

King Charles Coronation: An Insider's Look at the 40-Year Friendship Between Queen Elizabeth II and Billy Graham

 “Queen Elizabeth II, the UK’s longest-serving monarch, has died at Balmoral aged 96, after reigning for 70 years, BBC, Sept. 8.”

Like most everyone throughout the British Commonwealth, across the U.S. and the rest of the world, I received this breaking news about the end of an unprecedented era with profound sadness and grief.

It was the first day of my life without Elizabeth II on the throne, as she was coronated in 1953 just six weeks before I was born. And America has adopted her as “our queen,” too.

Several hours later, a British friend texted me from London that the BBC had been reporting all afternoon about Her Majesty’s affection for Reverend Billy Graham.

It was true.

I had seen it first-hand because I had served as personal media spokesperson for Mr. Graham for nearly 34 years, including several occasions when he had been with the queen and preached to The Royal Family.

And it’s a fascinating story.

Neither the Queen Nor Graham Grew Up Expecting the Global Spotlight

In recent days, I’ve been reflecting on the notable influence

and impact of these two extraordinary individuals—Britain's longest-serving monarch who reigned over the United Kingdom for 70 years, and the American evangelist who represented the kingdom of God through a global public ministry spanning more than six decades.

Despite intense scrutiny by a watching world and the international media, both served without a hint of personal scandal, and modeled character, integrity and authenticity for us all.

As a child, Elizabeth was never expected to become queen.

She was third in the line for succession behind her uncle Edward and her father.

No one could have foreseen that the throne would be her destiny until she became the heir presumptive after her uncle abdicated.

Likewise, when Billy Graham was born no one could have imagined that God would raise him up to become the world's most well-known and fruitful evangelist.

Graham was raised on a rural North Carolina farm out of the public eye, yet he rose from obscure roots to become "God's Ambassador" and "Pastor to Presidents"—as well as prime ministers and royalty.

Both of these remarkable individuals consistently displayed a remarkable sense of humor, a genuine interest in people and an innate ability to make everyone in their presence feel as if they were the most important person in the world at that moment.

Their careers respectively dedicated to serving God, the Commonwealth and the Common Good arose in an atmosphere of great ideological and political shifts, when Mr. Graham and Her Majesty concurrently entered the world stage at the

mid-20th century following the Second World War.

The prevailing cultural milieu in these turbulent times had disastrously revealed politically Britain's declining influence and confidence in their monarchy, and spiritually the limitations of human reason, decreasing personal faith and religious practice globally as people hungered for answers.

The queen demonstrated a strong, unswerving sense of duty and determination to dedicate her life to her throne and to her people.

Mr. Graham also remained faithful to his calling, offering a different kind of hope in a gospel message that transcends all human failure and understanding.

Through both message and ministry, Graham projected to America, Britain and the world an unfolding narrative of God's grace.

How Did the Queen Meet Billy Graham?

Billy Graham held more crusades (internationally known as "missions") in the United Kingdom than any other nation other than the United States.

During those British missions, Graham spoke to more than 9 million people in attendance, and countless millions more by radio and television.

That included his longest-ever lasting 16 weeks at Harringay Arena in London in 1954, culminating with a final rally at Wembley Stadium, to a crowd estimated at more than 185,000.

Following the meetings, the queen had an aide write to Graham to say that she had been touched by what happened at Harringay.

Interesting, the queen noted that she had been counseled against meeting Graham.

On that trip, however, the evangelist did meet with then-Prime Minister Winston Churchill on the day of his departure to Scotland with whom he shared that he was filled with hope, based on his message from the Bible.

The prime minister replied, "I do not see much hope for the future unless it is the hope you are talking about, young man."

The evangelist returned to Great Britain in 1955 to hold a six-week All-Scotland Crusade in Glasgow, followed by a week-long return engagement at Wembley.

The BBC carried his sermon live to an audience believed to be their largest since the young queen's coronation two years earlier.

It was on that mission that Her Majesty and her husband, the late Duke of Edinburgh, first heard Graham speak in person.

It was then that the queen invited the evangelist and his wife, Ruth, to meet her at her London apartments at Clarence House, and to speak at the Royal Chapel in Windsor.

That began a four-decade friendship with, and ministry to, Her Majesty based on their shared faith and belief in the Bible and the values they inspire, during which they met on 12 separate occasions—in Britain and America, including several opportunities to preach to The Royal Family.

Note: This article was previously written in 2022 and is being posted this week in honor of King Charles' coronation as King of England.

For the rest of this article, visit . {eoa}

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