

faith at
home



**Saying Goodbye to a Servant
Queen: HM Elizabeth II
Head of the Commonwealth Nations**



KEY CONCEPT/MESSAGE:

Queen Elizabeth II was a long-serving faithful monarch, giving over 70 years of her life in service to the people of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth as their Queen. With her passing comes the end of an era, one which should be marked with thanksgiving and celebration for the end of a life well-lived as a life of service.

BIBLE STORY OF THE WEEK:

Matthew 25: 14-30 The Parable of the Talents.



‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’

Gathering

Think about all the times Queen Elizabeth II comes to mind in the every day. When you have paid for something, given money to charity or gifts to others, her face has been there on our coins and our bank notes. When you have mailed a card or a letter, containing kind words of gratitude, encouragement and celebration, her head has been there on the stamp. When you flew back from holidays into London Gatwick airport, full of memories, her face was there on the wall, a smiling montage made from all her royal subjects. Every time you watched or attended a sporting event, like a football match or rugby game for our national team, she was blessed and commemorated in the words of the national anthem. Queen Elizabeth was a face we associated with many positive and happy things, as well as offering a sense of what it means to be a citizen of a land as old as the United Kingdom.

Slide 2

Spend a few moments looking at the images on the second slide of the PowerPoint and thinking about what your personal memories are associated with the smiling image of our Queen. Light a candle and allow for a few moments of quiet reflection before saying this prayer:

Dear God,

We gather today in memory of our Queen, Elizabeth II, a good and faithful servant all her life. We come together to smile and remember her great acts of service and to think about the ways in which she might inspire us to care about others and use our lives in good and positive ways.

Amen

Engagement

The Queen was very special to people in the UK. She was the longest serving monarch in a long history of kings and queens of this country and one of only a handful of female monarchs. She had been the Queen for as long as many people can remember and she will continue to hold a special place in the hearts of millions.

I wonder if you know she was not just Queen of the UK?

Slide 3

Queen Elizabeth II was not just the ruler of the United Kingdom but also the Queen of the 54 nations in the Commonwealth.

Slide 4

The nations of the Commonwealth were seen as equals and when it formed they willingly chose to have King Charles VI, the then King of England, as the first Head of the Commonwealth. When he died unexpectedly and still quite young, his daughter, Queen Elizabeth II, not only became the Queen of the United Kingdom but was also chosen by the Commonwealth nations as their monarch and sovereign, which shows how well thought of she was, and still is, by the people of those countries.

The Queen was given something very important and precious to look after.

I wonder how that felt?

Slide 5

Read the Parable of the Talents ([Matthew 25:14-30](#)) in a Bible of your choice. If appropriate, you could choose pupils to act out the different servants with their talents. What did the Queen choose to do with all she was given to look after? Elicit pupils' responses. She chose to serve others and bring people together.

I wonder what we can learn from her example?

In her message on Commonwealth Day 2021, Her Majesty described the Commonwealth of Nations' "**friendship, spirit of unity and achievements**". These were things she embodied herself as Queen over the years she was the Queen both here and across the globe for the Commonwealth states.

In the next part of the collective worship we will think about 5 ways of seeing the Queen, understanding her legacy across the world and reflecting upon the ways in which her own Christian faith shaped who she was and how she brought people from all over the globe together. You might want to explore each of these ideas at a time, over the course of a few days, pausing to think about the difference the Queen made to our lives, and what we might learn from her example.

I wonder what the Queen means to you?

Slide 6

The Queen did a wonderful job of bringing people from all over the world together, which was especially important after a time of conflict.

I wonder how she did that?

I wonder how we too can bring people together?

She remained as a bridge between those nations for all the decades of her reign. Her code name was actually 'London Bridge', to be used in reporting the sad news of her death in secret to those who would need to know before the rest of the country would find out about it.

I wonder what the world would have been like after the war without the Queen and the Commonwealth?

I wonder if the Commonwealth has helped to keep peace in our world?

Slide 7

The image of the Queen with a chef's hat on may make you giggle but in her 2020 Commonwealth Day message, the Queen said this when she spoke about the diverse nations of the Commonwealth:

*“Such a blend of traditions serves to make us stronger, individually and collectively, by **providing the ingredients** needed for social, political and economic resilience”*

She was a wise leader who knew the meaning of the Christian teaching of **Imago Dei** - that all people are **made in God's image** – and she recognised that the diversity and difference of the people making up the Commonwealth gave it its strength and unique flavour. Like a chef aiming to create a delicious meal made from only the best, most wonderful flavours, she believed that keeping the Commonwealth together was what made the world a stronger and better place for all people to live in. The Queen was a 'good and faithful servant' and knew that all humans flourish better when they live in community and harmony together.

I wonder how we might also follow the Queen's example in celebrating diversity and difference?

Slide 8

Ideas can be very powerful and strong leaders make sure they are turned into actions that make a difference. For over 70 years the Queen kept the Commonwealth together, even when countries were going through big changes and not everybody agreed with each other. She was like the glue that joined all those diverse nations together – Australia to Rwanda, India to Malta, from Sri Lanka to Ghana. It is for this reason that people mourn around the world at her passing away and are saying goodbye to Her Majesty, because she was the glue that joined all those nations together in celebration and appreciation of their unique ways of living and being human beings. She really took to heart the verse from Romans 12:18:

“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

The Queen was aware it *did* depend on her and she took that role very seriously. The Royal Website described her: “As Head, the Queen **personally reinforces the links by which the Commonwealth joins people together** from around the world.” She saw herself as being like glue!

I wonder if you think other people can be like the Queen and act like glue to keep groups working together?

Slide 9

The Queen knew that the strength of the Commonwealth was in its continuing and she recognised the role young people would play in that, stating “*the Commonwealth can only flourish if its ideas and ideals continue to be young and fresh and relevant to all generations.*”

I wonder if you know what ‘flourishing’ means?

The Queen knew young people had a very important part to play in making sure the future was bright. She saw that they were ready to be leaders, just as the verse in the Bible says:

Don’t let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live... 1 Timothy 4:12

The Queen was a *visionary*, looking ahead to the future and seeing how things should be and can be if the voice of young people is heard. The Queen sought to use her power and influence so that young people’s ideas could be heard and they could really start to change the world.

In 2014 The Queen launched the ‘Queen’s Young Leaders’ campaign, which celebrated exceptional young people from across the Commonwealth aged 18-29 who were taking a lead in their communities and using their skills to transform lives. She recognised the leaders of the future from all the different nations and honoured them with a special award. The Queen was a visionary- looking to the future and imagining a better tomorrow for all the children and young people of the Commonwealth nations around the world. She said “*The future of this association lies with the one billion who are under 25 years of age.*” That includes you!

I wonder how that feels, knowing that the Queen of England thought about people like you?

I wonder how the Queen showed she cared about children and young people? I wonder how we can be a champion for other people too?

The Queen was also very aware of the concerns young people had about the Earth and climate change and the planet they were set to inherit. Again, looking to the future, she urged the Commonwealth, back in 2009, to take a lead on climate change: “*The threat to our environment is not a new concern, but it is now a global challenge which will continue to affect the security and stability of millions for years to come.*” The Queen also knew that many of those who would be most affected by climate change lived in nations within the Commonwealth and that it was important for the whole Commonwealth to work together on saving the

planet. With this in mind, the Queen's Commonwealth Canopy project was launched in 2015. This appeal went out to all the member nations to contribute to preserving areas of indigenous forest to create a tree canopy that stretched across the globe in recognition of her life of service to the Commonwealth. She spoke about it saying, "*This and other initiatives are a practical demonstration of the power of the Commonwealth, working as a group, to effect real change for generations to come*".

What changes would you like to see for your future? How can we work together to achieve these, as the Queen worked together with the Commonwealth?

Slide 10

This slide shows the Queen speaking at a Commonwealth meeting in London in 2018 but the words in the box are from her Commonwealth Day message in 2021, when she was reflecting on how the Commonwealth was managing the stresses and struggles of the Coronavirus Pandemic.

I wonder how can we all play our part in creating this kind of world for those who come after us?

Slide 11

As you now know, the Queen was the Head of 54 nations and not just the UK. When she was younger she used to do a lot of travelling to these different places, talking to the people, engaging with the culture, often wearing clothes she was given and joining in with dancing and singing done in her honour. The Queen valued the huge variety of ways to be human that she encountered on her travels around the Commonwealth. In many ways she was like a pilgrim. In ancient times, the scallop shell was a symbol that somebody had been on a pilgrimage somewhere far from home. I'm sure the Queen encountered many exotic shells and other things on all her travels and wherever she went she was welcomed by people, of different cultures and skin colours, who recognised this lady as being an important person for them.

In 1959 a statement was released from the Queen which stated that she felt '*equally at home in all her realms*'. 2 Corinthians 5: 9 says '*So whether we are here at home in this body or away from this body, our goal is to please him*'. The Queen was in many places during her life, spending it with many different people and serving them faithfully with her leadership and endless sense of duty. She had made it her goal to please God in her role as Head of the Church wherever she was in the world.

I wonder - when we travel to new places, what helps us to, like the Queen, feel 'equally at home'?

I wonder how can we help others to feel 'at home' in our community too?

Response

Use slide 12 to recap on the 5 ways of looking back at the life of service lived by the Queen. She was like a bridge, a master chef, glue, a visionary and a pilgrim.

I wonder – does this change how you feel about the Queen?

I wonder which one of those images best describes the Queen for you?

Move to slide 13. Return to thinking about the Parable of the Talents in a Bible ([Matthew 25:14–30](#)). In this parable the master commends the servants who had been given talents and used their skill and dedication to double what they had been given.

The Queen came to the throne very suddenly when she was only young. She had expected her father to be the King for a lot longer. When she was crowned, she was given not just the monarchy of the United

Kingdom to lead, but was named as Head of all the Nations of the Commonwealth too. Much was given to her and she took the meaning of this parable seriously.

Speaking in Malta in 2015 she said: *“I feel enormously proud of what the Commonwealth has achieved, and all of it within my lifetime...a vast expansion of human freedom...millions of people sprung from the trap of poverty.”* What a lasting legacy to leave behind!

I wonder – which of the ways in which the Queen sought to be a ‘good and faithful servant’ might we also use in our own school and local community? What can we learn from her example?

Sending

In her Christmas Day speech in 2019, the Queen said:

“It’s worth remembering that it is often the small steps, not the giant leaps, that bring about the most lasting change.”

Invite pupils to ponder this quote and **commit to one thing** they might do this week that is small but has a big impact on making all people feel loved, welcomed and celebrated. After all, the Bible says: *“Do not despise these small beginnings, for the LORD rejoices to see the work begin”* (Zechariah 4:10).

Finish this time of worship with a prayer of thanks for the Queen and her life of service and the asking for wisdom for future leaders of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth.

Dear God,

We thank you for your good and faithful servant, Queen Elizabeth II. She served you and this country faithfully during her many, many years on the throne and we will miss her. We give thanks for her great work in keeping the Commonwealth together, her desire to see children and young people flourish and lead, and her understanding that the Earth is a special place to be nurtured and preserved for future generations, to continue in the years to come. We thank you for her life and all we have learned about being a good and faithful servant through remembering and celebrating her life.

Amen.

Additional Information:

After war had broken out across Europe during World War One, the nations of the world were faced with the prospect of how to form alliances and build bridges with each other once more. Added to that, many countries had re-gained, or were in the process of re-gaining, their independence from the 'British Empire'.

As far back as 1884, Lord Rosebery visited Australia and described the changing British Empire, as some of its former colonies became independent, as a "Commonwealth of Nations".

It was in 1926 that the possibility of a Commonwealth was formally discussed, with the words of the Balfour Declaration from that year stating Britain and its former dominions were "**equal in status**, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though **united in common allegiance** to the Crown".

The official birth of the Commonwealth is 11th December 1931, just 8 years before World War 2 began. For more information on the forming of the Commonwealth and the member states, see <https://thecommonwealth.org/>

As Patrick Gordon Walker's statement in the House of Commons in 1953 illustrates, she was the Queen to a diverse and vast people: "*The Queen, now, clearly, explicitly and according to title, belongs equally to all her realms and to the Commonwealth as a whole.*"

Find out more about great young leaders from around the Commonwealth here: <https://www.queensyoungleaders.com/>
The website describes this project as a 'lasting legacy'.

The King or Queen of England is not automatically chosen as Head of the Commonwealth and so those nations will now consider who her successor will be. Under her leadership, the Commonwealth grew from 7 independent states in 1952 to 54 nations over 16 realms in 2021. These were all former British colonies, except for Rwanda and Mozambique, who have chosen to take the Queen as their sovereign.

The forming of the Commonwealth brought peace to relationships between the United Kingdom and countries that had been forcefully conquered as part of the British Empire. When the Queen became the Head of the Commonwealth, World War Two had just ended and Britain's ties with the Commonwealth had meant that the battlefield had stretched beyond Europe into those nations too, with some countries (e.g. Canada, Australia, India and African nations) also sending soldiers to fight on behalf of Britain in countries they had never been to before and losing many of them as casualties of war. The impact of the war was felt all across the world and following its conclusion the Commonwealth was an opportunity to bring diverse countries from around the world together in unity.

See: [Forgotten Commonwealth Veterans](#) | [VJ Day 75](#) | [Royal British Legion](#)

Political scientist, Peter Boyce, described it as "an achievement without parallel in the history of international relations or constitutional law". It provided those 54 nations with a personalised link and right at the centre of the web of relationships was the shared monarchy.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

(practical ways to help us explore faith and develop spiritually at home together)

EXPERIENCES that can help us ENCOUNTER:

Look up the symbol for the Commonwealth. It represents the different nations of the Commonwealth all around the globe and in some ways it resembles a crown, perhaps in honour of the Queen as the chosen Head of the alliance, or a sun, focusing on the new beginnings the Queen had envisaged for all people. Invite pupils to design their own symbol for the Commonwealth, bearing in mind all they have learned about the Queen and the importance she placed upon the unity and diversity of this group of nations working together.



ACTIVITIES that can develop PRACTICES-HABITS:

Read some of the young leader stories from across the Commonwealth found here:

<https://www.queensyoungleaders.com/> What properties do these young people have in common? Spend some time talking about what makes a good leader. All of these young leaders were transforming their communities in some way. Spend some time discussing courageous advocacy with pupils. How did these young people show courage in what they did? How did they find out about the issues their community was facing? How did they make plans to change what they saw? Are there some things that pupils can see for themselves are not creating 'happier and healthier places for us all' locally and nationally as well as globally, as the Queen has wished for? What can pupils do about those things and how can adults support them?





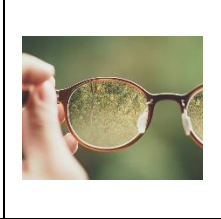

Explore the Queen's Commonwealth Canopy some more here: <https://queenscommonwealthcanopy.org/> This is described as 'a practical demonstration of the power of the Commonwealth, working as a group, to effect real change for generations to come.' Perhaps there is a space in your school grounds, or a local green space, that you can help to cultivate for future generations. How can you contribute to this vision of the Queen's for a better future for the Earth for generations to come?

CONVERSATIONS which CONNECT COMMUNITIES

Spend some time discussing this question with pupils and what each of these things might mean within your school's context:

In what ways can I be like the Queen – as a bridge, a master chef, glue, a visionary and a pilgrim?

Create a grid for pupils to record their ideas, such as this one:

You might use pupils' ideas to create a legacy board in memory of the Queen, linking this to courageous advocacy in your local area or school community.

INVITATIONAL

Everyone is welcome to take part in collective worship, as much or as little as they or their parents and carers are comfortable with. This means we use invitational language and consider carefully our choice of words and songs. Children are invited to pray but are not compelled or expected to do so; they always have a choice. We invite them to pray or reflect in whatever way they would usually as a family, if that is part of their home experience.

INCLUSIVE

Acts of worship need to be inclusive of all. Therefore, we choose topics and ideas that are shared by different faiths and worldviews. When we present Christian teaching, we make it clear that this is 'what Christians believe', saying things like:

'I wonder why this story might be important to Christians?'

'The story today comes from the Bible (the holy book of Christians), which teaches that ...'

Our worship should be accessible for children and young people with a range of different backgrounds, and so we take care that activities do not require expensive resources. We also offer a variety of activities, so that children and young people with differing needs can all find something they can engage with.

INSPIRING

We aim for our acts of worship to inspire those engaging with them. How might it engage their emotions, enabling a sense of peace, comfort, hope or motivation? How might it inspire them into action, into thinking differently and considering their behaviour or actions? How might it inspire them to reflect on their faith or beliefs, and on the faith or beliefs of others?