

## Monthly Letter, November 2020

From the Bishop of Sherborne, Karen Gorham



November is a time for remembrance and 11am on 11<sup>th</sup> is always a poignant time as the nation stops for 2 minutes to remember those who have lost their lives in war. Last month I was walking by the South West Coastal path in Dorset, and I heard two boys speaking as they were running towards the cliff edge, what they said shocked me. One warned the other not to go too close to the edge of the cliff, and the other said 'What a perfect way to die!' They then proceeded to sing a song by Alicia Keys. That song itself is about a victim of gun crime, about his death and those left behind. It is interesting that if you put the words of the song into a certain search engine, the number for the Samaritans comes up on screen.

What is life, when we have become somewhat immune to death? It is tragic that even children are wondering what the point of it all is and when we look back at the numbers of those killed in war – 20 million in the first world war, and 70 – 85 million in the second world war, and 17 million in the holocaust, it is easy to skate over them.

Covid-19 is making us all think, and I hope it helps us think differently. So far over 1 million people have died, and every death is someone's child, parent, grandparent, brother or sister. Life is precious as we protect ourselves, and our neighbours particularly the elderly and the most vulnerable. Everyone is made in God's image, and death is definitely not nothing at all, as we are discovering as we anger over not being able to visit loved ones in nursing homes and are so grateful to those who have held hands of relatives dying in hospital.

Many have found comfort at such a time from a prayer, anointing with oil or holding a cross in their hands, because God's love promises much more than sentimental songs. Christians stand alongside those in the trenches, those in hospital, those at the graveside because life is precious, death is hard and hope eternal.

Let us take the opportunity to make November a month when we truly remember everyone who had died and enable our local communities to remember too, not just with the sounds of bugles and silence, but by reminding people of God's promises, that everyone is special and 'that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord'. Romans 8:38,39