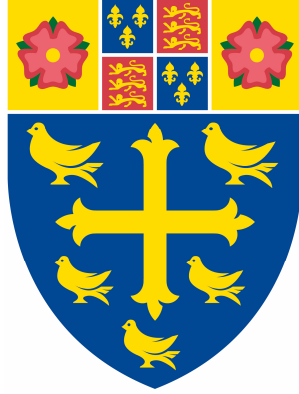


Westminster Abbey



A Service of Thanksgiving to mark the 80th Anniversary of VE Day



Thursday 8th May 2025
Noon

HISTORICAL NOTE

On the 8th May 1945, people across the United Kingdom came together to celebrate the end of nearly six years of war against Nazi Germany. This was deemed Victory in Europe Day – VE Day. VE Day marked the surrender of the Nazi regime and the end of war in Europe, which had caused huge loss of life, suffering, and destruction, from the front lines through to the home front, impacting the entire United Kingdom and across the world.

The BBC interrupted its scheduled programming on the 7th May to announce the long-anticipated news to the nation, reporting that the next day would be a national holiday. It followed the final surrender of German forces on all fronts, at US General Dwight D. Eisenhower's headquarters in France. That surrender would be ratified in Berlin the following evening.

As VE Day dawned, bells rang out everywhere across the country from churches that would see packed congregations. The poor weather in the morning did not bode well for the jubilant festivities, but in the afternoon the clouds parted and the sun shone down. Huge crowds surged into the centre of towns and cities, waving flags, singing, and dancing to music from gramophones, barrel organs, and accordions. Many of the revellers wore military uniforms, whilst paper party hats and red, white, and blue rosettes abounded.

At 3pm, as Big Ben struck the hour, Britain's Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, broadcast a short speech to the nation from 10 Downing Street. In it he declared:

'Yesterday at 2:41am... the representative of the German High Command signed the act of unconditional surrender of all German land, sea and air forces in Europe... The German war is therefore at an end... Long live the cause of freedom! God save the King!'

In London, crowds gathered around Whitehall, Trafalgar Square, and Buckingham Palace. From late afternoon into the evening, the King and Queen appeared eight times on the Palace balcony, together with Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret – at one point joined by Churchill.

Right across the United Kingdom, people put up bunting and hauled furniture outside for street parties. There was a sense of nationwide unity and shared victory, as communities came together to celebrate. Children, many of whom had known only war, tucked into tables of food specially prepared for this day. As evening fell, and with over five years of the blackout finally over, men, women, and children marvelled at the sight of floodlit public buildings and celebratory bonfires.

Yet behind all the relief and the joy, this was also a time to remember loved ones who had not lived to see this momentous day, and to reflect on the ongoing war with Imperial Japan, which would not end until VJ Day, on the 15th August 1945.

Today we come together to commemorate the 80th anniversary of a remarkable day; a milestone in our shared history. Men and women from Britain and the Commonwealth all played their part in the final victory over Nazi tyranny. Above all, we thank and honour the Second World War generation who, both on the fighting fronts and on the home front, gave so much to protect our freedom and shared values.

The whole of the church is served by a hearing loop. Users should turn their hearing aid to the setting marked T.

The service will be broadcast live on BBC One.

Members of the congregation are requested kindly to refrain from using private cameras, video, or sound recording equipment. Please ensure that mobile telephones and other electronic devices are switched off.

The service is sung by the Choir of Westminster Abbey, directed by Andrew Nethsingha, Organist and Master of the Choristers. The organ is played by Matthew Jorysz, Sub-Organist.

The State Trumpeters of the Household Cavalry are directed by Trumpet Major Julian Sandford MVO. The Royal Marines Fanfare Team is directed by Warrant Officer Class 2 Jamie Gunn. The Band of the Royal Air Force Regiment is directed by Squadron Leader Chris I'Anson, Director of Music.

Paul Greally, Assistant Organist, plays

Allabreve in D BWV 589 *Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)*

Nun danket alle Gott Op 65 no 59 *Sigfrid Karg-Elert (1877–1933)*

Elegie from Vingt-quatre pièces en style libre *Louis Vierne (1870–1937)*

Fugue from Prélude et Fugue sur le nom d'Alain Op 7 *Maurice Duruflé (1902–86)*

Prelude and Fugue in D BWV 532 *Johann Sebastian Bach*

The band plays

Spitfire Prelude *William Walton (1902–83)*

Greensleeves *Traditional
arranged by Alfred Reed (1921–2005)*

Entr'acte from Theatre Music *Philip Sparke (b 1951)*

Elegy on the RAF March Past *Barrie Hingley (b 1938)*

Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonnie Doon *Percy Grainger (1882–1961)*

Chaconne from First Suite in E flat *Gustav Holst (1874–1934)*

The Sub-Organist plays

Elegy *Harold Darke (1888–1976)*

THE REPRESENTATIVES OF FAITH COMMUNITIES

Verger

Representing Jewish Reform Synagogues
Rabbi Joshua Levy

Representing Liberal Judaism
Rabbi Charley Baginsky

Representing Orthodox Judaism
Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis KBE

Representing the Hindu Community
Mr Girish Patel

Representing the Jain Community
Mr Mehool Sanghrajka MBE

Representing the Sikh Community
Lord Singh of Wimbledon CBE

Representing the Zoroastrian Community
Mr Malcolm Deboo

Representing the Buddhist Community
The Venerable Bogoda Seelawimala

Representing the Baha'i Community
Mr Miles Green

Representing the Sunni Muslim Community
Mufti Sir Hamid Patel CBE

Representing the Shia Muslim Community
Imam Dr Sayed Razawi

THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CHURCHES

Verger

Roman Catholic Church (Wales)
The Most Reverend Mark O'Toole

Inter Faith Council Wales
Ms Katie McColgan

Roman Catholic Church (Scotland)
The Right Reverend Paul Mason

Church of Scotland
The Very Reverend Dr James Paterson

Irish Council of Churches
The Right Reverend Sarah Groves

Presbyterian Church in Ireland
Moderator Dr Richard Murray

Methodist Church in Ireland
The Reverend Dr John Alderdice

Roman Catholic Church (England)
The Most Reverend John Wilson

Free Churches Group
The Reverend Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson

Methodist Church
The Reverend Helen Cameron

The Church of England
The Right Reverend Philip Mounstephen

Coptic Orthodox
His Eminence Archbishop Angaelos

Greek Orthodox
His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas

The Right Honourable Sir Keir Starmer KCB KC MP, Prime Minister of The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, along with The Lord Speaker, The Right Honourable the Lord McFall of Alcluith, The Speaker of the House of Commons, The Right Honourable Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP, members of the Cabinet, and representatives of Parliament, arrive in procession and are conducted to their seats.

The Right Honourable The Lord Mayor of London, Alderman Alastair King DL, and Mr John Garbutt JP, High Sheriff of Greater London, arrive and are conducted to their seats.

The Right Worshipful The Lord Mayor of Westminster, Councillor Robert Rigby, arrives. Presentations are made and he is conducted to his seat. All stand, and then sit.

His Royal Highness The Duke of Kent is received at Poets' Corner and conducted to his seat.

Their Royal Highnesses The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester are received. Presentations are made and they are conducted to their seats.

Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal and Vice Admiral Sir Tim Laurence KCVO CB CSM ADC are received. Presentations are made and they are conducted to their seats.

Their Royal Highnesses The Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh are received. Presentations are made and they are conducted to their seats.

All stand.

Their Royal Highnesses The Prince and Princess of Wales are received. Presentations are made.

A fanfare is sounded.

Their Majesties The King and The Queen are received. Presentations are made.

THE PROCESSION

Beadle

The Choir of Westminster Abbey

The King's Almsmen

The Cross of Westminster and Lights

The Minor Canons

The Receiver General

High Bailiff

High Steward

Service Chaplains

The Bishop of London and Dean of His Majesty's Chapels Royal

The Archbishop of York and Primate of England

The Canons' Verger

The Canons of Westminster

The Dean's Verger

The Dean of Westminster

Her Majesty The Queen

His Majesty THE KING

Her Royal Highness
The Princess of Wales

His Royal Highness
The Prince of Wales

ORDER OF SERVICE

All remain standing. At Noon, a national two-minute silence is kept

The choir sings the Introit, during which His Majesty The King lays a wreath on behalf of the Nation and the Commonwealth at the Grave of the Unknown Warrior. Likewise, His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales lays a wreath on behalf of Veterans and the Second World War Generation

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.
We will remember them.

*Douglas Guest (1916–96)
Organist of Westminster Abbey 1963–81*

*from For the Fallen
Laurence Binyon (1869–1943)*

The Very Reverend Dr David Hoyle KCVO MBE, Dean of Westminster, says the Collect

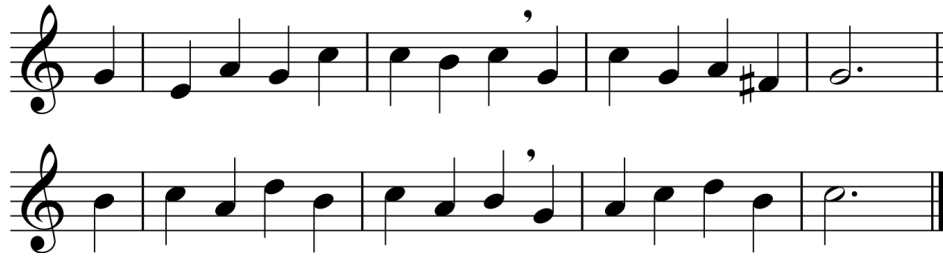
Let us pray.

REMEMBER, O Lord, all those, the brave and the true, who have died the death of honour, and are departed in the hope of resurrection to Eternal Life.

We praise thy holy name for the gift of their matchless courage. We thank thee that their warfare is accomplished, that their sorrows are assuaged, and their grievous wounds all healed. Crown, we beseech thee, with thy loving mercy, the offering of their brave lives. Grant unto them thy eternal peace; and the blessing of thy perfect comfort unto all who mourn. We ask it in the name of him who died and rose again for us all, thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Collect used at Westminster Abbey on VE Day 1945

All sing the Hymn, during which the Procession, along with Their Majesties The King & The Queen, moves through the Abbey to places in Quire, Lantern, and Sacrarium



O GOD, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast,
and our eternal home;

under the shadow of thy throne
thy saints have dwelt secure;
sufficient is thine arm alone,
and our defence is sure.

Before the hills in order stood,
or earth received her frame,
from everlasting thou art God,
to endless years the same.

A thousand ages in thy sight
are like an evening gone,
short as the watch that ends the night
before the rising sun.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
bears all its sons away;
they fly forgotten, as a dream
dies at the opening day.

O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
be thou our guard while troubles last,
and our eternal home.

*St Anne 417 NEH
William Croft (1678–1727)
Organist of Westminster Abbey 1708–27*

*Man frail, and God eternal
Isaac Watts (1674–1748)
after Psalm 90: 1–5*

All remain standing. The Dean gives the Bidding

WE gather on holy ground, where prayers of thanksgiving were offered on this day eighty years ago. We are here to remember all that was suffered and all that was lost. We are here to honour those whose courage, strength, and skill through long years of conflict brought victory and a new dawn. We are here to renew our hope and to reaffirm a commitment to a peace that will endure. In this Easter season, we proclaim the life that defied the powers of death and of destruction and the final victory of God. May he always lead us in the way of peace.

All sit. An actor reads from a letter written by Fredrick Burgess, a serving soldier on the frontline, to his seven-year-old son

Zizi Strallen sings

The White Cliffs of Dover

Walter Kent (1911–94)
and Nat Burton (1901–45)
arranged by Simon Haw (b 1965)

An extract of Winston Churchill's VE Day speech is heard

Nina Sosanya reads from a letter written by Janet Thornton to her young daughters, on VE Day

All stand for the Procession of Witness. Artefacts from the Second World War, representing the Armed Forces and the Home Front, are processed through the Abbey, received by the Dean, and placed near the High Altar, during which the band plays

When the lights go on again (all over the world)

Bernie Benjamin (1907–89)
Sol Marcus (1912–76)
and Eddie Seiler (1911–52)
arranged by Jonathan Read (b 1989)

The Dean says

ALmighty God, Father of all mercies, by thy grace may these singular and simple offerings invite our faithful remembrance of all who served and suffered for this nation in ways too numerous to know or to name. May our thanksgiving be heartfelt, and the offering of our own lives be to their honour and thy glory. **Amen.**

All sit. The Right Honourable Sir Keir Starmer KCB KC MP, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, reads the Lesson

WHEN Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:
'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

Matthew 5: 1–10

Thanks be to God.

All stand to sing the Hymn



I VOW to thee, my country, all earthly things above,
entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love:
the love that asks no question, the love that stands the test,
that lays upon the altar the dearest and the best;
the love that never falters, the love that pays the price,
the love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice.

And there's another country, I've heard of long ago,
most dear to them that love her, most great to them that know;
we may not count her armies, we may not see her King;
her fortress is a faithful heart, her pride is suffering;
and soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase,
and her ways are ways of gentleness and all her paths are peace.

All sit. The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York and Primate of England & Metropolitan, gives the Address

The choir sings the Anthem, during which the VE Day 80th Candle of Peace is lit by Alexander Churchill, the great-great-grandson of Sir Winston Churchill, while young people hand flowers to veterans of the Second World War

MY soul, there is a country
Far beyond the stars,
Where stands a wingèd sentry
All skilful in the wars:

There above noise, and danger,
Sweet Peace sits crowned with smiles,
And One born in a manger
Commands the beauteous files.

If thou canst get but thither,
There grows the flower of Peace,
The Rose that cannot wither,
Thy fortress, and thy ease.

He is thy gracious friend,
And (O my soul, awake!)
Did in pure love descend,
To die here for thy sake.

Leave then thy foolish ranges,
For none can thee secure,
But One who never changes,
Thy God, thy Life, thy Cure.

*from Songs of Farewell
Hubert Parry (1848–1918)*

Henry Vaughan (1621–95)

The Reverend Robert Latham, Minor Canon and Precentor, introduces the Prayers

Let us hold before God the remembrance of the dark days of war in Europe; and give thanks to God for the victory of liberty, light and peace.

Let us pray.

All remain seated or kneel

Joyce Wilding, former member of Special Operations Executive and Female Auxiliary Nursing Yeomanry, says

WE give thanks for the selfless and costly sacrifice of all who were called to duty at home and abroad in the service of this nation; let us pray for the welfare of veterans, and for all serving today in the Armed Forces and Intelligence Services of the Crown.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Her Excellency The Honourable Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, Commonwealth Secretary General, reads

We give thanks for all nations who shared with us the trials of war in the pursuit of peace; for the grace of reconciliation and friendship between former enemies. Let us pray for the Commonwealth, and all our allies and partners today; for unity in diversity; for the healing and flourishing of all.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

A representative of St John Ambulance, says

We give thanks for the vocation to serve the needs of others; for the example given by a generation at war. Let us pray for all voluntary services today who strengthen and sustain our common life.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Captain Hannah Karas, Royal Gurkha Rifles, says

We give thanks to God for the courage and resilience of those who led this nation through the years of war. Let us pray for His Majesty The King, his Government, Parliament, and for all called to serve in public life today.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Alexander Churchill says

Let us pray for peace in Europe and across the world; in our time and for generations to come. For the sacrifice of those who have gone before us to be honoured in the defence of liberty, justice, and peace.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

The Right Reverend Anthony Ball, Canon in Residence, says

Let us pray in the words that Jesus taught us:

OUR Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

All sit. Cadet Warrant Officer Bethan Holmes reads from the memoir of Joan Broome, a fifteen-year-old girl, on her experience of VE Day in London

The choir sings the Anthem

GOD is our hope and strength : a very present help in trouble.
Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved :and though the hills
be carried into the midst of the sea.
Though the waters thereof rage and swell : and though the mountains shake at the
tempest of the same.
The heathen make much ado, and the kingdoms are moved : but God hath shewed
his voice, and the earth shall melt away.
The Lord of hosts is with us : the God of Jacob is our refuge.
He maketh wars to cease in all the world : he breaketh the bow, and knappeth the
spear in sunder, and burneth the chariots in the fire.
Be still then, and know that I am God : I will be exalted among the heathen, and I
will be exalted in the earth.
The Lord of hosts is with us : the God of Jacob is our refuge. Amen.

*John Rutter (b 1945)
commissioned for the 75th anniversary of VE Day*

from Psalm 46

All stand. Abigail McFarlane, a King's Scout, leads the Rededication to Peace

WILL you work for peace and reconciliation in your homes and communities,
and strive to promote peace and goodwill in the world?

We will.

Will you commit to an honest remembrance of the cost of war and resist all forms
of evil, hatred, and injustice?

We will.

Will you recognise that the freedoms and responsibilities you have were hard won,
and exercise them with gratitude, generosity, and humility?

We will.

On this eightieth anniversary of VE Day, let us dedicate ourselves anew to one
another and to the cause of peace, justice, and liberty as people of faith, hope, and
love.

The Dean says

May God grant us courage always to seek and defend the ways of justice and mercy.
Amen.

All sing the Hymn



O PRAISE ye the Lord!
praise him in the height;
rejoice in his word,
ye angels of light;
ye heavens adore him
by whom ye were made,
and worship before him,
in brightness arrayed.

O praise ye the Lord!
praise him upon earth,
in tuneful accord,
ye sons of new birth;
praise him who has brought you
his grace from above,
praise him who has taught you
to sing of his love.

O praise ye the Lord!
all things that give sound;
each jubilant chord,
re-echo around;
loud organs, his glory
forth tell in deep tone,
and, sweet harp, the story
of what he has done.

O praise ye the Lord!
thanksgiving and song
to him be outpoured
all ages along:
for love in creation,
for heaven restored,
for grace of salvation,
O praise ye the Lord!
Amen, amen.

Laudate Dominum 427 NEH
Hubert Parry (1848–1918)
from Hear my words, ye people
arranged by James O'Donnell (b 1961),
Organist of Westminster Abbey 2000–22

Henry Baker (1821–77)
after Psalm 150

The Dean pronounces the final Blessing

GOD grant to the living grace; to the departed rest; to the Church, The King, the Commonwealth, and all people, peace and concord; and to us sinners life everlasting; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

All sing

GOD save our gracious King,
Long live our noble King,
God save The King.
Send him victorious,
happy and glorious,
long to reign over us:
God save The King.

arranged by Gordon Jacob (1895–1984)

All remain standing as the clergy and choir depart. Their Majesties The King & The Queen, along with Members of the Royal Family, move to the Nave to meet veterans

All sit as directed by the Honorary Stewards

On departure, Her Majesty The Queen, Her Royal Highness The Princess of Wales, and other Members of the Royal Family, lay flowers at the Innocent Victims' Memorial at the West Front of the Abbey

Music after the service

Prologue from A Wartime Sketchbook

William Walton
arranged by Christopher Palmer (1946–95)
Robert Gower (b 1952)
and Matthew Jorysz (b 1992)

The band plays

Calling All Workers

Eric Coates (1886–1957)

We'll Meet Again

Ross Parker (1914–74)
& Hughie Charles (1907–95)

Excerpt from 'The Battle of Britain Suite'

William Walton

RAF March Past

Henry Walford Davies (1869–1941)
& George Dyson (1883–1964)

Members of the congregation are requested kindly to remain in their seats until directed to move by the Honorary Stewards

The bells of the Abbey church are fired (struck simultaneously) eighty times. Church bells were fired in celebration throughout the United Kingdom on the 8th May 1945

In Retrospect

*The world asks a great deal of the poppies,
insists they carry the wounds of war
and shoulder the weight of remembrance.
Such flimsy, wavering plants;
we painted their flowers the colour of blood
and punched dark holes in their heads
as if bullets had passed through,
then trimmed them with green sprigs of hope.
And from deep in the seeds we concocted
the essence of sleep and dreams and resting-in-peace.
Almost weightless even in full bloom
we made them souls, the poppies, souls
of those who we lost, and - let it be said -
those who we killed.*

*Poppies - nursed in darkness, nourished by dirt.
But for all their spindly roots, frail stalks
and papery petals - as easily smudged
as a butterfly wing -
they joggle into existence
again and again, unearthing themselves
in fallow fields and railway sidings,
on roundabouts, verges and no man's land,
from the brickwork of old chimneys and bridges
and cracks in the pavement.
They nod and they nag,
reminding us not to forget, flagging a red alert
as their crumpled petals unfold.
So, rightly, the poppies ask a great deal of the world.*

*Simon Armitage
Poet Laureate*