

WWII: Calling the Nation to Prayer

A few weeks ago, our church moderator reminded us of the National Days of Prayer called by King George VI and the Government during World War II to seek God for His deliverance from our enemies...

The first, and most famous, Day of Prayer was held on 26th May 1940, resulting in the rescue of 338,000 British soldiers from the beaches of Dunkirk, but there were seven such days of prayer during the war years - the first three "held within the first twelve months because the situation was known to be so desperate."



The queue outside Westminster Abbey on 26th May 1940

"This extraordinary photograph provides comforting reassurance that even in the most frightening of times there is always hope and help available, provided of course, it is sought for in the right place and in the right spirit."

The second Day of Prayer was called on 11th August 1940, in which "the King had called all the young people to pray ... the tennis courts were deserted."

The third was held on 8th September 1940, during the Battle of Britain. "Calling for another Day of Prayer so soon showed how desperate Parliament knew the situation to be ... The answer was again immediate ... Air Chief Marshall Dowding said: 'I

will say with absolute conviction that I can trace the intervention of God ... Humanly speaking victory was impossible!'"

On 23rd March 1941 was the fourth Day of Prayer. "The guidance of God must have been evident, for we did not know at the time that this was Hitler's next date for invading Britain ... This was a turning point in the war. We learned later that Hitler had put off the invasion of Britain four times."

The fifth was called on 3rd September 1942. "Very significantly, the next month in the North African desert, the Eighth Army ... saved Egypt (and therefore Israel) from being invaded by Hitler's powerful tank commander Rommel."

The sixth Day of Prayer was held exactly a year later on 3rd September 1943, and "Italy surrendered to the allies that very night."

Finally, "In the spring of 1944, the seventh and last Day of Prayer was called by the King ... [and] on June 5th the Allied Forces launched out across the Channel. Eisenhower reported later: '*If there was nothing else in my life to prove the existence of an Almighty and Merciful God, the events of the next twenty-four hours did it ... All officers were called to church services, and all ranks came to pledge themselves to God ... the deputy chaplain-general ... urged faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*'."

On Sunday 8th November this year we will once again remember those who fought and died in the wars of last century, and we will once again give thanks to God for His great faithfulness in protecting our nation and preserving our people from evil.

This overview has been necessarily brief, but the quotes above are all taken from two articles which can be found here: <https://ctntp.files.wordpress.com/2017/12/seven-national-calls-to-prayer-in-wwii.pdf> and here: <https://anglican.ink/2015/06/08/national-day-of-prayer-at-the-time-of-dunkirk-1940/>

At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them

*May God continue to preserve our nation and turn hearts toward Him in prayer once again,
Elizabeth McDonald
20 October 2020*

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