

**Here are just a few possibilities for local CT groups. Please also note the specific ideas for 2014.**

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (in 2014 this 18 – 25 January)

Week of Prayer using 24/7 principles

Mayor's Carol Service

One World Week

Fair Trade Shops

Peace Vigils

Unity at the Cross services

Lent studies

Youth Forums

Peace and Justice issues

Christmas Day lunches for the lonely

Holocaust Memorial Day services

Remembrance Sunday united services

Gospel Singing days

Choir Festivals

Taize style services

Outreach through community projects

Involvement in local carnivals/festivals

Listening skills courses

Pentecost Praise and Picnics

Maundy Thursday Supper

Holiday clubs for children

Bereavement support

## 2014

### Background

The First World War (WW1) began on 28 July 1914 and lasted until 11 November 1918, although in the UK the arguably most significant forthcoming date in 1914 is 4<sup>th</sup> August, which is when the UK declared war on Germany.

The early part of WW1 did not involve conscription, but the generally buoyant view of British military supremacy led many men and boys, a significant number of whom were under-age, to volunteer. A key concept for what was called *Kitchener's New Army* from mid 1915 onward were 'Pal's battalions', in which local firms, country estates etc. raised a group of between 500 – 1000 men to serve together. This was based on the belief that extant relationships and management hierarchies could be beneficially translated to the battlefield.

With the exception of the most recently built, there are a vast number of memorial tablets in the churches in the area which remember local men. As well as these, most towns and villages have a local war memorial, and in St Albans, almost uniquely, there are ten 'street' memorial plaques listing just a few names of men from that road or neighbourhood.

Bedfordshire had a 'regular' regiment at the outbreak of war which was hugely supplemented by territorial, reserve and 'new army' battalions as the war progressed.

Hertfordshire had a 'yeomanry' regiment, drawn from the working men on the land and intended originally to be a mounted unit. Like most yeomanries however, the Hertfordshires served dismounted.

The Hertfordshire's WW1 colours (their battle flags) remain in the Hertfordshires chapel in the north aisle of the Abbey, and their final disbandment colours hang at All Saints Hertford.

The regiments served with distinction on the Western Front and at Gallipoli. Nine Victoria Crosses were won by these two regiments, most of them posthumously.

Because of the two regiments' proximity, men from Herts and Beds were frequently found serving in the 'opposite' regiment. There are numerous locations in the counties that recall and commemorate the service and sacrifice of these men. One example is Lydekker Park in Harpenden, donated by the sister of two Bedfordshire regiment brothers who died in action with no known grave. The Tree Cathedral at Whipsnade was designed and built by WW1 veteran William Blyth as a memorial to fallen comrades and as a symbol of peace.

Locations in Beds and Herts were used extensively for training, billeting and mustering of troops.

### Contacts and groups

**The Western Front Association** <http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/> has some thousands of UK members organised into local branches, and along with the Imperial War Museum is the most active organisation in the plans for 2014-18.

**The Royal British Legion** has branches all around the diocese. It has struggled in recent years with membership levels and in attracting younger members, but is still active in the more formal remembrance areas and the poppy appeal etc.

**Uniformed groups** such as Scouts, guides, brownies and beavers etc will undoubtedly be involved in local events although there is little being publicized about planned activities at present.

**Hertfordshire University** has a 'heritage hub' which is planning a series of public events over the next four years. <http://heritagehub.herts.ac.uk/>

### **Help for Heros**

This relatively new and very successful charity is essentially doing what the young British Legion once did. Although its focus is not primarily heritage/remembrance, it will be using 2014-18 as a major hook for its activities and it has growing local units all round the country.

<http://www.helpforheroes.org.uk>

### **Potential**

Because of the local 'pals' recruitment described above and the mass mobilisation of WW1, it made a huge impact on virtually every town, village and church in the diocese. Local connections and stories number in their thousands. There is a clear connection to be made between WW1 and later/current conflicts and the continued elusive struggle for peace.

WW1 made an immense cultural impact on western Christianity. The practice of cremation was 'forced' into common use and the theology of bodily resurrection was challenged in the light of thousands of casualties with no known graves. After WW1, some 30,000 war memorials and commemorative plaques were erected on the UK.

### **Churches and Communities**

An obvious focus are the still extant memorials to local battalions or individuals in our churches. As well as 4<sup>th</sup> August and Remembrance Sunday in 2014, other occasions that link to specific actions could be marked with short dedicated acts of worship or incorporation into main services.

The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary could also lend itself to 'then and now' events where churches organise an evening at which the local history group etc. is present. Encouraging locals to bring photos, memories and linking it to the church in the midst of that community could be an excellent outreach opportunity.

### **Schools**

#### *Local war memorials*

There could be an excellent initiative in providing a resource pack for schools to encourage and resource research about the local war memorial, or the memorial in the local church.

#### *Local 'heros'*

A sub-set of the above. Most war memorials have officers of high rank or even a Victoria Cross winners. These are easier to trace than lower ranks and lend themselves especially to primary level activities.