

RECTOR'S PINT

It was inevitable that Her Majesty the Queen would die. We were all expecting it, yet it still came as a shock when it happened. I am sure that we are all very grateful to have celebrated the Jubilee celebrations to mark 70 years since her accession to the throne, which I wrote about only a couple of months ago.

As a member of the Clergy, I acknowledge the Monarch as the Head of the Church of England. Whenever I have been instituted as the Vicar, or as here, the Rector, one of my oaths has been to the Queen. A few days ago, a friend of ours contacted us to tell that on the same night that the Queen's death was publicly announced, a new vicar was being instituted in their church in Frome. Apparently, there was some hurried hunting for legal advice and half an hour after the death of the Queen was announced, this new vicar swore allegiance to the King. We think this might have been the first time any member of the Church of England has sworn allegiance to a King in over seventy years!

We were on holiday at our house in Newnham in Gloucestershire when the news broke. While we chose to remain there, we still had much to do, it was not a particularly restful holiday! I engaged in many emails between here and there. One of the issues we had was about books of condolence. Although we had planned, and even chosen, the books, we were caught by surprise and the order went in just a few hours before the Queen's death. After some negotiation with the company producing the books, we eventually received one book for each church, six days after the death, while the firm was still sending out hundreds a day to people who had also been surprised at the speed of Her Majesty's decline.

We are keeping our books open, until our local service of Thanksgiving and Commemoration for the Departed, at which point they will be closed. The service this year will be held at St Peter's, Great Haseley on Sunday 6th November at 4.00pm. The books will then be kept locally as a historical record for future generations. There is still plenty of opportunity to write something should you choose to, and at the same time take a small part in a significant historical event.

On the Sunday after the Queen died, we went to a local church in Gloucestershire where we learnt that one of the Queen's favourite hymns was 'Praise my Soul the King of Heaven'. I talked about this at our local schools when I took the assemblies on my return. I said that it was a wonderful thing that Queen Elizabeth II, probably one of the most recognised people in the world, the Queen of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth nations, still held to the belief that there was another higher and greater King. Many people have talked about her faith and how it was an inspiration.

I don't think it matters if we are ardent royal followers or rather distant from issues of the Monarchy, there is no doubt that on the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, something changed. Singing 'God Save the King' the following Sunday was the moment that I realised this for myself

Simon