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Dear friends,

November is a month dominated by remembering. On the first Sunday of the month we have our service where we recall those who have died throughout the last twelve months. Invitations are sent to the next of kin of everyone whose service Sue or I have taken, regardless of whether it was in church or at a crematorium. During this service we light individual candles in memory of each person. This is a very powerful time that I know many people find very helpful. The reality is that death is something our society does not cope with very well. One of our tasks as Christians is to show that those of us who believe that this life is not all there is relate to death differently than those for whom this life is the only life. This service enables everyone who attends to remember with thanks the lives of those who have departed this life and the influences they have had on those left behind.

Remembrance Sunday has become one of the most important Sundays in the village calendar. In recent years the services at both churches have grown in attendance. No doubt the War Memorial has helped everyone to focus on the ultimate sacrifice paid by such a large number of individuals from our villages. It is impossible to grasp the impact that must have been made by the loss of a generation during the First World War. During this year we have lost Jack Nicholls who was the oldest surviving soldier from the Second World War living in the village. Jack took a prominent role in the service of unveiling the memorial. I know that he, and indeed all those who returned from the war, could not understand why they returned and others did not. That is an unanswerable question. The sacrifice and suffering of those who were involved needs to continue to be acknowledged, particularly as the generation directly involved becomes less and less. I am particularly pleased that we have such support from our Uniformed Organisations for our services. To see so many young people trying to understand the significance of these events is very moving. It is very good that we will welcome

some of the older Scouts and their leaders to Fryerning Church this year. These boys are quite near the age of some of those names on the memorial. I know that a number of people from the village join the service at the Cenotaph. Others watch it on the television. I would encourage you to join us at either church for services that are poignant and moving. In both churches we are also remembering in prayers Nicholas Dent. This young man with connections to our community is serving in Afghanistan. His photo is displayed in Ingatestone church as well as Michael's the hairdressers.

For the church, November also brings the season of Advent. This time of preparation for Christmas has almost been forgotten by our society. All the preparing we feel we need to do consists of buying gifts and cards and planning our social calendar. The idea that in some way we need to be spiritually prepared for remembering the birth of Jesus is lost amongst the glitter and the wrapping paper. Thanksgiving for his birth has become anxiety should we have forgotten something. In reality, we may well have forgotten what it is supposed to be all about. Advent is the season for both anticipating the first coming of Jesus, born in poverty in a manger. It is also about anticipating his Second Coming in glory as judge. This is part of the Christian narrative completely lost by many people. A good preparation for Christmas is to spend time in Church considering this theme.

I hope that you have seen the Christmas cards produced for the two churches this year. A picture of Fryerning Church in the snow, a close up of the Ingatestone crib and a view inside Ingatestone Church showing the Advent ring, the Christmas tree and the window behind the altar. Receiving these cards might help some people recall, if only for a moment, the reason for Christmas and that the only place to really recall the significance of the season is among believers remembering and celebrating together. Of course it is all part of the Christian narrative, central to which is the death and resurrection of Jesus. As we remember this, so we can hope in remembering those who we have lost.

Yours in Christ, *Patrick*

