

Delivering a Common Future: Connecting, Innovating, Transforming

## The Commonwealth Service

## A Celebration of the Commonwealth

Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021, 10.00 am





#### A CONNECTED COMMONWEALTH

#### WHAT IS THE COMMONWEALTH?

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of fifty-four independent and equal sovereign states. It is home to 2.4 billion citizens, and includes some of the world's largest, smallest, richest, and poorest countries, spanning five regions. Thirty of its members are small states, many of them island nations.

#### WHAT IS THE COMMONWEALTH THEME?

Every year, the Commonwealth choses a theme to provide a focus for its activities. The theme is celebrated throughout the year with special events taking place during Commonwealth Week, including the Commonwealth Service. This year's theme is 'Delivering a Common Future: Connecting, Innovating, Transforming'

#### WHAT DOES A CONNECTED COMMONWEALTH MEAN?

The Commonwealth offers opportunities for the people, governments, and institutions of this richly diverse worldwide family of nations to connect and cooperate at many levels through far-reaching and deep-rooted networks of friendship and goodwill.

Lord-Lieutenant for the West Midlands, Mr John Crabtree OBE Lord Mayor of Birmingham, Councillor Mohammed Azim

#### FAITH COMMUNITIES

The Rt Reverend David Urquhart, Bishop of Birmingham on behalf of the Church of England community

The Most Reverend Bernard Longley is the Archbishop of Birmingham on behalf of the Roman Catholic Community

Rabbi Yossi Jacobs (Singers Hill Synagogue) on behalf of the Orthodox Jewish community,

Iman Muhammad Assad on behalf of the Muslim community

#### MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Dr Quaye Botchway



#### FLAGS OF THE COMMONWEALTH

#### Dr Quaye Botchway Master of Ceremonies

Lord-Lieutenant of the West Midlands, Mr John Crabtree OBE, Lord Mayor of Birmingham, Councillor Mohammed Azim, Chairman of the Birmingham Commonwealth Association, Past Lord Mayors of Birmingham City Council, Councillors, Representatives of the Diplomatic Corp and the Faith Communities, the Police, Academia, from our neighbouring cities, thank you for joining us today at this special Commonwealth Day service on Commonwealth Day itself, the 8<sup>th</sup> March.

It is good that we are also joined by Commonwealth Students from Birmingham City University and students from Nishkam High School.

I will now invite the Chairman of the Birmingham Commonwealth Association, Mr Keith Stokes-Smith, to say a few words.

#### Keith Stokes-Smith Chairman, Birmingham Commonwealth Association

Thank you Dr Botchway.

We gather today to celebrate and give thanks for our Commonwealth network and family, with its shared history and values.

Our diverse family of 54 commonwealth countries connect at many levels through extensive and deeprooted networks of friendship and goodwill. Together, the countries and people of the Commonwealth tackle climate change and its effects. We work to find sustainable ways of using the natural resources of our planet, its land and ocean, so that our environment is protected. Together we work to build peace and harmony through social and democratic development. Together, we encourage inclusive economic empowerment and fair trade so that all people, particularly women, young people, and those in marginalised communities can share the fruits of progress and prosperity. Together, we are delivering a common future by connecting, innovating, and transforming our societies.

You have, Dr Botchway, rightly already recognised many of those who have joined us today. Can I also add my thanks to the Claire Noakes, soprano, Steve Higgins, soloist, the City of Birmingham Brass Band, Birmingham City Council Choir and the producer and sponsor of this event, Reeves PR Agency.

This Commonwealth service will hopefully be unique only to the extent it is being held on line. Nevertheless, we are honoured by the presence of HM The Queen's representative, Lord-Lieutenant for the West Midlands, Mr. John Crabtree OBE, and the Lord Mayor of Birmingham, Councillor Mohammed Azim, as well as other distinguished guests.

I will now invite the Lord Mayor of Birmingham to give a formal welcome.

#### Welcome by the Lord Mayor of Birmingham, Councillor Mohammed Azim

This is Birmingham's second Commonwealth Day Service organised by the Birmingham Commonwealth Association, albeit in circumstances none of us could have envisaged this time last year.

The Covid 19 pandemic has taken many lives across the Commonwealth, ruined many lives and businesses, and will continue to impact adversely on our citizens and citizens of the world for many years to come.

As we celebrate the coming together of the Commonwealth Nations, we, in Birmingham, will continue coming together, supporting each other, doing the right thing, to ensure that, in these challenging times, we have the best chance of creating a better future and world for all of us.

Thank you

#### **Dr Quaye Botchway**

I will now invite the Birmingham City Council Choir to sing our first piece of music for this service, 'Proud'.

#### The Birmingham City Council Choir to Sing

#### PROUD

I look into the window of my mind, reflections of the fears I know I left behind

I step out of the ordinary, I can feel my soul ascending, I'm on my way, can't stop me now, And you can do the same, yeah

What have you done today to make you feel proud? Its never too late to try What have you done today to make you feel proud? You could be so many people, if you make the break for freedom. What have you done today to make you feel proud?

Still so many answers I don't know. There are so many answers. Realize that to question is how we grow. To question is to grow

I step out of the ordinary, I can feel my soul ascending, I'm on my way, can't stop me now, And you can do the same, yeah

What have you done today to make you feel proud? Its never too late to try What have you done today to make you feel proud? You could be so many people, if you make the break for freedom. What have you done today to make you feel proud?

We need a change, yeah! Do it today, yeah! I can feel my spirit rising Change! Yeah! We need a change! Yeah! So do it today! Yeah! Coz I can see a clear horizon.

What have you done today to make you feel proud? Its never too late to try What have you done today to make you feel proud? You could be so many people, if you make the break for freedom. What have you done today to make you feel proud?

What have you done today to make you feel proud? Its never too late to try

What have you done today to make you feel proud? You could be so many people, if you make the break for freedom. What have you done today to make you feel proud?

Words and Music: Peter John Vettese and Heather Small Arrangement: Greg Gilpin

Conducted by: Mariana Rosas

Accompanied by: James Keefe

**Choir**: Edwina Langley, Finola Lyons, Jan Chambers, Jane Taylor, Jenny Walters, Kathryn Houlahan, Marion Daniels, Sandra Barnett, Tina Spiers, Karen Armitage, Helen Lawrence, Julie Reynolds, Denise Barrett, Elizabeth Morgan, Janine Goodman. Judy Preece, Karen James, Rachel Hinton, Diana Willsher, David Board, Lee Southall, Carl Marshall, Chris Watts, Stuart Unwin, Alistair Campbell

#### The Rt Reverend David Urquhart, Bishop of Birmingham

#### THE BIDDING

# W e gather this year at a solemn time for the world and for the Commonwealth of nations as

we look out on the untold and unexpected suffering due to the Covid 19 pandemic and its variance. We can meet with the wonderful technology of modern science as we stretch virtual hands around the globe in hope and in shared courage and in mutual affection.

In our prayers today and our thoughts, we remember our neighbours who desperately need vaccination and that that might be shared by all.

We think ahead to the suffering planet and our conference later in the year, COP 26, in order to commit ourselves to sustaining God's creation for future generations and we also recognise that in our ordinary relations we need economic sustenance, work and trade.

For all these things, we commit ourselves afresh to the mercy of God. Above all, in our diversity, we seek that deeper love, that deeper appreciation of respect for all humanity. And so, as we offer ourselves and our gathering to God, let us pray in the words that Lord Jesus taught us.

UR Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Thank you

#### **SUNG BY CLARE NOAKES**

#### ACCOMPANIED by her husband Benjamin on the piano

#### HALLELUJAH

Now I've heard there was a secret chord That David played, and it pleased the Lord But you don't really care for music, do you? It goes like this The fourth, the fifth The minor fall, the major lift The baffled king composing Hallelujah Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah

Your faith was strong, but you needed proof You saw her bathing on the roof Her beauty and the moonlight overthrew you She tied you To a kitchen chair She broke your throne and she cut your hair And from your lips she drew the Hallelujah Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah

You say I took the Name in vain I don't even know the Name But if I did, well really, what's it to you? There's a blaze of light In every word It doesn't matter which you heard The holy or the broken Hallelujah Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah

I did my best, it wasn't much I couldn't feel, so I tried to touch I've told the truth, I didn't come to fool you And even though It all went wrong I'll stand before the Lord of Song With nothing on my tongue but Hallelujah Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah

#### Written by Leonard Cohen

Lord Lieutenant for the West Midlands, Mr John Crabtree OBE, to speak about the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and the connected Commonwealth.

#### The Birmingham City Council choir sing

#### **CROSSING THE BAR**

Sunset and evening star And one clear call for me! And may there be no moaning of the bar When I put out to sea, When I put out to sea, when I put out to sea And may there be no moaning of the bar When I put out to sea.

But such a tide as moving seems asleep, Too full for sound and foam, When that which drew out the boundless deep Turns again home Turns again home, turns again home When that which drew from out the boundless deep Turns again home

Twilight and evening bell, And after that the dark! And may there be no sadness of farewell When I embark When I embark, when I embark And may there be no sadness of farewell When I embark

For though from out our bourne of Time and Place The flood may bear me far I hope to see my Pilot face to face When I have crost the bar, When I have crost the bar, when I have crost the bar I hope to see my Pilot face to face When I have crost the bar When I have crost the bar, when I have crost the bar I hope to see my Pilot face to face When I have crost the bar, when I have crost the bar

Arr. Rani Arbo (1968) On words by Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809 – 1892)

Conducted by: Mariana Rosas

#### Accompanied by: James Keefe

**Choir:** Edwina Langley, Finola Lyons, Jan Chambers, Jane Taylor, Jenny Walters, Kathryn Houlahan, Marion Daniels, Sandra Barnett, Tina Spiers, Karen Armitage, Helen Lawrence, Julie Reynolds, Denise Barrett, Elizabeth Morgan, Janine Goodman. Judy Preece, Karen James, Rachel Hinton, Diana Willsher, David Board, Lee Southall, Carl Marshall, Chris Watts, Stuart Unwin, Alistair Campbell

#### Pupils from Nishkam High School to read Luke 10: 29-37

#### THE READING

WANTING to justify himself, the lawyer asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.

Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend." Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?'

He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'

Luke 10: 29-37

**Pupils** 

Craig Singh (year 8) read parts 1 and 5 Leah Atkins (year 10) read parts 2 and 4 Har-Theer Singh (year 8) read part 3

#### O'er our blue Mountain

#### **Sung by Steve Higgins**

O'er our Blue Mountain descends this bright angel song-To you and all mankind comes peace today O'er our Blue Mountain, where clouds glide with grace along, Sorrow from all mankind shall go away O come ye that labour, come ye heavy laden, To you and all mankind comes peace today

O'er our Blue Mountain, there rings that sweet song of old To you and all mankind comes peace today For love shall conquer all fear that each heart may hold, Sorrow from all mankind shall go away O come ye that labour, come ye heavy laden, To you and all mankind comes peace today

O'er our Blue mountain, goes forth now our hopeful song-To near and far away, we send our voice To all proclaiming that all to All good belong, Boldly our kindred may accept, Rejoice O come Ye that labour, come ye heavy laden, To you and all mankind comes peace today

Written by Clyde Hoyte

#### THE PRAYERS

Prayers read by:

## Mr Rabbi Yossi Jacobs (Chief Minister, Birmingham Hebrew Congregation) on Behalf the Birmingham Jewish community,

LORD of the universe, who reigned before the birth of anything – When by His will all things were made then was His name proclaimed King. And when all things shall cease to be, He alone will reign in awe. He was, He is, and He shall be glorious for evermore. He is One, there is none else, alone, unique, beyond compare; Without beginning, without end, His might, His rule is everywhere. He is my God; my Redeemer lives. He is the Rock on whom I rely – My banner and my safe retreat, my cup, my portion when I cry. Into His hand my soul place, when I awake and when I sleep. GOD is with me; I shall not fear; body and soul from harm will He keep.

#### Iman Muhammad Assad on behalf of the Muslim community

V lord, unite our hearts and set alight our mutual affairs

Guide us in the path of peace Liberate us from the darkness towards the light Save us from enormities whether open or hidden O'lord, impart to our earth its blessings, its embellishment and its repose O'lord your forgiveness is vaster than our sins and your compassion is more promising than our actions Through your infinite mercy accept our prayers Amen

#### THE ACT OF AFFIRMATION TO THE COMMONWEALTH

Read by Professor Louise Toner, Chairman of the BCA's Education Focus Group and Associate Dean: Academic Portfolio & Market Development, Faculty of Health, Education & Life Sciences, University of Birmingham and students from the Universities Dept of Public Health.

Chinenye Chianakwana from Nigeria Justice Onuoha from Nigeria

Jeffin Thomas from India

Sunbo Ogundele from Nigeria

Nasreen Diwan from India

Let us now pledge ourselves afresh to uphold and serve the values and fellowship of the Commonwealth.

We affirm that every person possesses unique worth and dignity.

We affirm our respect for nature, and that we will be stewards of the earth by caring for every part of it, and for it as a whole.

We affirm our belief in justice for everyone, and peace between peoples and nations.

Joining together in kinship and affinity, in diversity, and unity, as members of a worldwide family of nations, we acknowledge our shared inheritances.

 ${f W}$ e cooperate with mutual respect and goodwill to deliver a common future for the good of all.

Through Commonwealth connection we learn from one another, and innovate to transform our communities, our nations, and our world.

### All respond

We affirm our belief in the Commonwealth as a powerful influence for good in the world, and pledge ourselves to its service, now and for the future.

#### The City of Birmingham BRASS BAND PLAYING

**17** Delivering a Common Future: Connecting, Innovating, Transforming.

#### Love Divine, all loves excelling

Love divine, all loves excelling, Joy of Heav'n to earth come down; Fix in us thy humble dwelling; All thy faithful mercies crown! Jesus, Thou art all compassion, Pure unbounded love Thou art; Visit us with Thy salvation, Enter every trembling heart.

Finish, then, Thy new creation; Pure and spotless let us be; Let us see Thy great salvation Perfectly restored in Thee; Changed from glory into glory, Till in Heav'n we take our place, Till we cast our crowns before Thee, Lost in wonder, love, and praise. Till we cast our crowns before Thee, Lost in wonder, love, and praise. Amen.

#### Written by Charles Wesley

#### THE BLESSING

#### The Most Reverend Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham

GOD grant to the living grace; to the departed rest; to the Church, The Queen and the Commonwealth, and all people, peace and concord and to us sinner's life everlasting: and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

#### Closing remarks by the Chairman of the Birmingham Commonwealth Association, Mr Keith Stokes-Smith

I would like to thank all of you who have joined us here today for this special Commonwealth Day service.

As alluded to earlier by the Lord Lieutenant for the West Midlands, Birmingham is the hub for the 2022 Commonwealth Games when we see the coming together of Commonwealth nations and Territories for a once in a life time opportunity to showcase the West Midlands on the global stage. Sport, of course, is the focus of the games although a trade, tourism and culture element will be running in parallel to it.

The theme of the Commonwealth for today and indeed the next 12 months is "Delivering a common future: connecting, innovating and transforming". The Commonwealth Heads of government meeting is due to take place later this year in Rwanda to discuss how this common future can be delivered and in the light of the Covid 19 pandemic. A number of other issues face the world: poverty, climate change, food sustainability/security, plastic waste, the world's oceans, democracy and peace to name a few. We wish them well.

Can I thank all those who have contributed to today and our sponsors, Reeves PR Agency, based here in Birmingham.

The Birmingham Commonwealth Association, Birmingham's first Commonwealth focused organisation, will continue to work towards supporting communities, business and academia in the achievement of their commonwealth related initiatives/outcomes.

Keep safe and well

Keith Stokes-Smith

BCA Chairman

#### THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

God save our gracious Queen, long live our noble Queen, God save The Queen. Send her victorious, happy and glorious, long to reign over us: God save The Queen.

arranged by Gordon Jacob (1895 - 1984)

Thank you for joining us today.

#### PARTICIPANTS



#### **City of Birmingham Brass Band**

Previously known as Fisher & Ludlow Works Band and Pressed Steel Fisher Band during the first half of the 20th Century, in 1976 the band's major contribution to civic life was recognised by the city council; and they have been known as City of Birmingham Brass Band ever since.

Based in the heart of Birmingham, engagements include regular performances in the city centre and taking part in a number of civic events, as well as entertaining audiences at a variety of concert venues. During the summer months, the band can be found in parks and bandstands in and around Birmingham. The band has a broad repertoire to suit its wide variety of audiences. This ranges from traditional and modern brass band music, through classical works arranged for brass, to film/television theme tunes and arrangements of popular melodies. The band can be found on Facebook and twitter @BirminghamBrass, and their website www.birminghambrass@yahoo.co.uk.



#### **Birmingham City Council Choir**

Birmingham City Council Choir was established by choir master Gareth Malone for the second series of the inspirational BBC TV show The Choir: Sing While you Work, drawing employees together from across our organisation and giving them a shared sense of purpose. Since

participating in the show, the choir has expanded to welcome new members who represent all service areas within the council. Now under the guidance of Musical Director Mariana Rosas and pianist James Keefe we continue to be involved in events around the city and beyond acting as ambassadors for the Council and showing local government and public service at its best.

Conducted by: Mariana Rosas, Accompanied by: James Keefe

Choir: Edwina Langley, Finola Lyons, Jan Chambers, Jane Taylor, Jenny Walters, Kathryn Houlahan, Marion Daniels, Sandra Barnett, Tina Spiers, Karen Armitage, Helen Lawrence, Julie Reynolds, Denise Barrett, Elizabeth Morgan, Janine Goodman. Judy Preece, Karen James, Rachel Hinton, Diana Willsher, David Board, Lee Southall, Carl Marshall, Chris Watts, Stuart Unwin, Alistair Campbell



#### Clare Noakes, soprano

A singer and conductor by training, Clare currently sings with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra Chorus, Warwick-based chamber choir, Armonico Consort, and is Director of Music at her church in Kings Heath, Birmingham. Professionally, Clare manages the Vice-Chancellor's office at Aston University, where she has also set up and conducts a workplace choir, bringing together staff from across the University.



#### **Steve Higgins**

A singer, soloist, conductor, musician, and performer who dedicates his life to lifting people's spirits with music. He found his voice through the occasional request to sing for family events, and continued his journey by singing at churches and chorales around Jamaica. After relocating to South Florida, the passion for music developed even further as Steve began

traveling internationally to perform for a multitude of events and organizations around the world.



#### Dr Q. Botchway

Dr Q. Botchway is a Businessman and a Public Policy Consultant with over 20 years professional experience. He currently runs his own consultancy practice, QBQ Research & Consultancy Ltd and also a part time university lecturer in England. He originally trained as a Town Planner in England with specialist knowledge in local economic development and subsequently worked as an Academic, Public Policy Consultant, and Qualifications

Regulation Manager, before setting up his own consultancy practice.

Dr Botchway is a strong activist in the Black Minority Ethnic sector, particularly, the Ghanaian community. He is the Chairman of the National Council of Ghanaian Unions UK (NCGU); President of the Ghana Union Midlands (GUM); and President of the Ghana Union Greater Birmingham (GUGB). He is also a member of the Ghana/UK Diaspora Steering Committee and Deputy Chair of the Communities Group of the Birmingham Commonwealth Association. He is currently a founding member and Chair of the African Business Chamber in Birmingham.

Dr Botchway is married with two children and enjoys spending time with the family, playing golf and listening to music - afro beat music is his favourite at the moment.

#### **Birmingham City University, Dept of Public Health**

Professor Louise Toner, Chairman of the BCA's Education Focus Group and Associate Dean: Academic Portfolio & Market Development, Faculty of Health, Education & Life Sciences, University of Birmingham and students from the Universities Dept of Public Health Chinenye Chianakwana from Nigeria Justice Onuoha from Nigeria Jeffin Thomas from India Sunbo Ogundele from Nigeria Nasreen Diwan from India

#### **Nishkam High School Pupils**

#### Craig Singh, Leah Atkins and Har-Theer Singh

Nishkam High School Birmingham opened its doors in 2012 as Britain's first 'faith inspired, virtues led' multi-faith school. Whilst they are proud of their Ofsted 'Outstanding' status, they believe their most important work lies in achieving their mission statement, which is; 'to empower children with values, to enable them to excel academically and spiritually, enabling them to serve humanity selflessly, with an abundance of love, compassion and forgiveness'.

#### WITH THANKS TO

## The Birmingham Commonwealth Association gratefully acknowledges the support of the following:

Lord-Lieutenant of the West Midlands – Mr John Crabtree OBE

Lord Mayor of Birmingham – Councillor Mohammed Azim Birmingham City Council Choir

Conducted by: Mariana Rosas Accompanied by: James Keefe

City of Birmingham Brass Band
Clare Noakes and her husband, Benjamin Noakes playing the piano
Steve Higgins
Keith Stokes-Smith – Chairman of Birmingham Commonwealth Association
The Rt Reverend David Urquhart, Bishop of Birmingham
The Most Reverend Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham
Faith Leaders
Nishkam School Trust
Dr Quaye Botchway, Vice Chair of the Birmingham Commonwealth Associations Communities Focus Group
Professor Louise Toner, Chairman of the BCA's Education Focus Group and Associate Dean: Academic Portfolio & Market Development, Faculty of Health, Education & Life Sciences, University of Birmingham and Students from Birmingham City University Faculty of Health, Education and Live Sciences.

Lord Mayor's Office and Birmingham City Councils International Office Reeves PR Agency



The Birmingham Commonwealth Association (BCA) is a network of individuals, organisations and business committed to:

improving the lives and prospects of Commonwealth citizens across Birmingham;

supporting business wishing to trade with commonwealth countries;

engaging with the city's universities, colleges and schools to improve commonwealth engagement, promote greater awareness of commonwealth values and transfer of commonwealth knowledge;

the holding of events of a corporate nature which lead to improved networking and greater collaboration and partnership across the city.

Founded in March 2014, it is non-partisan, is independent of governments, and is supported by Birmingham City Council, strategic partners, Birmingham City University and Aston University, and public generosity.

The Society engages with youth, civil society, business, and governmental networks to address issues that matter to them.

Website: https://www.b-ca.org

Email: Office@birminghamciommonwealthassociation.com

**23** Delivering a Common Future: Connecting, Innovating, Transforming.