

SERMON PREACHED AT ST ANDREW'S WALKERVILLE ON APRIL 23, 2017
(ANZAC COMMEMORATION SUNDAY) BY THE REV'D STUART LANGSHAW -
LOCUM TENENS PRIEST.

In the Old Testament, the people were adept at creating monuments and devising ceremonies to remind them of important events in their national life. There is the account of the Hebrews' crossing the River Jordan, and entering the Promised Land under Joshua's leadership. To mark the occasion they chose 12 men each to collect a decent-sized rock from the bed of the river, and form those 12 rocks into a small monument at their first camp site in the new land. Joshua 4: 6 says, "... when your children ask in times to come, 'What do those stones mean to you?' Then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord ...so these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial for ever."

Ceremonies, too, were devised to remind the people of important events. The Feast of the Passover that originated with Moses – right down to 2017 – is a ceremony to remind Jewish people that once they were slaves in Egypt, but now they are free.

Monuments, statues, buildings, works of art, photographs rituals, gatherings, marches forms of words, songs, tunes all are used by us humans to remember important events, and for those with a special, individual relationship to an important event, not only a reminder, but an *experience of re-living that event* - - hearing the sounds once again, smelling the smells once again, in our minds' eye seeing the location and faces of those with whom we shared the event.

Look around us here at St Andrew's. The memorial board at the back of the church of previous incumbents does all those things we've mentioned for those who experienced the ministries here of Cecil Eggleton, Leonard Goggs, Tom Jones and Martin Bleby. The plaques we have on the walls that mention the names of previous parishioners help us to remember them, to remind us of their fellowship and service here – in the Sacristy there is a small plaque to Joan Clift, and there's a bottle of Joan's special furniture polish that is still being used to feed the timber in our sanctuary furniture. Many remember her with affection and thankfulness, and can see her now in their mind's eye.

Look around your own home - your photos and souvenirs of places you've visited and people you've known; those recipes handed down from one generation to another; that tie or that scarf that a parent may have worn, and that you wear occasionally; and that perfume or After-Shave fragrance that is a strong, poignant reminder of a member of your family. At baptisms I encourage the families to take lots of photos and to provide a baptism candle, so that, on the anniversary of the child's baptism, the candle can be lit again and the photos can be looked at, and the story of the baptism day can be re-told, and memories of the baptism day be refreshed.

The gift of memory is a precious gift. Our ability to re-live events is a valuable ability. Our photos and mementos of people, places and events are important springboards for our remembering.* Remembering grows into appreciation of

those people, places and events. Remembering can grow even more deeply into determination to perpetuate aspects of those things by practising them in our lives today.

The commemorations of the Anzac event are of special importance to us in Australia. Men of various ages ... some of them cheekily young ... volunteered to go to Gallipoli to fight for the defence of the British Empire, and by extension, to fight for the defence of their families back in Australia. In military terms Gallipoli may have been a defeat, but its heritage for all of us Australians is significant. This year, the War Memorial on North Terrace; the wearing of medals, Rosemary, the march, Last Post and Rouse, the words of the Ode, the fellowship with mates from days as servicemen and women; gatherings at dawn on Anzac Day with Australian families ... all these things - monuments and ceremonies - help us to remember for some people, to remember with deep emotion the important events of previous wars. Remembering grows into our appreciation of those events and people. And remembering can grow even more deeply into a determination to perpetuate the peace that was defended, by living in peace wherever we are, and to perpetuate the peace by speaking in peace in what we say and how we say it, and to perpetuate the peace by having an attitude of peace in our relationships and in our dealings with others.

If there is one thing we all crave, it is peace ... peace of heart ... peace of mind ... peace with others. This Anzac Commemoration service is a good time for us to consider the value of peace and why we so desire it.

Remember Jesus' words - "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you. Not as the world gives do I give unto you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." (John 14:27). I'm afraid that these words would not sound well to Christian in Syria - in Mosul and other places where there is no peace.

Peace is what everyone seeks - the refugee who goes to another place away from war to seek peace - the Australian householder who lives peaceably with neighbours and acquaintances. The peace that the world gives is always tenuous, under threat. The latest posturing of the latest national leader leads to another national leader also posturing - and the peace that the world offers seems to be fragile.

The peace that Jesus Christ offers is an inner, spiritual peace - peace of heart - peace in our souls. While that peace comes under pressure from all sorts of circumstances, yet the Jesus sort of peace endures. Jesus spoke these words about peace to his countrymen whose nation was under the rule of the Romans - an invading army. Even so Jesus said, "My peace I give to you."

Today as we commemorate people's loving sacrifices, let our meditation, let our mantra be, "Christ's peace ... Christ's peace ... Christ's peace." And not only our meditation and mantra, but also let our determination and our daily practice be "Christ's peace ... Christ's peace ... Christ's peace."

*Jesus said about the bread and wine of Holy Communion - "Do this in remembrance of me."