**Holocaust Memorial Day January 27**

Top of Form

Bottom of Form

Each year British society is invited to observe 27 January as Holocaust Memorial Day. This date is the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz camp by the Soviet Army on 27 January 1945. 2015 is the 70th Anniversary of this. Many Jews prefer to use the word Sho'ah to describe the murder of the Jews and other so called minorities during the Second World War. The word Sho'ah means desolation, destruction or catastrophe.

During the war it is estimated that 2 million Jews were killed in the Soviet Union, 3.5 million Jews were killed in the gas chambers of Auschwitz and other camps, and half a million died in the ghettos of Eastern Europe, 6 million in all. Millions more minority groups also perished.

The Holocaust Memorial Day was proposed to commemorate not just the Holocaust or Sho'ah, but also to acknowledge the repeated occurrences of genocide, such as Cambodia, Rwanda and Bosnia, and to renew the commitment to combat racism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia.

On Holocaust Memorial Day we pray for those who died when madness ruled the world and evil prevailed on earth. If we forget, the way is prepared for yet more holocausts. Therefore we must never forget.

**Prayer**God who knows us, who never forgets us,

we thank you that, when you ‘remember’ us,

you gaze on us in a way that makes new worlds possible.

Help us to remember the horrors others have faced and face.

Help us to remember the people we’d rather forget.

Help us to remember the dark corners of our own lives,

for you transfigure everything, bringing light and life.

Amen

Psalm 13

One Jewish Rabbi tells this story: “On an early Friday afternoon in November of last year, I spoke on the topic “Zionism and the Renaissance of Judaism” before a senior community in Delray Beach, Florida. In the past 17 years, I have presented many lectures on topics in Jewish history and thought for many adult education programmes, but this particular presentation stays in my mind.  
  
Before lecturing, I was approached by an older Jewish man who confided in me: He was a soldier in the American Army in World War II who was one of the first liberators of the Dachau concentration camp near Munich. What he witnessed at Dachau destroyed any faith he had in God and left him an atheist. I told the gentleman that, while I was a man of faith and a rabbi, I could not judge him for his rejection of God. Had I been in his shoes, perhaps my response would have been the same.”

While we can all sympathise with that, that wasn’t the experience of everyone, which the following poem reveals:

**I Believe**

I believe in the sun  
though it is late in rising.  
I believe in love,  
though it is absent  
I believe in God  
though he is silent...

This poem, found on the wall of a cave in Cologne where Jews had been hiding, sums up the hope of many of those who endured the Shoah/Holocaust. They trusted in a God of love. They hoped, even in the darkest hour.

**Meditation**

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 Niemoeller, in prison and concentration camp for eight and a half years*

**Intercessions**

God of compassion, hear us as we pray for those who suffer today for the horrors of the past. For survivors of the Holocaust whose memory of it still haunts and hurts.  
**Compassionate God, Hear Us**

God of healing hear us as we pray for those who work for reconciliation and understanding peace, respect and tolerance. Guide organisations that foster friendship and heal hurts and bitter memories, that promote faithful encounter and honest dialogue.  
**Healing God: Hear Us**

God of Truth, hear us as we pray for those who encourage interfaith dialogue and international peace and relations, for those who pioneer new ways of thinking and understanding, those who encourage fresh visions of a world where we respect each other’s diversity and celebrate the richness of each other’s traditions, where we learn from one another and glimpse something of the Mystery that is God.  
**God of Truth: Hear Us**

God of Pity and comfort, hear us as we pray for those who are caught in the world’s conflicts; innocent men, women and children. Hear their cries, feel their pain and loss, see their  
desolation.  
**God of Pity: Hear Us**

God of Mercy, hear us as we pray for those who are dying, with no-one to care for them, no-one to love them, those who die and nobody knows their name. Be with the lost and afraid, the destitute and the dying, the lonely and the oppressed.

We offer these prayers for the sake of your son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen**

**THE BLESSING**

All our problems

**we send to the cross of Christ.**

All our difficulties

**We send to the cross of Christ.**

All the works of evil

**We send to the cross of Christ.**

All our hopes

**we set on the risen Christ.**

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon us and scatter the darkness from before our path:

and the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be among us and remain with us always.

**Amen.**

