

Friday 9 September 2022

Dear Everyone

It is really wonderful to see everyone back, as we also welcome new families to St Paul's Cathedral School.

Of course, this week, for all its excitement of new beginnings, is also tinged with sadness, and we talked about that in assembly this morning. My crib sheet for assembly is below.

I have one housekeeping notice for this week. On collection at the end of the day, please keep very tight control of all your children. The Cathedral gardens, and Festival gardens are public spaces, and allowing children to wander about, and in the bushes, has its risks.

Although the City garden's team do a fabulous job, we can't be responsible for the detritus that the public leaves in the undergrowth. You can imagine...and we have a city fox, too.

Do watch the service of prayer and reflection on the TV this evening. I'm not sure when broadcasting starts, but the service begins at 6.p.m. The Cathedral is very much our community, too.

Assembly notes below: *(ad libs throughout, calling on children's responses)*

First Assembly – Autumn Term for the academic year, 2022-23

Hymn: Be still for the presence of the Lord 383

Welcome Back.

It is a sad day, in which we mourn the death of Queen Elizabeth II. At 96 years old, she was also the longest reigning monarch, indeed only this year we celebrated her 70 years on the throne with the Platinum Jubilee Service at St Paul's Cathedral. And tonight, there will be the service of prayer and reflection at St Paul's at which our choristers will be singing. I will say a little more about Queen Elizabeth in a moment.

A very warm welcome to so many new people to this wonderful school. A place of kindness, curiosity and enjoyment.

We warmly welcome new staff, too. Our gap students for this year are Miss Acra (Art), Miss Dawson (Sport), and the resident gaps, Miss Fairbairn, Mr Sheldon and Mr Banks.

Our additional Teaching Assistants are Miss Heylen, Miss Paterson, Miss Guerguerian and Miss Boddington.

Mrs Peters joins us as Y3 teacher, Mrs Moir returns from maternity and is paired with Mrs Waterhouse in the job share for Y4. Mr Dilks joins us as Head of Science, Mrs Lyons returns to teach MFL, Mr Trickey joins the sports department and Mrs Jackson joins us as a maternity cover for Learning Support.

Thinking of Learning support, you will be pleased to learn that over the summer, Mrs Thomas had a baby boy and Mrs Fowler also had a baby boy. All are well, and we send them our best wishes.

Many of you will have been watching the TV last night, and will have seen and heard the very large numbers of people from around the world express not just their sadness at the death of Queen Elizabeth, but the tributes about her life of service to her people.

Elizabeth's coronation was held at Westminster Abbey on 2 June 1953. At that service, choirs were drawn from across the country, and included our own choristers. The fact that it was televised caused some controversy – it was deemed too unseemly, an intrusion into an ancient institution, undignified and lacked solemnity - but it meant that people from around the world were able to see, and feel part of, such an important moment in history. As it will be this evening, at St Paul's.

Elizabeth's reign has been marked by the principles of loyal service, diplomacy and discretion, and she has been an extraordinary role model for us all in this regard.

On the evening of her coronation, remember she was only 25, she said:

I have been speaking of the vast regions and varied peoples to whom I owe my duty but there has also sprung from our island home a theme of social and political thought which constitutes our message to the world ...

Parliamentary institutions, with their free speech and respect for the rights of minorities, and the inspiration of a broad tolerance in thought and expression - all this we conceive to be a precious part of our way of life and outlook.

...we can go forward together in peace, seeking justice and freedom for all.

In 1953, these were bold words. The world was still recovering from the second world war, a war that Elizabeth had experienced directly - she was the first female Royal to be on active duty in the armed forces - and so that continued message of peace was important. Elizabeth could clearly see that all people deserved respect and freedom and, ironic as that might seem from a monarch, her humility and commitment to service and equality is an ambition we must continue to work towards.

Imagine that, though, a life in which there is no privacy for yourself, very little personal freedom, and unable to speak your mind publicly about the events of the day and the actions of politicians and others. However, she kept a diary, and one day they may be published. I have no doubt that, given her 70 years of meeting world leaders, and seeing extraordinary change, and experiencing challenges within her own family, that they will be one of the most remarkable chronicles of our age. For all of us, we have only known what it is to be the second Elizabethans. And that time has ended.

We have a new King, Charles III, and he will speak later today about his mother, and perhaps might give a glimpse into his thoughts – as monarch, he will be less free to speak his mind, and he is well known to have strong opinions, especially about the natural world and climate – but I am sure that his mother’s keen ambition for unity in the world will continue to be something to strive for, and can be the ideal we all take to our hearts.

Our school chaplain will lead us in prayer.

I leave you with the Queen’s Coronation Speech – much has changed, yet many of the ambitions remain.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2pgmKeGEZg>

Our thoughts and prayers are with the Royal Family who yesterday lost a mum, a grandmother, great grandmother, aunt and friend. There was something poignant about her great grandchildren starting their first day at school and ushering in the future.

Best wishes

Simon