

## **Time to Celebrate! by Rev Rachel Sturt**

We are living through history! Beginning on June the 2nd there will be a four-day holiday when we will join the Queen in celebrating her Platinum Jubilee - a unique occasion that almost certainly none of us will see again. The shops are filling up with Union flags and celebratory items, some more tasteful than others. There is plenty for journalists to write about. The people who remember the 1953 Coronation are now pensioners and even those like me who took part in the 1977 Silver Jubilee are somewhat long in the tooth. I remember a street party where the highlights were bowls of jelly and running races. We made our own entertainment back then.

The Platinum Jubilee is such a momentous event that it breaks many records, but you might be intrigued to learn that the Queen employs 1200 people yet feeds her own corgis. She wears a crown but promised to be a servant. She rules a nation and the Commonwealth, yet on her 21st birthday she made the following promise: *'My whole life, whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service.'*

I have noticed that the Queen, although private and reticent in many ways, has become bolder in speaking about her Christian faith in recent years. In 2008 she said this (of Jesus), *'He makes it clear that genuine human happiness and satisfaction lie more in giving than receiving; more in serving than being served.'*

The world has changed immeasurably since that Queen was born in 1926, only eight years after the end of the First World War, long before the internet, television, or jet engines. Her teenage years spanned the Second World War. She married, had her first two children, and was crowned in the space of a few years, has lived through fourteen Prime Ministers, numerous conflicts and many family difficulties. Perhaps her stoicism in coping with these has brought her closer to her subjects.

In her Christmas broadcast in 1985, the Queen used the story of the Good Samaritan as a base for her broadcast. A few years ago, I was taking a service in a nursing home on the theme of 'who is my neighbour?' One of the residents told the tale of how she used to live near Balmoral and went to a fete in a local hall. She paused by the bric-a-brac stall and spied a lovely brooch. At the same time another hand reached out for it. Turing round she realised that the other person was the Queen. 'Oh' smiled the Queen 'I'm just a neighbour.'

We are so blessed to have a monarch whose faith shapes her life, attitudes and influence, and who is at heart, a servant of her people.

Love and prayers,

*Rachel*