



**A Vigil on the 83rd Anniversary
of the Coventry Blitz
14th November 1940**



***In the Ruins of
Coventry Cathedral
14th November 2023, 6pm***

On the 14th and 15th November 1940, over five hundred and fifty people were killed in bombing raids on Coventry. As we gather, we listen to some of their names read out. The recording is courtesy of Derek Nisbet of Talking Birds.

Welcome

The Dean of the Cathedral, the Very Reverend John Witcombe, says,

We meet in the presence of God
to remember those who died in the Coventry blitz
eighty-three years ago;
to pray for those suffering in conflicts today
and to commit ourselves to working for peace.
We meet with confidence that we, and all humanity,
are known to God and precious to God;
that God hears our cries and is attentive to them.

Listen to what God says:

‘Can a woman forget her nursing child,
or show no compassion for the child of her womb?
Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.
See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.’

Isaiah 49:15 - 16

Let us pray:

Loving God,
as the survivors of the Coventry blitz become fewer and frailer,
we thank you that you recall the events of that terrible night
as if it were only yesterday;
that you continue to hold in your care all those who died,
or who were injured, orphaned, or traumatised.
Help us to remember, not only to honour the past,
but also to recommit ourselves for the present,
that we might be those who work and pray for peace.

All: **Amen.**

Song

Rob Halligan, singer-songwriter and member of the Cathedral congregation, sings a version of Psalm 23. We are invited to join with him in singing, if we wish.

**The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
He makes me lie in pastures green.
He leads me by the still, still waters,
His goodness restores my soul.**

**And I will trust in You alone,
And I will trust in You alone,
For Your endless mercy follows me,
Your goodness will lead me home.**

**He guides my ways in righteousness,
And He anoints my head with oil,
And my cup, it overflows with joy,
I feast on His pure delights.**

**And though I walk the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one,
For You are with me, and Your rod and staff
Are the comfort I need to know.**

Words cf. Psalm 23

Tune by Stuart Townend (b. 1963)

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We remember

Ruined and Rebuilt

The Dean reads an extract from 'Ruined and Rebuilt', Provost Dick Howard's memoir of the bombing of Coventry Cathedral, and the building of the new Cathedral.

Surviving the Blitz

The Reverend Canon Mary Gregory, Canon for Arts and Reconciliation, interviews Ken Barber, a volunteer at Coventry Cathedral's Blitz Museum and, himself, a survivor of the blitz.

Naming

We listen to more of Derek Nisbet's recording of the names of those who died on the 14th - 15th November 1940. As we do, candles are lit, one for every five victims. You may also like to switch on the torches on your phones, and hold them up.

Song

Rob Halligan sings his setting of the Coventry Litany of Reconciliation.

*For the hatred that divides us
race from race and class from class,
and the covetous desire
for things that are not ours;
for the greed that takes advantage
and for laying waste the earth -
Father, forgive.
Father, forgive.
Father, forgive.*

*For our envy of our neighbour
and their good fortune that we see;
for our indifference to the captive,
the homeless and the refugee;
for the lust that brings dishonour
and the pride that steals our peace -
Father, forgive.
Father, forgive.
Father, forgive.*

*Be kind to one another
and tender in your heart,
forgiving one another
as Christ forgave you*

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We pledge ourselves for peace

Bible Reading

¹ The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
² to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
³ to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.
⁴ They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

Isaiah 61:1 – 4

Reflection

We listen to the Reflection given by the Reverend Canon Mary Gregory.

Prayers for Peace

The Dean leads us in prayer.

To Gaza and to Israel,
God give peace.

All: **God give peace.**

To Ukraine and to Russia,
God give peace.

All: **God give peace.**

To South Sudan,
God give peace.

All: **God give peace.**

To Myanmar, Burkina Faso and Mozambique
God give peace.

All: **God give peace.**

May the displaced return home,
may the hungry be fed,
may the injured find healing,
may the exhausted find rest.
And may children rediscover joy,
and learn to play again.

Instead of war,
may their lessons be of imagination and of kindness.
God give peace.

All: **God give peace.**

Amen.

Coventry Cathedral's Together for Hope Pledge

All: For love, which heals wounds,
we will stand.

All: For generosity, which opens space for hope,
we will stand.

All: For nurturing, which builds a culture of peace,
we will stand.

All: For compassion, which seeks the best for all,
we will stand.

All: For respect, which enables us to love with difference,
we will stand.

All: For humility, which allows healthy relationships with others,
we will stand.

All: Together for hope,
we will stand.

Song

Led by Rob Halligan, we sing:

**Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father;
there is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
as Thou hast been, Thou forever wilt be.**

Great is Thy faithfulness!

Great is Thy faithfulness!

***Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed Thy hand hath provided:
great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!***

**Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest;
sun, moon, and stars in their courses above
join with all nature in manifold witness
to Thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.**

**Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow:
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!**

Words by Thomas Chisholm (1866-1960)

Tune CP 453 Great is thy faithfulness W.M. Runyan (1870-1957)

The Blessing

The Dean prays for God's blessing.

The peace of God,
which surpasses all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds
in the knowledge and love of God,
and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.
And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

All: **Amen.**

On the 14th and 15th November 1940, over five hundred and fifty people were killed in the bombing raids on Coventry. As we begin to leave, we listen to some of their names read out. The recording is courtesy of Derek Nisbet of Talking Birds.