

Holocaust Memorial Day 2020

Stand Together



HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
DAY 27/1

**'Don't be content in your life just to do no wrong,
be prepared every day to try and do some good.'**

*Sir Nicholas Winton, who rescued 669 children from
Nazi-occupied-Europe*

***A resource for churches
produced by the
the Council of Christians and Jews***



What is Holocaust Memorial Day?

27 January is the day for everyone to remember the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust, and the millions of people killed under Nazi Persecution, and in the genocides which followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Darfur.

27 January marks the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi death camp. In 2020 we will commemorate the 75th anniversary.

In the UK, thousands of local events and activities take place every year – each one an opportunity for people to reflect on those whose lives were changed beyond recognition, and to challenge prejudice, discrimination, and hatred in our own society today.

On HMD, we all have a role to play to ensure that we learn the lessons of the past, to create a safer, better future.

How to use this resource

This resource is produced by the Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ) with the support of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (HMDT). It is designed for use by Christians in a worship setting on Holocaust Memorial Day or a Sunday close to Holocaust Memorial Day. It is not a complete service liturgy but it includes a suggested liturgy for an act of commemoration within Christian worship. Commentaries are provided on the readings set for Sunday 26 January 2020, referencing the theme for Holocaust Memorial Day 2020: *Stand Together*.

The resource can be adapted as necessary for your own context, however it is hoped that it will provide inspiration and guidance so that church communities can remember the Holocaust, Nazi persecution, and subsequent genocides as a fundamental part of their Christian witness and discipleship.

CCJ is grateful to alumni of their annual seminars at the International School of Holocaust Studies, Yad Vashem, who have contributed to this resource.

Outline of the resource

This resource follows the below structure. Please use it as you see fit for your community.

- A message from the Chief Rabbi
- A message from the Archbishop of Canterbury
- How should Christians observe Holocaust Memorial Day?
- Prayers
- Poetry
- Testimonies you can read aloud
- Stories of the Righteous among the Nations
- Reflections on the lectionary for 26 January 2020
- Questions to consider and further resources



Pictured: The memorial to the deportees, Yad Vashem

A message from the Chief Rabbi

Urban legend has it that the great Jewish violinist, Itzhak Perlman, was once performing to a packed theatre on Broadway, when one of his strings unexpectedly snapped with an audible twang. The audience held its breath, expecting the end of the performance or, at the very least, a break whilst a new instrument would be found. But, Perlman didn't bat an eyelid. He proceeded to do the impossible – to play the rest of the concerto almost flawlessly on three strings. In explaining the extraordinary feat after the performance, he is said to have remarked: 'sometimes in life, you have to make music with what is left.'

I think of these words often when I meet Holocaust survivors who invariably epitomise dignity and unshakable resolve.

In our modern age, we tend to recognise and reward those who run the fastest or jump the highest; people who are celebrated in the media for their talents in the arts or sciences – as well we should. But, it is important that we choose our heroes carefully.

The great Jewish sages famously ask the question 'Who is strong?' The answer, we are taught, is: 'those who overcome their inclinations'. None among us can begin to imagine how survivors must have felt as the Nazi regime eventually crumbled and they finally found their freedom. The sense of hopelessness and betrayal must have been overwhelming. There was not (and could never be) any rule book or prescribed structure for how people should rebuild their lives, having had every element of their humanity savaged. If one Holocaust survivor had somehow summoned the strength to overcome his or her ordeal and live a happy life, it would have been extraordinary. That so many survivors made it their mission to use their experiences to positively impact the world around them, is nothing short of a miracle. You have to make music with what is left.

Similarly inspiring are those individuals who were faced with every conceivable disincentive to help Jews. Politically, socially, culturally, and physically, it was made almost impossible to reach out and offer a lifeline to

the victims of the Holocaust. Yet, there were some extraordinary individuals who did so nonetheless.

To most people there would have been nothing remarkable about Frank Foley, a quiet, unassuming immigration official, working in the British Passport Control Office in Germany. In fact, he was Britain's most senior spy in Berlin – a devout Catholic man of unyielding principle, who is now known to have saved some 10,000 Jewish lives. He went to extraordinary lengths, at unimaginable risk to his own life, to hide victims and falsify documentation. When he passed away in 1958 he had not uttered a word about what he had achieved to anyone. It was only later that evidence of his heroism came to light and he was awarded the title "Righteous Among the Nations". He never considered himself a hero – he saw tragedy unfolding and simply did what he could to shine a little light in the darkness. You have to make music with what is left.

There is a great deal to be learned from the way that the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, responded to the first human tragedy. When Cain murdered Abel, his parents might have been forgiven for thinking that the experiment of human civilisation had failed and that all hope was lost. What did they say when they learnt of this catastrophe? Nothing. There is no record in the Bible of them having responded in any way at all, other than continuing with their lives, having another child and rebuilding their family. You have to make music with what is left.

We live in challenging times. Hate speech and hate crime are on the rise. Respect for difference appears to be declining. Our society is becoming increasingly polarised. So, what should our reaction be? To fight fire with fire? To match the hateful rhetoric with invective of our own?

I believe that we should look to the heroes of the Holocaust: both the survivors and the righteous saviours. We should not be intimidated or cowed. If they were able to make music with what was left, surely we can as well.

Despite all the challenges that contemporary society faces, I remain optimistic because of the work of organisations like the Council of Christians and Jews. Its work to cultivate dialogue, promote respectful engagement, even on the most challenging of topics, should provide us all with great cause for optimism. The theme of this year's Holocaust Memorial Day is *Stand*

Together. If you are reading this, it is because you have already made a commitment to stand together with the Jewish Community and with those of all faiths and none, in commemorating the Holocaust. For that, I offer you my deepest gratitude. By taking the time to learn about what can happen when hatred is left to develop unchecked, you have helped to ensure that it can never happen again.

The Holocaust is now 75 years – a lifetime – away, and the time when there will be no more survivors left to share their experiences draws ever closer. Let us resolve to stand together so that their legacy will be a society of optimism, cooperation, and compassion.

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth



The Chief Rabbi speaks at Lambeth Palace in December 2018 to mark the 80th anniversary of the start of the Kindertransport

A message from the Archbishop of Canterbury

The theme of Holocaust Memorial Day 2020, *Stand Together*, is both a sobering reminder to us as Christians as well as an encouraging inspiration.

The opposite sense of “standing together” might be to “stand by”: to watch from a distance, doing nothing. It goes to the heart of Christian discipleship, what it means to be a good neighbour, that we figuratively cross the road. Following Christ Jesus demands that we take action on behalf of someone else who is the object of hate or violence. When Jesus summarised God’s commandments into the twofold direction to ‘love God’ and ‘love your neighbour as yourself’, he was following a pattern of familiar rabbinical teaching. The biblical understanding of the sacredness of humanity, the image of God in each person, underpins this twofold challenge. Essentially, you cannot love God and hate your neighbour, and you cannot love your neighbour without loving God. When Jesus’ concept of the neighbour includes people that may be ethnically or religiously “other”, even the enemy, then we indeed have our work cut out.

It is this very “standing together”, that we believe God has done in Christ. God in Christ does not merely watch the world from afar, but enters into our stuff, is alongside us, feels with us, and is even prepared to die for us. This is the reality of ‘God with us’. The solidarity that this year’s Holocaust Memorial Day theme calls us to is thoroughly of a piece with the Christian story. It is fitting, then, that this calling is situated within Christian prayer and worship. We need God’s help and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to live lives worthy of the good news of Christ. Indeed, we need to approach this theme with genuine humility.

If we are completely honest with ourselves, solidarity on behalf of the other, the stranger, whoever they may be, disturbs our comfort. Thankfully, in the UK itself we are not currently expected to lose our lives for our faith, although we were in historic times, though many Christians around the world may face that choice daily. But we are still called to be alongside the suffering, the objects of hate, and risk material gain, privilege, or reputation in the process.

Some of us are familiar with Thomas Cranmer's words of confession in the Book of Common Prayer where we are encouraged to repent before God, first of all, for having 'left undone those things which we ought to have done'. Standing by is a sin.

To stand with our neighbours will mean that as Christians we may be called to speak against hatred of other religions. This Christian solidarity will seek the best of those that we may otherwise disagree with on matters of doctrine and belief. In a country struggling with deep political divisions, it may require of us to model respectful speech for those whose politics are very different to ours. At a time of rising hate speech on social media, and of far-right extremism, it will mean challenging racism or language that vilifies the refugee or asylum seeker.

I am inspired by the story of Corrie Ten Boom, the Dutch Christian woman who hid Jews from the Nazis in occupied Netherlands and is an emblem for so many of this year's theme. She was sent to a concentration camp where her sister died. Through all that suffering, though, Corrie Ten Boom persisted in a message of truth and forgiveness, whatever the cost. At the same time, I am ashamed of the long history of Christian antisemitism, and those moments when, even to this day, Christians have failed to speak out and have just stood by while others have suffered.

The Holocaust, the Shoah, remains a unique stain on the history of Europe, and a chilling reminder to me of how millennia of Christian anti-Jewish hatred could provide a seedbed for such evil. Let us use this 75th anniversary to come before God in worship, conscious of our need for forgiveness, but committed to action that would seek the common flourishing of all.

***The Most Revd and Rt Hon Justin Welby
Archbishop of Canterbury***



Archbishop Justin pictured at Yad Vashem in 2017

Standing Together in Memory

How should Christians mark the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz?

After nearly two years in hiding in Amsterdam, on 11 May 1944 15 year old Eva Schloss née Geiringer was suddenly arrested along with her family. They were taken for questioning at the Gestapo headquarters where Eva was brutally beaten for information.

Even in the midst of the tragedy of their betrayal, Eva recalled a profound act of courage and generosity. Her mother—in a bid to save the Reitsmas, the non-Jewish couple who had been hiding herself and Eva, and who had been arrested alongside them—offered to reveal to the Nazi guards the whereabouts of the family's hidden jewellery. In doing so, Eva's mother saved their protectors from further detention. A secret food store which the Nazis did not discover fed the Reitsmas throughout Holland's infamous Hunger Winter of 1944-45 when thousands of other Dutch civilians died. Even as Eva, her brother, and parents were led away to Westerbork Transit Camp, and from there to Auschwitz, her mother saved another's life and demonstrated how Jews and non-Jews could stand together.

The theme for Holocaust Memorial Day 2020 is *Stand Together*. On 27 January—when we commemorate 75 years since the liberation of Auschwitz—communities around the UK will join to remember the past and recommit for the future.

There are a number of things which Christians can do to mark this important date.

Firstly, we can remember those who, during the Holocaust, embodied the courage of standing together, even in the face of Nazi brutality.

Jane Haining was matron of the Girls' Home at the Church of Scotland Mission in Budapest. When she was ordered to return home to Scotland in 1940 she refused to leave the children in her care. As more and more Jewish refugees from across Europe fled to Hungary, Haining and the rest of the Mission helped many to prepare for their onward journeys elsewhere.

In April 1944, after the Nazi occupation of Hungary, she was arrested and charged with, amongst other things, working among Jews. She was deported to Auschwitz. Jane Haining's last letter read: 'Even here on the way to heaven are mountains, smaller than ours for sure—but just the same.' She died there in July 1944.

But for every remarkable story of courage and resistance, like Jane Haining's, there are far, far more stories of tragedy: of the consequences of individual and collective failure to stand together.

There are nearly 30,000 people who have been named by Yad Vashem—the World Holocaust Remembrance Centre in Jerusalem—as "Righteous among the Nations": non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. But the Holocaust occurred in predominantly Christian Europe. Millions more failed to stand together with their neighbours.

When the historian Martin Gilbert wrote to Holocaust survivors to ask for their stories of rescue and survival, Polish-born survivor, Ella Adler, replied: 'Thank you kindly for your recent letter inquiring as to whether I had experienced a kindness from a non-Jew during my four years of incarceration during the Holocaust years. Sorry to say that I personally do not recall any such kindness during that period.'

Eva Schloss' mother might have saved their Dutch rescuers, but it was a Nazi sympathiser who betrayed the family to the Gestapo and, ultimately, no one saved Eva's father or brother. They both died in Auschwitz.

So the second responsibility on Holocaust Memorial Day 2020 is to remember those who were murdered or who had their lives uprooted because their neighbours did not stand together with them.

We also remember genocides subsequent to the Holocaust. And holding all these genocides in memory together, we cannot fail but to think about the steps which led to genocide during the Holocaust and in Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Darfur.

75 years since the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps, the world is very different. But people continue to be demonised, persecuted, displaced, ignored, and murdered because they are different. Genocide continued to

occur after the Holocaust, antisemitism is at record levels, and prejudice is still allowed a place in our contemporary society because too often we fail to stand together ourselves.

In this context, the importance of standing together is evident. Just as in the Holocaust, standing together today has the potential to change—and even save—lives.

The historian Debórah Dwork wrote that ‘rescuers did not derail the Holocaust, but without them the number of Jews murdered would have been greater.’

There is a Talmudic principle that to save one life is to save the entire world. What little we can do matters a lot.

75 years ago Eva Schloss awoke at Auschwitz Birkenau. The Nazi guards had abandoned the concentration camp, forcing most on a death march. Eva was 15 years old. These are her own words, remembering that day:

‘When dawn broke [...] we were already deep in discussion about what to do and where to go. The conversation went round and round for what felt like hours. Suddenly, the door to the barrack flung open and a woman shouted, “There’s a bear at the gate—a bear!” This seemed unlikely, but in Birkenau anything was possible. Nervously we made our way down to the entrance and peered at the peculiar sight. Indeed, there was a “bear”. A large man covered in bearskins, staring back at us with the same startled expression. Perhaps I should have been more cautious, but all I felt at that moment was unrestrained joy. I ran into his arms, and hugged him. It was 27 January 1945, and Soviet forces had arrived to liberate us.’

Reflecting on the idea of standing together is not always so clear-cut. We should remember, which means to mourn the many victims as much as it does to celebrate the few heroes which we can name.

But sometimes—in history, memory, or everyday life—unexpectedly and inexplicably we ourselves are brought face to face with the opportunity to embody courage and love and to fulfil the deepest hope of a neighbour who

needs our help. For the Church, this can begin in our collective worship of a God in whose image all humankind is created and from whom nobody is turned away.

So 75 years since Eva's hug at the gates of Auschwitz, the Church is called to stand together with our neighbours in memory of the Holocaust and subsequent genocides. On Holocaust Memorial Day our collective remembering is a powerful declaration that the stories of those who were murdered and those who survived—sometimes because of the courage of their neighbours—will not be forgotten.

In doing so we will stand together as a collective symbol of the moral authority to challenge denial, untruth, and the roots of genocide—the hatred we can glimpse even today—and of our commitment, with 'unrestrained joy', to seize the possibility of a changed and better future.

Rob Thompson
Senior Programme Manager, CCJ



The Memorial to the Partisans, Yad Vashem

A prayer for Holocaust Memorial Day

As Presidents of the Council of Christians and Jews (CCJ), and in respect of the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, we ask our churches to join in the use of this prayer on the Sunday closest to Holocaust Memorial Day 2020.

The Rt Hon and Most Revd Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury

Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

His Eminence Nikitas Loulias, Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain

The Rt Revd Colin Sinclair, Moderator of the Church of Scotland

The Revd Dr Hugh Osgood, Moderator of the Free Churches

*Please invite the congregation to stand as they are able and to join in the words in **bold**.*

God of the past, present, and future, we remember today, 75 years since the liberation of Auschwitz, the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust, the millions of other victims of Nazi persecution, and all those who have been targeted and killed in subsequent genocides.

We remember those who, having survived genocide, share their stories with us:

We give thanks to You for the lessons of human stories, both in their suffering and in their joy.

We remember those who stood up against injustice and saved lives:

We give thanks to You for their example.

Together we acknowledge the sacrifice of those that stood together with those who suffered during the Holocaust and other genocides.

And we affirm that every life is loved by You and sacred.

Yet, during the Holocaust too many failed to stand together with their neighbours. Oppression stains Your world and contradicts Your love.

So we pray that You will inspire us now as we stand together on this day in the love that we know of God in Christ Jesus.

Let us commit to remembering:

And glorify God in our words and actions.

We make these prayers in the name of Christ Jesus who, through His life, death, and resurrection, journeys with us into the eternal hope of Your truth and light.

Amen.



Janusz Korczak Memorial, Yad Vashem

An opening prayer

God of all people everywhere,

You reveal yourself in myriad ways, speaking through different voices to enlighten our world and enrich our lives.

All are created in your image but, in the face of prejudice and persecution, too often we fail to stand together.

So we gather today in memory:

We remember the lives of those who were murdered in the Holocaust and subsequent genocides.

We give thanks for those who have courageously shared their stories.

We recommit ourselves to transform the world through your love.

Silence

A prayer of confession

For too long:
We walked different ways.
For too long:
We let what separates us define us.
For too long:
We turned a blind eye.
For far too long.

When it mattered so much, we did not stand with you.

We did not see the sights you saw, hear the sounds you heard, or feel the pain you felt, through persecution and hardship and unprecedented levels of brutal inhumanity.

But now we have listened:

We have come to walk more closely,
And we commit to a new relationship.

We are here to remember.

We recall the longed-for liberation, and now we seek justice and truth.

We did not walk with you into those dark places but we walk together now, we stand together now.

For it matters still.

We will stand together.

Jesus calls us to Stand Together: a litany

In the face of the classification of people as 'other',

Jesus calls us to stand together

In the face of people being singled out by labels,

Jesus calls us to stand together

In the face of discrimination

Jesus calls us to stand together

In the face of human beings being treated as less than human,

Jesus calls us to stand together

In the face of extremism,

Jesus calls us to stand together

In the face of the polarisation of cultures with the intention of creating opposition,

Jesus calls us to stand together

In the face of incitement to hatred,

Jesus calls us to stand together

In the face of persecution,

Jesus calls us to stand together

In the face of genocide,

Jesus calls us to stand together

In the face of denial of such atrocities as the Holocaust,

Jesus calls us to stand together

We stand together with Jesus, who came into the world so that everyone might have life in all its fullness.

Amen.

A prayer for use with young people

God of justice and of peace,

You call your people to stand together, in solidarity with those who suffer;

We remember before you in sorrow:

all who perished in the horror of the Holocaust,

all who were persecuted,

and all whose suffering continues;

Turn the hearts of all who persecute and oppress,

and of all who seek to divide;

Open our own hearts and minds, when they are closed in fear and hatred,

So that all your peoples may stand together and reflect your image

Amen

Notes for an all-age address

The theme of standing together offers a potential action as well as an attitude of the heart. An all age context invites us to start with acknowledging what the congregation has in common despite its variety. What does the unity of a church community look like and what does it mean?

One aspect of the variety may be their different experience and knowledge of persecution, hostility, and divisions within a community. Some will know about the Holocaust and some may know next to nothing. All, however, will know the feelings of being excluded or isolated, and the power of standing together (physically and symbolically).

Focus on what those feelings are – both when you are the victim and when you are the perpetrator – and encourage the congregation to own the darkness in all our hearts.

There are numerous stories of Jesus siding with the excluded (those with leprosy, tax collectors, the poor, for example) and of course being the excluded Himself, in lonely death on the cross. Share true stories about the Holocaust and subsequent genocides. Use these stories to grow empathy and see the Christian imperative to stand together.

You might return to the examples of isolating others and being isolated, and ask 'what would Jesus do?' Explore what practical steps a Christian might be called to take in such situations.

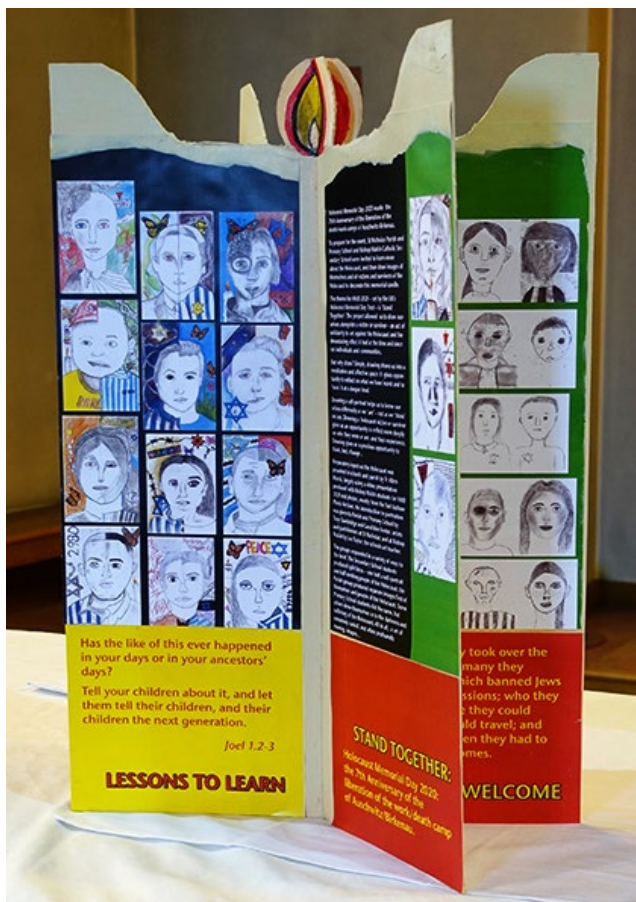
Closing Prayer

As we go from this house of prayer into a world of challenge and change,
We remember the pain of the past.

As we obey God's commandments and follow Christ's way.
We recognise the opportunity of the here and now.

As we seek the truth and glimpse God in all people and all places,
We stand together to transform the world through hope and in love.

Amen.



*Artwork prepared by the Boldmere
Parish and Schools, Sutton Coldfield,
in preparation for HMD 2020*

Poetry

First they came

First they came for the Communists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Communist
Then they came for the Socialists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Socialist
Then they came for the trade unionists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a trade unionist
Then they came for the Jews
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Jew
Then they came for me
And there was no one left
To speak out for me

Pastor Martin Niemoller

www.hmd.org.uk/resource/first-they-came-by-pastor-martin-niemoller

What if it were me?

I was walking through the park one day,
Pottering about in my usual way,
When I saw two surly youths staring at me,
Two surly youths, with a boy, pinned to a tree.
The youth called out, 'You got something to say?'
I bent my head low and went on my way.
But something stopped me, a sound, helpless and weak.
It got louder and turned into a shriek.
I stopped in my tracks, 'Who would help me?
What hope would I have were I pinned to a tree?'
I could now hear their taunts and jeers,
With words so foul that they burned my ears.
I turned on my heels and strode back to the tree.
Where the two boys stood, staring at me.
'It's wrong and disgraceful, what you have done here.
It's behaviour like this that spreads violence and fear.
Everyone's different; no two are the same,
To judge someone 'inferior' is cause for shame.
This isn't a game to share with a friend,
It's up to everyone to make racism end.'
The youths sulked off and I noted with glee,
That the boy was smiling, smiling, from under the tree.

Naomh Hannon (Written for HMD 2012 on Speak Up, Speak Out)

www.hmd.org.uk/resource/what-if-it-were-me

Testimonies you can read aloud

Susan Pollack grew up in Hungary and experienced antisemitism from a young age. In 1944 Susan was sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where she was separated from her family. After the war, she found out that more than 50 of her relatives had been killed and that only her brother had survived.



I was born in 1930 in Felsögöd, Hungary. My name was Zsuzsanna Blau. I lived with my mother and father and my brother, Laci. At home I enjoyed a very sheltered life, secure with my family. My father was my role model: a strong personality who was protective, reliable and caring.

I became aware of antisemitism in my hometown from a young age. From 1938, my brother Laci was affected by antisemitic laws. He had hoped to go to university, but a law restricted the number of Jewish students who could enter higher education, preventing him from attending.

Following the outbreak of the Second World War, antisemitism in my town became more visible, with anti-Jewish graffiti appearing on the streets. The situation got worse following the German invasion of Hungary in March 1944. We had to wear a yellow Star of David to identify ourselves as Jews. I think about how my father would have managed as he realised he was not able to protect us from the looming threat.

Eventually a letter was issued by the council for all Jewish fathers to attend a meeting to discuss the welfare of their families. My father was among those men who went to the meeting, but when they arrived they were herded into waiting lorries and taken to a concentration camp. I never saw my father again.

In 1944 the Nazis and their Hungarian collaborators organised the deportation of Hungarian Jews: in less than two months from mid-May 1944, almost all Jews were deported, mostly to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Along with Laci and our mother, we were all sent to a ghetto in Vác and from there to a prison camp. In late May 1944, we were sent by cattle truck to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

On arrival we scrambled out of the trucks, and men and women were separated immediately. I was also then separated from my mother who was sent to join a group of elderly prisoners. I was left on my own, surrounded by shouting, not comprehending anything. I felt pure terror and devastation. I soon learned that my mother had been sent directly to the gas chambers. I was selected to work, and remained in the camp for around 10 weeks. Once I entered the camp all of my faculties, emotions, fears and hopes diminished. I was dehumanised, and in a different world. I had entered a place that was unknown to anything I could imagine. My emotions seized up and the experience shut me down, and shut me off from the world. I survived by behaving as a robot.

From Auschwitz I was sent to Guben in Germany to work as a slave labourer in an armaments factory.

With the Allies advancing, the prisoners were forced on a death march to Bergen-Belsen. On 15 April 1945 I was liberated by the British army. I crawled towards my liberators, unable to walk and close to death. I was hospitalised for tuberculosis, typhoid and severe malnutrition, and was sent to Sweden to recover.

I was left with nothing – no family, no education, no money, and only speaking Hungarian.

After liberation, I found that Laci was the only member of my family to have survived: more than 50 of my relatives had been killed during the Holocaust.

After the war, I lived in Sweden before moving to Canada, where I met and married a fellow survivor. Together we had three children and six grandchildren.

How do you get over such an experience? Is it possible to walk away and

learn to live with all of this? How do you find the strength? Life is precious – you can go in one of two ways – up or down. I chose to walk away and rebuild my life. There was no revenge, and no justice.

In my case I think I rebuilt my self-esteem through the joy of having children and building a family. I also chose to exercise my free will. I find that trying to make a positive contribution to society, such as through volunteering, helps greatly.

I now live in London and continue to share my testimony in schools across the country.

Read more about Susan's story here:
www.hmd.org.uk/resource/susan-pollack



Auschwitz-Birkenau

When he was just 17 years old, Nedžad Avdić was shot during the genocide in Srebrenica. He is one of just a small number of men and boys who survived the massacre, thanks to the help of another survivor.



Nedžad Avdić (pronounced Ned-jad Av-dich) was born in April 1978 in Zvornik, a city in eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina, to his parents Alija and Tima. He and his three younger sisters were brought up in a village in the neighbouring area to Srebrenica. Nedžad and his family were Bosniaks - Bosnian Muslims.

When Bosnia declared independence in 1992, the region descended into war between Bosniaks, Bosnian Serbs, who were fighting for an independent breakaway state called Republika Srpska, and Bosnian Croats.

As the conflict escalated, Serb forces began opening gunfire on Bosniak villages such as Nedžad's. Although Serbs and Bosniaks continued to live side-by-side, there were increased feelings of tension and fear. Eventually, Nedžad's school was closed down.

Bosnian Serb soldiers who were patrolling the streets began threatening his family. Escaping from their homes, the family reached Srebrenica in March 1993.

Srebrenica had been declared a 'safe zone' by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), and as a result was highly populated with refugees. In July 1995, under the orders of General Ratko Mladic, the army of the Republika Srpska overran and occupied Srebrenica. They deported around 23,000 women and girls, selecting all the men and boys over the age of 12 for interrogation.

As he was just 17 years old, Nedžad and his family feared for their lives. Word began to spread amongst Bosniaks that able-bodied men should take to the woods and form a column in order to reach Bosnian-controlled territory. Nedžad, his father and his uncle took the decision to join them.

Nedžad remembers: 'Running away we were under constant bombardment by Serb artillery from the hills. On that Death Road, many were killed and the wounded were crying out for help, in vain. In the chaos, I lost my father and ran through the crowd crying and calling for him. We could not keep going forward. We were lost in the middle of the forest, we did not know where to go. Serb soldiers called by megaphone: "Surrender or you will be killed."

Nedžad had no choice but to surrender. They were driven to a school ground where they were forced to take off their clothes, while soldiers tied their hands behind their backs. Over the course of the night, prisoners were taken to a field, and ordered to line up in rows of five to be shot.

Over three days, more than 8,000 Muslim men and boys were murdered in Srebrenica.

Nedžad was shot three times: in his stomach, his right arm and his left foot. As he lay on the ground in unbearable pain, lines of people fell down around him and he heard the sound of bullets firing. He thought of his mother, and how she would never know what had happened to him. Around midnight, Nedžad noticed a man who was moving and asked if he was alive. He answered: 'Yes, come to untie me.' They managed to untie each other and flee the field. To stem the bleeding, the man ripped up his T-shirt and wrapped it around Nedžad's wounds.

After days of suffering, wandering through the woods and hiding in the streams, they managed to reach territory under the control of the Bosnian government, and Nedžad was taken to a war hospital to be treated. The next day he was taken to a hospital in Tuzla, and soon after, his mother and sisters were found in a refugee camp in the same city. His father and uncle did not survive.

Today, Nedžad lives in Potočari, which lies 6 km north-west of Srebrenica. The town is within the Republika Srpska, which is now an autonomous region of

Bosnia with a majority Serb population. He lives with his wife and three daughters.

However, despite the post-conflict justice efforts, Nedžad says that ethnic Bosnians continue to be marginalised and that denial of the genocide is widespread amongst local politicians. For example, Mladen Grujičić, the current mayor of Srebrenica, has stated that he does not believe that the massacres of Bosniaks that took place in Srebrenica were a genocide.

‘I can say from my experience that this is a bad message, not just for me because I lost so much’, Nedžad says. ‘This is a bad message for mankind.’

Read more about Nedžad’s story here:

www.hmd.org.uk/resource/nedžad-avdic-hmd-2020

Stories of the Righteous among the Nations

Yad Vashem—the World Holocaust Remembrance Centre—dedicates itself, amongst many other things, to name the Righteous among the Nations. According to Yad Vashem, the Righteous are ‘non-Jews who took great risks to save Jews during the Holocaust. Rescue took many forms and the Righteous came from different nations, religions, and walks of life. What they had in common was that they protected their Jewish neighbours at a time when hostility and indifference prevailed.’

In these next few pages we share just three of these stories: Christians who stood with Jews during the Holocaust.

Mother Maria Skobtsova

Mother Maria Skobtsova is a Saint in the Russian Orthodox Church and one of the Righteous Among the Nations at Yad Vashem. Born in Riga in 1891 as Elizaveta Pilenko, she lived a colourful and varied life as a poet, an artist, a politician and writer, before moving to Paris in the wake of the Russian Revolution. Once in Paris she decided to take a monastic vow, assuming the name Maria in 1932. A central part of her monastic vow was a commitment to serving the poorest and most marginalised communities in Paris; caring for the elderly, housing the homeless, supporting fellow émigrés, feeding the poor and, latterly, rescuing Jews from the Nazis. It



was this involvement in the Resistance, and her dedication to assisting the Jewish people, that led to Maria being murdered on Good Friday at Ravensbrück Concentration Camp in 1945.

Mother Maria's concern for the poor and marginalised was rooted in her belief in the dual command to love God and the neighbour. These two commandments, Maria wrote, 'are two aspects of a single truth. Destroy either one of them and you destroy truth as a whole.' This concern for God and the neighbour is not only exemplified by Christ but also by Mary the Mother of God, and is materialised in a concern for the suffering of the other. Mary's heart was pierced by the suffering of her son, and so too, Maria claims, should our hearts be pierced for the suffering of our neighbour: 'The human heart should also be pierced by the two-edged swords, the soul-cutting weapons, of other people's crosses. Our neighbour's cross should be a sword that pierces our soul. Our soul should co-participate in its neighbour's destiny, co-feel, co-suffer... To my mind, it is here that the authentic mystical bases of human communion lie.' Maria believed that in loving our neighbour, we should be moved by their burdens, whether this 'cross' is physical suffering, poverty, or injustice, and this should lead us into action.

Mother Maria expressed this love in Paris when she accommodated and fed Jews in her home, when she forged baptismal certificates for them, and orchestrated the escape of several children from the Velodrome d'Hiver, who were smuggled away in bins. When the Gestapo officer Hans Hoffmann interrogated Maria's mother Sophia about this resistance, she replied: 'my daughter is a genuine Christian, and for her there is neither Greek nor Jew, only individuals in distress. If you [Hofmann] were threatened by some disaster, she would help you too.' Mother Maria smiled at this and said 'Yes, I suppose I would.' For Mother Maria, to 'stand together' was not a question of virtue, honour or piety. It was, in fact, a matter of love; a love which pierces one's heart in the face of the suffering of our neighbours, as the sword pierced Mary's heart at the death of her Son. It is only when this love for the neighbour, who is made in the image of God, captivates a person's heart that they can begin to transform and transfigure this world.

James Roberts

The Overduin Family

With my Dutch background, stories about the resistance in WWII and the Holocaust were part of my childhood. My father was involved in the resistance in Rijssen and my grandparents on my mother's side adapted their Leiden townhouse to hide Jews during the war. The fact that they had 5 children at the time and that the German occupiers had also requisitioned part of the house doesn't seem to have fazed my grandmother.

Two of my great-uncles, brothers of my grandfather, were priests. In his book *Faith and Victory in Dachau*, one of them, Revd Jacobus Overduin, describes how one Sunday in February 1941, he preached about the threat to Christian education by the German occupiers, when two German officers entered the church, one of them a Gestapo agent, the other a security police interrogator. Despite having a young daughter, but knowing that he had the full support of his wife, he delivered his sermon as planned. He was arrested and his house was searched. The Gestapo officers were enraged to find papers relating to the Mission to the Jews in Arnhem of which he was chairman at the time. My great-uncle was interrogated, and after being held in different prisons in the Netherlands, he was taken to the transit camp in Amersfoort and from there to the concentration camp Dachau. He was part of a group of intellectuals and clergy who were released in October 1943 and he survived the war.

His brother, Revd Leendert Overduin, together with his sisters Maartje and Corrie started one of the first organized resistance networks in the Netherlands. In September 1941, over 100 Jewish men from Enschede were deported to Mauthausen, and when reports of their deaths reached their home town, Leendert and his sisters started working with the Jewish Council and its chair Sieg Menko. Leendert used many disguises as he and his sisters travelled the country in search of hiding places for any Jews who wanted to take up the offer, and they helped provide food and ration cards for the hundreds of people in hiding.



Revd Leendert Overduin

As a result, the percentage of Jews who survived the war was higher in Enschede (nearly 40%) than anywhere else in the country.

In 1944, his luck ran out and an arrest warrant was issued for him and his sister Maartje. They were accused of resisting the orders of the occupying forces, hiding Jewish visitors and using forged identity papers. They were both imprisoned and sentenced to death and only the liberation of The Netherlands saved their lives. Leendert has been credited with having helped to save and sustain over 1000 Jews. He and his sisters are mentioned in Yad Vashem amongst the righteous among the nations and a tree was planted in his honour.

All my family have always been very modest about their contribution to the Dutch resistance and the help they provided to the Jewish population. I feel honoured that I am given the opportunity to let their stories live on in my talks and articles.

Rev'd Manette Crossman



Revd Jacobus Overduin

Mother Marie Augustine (Virginie Badetti) and Mother Marie Agnesa (Emilie Benedetti) – Congregation of Our Lady of Sion, Rome



Mother Marie Agnesa

Mother Augustine (Virginie Badetti), was born in Istanbul on 29 May 1881. In 1942, she was sent to Rome to become Superior of the Congregation of Our Lady of Sion.

Mother M. Agnesa was born in Rome in 1902. She was raised in the boarding school of Our Lady of Sion and then studied nursing and theology. After making her first vows in Paris on 20 January 1928 and after a short time in Trento, she spent the entire remainder of her life in Rome. At that time, the congregation had a large boarding school on the

Gianicolo. This school was closed on the eve of the war. Instead, an orphanage was opened, of which Mother Agnesa was the first director.

On 8 September 1943 Italy surrendered and Rome was occupied by the Nazis. The first roundups started on 15 October.

The account that was written at the end of the war on the situation of the Rome house during that period recounts that groups of Jewish women and children began to arrive at the convent from dawn on 16 October. Mother Augustine was willing to welcome them in the convent. Because of the warm welcome that was given them, the women asked Mother Augustine for permission to have their husbands come. Mother Augustine accepted. The entire space was occupied: even the space under the stairs sheltered a family of seven. In this way whole families were welcomed instead of separating them. The last ones to arrive found shelter in the greenhouse.

A bell was installed in the concierge's house to serve as an alarm signal: when it was rung three times, everybody had to run and hide. Once, a woman wasn't able to get to her hiding place on time, so a sister took off her headdress and put it on the woman's head, and at the same time she gave her a pot to stir.

When there wasn't an alarm, people tried to live as normally as possible.

Some benefited from the garden by going for walks there or doing some gardening, others worked for the Vatican in exchange for a small payment, going through correspondence regarding the search for prisoners.

The people who were hidden tried to be useful to the sisters in every way, bringing medicines to the sick, carrying buckets, etc. On Saturdays, some gathered together to pray and to read Psalms.

It was obviously difficult to solve the problem of getting fresh supplies of food. A sister was responsible for going to the black market, and sometimes women who were hidden came to help her. For food supplies, the sisters asked for and at least sporadically received help from the Vatican.

This situation lasted for ten months. Luckily, Mother Augustine obtained a document stating that the property was protected by the Vatican, thus prohibiting searches. One day, the Germans nevertheless tried to enter the house. Some of the Jews who were hiding became afraid and tried to flee. They were taken and one of them was tortured. This happened a few days before the liberation of Rome on 4 June 1944. In this way they were freed before being deported. In the end, all the Jews who were hidden at Sion were rescued.

Mother Augustine was sent to Trieste in October 1945 and remained there for a few years before going to Paris, where she died on 20 November 1949. Mother Agnesa remained in Rome until the end of her life in 1952. Both of them received the title Righteous among the Nations in 1999.

Céline Hirsch Poynard

Prayer for the Righteous among the Nations

Lord God, like your servants Mother Maria, the Overduin family, Mother Marie Augustine, and Mother Marie Agnesa,
Help us to stand with the oppressed;
Bearing their crosses alongside them, and alleviating their burdens.
May our hearts be pierced by suffering and injustice,
And burn with compassion for our neighbour.
Keep us safe in knowledge of the age to come,
Where pain shall be no more, and all will be love.

Amen.

TOS JOZEF & DIMITRA SOPHIA IS GEORGES & LITSA S CHRISTOS ZOE I DANAE DIS GRIGORI 1999 DAVIS & YANULA YANIS & PAGONA POULOS DEMITRIS & GEORGES & FAIDRA MANOLIS POULOS DEMITRIS & O POULOS LEANDROS & AKIS STYLIANOS & SKINI & CHILDREN:	בריטניה UNITED KINGDOM COOK IDA & LOUISE HAINING JANE WALSH CLARA (AGNES) 1998 SKIPWITH SOFKA 1999 BEDANE ALBERT FOLEY FRANCIS ANTONIAZZI MARIA (ANTHONY) 2007 RAVENHALL ELSIE JUNE	MOLNAR ILONA PUSKÁS LAJOS STÓGLI MIHÁLY & MARI SZAKÁL GEZA SZIRMAI JAN A. ZSIGMOND ISTVÁN 2007 CSOMBO IMRE & EMILIA HER MOTHER EMMA FENYVESI GYÖRGY & E FENYVESI ISTVAN & MA KOLONITS FERENCNÉ & HER MARGIT ILONA & PAULA LÖRINCZ SANDOR & SIS MARGIT KOVÁCS MEZŐ FERENC & ANNA SEBESTYÉN SÁNDOR SZABÓ LÁSZLÓNÉ TÁTRAI GIZELLA VARDI DEZSO
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Names of British-born Righteous among the Nations , memorialised at Yad Vashem

Reflections on the Lectionary for 26 January 2020

A reflection based on Nehemiah 5: 1-13

The Revd Canon Lisa Battye

The Christian preacher's eye for Sunday 26 January might naturally be drawn to talking about the subject of the Gospel reading that day. But it might better help us at this time, in our own political context here in the UK, to address the situation described in the passage from Nehemiah.

It details a disappointing scene. Return of the 'survivors' from Babylon has not produced the glorious vision of second Isaiah. There is disunity within the people of God, and a crying need for the kind of outrage found in Nehemiah's angry rhetoric. Disunity among the leaders, dismay among the hopeful, and poverty and human distress are taking the place of the joy of restoration. How wonderful if today one of our own leaders, struggling as we are with a divided politics, could stand before a great assembly (v.7) and call our most powerful individuals to account: 'The thing that you are doing is not good' (v.9).

Is goodness simple? It involves walking in the fear of God. It involves learning and following the Law (however we interpret that). It means, as in this passage, returning the vineyards, and the olive orchards, and the houses, and the hundredth of money, grain, wine, and oil which I have been exacting from other people to those who are now dispossessed of the things they need for a good life. All this without requiring anything in return, without asking to be repaid in the currency of some other kind of power over them.

Holocaust Memorial Day is a special opportunity to quietly reflect on the dispossession of God's human family so totally. There is no jumping to any theme of hope or love or some equally pleasant engagement with ideals. But there is opportunity to be grateful for the prophets who 'speak truth to power', and to pray that God will raise up more of them. And there is a challenge to pray that the present dangers we all see in our political life may

be prevented from repeating the evils that have been experienced within our time.

By standing together in a great assembly, we too can point towards those things which are not 'good' and together say 'Amen'.



Arrested Jews at roll call: photograph courtesy of the Wiener Library

A reflection based on Matthew 4: 12-23

The Revd Nathan Eddy

The theme 'stand together' implies action, commitment, and solidarity. The reading from Matthew set in the lectionary for Sunday 26 January speaks to just these issues. Appropriately for the Epiphany season, Matthew 4:12-23 tells of Jesus' first public ministry after his temptation in the wilderness. It tells of Jesus' call of, and preaching to, his own Jewish sisters and brothers and his ministry of healing in synagogues, proclaiming the good news (v 23). There are many ways preachers might approach this foundational text for a service focused on our theme; here are three.

Most simply, today we in the Church 'stand together' in remembrance of victims of the Holocaust. Perhaps there is nothing more important to do on Holocaust Memorial Day than this. In this respect, the mention of the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali in Matthew's citation of Is 9:1-2 (vv 13-15) is deeply poignant. At the time the gospel was written, these tribes had been lost to history for more than 750 years (see, for example, 2 Kings 15:29). They were deported when the northern kingdom of Israel was annexed to the Assyrian empire in 722 BCE. In quoting Isaiah, the writer of Matthew stands in a long line of Jewish interpreters who sought the fulfilment of these words of prophecy in their own day. The empires changed from Assyrian to Babylonian, Persian to Seleucid to Roman, but the people of Naphtali and Zebulun were not forgotten. In a different context, today we also remember people beloved to God who were lost to history. We stand together, in Jesus' name, and remember them. They are not forgotten. And Christians must be committed to remembering 750 years on, as well as 75 years on, as we do in 2020.

The reading's terse description of Jesus' call of the first disciples, and their response, also expresses the urgency of our solidarity in the present. Matthew has no time for the internal decision-making of Simon, Andrew, James, and John. The point is to rise and follow. There is no hesitation on matters as important as this, nor room for lukewarm sympathy. As the reflections and prayers in this resource show, to wait for others braver than ourselves to speak out is to permit grave injustice to occur. We, too, must turn from indifference and apathy and rise, follow, and act. Today we do not just remember those whose lives were lost in the Shoah, but also other more recent victims of genocide, and all those suffering for their religion today.

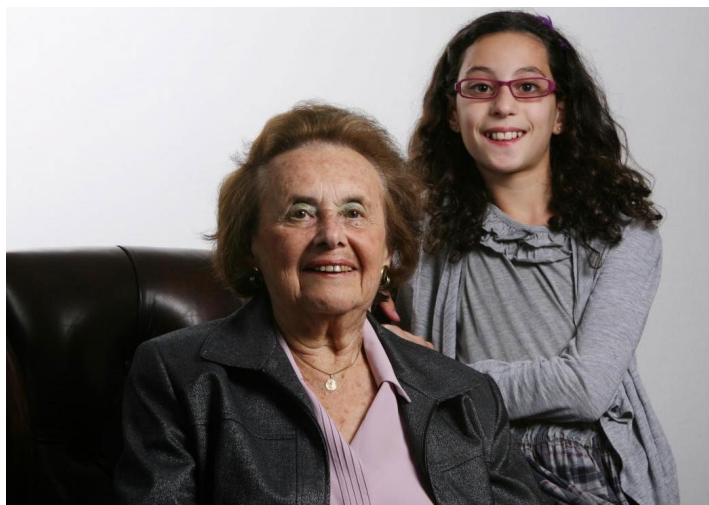
The image of the first disciples leaving their nets is thus appropriate for the Church today. Just as Jesus called his first followers, so today Jesus calls ordinary people—you and me—to leave our tasks and rise to ‘stand together’ in remembrance and solidarity.

Remembering the past, committed to the present, we also to dare to look to the future with hope as we stand together. The mention of Galilee in verses 12, 15, 18, and 23 looks forward to Jesus’ promised resurrection appearance in Galilee at the end of the gospel (Mt 28:7). Following Jesus, rightly remembering the Holocaust, overcoming Christian anti-Judaism: these are not one-off actions. The work to which Jesus calls the Church is a long road that demands daily tasks of healing, justice, and hope. In Matthew’s gospel, that work is carried out under the wider promise of God’s ongoing commitment. As did Jesus’ disciples, there will be times when we falter and stumble. But, standing together, we are strong enough for this journey. Let us begin it, together.

Questions to consider and further resources

Questions to consider

1. What does it mean to stand together?
2. Where does this theme occur and where is it absent in the stories we learn about the Holocaust and other genocides?
3. How can we stand together today?



Holocaust survivor Lily Ebert with her granddaughter. Read more: hmd.org.uk/resource/liy-ebert-hidden-histories

Further resources

The Council of Christians and Jews: www.ccj.org.uk

Holocaust Memorial Day Trust: www.hmd.org.uk/resources

Yad Vashem: www.yadvashem.org/holocaust/video-testimonies.html

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The prayer for young people and notes for an all-age address were written by *the Revd Patrick Moriarty, Headteacher of JCoSS and Joint Honourary Secretary of CCJ.*

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