



CELEBRATING THE QUEEN'S 70 YEARS OF FAITHFUL SERVICE

Catherine Butcher

AUTHOR CATHERINE BUTCHER INVITES US TO BRING OUR COMMUNITIES TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE THE QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE

This year, the country and Commonwealth are celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Hours of documentaries and pages of print are exploring her life. Many examine the remarkable changes that have taken place in her reign. Pictures of all things royal, from hats to horses, record seven decades of royal history, but few focus on the source of her strength.

As she said at Christmas in 2002: 'I know just how much I rely on my own faith to guide me through the good times and the bad. 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. Like others of you who draw inspiration from your own faith, I draw strength from the message of hope in the Christian gospel.'

During this Platinum Jubilee year, churches have an amazing opportunity to bring their communities together to celebrate the Queen's 70-year reign and to talk about her faith, which has been the source of her strength. To

help churches to make the most of this wonderful opportunity, HOPE Together and Biblica have published a beautiful gift book - Our Faithful Queen - which gives a unique insight into the Queen's life of faith and service.

As she approached the day of her Coronation, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher, gave the Queen a slim volume of daily Bible readings and prayers to use as she prepared for that powerful Westminster Abbey service. Fewer than a dozen copies of this Little Book of Private Devotions were printed. This new book, Our Faithful Queen, draws on those prayers, the Bible verses upon which she was invited to meditate, and the speeches she has made. These show how her Christian faith enabled her to prepare for her reign and how that faith has sustained her in the life that has followed.

ANOINTING

The focus of the Little Book of Private Devotions was the deep symbolism of the Coronation ceremony, rooted in the Bible. At the heart of the Coronation, there was a hidden ceremony, screened from view under a canopy so the television cameras could not film it. At this most sacred moment, the Queen was anointed with oil.

As Our Faithful Queen explains: 'Anointing symbolically sets people apart

for service and pours out the life and power of God ... God's anointing makes the difference between an ordinary human life and a life empowered by God's Holy Spirit.

'Just as God has equipped the Queen for her role as Sovereign over the past 70 years and answered her prayers, Christians believe that God wants to equip each of us for our roles in life and invites us to talk to him in prayer so he can answer our prayers too.'

For the anointing at her Coronation, the Queen's regal robes were removed, leaving her wearing a simple white dress, as the Devotions reminded her: '... stripped of all royal dignity, to offer myself in my own person for his work.'

Symbolically she was coming to God as an ordinary woman like any other Christian without any special status. She was asking God to send his Holy Spirit to enable her to take on her royal role. In her Devotions she anticipated this significant moment: 'By the anointing God makes, blesses, and consecrates me Queen: and I am till my dying day "his anointed servant". In the anointing God creates a new relationship between himself and me, giving me for my use in this office just those resources of his divine grace which I need to dispose hands and heart and mind to do his will.'



Coincidentally, the Platinum Jubilee four-day Bank Holiday from 2-5 June, ends on Pentecost Sunday, which makes it an ideal opportunity to focus on the work of God's Holy Spirit in equipping the Queen, and all of Jesus' followers, for a life of service.

ANSWERED PRAYER

The gift book Our Faithful Queen also highlights the prayers the Queen was invited to pray and the requests she has made for prayer throughout her life.

In her first Christmas broadcast as Queen in 1952 she asked for prayer: 'Pray that God may give me wisdom and strength to carry out the solemn promises I shall be making, and that I may faithfully serve him and you, all the days of my life.'

As her Coronation ended, the Queen left Westminster Abbey to the sound of the National Anthem: '... long live our noble queen, God save the Queen'. Seventy years later, after one of the longest reigns in history, the prayers of that much-sung song have been answered.

On the fortieth anniversary of her accession in 1992, a year which the Queen described as an 'annus horribilis', she acknowledged that prayers 'have sustained me through all these years.'

Four days before she gave that speech, Windsor Castle had been badly damaged by fire. In that year, the marriages of three of her four children had broken down. As Our Faithful Queen reflects: 'Any mother would have been saddened by such a year, but the Queen had to endure it in the full glare of the scandal-hungry media. That year, and every year; that week and almost every week of her life, the Queen would be found joining millions of others in churches around the world, asking God for wisdom.

'Yes, she was crowned with a priceless, jewelled crown of gold. But she has also worn her metaphorical 'crown of thorns' with the grace and faithfulness for which she prayed: "For myself, and for my peoples I pray that thou wilt make our minds to be wise, our hearts sound,

and our wills righteous, according to thy will and unto thy glory: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.'"

Just as God has equipped the Queen for her role as Sovereign over the past 70 years and answered her prayers, Christians believe that God wants to equip each of us for our roles in life and invites us to talk to him in prayer so he can answer our prayers too.

RESOURCES

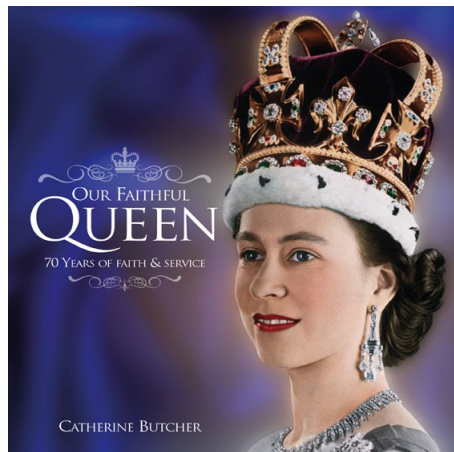
HOPE Together, the Church of England, the Methodist Church and other partners are helping churches around the Commonwealth to mark this special occasion with special church services and community parties. www.theplatinumjubilee.com is a dedicated website with all the ideas and resources needed to bring communities together to celebrate.

Street Parties

- Your Street Party Planner - ideas, plans and games for fun-packed community events developed in collaboration with the Methodist Church.

A New Anthem

- A new anthem 'Rise Up and Serve' has been commissioned by HOPE Together and partners, and written by popular song writers Graham Kendrick, Mal Pope and Rend Collective. The lyrics and sheet music are free to download.
- A YouTube video featuring Commonwealth choirs singing 'Rise Up & Serve' is being filmed at the Tower of London. It is produced by Les Moir from the Word & Worship Trust, who played a significant role in bringing together The UK Blessing, which has been watched by nearly 5 million people.



Souvenir giftbook

- Our Faithful Queen - a gift book using rarely-seen prayers the Queen prayed as she prepared for the Coronation. Our Faithful Queen

is a 64-page book full of photos showing the Queen through her life. It is based on the prayers the Queen prayed in preparation for her Coronation - prayers given to her by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher, in a book of devotions to use from 1 May 1953 to 2 June - her Coronation day.



Gift book for toddlers

- An animation and book The Girl Who Grew Up To Be Queen for under 5s has been published using Happyland children's toys from The Early Learning Centre to explore the question, 'What do you want to be when you grow up?'

Celebrate by serving others

- 70 Acts of Service is an invitation to communities to celebrate the Queen's 70 years of service by serving others - the 70 community service ideas include: ideas for individuals, small groups and whole communities. Examples include:
 - Drop a small card to a hidden hero, just to let them know they're noticed.
 - In a queue? Buy the next person in line a coffee/sandwich/pint along with your order. Or pay for a bus ticket for the person behind you.
 - Ask a local care home if there are residents who have no visitors, who'd welcome a visit. Commit to visiting at least once a month.
 - Set up a free shoe-shine stall in your high street or town centre - with the necessary permission from the local authority.

Resources for young people

- On Her Majesty's Service for 11-14s - seven ready-to-use sessions for youth organisations, schools and uniformed organisation produced by youth specialists from the Church of England, HOPE Together, Pais Movement, Youth For Christ, YouthScape, The Message, Prayer Spaces In Schools, Girls' Brigade and Boys' Brigade.

Banners, mugs and bunting

- Banners, posters and other Platinum Jubilee branded resources are available from CPO - www.cpo.org.uk/queen-platinum-jubilee

Catherine Butcher is the author of 'Our Faithful Queen' and co-author, with Mark Greene, of 'The Servant Queen and the King She Serves'. For the past 10 years, Catherine has been communications director for HOPE Together alongside other freelance writing and editing work. She trained as a newspaper journalist in Eastbourne, where she still lives at the edge of the South Downs National Park. She and her husband Adrian worship at their local Anglican church, where Catherine is a Reader. She is a member of the Church of England's General Synod, loves sea swimming all year round, and enjoys walking with their dog Milly.



RISE UP & SERVE

*Graham Kendrick,
Mal Pope & Rend Collective*

In this glorious year of the Jubilee
We give thanks for Her Majesty
In honour of a faithful heart
Who chose to serve and to play her part

Many nations have gathered here
From the mountain heights let the song ring clear
Celebrating the answered call
Blessed with prayer and sacred oil

*'Rise up and serve' is the call we hear
With hope in our hearts, joining as one, making history
Let fanfares sound through this Jubilee
Rise up and serve, thanking God for Her Majesty*

May God's good grace be upon her now
To complete the task and fulfil her vow.
May the trust in Christ she has held so long
Be the truth that burns brightly on

One hope, one vision
On many tongues one song
From East to West
Let's keep it burning on

One hope, one vision
On many tongues one song
From East to West
Let's keep it burning on
Keep it burning on

Rise up, come on and rise up,
In this year of jubilee
Rise up, come on and rise up,
Celebration time is here

The Jubilee is coming
Everyone is singing
Rise up and greet the dawn
The Jubilee is coming
Everyone is singing
Let's keep it burning on
Keep it burning on