

# Off Script

## Veteran Quality

At the VJ ceremony in the National Memorial Arboretum, all were awed by the precision fly-past of the Lancaster, Spitfire and



Hurricane. But the moment which captured our hearts was when Captain Yavar Abbas, a 104-year-old veteran, went ‘off script’.

Yavar’s story can be read on the British Legion website. (*Type in British Legion Yavar Abbas.*)

I doubt that any formal gift or eloquent speech could touch the heart of a king so effectively as an off-script tribute in a public arena from a man who has served valiantly, lived long, survived cancer and simply wanted to express his respect and care for his chief of staff.

As MU chaplain, I am used to sitting at my computer choosing words and shaping phrases into a page of what I prayerfully hope might touch a few readers. I am also aware that the written word is never as powerful as a timely and kindly ‘off-script’ and unsolicited spoken word, accompanied by empathetic body-language. I am ever grateful for the many unexpected, kindly words spoken to me.

Jesus was a master of the ‘off-script’ word – the giver of encouragement through his spontaneous comments to people in need of hope and love. Ceremony may have it’s time and place, but of greater importance to Jesus were the people affected by it: the woman at the well, the man up the tree, the woman who touched the hem of his garment, the man haunted by demons, the woman caught in adultery, the blind beggar, the thief on the cross...

*‘Come to me all you who are heavy-laden and I shall give you rest.. ‘ and words of life and hope. (Matthew 11.28)*