

- 1 The second Monday in March is “**Commonwealth Day**”. The “**Commonwealth of Nations**” is an association of some 53 independent nations, including over a quarter of the world’s population. In years past, all the countries have been associated with Britain - except for Mozambique (formerly a Portuguese colony) which joined in 1995, having seen how the Commonwealth helps to give a voice to some small or poor countries.
- 2 We can think today of how unique is each and every individual in the world. We’ll pray the shortest psalm in the Bible. It invites people - not of any **single** country, but the people of **all** nations - to give praise to God:

3 *Let us pray:*

**Praise the Lord, all you nations.  
Speak to him, all people of the earth,  
because his love is great  
and he is always faithful.**

(Psalm 117)

 Alternative prayer: as of 21 March.

 **The 53 independent countries of the Commonwealth are:**

Antigua and Barbuda (joined in 1981), in the West Indies, the Caribbean.  
Australia (1931).  
The Bahamas (1973), West Indies, the Caribbean.  
Bangladesh (1972), Asia.  
Barbados (1966), West Indies, the Caribbean.  
Belize (1981), north eastern Central America.  
Botswana (1966), southern Africa.  
Brunei (1984), part of the island of Borneo, eastern Asia.  
Cameroon (1995), west central Africa (most of the country is a former French colony).  
Canada (1931), northern America.  
Cyprus (1961), in the Mediterranean.  
Dominica (1978), West Indies, the Caribbean.  
The Gambia (1965), north western Africa.  
Ghana (1957), western Africa.  
Grenada (1974), West Indies, the Caribbean.  
Guyana (1966), northern coast of South America.  
India (1947), Asia.  
Jamaica (1962), West Indies, the Caribbean.  
Kenya (1963), eastern Africa.  
Kiribati (1979), islands 2,100 miles north east of Australia.  
Lesotho (1966), southern Africa.  
Malawi (1964), south eastern Africa.  
Malaysia (1957), Asia.  
Maldives (1982), islands off the south west coast of India.  
Malta (1964), in the Mediterranean.  
Mauritius (1968), island near Madagascar, off eastern Africa.  
Mozambique (1995), south east Africa; it was formerly a Portuguese colony with no British connections.  
Namibia (1990), south western Africa.  
Nauru (1968), island 2,500 miles north east of Australia.  
New Zealand (1931), 1,200 miles south east of Australia.  
Nigeria (1960), Africa; membership suspended in 1995.  
Pakistan (1947, left 1972, rejoined 1989), Asia.

Papua New Guinea (1975), off northern Australia.

St Christopher (Kitts) and Nevis (1983), West Indies, the Caribbean.

St Lucia (1979), West Indies, the Caribbean.

St Vincent and the Grenadines (1979), West Indies, the Caribbean.

The Seychelles (1979), islands 900 miles off western Africa.

Sierra Leone (1961), on western coast of Africa.

Singapore (1965), Asia.

The Solomon Islands (1978), 1000 miles north east of Australia.

South Africa (1951, left 1961, rejoined 1994).

Sri Lanka (1948), island off south east coast of India.

Swaziland (1968), east of South Africa.

Tanzania (1961), on eastern coast of Africa.

Tonga (1970), island 2,000 miles north east of Australia.

Trinidad and Tobago (1962), a Caribbean island just off the coast of Venezuela.

Tuvalu (1978), islands 2,000 miles off coast of north east Australia.

Uganda (1962), central Africa.

United Kingdom

Vanuatu (1980), islands 1,000 miles off the north eastern coast of Australia. Formerly called the 'New Hebrides' which was a joint British/French territory.

Western Samoa (1970), islands 3,000 miles off the north eastern coast of Australia.

Zambia (1964), southern Africa.

Zimbabwe (1980), southern Africa.

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Gibraltar, Pitcairn Islands. Members of the Commonwealth have "High Commissions" rather than "Embassies" in each others' countries. Every two years there is a formal meeting of the Heads of Government of the countries of the Commonwealth.

☞ The Isle of Man and the Channel Islands are dependencies of the British crown rather than of Britain itself, and are not actually part of the United Kingdom. They have their own government and do not have representation in the Westminster Parliament. They are not members of the Commonwealth of Nations, nor of the European Community.

☞ The facts given here are as of August 1997. For further details, the Commonwealth Secretariat can be contacted at Marlborough House, Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5HX.

♪ All the nations of the earth; Come let us go up to the Lord; Follow me; O Lord, all the world

- ☞ "The Commonwealth of Nations" was formerly called "The British Commonwealth". Fiji withdrew from the Commonwealth in 1987, and Nigeria was suspended in 1995. The British monarch is the Head of the Commonwealth.
- ☞ Only independent nations can be members of the Commonwealth, but self-governing or dependent territories of member countries are within the Commonwealth. In addition to the 53 independent nations, therefore, are such as the 13 dependencies of Britain e.g. Bermuda, Montserrat (where the volcano erupted in 1997), Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands,

This is an excerpt from the page of this date in  
*'Praying Each Day of the Year'*,  
a 3-volume book  
by Nicholas Hutchinson, FSC.

For details:  
<http://www.matthew-james.co.uk/>

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