

FROM OUR MINISTER

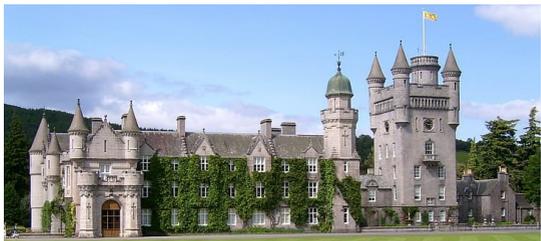
The Queen is dead – long live the King.

That came as a shock on Thursday 8 September. The Circuit Welcome Service for Janice Hacon and Stephen Richardson was bookended with prayers on the death of the monarch and the National Anthem for the new King.

Anyone born after 1952 will have known no other Monarch, had no such experience before and never sung 'God save the King'. Elizabeth II was a constant through all the changing scenes of life for many of us. And now, the longest serving monarch in British history has gone. It will take a long time to sink in.

It is a poignant and sobering moment in our national story. When a Monarch dies, the pulse of a nation slackens. In this moment we will mourn and reflect, remember and give thanks. In Windsor, as the flag was lowered and the gathering crowds fell silent, a rainbow appeared in the skies above the castle. A rainbow: the sign of God's faithfulness and a sign of hope.

Queen Elizabeth was faithful. Faithful to her people and her work. Our final image was of her welcoming her 15th Prime Minister, Liz Truss, in the drawing room of



Balmoral castle. Forty-eight hours before her death she stood, a frail and physically diminished figure, hand outstretched and with that characteristic beaming smile, doing her duty. Faithful to the end.

Faithful to her people and to her duty, but also faithful to the God she believed had called her and whose purposes she served. A faith, deep and personal, that she was unafraid to express and that guided her steps and was a light shining in the darkness of our times.

Naturally, we mourn, we look back and we give thanks. The media has been saturated with memories, reflections and thanksgiving. But the rainbow is also a sign of hope for the future and we say, 'the Queen is dead; long live the King.' This is also a



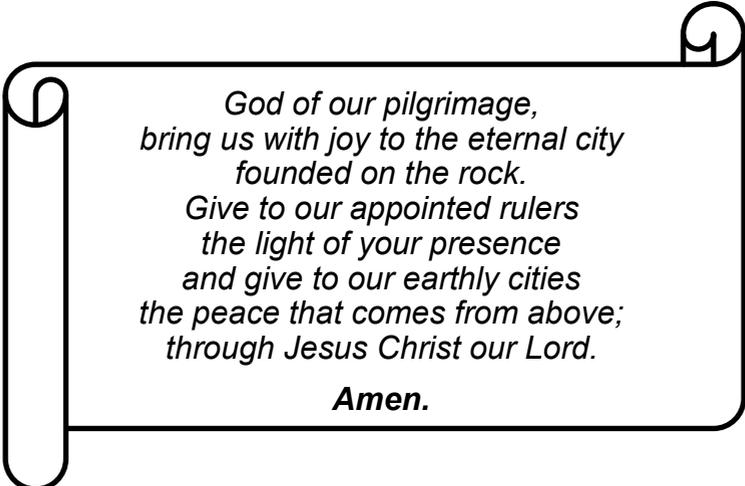
time to look forward. With a hereditary monarchy (whatever you think about that) there is no gap, no process to appoint a successor. Succession is immediate and there will be a wide range of hopes and expectations focussing on what the monarchy might look like under Charles III.

As it happened, at the beginning of the week after the Queen died, I read 2 Kings 2:1-15 where Elijah is taken up to heaven and is succeeded by Elisha. The focus of that episode is on the future and Elisha's inheritance of a 'double share' of Elijah's spirit. Elisha took up the mantle of Elijah which fell from him as he was taken up and he continued the prophetic ministry. Elisha returned from the Jordan after

watching the 'chariots and horsemen of Israel' taking Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind and was greeted by a company of prophets in Jericho who said, 'the spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha'.

I don't know what your hopes may be for the future. I also don't know if we're going to say that the spirit of Elizabeth II rests on Charles III. In the meantime, for a rainbow to give its sign of faithfulness and hope, you need both rain and light. In the rainstorm of so many crises and challenges we need all the light we can get. We need the light of Christ.

So now we must pray for King Charles III that he, and the Queen Consort, may conduct their roles with grace and humility, faithfulness and love and that the light which guided our late Queen may be their most treasured inheritance.



*God of our pilgrimage,
bring us with joy to the eternal city
founded on the rock.
Give to our appointed rulers
the light of your presence
and give to our earthly cities
the peace that comes from above;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Amen.

David Muskett