

Dear Colleagues

We wanted to be in contact with you again, following our initial email from last Thursday evening, to offer you further resources and reflections following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. We suggest that the first port of call for support should be the excellent resources prepared centrally by the Church of England, and which are located on the main C of E website [here](#). Beyond these, however, we would like to group our thoughts around four key headings:

1) **Bereavement, Mourning and Loss**

Our observations, speaking with a number of Heads across a number of schools, is that **adults are experiencing a greater sense of loss than many of our young people are**; The constancy, ubiquity and dependability of Queen Elizabeth II over 7 decades, encompassing most of the life of the majority of the population, means that not only can people not easily remember a time when she was alive, but that she somehow represents a still point of stability in the life of the nation and in people's personal lives.

In the attachment is **a story adapted from Winnie the Pooh** about an old oak tree that falls down from the 100 Acre Wood. Whilst this has explanatory and emotional power for pupils, it might be just as helpful for explaining to pupils why staff and parents are finding the Queen's death to be a more emotive and challenging time than they expected.

Of course, there will be **young people who are particularly affected** by the loss of the Queen because it will trigger a memory of a loss of their own – a grandparent, maybe even a parent or sibling, or the loss of a stable family life through divorce or separation between parents. Naturally loss also has a more generic form; a pupil could re-experience a sense of loss about their former school, where they felt known, loved and secure, or they might feel keenly the loss of a friend who has moved away or a pet who has died.

This is all within the normal range of emotional side-effects that any bereavement can bring.

Winston's Wishes is a well-established and trusted national charity that could be very helpful in these circumstances and the link is [here](#), or you might look at our **Diocesan resources** which were prepared recently for schools that experience a bereavement, by clicking [this link](#).

One particular resource stands out as a helpful means of expressing this sense of pain and loss, namely **Prayer Spaces in Schools**, who offer very helpful, considered and tried and tested 'prayer/reflection experiences'. This is [the link](#) to their website, though you do have to sign up for free first to gain access to resources. I particularly commend to you this reflection on ['torn clothes'](#) and ['The Empty Throne'](#).

2) **Gratitude and Service**

There has been much attention given to the amazing life of service of the late Queen, and I commend to you the Church of England's resources on this subject on [this link](#) under the title 'The Servant Queen'. There are Primary and Secondary Collective Worship power points with accompanying notes as well as quotations about leadership from the late Queen.

We have heard of the successful use of [this Paddington Bear clip](#) from the Queen's Platinum Jubilee being used in this respect, ending as it does at 1 minute 56 seconds with the words: "Thank you Ma'am... for everything."

3) Preparation for the Funeral

The day of the funeral has now been set for Monday 19th September, and it may well be that the majority of the children and young people in our schools will not have been to a funeral, or indeed a church funeral.

The resources on the Church of England website, under the title [Resources for the Day of the Funeral](#), should help young people navigate and familiarise themselves with what will happen on the day of the funeral. The Power Points answer the question: 'Christian hope – how does faith help Christians navigate grief and loss?'

It is notable that at times of grief, or indeed other key times of transition, we often turn to what psychologists call **Transitional Objects**. These are physical items, typically a Teddy Bear or blanket when young, but which still have prominence at times of difficulty, liminality or change. It is notable that many people have been focusing on Paddington Bear since the Queen died, and the way he was used in the Platinum Jubilee celebrations.

Whilst it is quite normal and rather touching that we do this – especially with such an endearing character as Paddington Bear (I had two stuffed Paddingtons myself when young) – it's also an opportunity to point towards the power and importance for Christians of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit at such times.

Christians believe that it is **God who carries us most powerfully through these transitional times**, these times of change, challenge and the unknown. Ultimately this is what the cross and resurrection are all about; we cling to the promises of the cross and resurrection, that nothing can separate us from the love of God, not even death itself, that the suffering and pain of the cross do not have the last word, but instead the new life, hope and joy of the resurrection win the day. [This poem](#) seems quite helpful to me in thinking about this.

Moving on

For those of us who remember the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, one of the big questions was **how do we transition back** to something that feels relatively normal again. On that occasion, the problem focused on what do you do with all the flowers, tributes and messages?

The Church of England Collective Worship Resources have material on this topic via [this link](#) under the title '**Hope for the Future**' to help us with this in schools. Part of being human is coming to terms with change and realising that, as Queen Elizabeth herself so often did offering the wisdom of age and the perspective of the stateswoman, that 'this too shall pass'. We don't need to feel guilty about moving on.

I do hope that you find some of these resources, thoughts and reflections helpful at a time of continual change and adaptation in our national life and in our schools. Please don't hesitate to be in touch with me [by email](#) or your School Adviser (if you are in the SLA) if you require further assistance and may God bless you as you continue to serve your schools and their communities at this time.

With every blessing and warmest wishes

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