

On behalf of CUF's trustees and team, we offer our deepest condolences to the Royal Family at this very sad moment. We join in prayer with the millions around the world who thank God for Her Majesty's wisdom, compassion, humanity and steadfastness.

Our Bishop-in-Residence, Rt Revd Adrian Newman, shares a reflection on Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the Patron of CUF, who will be so greatly missed by us all.

Andrew Barnett OBE
Chair

Rachel Whittington
Group Chief Executive

In an irony of circumstance, I found myself in France at the moment the Queen's death was announced. Republics the world over have rejected monarchies for all too familiar reasons, in particular the almost intrinsic instinct for power to corrupt those who hold it in an unaccountable way. Yet it is hard to escape the conclusion that Queen Elizabeth II managed to remain uncorrupted in the exercise of her role. Even those with the deepest republican sympathies have held her in high regard. She prioritised public service over private interest, modelled a set of values (and virtues) borne of her deeply held Christian faith, worked tirelessly well into her 90's, and displayed an extraordinary understanding of the delicate interplay involved in the - unwritten - British constitution. Holding all this together has been an understated wisdom, an ability to know when to speak and when to remain silent.

Of course, the monarchy is privileged, but as younger royals have discovered, privilege like this can become a prison, trapped in the goldfish bowl of unerring publicity, and dehumanised by the projections of strangers. Our Queen navigated her way through all of this with a deft touch and a steely determination.

I met her on a number of occasions, but perhaps my greatest insight into her humanity came from an incident recounted in David Nott's book 'War Doctor'. Nott, recently returned from volunteering his skills as a surgeon in horrific circumstances (in Syria), was sat next to the Queen at a dinner but found himself so traumatised by his recent experiences that he was unable to speak. The Queen somehow intuited his distress and quietly invited him to help her feed the corgis sat at her feet. This simple act of companionship gradually calmed him and restored him to himself. It sums Elizabeth II up: calm, understated, wise, compassionate, and human.

Even on our republican campsite, as my wife quietly sang the national anthem last night, French campers voiced their sympathy. This English monarch was remarkable, we have been fortunate to have her as our Queen for so long, and the nation will miss her in ways we probably have yet to understand.

Rt Revd Adrian Newman
CUF Bishop-in-Residence