out if they were brought in at the start.



PART 2: RESOURCES TO BUILD YOUR OWN CHRISTMAS TRUCE-THEMED SERVICES

HOW TO USE THESE RESOURCES

This part of the pack provides liturgical resources for a range of services that use the December 1914 truces to explore Christian ideas of peace in a violent world. The prayers, reflections and ideas for corporate actions in this booklet are intended either to be used ‘off the peg’ or to be adapted for local usage. Whilst intended primarily for a formal church service, they could be readily adapted for more informal small groups. It is envisaged that in many cases these materials may be used with already-established formats, and so only one or two items may be used and they may need to be adjusted to be in-keeping with the rest of the occasion.

Although these resources are designed immediately to mark the centenary of the Christmas Truces, they could be readily adapted for use at other anniversaries between 2014 and 2017. Some of these resources can be adapted for use at other commemorative events where peace-making is a focus. Also, some may be helpful in planning Remembrance services, Week of Prayer for Christian Unity etc...

For those in extempore prayer traditions or writing their own, note that this pack is structured around common elements of a Christian service: welcome/gathering, intercessions, confession, reflection/sermon, symbolic actions, and endings. Each section begins with guidance notes and pointers to relevant sections of scripture, and then moves to written prayers that can be used in full. Alternatively, prayer can be extemporaneous combined with the reading of scripture. To assist that second approach, as well as the guidance notes we have indicated the scriptural references throughout the written prayers.

This structure recognises that some traditions structure services around written liturgy, while others use it minimally or barely at all. The appendices give more ideas for elements within the service or as starting points for further research. Part 3 provides some sample orders of service to give a sense of how the materials might be used.



OPENING WORDS

The purpose of this section is to call the congregation to worship by setting out the theme of the gathering. We suggest that the bidding should:

- Remind people why they are here – to worship ‘the God of peace’ (Hebrews 13:20).
- Inform them of the service’s theme, from scripture.
- Briefly state what happened during the 1914 Christmas Truces, and tell the congregation that these will be remembered and be used to help us think about Christmas/the gospel.

A Bidding prayer

Sisters and brothers, year by year we gather for the remembrance of Christ’s birth. We recall together his title as Prince of Peace, the angels’ song of ‘Peace on earth and goodwill to all people’ and the mission of the Messiah to ‘guide our feet into the way of peace’. This year we also remember that one hundred years ago our nations prosecuted warfare so terrible that it was called the War to End all Wars. Tonight we also remember that one hundred Christmases ago in Flanders Fields peace broke out spontaneously. With customs and songs of Christ’s birth, enemies crossed into friendship and exchanged gifts. Though their truces were short-lived and broken by those in command, they remain a hopeful reminder that humans are not born to war and that the Prince of Peace still works in this world by the Spirit of holiness.

So, pray with us for the peace of the world, upheld by justice; that wars may cease and negotiation replace fighting to resolve conflicts. *[A time of quiet recollection and prayer may be kept]*

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.

Andii Bowsher (cc, 2014)

An opening responsory¹

Tidings of great joy we bring

To us a child is born

To us a Son is given

And the government will be upon his shoulders

And his name will be Wonderful Counsellor

The Prince of Peace

Andii Bowsher (cc, 2014) referencing Isaiah 9:6

Opening responsory (2)

In the tender compassion of our God

The Dawn from on High will break upon us

He will give to us knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of all our sins:

He will guide our feet into the way of peace.

Glory to God in the highest:

And peace to his people on Earth.

Andii Bowsher (cc, 2014) referencing Luke 1 & 2

Opening responsory (3)

The desert will rejoice with singing

And the wilderness bloom with flowers.

All people will see God’s splendour

And behold the Lord’s greatness and power.

Tell everyone who is anxious:

Be strong and don’t be afraid

The blind will see

The deaf will hear

The lame will leap and dance

Those unable to speak will shout

They will turn their swords into ploughs

And convert their spears into pruning hooks

The nations will live in peace

They will train for war no more

This is God’s promise

God’s word will be fulfilled

Adapted from Iona Community Worship Book, p40f referencing Isaiah 2:4; 35:1-7;



PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING

In some services, these materials might be well used to start a time of prayer before using the intercessory prayers in Section 3 below. In rewriting or writing your own, we encourage you to try to express or bear in mind:

- That God is the Author of peace in Christ.
- The Biblical witness to peace and its expression in the traditions of Christmas.
- The part played by Christmas traditions in enabling peaceful gestures between combatants.

A thanksgiving that may preface petitionary prayers

We give thanks for shared understandings which can support our discovery of the humanity we share with Jesus and with our neighbours.

We give thanks for Jesus’ call to peace which, though often muted or smothered, yet shines through the stories and customs of Christmas.

We give thanks for the courage of those who dare to act peacefully in conflict and who risk friendship in the face of enmity.

We give thanks for the Prince of Peace, born to reconcile us to God and to the whole of humanity.

A responsive prayer of praise

As we contemplate the first Christmas of the First World War, we find encouragement and hope and give thanks:

For the message of Christmas proclaiming ‘peace on earth and goodwill’ to all, we give thanks O God

And praise your holy name.

For the words of the prophets fulfilled in Christ, inspiring us to dream and work for justice, plenty and peace,

we give thanks O God

And praise your holy name.

For the gospel which calls all of humanity and crosses national boundaries to draw us into one family in Christ, we give thanks O God

And praise your holy name.

For the courage of those who take risks for peace and reconciliation, we give thanks O God

And praise your holy name.

For times of celebration and togetherness and the will to welcome outsiders to join us, we give thanks O God

And praise your holy name.

A responsive thanksgiving

We find encouragement in the peace that broke out on the first Christmas of the First World War and give thanks for the hope it gives us.

Glory to God in the highest;

And peace to all upon earth.

We give thanks for the songs of this season, celebrating the peace of the Christ child; we find hope in that these songs gave soldiers a common language to risk peaceful gestures;

Glory to God in the highest;

And peace to all upon earth.

We express our enjoyment of the customs of giving and receiving gifts in recollection of the Gift of a Child; we are glad that such customs drew enemies together and made them friends;

Glory to God in the highest;

And peace to all upon earth.

For the sharing of food and the enjoyment of time out from the ordinary; we rejoice that combatants 100 years ago found comradeship in food and foolery and discovered a common humanity.

Glory to God in the highest;

And peace to all upon earth.



PETITIONARY / INTERCESSORY PRAYERS

In intercession we cry out to God for our world. Paul exhorted Timothy to pray 'for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives' (1 Timothy 2:2). John Stott comments on this passage that 'I sometimes wonder whether the comparatively slow progress towards peace and justice in the world ... is due more than anything else to the prayerlessness of the people of God'. During the intercessions we should try to reflect the following themes:

- *That God is the Almighty who 'makes wars to cease to the ends of the earth' (Psalm 46:9).*
- *Identifying with the pain and sorrow of those who suffer as a result of war.*

- *Making particular mention of situations affecting the congregation, whether locally, nationally or internationally.*

A form of prayer for intercessions

*At the end of each section, it may be appropriate to use a brief response such as "Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer**" or "In your tender mercy O God; **Guide our feet into the way of peace.**" (see Luke 1:78-9)*

As we consider Christmas Eve 1914 and contemplate soldiers laying down arms, meeting in no-man's land, exchanging gifts, playing games in defiance of orders and in recognition of common humanity, let us pray.

God, who reaches out to us even when we make ourselves your enemies, we give you thanks for shared understandings which can support our discovery of the humanity we share with Jesus and with others.

We give thanks for Jesus' call to peace which, though often muted or smothered, yet shines through the stories and customs of Christmas. We give thanks for the courage of those who dare to act peacefully in conflict and who risk friendship in the face of enmity.

Bless those who reach out to enemies: may their courage and hope be rewarded; may they be wise as serpents and gentle as doves in the cause of peace.

May those who question accepted truths open our hearts and minds to the realities propaganda hides from our eyes.

May those who exercise authority be strengthened to do right even when procedure or standing orders point another way.

We ask that those who exercise authority at a distance might listen to the experiences and concerns of those they command and be tender to them.

Andii Bowsher (cc, 2014)

Intercessions suitable for a Eucharist

In this centenary of WW1, may the Church be renewed in its service of the Gospel. May we be preachers of peace and effective signs of God's healing love in the world. Let us pray to the Lord: **Grant us your peace.**

For the peace of Jerusalem and for all the people of the Holy Land: that the wounds of hatred and division may be healed and that Jerusalem may be truly a 'City of Peace' for all.

Let us pray to the Lord: **Grant us your peace.**

For reconciliation where there is conflict; for peace where there is fighting. We remember today especially [*name a situation of oppression or violence in the news at the moment ...*]

Let us pray to the Lord: **Grant us your peace.**

For all who work for peace and justice; for all who live prophetically and take risks for peace. We ask God's blessing today especially on the work of Christian Peacemakers and those who work for peace from other convictions....

Let us pray to the Lord: **Grant us your peace.**

² Stott, John. 1996. *The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus, The Bible Speaks Today*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, p.62.

Let us commend to God's mercy all who are unwell (*especially*),
that they might be restored to health;
Let us pray to the Lord: **Grant us your peace.**

And we remember with thanks and penitence those who have died who were caught up in war and violent conflict and who share the faith of Christ ... May they be gathered, with people of every race, language and way of life, into the joy of God's Kingdom.
Let us pray to the Lord: **Grant us your peace.**

In a moment of silence, let us bring before God our own thirst for peace and hunger for justice ...

Final Prayer: Lead us, Father, to the Wedding Feast of your Kingdom and help us to share that joy with all who are in need. Hear these, our prayers, which we make through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Adapted from Pax Christi, Peace Sunday resources

A form for public intercessions

God we know your concern for the poor and marginalised, we stand with your concern for victims of oppression and of war and we call out to you for peace in our world.
Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, **help us to act for peace.**

We remember before you all affected by the arms trade worldwide. People in ... (*insert here current examples of conflict and of poor countries which give priority to arms spending*) ... and many other places where conflict has been prolonged and exacerbated by the flow of arms, or where money spent on arms is depriving people of their basic needs.
Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, **help us to act for peace.**

As a result of the use of arms, much is lost:
We hold before God those who have lost loved ones,
Who have lost limbs,
Who have lost sanity,
Who have lost homes,
Who have lost livelihoods,
Who have lost hope.
Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, **help us to act for peace.**

We pray for leaders and decision makers, that they might form and enact policies to make peace and strengthen human rights rather than continue war and oppression
Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, **help us to act for peace.**

We recall those involved in the trading of arms, asking that they may become conscious of the real consequences of their business. We pray for the conversion of hearts and minds; and for the conversion of the arms industries towards productive purposes.
Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, **help us to act for peace.**

We pray for ourselves. Give us courage to speak out against the export of death. Give us the strength to work for an end to the arms trade. Give us the resolve to withdraw our financial support, even at cost to ourselves. We offer these prayers in the name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace.
Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, **help us to act for peace.**
Based on Holy Ground, p174, amended

Intercession reflecting on the Christmas Truces

At the end of each section, it may be appropriate to use a brief response such as :

*"Lord, in your mercy; **Hear our prayer**"*

Peace-making God, who in Christ reconciles enemies and calls us friends, we give thanks that Christian symbolism and understandings were at the heart of the Christmas Truces. We offer you our hope that in our day, Christ-born hopes and dreams of love, joy and peace may resource the imaginations of all people of good will and challenge towards change those whose wills are captive to divisive and short-sighted forces. Give us courage and wisdom to offer our best hopes and insights for the healing of the nations and multiply our offerings into just, merciful and sharing communities.

We celebrate the courage of those who put aside the propaganda of hostility and dehumanisation at the start of the Christmas Truces (in Flanders trenches in 1914). We rejoice that they found it possible to celebrate with so-called 'enemies' the things they had in common.

So we call to mind those who today take courageous actions to reach beyond hatreds and suspicion to connect with common humanity and make common cause: bless their efforts to reach out with the fruit of conviviality, understanding and harmony. Give them wisdom to direct their efforts well and refresh them when their work for peace overwhelms them.

Mindful that land of Flanders was savaged and torn apart by munitions, movement, and machinery; we remember with thanks all who protect, restore and safeguard our environment: microbes and fungi, plants and animals, people who care for nature and nurture life. We ask for their well-being to grow and develop and for their efforts for the common good of creation to be fruitful and multiply.

We give thanks for the work of international agencies working for peace and the things that make for peace. We ask for them to be well-resourced, well-informed and well-led so that their deliberations and actions may bring about reconciliation, harmony and justice.

We remember before you:
Families and single people who have been driven from their homes
Those separated from loved-ones.
Refugees, conscripts or press-ganged people caught up in war unwillingly.
Victims of terrorism and all in fear of violence against civilians.
The traumatised and those physically maimed by war, violence or tyranny.
Give them peace, bring them healing and restoration.

Andii Bowsher (cc, 2014)

A responsory for peace-making

God may we be instruments of your peace today.
In a world divided by war and strife
May we be reconcilers
In a world of hurt and pain
May we be those who care for enemies
In a world that kills and maims

May we be those who heal and restore

Adapted from Christine Sine, <<http://mike-collins.blogspot.co.uk/2007/06/liturgy-for-peace.html>>

A short prayer for the common life of the world

God of all people, draw us to the light and be our guide. May we be a sign to the world of unity in diversity. In every part of our common life, give us clear vision and an understanding of what is right. Inspire in us true values, so that the wealth of work of each land may be available to all and for the exploitation of none.

Ray Simpson

A short prayer recognising those in the armed forces

We remember the courage, devotion to duty, and the self-sacrifice of those in the armed forces of both nations, our friends and those who were our enemies.

May we remember them in peace and honour their service.

James Breslin, developed from the Church of Scotland Remembrance Sunday Service.

Short responses for peace

Make your ways known on earth, O Lord,

Let all nations acknowledge your saving power

Let the earth be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea

establish and uphold peace with justice and righteousness

O God, save the nations of the world

And teach their counsellors wisdom

With righteousness, judge the needy,

with justice give decisions for the poor of the earth.

Give us peace in our time, O God,

For you alone make us dwell in safety

Make our hearts clean O Lord,

And renew a right spirit within us.

Reworked by Andii Bowsher from Book of Common Prayer and Common Worship



PENITENTIAL/CONFESSION

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones preached a series of sermons in Westminster Chapel at the outbreak of World War 2 entitled, 'Why does God allow war?' 'The Bible does not isolate war,' he writes, 'as if it were something separate and unique and quite apart, as we tend to do in our thinking. It is but one of the manifestations of sin, one of the consequences of sin.' And the gospel is its remedy, as it is the remedy of all sin. As we prepare to lead confession, in this context we aim to:

- Recognise that war is sin – disobedience to God, and the destruction of people made in his image (James 4:1-3; Genesis 4:1-15).
- Lament over the devastation that occurs in war (Jeremiah 4:11-21).
- Recognise that we are all caught up in the things that make for war and are all affected by it.
- Proclaim that in 'the gospel of peace' (Ephesians 6:15) we have forgiveness of this and every sin, and are called to repentance.

Kyrie⁴ confession for Peace Sunday

Let us ask the Lord to take from our hearts and from our community every division which is an obstacle to the peace Christ brings, and to make us worthy of our calling as brothers and sisters of the Lord.

Lord Jesus, you are our Passover and our lasting Peace.

Lord have mercy: **Lord have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, you have reconciled us to the Father and you call us to be ambassadors of reconciliation.

Christ have mercy: **Christ have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you are the Master of the Wedding Feast. You lead us to the joy of God's Kingdom.

Lord have mercy: **Lord have mercy.**

Pax Christi, for Peace Sunday

Kyrie confession of the roots of war

We confess that there have been times when we have assumed that you are on our side rather than learned to be on your side.

Lord have Mercy: **Lord have mercy**

We confess that we have acted ungraciously and let our differences blind us to our common humanity.

Christ have Mercy: **Christ have mercy**

We confess that approval, procedures and orders have been more important to us than doing right.

Lord have Mercy: **Lord have mercy**

Penitence in the face of industries of war

As we reflect on the history of World War 1 we see industrial scale warfare and the increasing machinery of war and discover a reflection of our own collusion or co-option into global unrest.

God of peace, for choosing to put our trust in weapons of war:

We come before you in sorrow and confession.

⁴ Kyrie confessions are a traditional form of confessing sin liturgically using the Greek phrase 'Kyrie eleison' or its translation 'Lord have mercy' as a response. It is usually a threefold refrain as seen here.

God of life, for our silent complicity with the industries of death:

We come before you in sorrow and confession.

God of hope, for our doubt, despair and acquiescence in the face of evil:

We come before you in sorrow and confession.

God of courage, for our fear to speak out or to take bold action

We come before you in sorrow and confession.

p172, Holy Ground, adapted

Repentance for complicity in the roots of war

When in the imagination of our hearts, we have thought of others as less than bearers of the image of God, Christ who became like us to overcome enmity...

Be gracious to us

Lord have mercy

When we have desired the grace to allow us to change but denied it in others, Christ, who came to set prisoners free...

Be gracious to us

Lord have mercy

When we have shied away from the opportunities to make new starts and create just and peaceful futures, Christ who embodies the peace of God...

Be gracious to us

Lord have mercy

Andii Bowsher (cc, 2014)

An act of repentance reflecting on the Nativity

Christ was born amongst the disregarded; where we have regarded those who differ from us as less than ourselves.

Lord change us

And we shall be changed

Christ was born as one of us; where we have allowed the prejudices of class, race, nationality or gender to count more than God-given common humanity,

Lord change us

And we shall be changed

Christ was born of a conquered people; where we have taken pride in conquest and drawn profit from oppression,

Lord change us

And we shall be changed

Andii Bowsher (cc, 2014)

An act of repentant rededication

Let us commit ourselves to work towards a world where prejudice, hate and fear shall be no more and God will wipe away every tear.

Let us shun false pride and narrow interests, honour one another and seek the common good.

We commit ourselves to God:

God's love is the source of all life

and the deepest desire of our lives.

**God's love gained a human face in Jesus born of Mary,
and was crucified by the same enslaving evil crouching in wait for each of us.**

**God's love offers glorious freedom to us defeating even death.
Though sometimes doubting and fearful,
yet in God we keep trust.**

In Christ's name

we give ourselves afresh to the service of others:

we seek justice and peace;

we seek the wellbeing of the earth;

we seek the common wealth of God's goodness towards us.

We breathe in the freedom of God's forgiveness.

We share the power of the Loving Spirit in the company of all faithful.

We become anew the Church for God's glory and earth's well-being.

cf Iona CWB, p42. Amended



REFLECTIONS/SERMON

It's probably best to steer clear of too much historical and political analysis of WW1, and of the merits of just war theory vs pacifism etc. We would commend a central focus on the coming of the Prince of Peace and the way that the events of the Christmas Truces can be seen hopefully in this light. This can be done through various passages of scripture, and illustrated with poems, stories, readings from church history and through the evocative and powerful diaries, letters and prayers of those who took part in the truces which may or may not have been used in the service so far. These reflections should:

- *Expound a Christian view of war as contrary to God's good purposes for humanity.*
- *Show how the birth of Christ, and his teaching, death, resurrection and future return, are God's response to war.*
- *Use the Christmas Truces as illustration.*

Here are some Scriptures which are particularly appropriate to use in services where the Christmas Truces are being recalled. These are not to exclude other passages, but merely to highlight ones that are helpful in this respect.

Psalms 34:11-18 "seek peace and pursue it", "The LORD is close to the broken-hearted"

Isaiah 9:2-7 Isaiah envisions the Messianic Kingdom in peaceful terms

Isaiah 11:1-2 & 6-9 A vision of the peaceable Messianic age with enmities reconciled and 'a little child shall lead them'

Micah 5:2-5 The one mentioning Bethlehem, the final phrase is "he shall be the one of peace"

Luke 1:67-79 Zechariah prophecies over the infant John the Baptist at the end of which the promise is to lead us into the paths of peace

Luke 2:8-14 Angels announce the birth to shepherds with the words "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours" (you may wish to include some of the verses either side of this passage)

Romans 12:12-21 ending with "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good"

Revelation 7:9-17 The saints are delivered from the raging war of the beast, 'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes'



ACTIONS, RITUALS AND CEREMONIAL

These symbolic actions visualise the message of the truces. It would be inadvisable to have too many symbolic actions in the service. Better to work with one or two which are linked to liturgical/worship 'moments' of the service. Simplicity is generally good as is keeping explanation to a minimum, allowing the symbolic items and actions to speak for themselves as much as possible. Where reasonable and without complication, such actions can be helpfully incorporated into or reference existing activities that a congregation already uses, for example, sharing the peace, parading flags, taking an offering, moving forward for communion or responding to a message. It should be recalled, too, that saying the Lord's Prayer in German or French (see Appendix I) is also a symbolic action. Some of these ideas could be adapted for use in Sunday School or for a talk aimed at children in the main service.

Sharing the Peace:

In a church building with aisles, encourage the congregation to share across the separating spaces and meet in the aisle(s). Perhaps using white flags of truce (see below) to be held by or with whoever introduces the act of sharing the peace.

Some words to introduce the peace:

We meet under the Truce of God who in Christ has set aside the earthly divisions of nation and race and calls us to be blessed as peacemakers.

The Peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

White flag/s

In conventions of warfare, the white flag is used not only to surrender, but alternatively to signal a desire for a truce. It could be used to signal sharing 'the Peace' (see 'Sharing the Peace' section above).

This could be linked to the German imperial flag as well as UK's (and perhaps some other flags of WW1 participants?) These could be laid down (on the communion table?) towards the start of a service and a white flag raised from the spot where they are laid to 'preside' over the service. Perhaps the white flag could have a simple Christian symbol on it, for example, the Chi-Rho. This kind of action could be linked with a confession and absolution.

The flag could be raised in association with readings from diaries/memoires, perhaps placing the flag centrally in the congregational space.

Rifles or other guns

These could be models or drawn/printed on card or paper. Symbolically these could be broken at an appropriate point

in the service or laid down. It might be appropriate to 'lay down arms' at the start of a service, and perhaps to break them later on. Such actions could accompany acts of penitence, intercession or a sharing of the peace.

It may be possible for the illusion to be contrived of changing gun into gardening tool or printed/drawn ploughs and pruning hooks. For example, gun models could be laid down and covered (perhaps with a white sheet or flag) towards the start of the service, and later apparently retrieved but in the form of gardening tools. This could be linked to words of commitment to peace-making.

Christmas trees

Far from being merely Pagan symbols, the Christmas tree harks back to St. Boniface whom it is thought was born in Crediton in Devon in the seventh century and became an apostle/missionary to the German Tribes, bringing Christianity to what we now know as Holland and northern Germany where he is honoured to this day. The Christmas tree commemorates a story of Boniface's challenge to Thor using a tree sacred to those who honoured the Teutonic gods in which he won the symbolic contest. The tree then became a symbol of God's being greater than the old (and warlike) gods. Boniface thus unites England and Germany via the Christian gospel. The role that Christmas trees played in the Christmas Truces - where they were commonly used to signal their beginning - seems poignant in the light of this story. The modern tradition of a Christmas tree came to England from Germany in the nineteenth century. And so to make use of a Christmas tree within the service, drawing attention perhaps to its ancient links binding England and Germany and also to the part played by Christmas trees in starting the Christmas Truces, would be fitting.

Perhaps reading some of the diary excerpts around the tree and placing tree decorations on it to represent the stories told might be an appropriate action. This could be combined with placing decorations representing biblical readings and/or prayers.

Candles

The custom of the time was to place candles on the branches of fir trees, the precursors of electrical Christmas tree lights. Accounts from Christmas Eve 1914 show that the lighting of such lights and the raising of the trees above the trenches in many places began the processes that led to men leaving their trenches to meet in no-man's land. In some cases the informal truce begun this way lasted until companies were changed, sometimes many months later.

Using suitable holders, candles could be placed on a Christmas tree to accompany intercessions or readings. Alternatively, the lights could be activated singly (twisting bulbs fully into their sockets -make sure this is done safely) or uncovering LED lights on which Blu Tack or similar has been placed.

Always experiment beforehand to make sure that things work as you think they should.

Poppy seeds

Given the well-known symbolism of poppies for Remembrance, commemorating the armistice that ended WW1, the use of poppy seeds to commemorate this first sign of peace and reconciliation in WW1 might be apt.



Of course, poppy seeds are very small and so careful handling and thought is needed and possibly experimentation before any activity is tried in a service to make sure things work as you'd hope and expect. Poppy seeds are often sold in the spices section of supermarkets as well as in garden centres and the like.

Using liquid glue or glue sticks, brief prayers or words for peace could be written and then poppy seeds poured onto them, the glue adhering to the letters. Perhaps this could be done on or in Christmas cards which could then be placed in a suitable place in the building - either by service leaders or servers or directly by congregants themselves. A variant on this would be to write in pencil or ink a prayer but to put a poppy seed 'amen' on the card.

A map of the world

A map of the world could be placed before or under a Christ-child crib or nativity scene. Invite people to place tea lights on places of conflict before the Prince of Peace. It may be helpful if each names the situation they are placing their candle on.

Poppies: white and red.

Many churches will have Remembrance Day wreaths or similar still around. If local sensitivities will bear it, perhaps these could be supplemented by white poppies in remembrance of the bravery of those who created the Christmas Truces by their actions in 1914. If white poppies seem too provocative in the local context, then perhaps a further red-poppy display could be added in recollection of the truces and the bravery needed to create it.

Another possibility is to have a number of white and/or red tissue-paper (or similar) petals, reminiscent of poppy petals. These could be strewn or showered down as an act of remembrance of the Christmas Truces. Prayers could be written on them (check they are strong enough to be able to withstand being written on), collected on a plate or in a basket and strewn in an appropriate spot at an appropriate time.

Toy soldiers

The main idea here is to have some toy plastic figures of soldiers carrying guns and rifles, enough for everyone who wants to participate.

The main activity would be to cut (try the scissors beforehand to make sure they will work) the guns from the hands of the soldiers. Do remember to make proper arrangements for supervision if children are involved.

This could be done in conjunction with an act of penitence; the disposal of the guns could be a symbolic act of confession and repentance.



ENDINGS

The congregation is sent out to continue the work and worship of God in the world. The dismissal should:

- *Emphasise that the 'God of Peace' sends us out and equips us (Hebrews 13:20-21)*
- *Revise the themes of the service: war as a consequence and manifestation of sin, and its remedy in the birth of the Prince of Peace, as illustrated by the Christmas Truces*

Liturgical prayers

Go forth into the world in peace, be of good courage, hold fast that which is good, render to no one evil for evil, strengthen the fainthearted, support the weak, help the afflicted, honour all people, love and serve the Lord rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you always.

Amen.

A Blessing

May the peace the angels sang of fill your hearts and strengthen you as peacemakers so that God's glory may be known in the courage and imagination you show to reach out to strangers and those labelled as enemies and call them friends. And God who calls us to live in peace with one another, the harmonious Trinity; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless you and those whose lives your lives touch with the joy and peace of Christmas, now and always. Amen.

Andii Bowsher (cc, 2014)

A contemporary blessing on peacemaking

(It may be helpful to use two or more voices for this reading)

Blessed are you peacemakers
who say no to war as a means to peace.
Blessed are you peacemakers
who are committed to disarm weapons of mass destruction.
Blessed are you peacemakers
who wage peace at heroic personal cost.
Blessed are you peacemakers
who challenge and confront judges, courts and prisons.
Blessed are you peacemakers
who challenge and confront terrorists and gangs.
Blessed are you peacemakers
who help those who are hurting.
Blessed are you peacemakers
who befriend perfect strangers.
Blessed are you peacemakers
who open doors for acting justly,
loving tenderly and walking humbly with God
and all people of good will.
Blessed are you peacemakers
who offer hope and healing.

Blessed are you peacemakers
 who care and comfort.
 Blessed are you peacemakers
 who help find answers.
 Blessed are you peacemakers
 who welcome, encourage and inspire.
 Blessed are you peacemakers
 who delight in creation, art and
 creativity.
 Blessed are you peacemakers
 who provide stability not insanity.
 Blessed are you peacemakers
 who help restore faith, hope and love.
 Blessed are you peacemakers
 who see the good image of God in others.
 Blessed are you peacemakers
 who never give up.
 Blessed are you peacemakers
 who give and give and give.

Paul Milanowski, modified



OTHER WRITTEN RESOURCES

A Christmas Prayer (from the trenches)

Not yet for us may Christmas bring
 Good-will to men, and peace;
 In our dark sky no angels sing,
 Not yet the great release
 For men, when war shall cease.
 So must the guns our carols make,
 Our gifts must bullets be,
 For us no Christmas bells shall wake;
 These ruined homes shall see
 No Christmas revelry.
 In hardened hearts we fain would greet
 The Babe at Christmas born,
 But lo, He comes with pierced feet,
 Wearing a crown of thorn,
 His side a spear has torn.
 For tired eyes are all too dim,
 Our hearts too full of pain,
 Our ears too deaf to hear the hymn
 Which angels sing in vain,
 "The Christ is born again."
 O Jesus, pitiful, draw near,
 That even we may see
 The Little Child who knew not fear;
 Thus would we picture Thee
 Unmarred by agony.
 O'er death and pain triumphant yet
 Bid Thou Thy harpers play,
 That we may hear them, and forget
 Sorrow and all dismay,
 And welcome Thee to stay
 With us on Christmas Day

by Cyril Winterbotham from http://www.firstworldwar.com/poetsandprose/mia_christmasprayer.htm

A Poem: We Interrupt This War

See Appendix IV for the modified text of the poem 'We Interrupt This War' by Cappy Hall Rearick. This reading could be very effective as a dramatized reading at this point.

Voices from the trenches

Arguably the most powerful non-scriptural material to use to illustrate the truces are the letters, journal extracts and memoirs of those who took part in them. Appendix II contains some that can be used, while many more can be found in the books and websites listed in Appendix V.

Readings from church history

"We who hated and destroyed one another, and on account of their different manners would not live with men of a different tribe, now, since the coming of Christ, live familiarly with them, and pray for our enemies, and endeavour to persuade those who hate us unjustly to live conformably to the good precepts of Christ, to the end that they may become partakers with us of the same joyful hope of a reward from God the ruler of all."

Justin Martyr (A.D. 160)

"The world wants a peacemaker; oh! How badly it wants it now! I seem as I walk my garden, as I go to my pulpit, as I go to my bed, to hear the distant cries and moans of wounded and dying men. We are so familiarised each day with horrible details of slaughter, that if we give our minds to the thought, I am sure we must feel a nausea, a perpetual sickness creeping over us. The reek and steam of those murderous fields, the smell of the warm blood of men flowing out on the soil, must come to us and vex our spirits. Earth wants a peacemaker, and it is he, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, and the friend of Gentiles, the Prince of Peace, who will make war to cease unto the ends of the earth."

C.H. Spurgeon (1870)

A Story: The War Prayer by Mark Twain

This is a fairly long reading taking 8 or 9 minutes. Accordingly it should be read by a very competent reader who is able to vary pace and tone well. It could be broken down into two or three sections to be used at different points in the service. It might be that two or three voices could help – perhaps even acted out.

It was a time of great and exalting excitement. The country was up in arms, the war was on, in every breast burned the holy fire of patriotism; the drums were beating, the bands playing, the toy pistols popping, the bunched firecrackers hissing and sputtering; on every hand and far down the receding and fading spreads of roofs and balconies a fluttering wilderness of flags flashed in the sun; daily the young volunteers marched down the wide avenue gay and fine in their new uniforms, the proud fathers and mothers and sisters and sweethearts cheering them with voices choked with happy emotion as they swung by; nightly the packed mass meetings listened, panting, to patriot oratory which stirred the deepest depths of their hearts and which they interrupted at briefest intervals with cyclones of applause, the tears running down their cheeks the while; in the churches the pastors preached devotion to flag and country

and invoked the God of Battles, beseeching His aid in our good cause in outpouring of fervid eloquence which moved every listener.

It was indeed a glad and gracious time, and the half dozen rash spirits that ventured to disapprove of the war and cast a doubt upon its righteousness straightway got such a stern and angry warning that for their personal safety's sake they quickly shrank out of sight and offended no more in that way.

Sunday morning came – next day the battalions would leave for the front; the church was filled; the volunteers were there, their faces alight with material dreams – visions of a stern advance, the gathering momentum, the rushing charge, the flashing sabers, the flight of the foe, the tumult, the enveloping smoke, the fierce pursuit, the surrender! – then home from the war, bronzed heroes, welcomed, adored, submerged in golden seas of glory! With the volunteers sat their dear ones, proud, happy, and envied by the neighbours and friends who had no sons and brothers to send forth to the field of honour, there to win for the flag or, failing, die the noblest of noble deaths. The service proceeded; a war chapter from the Old Testament was read; the first prayer was said; it was followed by an organ burst that shook the building, and with one impulse the house rose, with glowing eyes and beating hearts, and poured out that tremendous invocation – “God the all-terrible! Thou who ordainest, Thunder thy clarion and lightning thy sword!”

Then came the “long” prayer. None could remember the like of it for passionate pleading and moving and beautiful language. The burden of its supplication was that an ever-merciful and benignant Father of us all would watch over our noble young soldiers and aid, comfort, and encourage them in their patriotic work; bless them, shield them in His mighty hand, make them strong and confident, invincible in the bloody onset; help them to crush the foe, grant to them and to their flag and country imperishable honour and glory.

An aged stranger entered and moved with slow and noiseless step up the main aisle, his eyes fixed upon the minister, his long body clothed in a robe that reached to his feet, his head bare, his white hair descending in a frothy cataract to his shoulders, his seamy face unnaturally pale, pale even to ghastliness. With all eyes following him and wondering, he made his silent way; without pausing, he ascended to the preacher's side and stood there, waiting.

With shut lids the preacher, unconscious of his presence, continued his moving prayer, and at last finished it with the words, uttered in fervent appeal, “Bless our arms, grant us the victory, O Lord our God, Father and Protector of our land and flag!”

The stranger touched his arm, motioned him to step aside – which the startled minister did – and took his place. During some moments he surveyed the spellbound audience with solemn eyes in which burned an uncanny light; then in a deep voice he said,

“I come from the Throne – bearing a message from Almighty God!” The words smote the house with a shock; if the stranger perceived it he gave no attention. “He has heard the prayer of His servant your shepherd and grant it if such shall be your desire after I, His messenger, shall have explained to you its

import – that is to say, its full import. For it is like unto many of the prayers of men, in that it asks for more than he who utters it is aware of – except he pause and think.

“God's servant and yours has prayed his prayer. Has he paused and taken thought? Is it one prayer? No, it is two – one uttered, the other not. Both have reached the ear of His Who heareth all supplications, the spoken and the unspoken. Ponder this – keep it in mind. If you beseech a blessing upon yourself, beware! lest without intent you invoke a curse upon a neighbour at the same time. If you pray for the blessing of rain upon your crop which needs it, by that act you are possibly praying for a curse upon some neighbour's crop which may not need rain and can be injured by it.

“You have heard your servant's prayer – the uttered part of it. I am commissioned by God to put into words the other part of it – that part which the pastor, and also you in your hearts, fervently prayed silently. And ignorantly and unthinkingly? God grant that it was so! You heard these words: ‘Grant us the victory, O Lord our God!’ That is sufficient. The whole of the uttered prayer is compact into those pregnant words. Elaborations were not necessary. When you have prayed for victory you have prayed for many unmentioned results which follow victory – must follow it, cannot help but follow it. Upon the listening spirit of God the Father fell also the unspoken part of the prayer. He commandeth me to put it into words. Listen!

“O Lord our Father, our young patriots, idols of our hearts, go forth to battle – be Thou near them! With them, in spirit, we also go forth from the sweet peace of our beloved firesides to smite the foe. O Lord our God, help us to tear their soldiers to bloody shreds with our shells; help us to cover their smiling fields with the pale forms of their patriot dead; help us to drown the thunder of the guns with the shrieks of their wounded, writhing in pain; help us to lay waste their humble homes with a hurricane of fire; help us to wring the hearts of their unoffending widows with unavailing grief; help us to turn them out roofless with their little children to wander unfriended the wastes of their desolated land in rags and hunger and thirst, sports of the sun flames of summer and the icy winds of winter, broken in spirit, worn with travail, imploring Thee for the refuge of the grave and denied it – for our sakes who adore Thee, Lord, blast their hopes, blight their lives, protract their bitter pilgrimage, make heavy their steps, water their way with their tears, stain the white snow with the blood of their wounded feet! We ask it, in the spirit of love, of Him Who is the Source of Love, and Who is ever-faithful refuge and friend of all that are sore beset and seek His aid with humble and contrite hearts. Amen.

(After a pause)

“Ye have prayed it; if ye still desire it, speak! The messenger of the Most High waits.”

It was believed afterward that the man was a lunatic, because there was no sense in what he said.

Note:

Twain wrote *The War Prayer* during the US war on the Philippines. It was submitted for publication, but on March 22, 1905, Harper's Bazaar rejected it as “not quite suited to a woman's magazine.” Eight days later, Twain wrote to his friend Dan Beard, to whom he had read the story, “I don't think

the prayer will be published in my time. None but the dead are permitted to tell the truth." Because he had an exclusive contract with Harper & Brothers, Mark Twain could not publish *The War Prayer* elsewhere and it remained unpublished until 1923.

Quoted from <http://www.lewrockwell.com/1970/01/mark-twain/the-war-prayer/>



Artist's impression of beginning of truces, *London Illustrated News*, 9 January 1915.

PART 3: EXAMPLE SERVICES

USING THE *SILENT NIGHT*, *HOLY TRUCE* MATERIALS

ANOTHER CAROL SERVICE

This is a fairly traditional carol service with readings and carols interspersed. For the most part this example does not suggest carols or other music except for Silent Night which is suggested early on in the service to recall the fact that in many places it was part of creating the conditions for the truces to happen. This service should take roughly 60 minutes as set out here.

Carol 1

Processional (in many churches this is traditionally 'Once in Royal David City')

Opening Prayer and Welcome

Sisters and brothers, year by year we gather for the remembrance of Christ's birth. We recall together his title as Prince of Peace, the angels' song of 'Peace on earth and goodwill to all people' and the mission of the Messiah to 'guide our feet into the way of peace.' This year we also remember that one hundred years ago our nations prosecuted warfare so terrible that it was called the War to End all Wars. Tonight we also remember that one hundred Christmases ago, in fields in Flanders peace broke out spontaneously. With customs and songs of Christ's birth, enemies crossed into friendship and the exchange of gifts. Though their truces were short-lived and broken by those in command, yet they remain a hopeful reminder that humans are not born to war and that the Prince of Peace still works in this world by the Spirit of holiness.

So, pray with us for the peace of the world, upheld by justice; that wars may cease and negotiation replace fighting to resolve conflicts. *[A time of quiet recollection and prayer may be kept]*
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.

Carol 2

Many of the accounts of the Christmas Truces mention hearing singing, and Stille Nacht is one of the songs mentioned, it being familiar to both German and British troops. The basic idea here is to sing some, at least, of the carol in German. This might be done by singing one of the verses in German all together (perhaps a bit of help with pronunciation might be needed) or to invite those who can read German to sing one or more verses in German.



Silent Night (English)

Silent night, Holy night,
All is calm, all is bright;
Round yon virgin mother and child,
Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, Holy night,
Shepherds quake at the sight:
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heav'nly hosts sing Alleluia:
Christ the Saviour is born,
Christ the Saviour is born!

Silent night, Holy night,
Son of God love's pure light;
Radiance beams from thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

Stille Nacht (German)

Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht,
Alles schläft; einsam wacht
Nur das traute hochheilige Paar.
Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar,
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!

Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht,
Hirten erst kundgemacht
Durch der Engel Halleluja,
Tönt es laut von fern und nah:
Christ, der Retter ist da!
Christ, der Retter ist da!

Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht,
Gottes Sohn, o wie lacht
Lieb' aus deinem göttlichen Mund,
Da uns schlägt die rettende Stund'.
Christ, in deiner Geburt!
Christ, in deiner Geburt!

Words: Joseph Mohr, 1816

Pronunciation Guide

Shtiller nakht haye-ligger nakht
Ahl-erz shlefft, ayenzam vakht
Noor das trouter hokhayeligger Par Holder
k-nahber im lokiggen har
Shlaff in him-lisher roo
Shlaff in him-lisher roo

Shtiller nakht haye-ligger nakht
Heer-tun airst koond-gemakht
Doorkh dair engle Halleluyah
Ternt ez lout fon fairn oond nah
Khris-t dair retter ist da
Khris-t dair retter ist da

Shtiller nakht haye-ligger nakht
Gott-us zone, o vee lakht
Leeb ous daye-num gertlikhen moond,
dah oons shlekt dee rettender shtoont.
Khris-t in daye-ner geboort
Khris-t in daye-ner geboort



Reading 1 *Please select from the readings suggested elsewhere in this pack*

Carol 3

Reading 2 *Please select from the readings suggested elsewhere in this pack*

Carol 4

Reading 3 *Please select from the readings suggested elsewhere in this pack*

Prayers

At the end of each section, it may be appropriate to use a brief response such as:

*“Lord, in your mercy; **Hear our prayer**”*

Peacemaking God, who in Christ reconciles enemies, calling us friends, we give thanks that Christian symbolism and understandings were at the heart of the Christmas Truces. We offer you our hope that in our day, Christ-born hopes and dreams of love, joy and peace may resource the imaginations of all people of good will and challenge towards those whose wills are captive to divisive and short-sighted forces. Give us courage and wisdom to offer our best hopes and insights for the healing of the nations and multiply our offerings into just, merciful and sharing communities.

We celebrate the courage of those who put aside the propaganda of hostility and dehumanisation at the start of the Christmas Truces (in Flanders’ trenches in 1914). We rejoice that they found it possible to celebrate with so-called ‘enemies’ the things they had in common.

So we call to mind those who today take courageous actions to reach beyond hatreds and suspicion to connect with common humanity and make common cause: bless their efforts to reach out with the fruit of conviviality, understanding and harmony. Give them wisdom to direct their efforts well and refresh them when their work for peace overwhelms them.

Mindful that land of Flanders was savaged and torn apart by munitions, movement, and machinery; we remember with thanks all who protect, restore and safeguard our environment: microbes and fungi, plants and animals, people who care for nature and nurture life. We ask for their well-being to grow and develop and for their efforts for the common good of creation to be fruitful and multiply.

We give thanks for the work of international agencies working for peace and the things that make for peace. We ask for them to be well-resourced, well-informed and well-led so that their deliberations and actions may bring about reconciliation, harmony and justice.

We remember before you:
Families and single people who have been driven from their homes.

Those separated from loved-ones.

Refugees, conscripts or press-ganged people caught up in war unwillingly.

Victims of terrorism and all in fear of violence against civilians.

The traumatised and those physically maimed by war, violence or tyranny.

Give them peace, bring them healing and restoration.

Andii Bowsher (cc, 2014)

Choir: *Anthem, motet or other item*

Reading 4 *Please select from the readings suggested elsewhere in this pack*

Sermon or Address

Carol 5

Reading 5

(It may be helpful to use two or more voices for this reading)

Blessed are you peacemakers
who say no to war as a means to peace.
Blessed are you peacemakers
who are committed to disarm weapons of mass destruction.
Blessed are you peacemakers
who wage peace at heroic personal cost.
Blessed are you peacemakers
who challenge and confront judges, courts and prisons.
Blessed are you peacemakers
who challenge and confront terrorists and gangs.
Blessed are you peacemakers
who help those who are hurting.
Blessed are you peacemakers
who befriend perfect strangers.
Blessed are you peacemakers
who open doors for acting justly,
loving tenderly and walking humbly with God
and all people of good will.
Blessed are you peacemakers
who offer hope and healing.
Blessed are you peacemakers
who care and comfort.
Blessed are you peacemakers
who help find answers.
Blessed are you peacemakers
who welcome, encourage and inspire.
Blessed are you peacemakers
who delight in creation, art and
creativity.
Blessed are you peacemakers
who provide stability not insanity.
Blessed are you peacemakers
who help restore faith, hope and love.
Blessed are you peacemakers
who see the good image of God in others.
Blessed are you peacemakers
who never give up.
Blessed are you peacemakers
who give and give and give.
Modified from a piece by Fr. Paul Milanowski

Choir: *Anthem, motet or other item*

Reading 6 John 1:1-14

Blessing and dismissal

May the peace the angels sang of, fill your hearts and strengthen you as peacemakers so that God's glory may be known in the courage and imagination you show to reach out to strangers and those labelled as enemies and call them friends. And God who calls us to live in peace with one another, the harmonious Trinity; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless you and those whose lives your lives touch with the joy and peace of Christmas, now and always. Amen.

Carol 6

(Recessional)



A COMMUNION SERVICE

This is envisaged as being a service held as part of the regular program of services for a church, during which the Christmas Truces are to be remembered and so Christmas or late Advent material is assumed to be part of the service. Musical items are not suggested and left to local custom and repertoire. It is suggested that the carol 'Silent Night' is incorporated at some point and the use of a German verse or verses is included in that.

Opening sentences

In some churches there is a custom of a choir procession. Either the opening sentences could be used before the procession announced from the back of the worship space or the order of the opening music and the sentences could be reversed. If it is not customary to use responsive spoken prayers, these could be said by one voice alone.

In the tender compassion of our God

The Dawn from on High will break upon us

He will give to us knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of all our sins:

He will guide our feet into the way of peace.

Glory to God in the highest:

And peace to his people on earth.

Song, hymn or carol

Repentance for complicity in the roots of war

As we recall with sorrow the horrors of warfare and violence, let us recognise in ourselves the things that could seed hatred and nurture ill-will.

Pause for a few moments of recollection.

When, in the imagination of our hearts, we have thought of others as less than bearers of the image of God, Christ who became like us to overcome enmity,
Be gracious to us

Lord have mercy

When we have desired the grace to allow us to change but denied it in others, Christ, who came to set prisoners free,
Be gracious to us

Lord have mercy

When we have shied away from the opportunities to make new starts and create just and peaceful futures, Christ who embodies the peace of God,
Be gracious to us

Lord have mercy

Andii Bowsher (cc, 2014)

Appropriate assurances of forgiveness are given.

Ministry of the word

This set of suggested readings is set out as if for a usage of the 'full' complement of OT, NT, Psalm and Gospel readings used in many churches, however, some churches customarily use less.

Isaiah 11:1-2 & 6-9 A vision of the peaceable Messianic age with enmities reconciled and 'a little child shall lead them'

Romans 12:12-21 ending with "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good"

Psalm 34:11-18 "seek peace and pursue it", "The LORD is close to the broken-hearted"

Luke 1:67-79 Zechariah prophecies over the infant John the Baptist at the end of which the promise is to lead us into the paths of peace

Intercessions suitable for a Eucharist

Different sections could be read by different people. Different accents or nationalities reading would have a positive sign value.

Jesus said: 'Blessed are the peacemakers.' As we remember the Christmas Truces of 1914, let us ask God to bless all those who work to bring peace in our world and to bestow that gift of peace wherever it is lacking in Church and society.

The response to each intercession is: **Grant us your peace.**

Let us pray for ourselves. May we be gifted by the Spirit with the imagination, the words and the gestures which can bring peace where there is none.

Let us pray to the Lord: **Grant us your peace.**

In this centenary of WW1, may the Church be renewed in its service of the Gospel. May we be preachers of peace and effective signs of God's healing love in the world.

Let us pray to the Lord: **Grant us your peace.**

For the peace of Jerusalem and for all the people of the Holy Land: that the wounds of hatred and division may be healed and that Jerusalem may be truly a 'City of Peace' for all.

Let us pray to the Lord: **Grant us your peace.**

For reconciliation where there is conflict; for peace where there is fighting. We remember today especially *[name a situation of oppression or violence in the news at the moment ...]*

Let us pray to the Lord: **Grant us your peace.**

For all who work for peace and justice; for all who live prophetically and take risks for peace. We ask God's blessing today especially on the work of Christian Peacemakers and

those who work for peace from other convictions....

Let us pray to the Lord: **Grant us your peace.**

Let us commend to God's mercy all who are unwell (*especially*), that they might be restored to health;

Let us pray to the Lord: **Grant us your peace.**

And we remember with thanks and penitence those who have died who were caught up in war and violent conflict and who share the faith of Christ ... May they be gathered, with people of every race, language and way of life, into the joy of God's Kingdom.

Let us pray to the Lord: **Grant us your peace.**

In a moment of silence, let us bring before God our own thirst for peace and hunger for justice ...

Final Prayer: Lead us, Father, to the Wedding Feast of your Kingdom and help us to share that joy with all who are in need. Hear these, our prayers, which we make through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Adapted from Pax Christi, Peace Sunday resources

Sharing the Peace

In a church building with aisles, encourage the congregation to share across the separating spaces and meet in the aisle(s). Perhaps use a white flag or white flags of truce to be held by or with whoever introduces the act of sharing the peace.

Some words to introduce the peace:

We meet under the Truce of God who in Christ has set aside the earthly divisions of nation and race and calls us to be blessed as peacemakers.

The Peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

In some churches it may be suitable to use the following words as the gifts are brought forward before the prayer of thanksgiving over the bread and the wine of Communion. In some churches it may be appropriate to adapt and incorporate this prayer as part of that prayer,

We give thanks for shared understandings which can support our discovery of the humanity we share with Jesus and with our neighbours.

We give thanks for Jesus' call to peace which, though often muted or smothered, yet shines through the stories and customs of Christmas.

We give thanks for the courage of those who dare to act peacefully in conflict and who risk friendship in the face of enmity.

We give thanks for the Prince of Peace, born to reconcile us to God and to the whole of humanity.



In churches where the liturgy or custom encourages the reciting of the Lord's Prayer between the Eucharistic/Thanksgiving prayer and receiving Communion, it may be good to encourage those who can read German or French to pray it in French or German alongside those praying in English.



German

*Vater unser im Himmel,
Geheiligt werde dein Name;
Dein Reich komme;
Dein Wille geschehe, wie im Himmel,
so auf Erden.
Unser tägliches Brot gib uns heute.
Und vergib uns unsere Schuld,
wie auch wir vergeben unsern
Schuldigern;*

*Und führe uns nicht in Versuchung,
sondern erlöse uns von dem Bösen.
Denn dein ist das Reich und die
Kraft
und die Herrlichkeit in Ewigkeit.
Amen.*

French

*Notre Père, qui es aux cieux,
Que ton nom soit sanctifié,
Que ton règne vienne,
Que ta volonté soit faite sur la terre comme
au ciel.
Donne-nous aujourd'hui notre pain de ce
jour.
Pardonne-nous nos offenses
Comme nous pardonnons aussi à ceux qui
nous ont offensés.
Et ne nous soumetts pas à la tentation,
mais délivre-nous du mal,
car c'est à toi qu'appartiennent le règne,
la puissance et la gloire, aux siècles des
siècles.
Amen.*

Towards the end of the service, in some churches it might be appropriate to use this rededication. In Anglican churches this might replace a prayer after Communion.

We commit ourselves to God:

**God's love is the source of all life
and the deepest desire of our lives.**

**God's love gained a human face in Jesus born of Mary,
and was crucified by the same enslaving evil crouching in wait for
each of us.**

God's love offers glorious freedom to us defeating even death.

Though sometimes doubting and fearful,

yet in God we keep trust.

In Christ's name

we give ourselves afresh to the service of others:

we seek justice and peace;

we seek the wellbeing of the earth;

we seek the common wealth of God's goodness towards us.

We breathe in the freedom of God's forgiveness.

**We share the power of the Loving Spirit in the company of all
faithful.**

**We become anew the Church for God's glory and earth's well-
being.**

cf Iona CWB, p42. Amended

Blessing

May the peace the angels sang of, fill your hearts and strengthen you as peacemakers so that God's glory may be known in the courage and imagination you show to reach out to strangers and those labelled as enemies and call them friends. And God who calls us to live in peace with one another, the harmonious Trinity; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless you and those whose lives your lives touch with the joy and peace of Christmas, now and always. Amen.

Andii Bowsher (cc, 2014)

A PREACHING SERVICE/ SERVICE OF THE WORD

This is envisaged to be a service in which the main focus, or one of the main focuses, is reading scripture and a sermon. Musical items are not suggested here and should be added in at appropriate points.

Opening responses

If necessary (e.g. perhaps the custom is not to have responsive said prayers) these could be said by one voice alone.

Tidings of great joy we bring

To us a child is born

To us a Son is given

And the government will be upon his shoulders

And his name will be Wonderful Counsellor

The Prince of Peace

Confession

Christ was born amongst the disregarded; where we have

regarded those who differ from us as less than ourselves.

Lord change us

And we shall be changed

Christ was born as one of us; where we have allowed the prejudices of class, race, nationality or gender to count more than God-given common humanity,

Lord change us

And we shall be changed

Christ was born of a conquered people; where we have taken pride in conquest and drawn profit from oppression,

Lord change us

And we shall be changed

Andii Bowsher (cc, 2014)

Short responses for peace

Make your ways known on earth, O Lord,

Let all nations acknowledge your saving power

Let the earth be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea

establish and uphold peace with justice and righteousness

O God, save the nations of the world

And teach their counsellors wisdom

With righteousness, judge the needy,

with justice give decisions for the poor of the earth.

Give us peace in our time, O God,

For you alone make us dwell in safety

Make our hearts clean O Lord,

And renew a right spirit within us.

Reworked by Andii Bowsher from Book of Common Prayer and Common Worship

Intercession reflecting on the Christmas Truces

At the end of each section, it may be appropriate to use a brief response such as

*"Lord, in your mercy; **Hear our prayer**"*

Peacemaking God, who in Christ reconciles enemies and calls us friends, we give thanks that Christian symbolism and understandings were at the heart of the Christmas Truces. We offer you our hope that in our day, Christ-born hopes and dreams of love, joy and peace may resource the imaginations of all people of good will and challenge towards change those whose wills are captive to divisive and short-sighted forces. Give us courage and wisdom to offer our best hopes and insights for the healing of the nations and multiply our offerings into just, merciful and sharing communities.

We celebrate the courage of those who put aside the propaganda of hostility and dehumanisation at the start of the Christmas Truces (in Flanders trenches in 1914). We rejoice that they found it possible to celebrate with so-called 'enemies' the things they had in common.

So we call to mind those who today take courageous actions to reach beyond hatreds and suspicion to connect with common humanity and make common cause: bless their efforts to reach out with the fruit of conviviality, understanding and harmony.

Give them wisdom to direct their efforts well and refresh them when their work for peace overwhelms them.

Mindful that land of Flanders was savaged and torn apart by munitions, movement, and machinery; we remember with thanks all that protect, restore and safeguard our environment: microbes and fungi, plants and animals, people who care for nature and nurture life. We ask for their well-being to grow and develop and for their efforts for the common good of creation to be fruitful and multiply.

We give thanks for the work of international agencies working for peace and the things that make for peace. We ask for them to be well-resourced, well-informed and well-led so that their deliberations and actions may bring about reconciliation, harmony and justice.

We remember before you:

Families and single people who have been driven from their homes.

Those separated from loved-ones.

Refugees, conscripts or press-ganged people caught up in war unwillingly.

Victims of terrorism and all in fear of violence against civilians.

The traumatised and those physically maimed by war, violence or tyranny.

Give them peace, bring them healing and restoration.

Andii Bowsher (cc, 2014)

Blessing

May the peace the angels sang of, fill your hearts and strengthen you as peacemakers so that God's glory may be known in the courage and imagination you show to reach out to strangers and those labelled as enemies and call them friends. And God who calls us to live in peace with one another, the harmonious Trinity; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless you and those whose lives your lives touch with the joy and peace of Christmas, now and always. Amen.

Andii Bowsher (cc, 2014)



PART 4: A CHRISTMAS TRUCE-THEMED SUNDAY SCHOOL SESSION

This provides a Sunday school/junior church activity plan for a single session linked to the 1914 Christmas Truces. It uses the truces to teach the message that being a Christian is more important than our nationality, based on a key Bible memory verse of Galatians 3:28. It is aimed at UK school years 4-9 (ages 8/9 – 13/14) but could be modified for older children. This session can be readily incorporated with other elements of your group, for example, prayers for each other, sharing weekly news, etc...

PREPARATION

- Use a projector screen or (for small groups) a laptop or tablet to show the associated PowerPoint slideshow (available to download for free from www.mklpc.org); alternatively, print out the key images and the hand-out to pass around (print-ready copies below).
- (Optional) Photocopy outline maps of European alliances 1914 with pencils/crayons to colour in (hand-out provided at end of this section).

NB: The Christmas Truces Sunday School slideshow has dual use, as it is also designed for school assemblies. To this end more extensive text is attached to the slideshow notes, which can largely be ignored for this Sunday School class.

INTRODUCTION AND BIBLE VERSE

Show slide 2 (image of World War I graves) and ask the children if they know what they are. When World War I is mentioned, ask them to tell what they know about it – belligerents, dates, causes etc. Use their answers to sketch outline and make link to WW1 commemorations. See notes for leaders for an explanatory paragraph.

Introduce Galatians 3:28 (slide 3 from PowerPoint), or ask them to find verse in church Bible, or read from hand-out provided. Explain 'Jews and Gentiles' and that at the time of Jesus the Jewish land was controlled by Gentile (Roman) soldiers who had invaded it in a war. Explain that Christians of all countries are united in Jesus even if they are from 'enemy nations' like Jews and Gentiles were.

Explain that we are going to look at one of the most amazing events in the history of war, something that is well worth commemorating.

WORLD WAR 1: OUTLINE AND ACTIVITY

This builds on story pieced together in introduction

Activity (optional): Give blank outline maps of states in Europe 1914, ask children to colour in belligerent power alliances (i.e. 'the Allies' and the 'Central Powers') in two colours. Alternatively, show a map of the same (slide 4). Use this to explain that World War I came about as a result of the most heavily armed countries in the world competing to be the strongest and most powerful.

Ask children if they thought the war was popular. Show the British and German propaganda posters that encouraged people to support the war and fight the enemy (slides 5-8).

Say that although many people supported the war and were eager to join the army (slide 9), many people also thought it was wrong and some refused to fight (slide 10 – protest in Trafalgar Square). Many of these were Christians who thought that Galatians 3:28 meant they should not fight each other as they were one in Christ. Famous examples (slide 11, or use pictures provided in Further Notes for Leaders) are Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze (from Germany) and Henry Hodgkin (from Britain), who were attending an international meeting of Christian leaders in Germany. As they said goodbye on the platform of Cologne railway station, they promised, “We are one in Christ and can never be at war.”

CONDITIONS IN TRENCHES

Ask children what they know about the fighting in World War I. Explain conditions of trench warfare (see Further Notes for Leaders, Part I) and that the hope of a quick victory by Christmas was dashed by December 1914. If using a projector, show slides 12-17 of WW1 fighting/weaponry. Select as appropriate for age.

THE DECEMBER 1914 CHRISTMAS TRUCES

Explain the Christmas Truces (see Further Notes for Leaders, Part II) including the word ‘truce’. For children who are competent readers, this can be done in part by asking them to read aloud two first-hand accounts (see Further Notes for Leaders, Part III below). Use the slide images to illustrate. Make sure that you mention that there were joint Christian services held in no-man’s land with Bible readings, carols and prayers in English and German, as an illustration of our memory verse Galatians 3:28. This could be explained as a foretaste of the image of Revelation 7:9 of John seeing ‘a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.’

ACTIVITY

Set one of the activities below themed around the truces, breaking for refreshments at suitable moments if necessary:

- i. **Drama:** divide children into groups and ask them to create their own dramas about the truces. This works well for creative children who value a bit of peer-group collaborative time.
- ii. **Trench warfare / Christmas Truce game:** This can be played in a church hall. The hall is divided into two by a line of chairs or a rope stretched along the floor. Children are divided equally into two teams (British and German). An equal number of soft balls (e.g. those used in ball pits) are scattered either side, and when the signal is given the teams have three minutes to pick up and throw (not kick) as many balls as possible over to the other side. When the stop signal is sounded everyone freezes, and the team with the fewest balls on its side of the boundary wins. This is a frenetic game and can easily be imagined as trench warfare. The final time it is played, no ‘winner’ is declared but snacks/drinks and handshakes are shared by the two teams in a symbolic ‘truce.’ This is great fun and uses up lots of energy!
- iii. **Identifying countries:** using the hand-out provided, children should look at the blank ‘The two sides in World War 1’ and ask them to colour in the two sides, using two colours – a different one for each side. This could be a task for younger children, or an alternative to the drama for those children who prefer not to engage with it.

CONCLUSION

- Remind the children of the Bible verse for the day, adding that for the people who took part in the truces, ‘Jew and Gentile’ can mean ‘British and German.’
- Ask the children if they think the truces continued indefinitely and how they came to an end (‘I wonder if the truces carried on...’). Tell the children that they were stopped by orders from

generals who were angry that the soldiers had stopped fighting; but explain that when Jesus returns, war will finally stop for ever.



FURTHER NOTES FOR LEADERS

I: EXPLAINING WW1 TO CHILDREN

There are numerous resources available online and in books to help us understand and explain WW1. A brief summary of the outbreak and conduct of the war up until December 1914 could be that World War I began 100 years ago, in 1914. Powerful countries including Britain, France and Germany were competing with each other to be the strongest countries in the world, and this led to the war. Thousands of young men and teenage boys, many of High School age, joined the British army to go and fight the German army which had invaded France and Belgium. Both sides made 'trenches' – a network of ditches, holes, tunnels and rooms dug in the ground and supported by sand-bags to protect themselves from enemy fire. Following wet weather in late 1914 many of these trenches had become deep in mud making life unpleasant and dangerous. The British and German front-line trenches were usually between 50 and 250 metres apart, with the space between them known as 'no-man's land.' When they joined the army, many men believed that the war would be over by the first Christmas. Instead, thousands of people had been killed and there was no sign of an end. The war continued until 1918 by which time some 10 million soldiers had died. More British soldiers were killed in this war than in any other in our history, including World War 2.

II: EXPLAINING THE CHRISTMAS TRUCES

For background material on the Christmas Truces, see the introduction to this pack – 'A Hopeful Bit of History', plus the resource pack on the December 1914 truces for schools also produced by the Martin Luther King Peace Committee, available at our website www.mlkpc.org

III: FIRST-HAND NARRATIVES OF THE TRUCES

1) Private Frank Sumter, London Rifle Brigade:

"After the 19th December attack, we were back in the same trenches when Christmas Day came along. It was a terrible winter, everything was covered in snow, everything was white. The devastated landscape looked terrible in its true colours - clay and mud and broken brick - but when it was covered in snow it was beautiful. Then we heard the Germans singing 'Silent night, Holy night', and they put up a notice saying 'Merry Christmas', and so we put one up too.

While they were singing our boys said, 'Let's join in,' so we joined in and when we started singing, they stopped. And when we stopped, they started again. So we were easing the way. Then one German took a chance and jumped up on top of the trench and shouted out, 'Happy Christmas, Tommy!' So of course our boys said, 'If he can do it, we can do it,' and we all jumped up.

And so we just shook hands. We spoke about our families, about how old we were, how long we thought it would last and things like that."

2) The Journal: Thursday, December 31st, 1914

A Gateshead soldier, who is serving at the Front, writing to a friend at Low Fell, gives an interesting description of the way in which Christmas Day was spent by some of the troops. He states:

"On Christmas Eve the Germans lit up their trenches and started calling across, A Merry Christmas. We responded in the same vein, and then we started singing songs to one other another, carols etc. By this time all shooting had stopped. We walked about the parapets of the trenches and called out to one another. Then some of our chaps walked out and met some of the Germans half-way, wished each other a Merry Christmas, shook hands

and said they would not fight today. Some of our chaps started kicking a football about outside the trenches. Then the Germans showed themselves and, to cut a long story short, it finished with us meeting halfway, shaking hands and exchanging fags and souvenirs, and parting the best of friends. One has given me his address to write to him after the war. They were quite a decent lot of fellows, I can tell you. I know this seems an unbelievable story but it is a fact. I am sure if it were left to the men there would be no war."



Other first-hand accounts, searchable by UK region, can be found at: <http://www.christmastruce.co.uk/about.html>

IV: IMAGES OF FOUNDERS OF FELLOWSHIP OF RECONCILIATION (FOR):

Print out copies of these only if you are not using either the PowerPoint slideshow or the individual hand-outs.



Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze



Henry Hodgkin

V: TWO PAGE HAND-OUT (OVER PAGE)

THE DECEMBER 1914 CHRISTMAS TRUCES

Memory verse:

“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Galatians, Chapter 3, Verse 28



This picture shows British and German soldiers celebrating Christmas Day together in 'no man's land' between the trenches, December 1914.



Central Powers

Germany
Austria-Hungary
Turkey
Bulgaria (1915)



Allies

France, Britain
Belgium, Russia
Serbia
Italy (1915)
Romania (1915)
Portugal (1916)
Greece (1917)

Locate on the map and then colour in the two sides in the war. Use one colour for the Central Powers and another for the Allies.

APPENDICES

Appendix I: Multi-lingual resources

In many contexts it may be appropriate to sing or to say words in German or other relevant languages (French or Flemish being most likely). It would be good to sing Silent Night in German, or a verse in German, or invite people to sing in whichever language. Stille Nacht was reported to be one of the songs sung which helped to catalyse the truces. For correct pronunciation, find YouTube versions of these songs and liturgies or consult with the more linguistically gifted members of your congregation.

SILENT NIGHT / STILLE NACHT

Silent Night (English)

*Silent night, Holy night,
All is calm, all is bright;
Round yon virgin mother and child,
Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.*

*Silent night, Holy night,
Shepherds quake at the sight:
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heav'nly hosts sing Alleluia:
Christ the Saviour is born,
Christ the Saviour is born!*

*Silent night, Holy night,
Son of God love's pure light;
Radiance beams from thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.*

Stille Nacht (German)

*Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht,
Alles schläft; einsam wacht
Nur das traute hochheilige Paar.
Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar,
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!*

*Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht,
Hirten erst kundgemacht
Durch der Engel Halleluja,
Tönt es laut von fern und nah:
Christ, der Retter ist da!
Christ, der Retter ist da!*

*Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht,
Gottes Sohn, o wie lacht
Lieb' aus deinem göttlichen Mund,
Da uns schlägt die rettende Stund'.
Christ, in deiner Geburt!
Christ, in deiner Geburt!*

Pronunciation Guide

*Shtiller nakht haye-ligger nakht
Ahl-erz shlefft, ayenzam vakht
Noor das trouter hokhayeligger Par Holder
k-nahber im lokiggen har
Shlaff in him-lisher roo
Shlaff in him-lisher roo*

*Shtiller nakht haye-ligger nakht
Heer-tun airst koond-gemakht
Doorkh dair engle Halleluyah
Ternt ez lout fon fairn oond nah
Khris-t dair retter ist da
Khris-t dair retter ist da*

*Shtiller nakht haye-ligger nakht
Gott-us zone, o vee lakht
Leeb ous daye-num gertlikhen moond,
dah oons shlekt dee rettender shtoont.
Khris-t in daye-ner geboort
Khris-t in daye-ner geboort*

Words: Joseph Mohr, 1816



LORD'S PRAYER

Lord's Prayer in English

*Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.*

The Lord's Prayer in German

*Vater unser im Himmel.
Geheiligt werde dein Name.
Dein Reich komme.
Dein Wille geschehe, wie im Himmel,
so auf Erden.
Unser tägliches Brot gib uns heute.
Und vergib uns unsere Schuld,
wie auch wir vergeben unsern Schuldigern.
Und führe uns nicht in Versuchung,
sondern erlöse uns von dem Bösen.
Denn dein ist das Reich und die Kraft
und die Herrlichkeit in Ewigkeit.
Amen.*

The Lord's Prayer in French

*Notre Père, qui es aux cieux,
Que ton nom soit sanctifié,
Que ton règne vienne,
Que ta volonté soit faite sur la terre comme au ciel.
Donne-nous aujourd'hui notre pain de ce jour.
Pardonne-nous nos offenses
Comme nous pardonnons aussi à ceux qui nous ont
offensés.
Et ne nous soumetts pas à la tentation,
mais délivre-nous du mal,
car c'est à toi qu'appartiennent le règne,
la puissance et la gloire, aux siècles des siècles.
Amen.*



Appendix II: Voices from the trenches – diaries and recollections

These are supplementary readings taken from wartime diaries and recollections of soldiers who recorded their experiences of the Christmas Truces. They may provide an additional resource for services. Unless otherwise stated the following excerpts are taken from the Imperial War Museum Sound Archives, Max Arthur, *Forgotten Voices of the Great War*, London: Ebury, 2002.

SERGEANT GEORGE ASHURST, 2ND BATTALION, LANCASHIRE FUSILIERS

“There was still 200 yards between us and the Germans. We did not intermingle until some Jerries came to their wire waving a newspaper. ‘What’s that lads?’ ‘Are you going for it?’ ‘I’m not going for it!’ Anyway a corporal in our company went for it. Well, he got halfway and he stopped. I don’t know if he’d changed his mind or not, but the lads shouted ‘Go on’ Get that paper!’ He went right to the wire and the Germans shook hands with him and wished him a merry Christmas and gave him the paper.

He came back with it but we couldn’t read a word of it so it had to go to an officer. And there were still fellows walking about on top of our trench at 5 o’clock, at teatime, and not a shot had been fired, although the armistice had officially finished at 1 o’clock. And we could see Jerries knocking about all over the place. It was so pleasant to get out of that trench, from between those two clay walls, and just walk and run about. It was heaven. And to kick this sandbag about, but we did not play with the Germans. Well we didn’t, but I believe quite a lot did up and down the place. Eventually, we got orders to come back down into the trench, ‘Get back in your trenches, every man!’ The order came round by word of mouth down each trench. Some people took no damn notice.

Anyway, the generals behind must have seen it and got a bit suspicious, so they gave orders for a battery of guns behind us to open fire and a machine-gun to open out, and officers to fire their revolvers at the Jerries. That started the war again. We were cursing the generals to hell. You want to get up here in this mud. Never mind you giving orders in your big chateaux and driving about in your big cars. We hated the sight of bloody generals, we always did. We

didn’t hate them so much before this, but we never liked them after that.

Then we had newspapers coming here from England accusing us of fraternising with the Germans: parsons accusing us of fraternising with the Germans when there had been an armistice on Christmas Day. I wrote back home and told my family off. I said we could do with that parson and the fellows that are writing in the newspapers here, I said. We want them here in front of us instead of Jerry so we could shoot them down for passing remarks like that while nice and safe in England.” [p56-7]

PRIVATE FRANK SUMTER, LONDON RIFLE BRIGADE

“After the 19th December attack, we were back in the same trenches when Christmas Day came along. It was a terrible winter, everything was covered in snow, everything was white. The devastated landscape looked terrible in its true colours -clay and mud and broken brick- but when it was covered in snow it was beautiful. Then we heard the Germans singing ‘Silent night, Holy night’, and they put up a notice saying ‘Merry Christmas’, and so we put one up too.

While they were singing our boys said, ‘Let’s join in,’ so we joined in and when we started singing, they stopped. And when we stopped, they started again. So we were easing the way. Then one German took a chance and jumped up on top of the trench and shouted out, ‘Happy Christmas, Tommy!’ So of course our boys said, ‘If he can do it, we can do it,’ and we all jumped up. A sergeant-major shouted ‘Get down!’ But we said, ‘Shut up Sergeant, it’s Christmas time!’ And we all went forward to the barbed wire.

We could barely reach through the wire, because the barbed wire was not just one fence, it was two or

three fences together, with a wire in between. And so we just shook hands and I had the experience of talking to one German who said to me, 'Do you know where the Essex Road in London is?' I replied, 'Yes, my uncles had a shoe repairing shop there.' He said, 'That's funny. There's a barber shop on the other side where I used to work.'

They could all speak very good English because before the war, Britain was invaded by Germans. Every pork butcher was German, every barber's shop was German, and they were all over here getting the low-down on the country. It's ironic when you think about it, that he must have shaved my uncle at times and yet my bullet might have found him and his bullet might have found me.

The Officers gave the order 'No fraternisation' and then they turned their backs on us. But they didn't try to stop it because they know they couldn't. We never said a word about the war to the Germans. We spoke about our families, about how old we were, how long we thought it would last and things like that. I was young and I wasn't that interested, so I stood there for about half an hour then I came back. But most of the boys stayed there the whole day and only came back in the evening. There were no shots fired and some people enjoyed the curiosity of walking about in no man's land. It was good to walk around. As a sign of their friendliness the Germans put up a sign saying 'Gott mit uns' which means 'God is with us' and so we put a sign in English saying 'We got mittens too'. I don't know if they enjoyed that joke." [p55-6]

**LIEUTENANT JOHN WEDDERBURN-MAXWELL,
ROYAL FIELD ARTILLERY**

"There was a party, a couple of hundred yards away, of our troops and the Germans all fraternising. And so I said I was going to go and look at this. And I told the infantry to keep an eye on me, in case anybody tried any rough business, so they'd know what was happening, and I went up and met a small party who said, 'Come along into our trenches and have a look at us.' I said, 'No, I'm quite near enough as it is.' And we laughed at each other, and I gave them some English tobacco, and they gave me some German - I forget what it was- and we walked about for about half an hour in no man's land.

And then we shook hands, wished each other luck, and one fellow said, 'Will you send this off to my

girlfriend in Manchester?' So I took his letter, and franked it, and sent it off to the girlfriend when I got back. And then after that I came back, and at midnight we were ordered into action because there was a strong rumour from a German deserter that there was going to be an attack." [p57-8]

**RIFLEMAN HENRY WILLIAMSON, LONDON RIFLE
BRIGADE**

"That evening the Germans sent over a note saying that their Staff was visiting their trenches that night, so the truce must end and they would have to fire their machine-guns. They would fire them high but

could we in any case keep under cover in case regrettable accidents occurred. At 11 o'clock precisely they opened up. We saw flashes of the machine-guns going high and it was passed back to Intelligence that the Germans were using Berlin time in the trenches, which is one hour before British time. I suppose that was an important item for Intelligence, and that was the end of our truce. We did not fire, and they did not fire for a day or two, but then the Prussians came in and relieved the Saxons and then we began to lose more men from sniping and we went out after that." [p58]

ARTHUR PELHAM-BURN, LIEUTENANT, 6TH GORDONS
Aged 19, who hoped to study for the ministry after the war, on taking part in a joint service in No Man's Land on Christmas Eve wrote home that:

"The mass burial of the dead was 'awful, too awful to describe so I won't attempt it,' but the joint burial service was 'most wonderful. Chaplain Adams arranged the prayers and the twenty-third psalm etc and an interpreter wrote them out in German. They were read first by our Padre and then in German by a boy who was studying for the ministry. It was an extraordinary and most wonderful sight. The Germans formed up on one side, the English on the other, the officers standing in front, every head bared. Yes, I think it was a sight one will never see again."

Recorded in Stanley Weintraub's *Silent Night: The Remarkable Christmas Truce of 1914*, pp70-1.

PRIVATE WALTER MOCKETT

The following extracts are taken from a forthcoming book by Clive Barrett Based on documents in the Liddle Collection, Leeds. Private Mockett wrote to Master Charlie Miller on 28th December:

“Xmas Day was spent by us in a most remarkable way, the Germans and our fellows got out of their trenches and shook hands with each other, the Germans said ‘you no shoot, we no shoot’, so we agreed, and all day long we walked about on top of the trenches, where in the ordinary course of events it would have been instant death for us. I went over and talked to some of them, they said they were fed up with the war and were ready to go home.” (Liddle Collection, GS1121).

SERGEANT SPENCE SANDERS

Sergeant Spence Sanders wrote to Miss Noel Sanders on 28 December:

“Christmas Day in the trenches! And of all extraordinary days, it took the biscuit. An order passed along the line not to shoot. A few minutes after, I saw the Germans getting up out of their trenches. I was with the Capt. & the Colonel. We rushed along to see that the men didn’t shoot – found our men getting out of the trench as well. I’m dashed if they didn’t walk out, meet the Germans & start shaking hands and chatting to them like old friends! Lots of the Germans could talk English – I went out, of course. In a few minutes we were ordered back to the trenches, but shortly after a proper truce was arranged to bury the dead. There were lots of dead between the trenches – English who had fallen in a charge a week or so before & Germans who had been there for ages. They were not a pretty sight.

We all went out & chatted to the Germans – they were nice fellows & quite decent clean looking men – not the dirty ruffians I had expected. When the dead were buried, the Padre, who, by a stroke of luck had come down with the Col. that morning for a look round, read a short service, the Germans standing at one side & we at the other. The truce was to continue till 5.30 in the evening but we found the Germans did not want to do any firing & agreed that we would not if they didn’t & so there had been no firing when we came away last night...

The padre was a Church of Scotland minister, J. Esslemont Adams. Unattributed press cuttings refer to an impromptu game of football between the

opposing armies, using a hare as a ball. Other articles include an account by Lance-Corporal George Dyce, who said of the Germans, ‘They don’t want to fight any more than we do; they are as fed up of this game as we are fit to be. They told us that they would not shoot if we did not, so we have had a holiday for the last two days we were in the trenches... I thought peace was proclaimed, but no such luck.’ (Liddle Collection, GS0527).

Appendix III: Notes for a school assembly

Many church leaders are invited into schools to take assemblies. The Christmas Truces will make very appropriate material for assemblies not only during the 2014-17 Christmas seasons, but at any point during that time and also at Christmases beyond then.

The Christmas Truces Sunday School PowerPoint slideshow, available for free download from www.mlkpc.org, provides the ideal basis for an assembly. Each slide has additional notes attached to it, which are intended for the assembly rather than Sunday School format. If preferred, these notes can be printed out as a crib sheet available in the ‘Teaching the 1914 Christmas Truces Resource Pack for Teachers’ produced by the Martin Luther King Peace Committee and available on our website.

Assembly leaders will have their own preferred ways of delivering: for example, asking questions as they go along before explaining each slide, or inviting some pupils to read out the first-person narrative extracts from Appendix II of this pack, ‘Voices from the trenches.’

The PowerPoint Christmas Truces slideshow clearly provides a link to both historical and religious concerns, given that the truces were only possible due to shared traditions of celebrating a Christian religious festival.

As for the Sunday School activity, the Christmas Truces can be interpreted as a momentary glimpse of Paul’s vision for the church as it is meant to be where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, explaining that a 1914 equivalent of these First Century national enemies would be ‘neither German nor Frenchman nor Britons.’ This approach could also address the

dissonance here revealed in propaganda posters in slide 7 – that the churches of 1914 arguably forgot this vision and lined up behind their respective governments.



Appendix IV: Poem

WE INTERRUPT THIS WAR

*We interrupt this war to exchange Christmas gifts,
Sing carols, and play football in no-man's land.*

*We interrupt this war for doctors to heal,
teachers to teach, and students to learn.*

*We interrupt this war to marvel at sunsets,
listen to music, and to laugh.*

*We interrupt this war for poets to rhyme, sculptors to
chisel, and writers to paint pictures with words.*

*We interrupt this war to plant tomatoes, mow
the grass, and to smell the roses.*

*We interrupt this war to feed the hungry, build
new schools, and to stamp out ignorance.*

*We interrupt this war to clean up the air, save
the whales and to find a cure for cancer.*

*We interrupt this war to wash the dishes,
tickle babies and for world peace.*

*We interrupt this war for PTA meetings, band
practice, and high school graduations.*

*We interrupt this war for Girl Guide cookies,
church bake sales, and the Paralympics.*

*We interrupt this war for Legoland, the
World Cup and the Great North Run.*

*We interrupt this war for bonfire toffee,
Christmas crackers, and Bank Holiday barbecues.*

*We interrupt this war for office parties,
Advent Calendars, and silly Santa hats.*

*We interrupt this war to bring sons,
daughters, sisters and brothers home.*

*We interrupt this war to decorate the tree,
and welcome the babe in the manger.*

*We interrupt this war to hear a message from
Our Sponsor: THOU SHALT NOT KILL.*

Based on a poem by Cappy Hall Rearick – 2001 (modified to fit with the context)



Appendix V: Further reading

Resources cited in the pack

The Iona Community worship book. Rev. ed. Glasgow: Wild Goose, 1991.

Bell, George K.A. 1946. The church's function in war-time. In *The Church and Humanity*. London: Longman, Green and Co., p.23.

Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*.

King, Martin Luther, Jr. (1981) 'The knock at midnight', in: *Strength to Love*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Lloyd-Jones, D. Martyn. 2003. *Why Does God Allow War?* Wheaton, Illinois, Crossway Books.

Paynter, Neil. *Holy Ground: liturgies and worship resources for an engaged spirituality*. Glasgow: Wild Goose, 2005.

Stott, John. 1996. *The Message of 1 Timothy and Titus, The Bible Speaks Today*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press.

On the Christmas Truces

The book by Brown and Seaton is regarded as the most authoritative scholarly text on the truces; Ashworth shows how truces, fraternization and tacit agreements characterised much combatant behaviour throughout the war, rather than being an exception. Arthur's book is mostly excerpts from diaries and letters compiled by date and incident. Weintraub's mixes scholarship with popular culture, and would make a good stocking-filler for non-historians.

Arthur, Max. *Forgotten Voices of the Great War*. London: Ebury, 2002.

Ashworth, Tony. *Trench Warfare 1914-1918: The Live and Let Live System*. Pan Grand Strategy. London: Macmillan, 1980

Brown, Malcolm, and Shirley Seaton. *Christmas Truce: The Western Front, December 1914*. Pan Grand Strategy. London: Macmillan, 1999.

Weintraub, Stanley. *Silent Night: the story of the World War I Christmas truce*. New York: Free Press, 2001.

Preaching on the subject of war

These four books are collections of sermons largely tackling the subject of war. The first two are from liberal traditions, the second two Reformed/Evangelical.

Moltmann, Jürgen. 1983. *The Power of the Powerless*. London: SCM.

Franklin, R. William, and Mary Sudman Donovan. 2003. *Will the Dust Praise You? Spiritual Responses to 9/11*. New York: Church Publishing Incorporated.

Lloyd-Jones, Martyn. 2003. *Why Does God Allow War?* Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books.

Megoran, Nick. 2007. *The War on Terror: How Should Christians Respond?* Nottingham: InterVarsity Press.

Remembering the war

This accessible book shows the origins of 'Remembrance Sunday' in Armistice Day after World War I. It reminds the church leader that public commemoration is always political and contested. Recommended to help church leaders reflect on the practice of war commemoration in their own churches.

Gregory, Adrian. 1994. *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day 1919-1946*. Oxford: Berg.

Churches and the war

These three books explore the response of churches to the First World War. Hoover's is particularly recommended as it contains insights into how both British and German churches (mis)used the Bible to support 'their side' in the war.

Hoover, A.J. 1989. *God, Germany, and Britain in the Great War: A Study in Clerical Nationalism*. London: Praeger.

Jenkins, Phillip. 2014. *The Great and Holy War: How World War 1 Changed Religion Forever*. London: Lion.

Marrin, Albert. 1974. *The Last Crusade: The Church of England in the First World War*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke.

Books for children

Michael Foreman's book is beautifully illustrated (in some editions) and could be used to illustrate a talk for older children. Carol Ann Duffy's moving poem, accurately indicating many elements of the truce and including German phrases from carols, prayers, scripture readings etc. that featured in the truces. Less disturbing than the Foreman book for younger children.

Duffy, Carol Ann. *The Christmas Truce*, 2011.

Foreman, Michael. *The War Game: From Village Green to No-Man's Land*, 2006 (re-issue due 2014). TLS described this as 'a masterpiece'. Some editions are beautifully illustrated.

Websites

Christmas Truce 1914: Operation Plum Puddings - <http://www.christmastruce.co.uk/about.html>

This site contains numerous examples of letters home from troops who witnessed the truces, and is organised via region allowing pupils to be directed to the accounts of people from near their home area. This allows church leaders to tailor a service with examples specific to their region.




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www.mlkpc.org

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