

**The United Church of Canada  
Conseil régional Nakonha:ka Regional Council  
Lennoxville United Church**

Theological Reflection  
November 2019

November a good time to remember.

Every year we start off November with All Saints' Day, as Christians have been doing for over 1000 years. It is a time to remember Christlike humans; a time to remember those who taught us about the love of God; a time to be grateful for the people who made this world brighter just by being in it. November ends with Reign of Christ Sunday, also known as Christ the King Sunday. Christians have been celebrating this day for even longer than All Saints' Day. On this day we remember that as a Christian Church we believe that Jesus of Nazareth embodied God more fully than any other human. On this day we recommit ourselves to the Way of Jesus, and not the way of Caesar, placing ourselves in opposition to oppressive empires. Between these two days, Canadians have been commemorating Remembrance Day, since the Armistice Day Act was amended in 1931. This is a day to honor soldiers who have fought in wars since the beginning of the Great War in 1914.

Growing up, I went to Remembrance Day Ceremonies every year, some years I even participated in more than one. I have laid wreaths, I have carried flags, and in High School I volunteered to help with special assemblies. It was when I was in University, studying World and North American history that I began to grow uncomfortable with Remembrance day; I began to wonder 'what is it that we are remembering?' When I was a kid I was told we were remembering war so that we wouldn't do it again, but as a young adult I knew that war has been on-going since 1914, we never really stopped. When I was a kid I was told we were remembering soldiers who died for our freedom, but as a young adult I knew that more civilians die in war than soldiers and that over 2.5 million children have died because of war in just my lifetime. When I was a kid I was told that we remember the everyday-regular-person making a decision to give their life, but as a young adult I knew of how powerful people used propaganda to hide their war agenda. I remain uncomfortable, and I continue to reflect on what my role as a Christian is on Remembrance Day. I do not have all the answers that I am seeking, but I actively search for meaning in this commemoration.

Last June, Jillian and I went to Reims France. This city experienced destruction during the Great War, when more than 70% of the city was brought to ruins. The Cathedral was used as a hospital until the shelling started a fire that burned so hot that it melted the lead roof; lead poured out of the gargoyles mouths. This city also hosted an important day of the Second World War, this is where high ranking German soldiers signed their unconditional surrender. We went to La Musee de la Reddition/ Museum of surrender, and spent time in the room which has been preserved since the signing on May 7th 1945 at 3am; in the dark of night, hidden within a college, done in total secrecy. I read and heard how everyone in that room was sworn to keep this secret for 3 days; I couldn't help but wonder how many soldiers and civilians died during those 3 days. There were so many things in that preserved room that made my head swirl and my stomach ache; I am still processing my experience of being in that room.

The reality of war should make us uncomfortable, we should reflect on the sacrifice that war imposes, we should remember the lives lost because of human infighting. How we should do this, I believe is still an open question. I don't know if Remembrance Day will be commemorated for as long as All Saint's Day or Reign of Christ Sunday, but for now I hope as Christians we will continue to reflect, we will continue to learn, we will continue to question, we will continue to be uncomfortable and we will continue to remember.

Blessings,  
Rev. Linda Buchanan