

Dear Friends,

What a difference a week makes!

This time last week we had no idea that we would journey through 7 days in which we saw the death of this country's longest serving monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, at the age of 96 and the accession of a new King, Charles III.



Last week's pastoral letter from Paul, our Superintendent, spoke of an inspirational life – Autherine Lucy Foster, who died earlier this year at the age of 92. I have to say, I'd never heard her story before; I wish I had, she sounds like an amazing, resilient, brave and persistent person who overcame incredible prejudice and resistance with courage and quiet dedication.

We have seen many images on our screens these last few days, heard many a story and reminiscence about the late Queen and it would seem to me that Elizabeth and Lucy shared many of the same attributes but one was known by some, the other known by many the whole world over. Two long lives, well lived, both often at the mercy of events and things that happened TO them, with only the choice to decide how they would respond.

Paul encouraged us to emulate Lucy, and the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu, to have a hopeful mindset and strive to see the best in people and do the best for them and with them. I think that Elizabeth strived to do just that.

As we, our country, the Commonwealth of Nations and people the world over prepare to bid farewell to the Queen at her state funeral on Monday 19th September – perhaps the best tribute we can pay to her is to follow her example of constancy in public service, faithfulness in her relationships – those close personal ones and those people she met in her public duties, humility in bearing and a simple, honest witness to her faith in Almighty God, who helped her through so much.

As this last week graphically portrays, we know not what may come but, as Christians, we know that whatever it is, we have God with us to help us through.

May Elizabeth rest in God's peace;

May Charles reign in God's power;

And may we live and trust in God's presence – always!

Amen.

Sam.