

Protocols for churches marking the death of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh and Official Commemorative Services

Introduction

These guidelines are for use by churches in the Diocese of Exeter in the event of the death of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

They provide information and advice about communications, practical considerations and local and countywide memorial events and services.

Some details will not be finalised until the day after the death of the Prince Philip has been confirmed. The Diocese of Exeter's website page will be updated regularly.

This document has been updated to reflect Coronavirus restrictions in force as of March 2021, including the possible need for online memorial services instead of those in person, and online Books of Condolence.

Official Notification

- Lambeth Palace will receive official confirmation from Buckingham Palace.
- Lambeth Palace will share the news with Church House Westminster and Bishopthorpe (Archbishop of York).
- Confirmation will be shared with Diocesan Directors of Communications along with details of official resources available.
- The Diocese of Exeter's Director of Communications will share the information with the Bishop and Bishop's Staff.
- The confirmation of the death of Prince Philip and a statement from Bishop Robert will then be emailed out to all licensed clergy and readers, churchwardens, lay chairs and diocesan staff by the Bishop's Office.
- Nothing should be posted on church social media accounts or websites until the death has been officially confirmed by Lambeth Palace.

Communications

1. Following the official confirmation of the death of Prince Philip, a pre-prepared page on the diocesan website will be uploaded. It will include an official written statement, a prayer from Bishop Robert, and a downloadable video statement and prayer.
2. The page will also contain links to the Church of England website for a variety of resources detailed below. Once known, details and times of any local civic services will also be published on the website.

3. Official photos will also be available on the diocesan website page for churches to download, use on their own website, social media pages or printed off to go in a frame alongside books of condolence. The photo of Prince Philip has been approved by Buckingham Palace. Other photos should *not* be used. The official photo must be credited to PA (the Press Association) and must not be used before the death is confirmed.
4. National resources including prayers, statements, videos, official images, the National Anthem music and liturgies for local use will be made available on the Church of England's *A Church Near You* website resource hub. There will be a link to this on the Diocese website page and can also be found at the end of this document.
5. Several orders of service, based on the official commemorative materials, have been designed to be used in Church of England churches. Some of these resources are suitable for use at home or online.
6. The Church of England has prepared an online Book of Condolence, which will go live once the death has been confirmed. This will happen even if there are no Covid restrictions in place at the time.
7. The Church of England website will also offers people the opportunity to light an online candle of remembrance.
8. If your church is active on social media, please stop and think about what it is appropriate to post and what kind of tone you should be striking. If you schedule posts, make sure you postpone any that may seem too frivolous or inappropriate in the light of a Royal death. If you are unsure about any element of social media or what should be posted on your church website, please contact the communications team (contact details are at the end of this document).
9. If local churches are contacted by the local or national press, please consult the Diocesan Communications Office *before* making any comment, verbal or written.

The National Response and Resources

10. Instead of a national Memorial Service, a service of prayer and reflection will be led by the Archbishop of Canterbury from Lambeth Palace. This will be broadcast at 6pm on the day of the announcement of the death or the next day if the death happens later in the day.
11. There will be 7 days of mourning between the Duke's death and his funeral.
12. A private funeral for the Duke will be held at St George's Chapel, Windsor eight days after his death. If the death occurs over a weekend or on a bank holiday, the timetable may be extended and the funeral moved to the following Monday.
13. The publication of official commemorative material will be undertaken by Church House, Westminster, following the go-ahead from Lambeth Palace. This material will include texts for use at Morning or Evening Prayer, or a celebration of Holy Communion. It will also include a fully worked out official Commemorative Service, which will be published online by the Crown Printer, Cambridge University Press (because of Crown copyright) that may be accessed via the Church of England website.

14. In addition to these materials, there will also be a suite of simple prayers published on the Church of England website suitable for children and use in schools **(Appendix A)**.
15. The official Commemorative Service will provide the framework for local and diocesan services. The service can be adapted as required, but is designed to work equally well in a cathedral, a parish church or online. Church House will simultaneously provide notes of guidance on such services as well as further resources for private and small groups.

Local Responses in Diocese and County

16. Exeter Cathedral will hold the official city and county Memorial Service at 4pm on the Sunday during the period of mourning at which the Lord Lieutenant will be present and the Bishop of Exeter will preach. In accordance with Government regulations, which do not currently permit singing with a congregation present, the live service will include the choir but, regrettably, no congregation and be online only.
17. Similar services will be held on the Sunday at St Andrew's, Plymouth at which the Bishop of Plymouth will preach, and at St John the Baptist, Paignton at which the Bishop of Crediton will preach, on behalf of the unitary authorities of Plymouth and Torbay respectively.
18. At the moment, there are no plans for additional civic district services in Devon, but this may change. It will be a matter for local decision in response to public opinion and to which we will need to respond quickly and appropriately. Any service should be held in accordance with government regulations and take place on the Sunday during the period of mourning.
19. Parishes are free to hold their own local Memorial Service if they would like to, preferably on the day before the funeral. Resources for such commemorative services will be available on the Church of England *A Church Near You* resource hub.

Books of Condolence

20. The Church of England has opened an online book of condolence for the Duke of Edinburgh. You can sign it here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/remembering-his-royal-highness-prince-philip>

The Government has advised that in order to observe current Covid-19 precautions, physical condolence books should not be offered at this time.

21. As churches can be open for personal prayer and communal worship, you may choose to have a commemorative display for the Duke of Edinburgh with information about how people can sign the online book of condolence.
22. On such occasions, people often like to light a candle. Thought should be given as to how this might safely be facilitated in your own setting, taking into account current Covid restrictions.

23. Local schools can be invited to sign the online book of condolence and clergy should, where possible, make arrangements to support school staff in leading collective worship.

Flags and Bells

32. **Flags:** not all Devon churches fly flags and for those that do, official guidance provides that:

All flags should be flown at half-mast from official confirmation of the death until 0800 hours on the day after the funeral.

33. The general convention in flying flags on or over church buildings is that the only flag flown is the “flag of St George with the diocesan arms in the top quarter nearest the mast”. Many churches possess only a flag of St George without the quartered arms, which is fine.
34. More guidance about flags can be found here: <http://www.flaginstitute.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Flags-on-Churches.pdf>
35. **Bells:** Half-muffled tolling or chiming of a single bell on Saturday 10 April 2021 at 12 noon, 99 times or up to 5 minutes is recommended following the announcement of the death the Duke of Edinburgh. The Cabinet Office has declared 8 days of official mourning, during which time any other ringing should be half-muffled and in accordance with current Covid-19 restrictions. Half-muffled tolling or chiming of a single bell is recommended on the day of the funeral. There is no special dispensation of current ringing guidance on Sunday. More information about bells can be found here <https://cccbr.org.uk/>

Appendix A

PRAYERS

God of our lives,
we give thanks for the life of Prince Philip,
for his love of our country,
and for his devotion to duty.
We entrust him now to your love and mercy,
through our Redeemer Jesus Christ. Amen.

Merciful God, be close to all who mourn,
especially The Queen and all members of the Royal Family.
May they know the comfort of your love,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Eternal God, we give thanks for the life of Prince Philip,
founder of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.
We remember his vision and imagination,
his interest in young people and his support for them.
Inspire us with the same commitment
to serve friend, neighbour, and stranger alike,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For use with children and in schools

Loving God,
we are sad that Prince Philip has died.
Thank you for his long life
and for his care for The Queen and our country.
Amen.

Appendix C

Contact information

The Acting Archdeacon of Barnstaple

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The Archdeacon of Exeter

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Communications Team:

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Communications Officer

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Diocese of Exeter main reception: 01392 272686

Useful Websites

Diocese of Exeter Website: <https://exeter.anglican.org/>

Church of England website: <https://www.churchofengland.org/>

A Church Near You resource hub: <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/> (You will need to create a login for A Church Near You if you do not already have one)

Cambridge University Press website: <https://www.cambridge.org/>