

I'm writing this on the day of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh's funeral, what a moving occasion it was. In particular the excellent singing felt really appropriate and the military precision throughout the occasion echoed Prince Philip's attention to detail. I wonder if what we have seen might encourage more of us to think about our death, and about our funeral services ahead of time!

Like most I felt sadness for the Queen losing her companion and support, and for the rest of the royal family in their grief, I gave thanks for Prince Philip's dedication to public duty. I also think we've discovered more over these last few days than I've seen about Prince Philip's Christian faith - an active faith, a challenging faith, a no-nonsense faith with an emphasis in caring for God's word and helping people, particularly young people realise their God given gifts.

I have been reflecting too on my own story in relation to Prince Philip's life. There was the garden party Helen and I were invited too once - a glimpse from afar across Buckingham Palace garden, when the Queen visited our children's school, or when our son James received his gold duke of Edinburgh award and during the ceremony when Prince Philip was talking to a group of girls who'd done their expedition by canoe he said 'I hope you canoed downhill!' My father's royal navy career also involved time in the Mediterranean, though at a much lower rank! There is also the family story that my mother as a teenage girl once danced with him - she grew up near Gordonstoun school and she and her friends were the local girls brought in for the school dances.

I have sent a message of condolence on behalf of the churches of Cudham and Downe, saying that we are remembering the Royal Family in our prayers and giving thanks for Prince Philip's life of service.

In the Christian calendar we are between Easter and Ascension/Pentecost, those 40 days when following his resurrection Jesus prepared his friends for his return to his father's side in heaven., saying to his followers that he will not leave us comfortless...but will send us the comforter, the Holy Spirit, to be with us for ever. That truth remains so today, even in grief. Ask Jesus to fill you with the Holy Spirit; and don't be surprised when he comforts you too.

Rev John Musson