

About this event

Today's Observance in Westminster Abbey is taking place in a church that has been dedicated to Christian worship for over nine hundred years, and it will be clear to all present that the Observance has a Christian orientation that is appropriate to this place.

Other great and historic faiths also have an honoured place in the Commonwealth. We are glad to welcome representatives of those faiths to take part in the Observance. Their contributions show how the six affirmations, which are at the heart of the Observance, rest upon values and principles that are endorsed by the religious traditions of us all. Those same values and principles sustain the Commonwealth and nourish its distinctive character.

The Observance is being filmed by Lion TV and Nexus Communications.

Before and after the Observance, the bells of Westminster Abbey are rung.

Commonwealth Day

Commonwealth Day is celebrated across the member countries of the Commonwealth, and in other parts of the world where Commonwealth citizens gather together.

In 1977, Commonwealth Heads of Government agreed that the second Monday in March should be Commonwealth Day. A consideration much in their minds was that it would be term time rather than holidays for schools all over the Commonwealth, thus making it easier for young people in particular to learn about and mark the day together.

Today, there is a special significance about the celebrations because 2009 marks the 60th anniversary of the modern Commonwealth. This, and the challenges facing the new Commonwealth generation, together form the theme of this Observance.

The whole of the Abbey, except for the North Transept, is served by a hearing loop. Users should turn their hearing aid to the setting marked T.

Please ensure that mobile phones, cellular phones and pagers are switched off.

Order of the Observance

Before the Observance

Music before the start of the Observance is provided by the One Voice Community Choir, the Ebony Steel Band and the Commonwealth Young Artists' Ensemble.

The Procession of Flags

The procession of Commonwealth flags moves to the Sacarium. The musical accompaniment is "Countries of the Commonwealth" and is performed by the Commonwealth Young Artists' Ensemble. The flags of the member countries of the Commonwealth are carried in the order determined by the date of membership (when read from right to left):

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ■ Canada | ■ United Kingdom |
| ■ New Zealand | ■ Australia |
| ■ India | ■ South Africa |
| ■ Sri Lanka | ■ Pakistan |
| ■ Malaysia | ■ Ghana |
| ■ Cyprus | ■ Nigeria |
| ■ Tanzania | ■ Sierra Leone |
| ■ Trinidad and Tobago | ■ Jamaica |
| ■ Kenya | ■ Uganda |
| ■ Malta | ■ Malawi |
| ■ The Gambia | ■ Zambia |
| ■ Guyana | ■ Singapore |
| ■ Lesotho | ■ Botswana |
| ■ Nauru | ■ Barbados |
| ■ Swaziland | ■ Mauritius |
| ■ Samoa | ■ Tonga |
| ■ Bangladesh | ■ Fiji Islands |
| ■ Grenada | ■ The Bahamas |
| ■ Seychelles | ■ Papua New Guinea |
| ■ Tuvalu | ■ Solomon Islands |
| ■ Saint Lucia | ■ Dominica |
| ■ Saint Vincent and The Grenadines | ■ Kiribati |
| ■ Belize | ■ Vanuatu |
| ■ Maldives | ■ Antigua and Barbuda |
| ■ Brunei Darussalam | ■ Saint Christopher and Nevis |
| ■ Namibia | ■ Mozambique |
| ■ Cameroon | |

All stand

The Procession of Honoured Guests and Participants

An Honorary Steward

The Chairman of the Royal Commonwealth Society, **Sir David Green KCMG** and **Mrs Green**
The Chairman of the Victoria League for Commonwealth Friendship, **Mr Lyn Hopkins**,
The Chairman of the Royal Over-Seas League, **Mr Stanley Martin CVO** and **Mrs Martin**,
The Deputy Chairman of the English-Speaking Union, **Mr Edward Gould** and **Mrs Gould**

An Honorary Steward

The Readers of Personal Testimonies

Mr Ravi Gehlot
Ms Hafsat Abiola

Mr Kwame Kwei-Armah
Mr Hugh Evans

Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson DBE

The Representatives of the Faith Communities

An Honorary Steward

The Representative of the
Buddhist Community,
The Venerable Bogoda Seelawimala

The Representative of the
Baha'i Community,
Mrs Fidel Meehan

The Representative of the
Jain Community,
Dr Natubhai Shah

The Representative of the
Sikh Community,
Mr Indarjit Singh OBE

The Representative of the
Zoroastrian Community,
Mr Paurushasp Jila

An Honorary Steward

The Representatives of the Muslim Community,
Maulana Raza Shabbar **Dr Mohammed Raza**

The Representative of the Chief Rabbi,
Rabbi Alan Plancey

The Representative of the
Hindu Community,
Dr Anil Bhanot

The Representatives of the Christian Churches

Salvation Army,
Commissioner John Matear

Methodist,
The Reverend Martin Turner

Free Churches,
Commissioner Elizabeth Matear

Roman Catholic,
Canon Christopher Tuckwell

Church of Scotland
The Reverend Camille Cook

Orthodox
His Eminence Archbishop Gregorios

All sit

The Observance

Her Majesty The Queen and His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh are received at the Great West Door by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster.

All stand

Presentations are made.

All sing

The National Anthem

God save our gracious Queen,
Long live our noble Queen,
God save The Queen.
Send her victorious,
Happy and glorious,
Long to reign over us:
God save The Queen.

The Procession forms and moves through the Nave,
the South Quire Aisle, and into the Lantern and Quire.

All remain standing to sing

The Hymn



1. O praise ye the Lord!
praise him in the height;
rejoice in his word
ye angels of light;
ye heavens adore him
by whom ye were made,
and worship before him
in brightness arrayed.
2. O praise ye the Lord!
praise him upon earth,
in tuneful accord,
ye sons of new birth;
praise him who has brought you
his grace from above,
praise him who has taught you
to sing of his love.
3. O praise ye the Lord,
all things that give sound;
each jubilant chord
re-echo around;
loud organs, his glory
forth tell in deep tone,
and, sweet harp, the story
of what he has done.
4. O praise ye the Lord!
thanksgiving and song
to him be outpoured
all ages along;
for love in creation,
for heaven restored,
for grace of salvation,
O praise ye the Lord!

Words: H.W.Baker (1821-77) based on Psalm 50
Music: Laudate dominum, C. Hubert H. Parry (1848-1918)

The Order of the Procession

The Beadle

The Chaplain

The Minor Canon

The Canons' Verger

The Canons of Westminster

The Dean's Verger

The Dean of Westminster

The Queen's Almsmen

The High Steward

An Honorary Steward

The Commonwealth Flag (with Brownie escort)

The Commonwealth Secretary-General,
His Excellency Kamallesh Sharma and Mrs Sharma

The Chairperson-in-Office of the Commonwealth,
His Excellency President Yoweri Museveni of the Republic of Uganda

The Chief Honorary Steward

The Chairman of the Council of Commonwealth Societies,
The Lord Watson of Richmond CBE

The Commonwealth Mace

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN
HEAD OF THE COMMONWEALTH

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH

Lady-in-Waiting to The Queen

Private Secretary to The Queen
Equerry-in-Waiting to The Queen

All remain standing

The Welcome and Introduction

given by **The Very Reverend Dr John Hall**
Dean of Westminster

On behalf of the Dean and Chapter, I am pleased to welcome you to Westminster Abbey for this special celebration of Commonwealth Day. For a thousand years this has been a place of pilgrimage. Today more than ever we strive to extend a warm welcome to those who come to the Abbey to wonder and to worship God. Our hope is that those who come as visitors will leave as friends. Our visitors come from all parts of the world and the Abbey community is enhanced by our encounter with them.

Just as the Abbey is a place where faiths, cultures and traditions encounter each other, so too is the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth to which we all belong is enriched by the diversity which each nation brings to it. It is a community of nations which actively seeks to strengthen the bonds of understanding and where links of friendship can be forged, underpinned by the values we hold in common. For this reason the Commonwealth is dear to us at Westminster Abbey. It is a privilege and a pleasure for us not only to mark Commonwealth Day itself but also to invite representatives from each of the Commonwealth nations to join us for Evensong to mark their individual national days throughout the year. Each representative is invited to read the Second Lesson and prayers are offered for their nation.

This year's Commonwealth Day theme is concerned with the future, the new generation. The contribution of children and young people is a highlight of our celebration. Whilst they through word and music convey to us all the rich diversity of our community of nations, may each of us take a moment to consider how we might ourselves best serve the young people of the Commonwealth so that they can be nurtured and enabled to fulfil their God-given potential.

All sit

The Commonwealth Day Message 2009

from Her Majesty The Queen Head of the Commonwealth

This year the Commonwealth commemorates its foundation sixty years ago. The London Declaration of 1949 was the start of a new era in which our member countries committed themselves to work together, in partnership and as equals, towards a shared future.

We can rightly celebrate the fact that the founding members' vision of the future has become a reality. The Commonwealth has evolved out of all recognition from its beginning. It has helped give birth to modern nations, and the eight original countries have become fifty-three. We are now home to nearly two billion people: a third of the world's population. Across continents and oceans, we have come to represent all the rich diversity of humankind.

Yet despite its size and scale, the Commonwealth to me has been sustained during all this change by the continuity of our mutual values and goals. Our beliefs in freedom, democracy and human rights; development and prosperity mean as much today as they did more than half a century ago.

These values come from a common responsibility exercised by our governments and peoples. It is this which makes the Commonwealth a family of nations and peoples, at ease with being together. As a result, I believe we are inspired to do our best to meet people's most pressing needs, and to develop a truly global perspective. That is why the modern Commonwealth has stood the test of time.

But as we reflect upon our long association, we should recognize the challenges that lie ahead. Nearly one billion people of today's Commonwealth are under 25 years of age. These are the people that this association must continue to serve in the future. It is they who can help shape the Commonwealth of today, and whose children will inherit the Commonwealth of tomorrow. To help them make the best of their opportunities, our young men and women therefore need the opportunity to become active and responsible members of the communities in which they live. I am pleased that the Commonwealth recognizes this, and is determined to continue to put young people at its centre.

The call that brought the Commonwealth together in 1949 remains the same today. Then we joined together in a collective spirit – built on lasting principles, wisdom, energy and creativity – to meet the great tasks of our times. As the Commonwealth celebrates its sixtieth birthday, its governments, communities and we as individuals should welcome that achievement. Together, we should continue to work hard to deal with today's challenges so that the young people of today's Commonwealth can realize their aspirations. In that way, we can look to the future with confidence.

Elizabeth R.

All remain seated

Njabulo Madlala, baritone, sings 'Shosholoza'

A traditional South African folk song originally sung by all-male work gangs, in a call and response style. After South Africa's triumph in the 2006 Rugby World Cup, it has become very popular at sporting events

1. Fulfilling human potential

Personal testimony by Ravi Gehlot

I left school at 16, drawn to business enterprise rather than studying. I firmly believe that other young people can have the success I have achieved, and encouraging this is my latest venture.

But I have also discovered that there is another side. In January 2007, as part of a social experiment, I lived the life of a homeless person and slept rough on London's streets for ten days.

I became part of the invisible society living outside our system – socially unacceptable, ignored and moved on as a nuisance by the police.

The experience affected me deeply. That is why we are launching the first ever 'National Homeless Week' later this year. It will be an annual event to raise money with one sole objective - eradicating homelessness in the UK.

Question: How responsible am I for my own success in life?

Paurushasp Jila says

Zoroastrianism lays great emphasis on individuals using their own 'Vohu Manah', good mind, to make their own decisions in life. This fundamental doctrine very consciously puts us in the driving seat of our lives. Zoroastrianism encourages me to seek knowledge, work hard and follow the path of 'Asha Vahishta', the best truth, in order to be successful. I am solely responsible for the choices I make in this life and answerable to 'Ahura Mazda', the Lord of wisdom for all my actions.

All faiths and religions guide their followers along the right path. Our challenge is to apply our beliefs to make our lives and the lives of those around us successful, happy and full of love.

Commissioner John Matear says

Jesus asked the question 'What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?' Herein lies an indication of what constitutes true success. Success is about our character and eternal destiny, not the transient trappings of status, wealth, or reputation. As such 'success' is in our own hands. The Lord graciously blesses us and calls us to himself—it is for us simply to respond in faith and receive life abundant. In this way, irrespective of the world's perspective, the Christian pilgrim carries the true treasure of God's indwelling presence with them and patiently waits to hear the Lord Jesus's ultimate recognition of success—'Well done, good and faithful servant!'

The Dean says:

Let us say together the First Affirmation

All say

The First Affirmation

We affirm that every person – of whatever colour, class or creed – possesses unique worth and dignity.

2. Making our future

Personal testimony by Kwame Kwei-Armah

History shapes who we are, individually and as peoples. Appreciating that can be a positive force.

I recently began retracing the footsteps of The Queen's 1953 tour of the Commonwealth for a TV series I'm making. Before it, I knew very little about the Commonwealth, its aims, its needs, even its function, beyond a name. I have returned from that trip changed. Not just in knowledge but in outlook. For I believe the very spirit of this great organisation has somehow touched mine. The spirit that allows small nations to speak to large, southern hemisphere to speak with northern, also enables a British African Caribbean man to speak to you all today in a forum of equality, respect and, above all, kinship. Happy birthday, Commonwealth. Long may you reign.

Question: Should our history inform our future?

Dr Anil Bhanot says

There are Ten Principles of the Hindu Dharma, one of which is 'self-respect' and another 'quest for higher knowledge.'

Self-respect, when rooted in our true heritage is an essential ingredient to our quest for higher knowledge. We can never live in the past, but we must acknowledge it fully so that we may win our own self respect. Only then can we launch ourselves into a visionary future.

The rich history of all our cultures and communities has brought us here today. So what should now inform our vision for the future of Britain and the Commonwealth? I suggest rooting ourselves in a teaching of the ancient Vedas: 'aa no bhadrah krutavo yantu vishvatah'—'Let noble thoughts come to us from every direction.'

Maulana Raza Shabbar says

Yes indeed! For if we don't learn from history we are nowhere. Two examples: One of Mahatma Gandhi whose unique slogan of non-violence gave peace and prosperity to the sub-continent. Occasional eruptions of violence may give a distorted picture, but 99% of people living together proved we have indeed learnt from history.

A second great man of peace, but much less known, was Dr Zakir Hussain who was a great disciple of Gandhi and a friend of Nehru. He was Vice-Chancellor of the Muslim University of Aligarh when I was an undergraduate there, and later became the first elected Muslim President of the Republic of India. He always taught us through his speeches at Aligarh that we must learn from history to reform our future. Both of them took lessons from Bhagvat Geeta and the Qur'an to prove their point. The Qu'ran tells us about compassion as an innate sense of interconnected oneness of all human beings. It says 'Your creation and your resurrection is but a single soul' (31:28).

The Dean says:

Let us say together the Second Affirmation

All say

The Second Affirmation

We affirm our respect for the world, and pledge that we will be its stewards by caring for every part of it.

All remain seated

The One Voice Community Choir sings 'Down by the riverside'

Gonna lay down my burdens
Down by the riverside,
Down by the riverside,
Down by the riverside,
Gonna lay down my burdens
Down by the riverside,
Down by the riverside.

Ain't gonna study war no more.

Gonna lay down my sword and shield...
Gonna put on my long white robe...

(Traditional)

3. Fighting for justice

Personal testimony by Hafsat Abiola

Outraged by the poverty experienced by the majority of our people, we decided that we Nigerians must have a voice in the decisions that our government takes. So my parents and others started a movement for democracy and I joined it. We marched. We sang songs and we demanded change. Both my parents died for the cause. But, in the end, Nigerians brought an end to military rule and restored democracy.

The task does not end there. I work now to teach our women that in a democracy, our votes give us power to end poverty, to create a just country, to contribute to making a better world. In my generation, let the Commonwealth help build that world where wealth is created and truly held in common.

Question: Can one person challenge the way a whole society lives?

The Venerable Bogoda Seelawimala says

Yes, certainly he can. Like many other great teachers, the Buddha himself challenged the way in which people were living. He questioned their habitual assumptions and attitudes, and specifically said that his teaching went 'against the stream', meaning that it went against the tendency of most people to run after selfish desires and sensual pleasures in the hope that they will bring lasting happiness.

In one of our books it says:

'Think not lightly of evil, saying, "It will not come to me." Drop by drop is the water pot filled; likewise, the fool, gathering it little by little, fills himself with evil.' (Dhammapada 121)

All of us can take responsibility for our own actions and strive to live a virtuous life.

Mrs Fidel Meehan says

To the individual striving for the betterment of the world, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, one of the Central Figures of the Bahá'í Faith, says:
'Trust in the favour of God. Look not at your own capacities, for the divine bestowal can transform a drop into an ocean; it can make a tiny seed a lofty tree. Verily divine bestowals are like the sea and we are like the fishes in that sea. The fishes must not look at themselves; they must behold the ocean which is vast and wonderful. Provision for the sustenance of all is in this ocean, therefore the divine bounties encompass all and love eternal shines upon all.'

In such ways can the individual challenge the way society lives and works for the common good.

The Dean says:

Let us say together the Third Affirmation

All say

The Third Affirmation

We affirm our belief in justice for everyone and peace between peoples and nations.

All stand to sing

The Hymn



- 1 Now let us sing in loving celebration:
The holier worship which our God may bless,
Restores the lost, binds up the spirit broken,
And feeds the widowed and the parentless.
Fold to thy heart thy sister and thy brother;
Where pity dwells, the peace of God is there;
To worship rightly is to love each other,
Each smile a hymn, each kindly deed a prayer.
- 2 Follow with reverent steps the great example
Of those whose holy work was doing good;
So shall the wide earth seem our daily temple,
Each loving life a psalm of gratitude.
Then shall all shackles fall; the stormy clangour
Of wild war-music o'er the earth shall cease;
Love shall tread out the baleful fire of anger,
And in its ashes plant the tree of peace.

Words: John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892)
Music: Londonderry Air, traditional Irish melody

4. Caring for others

All sit for

Personal testimony by Hugh Evans

In 1792, William Wilberforce, who lies in this Abbey, said: 'Africa, your sufferings have been the theme that has arrested and engaged my heart.'

Slavery may have been abolished. But there remains a force which subjugates and repudiates basic human rights: extreme poverty.

I first understood the power of its grip when I was 14 years old, sleeping in the slums of Manila, working for World Vision.

Since then, I have worked to alleviate suffering - whether those crippled by lack of educational opportunity, poor health or appalling living conditions.

That is why I founded the Global Poverty Project - helping achieve the Millennium Goal of ending extreme poverty in our world.

Today, Wilberforce's words still ring true for us. For within an inseparable humanity, an injustice to one is the responsibility of all.

Question: How responsible am I for the wellbeing of others?

Reverend Martin Turner says

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was a preacher, prophet, and philanthropist. He believed we must strive to 'Love the Lord your God...and your neighbour as yourself.' For him there could be 'no holiness without social holiness' or as a Methodist theologian more recently put it 'holiness envisages a whole person in a whole society.'

A whole person's well-being relies upon food, shelter, education, and medical care, a just and fair community, a knowledge of the love and forgiveness of God. Releasing these gifts requires money. Wesley preached 'gain all you can, save all you can, give all you can!'

How responsible I am depends upon both my ability to respond and the willingness of others to accept.

Rabbi Alan Plancey says

'Love your neighbour as yourself'. This according to our rabbis is a major concept within Judaism. According to the implication of the original Hebrew text it means that we must be concerned for their person, their property, and their good reputation.

The world stands on three foundations, on which we will secure a bright and stable future for all of mankind. 'Torah': a moral and ethical code of conduct. 'Avodah': prayer as well as service to the community through volunteering. 'Chesed': acts of kindness, such as helping the sick, the poor and offering hospitality to those in need. Consequently according to Jewish law, responsibility for our fellow human beings is total, and applies equally well to the stranger in our gate, as to our co-religionist.

The Dean says:

Let us say together the Fourth Affirmation

All say

The Fourth Affirmation

We celebrate faith and love as the foundation of all human relationships

5. Rising to challenges

All remain seated

Personal testimony by Tanni Grey-Thompson

Sport has been an enduring part of my life for the last twenty years. It has brought me recognition and a career that, as a young aspiring athlete, I could only have only dreamed about.

My grandfather told me always to 'Aim High'. It is a motto that has driven me throughout my career. It means setting yourself a goal to reach; and even if you don't succeed, there is achievement in trying.

Participation in sport has given me the ability to overcome some of the barriers and prejudices that those with a disability can face. It has opened up new areas where I can make a contribution. Make fitness and health your achievable goal in life.

Question: Can sport and recreation strengthen individuals and build communities?

Indarjit Singh says

The Sikh Gurus taught the importance of both physical and spiritual well-being. They encouraged team sports in the belief that healthy competition, as well as developing physical fitness, helps us understand the importance of equanimity in both joyous and difficult times in what our scriptures refer to as the 'game of life'.

Sikh teachings remind us that this game requires both courage and commitment to look beyond ourselves to the wider welfare of society. Today different communities have been thrown alongside one another by the forces of globalisation. It is now more important than ever before that we turn this to positive advantage by working together for a common goal of reducing inequality and building cohesive and caring communities

Dr Natubhai Shah says

Dame Thompson is a role model for individuals with physical disabilities to cultivate faith, to train and to act so as to attain one's goal. Sports, peripheral activities and motivated people like her bring joy and discipline to many and help to build sustainable communities with equality and friendship

Jains believe in the dual nature of our existence: the eternal soul, being full of joy, energy, knowledge, equality and friendship to all, and the ever-changing body that is created and decayed. The cosmic law of karma makes the soul form its own material body, a tool for liberation from the karmic bondage to manifest its true characteristics. Through this tool one can acquire Right Faith, Right Knowledge, and Right Conduct to attain one's goal of physical and spiritual happiness.

The Dean says:

Let us say together the Fifth Affirmation

All say

The Fifth Affirmation

We affirm that we each belong to our own nation and to the whole human family

All remain seated

The Kiribati Tungaru Association Dance Group performs two traditional dances – 'E neinei te ben O' (a celebration of the island's staple diet, fish and coconut) and 'Te babobo' (a celebration of the skills of the dance).

6. Serving the new generation – the Commonwealth Challenge

A challenge by His Excellency Kamalesh Sharma, Commonwealth Secretary-General

We have heard five compelling testimonies – about fulfilling human potential, making our future, fighting for justice, caring for others, and achieving excellence. Five powerful witnesses to the potential of the young people of the Commonwealth and of the world – the people to inherit the 21st Century – those billions for whom the opportunities of modern times are fraught with daunting obstacles and threats, in a world of flux and friction. It is one thing to say that we value ‘the new generation’; and another to fulfil a promise to serve it. In its 60th year, the challenge for the Commonwealth is to sustain its resolve to find practical ways to give young people an equal voice, a fulfilling future, and the opportunity to play an active and creative role in society. It is more than just letting young people be. It is about supporting them to develop their skills and self-belief; and about entrusting them and equipping them to help form the new world.

The Dean says:

Let us stand to say together the Sixth Affirmation

All stand to say

The Sixth Affirmation

In marking the 60th anniversary of the modern Commonwealth, we re-affirm our belief in the Commonwealth and its young people as a force for good in the world. We pledge ourselves to its service, now and in the future.

All sit

The Meditation

Jason Yarde, Saxophonist, performs ‘Wondrous’.

All remain seated

A Response

by President Yoweri Museveni, of the Republic of Uganda, the Chairperson-in-Office of the Commonwealth

The Secretary-General has made a profound challenge. Indeed, if we say we value young people, we must show it. We must hear their voice, create employment opportunities for them; and ensure their active participation in the transformation of our societies. The potential which we have seen in our five witnesses today is inherent in all our youth. How is the Commonwealth to respond? As an association of 53 countries, we pledge to learn and share. We pledge to support the work of the Commonwealth Youth Programme in its training and mentoring and support for youth entrepreneurship. As national governments, we pledge to have a young people’s programme – and an accompanying budget – for all parts of our national lives: from jobs, to the environment, to local government. As communities, we pledge to work for effective engagement and social inclusion. As parents and friends, we pledge encouragement and respect. And as young people – the billion people in the Commonwealth under 25, the half-billion under 5 – we seek to take wing and fly, our potential unlocked.

All remain seated

The Prayers

Reverend Camille Cook

Representing the Church of Scotland:

O God of Wisdom, from you comes all wisdom and knowledge. We thank you for all who have made a positive impact on the history of the Commonwealth. May we learn from their knowledge and experience, and so work together for the betterment of all peoples and for the sake of generations to come. Help us never to lose sight of our past, but to use it to build a brighter and better future.

Lord in your mercy

All: **Hear our prayer.**

His Grace Archbishop Gregorios

Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain:

O God our Teacher, teach us to respect the needs of others, and where those needs have been violated, to have the courage to stand up for that which is right. Grant us a humble heart so that we may all be willing to serve you and one another, not through selfish gain, but through love and respect.

Lord in your mercy

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Commissioner Elizabeth Matear

Free Churches Representative, Churches Together in England:

O God our Sovereign, bless Elizabeth our Queen, and all the nations of the Commonwealth and their leaders. Give wisdom and vision to those who govern the peoples of the world; and grant us peace and justice that men, women, and children of every community may live in mutual respect.

Lord in your mercy

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Canon Christopher Tuckwell

Representing the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster:

O God of Community, in you are all the communities of the earth united together in your love. We pray for all communities where there is distrust and division, violence and hardship. Enable with your spirit all who work in these places to use the gifts of sport and recreation as a way of building up and uniting communities, and for the advancement and happiness of all people.

Lord in your mercy

All: **Hear our prayer.**

All remain seated

**The Choristers of Westminster Abbey Choir sing
'Let them Praise the Name of the Lord'**

Young men and women, old and young together,
let them praise the name of the Lord:
for his name only is excellent, and his praise above heaven and earth.

Léon Charles (b 1986) Ps 148: 12

The Dean says:

Let us stand and say together the Prayer for Peace

All stand to say

**Lead me from death to life,
from falsehood to truth.**

**Lead me from despair to hope,
from fear to trust.**

**Lead me from hate to love,
from war to peace.**

**Let peace fill our heart,
our world, our universe.**

Peace, Peace, Peace.

Words: Ancient Sanskrit prayer

All remain standing

The Dean pronounces The Blessing

Unto God's gracious mercy and protection we commit you. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you. The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you peace. **Amen**

Numbers 6: 24-26

All remain standing

The religious leaders, the readers, and members of the Collegiate Body move from the Lantern through the Quire and North and South Nave aisles to the Great West Door.

The flags of the Commonwealth move from the Sacarium through the Quire and Nave to the Great West Door.

Participants in the Observance move through the Nave to the Great West Door.

The Commonwealth procession precedes The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh, who are conducted by the Dean through the North Quire aisle and the Nave to the Great West Door.

During these processions, the Abbey choristers, the One Voice Community Choir and Njabulo Madlala, accompanied by the Commonwealth Young Artists' Ensemble, the Ebony Steel Band and Jason Yarde, lead the singing.

The Hymn

Si - ya - hamb' e - ku - kha - nye - ni 'kwen - khos, si - ya -
hamb' e - ku - kha - nye - ni 'kwen - khos, Si - ya - hamb' e - ku - kha
nye - ni 'kwen - khos, si - ya - hamb' e - ku - kha - nye - ni 'kwen - khos,
Si - ya - ham - ba Si - ya - ham - ba Oo Si - ya -
hamb' e - ku - kha - nye - ni 'kwen - khos, Si - ya - ham - ba Si - ya -
ham - ba, Oo Si - ya - hamb' e - ku - kha - nye - ni 'kwen - khos.

Solo:

Siyahamb' ekukhanyeni 'kwenkhos,
Siyahamb' ekukhanyeni 'kwenkhos,
Siyahamb' ekukhanyeni 'kwenkhos,
Siyahamb' ekukhanyeni 'kwenkhos,
Siyahamba, oh,
Siyahamb' ekukhanyeni 'kwenkhos,
Siyahamba, oh,
Siyahamb' ekukhanyeni 'kwenkhos.

Choir:

We are singing in the joy of God,
We are singing, oh,
We are singing in the joy of God,
We are singing, oh,
We are singing in the joy of God,

All:

We are dancing in the sight of God,
We are dancing, oh,
We are dancing in the sight of God,
We are dancing, oh,
We are dancing in the sight of God,

We are marching in the light of God,
We are marching in the light of God,
We are marching in the light of God,
We are marching in the light of God.
We are marching, oh,
We are marching in the light of God.
We are marching, oh,
We are marching in the light of God.

We are living in the love of God,
We are living in the love of God,
We are living in the love of God,
We are living in the love of God.
We are living, oh,
We are living in the love of God.
We are living, oh,
We are living in the love of God.

We are moving in the power of God,
We are moving in the power of God,
We are moving in the power of God,
We are moving in the power of God.
We are moving, oh,
We are moving in the power of God.
We are moving, oh,
We are moving in the power of God.

Words: Traditional South African, collected and edited by Anders Nyberg

Music: African melody 69 Word Praise, scored by Notman KB, Ljungsbro and Lars Parkman, arranged by Alison Cox

Members of the Congregation are asked to remain in their places until directed to move by the Stewards. Those in the Nave will be asked to leave by the Great West Door. Those seated in the Lantern and Transepts leave by the North and Poets' Corner Doors.

A retiring collection is taken for **Commonwealth Charities working for young people.**

Performers

in order of appearance

Ebony Steel Band

Founded in 1968, Ebony Steel Band was originally a group of people from Trinidad brought together by a love of playing steelpan music. Since then, the Band has built an enviable and worldwide reputation for musical distinction. Ebony first won the National Panorama championships (for steel bands) in 1983 and has an unsurpassed record, capturing this coveted award 16 times in total, with nine consecutive wins from 1991-1999.

In both 2000 and 2002, Ebony was crowned champions at the European Steelband Music Festival. The Band regularly plays at major sporting and other events, including the FIFA World Cup in Germany 2006 and the 2006 International Cricket World Cup, in New Delhi, India. They perform annually at Buckingham Palace and have been invited to take part in the cultural programme of the 2012 London Olympics.

Commonwealth Young Artists' Ensemble

The Commonwealth Young Artists' Ensemble, under the direction of Kevin Hathway, comprises talented musicians from a variety of Commonwealth countries and specialist music schools. At today's Observance, the group in particular will perform 'Countries of the Commonwealth' as the flags of the Commonwealth are processed to the Sacarium before the start of the Observance. The original version of this piece, scored for flute, viola, percussion and solo voice, was composed by Alison Cox as a tribute to Stuart Mole, to mark the occasion of his retirement as Director-General of the Royal Commonwealth Society.

At the suggestion of the organisers, Alison has now expanded the piece for today's ceremony using four flutes, a string quartet, four voices (SATB) and two percussionists. The text is simply a list of the names of all the Commonwealth countries.

Alison Cox

Alison Cox has composed from the age of 7. She studied composition at the Royal Northern College of Music with Dr. Anthony Gilbert and in 1979 spent a year in Australia working with young film-makers. Her orchestral composition Trilithon was awarded the Royal Philharmonic Society Prize in 1980.

In November 2005, as the UK Co-Director and creator of 'The Commonwealth Resounds!' she initiated new projects with musicians from many different countries, and has continued to develop these in successive Commonwealth events. Alison Cox is Head of Composition at the Purcell School for Young Musicians, an international specialist music school based near London in the UK. She also creates and runs many community outreach programmes, teaching young musicians cultural leadership skills.

Njabulo Madlala

Njabulo Madlala was born in South Africa and studied on the post-graduate opera course at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London under Robert Dean. He is a Britten Pears Young Artist, a Samling Foundation Scholar and a prize-winner of the Young Kathleen Ferrier Bursary and The Kenneth Loveland Gift Prize.

Njabulo appeared as a fisherman in 'Bird of the Night' at the Royal Opera House. His opera engagements also include 'Porgy in Porgy and Bess' at the Cheltenham Festival, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Wigmore Hall, and Sadler's Wells, 'Rangwan Koanga' for Sadlers Wells, Bello in 'La fanciulla del West' at Opera Holland Park, the disciple and an angel in the 'The Mysteries' filmed by the BBC, and Peachum in 'Three Penny Opera' for Hawaii Performing Arts Festival. He made his debut as Mel in 'Tippett's The Knot Garden' for the Montepulciano Festival, broadcast live in Italy on RAI. His other operatic roles include Forester in 'The Cunning Little Vixen', and Morales and Dancairo in 'Carmen'. Alongside his classical music training background and performing career, Njabulo continues to research and perform South African indigenous folk music.

One Voice Community Choir

Now in its tenth year, the One Voice Community Choir, based in Preston Lancashire has a repertoire which covers a mixture of gospel and inspirational songs.

Some of their more memorable performances include singing for The Queen at the City of Preston celebrations and at the Manchester Bridgewater Hall as part of the 2002 Commonwealth Games concerts. The choir took part in the spectacular opening of Liverpool's European City of Culture celebrations, and have featured on television in various performances including BBC's advent show 'Christmas Voices' with Lesley Garrett and most recently, in the BBC One drama 'All the Small Things' starring Sarah Lancashire, Neil Pearson and Richard Fleeshman. The choir has also made its first foray into musical theatre, providing a choral backdrop for the civil rights based stage play 'Rainbow Beach'.

In June 2005 the choir made history by taking part in the recording of EMI's 'The Best Gospel Album In the World Ever...!' at Abbey Road studios, London. This was the first gospel album ever to be released by a major UK label. The Choir's success is due to the inspired leadership of Tyndale Thomas MBE, a leading exponent of UK gospel music and a dedicated professional who has supported, performed and recorded with internationally acclaimed artists such as Stevie Wonder and Nina Simone.

Kiribati Tungaru Association Dance Group

The KTA Dance Group was started fifteen years ago for i-Kiribati and their families living in the UK, so that they could come together to celebrate their culture and teach it to their children (who may not have had a chance to visit these Pacific islands). The Association has nearly 200 members and about thirty of these are the dancers, comprising i-Kiribati women and men, their children and grandchildren too.

The most important month in their calendar is July when the group celebrates the Independence Day of Kiribati (formerly known as the Gilbert Islands). This involves a feast with a whole pig (roasted in an earth oven overnight), followed by traditional i-Kiribati dances.

The KTA Dance Group have been invited to perform in the cultural programme of the forthcoming Commonwealth summit in Trinidad & Tobago in November 2009.

Jason Yarde

Composer, arranger, producer, musical director and saxophonist Jason Yarde writes music that has been described as powerful, spiritual, evocative, rhapsodic, hair-raising and formidable. Jason began playing alto and soprano saxophones with Jazz Warriors while still a teenager and then went on to MD this landmark orchestra, becoming one of its principal writers.

As well as composing for his own performance projects such as the '10 piece; Acoustic Bombastic & Trio WAH!', Jason has written for dance, music theatre, opera and TV. His highly distinctive arranging style reflects the numerous artists and ensembles he has worked with, from 4hero to Hermeto Pascoal, Bembe Segue to the Britten Sinfonia, Keziah Jones to Kronos Quartet, Terri Walker to TY, Jonzi-D to Jack DeJohnette. In addition, Yarde has enjoyed much success as a record producer, working on many albums for UK independent Jazz label Dune Records and recently completing the debut CD by UK jazz pianist Gwilym Simcock on Basho.

The Boys of Westminster Abbey Choir

The music is directed by James O'Donnell, Organist and Master of the Choristers. The organ is played by Robert Quinney, Sub-Organist. Westminster Abbey Choir is an integral part of the Collegiate Church of St Peter which we know as Westminster Abbey. The 36 singing boys are trained on site at a school unique in the United Kingdom in that it is dedicated entirely to their education. They share the duties of their fellow musicians here in singing daily as part of the Abbey's pattern of worship.

Readers of personal testimonies

in order of appearance

Ravi Gehlot

Ravi is a young British Asian entrepreneur living in Islington, London. Now aged 25, he made his first million pounds by the age of 18, as a night club promoter in Cyprus. He left school at 16, finding business schemes far more compelling than his economics classes. He is now Chief Executive of OneOffice, offering internet office services to small and medium-sized companies. The aim of the company is to help other entrepreneurs set up their own businesses. It also enables those employed by other companies to start new enterprises from a credible platform. Ravi has also worked with the Commonwealth Youth Programme.

In 2007, he took part in a BBC documentary 'Filthy Rich' and 'Homeless' which involved him sleeping rough for a week. The experience gave him a real appreciation of the problems facing the homeless and changed his perceptions of those living on the streets. He is now involved in a new initiative designed to highlight the problems of homelessness.

Kwame Kwei-Armah

Kwame was born Ian Roberts in Hillingdon, London, though his parents came from the Caribbean island of Grenada. He changed his name after tracing his family history through the slave trade and back to his ancestral routes in Ghana.

As an actor, Kwame first achieved fame playing Finley Newton in the BBC's Casualty (1999-2004) and has also appeared in 'Holby City', 'Between the Lines' and 'The Bill'. Recent credits have been in the TV series 'Hotel Babylon', ITV's Lewis and the film, 'Fade to Black'.

He was Writer in Residence at the Bristol Old Vic (1999-2001) where he wrote three plays - 'A Bitter Herb' (Winner, Peggy Ramsey award), 'Blues Brother Soul Sister', and 'Big Nose'. He is currently Writer in Residence for BBC Radio drama, an Associate Artist at the National Theatre of Gt. Britain; Centerstage, Baltimore; and Congo Square theatre company, Chicago USA.

His triptych of plays set in the habits of the African Caribbean community - 'Elmina's Kitchen, Fix up' and 'Statement of Regret' - were premiered at the National Theatre between 2003-2007, with Elmina's Kitchen transferring to the London's West End, (The First African Caribbean playwright to have had that honour) Baltimore and Chicago. Amongst others, he has won the Evening Standard Charles Wintour Award for most promising playwright; the Screen Nation award for Favourite TV actor; the 100 Black Men of Britain Public figure award; GPA man of the year and The RECON community leadership award 2007. Kwame has been nominated for a Lawrence Oliver Award and a BAFTA. He received an Honorary Doctorate from The Open University and was made an honorary member of 100 Black men of London in 2008.

In 2008 Kwame directed two sell-out productions of his play 'Let There Be Love' at the Tricycle Theatre London, wrote the BBC TV drama 'Walter's War' about the first black soldier to receive an Officer's Commission in the British army during WW1 and 'This is our Moment' for BBC Radio 4's From Fact to Fiction slot.

Kwame has been the Good Will ambassador for Trade for 'Christian Aid' (2003-2008). He is a Governor at the University of the Arts, London and on the board of The Roundhouse, the National Theatre and the Tricycle Theatre.

Hafsat Abiola

Hafsat Abiola-Costello is the initiator of the China-Africa Forum, which seeks to promote positive socio-economic partnerships between China and Africa. Born to political leaders who died in the course of Nigeria's democracy struggle, Hafsat is also the founder and director of the Kudirat Initiative for Democracy (KIND), an NGO that promotes democracy and development in Africa by strengthening organisations and creating initiatives that advance women.

Her awards include the 'State of the World Forum Changemaker Award' in 1998, Association for Women's Rights in Development 'Women to Watch-for Award' in 1999, an Honorary Doctorate from Haverford College in 2004 and 'Seeking Common Ground Award' in 2007.

An Ashoka Fellow and a World Economic Forum 'Young Global Leader', Hafsat graduated with a Magna Cum Laude degree in Development Economics from Harvard in 1996 and is currently a Masters student at Tsinghua University's International Development Programme in Beijing.

Hugh Evans

Hugh Evans is 25 years old and has been working for the past 10 years in the field of international humanitarian development.

Just 14 years old when he began his humanitarian work, he travelled to the Philippines as an ambassador for World Vision. He then spent a year living in India, studying and working with Mother Theresa's orphanage, and at World Vision Projects in Delhi.

After completing high school in 2001, Hugh deferred entrance to University, becoming instead World Vision's inaugural Youth Ambassador and travelling to South Africa for a year. Returning to Australia, Hugh became founder and director of the Oaktree Foundation, one of the World's first youth run aid and development organizations. Hugh also played an important part in the Make Poverty History campaign and ran the Make Poverty History Concert and Zero Seven Campaign.

In 2008, Hugh founded the Global Poverty Project, a campaign designed to catalyze the international movement to end extreme poverty. The project was launched at the UN High Level Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals in New York.

Hugh was awarded 2004 Young Australian of the Year, 2005 Junior Chamber Young Person Of the World Award, 2006 MTV 'Free Your Mind' humanitarian Award and recently received a scholarship from the British Council to study a Masters in International Relations at the University of Cambridge, United Kingdom.

Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson DBE

Tanni Grey-Thompson, who is from Wales, was born with spina bifida and is paralysed from the waist down. A graduate of Loughborough University, she is one of the UK's greatest paralympic athletes, winning 16 Paralympic medals, including 11 gold, 4 silver and a bronze. She was also 6 times winner of the London Wheelchair Marathon in a career spanning 16 years. She has been named BBC Wales Sports Personality of the Year three times, in 1992, 2000 and 2004, and been awarded a number of honorary degrees and doctorates, including from Leeds Metropolitan University, Loughborough University and the University of Wales. Awarded the MBE in 1993 and the OBE in 2000 for services to sport, she was created a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 2005.

Now retired from competitive sport, Tanni's current roles include membership of the boards of UK Athletics, London Marathon and Transport for London. She is a television presenter and is married with a young daughter

Tributes

The Commonwealth Mace

The Mace, carried by Paul West of the Commonwealth of Learning, goes before The Queen. It was a gift of the Royal Anniversary Trust to The Queen in her role as the Head of Commonwealth, on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of her accession to the throne. The Mace is used on special Commonwealth occasions, including the Commonwealth Day celebrations in London, and at biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government meetings.

Flowers

Each year, the Abbey is filled with flowers for the Observance gifted by member countries of the Commonwealth. As in previous years, the striking flower arrangements have been prepared by the National Association of Flower Arrangement Societies under the direction of Sue Slark.

Great thought has been given to this year's theme, 'the commonwealth@60: serving the new generation' and the eight Commonwealth countries who were party to the London Agreement of 1949, which gave birth to the modern Commonwealth, have been particularly recognised in the flower arrangements.

Flag-bearers

The flag-bearers (under the direction of Brendan McCann) perform a vital role in the Observance and their presence was made possible by the support of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the High Commissions which nominate a flag-bearer from their own country, usually resident in the United Kingdom. The Commonwealth flag is accompanied by an escort of the Brownies of the UK.

The Royal Commonwealth Society

The Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS), whose home is the Commonwealth Club located off Trafalgar Square, organises the Observance on behalf of the Council of Commonwealth Societies (CCS), and in consultation with the Dean of Westminster. The RCS's work in encouraging the celebration of Commonwealth Day is part of its mission to promote knowledge and understanding of the Commonwealth in the United Kingdom and internationally.

Nexus Strategic Partnerships Ltd

Nexus is a company working in partnership with the Royal Commonwealth Society to deliver a communications package in support of the Commonwealth Day Observance. Nexus publishes the official 'Commonwealth Yearbook' and manages www.commonwealth-of-nations.org for the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Lion TV

Lion Television is an award-winning independent production company that specialises in making innovative and entertaining history and science programmes. In this tradition, Lion is currently producing a documentary series entitled 'On Tour With The Queen' retracing the steps of the Queen's Coronation Tour of 1953, and exploring the Commonwealth both then and now. It is due to be broadcast in the summer of 2009.

The Council of Commonwealth Societies

The Council of Commonwealth Societies (CCS) is a group, linking unofficial and official organisations, which promotes the value of Commonwealth Day and seeks to raise the profile of the modern Commonwealth. Its Chairman is Lord Watson of Richmond CBE, the Vice-Chairman is Stuart Mole CVO OBE, and the Secretary is Alice Kawoya (the Project Manager for Commonwealth Day at the Royal Commonwealth Society).

CCS members (2009) are:

- Association of Commonwealth Universities
- Commonwealth Broadcasting Association
- Commonwealth Business Council
- Commonwealth Countries League
- Commonwealth Foundation
- Commonwealth Education Trust
- Commonwealth Local Government Forum
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (UK)
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (International Secretariat)
- Commonwealth Press Union Training & Education Trust
- Commonwealth Secretariat
- Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation
- Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council
- Corona Worldwide
- English-Speaking Union
- Falkland Islands Government Office
- Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)
- Goodenough College
- Government of the Cayman Islands
- Government of the Turks & Caicos Islands
- Government of Gibraltar
- Government of St Helena
- Institute of Commonwealth Studies
- Kenya Society
- League for the Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers
- Nexus Strategic Partnerships
- Pacific Islands Society
- Pakistan Society
- Royal African Society
- Royal Commonwealth Society
- Royal Over-Seas League
- Soundseekers (Commonwealth Society for the Deaf)
- Victoria League

Sponsors

The CCS gratefully acknowledges the financial support of its member organisations and the Commonwealth High Commissions. The CCS is particularly grateful for the special contributions it has received this year from the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Mackwoods Limited, Needleman Treon Solicitors, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Foundation.

