

Letter from Rev Jacqueline

Dear friends,

The last few weeks have captured so much of what it means to be on a journey of life that brings with it sad and glad times – highs and lows – surprises and certainties throughout our times of work and leisure, through our communities local and global and through our daily living, personally and communally. Who would have thought that in one week we would have a new Prime Minister and New Monarch, and who would have thought that one person – our late and beloved Queen Elizabeth could have commanded such expressions of thanksgiving, sadness and joy, all at the same time.

I don't know about you but such radical changes have left a sense of disorientation as I try to remember that we now have King Charles III (long may he reign) and not Queen Elizabeth (RIP), and we now have Liz Truss as Prime Minister, both embarking on their new roles with a sense of identity and purpose unique to them yet guided by the underpinning principles of State and Church – and guided by the personal persuasion in the way that these fundamental principles afforded them in their roles are interpreted and played out by them as individuals in their call to public duty.

I also wonder if, like me, these events, along with the troubles and sorrows of places of conflict, poverty and inequality have evoked within you memories and experiences of grief and loss, feelings of disappointment and sadness for humanity, and uncertainty and questions of identity, purpose and meaning to life when, at the end of the day, all the transient things of life are stripped away - all the outer garments of material status from which seem to stem all sense of discord for the world and sometimes for ourselves.

I found myself turning to the book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament where the writer grapples with such questions and reflections – ‘What do people gain from all their toils under the sun’? (chapter 3)

But what we can be thankful for is that for those who embark on a journey of seeking in order to find meaning and answers through faith can be comforted and assured - but not by being *under* the sun but by seeking answers *in the Son*, Jesus Christ. ‘I am the way, the truth and the life’ he tells his followers and invites them to follow him to find out more about what that might mean...

The Queen herself lived out her seventy year reign out of duty and calling, yes, but also out of faith as the Head of our St Peter's Parish Church within the Church of England steeped in the teachings and tenets of Jesus Christ – of which, contrary to popular belief, there were only two – to love God and to love our neighbours.

The Queen lived out those commands not only as a Monarch and Mother – but as a wonderful Christian woman of God and in one way of another over the years how she alluded to the honour it was to have a trust and faith in God who spoke to her through the teachings of Christ and in whose Holy Spirit she lived out God’s call on her life to the best of her ability.

And it was fundamentally that honour of faith – that she shared with everyone – not only as the monarch but as a beloved Child of God in whose spirit she lived and worked and had her being – a woman before her time and of a faith that responded to God’s call on her life and lived it out the best she could.

And if ever there is testimony that God is not respecter of persons and circumstances, then we can see it during some years of Her Majesty’s life where she experienced challenges no different than you or I might experience living out a human life within a human family – it was only last year she endured the loss of her ‘strength and stay,’ Prince Phillip and it was her trust and faith that enabled her to say ‘As dark as death can be with grief, light and life are greater.’

And she also had the gift of compassion in her ability to offer mercy to things gone wrong or things done wrong – not that people or nations – including our own nation – on reflection didn’t make wrong choices or get things wrong – but rather, despite the wrongdoings, having grace to be compassionate about mistakes and to be willing to see the best in things – and to embrace the errors and to seek to find the blessings in the dark – the lessons learnt, the wisdom gained and to move on into the hope of brighter tomorrows...

Whatever your circumstances of life, the Queen has been such role model of steadfast dignity and integrity, outpoured through faith that can help us along, qualities that we now trust are to be honoured and lived out by our new King Charles III and so we join him in saying quite simply ‘Thank you, Your Majesty’ for your faithful and faith-filled leadership and example – may you rest in peace and rise in glory – Long live the King!

Ecclesiastes 3:1-12

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

a time to be born, and a time to die;

a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

a time to kill, and a time to heal;

a time to break down, and a time to build up;

a time to weep, and a time to laugh;

time to mourn, and a time to dance;

a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;

a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;
a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.

What gain have the workers from their toil? I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover, he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live....