

Sunday September 18th
A service of worship for use at home
Prepared by Mr Ian Wood

Call to Worship (from Psalm 8)

O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.
When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that
you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?
Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory
and honour. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you
have put all things under their feet.
O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Introduction

We have all been saddened and shaken by the sudden death of our Queen,
Elizabeth. As the days have passed, we have been following the events in a
period of National Mourning, and doubtless watched on television, or read in the
newspapers enabling us all to share in the ceremonial events that have unfolded
as the Nation and Commonwealth prepare for her funeral, tomorrow morning.
The service today aims to give thanks to God for her life of service, reflect on our
response, and give each of us opportunity to remember her life in our own way.

Hymn STF 81 Now Thank we all our God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JR9QD6mgeHM>

NOW THANK WE ALL OUR GOD,
With hearts and hands and voices;
Who wondrous things has done,
In whom His world rejoices;
In whom His world rejoices;
Who from our mother's arms
Has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
And still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God
Through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts
And blessed peace to cheer us;

And keep us in His grace,
And guide us when perplexed,
And free us from all ills
In this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God
The Father now be given,
The Son, and Him who reigns
With them in highest heaven,
The one eternal God,
Whom earth and heaven adore;
For thus it was, is now,
And shall be ever more.

Prayers

Loving God, we thank you for the opportunity to come together to celebrate the life of Queen Elizabeth.

For her courage, her dignity, her sincerity, we praise you.

For her dedication, her resilience, her faith, we praise you.

For all the ways she put service before self, we praise you.

And we ask your blessing on all those she loved at this sad time,

and especially on King Charles and the Queen Consort as they seek to follow her example and take on the mantle that has passed to them. Amen.

We thank you, loving God, for the faithfulness, discipleship and reign of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. We thank you for the strength, wisdom and long life with which you blessed her. We commend to your tender care her family and all who mourn her passing; may they know the truth of your promise that those who mourn shall be blessed. Pour out your Spirit of compassion, kindness, strength and wisdom upon your servants King Charles and the Queen Consort; guide and bless them especially over the coming days. Hear us in the name of the King of kings, even Jesus Christ. Amen.

Life-giving, forgiving God,

your Son Jesus challenged people to repent and turn again to follow you.

That challenge, O God, is still relevant for us and for all people.

So at this time we bow before you to confess again our need of your forgiveness and your renewing power in our lives.

Loving, gracious God,

we are sorry for wandering from your ways,

for the times we forget you,

for the times we ignore your call to live as your people,

for failing to share our knowledge and love for you with those around us.

We admit that we need to change, and we cannot do that without your forgiveness, and your renewing Spirit in our lives.

Lord God, hear our prayer.

To all who truly repent, God says:

'Your sins are forgiven, I will remember them no more.'

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Psalm 121

¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills - from where will my help come?

² My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

³ He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.

⁴ He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

⁵ The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade at your right hand.

⁶ The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.

⁷ The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.

⁸ The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in
from this time on and for evermore.

Hymn STF 132 O God our help in ages past

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZjdmLstpNGE>

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home;

A thousand ages in thy sight
Are like an evening gone;
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.

Beneath the shadow of thy throne
Thy saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is thine arm alone,
And our defence is sure.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.

Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting thou art God,
To endless years the same.

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be thou our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home.

Lesson 1: Isaiah 6 vv1-8

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. ² Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. ³ And one called to another and said:

‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.’

⁴ The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. ⁵ And I said: ‘Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!’

⁶ Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. ⁷ The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: ‘Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.’ ⁸ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’

And I said, ‘Here am I; send me!’

Reflection

Following the death of her father King George, Her Majesty succeeded the throne on 6 February 1952, and was officially crowned in 1953. My parents took me to the cinema to watch a filming of her Coronation, and that is one of my earliest memories. I was 3. Queen Elizabeth was the world’s longest-reigning living monarch and was a much-loved and popular royal figure.

This year will now be remembered by many of us as, ‘the year that Queen Elizabeth died’. Whatever we think about the institution of the monarchy, the death of our Queen has a huge impact upon us.

She was the same age my own mother, and Prince Charles was 3 months older than me. So, you could say our families grew up together, even though our backgrounds, and life experiences could not have been more different.

The Queen's face, her presence, her being there have been part of all our lives for so many years. For most of us, she has been the only monarch we can remember. She has been part of our lives, our imaginations, our sense of who we are, for so long. Her death was not expected by most of us, although we became aware of her increasing frailty, especially following the death of her beloved and faithful husband Philip, the late Duke of Edinburgh.

The writer of this Bible passage from the book of Isaiah shared this experience of the death of a monarch, after a reign of many years. It is probably no co-incidence that it was in this year, the year that King Uzziah died, that he had an experience of the ground shaking beneath him, when the Temple shook and he felt lost.

Although shaken and confused, he experienced God's presence, he was purified, and then responded by offering himself as a prophet, to share the hard message God had for his people.

Many of us now will also feel dislocated and shaken up, in ways we can't quite describe and perhaps hadn't expected.

The monarch whose reign has just ended in our own land would be the first to say that the God whom she worshipped, and to whom she committed her life in service, the God in whose name she was anointed in a holy place, this holy God, is with us, and the whole earth is filled with God's glory.

But what she provided above all was a kind of stability and reassurance. When times were painful and difficult for us as a nation, she was there. She always sought to comfort the suffering and to steady the anxious.

Above all, her own faith in God was sure and strong. She spoke with increasing depth, in her many Christmas broadcasts, about her own reliance on God. In the face of her death, we can depend on the God who is always with us, filling not only the temples of this world, but also our families and communities, with love and hope.

In the year that Queen Elizabeth died, we give thanks for a life of dedicated service to our nations and commonwealth. We give thanks for God's faithful servant, Elizabeth. We will pray for her family and closest friends, for those who will mourn and miss her most.

During her coronation in 1953, Elizabeth promised to serve her country and God until her dying day, and indeed she did just that.. Our late Queen has been an exemplary leader – having been entrusted with plentiful resources, she used them faithfully to help build up communities, support charities and serve others. Although we may not have the wealth of the British royal family, how can we follow her example, and show that we can faithfully use the things that we have been given?

The Queen was generous in her charitable giving, but perhaps the biggest impact she had on the smaller communities was her giving of time too. Is this something which you could explore - how can we use the time given to us to glorify God?

To honour her memory, why not challenge yourself to explore further the work the Queen undertook whilst being trusted with her role as Britain's head of state?

Is there anything which inspires you to imitate her actions so you can build up and look after your own community too?

In the year that Queen Elizabeth died, We grieve for what we have all lost. And we also take heart and hope from the faith that we shared with her and that she shared with us, remembering that death is defeated and that God reigns above all.

Quote from *The Servant Queen*, a book published on the occasion of her 90th birthday

“Each day is a new beginning. I know that the only way to live my life is to try to do what is right, to take the long view, to give of my best in all that the day brings, and to put my trust in God.” *Queen Elizabeth II*

Time to reflect

Spend some time in quiet reflection, or if you are with others share with them some of your memories of the late Queen.

Hymn STF 705 It is God who holds the nations
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DU1tV7CSuVg>

It is God who holds the nations in the hollow of his hand;
It is God whose light is shining in the darkness of the land;
It is God who builds his City on the Rock and not on sand:
May the living God be praised!

It is God whose purpose summons us to use the present hour;
Who recalls us to our senses when a nation's life turns sour;
In the discipline of freedom we shall know his saving power:
May the living God be praised!

When a thankful nation, looking back, has cause to celebrate
Those who win our admiration by their service to the state;
When self-giving is a measure of the greatness of the great:
May the living God be praised!

God reminds us every sunrise that the world is ours on lease -
For the sake of life tomorrow, may our love for it increase;
May all races live together, share its riches, be at peace:
May the living God be praised!

Lesson 2: 1 Timothy 2: 1-7

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings should be made for everyone, ² for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. ³ This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, ⁴ who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, ⁶ who gave himself a ransom for all - this was attested at the right time. ⁷ For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

Intercessory Prayers

As our nation remembers Queen Elizabeth II, we call to mind her role in the services and we pray for all those in our own country and overseas who serve in the military and all those whose lives are shattered by the war which is going on around them.

We hold before you the leaders and people of Ukraine and pray for peace in that troubled land. We pray for peace wherever there is war or conflict.

As the nation recalls the faithful service of Queen Elizabeth II, we call to mind her compassion and we give thanks for the hundreds of charities to which she was connected. We pray for them and those whom they seek to serve.

We commend to you the people of Pakistan as they seek to rebuild their lives after the devastating flood and all the various aid agencies working there.

As the nation grieves the passing of Queen Elizabeth II, we pray for her family who mourn a mother and grandmother and we remember all those who at this time are saddened as a result of the passing of a loved one, those who have suffered a recent bereavement, those for who it is a time of anniversary and those for whom the pain is constant. May they know your comfort and peace.

As we prepare to celebrate the life of Queen Elizabeth II and commend her to your eternal care, we pray for our nation that as we have been united by grief, we may be united by commitment to serve one another. Bless King Charles III and the Queen Consort, give them strength and wisdom that above all things they may serve you in the roles to which you have called them.

Finally, we prayer for ourselves and those we love, asking that God will enable us to listen to his call on our lives, and enable us to love and serve one another.

Amen

Hymn STF 470 Lord for the years

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8fxVrU9bc8>

Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided:
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

Lord, for that word, the word of life which fires us,
speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,
teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us:
Lord of the word, receive Your people's praise.

Lord, for our land in this our generation,
spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care:
for young and old, for commonwealth and nation,
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.

Lord, for our world when we disown and doubt him,
loveless in strength, and comfortless in pain,
hungry and helpless, lost indeed without him:
Lord of the world, we pray that Christ may reign.

Lord for ourselves; in living power remake us -
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne,
past put behind us, for the future take us:
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

Blessing

And now may God in his infinite love and mercy
bring the whole Church,
living and departed in the Lord Jesus,
to a joyful resurrection
and the fulfilment of his eternal kingdom;
and the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among you
and remain with you always.

Amen.