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Dear friends,

Remembrance Sunday this year has a particular poignancy as in the summer there were the deaths, within the period of seven days, of Harry Patch and Henry Allingham. Harry was known as 'The last fighting Tommy' and Henry was the oldest surviving member of the R.A.F. These two amazing elderly gentlemen, of extreme age, were the last surviving men who had fought in the First World War. I was not far from Wells, where Harry Patch lived, at the time of his death. Wells Cathedral, a giant of a building, the large green in front, and the streets of Wells were all full of people for Harry's funeral. Many people travelled considerable distances just to be part of this occasion. The local media made much of the fact that many young people wanted to be at or near the Cathedral that day. Harry and Henry were both bemused by the reality that fame was thrust upon them simply because of their extreme age. In later years Harry in particular had decided that he should speak of the terrible realities of life in the trenches and his book contains harrowing accounts of the deaths of his comrades. Like all survivors of wars, Harry and Henry never came to terms with why they survived when other died. When we look at the names on our War Memorials, and think of those who lost their lives, we also need to remember the pain of those who returned. In September the BBC showed a harrowing programme about service personnel injured in Iraq and Afghanistan. It was also revealed that there are more ex-service personnel in prisons than servicing in Afghanistan, showing the difficulties of those expected to re-adjust to ordinary life. We pray at all our services for all those caught up in conflicts, their families and friends, and those seeking to bring stability to areas of conflict.

It has been a great joy to see increases in the numbers of local people attending our Remembrance Sunday services, and also to see the lowering of the average ages of those attending. Thanks particularly are due to our Uniformed organisations for making

attendance at Remembrance Sunday a top priority. Harry Patch, Henry Allingham and our television screens remind us of the continuing importance of Remembrance Sunday. I am very pleased to have been involved in making sure that in Ingatestone we have a prominent War Memorial. Do please come to the service at either Ingatestone or Fryerning to show our gratitude to all those who fought in both World Wars and in other conflicts.

Sometimes there is an inevitable desire to focus on our own lives and concerns and give little or no thought to those in other parts of the world. It has been wonderful in recent years to see how our community has responded to the direct call to help those in north-western Bulgaria, one of the poorest areas in Europe. Sue Cruse and I, together with Jan Brandis and Katy Thomas, will be paying for ourselves to go to that region this month on behalf of Harvest Plus/Harvest for the Hungry. It was very good to have Rady and Plamy from the church in Sophia come to the Junior School and explain first hand to the children about the realities of life for many people. Of course there are many needy people throughout the world, but we know that we have a system in place that enables gifts of basic food items to be delivered to orphanages, old people's home's, institutions for those with mental problems and to families in this forgotten area of Europe. Just look on the website to see pictures that will show you the conditions. The rest of our old classroom tables have been sent this year. If you would still like to help, each box of aid needs a £3 gift to cover transportation costs. I will happily receive any gifts.

Remembering our gratitude to others and looking to help those in need are part of our response as Christians to understanding all Jesus has done for us in our own lives. They are not added extras to a faith that impacts upon every part of our lives. Jesus said, "Love God and love your neighbour as yourself" and then defined "neighbour" as everyone. Remembrance Sunday, Harvest Festivals and all church services, give us opportunities to think beyond our own everyday concerns.

Yours in Christ, *Patrick*