



The Queen's Christmas & Easter Messages

**Queen Elizabeth II describes
the Significance of Christmas & Easter**

***"Peace on earth, Goodwill toward all" ~
the eternal message of Christmas, and the
desire of us all***

***The Queen has spoken about the significance
of Christmas to more people than anyone else
in history***

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The Queen's first Christmas Message (1952), broadcast to millions of listeners, reminded us that "Peace on earth, Goodwill toward men" is the eternal message of Christmas, and the desire of us all. The Queen's Christmas Broadcasts give us her compassionate review of the year and describe the significance of Christmas, the celebration of the baby born king, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

The formal name of her Christmas Broadcast is 'Her Majesty's Most Gracious Speech.'

King George V, The Queen's grandfather, gave the first Royal Christmas Message in 1932. King George VI commenced the custom of an annual Royal Christmas Message in 1939 at the outbreak of the Second World War (1939-1945), just 21 years after the end of the First World War (1914-1918). King George VI ended his first Christmas broadcast with encouragement from the poem by Minnie Louise Haskins titled *God Knows*:

I said to the man who stood at the Gate of the Year, "Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown." And he replied, "Go out into the darkness, and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than light, and safer than a known way."

The poem continues:

So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly
into the night.
And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in
the lone East.

*So heart be still:
What need our little life
Our human life to know,
If God hath comprehension?
In all the dizzy strife*

*Of things both high and low,
God hideth His intention.*

*God knows. His will
Is best. The stretch of years
Which wind ahead, so dim
To our imperfect vision,
Are clear to God. Our fears
Are premature; In Him,
All time hath full provision.*

*Then rest: until
God moves to lift the veil
From our impatient eyes,
When, as the sweeter features
Of Life's stern face we hail,
Fair beyond all surmise
God's thought around His creatures
Our mind shall fill.¹*

The King's quotation of "The Gate of the Year" brought it to public attention and it became an inspiration to millions throughout the world. Widely reproduced and quoted, including on the following Sunday, New Year's Eve, December 31, 1939, the poem has continued to comfort and inspire many generations.

The book *The Servant Queen and the King She Serves*, published for Queen Elizabeth II's 90th birthday, with a Foreword by the Queen, says that the young Princess Elizabeth, aged 13, handed the poem to her father. Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother had its words engraved on plaques on the gates of the King George VI

Memorial Chapel at Windsor Castle, where the King was interred in 1952, as she was in 2002, having lived to 101.

The annual Queen's Christmas Broadcasts continue to inspire a worldwide audience. For millions, as for our family, it has been an eagerly anticipated part of Christmas Day, often following celebrations including the joyful carols of the morning church service, sharing family gifts, and enjoying the Christmas family lunch or dinner together. Our family, in Australia's summer, would sprawl around the floor and lounge chairs to relax and listen to the broadcast of the Royal Christmas Message on radio and, later on, on television. This was a welcome break amid the family's festive games such as trying out new toys or sports gear. The next day, on the Boxing Day holiday, we were back watching English and Australian cricketers compete in The Ashes series.

As technology developed, The Queen's Christmas Broadcast came to us with increasing and impressive sophistication. The early years of the crackling wireless from 1952 gave way to the magic of sight with black and white television from 1957, then to the splendours of colour TV from 1967. From 1959 the pre-recorded broadcasts gave increasing opportunity for relevant film footage to be interspersed with The Queen speaking. Millions appreciate her compassionate observations about events of the past year and about the significance of Christmas.

Jon Kuhrt wrote a blog about The Queen's Christmas messages. He was impressed by comments in the 2014 broadcast while he worked with people affected by homelessness, offending and addictions at the West London Mission. Jon wrote: "I have not been a committed viewer (apart from when I am at my Mum's

¹ *God Knows*, privately published by the author in the collection, *The Desert*, 1912.

when it is compulsory viewing). So I went back and read her previous Christmas messages over the last 5 years.”

Here, I have adapted Jon’s Resistance and Renewal blog in which he describes how The Queen’s Christmas messages are a model of how to talk about faith in the public sphere. (<https://resistanceandrenewal.net/2014/12/28/the-queens-christmas-message-a-model-of-how-to-talk-about-faith-in-the-public-sphere>).

1) The Queen speaks personally

“It is my prayer this Christmas Day that Jesus’ example and teaching will continue to bring people together to give the best of themselves in the service of others.” (2012)

“For me, the life of Jesus Christ, the prince of peace, whose birth we celebrate today, is an inspiration and an anchor in my life.” (2014)
Personal testimony is significant and convincing, causing respect in those listening. The Queen is *personal* in the way she speaks, using words like ‘for me’; ‘my life’ and ‘my prayer’.

2) The Queen speaks compassionately

“Despite being displaced and persecuted throughout his short life, Christ’s unchanging message was not one of revenge or violence but simply that we should love one another.” (2015)

“Christ’s example helps me see the value of doing small things with great love, whoever does them and whatever they themselves believe.” (2016)

Consistently, The Queen and the Royal Family show deep concern for the bereaved and suffering, both in personal contact and in correspondence. The heart of Christmas is about God’s love for everyone, especially the hurting and fallen.

3) The Queen speaks inclusively

“The Christmas message shows us that this love is for everyone. There is no one beyond its reach.” (2013)

“Christ’s example has taught me to seek to respect and value all people, of whatever faith or none.” (2014)

God’s love is for *all people* and believing in this love leads us to respect and value everyone. Jon adds, “It resonated with my own experience of meeting The Queen in 1997, when she came to open a new hostel for young homeless people that I was managing. I showed her round and introduced her to all the residents. I had expected it to be quite formal and awkward but I remember how adept she was at talking to such a diverse range of people.”

4) The Queen speaks about Jesus

“This is the time of year when we remember that God sent his only son ‘to serve, not to be served’. He restored love and service to the centre of our lives in the person of Jesus Christ.” (2012)

“God sent into the world a unique person – neither a philosopher nor a general ... but a Saviour, with the power to forgive.” (2011)

The Queen talks directly about the person at the heart of Christmas, the reason for celebrating. That includes both the example and achievement of Jesus and makes orthodox theology accessible to the widest possible audience.

5) The Queen speaks about faith in action

“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.” (2011)

“For Christians, as for all people of faith, reflection, meditation and prayer help us to renew ourselves in God’s love, as we strive daily to become better people.” (2013)

Reconciliation, service and love flow from Christian commitment. The Queen talks about what faith *does*. It makes a difference to how we live and helps us to be ‘better people’.

The following pages give brief quotations about the significance and meaning of Christmas drawn from The Queen’s Christmas & Easter Broadcasts from 1952, commemorating the baby born King – the King of kings and Lord of lords.

1952

Queen Elizabeth II has been Queen of the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand since 6 February 1952. She is Queen of 12 countries that became independent since 1952, and is Head of the Commonwealth of Nations, a free association of independent member nations (commonly known as *the Commonwealth*), comprising over 50 sovereign states. The Queen carries the blessings and responsibilities of her reign with grace and dignity. She understands the value of influence, symbols, tradition and innovation.

Elizabeth II (born 21 April 1926) began her reign at the age of 25 when her father King George VI died. The Queen heard of her Accession while visiting Kenya.

Her first Christmas message, broadcast from the same desk and chair used by her father and grandfather, continued the tradition of Christmas Broadcasts passed on to her by George V and George VI. The Queen thanked her people for their loyalty and affection in the first months of her reign. She referred to the British Commonwealth and Empire as an “immense union of nations” that was like a family and which “can be a great power for good – a force which I believe can be of immeasurable benefit to all humanity.”

The Queen spoke about her forthcoming Coronation where she would dedicate herself anew to serve her people, concluding:

I want to ask you all, whatever your religion may be, to pray for me on that day - to pray that God may give me wisdom and strength to carry out the solemn promises I shall be making, and that I may faithfully serve Him and you, all the days of my life. May God bless and guide you all through the coming year.

This message, and the broadcasts until 1956, were simulcast on television in sound without visuals. From 1957, millions of people have seen and heard The Queen on television and on radio on Christmas Day.

Unlike her other speeches prepared for her by officials, Her Majesty writes her own Christmas messages, assisted by her husband and her aides.

Quotations about the significance of Christmas from The Queen’s Christmas Broadcasts are reproduced in this book in ***bold italics***. ...



The Queen’s first Christmas Broadcast

Each Christmas, at this time, my beloved father broadcast a message to his people in all parts of the world. Today I am doing this to you, who are now my people.

As he used to do, I am speaking to you from my own home, where I am spending Christmas with my family; and let me say at once how I hope that your children are enjoying themselves as much as mine are on a day which is especially the children's festival, kept in honour of the Child born at Bethlehem nearly two thousand years ago. ...

Above all, we must keep alive that courageous spirit of adventure that is the finest quality of youth; and by youth I do not just mean those who are young in years; I mean too all those who are young in heart, no matter how old they may be. That spirit still flourishes in this old country and in all the younger countries of our Commonwealth.

On this broad foundation let us set out to build a truer knowledge of ourselves and our fellowmen, to work for tolerance and understanding among the nations and to use the tremendous forces of science and learning for the betterment of man's lot upon this earth. If we can do these three things with courage, with generosity and with humility, then surely we shall achieve that "Peace on earth, Goodwill toward men" which is the eternal message of Christmas, and the desire of us all. ...

[Double pages for 1953-2017 are omitted from this sample.]

2018

The Queen, at 92, recorded her annual Christmas Day speech in the White Drawing Room at Buckingham Palace. This broadcast began with the Choir of King's College Cambridge beautifully singing the stirring national anthem and concluded with their inspiring rendition of the first two and last two verses of the carol, Once in Royal David's City.

This Christmas Eve marked the centenary of the service of Nine Lessons and Carols, performed by the Choir of King's College Cambridge live from King's College Chapel, seen by millions annually. It always begins with a single chorister singing the first verse of Once in Royal David's City.

The Queen referred to the centenary of the Royal Airforce, and the April meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government in London, with 53 nations involved, compared to eight countries in 1948 at the beginning.

The 21st Commonwealth Games, held on the Gold Coast in Australia, 4-15 April, with 71 nations involved, included para-athletes for the first time and had gender equality with the same number of events for males and females.

Prince Louis, the third child of Prince William and Catherine, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, was born on 23 April. Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, married on 19 May in this year of two royal weddings, two more great-grandchildren for The Queen, and Prince Charles' 70th birthday on 14 November.

Queen Elizabeth II observed that some cultures believe that a long life brings wisdom amid life's paradoxes. ***"But through the many changes I have seen over the years: faith, family, and friendship have been not only a constant for me, but a source of personal comfort and reassurance. ... Even with the most deeply held differences, treating the other person with respect and as a fellow human being is always a good first step towards greater understanding."***



Christmas stamps 2018

"The Christmas story retains its appeal since it doesn't provide theoretical explanations for the puzzles of life. Instead, it's about the birth of a child, and the hope that birth 2,000 years ago brought to the world."

"Only a few people acknowledged Jesus when he was born; now billions follow him. I believe his message of peace on earth and goodwill to all is never out of date. It can be heeded by everyone. It's needed as much as ever."

"A very happy Christmas to you all."

2019

The theme of this televised message, recorded in the Green Drawing Room at Windsor Castle, was that it is often the *"small steps, not the giant leaps"* that bring lasting change. The broadcast began with reference to the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission and Neil Armstrong taking a small step for a man and a giant leap for mankind (July 20, 1969), observing that *"giant leaps often start with small steps."*

The Queen spoke about the commemorations marking the 75th Anniversary of D-Day in World War II (June 6, 1944) which she attended in Portsmouth. ***"For the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of that decisive battle, in a true spirit of reconciliation, those who had formerly been sworn enemies came together in friendly commemorations either side of the Channel, putting past differences behind them. Such reconciliation seldom happens overnight. It takes patience and time to rebuild trust, and progress often comes through small steps,"*** The Queen said, adding, ***"By being willing to put past differences behind us and move forward together, we honour the freedom and democracy once won for us at so great a cost."***

This broadcast followed the general election in December caused by intense conflict about Brexit, the plans for Britain to leave the European Union after 45 years.

Again, Her Majesty acknowledged the work of charities, the emergency services, and armed forces in helping those in need and protecting us. She noted how new generations have brought a similar sense of purpose to issues such as protecting our environment and climate.

The Queen also noted the birth of her eighth great-grandchild, Archie Mountbatten-Windsor, born 6 May 2019, the son of Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, and Meghan, Duchess of Sussex.

The broadcast concluded with the carol, *It Came upon the Midnight Clear*, sung by the Choir of St George's Chapel with Her Majesty's Tri-Service Orchestra.



Christmas stamps 2019

Of course, at the heart of the Christmas story lies the birth of a child, a seemingly small and insignificant step overlooked by many in Bethlehem. But in time, through his teaching and by his example, Jesus Christ would show the world how small steps, taken in faith and in hope, can overcome long-held differences and deep-seated divisions to bring harmony and understanding.

Many of us try to follow in his footsteps. The path, of course, is not always smooth, and may at times this year have felt quite bumpy. But small steps can make a world of difference.

As Christmas dawned, church congregations around the world joined in singing 'It Came Upon The Midnight Clear'. Like many timeless carols, it speaks not just of the coming of Jesus Christ into a divided world many years ago, but also of the relevance even today of the angels' message of peace and goodwill.

It's a timely reminder of what positive things can be achieved when people set aside past differences and come together in the spirit of friendship and reconciliation. And as we all look forward to the start of a new decade, it's worth remembering that it is often the small steps, not the giant leaps, that bring about the most lasting change.

And so I wish you all a very happy Christmas.

2020 Easter



Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

2020 saw the coronavirus COVID-19 spread worldwide. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II historically addressed the nation and the Commonwealth on Palm Sunday, April 5. Her Majesty's message included these significant observations during the coronavirus pandemic.

"Across the Commonwealth and around the world, we have seen heart-warming stories of people coming together to help others, be it through delivering food parcels and medicines, checking on neighbours, or converting businesses to help the relief effort.

"And though self-isolating may at times be hard, many people of all faiths, and of none, are discovering that it presents an opportunity to slow down, pause and reflect, in prayer or meditation."

Then on Easter Saturday, with churches worldwide closed for Easter and most people required to stay home, The Queen broadcast her only Easter message given during her reign.



Candlelight from the Easter Message

The Queen's historic Easter message of 2020 included these reflections:

As darkness falls on the Saturday before Easter Day, many Christians would normally light candles together. In church, one light would pass to another, spreading slowly and then more rapidly as more candles are lit. It's a way of showing how the good news of Christ's resurrection has been passed on from the first Easter by every generation until now.

This year, Easter will be different for many of us, but by keeping apart we keep others safe. But Easter isn't cancelled; indeed, we need Easter as much as ever. The discovery of the risen Christ on the first Easter Day gave his followers new hope and fresh purpose, and we can all take heart from this. We know that Coronavirus will not overcome us. As dark as death can be — particularly for those suffering with grief — light and life are greater. May the living flame of the Easter hope be a steady guide as we face the future.

I wish everyone of all faiths and denominations a blessed Easter.

2020 Christmas

The global Covid-19 pandemic dramatically affected everyone, everywhere. This year saw unprecedented illness, deaths, hospitals and health services often overwhelmed, and people in lockdown isolation in attempts to curb the spread of the pandemic.

The Queen's Christmas message emphasized how light brings hope even in the darkest times. The broadcast showed scenes of selfless service by volunteers and the many health and welfare agencies. Her Majesty noted:

"Remarkably, a year that has necessarily kept people apart has in many ways brought us closer. Across the Commonwealth, my family and I have been inspired by stories of people volunteering in their communities, helping those in need."

"This year, we celebrated International Nurses' Day on the 200th anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale. As with other nursing pioneers like Mary Seacole, Florence Nightingale shone a lamp of hope across the world. Today, our front-line services still shine that lamp for us, supported by the amazing achievements of modern science, and we owe them a debt of gratitude."

The broadcast also commemorated the centenary of the tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Westminster Abbey. The Queen concluded the broadcast, saying, *"Let the light of Christmas, the spirit of selflessness, love, and above all hope, guide us in the times ahead. It is in that spirit I wish you a very happy Christmas."*

Then the Lewisham Greenwich National Health Service Choir sang the carol, Joy to the World, inspired by Psalm 98 and written by Isaac Watts:

Joy to the world! The Lord is come; Let earth receive her king;
Let every heart prepare him room, And heaven and nature sing...

Joy to the world! The Saviour reigns; Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains, Repeat the sounding joy ...

He rules the world with truth and grace, And makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness, And wonders of his love ...



Christmas stamps 2020

Every year, we herald the coming of Christmas by turning on the lights. And light does more than create a festive mood. Light brings hope.

For Christians Jesus is "the light of the world" but we can't celebrate his birth today in quite the usual way. ...

We continue to be inspired by the kindness of strangers, and draw comfort that even on the darkest nights, there is hope in the new dawn.

Jesus touched on this with the parable of the Good Samaritan. The man who is robbed and left at the roadside is saved by someone who did not share his religion or culture.

This wonderful story of kindness is still as relevant today. Good Samaritans have emerged across society, showing care and respect for all, regardless of gender, race, and background, reminding us that each one of us is special and equal in the eyes of God.

The teachings of Christ have served as my inner light, as has the sense of purpose we can find in coming together to worship.



This book was first published in 2017 commemorating the 60th Anniversary of The Queen's first television broadcast in 1957, the 50th Anniversary of her first colour television broadcast in 1967, and 65 years of annual Christmas Messages from 1952. It is updated annually.

During the years of her reign, the longest reigning British monarch, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II has provided stability, continuity, and innovation, and has appeared on television in our living rooms on Christmas Day throughout her reign. The Queen has spoken about the significance of Christmas to more people than anyone else in history.

The Queen made more than 260 official overseas visits to more than 100 different countries, and is committed to fostering harmony and progress among the Commonwealth nations.

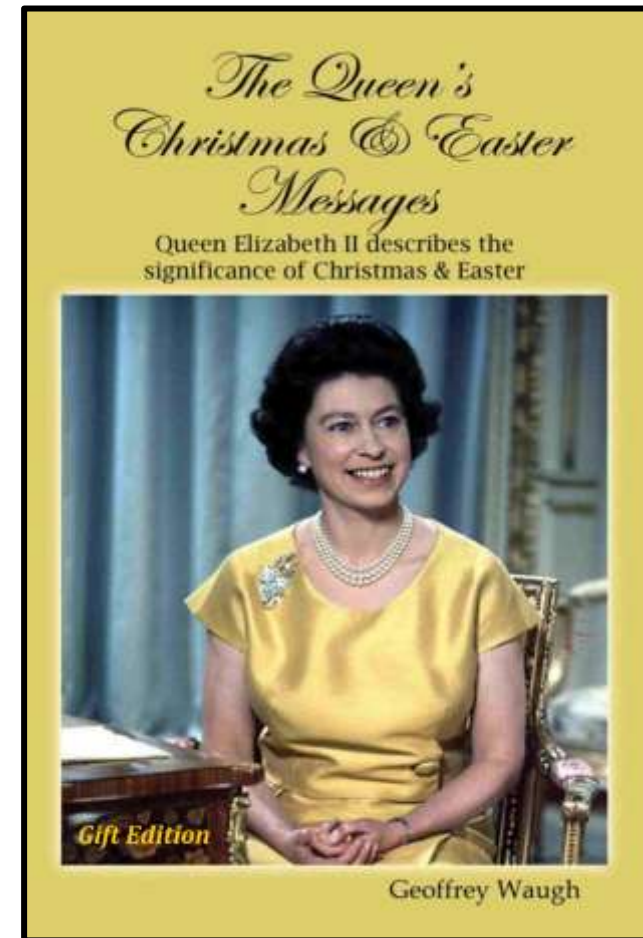
Her annual official duties include attending the Commonwealth Day service and speech on the second Monday in March, Trooping the Colour on her official birthday in June at the Horse Guards Parade, laying a wreath at the Cenotaph in November, and she has not missed Royal Ascot since 1945. Other members of the Royal Family assist or represent The Queen.

The Royal Family usually gathers at Windsor Castle for Easter, Balmoral in Scotland in August, Sandringham Estate for Christmas, and Buckingham Palace remains the headquarters of 'The Firm'.

The Queen invites a church minister to dinner each Sunday during her break at Balmoral. Famously, a Scottish minister once said grace there with the words, "For the delicious meal we are about to receive, and for the intercourse afterwards, may the Lord make us truly thankful."

Millions have reflected afterwards on the significance of Christmas following The Queen's Christmas Messages.

[End of this sample.]



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