

BRINGING THE COMMONWEALTH TOGETHER

With a population of over two billion people and comprising some of the largest economies and democracies in the world, the Commonwealth of Nations has the capacity to play a major role in the international arena. Yet this potential has never been realised. Given the new world order that is fast taking shape, *Politics First* invited numerous authorities on the Commonwealth to discuss why and how the 54 nations which make up the intergovernmental organisation should come together.



Queen Elizabeth of Great Britain... rarely gives interviews, so little is known of her personal thoughts and beliefs. Yet in her annual Royal Christmas Message broadcast to the Commonwealth, she regularly speaks of her personal faith. And as the current Monarch of the longest enduring Empire, she recently made the following statements:



“To many of us, our beliefs are of fundamental importance. For the teachings of Christ and my own personal accountability before God provide me a framework in which I try to lead my life. I, like so many of you, have drawn great comfort in difficult times from Christ’s words and example.”

Excerpts from her 2011 Christmas message, Queen Elizabeth said...



“In this past year my family and I have been inspired by the courage and hope we have seen in so many ways in Britain, in the Commonwealth and around the world. We’ve seen that it’s in hardship that we often find strength from our families; it’s in adversity that new friendships are sometimes formed; and it’s in a crisis that communities break down barriers and bind together to help one another.

The Commonwealth is a family of 53 nations, all with a common bond, shared beliefs, mutual values and goals.

It is this which makes the Commonwealth a family of people in the truest sense, at ease with each other, enjoying its shared history and ready and willing to support its members in the direst of circumstances. They have always looked to the future, with a sense of camaraderie, warmth and mutual respect while still maintaining their individualism.

Finding hope in adversity is one of the themes of Christmas. Jesus was born into a world full of fear. The angels came to frightened shepherds with hope in their voices: ‘Fear not’, they urged, ‘we bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.’

JEREMIAH 33 - QEII

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Although we are capable of great acts of kindness, history teaches us that we sometimes need saving from ourselves – from our recklessness or our greed. God sent into the world a unique person – neither a philosopher nor a general (important though they are) – but a Saviour, with the power to forgive.

Forgiveness lies at the heart of the Christian faith. It can heal broken families, it can restore friendships and it can reconcile divided communities. It is in forgiveness that we feel the power of God's love.

In the last verse of this beautiful carol, O Little Town of Bethlehem, there's a prayer:



*O Holy Child of Bethlehem
Descend to us we pray
Cast out our sin
And enter in
Be born in us today*

It is my prayer that we might all find room in our lives for the message of the angels and for the love of God through Christ our Lord.