

Address to the Throne

**United Reformed Church
General Assembly, July 2021**



To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty:

The General Assembly of the United Reformed Church sends loyal greetings to Your Majesty. Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

We extend our condolences to you following the death of HRH Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, after a life of dedicated service to nation and commonwealth. His championing of causes such as wildlife conservation and outdoor activities for young people have left a lasting legacy. We pray that you may know God's comfort in your grief.

This has been an extraordinary year in which many have had cause to mourn. The pandemic has wreaked a trail of loss – not only due to the many lives cut short by the virus, but because of missed opportunities, disrupted plans, limitations on contact, the impact of unavoidable debts, and in so many other ways.

We need to recognise the collective grief and trauma that has been experienced, and also that the burden of loss has fallen particularly heavily on certain groups in our communities and our world. Our churches will continue to play their part in responding, offering healing and hope through worship and pastoral care, acts of practical service, and challenging injustice.

We rejoice that through the efforts of scientists and the NHS, the vaccine rollout is now bringing hopes of a lifting of many of the restrictions we have learned to live with in this country.

However, we are very conscious that many of our sisters and brothers in other parts of the world have not been so privileged and are greatly pained that access to vaccines and treatment globally is so inequitable.

We stand in solidarity with them and have added our voice to the call for vaccines to be made available to all people as a global common good, as well as for the restoration of your Government's international development budget.

We believe that a commitment to the poorest in the world should not be an optional extra but at the heart of our country's responsibilities.

The General Assembly also responded to a particular plea to stand more resolutely in solidarity with the Palestinian people whose already deteriorating living conditions have been made worse by the pandemic.

We expressed our deep concern about the growth of illegal Israeli settlements and enforced house demolitions, urged for international law to be upheld, and pledged to use our influence and our resources in pursuit of justice and peace in the land we call holy.

As we emerge from this time of loss, we long to see the flourishing of all people as well as of the planet where we live. The forthcoming United Nations climate summit in Glasgow offers a real opportunity for leadership and progress in tackling the climate emergency.

Ahead of that event, many of our churches have been holding special services and deepening their own environmental commitments. We pray that those with power will rise to the moment.

We pray too that God will strengthen, sustain and guide Your Majesty as you continue to lead and serve.