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**RESOURCES TO HELP COMMEMORATE
THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME, 1st July 1916
CENTENARY**

The following Scripture readings, prayers and hymn suggestions may be used in your commemorative service at your discretion. These are suggestions only, what matters most is that your service suits you and your congregational context.

Somewhere in the region of 26,000 Presbyterians served during World War 1, with many of their names recorded for posterity in the book ‘The Presbyterian Church in Ireland Roll of Honour 1914-1919’.

The Battle of the Somme began on 1st July 1916. There were more than one million casualties (on both sides) by the time it ended, after 141 days, on 18th November 1916.

The 36th (Ulster) Division suffered more than 5,000 casualties - 2,069 of whom were killed on 1st July.

The Rt. Rev. Nigel McCulloch, head of remembrance at the Royal British Legion commented that the Battle of the Somme had "come to symbolise the tragic scale and futility of modern industrialised warfare". He said losses were felt by almost every community in the UK and Commonwealth. "Their collective sacrifice is as relevant today as ever, but in this centenary year we pay special tribute to their service".

The Battle of the Somme was fought at such cost that it has come to symbolise the tragic futility of the First World War. The first day of the conflict remains the bloodiest day in the history of the British Army.

This Somme Centenary provides an opportunity to commemorate the service and sacrifice of those who lost their lives in the battle, to reflect upon the human cost of conflict and to have prayerful hope for a more peaceful world.

**Service Suggestions**

You might consider a ‘zero hour’ service at 7.30am, the time the men went over the top from their trenches into ‘no man’s land’ on Friday, 1st July or include an Act of Remembrance or a suitable reflection during the Sunday service following it.

**Scripture Readings**

Many of the Psalms such as the 23rd, 91st, 93rd, 103rd and 121st are recorded as being read by Chaplains and/or Soldiers before going into battle. Psalm 91 is sometimes known as the ‘Soldiers Psalm’.

You might even choose to sing an appropriate Metrical Psalm.

**Other Appropriate Scripture Readings:**

Isaiah 2:2-4

Isaiah 9:2-7

John 15:13

2 Corinthians 4:6-11

Revelation 7:9-17

**Prayer**

Eternal God, you are our refuge and strength in times of trouble.

On this day we remember before you

all who experienced the battle at the Somme:

those who faced the terrible carnage and devastation,

who fought against all the odds, enduring the clinging mud,

and the squalor of the trenches.

We recall with thanksgiving the loyalty shown amongst soldiers and

the bravery of those who overcame their fear,

the courage of those who daily faced the pounding of artillery, gun-fire and shrapnel.

May we never forget the devastating loss of this battle,

the sacrifices that were made,

the grieving of the many who lost loved ones,

and the impact it had upon this island of Ireland.

Through our remembrances today, strengthen our resolve

to love our neighbours as ourselves

and to speak your word of peace in times of conflict and insecurity.

Give us strength to face the future, humility and wisdom to learn from the past,

as we remember those who have given their lives in the service of peace and justice.

This we ask in the name of the Prince of peace,

our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Suggested Hymns**

Records of World War One Chaplains note the following hymns as often sung by Soldiers at the Front:

IPH 67 ‘Jesus, Lover of my Soul’

IPH 74 ‘Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me’

IPH 207/8 ‘How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds’

IPH 427 ‘When I Survey the Wondrous Cross’

Revised Ed. Hymnary 707 ‘Safe in the Arms of Jesus’

**Other Appropriate Hymns**

IPH 85 ‘God is Our Strength and Refuge’ (Psalm 46)

IPH 107 ‘Lead Us, Heavenly Father Lead Us’

IPH 136 ‘O God our Help in Ages Past’

IPH 604 ‘God, as with Silent Hearts We Bring to Mind’ (Tune: Supreme Sacrifice)

IPH 605 ‘God of Grace and God of Glory’

IPH 613 ‘Who can Sound the Depths of Sorrow’

IPH 615 ‘Christ is the World’s True Light’

IPH 617 ‘For the Healing of the Nations’

IPH 618 ‘God Give Us Peace that Lasts’

IPH 661 ‘Abide with Me’

IPH 666 ‘For all the Saints, who from their Labours Rest’

**The Act of Remembrance**

Let us remember before God those who have died for their country in war; those whom we knew, and whose memory we treasure; and all who have lived and died in the service of mankind.

**The Exhortation**

They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old:

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning

We will remember them.

(All)

We will remember them.

**Last Post**

**Two Minute Silence**

**Reveille**

**The Dedication**

When you go home, tell them of us and say

For your tomorrow, we gave our today.

*Kohima Epitaph*

**Further Resources**

A special pack including liturgical materials, a DVD/CDROM with music, video clips and photographs amongst other resources is available to order from the British Legion at:

[www.rbl.org.uk/somme100](http://www.rbl.org.uk/somme100)