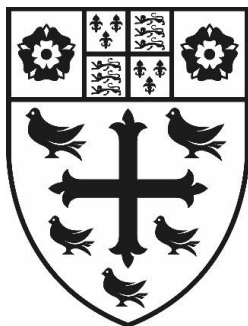


Westminster Abbey



A Service of Thanksgiving
on the 200th anniversary of the
Royal National Lifeboat Institution



Monday 4th March 2024
11.30 am

Members of the congregation are requested kindly to refrain from using private cameras, video, or sound recording equipment. Please ensure that mobile phones and other electronic devices are switched off. The whole of the church is served by a hearing loop. Users should turn their hearing aid to the setting marked T.

The service is conducted by The Very Reverend Dr David Hoyle KCVO MBE, Dean of Westminster.

The service is sung by the Westminster Abbey Special Service Choir, directed by Andrew Nethsingha, Organist and Master of Choristers.

The organ is played by Peter Holder, Sub-Organist.

Buck Brass are directed by Richard Buck, Steward of The King's Chapel of the Savoy.

Before the service Carolyn Craig, Organ Scholar, plays:

Introduction Florence Price (1887–1953)
from Sonata no 1

Light in Darkness Kerensa Briggs (b 1991)

Berceuse Louis Vierne (1870–1937)

Allegro Risoluto Percy Whitlock (1903–46)
from Plymouth Suite

His Excellency Mr Martin Fraser, Ambassador Extraordinary of Ireland to Great Britain, is received by the Dean and Chapter of Westminster. Presentations are made and he is conducted to his seat.

Admiral Sir Ben Key KCB CBE ADC, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff, is received. Presentations are made and he is conducted to his seat.

The High Sheriff of Greater London, Ina De, is received. Presentations are made and she is conducted to her seat.

The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor of Westminster, Councillor Patricia McAllister, is received. Presentations are made and she is conducted to her seat. All stand.

His Royal Highness The Duke of Kent, President of the RNLI, is received. Presentations are made and he is conducted to his seat. All then sit.

ORDER OF SERVICE

The choir sings the Introit

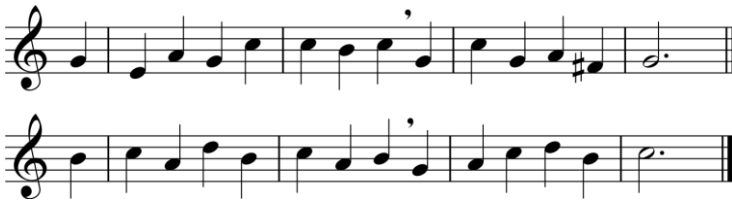
IN what torne ship soever I embarke
That ship shall be my embleme of thy Arke;
What sea soever swallow mee, that flood
Shall be to mee an embleme of thy blood;
Though thou with clouds of anger do disguise
Thy face; yet through that maske I know those eyes
Which, though they turne away sometimes
They never will despise.

I sacrifice this lland unto thee
And all whom I lov'd there, and who lov'd mee;
When I have put our seas twixt them and mee
Put thou thy sea betwixt my sinnes and thee
As the trees sap doth seeke the root below
In winter, in my winter now I goe
Where none but thee, th'Eternall root
Of true Love I may know.

Imogen Holst (1907–84)

John Donne (1572–1631)

All stand to sing the Hymn, during which the procession moves to places in Quire and the Sacrarium.



O GOD, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast,
and our eternal home;
Under the shadow of thy throne
thy saints have dwelt secure;
sufficient is thine arm alone,
and our defence is sure.

Before the hills in order stood,
or earth received her frame,
from everlasting thou art God,
to endless years the same.

A thousand ages in thy sight Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
are like an evening gone, bears all its sons away;
short as the watch that ends the night they fly forgotten, as a dream
before the rising sun. dies at the opening day.

O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
be thou our guard while troubles last,
and our eternal home.

St Anne 417 NEH
probably by William Croft (1678–1727)
Organist of Westminster Abbey 1708–27

Man frail, and God eternal
Isaac Watts (1674–1748)
after Psalm 90: 1–5

*All remain standing. The Very Reverend Dr David Hoyle KCVO MBE,
Dean of Westminster, gives the Bidding*

WE gather in a place where people have assembled for centuries in times of celebration and times of tragedy. We gather in a place of memory, committed to the twin tasks of remembrance and hope that bind together what has been and what will be. We meet in the presence of the God of earth, sky and sea. Today we rejoice in the life-saving work of the RNLI over two hundred proud and distinguished years. We honour the vision of Sir William Hillary, who founded the charity, and pay tribute to the thousands of volunteers and staff who have given so much, so often, so selflessly. We also give thanks for the generosity that has sustained this work. Here, we rededicate ourselves to the work of compassion and courage that reaches out over rough seas to embrace the stranger and rescue those in despair.

A copy of Appeal to the Nation, the 200th Pledge Scroll, and RNLI Standards are processed to the High Altar by serving crew and lifeguards

All sit. Martin Stephen, a rescuee, reads the first Reading

FOR many years, and in various countries, the melancholy and fatal cases of shipwreck which I have witnessed, have excited a powerful interest in my mind for the situation of those who are exposed to this awful calamity. So long as people shall continue to navigate the ocean, in every age and on every coast, disasters by sea, shipwreck, and peril to human life, must inevitably take place; and with this terrible certainty before our eyes, the duty becomes imperative, that we should use every means to mitigate the disastrous consequences. I most respectfully beg leave to submit that a national institution should be formed, important to humanity, having for its objects,

One – The preservation of human lives from shipwreck; which should always be considered as the first great and permanent object of the institution.

Two – Assistance to vessels in distress.

Three – The preservation of vessels and property.

Four – The prevention of plunder in case of shipwreck.

Five – The support of those persons who may be rescued; promptly obtaining medical aid, food, clothing, and shelter for those who may require such relief, with the means to forward them to their homes, friends, or countries.

Six – The bestowing of suitable rewards on those who rescue the lives of others from shipwreck; and the establishment of a provision for the widows or families of those who unhappily lose their lives on such occasions. To expect a large body of people to enrol themselves, and be in constant readiness to risk their own lives for the preservation of those whom they have never known or seen, perhaps of another nation, merely because they are fellow creatures in extreme peril, is to pay the highest possible compliment. Every stranger, whom the disasters of the sea may cast on their shores, should never look for refuge in vain.

*from Appeal to the Nation
Sir William Hillary (1771–1847)*

The choir sings the Psalm

They that go down to the sea in ships :
and occupy their business in great waters,
These men see the works of the Lord :
and his wonders in the deep.
For at his word the stormy wind ariseth :
which lifteth up the waves thereof.
They are carried up to the heaven, and down again to the deep :
their soul melteth away because of the trouble.
They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man :
and are at their wits' end.
So when they cry unto the Lord in their trouble :
he delivereth them out of their distress.
For he maketh the storm to cease :
so that the waves thereof are still.
Then are they glad because they are at rest :
and so he bringeth them unto the haven where they would be.
O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness :
and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men!

Edward Bairstow (1874–1946)

Psalm 107: 23–31

The Reverend Canon Thomas Woodhouse, Chaplain to the King's Chapel of the Savoy and Chaplain to the Royal Victorian Order, reads the second reading

ON that day, when evening had come, Jesus said to them, 'Let us go across to the other side.' And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great gale arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, 'Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?' He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still!' Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, 'Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?' And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'

Mark 4: 35–41

Thanks be to God.

All stand to sing the Hymn



ETERNAL Father, strong to save,
whose arm doth bind the restless wave,
who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep
its own appointed limits keep;
O hear us when we cry to thee
for those in peril on the sea.

O Saviour, whose almighty word O sacred Spirit, who didst brood
the winds and waves submissive heard, upon the chaos dark and rude,
who walkedst on the foaming deep, who bad'st its angry tumult cease,
and calm amid its rage didst sleep: and gavest light and life and peace:
O hear us when we cry to thee O hear us when we cry to thee
for those in peril on the sea. for those in peril on the sea.

O Lord, entrust their souls' safe keep
As lifeboats plough o'er oceans deep.
Lend them your courage, strength and grace.
To those in peril, they must race;
Oh hear us Lord, a sailor's plea,
Guide all who save lives out at sea.

O Trinity of love and power,
our brethren shield in danger's hour;
from rock and tempest, fire and foe,
protect them whereso'er they go:
and ever let there rise to thee
glad hymns of praise from land and sea.

Melita 354 NEH
John Dykes (1823–76)

William Whiting (1825–78)
verse 4 written by Richard MacDonald (b 1963)

All sit. The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Justin Welby GCVO, Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of All England and Metropolitan, gives the Address

The choir sings the Anthem

MANY waters cannot quench love,
neither can the floods drown it.

Love is strong as death.

‘Greater love hath no man than this: that a man lay down his life for his friends.’

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.

Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Greater Love Hath No Man *Song of Solomon 8: 7a, 6b; John 15: 13a; 1 Peter 2: 24; John Ireland (1879–1962)* *1 Corinthians 6: 11b; 1 Peter 2: 9; Romans 12: 1*

The Reverend Mark Birch MVO, Precentor, says:

Let us pray.

All kneel or remain seated

LET us give thanks to God for the work of the RNLI; for its founding vision, and for those who have maintained its mission over 200 years; for every life saved.

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

His Excellency Mr Martin Fraser, Ambassador Extraordinary of Ireland to Great Britain, says

LET us give thanks to God for all who volunteer today in crews all around our coasts; for their resilience, skill, and courage in the face of danger; for all who risk themselves to save the lives of others.

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Jayne George says

LET us give thanks to God for all who support the frontline work; for every donation, and for all who maintain the lifeboats, lifeguard equipment, and stations; for their generosity and commitment.

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Vice Admiral Sir Tim Laurence KCVO CB says

LET us pray for all who set out to sea for pleasure or out of necessity; for their preparedness and understanding; for all that can reduce their risk.

Lord, in your mercy

hear our prayer.

LET us pray for those who have perished in our waters; for crew-members who have died whilst saving others; for their families and colleagues; and for those in trouble who couldn't be saved.

Lord, in your mercy

hear our prayer.

Janet Legrand OBE KC (Hon.), Chair of the RNLI, says

MERCIFUL Father, all things in heaven and earth are held within Your loving care; look with favour upon the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. Protect and bless the crews of all our lifeboats, our lifeguards and all who risk their own safety to bring help to others. Guide all who work for the Institution as volunteers, supporters or staff, that they may be faithful to the vision of its founders, so that it may always be seen as a beacon of hope and light to those who find themselves in peril on the seas. Through the same Jesus Christ, to whom with You and the Holy Spirit be honour and glory, now and forever. **Amen.**

The choir sings the Anthem, during which serving crew, lifeguards, and a recipient of the RNLI's Gold Medal for Gallantry process a replica of the RNLI Memorial to the Lantern, where candles are placed

THERE is an old belief,
That on some solemn shore,
Beyond the sphere of grief
Dear friends shall meet once more.

Beyond the sphere of Time
And Sin, and Fate's control,
Serene and changeless
Prime of body and of soul.

That creed I fain would keep;
That hope I'll ne'er forgo.
Eternal be the sleep,
If not to waken so.

*from Songs of Farewell
Hubert Parry (1848–1918)*

John Lockhart (1794–1854)

The Precentor concludes

With confidence in him who can bring us safely through the deep waters of death, let us pray in the words that Jesus taught us.

OUR 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.**

The Chief Executive of the RNLI, Mark Dowie, gives a Vote of Thanks

Eleanor Hooker, Helm, Lough Derg, reads the third Reading

THE sea recites as wind regales,
it tugs at tides' unceasing echo, anchors
between land and thoughts of land.

My legs fall beneath; we all float differently –
and the sea talks to itself – soundings in my ears
as I tilt my stare to watch rain translate the sky.

I extend both hands to grasp what reaches back,
and the sea coils round to trawl my shoal of memories –
I tip my toes north and east and the sea slaps my soul.

As the vault above opens, and stars bloom on the axis
of night, the sea settles, bears me up. Weighing me
and countless more, sea grows damp in my bones.

I follow a satellite's drunken path past Pegasus,
and wonder how the sober strobe on my chest signals.
I wonder too if I'll be found. And brought back. And
when.

Engines growl as the lifeboat parts the night's dark silks.
Your shout 'over there' and your plea to 'hold on'
as the sea holds on... but your grip is more convincing
and the sea lets go. You swaddle and soothe,
say what a heart needs to heal, as you carry me back
to land wet footprints on the world.

Float to Live

Eleanor Hooker (b 1963)

All stand to sing the Hymn



GUIDE me, O thou great Redeemer,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
hold me with thy powerful hand:
Bread of heaven,
feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain
whence the healing stream doth flow;
let the fiery cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through:
strong Deliverer,
be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death, and hell's Destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side:
songs of praises
I will ever give to thee.

Cwm Rhondda 368 NEH
John Hughes (1873–1932)

Arglwydd, arwain trwy'r anialwch
William Williams (1717–91)
translated by Peter Williams (1727–96) and others

All remain standing. Roger Cohen MBE, Lifeboat Operations Manager, Brighton and Newhaven, recites the RNLI Pledge

WHOEVER we are, wherever we are from, we are one crew, ready to save lives.

We're powered by passion, talent, and kindness, like generations of selfless lifesavers before us.

This is our watch, we lead the way, valuing each other, trusting each other, depending on one another. Volunteering to face the storm together, knowing that with courage nothing is impossible.

That is what has always driven us to save every one we can. It's what makes every one of us a lifesaver.

The Dean pronounces the Blessing

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

All sing

GOD save our gracious King,
Long live our noble King,
God save The King.
Send him victorious,
happy, and glorious,
long to reign over us:
God save The King.

All remain standing as the procession moves to the west end of the Abbey Church

Music after the service:

Toccatto from Plymouth Suite

Percy Whitlock

The bells of the Abbey are rung

Members of the congregation are requested kindly to remain in their seats until directed to move by the Honorary Stewards

VOTE OF THANKS

It is a great privilege to be with you here today as we give thanks to those who have given so much in the name of saving lives at sea: their time, their courage, their support and, in some cases, their own lives. Two hundred years ago, in a letter to His Majesty the King, Sir William Hillary - founder of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution - wrote a plea for volunteers to 'risk their own lives for those whom they have never known or seen'. Good people responded then and have continued to do so for two centuries: men and women showing extraordinary courage, supported by volunteers and donors who hold the RNLI's values dear.

For a charity to have survived 200 years based on the time and commitment of volunteers - and on the sheer generosity of the public who provide kind donations - is truly remarkable. It is thanks to their dedication that the RNLI has survived the test of time, including tragic losses, funding challenges, two World Wars and, more recently, a global pandemic. Since 1824, our volunteers have saved more than 146,000 lives around the coastlines of the UK and Ireland. We will never forget the hundreds of RNLI crew members tragically lost while providing this service.

I would therefore like you to join me in commemorating all those who have selflessly given their lives to help save others and freely given their time, energy, and passion for our cause since 1824. On behalf of the whole RNLI family and the communities we serve, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all those remarkable volunteers.

Let us also celebrate the achievements of today's crew, volunteers, communities, and supporters. They provide a world-class lifesaving service, based on 200 years of learning, expertise and innovation. They are people of all ages, active all around and across our nations, from diverse backgrounds, united by the RNLI's vision: to save every one we can.

This is a vision which depends on the lifesavers and supporters who will take the RNLI into its next century and beyond. So, as we thank all those who have gone before, it is our sincere hope that their achievements inspire a new generation of courageous, generous and selfless people who will continue to help save lives at sea.

Thank you.

Mark Dowie
Chief Executive, RNLI