

11<sup>th</sup> July 2023

## Srebrenica

**“On the road, on the road from Srebrenica  
Blackbirds fly; blackbirds flying overhead  
Cry no mercy, on the road from Srebrenica,  
Where there’s no one left to count the dead.”**

Tom Paxton, *On the Road from Srebrenica*

From the album: *Live – For the Record (1996)*

[Tom Paxton - On the Road From Srebrenica \(Live 1998\) - YouTube](#)

A few days ago, the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Rev Sally Foster-Fulton, reminded us:

*Between 11 and 16 July 1995, the inhumanity we are capable of inflicting on each other manifested itself in then war-torn Bosnia-Herzegovina. 8,372 Bosnian men and boys were tragically killed by Serb forces in the town of Srebrenica in Bosnia, and, to our shame, the rest of the world stood by and did not intervene ... In 2009 the European Parliament declared 11 July to be the official Memorial Day to commemorate this tragedy.*

Today we remember Srebrenica. Two organisations – “Remembering Srebrenica Scotland” ([www.srebrenica.scot](http://www.srebrenica.scot)) and “Remembering Srebrenica” (<https://srebrenica.org.uk>) – offer lots of helpful information on this, so it doesn’t need me to repeat that. But I would simply emphasise the theme that’s been chosen for this Memorial Day – “Together we are one”. The “Remembering Srebrenica” website offers us this thought:

*The flourishing of such hatred and extremism can gradually escalate from inflammatory rhetoric to attacks, persecution and even extermination as seen in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The theme will therefore underline why we must combat such divisive rhetoric by focusing on the things which unite us ... Jo Cox MP (who was murdered by a far-right extremist) famously said: “We are far more united and have far more in common with each other than things that divide us.” The theme will remind us of the importance of remaining vigilant against the forces of hatred that seek to “other” groups as being negatively different ...*

I’ve never seen the word “other” used as a verb. But here it has a powerful resonance for me. To “other” people, to label them as different, divisive and, ultimately, dangerous, is what breeds hatred and violence.

“Together we are one” is our mantra as we remember Srebrenica today – and, hopefully, long after Srebrenica Memorial Day is past.

### **A prayer for today**

*Loving God, help us to remember, our togetherness today.  
And together, let us continue to pray and work for peace. Amen*