

ST MARY'S CHURCH WEDMORE

A SERVICE TO COMMEMORATE  
THE EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE END OF  
THE SECOND WORLD WAR



AUGUST 15<sup>TH</sup> 2025

10.00 A.M.

## The Greeting and Introduction

Minister Heaviness may endure for a night:

**All But joy comes in the morning.**

God has been our refuge and our strength:

**All A present help in time of trouble.**

Dear friends, we have come together on this day to commemorate the anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

We come together conscious of our need for God's forgiveness for the sin and the desire to dominate others that leads to conflict between people, and war between nations.

And as we remember the many soldiers, sailors, and airmen who gave their lives restraining evil and opposing tyranny, so we also come in thanksgiving for those who continue to strive for peace on this continent. We gather joyfully today, as those who gathered on that first VJ Day, glad of each other's company, and grateful for the laughter and love that follows times of sadness and loss.

But above all things, let us pray that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven, as we join our voices together and say:

**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, the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

**Hymn                      73                      Brother Sister, Let Me Serve You**

**Bible Reading    2 Corinthians 5.16-21    The call to be reconciled**

Minister Your salvation is near to those who fear you,

**All that glory may dwell in our land.**

Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.  
**that glory may dwell in our land.**

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.

**Your salvation is near to those who fear you, that glory may dwell in our land.**

## **The Sermon**

### **Prayers**

#### **A prayer for the 80th anniversary of VJ Day**

God of the nations,  
our refuge and our dwelling place,  
we remember with thanksgiving  
those whose service achieved Allied victory in the Pacific,  
and hold before you all those who suffered  
from the devastation and trauma of war.  
May their memory inspire us  
to learn from the atrocities of the past  
and to pursue peace, justice and reconciliation  
in our own generation;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

#### **For those who served and died in World War II**

O God of truth and justice,  
we hold before you those men and women who have died in active service, particularly in the Second World War.  
As we honour their courage and cherish their memory, may we put our faith in your future;  
for you are the source of life and hope, now and for ever.

**Amen.**

#### **For those who serve today**

O Lord God of Hosts,  
stretch forth, we pray, your almighty arm  
to strengthen and protect our service men and women. Support them in times of conflict,  
and in their rest and training keep them safe from all evil; endue them with courage and loyalty;  
and grant that in all things they may serve without reproach; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## **For the peace of the world**

O God, who would fold both heaven and earth in a single peace;  
that the design of your great love lighten upon the waste of our wraths and sorrows  
and give peace to your church, peace among nations, peace in our dwellings and peace in  
our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## **Act of Commitment**

Minister Let us pledge ourselves anew to the service of God and our fellow men and  
women: that we may help, encourage and comfort others, and support those  
working for the relief of the needy and for the peace and welfare of the nations.

**All Lord God our Father,**  
**we pledge ourselves to serve you and all humankind,**  
**in the cause of peace,**  
**for the relief of want and suffering,**  
**and for the praise of your name.**  
**Guide us by your Spirit; give us wisdom;**  
**give us courage; give us hope;**  
**and keep us faithful now and always.**  
**Amen.**

O Lord our God,  
as we remember, teach us the ways of peace.  
As we treasure memories, teach us to hope.  
As we give thanks for the sacrifices of the past,  
help us to make your future in this world,  
until your kingdom come.  
**Amen.**

**Hymn                      354                      Now Thank We All Our God**

## **The National Anthem**

## **The Blessing**

Minister God grant to the living, grace; to the departed, rest;  
to the Church, the King, the Commonwealth,  
and all people, peace and concord;  
and to us and all his servants, life everlasting;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
come down upon you and remain with you always.

**All Amen.**

## Memories of VJ Day

### Frank Colenso RAF

"To us serving in Burma, the announcement of a ceasefire to be effective on 15 Aug 1945 meant a miraculous finish to a struggle lasting over three years. Two atomic bombs, on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, had brought about Japan's surrender.

"On Toungoo airfield, 140 miles from Rangoon, 150 miles from Meiktila, I was serving as an airframe fitter on detachment from 3 Repair and Salvage Unit (Mobile) RAF in support of 155 Squadron RAF. That morning the squadron Spitfires continued strafing and bombing the Japanese army vainly attempting to escape annihilation, often returning from only 20-minute flights to rearm and refuel.

"Beside the airfield a battery of long-range guns of the Royal Artillery kept up a deafening bombardment into the hills, only pausing to allow our Spitfires to land – then resuming firing salvo after salvo right up to the 11am ceasefire.

"Suddenly the incessant noise of the morning's action stopped. The last aircraft landed, taxied away, parked and cut their engines. The silence was awesome, not a sound to be heard, leaving me with the dawning realisation that, at last, the war was over.

"Close by the airfield, our small tented camp was approached by a track made from hundreds of steel boxes which had contained rockets, but which now made an all-weather surface in the monsoon rains. Our cook clattered over them in a three-ton lorry bringing our rations, and we soon unloaded everything.



*Frank enjoying some down time in Burma. © Helen Davies.*

"It was an excessive amount for the 16 of us, with the rum ration allowing one bottle between four people. That was a memorable evening meal, and my diary said: 'A big do with bags of hooch and everyone merry and singing.' The next day's entry read: 'Day off. Everyone has hangover troubles, one or two merry all day from last night.'

### **David Mannock (aged 4 in 1945)**

I don't remember VE Day, but I do certainly remember VJ Day. It was a beautiful summer's day and there was a street party with tables arranged along the road loaded with food and drinks of all descriptions. Everyone in the road was seated at these tables and eating and drinking happily. There was a photographer from the local paper taking pictures and I had my picture in the paper.

My father made orange squash in a galvanised bath and served it to all who wanted it. He also brought my garden slide out into the road and let all the local children have a go on it.

Later people were doing the conga up and down the road and having a fun sports session. We lived at a crossroads and when it was dark a bonfire was lit there, musical instruments or gramophones provided music for people to dance around the fire late into the night.

### **Stanley Jones (aged 11 in 1945)**

Trowbridge Park has always been the place where the townspeople meet on special occasions - be it sad or glad - and on the Sunday following VJ Day once again a service was held, led by dignitaries from the bandstand. I think however that this was rather curtailed by heavy rain and we spent a large part of the time sheltering under the trees.

So the war had ended, but my abiding memory - I have mentioned this before - is not of VJ Day but the night before. The surrender of Japan was announced very late on the radio and my dad came upstairs to my bedroom and said, 'It's all over'. I turned over and went to sleep - I could not remember a more peaceful night. No more fighting, interrupted nights, bombs. Peace had come.

### **Elaine Penn Cheverton (serving with Women's Auxiliary Service in Burma)**

"I think that everybody felt 'had it all been worth it?' I think they felt elated that the war was over and they could start thinking about normal life again but I don't think they had any strong feelings of victory. It all seemed so unworthwhile really. There was a feeling that in Europe they didn't appreciate, you know, that nothing very much was made of our VJ day."

### **Mohammed Ismail Khan, Pakistani Indian Officer (captured in Singapore 1942 and a POW in Seletar Camp)**

"I was walking along the barbed wire... outside the Seletar camp when a man was sidling up and was giving me 'thumbs up' all the time, gleefully. So I suspected that something must have been happening outside. And next day after this, again I was sitting watching the skies when a P38 American fighter turned up. That was a delightful sight, absolutely. Officers were sitting there receiving it with mute jubilation while men away from us in their barracks, they were cheering wildly."