

CHURCHES OF EARLSDON AND CHAPELFIELDS
A PRAYER VIGIL FOR THE 5th ANNIVERSARY OF THE WAR IN IRAQ
(Each section is introduced, followed by some minutes of silent prayer.)

For the dead and injured Coalition troops, and for their families.

3924 US soldiers, 174 UK soldiers and 133 other nationalities have died in these five years. Each one is a tragedy for their family and friends. The numbers of wounded are less precise. MOD figures refer to more than 1600 military personnel medically evacuated. Some will face a lifetime of disability.

For the dead and injured citizens of Iraq, and for their families.

Civilian casualties are not officially counted. The latest attempt to quantify the death toll puts the figure at more than a million. There are reportedly 500,000 'extra' widows. It is estimated that 53% of the population has suffered some physical injury in the fighting.

For the refugees and displaced citizens of Iraq.

The Red Cross and the UNHCR estimate that 2.3 million people have fled to neighbouring countries, and another 2 million are displaced within Iraq. The total population of pre-war Iraq was around 25 million.

For the cost of the war, measured in other terms.

Ten million Iraqis live on food rations. OXFAM says 70% of the population has no access to safe drinking water. Unemployment is above 60%. Basic services are precarious. The UK has spent £5 billion on its military operations; £750 million on reconstruction. The anger, hatred and psychological trauma are incalculable.

For political decision-makers, acting on our behalf.

May our leaders be guided by a sense of what is right. May the gift of wisdom be theirs. Let the Christians among them listen to the Church and its Lord.

For ourselves, in whose names these things are done.

We ask for the gift of courage to witness to the truth. We pray for fortitude and commitment to continue to act and work for peace.

We commit ourselves to work for peace and justice, using the words of the Prayer of Saint Ignatius: Teach us, Good Lord, to serve you as you deserve; to give, and not to count the cost; to fight, and not to heed the wounds; to toil, and not to seek for rest; to labour, and not to ask for any reward, save that of knowing that we do Your will. Amen.