

VE Day 80 reception

St Paul's Cathedral Crypt

Thursday 8th May 2025

The Rt Hon The Lord Mayor of London

Alderman Alastair King

Mr Dean, Your excellencies, My Lord Bishop, Aldermen, Sheriff, Chief Commoner, Masters and Prime Wardens, Honoured Guests...

Good evening and a very warm welcome to this very special anniversary reception, following the beautiful evensong service and lamp-lighting ceremony.

Our deepest thanks to the Dean of St Paul's and all officials and staff at St Paul's for welcoming us all and supporting this event.

It is a great honour to speak here on this 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day, one of the most important and consequential days in the history of our City, our country, and indeed the world.

And I am conscious that if it wasn't for that victory 80 years ago, I most probably wouldn't be speaking to you at all.

How wonderful that we are gathered here at St Paul's Cathedral, effectively the United Kingdom's parish church, which became such a potent symbol of London's resilience under the horrors of the Blitz; its world-famous dome shining out over the smoke and the flame – one of the enduring images of the Second World War, a symbol of hope and of survival for the nation - giving us light in our darkest hour.

Years later of course, world leaders would gather here for the funeral of Sir Winston Churchill, who probably did more than any other single person for Victory in Europe.

As we have all been reminded in these commemorations, this conflict really was one of survival: the survival of the nation, the survival of freedom, the survival of humanity on this continent.

So many heroes from this country and our allies gave their lives in this conflict, the vast majority of those who did survive are of course no longer with us now, only a handful remain.

To all of them we owe an enormous debt of gratitude for almost everything we are able to do and enjoy now, and for the eighty years of relative peace, prosperity, and above all freedom which they won for us.

By laying down their lives, they gave us our lives today.

And to them we owe the duty to remain true to all that they fought for, to always be vigilant in defence of our freedoms, and steadfast in defence of our nation – we can never take their victory and all that they won for granted.

The City of London maintains a strong commitment to supporting our Armed Forces, on whom we rely for our security and our liberty today.

As my wife is a serving Army Reservist, this is a cause which is especially – and literally – close to my own heart!

Her mission is to support the recruitment and retention of Reservists in the City and to encourage as many firms and institutions as possible to sign the

Armed Forces Covenant, so we will always be in a position to defend ourselves and each other.

Guildhall and Mansion House have been lit up in red, white and blue in honour of this 80th anniversary, and tonight we will be lighting up Tower Bridge as well – a city illuminated in celebration, and at peace.

This is our small way of showing that the City of London will always remember Victory in Europe Day, and to those involved, will always say: Thank you.