

Autumn is here, leaves in a kaleidoscope of colours are tumbling around me as I walk the dog, the sun on my back as warm as on any summer's day, but the days are getting shorter. The first half term of a new school year is over and the shops are bursting with Christmas goods to tempt us, even though we have four more weeks until Advent (the time of preparation for the Christmas miracle) begins. The end of October into early November is a time of remembering in the church calendar and the period between the Feasts of All Saints and All Souls and the Feast of Christ the King is often called Kingdom Season. In churches using vestments, the colour of the Priest's stole and chasuble and of church altar frontals and cloths changes to red for the four weeks of November in these final weeks of the Church's year.

The Feast of All Saints is 1st November, but kept by the church on the nearest Sunday, so this year on 3rd. We remember with thanksgiving those holy people whose lives have followed the pattern of loving service and humility set by Christ and serve as an example to us today. The following day, 2nd November, is All Souls Day, which we keep in the afternoon on the nearest Sunday, giving thanks for all our departed loved ones at a reflective act of worship in Findon Church. The secular consumer-led celebration of Halloween has its roots in All Hallows Eve, which was traditionally a jolly country festival of songs, stories and mummers plays before the seriousness of All Saints and All Souls on the following days. Sadly, the American influence has spread over here with 'Trick or Treating' upsetting some elderly folk living alone and potentially also putting our youngsters at risk as they go unsupervised from door to door. The decorations using pumpkins (originally carved to keep 'bad spirits' away from the home) have grown to include plastic skeletons and spiders that add to our imprint on the natural world in our household refuse. Whilst I am all for children having fun, this is one custom that appears to have got out of hand!

The final part of this season of remembering comes on the Sunday closest to 11th November, Remembrance Sunday, when the busy world is hushed for 2 minutes as we stand in silence for 2 minutes to remember all those who have lost their lives, or had their lives drastically changed, through the ravages of war. We will gather at the end of our worship in Findon Church at the War Memorial outside at 11am, as we remember how the 1st World War ended at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month 1919 (Armistice Day). Traditionally, signalled by the firing of the Noon Gun on Signal Hill, one minute was a time of thanksgiving for those who had returned alive, the second minute was to remember the fallen. Poppy wreaths are laid at War Memorials across the country and overseas to remember those who have died fighting for our freedom in the two World Wars and subsequent conflicts. The poppy was chosen for its bright red colour, reflecting the poppies growing on Flanders fields where so many soldiers lost their lives and many people wear these during the weeks before Remembrance Sunday as a mark of respectful remembering. Other colours are also available; purple to remember animals who lost their lives in conflict, black to commemorate the contribution made by black, African and Caribbean communities and white for remembering those who died but seeking future peace instead of war.

Finally this month, for some light relief, we invite you to join us for a concert of Sussex through the year, celebrated in song and verse, led by the folk group Cotillion, on Friday 8th November at 7.30pm. Tickets at £6 still available from the Rectory or Peckham's Butcher. Let me know if you need a lift to the church.

Every blessing,

Helena