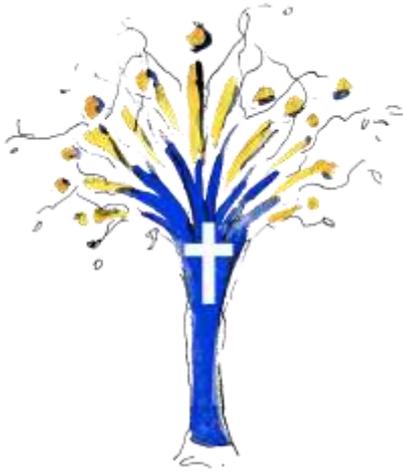


Off the Record



From **MAGOR
BAPTIST CHURCH**

*Growing and sharing
in God's love*



SUMMER 2023

A Message from our Moderator – Mark Thomas

I'll have a 99 please

“It’s hot, let’s go get an ice cream.”

Is it just me or is there something wonderfully delightful about giving yourself permission to go and get an ice cream just because the sun is out? And yet, how strange that I choose to get something that, precisely due to the weather, is going to melt in an instant! Maybe that is the part of the joy - to eat it not too quickly, but with sufficient speed that it doesn’t melt all over you.



But that is not the biggest challenge this year. The bigger concern is whether the ice cream van will be stocking the compulsory 99 flake that tops off any decent, slightly indulgent, ice cream choice. The reason, you may have heard, is that the famous Cadbury’s 99 flake is now too flaky for its primary task of adorning the top of any half-decent cone.



Consternation was shared between sellers, who can’t offer us broken flakes, and customers who would rightly refuse anything less than the perfect specimen. Of course, alternatives are being offered - milk chocolate sticks.

For many, of course, this is just a storm in a tea cup, a fuss about nothing, a tabloid story for the

summer months. But it did remind me that there are changes that lie completely outside of our control and many of us struggle with change. Some folk, but not most, are the entrepreneurial spirits encouraging early adoption of new innovations. Many more are the cautiously weighing-up-the-merits hesitant adopters who assess the scene to see if the effort involved in change is worth it. The thing is, even if we like things to be predicable and familiar, we acknowledge a God of adventure who desires that **we live life to the full.**

I’m still working out what that means, but I know Jesus said it and, if his life is any indication of what a full-life looks like, it

Jesus calls us to a risky
faith-filled journey that
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Him

surely means one that is focussed on loving God and loving others.

Jesus calls us to a risky faith-filled journey that requires us to rely on Him and not on our own skills and resources. Although his loving character is unchangeable, He doesn't want us to stay unchanged, settled, or self-reliant. He calls us to fail forwards, to move and to grow.

If things are changing around you right now. If stress and strain are part of your life and your heart and mind feel unsettled or even anxious then pause for a moment.

Firstly, look up. Think big picture. You may not feel in control, but your loving father God IS. He is sovereign, and 'He will never leave you, nor forsake you', so you can have confidence that 'the Lord is my helper 'during your changing situation.

Secondly, don't stress on the detail too much but focus instead on the relationships. Sometimes, we can be so anxious about the detail, that we ignore the things that really matter - the people God has given us to be alongside.

Eating a 99 ice-cream with a friend on a sunny summer's day. The overly-crumby flake doesn't seem to be quite so important as the person you are with and the conversation you are having because our greatest joy come from relationships - with God and with each other.

Rev. Mark Thomas

Our greatest joy come from relationships - with God and with each other.

Induction of Mark Thomas as Minister - Saturday

16th September at 2pm. All family and friends are invited, especially those who used to come but, for whatever reason, haven't been recently.

Fellowship News from Val Jones

What beautiful weather we have been having – the sun has been shining for weeks and thankfully we have just had some overnight rain to refresh the gardens. Whilst enjoying the warm sunshine we have found that it has also taken a lot of our energy and we think of our older members, as they enjoy the sunshine, but feel tired with the heat.

We are looking forward to Rev Mark Thomas and his wife Anne joining us in September as our minister and pray for them as they leave friends at Blackwood to join us in Magor, as well as moving house. We ask for guidance as we seek to serve the local community together.

We continue to thank God for our past minister Harry and for his continued support taking funeral services for us. We pray for both Harry and Alice as they settle into membership at Moriah Baptist in Risca.

We continue to remember in our prayers the family of Christine Edwards whose service of celebration took place here in Ebenezer on 24th May with hymns chosen by Christine herself. The service was opened by Rev Mark Thomas as our moderator, and a very good friend of Christine's, Brenda Woodier, took the rest of the service with tributes from Christine's family. The chapel was full, a real tribute to her. We pray for husband, Malcolm, and the family and especially think of her mum Beryl Cox who hasn't been at all well. We thank God for the whole family and ask for his peace and love to surround each one of them as they come to terms with their loss.

We pray for the family of Dorothy Petersen whose service of celebration is on 6th July here at Ebenezer to be led by Rev Harry Place. We think of the children Paul, Caroline and Mark and their families as they mourn the loss of both their Mum and Dad in such a short time. Dorothy served her Lord for many years in the Fellowship - attending to the laying of communion both mornings and evenings, attending Ladies Friendship, Womens Hour, Bible Studies, and leading a full Christian life, as well as looking after husband Bob and witnessing to all who came to visit. We thank God for her life and continue to remember her family and friends in our prayers.

Congratulations to Ruth and John Loebel who have recently celebrated their Golden Wedding. We thank God for them and pray that they may spend many more happy years together.

It was wonderful to celebrate our 207th Church Anniversary on 2nd July with Rev Mark Thomas taking the service. It was a real time of rejoicing and was followed by an excellent lunch in the school room. We thank God for the past 207 years of his faithfulness in Ebenezer and look forward to the future when Mark will become our minister.



Friends enjoying the church Anniversary lunch

CHURCH NEWS

Following her baptism Helen Ellwood was received into membership at the June communion service and more details can be found later. Meanwhile Harry and Alice Place have transferred to Moriah, Risca where we trust they will be blessed. Also Simon Brown has resigned his membership.

At the MAY DAY FAYRE, which was very well supported by the community, the tearoom raised £433 for Raven House and the bric-a-bac/plant stall £300 for Ukraine and £150 for Readysteadygo - a local autism charity.



Summer update from Tomi

Hi, it's Tomi, the Church/Community worker with an update on all that's been going on for children and young people at Magor Baptist since Easter! This will be my final contribution for Off the Record as I'm moving on at the end of this month, so I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for all your support and encouragement over the past 3 years.

Family Fun

We continued the Pentecost Celebrations with a Family Fun day on the theme, making windmills and kites and fire pictures, with a decorated birthday cake to remind us that Pentecost is the global church's birthday. A candle reminds us of the tongues of fire, which we blow out with a rushing wind and then sing Happy Birthday in a variety of languages and share cake together as a message of God's goodness to us which He wants us to share with the world!



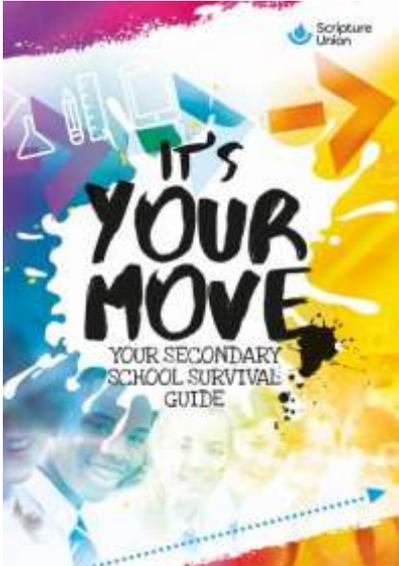
Father's Day Family Service

It was great to see a couple of new families from Superheroes join us for our Father's Day service, ably led once again by Max! He chose the Lord's prayer as his theme, so we explored how our dads act as King, Provider and Judge for their families just as the Lord our God does for his family, and encouraged everyone to look to the Lord for His help in all we do.

Schools' work

I've really enjoyed going into the schools this term, exploring how Jesus sent his Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and the difference he made in changing the disciples from scared cowards hiding from the authorities to people prepared to go to prison for Jesus! I pray we would tell everyone we meet about Jesus' love for them with equal passion and commitment!





I've also been invited back in to Magor, Undy and Archbishop Rowan Williams schools to give out Scripture Union booklets "*It's Your Move*" to help Year 6 children with their move up to comp. They help children consider friendship and who to ask for help, as well as allowing me to explore Psalm 139 with the children and remember that God knows all about them and yet still loves them and is always on hand to help. I have extra copies so if any of you know other children in Year 6 who would like one, please ask!

I am pleased to say that Jeremy Lock has agreed to take on these assemblies from September and Christine Miles is setting up an ecumenical Open the Book team to start around Christmas, so please pray for them as they continue this important work of sharing the love of Jesus in our schools.

Our after school club, **Superheroes**, has been going from strength to strength! The children have enjoyed exploring these same stories, and learning how Jesus is still at work today through the Holy Spirit.



Many are excited to be joining us with their parents for a **Family Camp** in the church garden 14th-16th July so we can explore the Gospel together – and prepare the Family Service! This will be my last service with you all, so do come and join in the fun, and stay for a picnic lunch with the families afterwards!



Praying you are able to spend some time in God's beautiful creation this summer, and find rest and joy in His presence!

Editor: We will have the opportunity to say a heartfelt thank you and goodbye to Tomi at the Family service on Sunday 16th July which will be followed by a farewell lunch.

Please also remember in prayer the church's search for a new Church & Community worker to carry on the work that Tomi has been doing.

Unfinished business

by Hazel Lucas

I do not usually feel inclined to write about political events, but the coronation of Charles III happened to coincide with my daily Bible readings in 1 Kings, where Solomon came to the throne on the death of his father David. (1 Kings 1 ff) It is very important for us to take Old Testament stories in context, not just assuming that we should do what the characters there did, but instead, tease out any principles that can be applied to our lives today. David, praised by God as a man after God's own heart, had gone to his death with several outstanding issues of justice unresolved. Two men deserved punishment. One situation had not been dealt with because David had been powerless to change it, the other because he had made a vow of clemency and he was a man of his word. A third man deserved honour and reward for his actions. On his deathbed David reminded Solomon of these outstanding issues, and asked that justice should finally be done. *'You are a wise man'* David said to his son (1 Kings 2:9), *'you will know what to do'*.

We know that Solomon started his reign with a famous prayer for wisdom, (1 Kings 3) and he certainly needed it. In 1 Kings 2 we are told how he dealt swiftly with his father's unpunished enemies, killing two of them and depriving another of his job. He also dealt firmly with a devious rivalry challenge by his elder brother.

In the UK, at any rate, we do not put to death those who from positions of power have offended moral principles in some way. But we do attempt to deal with them. Losing their job seems to be fairly common. Whether death is preferable to loss of income and reputation, is an interesting question. Some do end up serving gaol sentences, for actions which may have seemed common and acceptable fifty years ago. We still have scape goats, who carry the can for the sins of others. Is our national conscience actually getting better, or is it hyper-sensitive on the wrong issues? I expect that our new king is grateful that he does not have to implement the death penalty, or take responsibility for some other thorny issues. But he still needs wisdom, and we can pray that, like Solomon, he makes it a high priority. We have law courts attempting to bring justice and compensate those badly treated, but there is no court that can grant forgiveness for sins, which our political leaders and we ourselves may have committed. Our blame-hungry journalists do not usually mention forgiveness or redemption.

I praise the Lord that Jesus died in our place so that we can have a clear conscience and a new start, and that in the church we may find forgiveness, acceptance, comfort and welcome into God's family. I pray that King Charles and our political and church leaders will find their answers in Christ.

UGANDA NEWS - ROCK MINISTRIES CHURCH WORSHIP WORKSHOP

Greetings from the Rock Ministries Worship team.

We hope that all is well with you and that God is reigning in your life.

We want to thank God who enabled us to have a worship workshop this year. It was the first of that kind in the Rock Ministries Churches. Our main intention was to hold a workshop that was to teach people what worship is and how we can be true worshippers of the father in heaven.

We were able to invite 50 people and it was such an amazing time.

We had 5 facilitators some from our church, some from other churches and also one of the best worshippers in our country. They broadly explained the meaning of worship with reference to the Bible and answered many different questions from the congregation like:

- **What is worship**

Worship is a life style. It's declaring the greatness of someone and bowing down to lift up. Worship is more than just the music and singing, its everything to do with our lives. The way we present ourselves, the way we talk, the way we walk, the way we do our work.

Genesis 22:5, Genesis 18:2, Genesis 4:3-4, Genesis 2:15.

- **How to move from glory to glory as a worshipper**

Worship is everything that you do that glorifies God. To be a true worshipper comes with you knowing who you are in God. According to John 1:12-13, God gave us the right to become His children not born of the flesh but of the spirit. This creates a father – child relationship between us and our God, and it explains why in John 4: 23-24 He says that the time is now that those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and in Truth, because He is Spirit.

Under this topic we learnt that this Generation wants to do things that are deep but doesn't want to seek God deep, and this is one of the things hindering us from having a good relationship with God. We read the word of God when we feel like doing so where as it should be our daily bread and we should feed on it on a daily.

Isaiah 29: 11

We learnt that the Glory of a worshipper doesn't grow by singing more but by relating with God. It is very important for us as Christians to have a **secret place** where we meet with our father every day.

2 Timothy 3:15-17,

The other questions that were talked about were:

- **How to write gospel songs.**
- **How to be a worshipper relevant to the times we are in.**
- **How to set up the best sound for a church service and many more.**

We had a chance to eat together and everyone shared what they had learnt. We thank God that it was such a success and we are looking forward to having more workshops so that we learn more about our God and how to worship Him. We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the success of this day by making donations, including Magor. May God bless you so much and increase you all.

Phyllis Kasozi

Why we love the church (and how it's the answer to poverty)

by Tarryn Pegna from TEARFUND

What our research showed about the church as a cost-effective and transformational answer to poverty.

The church means different things to different people. It can look different. It can sound different. It can find itself in an ancient building, with spires pointing heavenward in expensive stonework... or outdoors, under the shade of a young tree.

No matter where it is, the Christ-following church has always been about the transformation of lives and about community: called by Jesus to first love God (allowing him to transform our own lives), and then to love our neighbours as ourselves (bringing transformation to our communities).

'A recent independent study for Tearfund found that an incredible £28 of social value can be created for every £1 invested in the church and the community.'

Church in the UK

The most recent census, which showed a steadily declining affiliation with the church, may suggest that the UK church has lost some of its ability to influence change (although, in England, Anglican bishops are still members of the House of Lords). And the news last year made much of the fact that only around ten per cent of the population regularly attend a church service.

Even so, research also showed that almost 3 million UK adults sought help from churches or faith organisations in 2022 because of the cost of living crisis. During the worst of Covid, churches across the country provided a hub for making sure the most vulnerable were fed and provided for. Many church buildings became food preparation and distribution centres and church members became temporary delivery drivers. When the Grenfell tragedy occurred in South West London, it was the local church that stepped up to be the first response point for helping those who had lost everything.

The local church around the world

In the same way, around the world, the church is often first to respond in times of need.

From its unique position right within a community, the local church knows intimately the needs of the people it serves. And in many places where Tearfund works, the church has a significant and trusted influence, giving it a voice for change and for justice in society.

The church, as a vehicle for transformation, has the capability to work powerfully and effectively in a way that lasts.



Through CCT training and support, Pastor Gabriel in Burundi says his own life and his whole community has been transformed. Credit: Paul Mbonankira/Tearfund

More than 50 years of Church and Community Transformation (CCT)

The church (in all its various forms and denominations) is the largest civil organisation on the planet. Tearfund itself was born out of the church, and for more than 50 years we have worked with and through local churches to help bring practical transformation in millions of people's lives around the world.

It's a sustainable, efficient, empowering and highly cost-effective way of helping whole communities lift themselves out of poverty.

'Church and Community Transformation brings positive, whole-life transformation.'

An empowering church and community response to poverty

The idea of poverty response may bring to mind images of starving children, flies on their sad faces, hands out, begging for help. It's a clichéd portrayal of need that strips people facing poverty of a sense of dignity and agency.

Of course, there is some deeply distressing truth in that picture. There are many people around the world facing the situation it depicts, and – as for all of us in different ways – there are clearly occasions in life where external help is vital. Sometimes, this help is the difference between life and death, and showing the dire contexts people find themselves in can be crucial to helping others understand that their input is needed – whether that be in prayer, in giving or in some other way.

However, working through the church to address poverty can provide a response that allows those being supported in their need to be agents in their own rescue. Rather than a hand out, it is holding hands and walking together through a situation into a relevant and sustainable solution.

The church works because it's God's idea

In 1 Corinthians 12:27, it says, *'Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.'* Each of us, whatever our gift may be, is important to the whole body. Whether we're the part of the body that sacrificially gives our time and finances, or whether we're the part that starts a self-help group in a community facing poverty, everyone has a role to play.

We are all part of the same body, and verse 26 reminds us, *'If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.'* Every part of the body has as much importance and purpose as every other. The church, viewed as the body of Christ, reminds us that we are all created with value to add to the whole. The church is the blueprint for a solution to poverty that is empowering and full of dignity.

How effective is Church and Community Transformation really?

The findings of our recent study were incredible! The researchers discovered that a social value of £28 was released for every pound invested by our supporters in CCT work, and here is a bit more of what that looks like:

Compared to people not living in CCT communities, those that do are:

- 27% more satisfied with their lives in general
- 113% more likely to work with others on shared projects
- 51% more likely to have maintained or increased their income in the last year
- 35% more likely to believe they will be better off in a year's time (they are hopeful about the future)
- 46% more likely to speak up and raise issues with decision-makers
- 35% more likely to feel that they can influence decisions in their community

- 62% more likely to have invested in assets, such as property or livestock in the last year
- and 26% more likely to feel confident they could cope with unexpected events in the future.

The study confirmed in numbers what over 50 years has shown in our lived experiences. CCT brings positive, whole-life transformation. And, the evidence suggests that the impact of CCT spreads throughout a community, so that even those who aren't directly involved in the activities still experience some benefits.

So, how does CCT actually work?

You may have seen Tearfund's new TV ad. See how communities in Burundi are transforming their lives and lifting themselves out of poverty with the help of training from Tearfund.

It talks about training – but what does it actually mean? CCT starts with the Bible. Local church members – or, in many cases, the church leader – receive training to facilitate Bible studies. These studies encourage people to recognise the church's mandate to address the practical needs in their communities and to identify the resources they have available to start to respond.

The Bible studies always end with a call to action. It may be something small to start with, such as committing to changing a way of thinking, but the action can quickly grow in scale to things like improving or building schools, clinics and roads.

Tearfund and our local partner organisations don't fund these initiatives – but we equip participants with all the practical knowledge and skills they need to carry out these plans. This might also include things like building self-help groups where people can learn to save together.

In this way, whole churches and communities can find themselves working together to bring about change – helping people to lift themselves out of poverty for good and to realise their God-given potential. Aline in Burundi

lost her child because she had no direct access to a health centre. After being part of the CCT process, she and her church decided to build their own health centre.



Credit: Paul Mbonankira/Tearfund

How is this work possible?

For more than 50 years, Tearfund has been able to carry out this kind of empowering, transformative work because of the faithful giving of supporters. In many local churches across the UK and other places, we have been blessed by the time, energy, prayers and generosity of Christians who recognise that the main purpose of our faith is not a church service, but service as the church.

Because of this, whole communities like Cecile's in Burundi have been transformed. Cecile's community were able to start small businesses, build a health centre and a road, and bring water up to the village.

Cecile's story

Cecile is a young, married mum with one daughter. She tells us her experience of CCT:

'We understood the power of coming together as a church and working together for our own development. A changed church changes the community for the better. As you could see, our congregation was able to build a health centre, a road and bring up water.'

'I am happy to be part of this church as I come to know God and see his hand. I now have a church family, we love and support one another. I played my part in the construction, even if I was not strong, I worked with others in digging the road and moving rocks, and we also contributed some money.'

'Before, we were living like any other poor community – working in our farms and selling our produce to access money. On Sunday, we would go to church and join different church activities. But now, it is like an awakening. People are more engaged, we have been inspired to change and to change our community and we are now active. **'It is like an awakening.'**

'Apart from building the health centre, more people are working hard to change their situation. Some have started small businesses, I've also been selling vegetables and I hope that once I get enough capital, I'll be able to start a small business at the market.'

'I hope that our family will have a better future. My husband and I are both farmers and we hope we will be able to start a small business and earn more money to help us improve our lives and build a house.'

By training churches all over the world, we can empower whole communities like Cecile's to lift themselves out of poverty and to thrive. Going forward,

dreaming bigger. Every day, thousands of people around the world suffer and die because of poverty. This is not God's plan. But we, the church, are.

We believe that we all have a part to play in ending extreme poverty and injustice. That's why we have a goal to see 250,000 churches lead transformation in their communities and bring an end to extreme poverty. It's an ambitious, massive goal. But God is bigger.

You too can partner with local churches and organisations around the world, equipping people to lift themselves out of poverty and fulfil their God-given potential. We are so grateful to every one of you who makes this work possible through your prayers, giving, awareness-raising and fundraising.

Pray for the church around the world:

- Pray for your local church – that God will give people the courage, vision and resources to make a difference in the local community and in communities around the world.
-
- Pray for local churches in communities facing poverty around the world – that there will be practical transformation that gives people the opportunity to thrive.
-
- Pray for the global church – that we will be a living demonstration of the love of Jesus as we prefer one another over ourselves and allow him to use us to be part of the answer to poverty.

Copyright:Tearfund

By investing in individuals, we can foster positive change, promote gender equality, and contribute to sustainable development in communities.

So strengthen one another, and build each other up, just as you are doing.

(1 Thessalonians 5:11 NTE)

NEW MEMBER – Helen Ellwood

My original home is Malvern, Worcestershire. (I get terribly homesick at times.) I have such fond memories of being blessed with a lovely home life.

My husband Phil, and I have lived in Rogiet since 2016. We both retired in 2018 and make the most of our free time, appreciating it while we have good health. We love the outdoors and have many shared interests. We enjoy walking, cycling, and swimming.



Since leaving school I had always worked full-time. Not having any children, my work has always been very important to me. I have worked for almost forty years in Health and Social Care and Pharmacy. I have worked as a Homeless/Housing officer, and for many years I was deputy of a residential home specialising in Dementia care and End of Life care. When I left Malvern, I became the Registered Manager for a retirement scheme. Later returning to Dementia care, working for the Alzheimer's Society, here in South Wales.

Two passions I have are supporting people affected by Dementia, and also Bereavement support. I have always loved working around and with people from all walks of life. I have learned so much from them, not least of all to appreciate my own blessings. *"But for the grace of God, go any of us."*

My faith is very important to me, and I am blessed to have a loving family and friends from 50+ years ago. Such a gift.

To feel part of a worship family again here at Magor Baptist Church has meant so much. This was something I missed terribly on leaving my home of 52 years, it was a huge void in my heart. Hence I am wanting to embrace my Baptism and Membership.

MULBERRY Luke 17:5

The mulberry tree in the New Testament times was the black mulberry, as the white mulberry (used in the silkworm industry) was not common in Palestine then. It grows in S Europe and China and the fruit of this low growing tree is similar to the blackberry. The durable wood can be used for furniture making.

OLIVE Gen 8:10

Often the most common wild tree in the landscape throughout the Mediterranean area, the cultivated olive tree can grow to about 7m. Frequently 50% of flowers drop off and only 20% become ripe olives. The oil was originally extracted by pressing fruit with a millstone and is still widely used in dietary, health, beauty and ceremonial applications. The trees grow very slowly and attain a great age. Olive groves were once as common as vineyards. There are many references to the olive in Greek and Roman mythology as well as legends of the Middle Ages.

DATE PALM John 12:12, Deut 34:3, Num 33:9

The date palm is the palm most often mentioned in the Bible. Jericho was known as the city of palm trees. They often grew near springs, in the hill country and in desert oases. Most famously, branches from this tree were used when Jesus entered Jerusalem. Leaves are still used as roofing, fencing and in mat, basket and hat making. This palm was also used as a motif in architecture. Its fruit is an extremely important part of a nutritious diet.

POMEGRANATE Ex 28:33, Song of Songs 4:13

The natural habitat of the pomegranate is S Europe and the Mediterranean area and it could have originated from NE India. The Hebrew name for this tree is "Rimmon". It is likely that the city of Rimmon mentioned several times in the Bible is named after the number of these trees grown there. It is a thorny large bush or small tree and has been cultivated for thousands of years. The fruit was eaten fresh, the juice drunk and also used for medicinal purposes. The skins were used to make red dye. The images of the golden, round fruits of the pomegranate also decorated priests' robes.

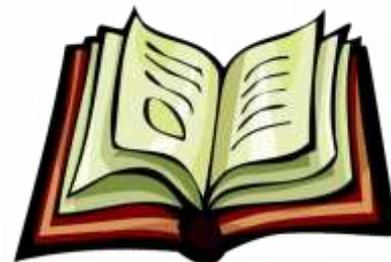
PLANE TREE Gen 30:37, Ezek 31:8

The Oriental Plane was common in Lebanon, Syria and Israel and there were probably many more plane trees in the Holy Land in Bible times than there would be now. These trees were usually found growing in moist conditions.

They were and still are, appreciated for their thick canopy of shade-giving foliage. In parks and lanes of the Mediterranean, they are still planted for this purpose. The plane produces beautiful wood, used in the furniture industry. However, it is difficult to work with and has a tendency to split.

References: D Smit Plants of the Bible FN Hepper Planting a Bible Garden

Fruitfulness on the Frontline – Mark Greene



Some years ago, a number of us followed a course of study with the above title, in house groups. This book is written in conjunction with that – but I did not read it at the time. However, I have found it useful to revisit this subject of how God works in our daily lives.

This is a practical book, citing many real-life situations where Christians try to live as Jesus would want them to, in the world beyond the Church building on a Sunday.

Written in an easily understood and at times humorous style, with plenty of Biblical quotes as well as examples from ordinary life, this book emphasizes how relevant the Bible is to today's frontlines. As the reader progresses, it becomes clear that fruitfulness is within the grasp of us all, as we become inspired to work for God in whatever circumstance we find ourselves.

There is a reading list at the end of each chapter and also questions for reflection providing food for thought.

2 quotes from the book -

"What might happen if we invite God into our tasks – the ones we find difficult and the ones we find easy?"

"When God gets involved in our tasks on the frontline, who knows what will happen?"

An inspiration for daily life.

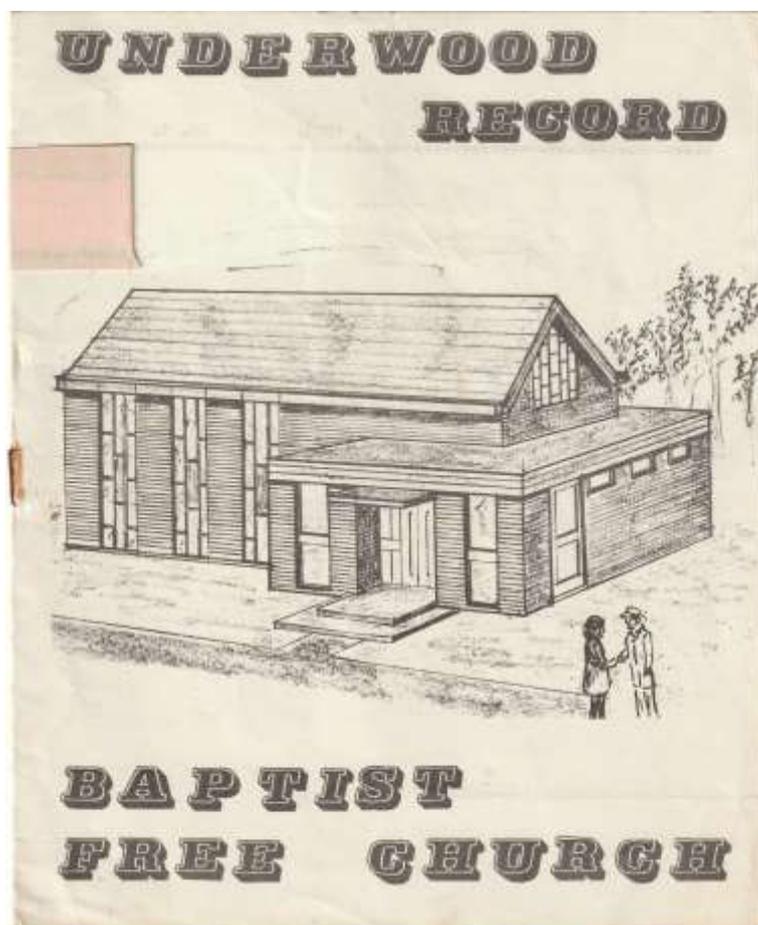
From Chris Seabridge

June 1973

The new church **minibus** arrived in May; volunteers would drive people to church services and meetings and it was also to be the transport for the minister and his wife. Appreciation was expressed to members of the Young People's Bible Class who, for the past six years, had enthusiastically fund-raised to keep a minibus on the road. The old one (a Commer 2500 twelve-seater) was now for sale for £50, the money going to the Bible Class Outreach Fund. Purchased in August 1968, the church had been the fifth owners. First registered in July 1964, it now had 71,000 miles on the clock, a new clutch at 68,000 miles, a new water pump and front tyres fitted a month previously, but was only licensed until 30 June 1973.

Reference was made to the Baptist witness at **Underwood**, celebrating 21 years on 17 June 1973. They now had 39 members, their own minister (Rev BK Close), and worshipped in a purpose-built building.

The first edition of the 'Underwood Record' in June 1968 commemorates the opening and dedication of that new building. It recounts how the work was started by Rev. Dennis Monger (pastor at Ebenezer, 1949-57)¹, in a disused prisoner ablution hut at the Llanmartin camp. The camp was originally built to house the US Army before the D-Day landings and then served as 'Prisoner of War Camp 184' until it closed in 1948. The pre-fabricated buildings were later used by Magor and St Mellons Rural District Council to provide temporary accommodation



Cover of the first edition of the Underwood Record

¹ Incidentally, Dennis Monger also started our church magazine in March 1949.

for 72 families awaiting permanent housing – including Rev. and Mrs Monger as, at that time, Magor had no manse.

The Mongers gathered children for a Sunday School on 15 June 1952 and, the following week, adults met for the first time at 7.45pm, after the evening service at Magor. The necessary extensive renovations were carried out by volunteers from Magor, and the hut was officially opened on 3 October 1952 by Sir James German, KBE, JP. Later, council plans to redevelop the site into a housing estate necessitated demolition of that hut. Twice they had to move into other temporary accommodation causing much upheaval and more renovations.

On 1 January 1964, the Underwood Baptist Free Church was formally constituted to replace the former Underwood Mission, and Mr Garfield Mathias became the first lay pastor of that ecumenical church. In 1961 they had started a Building Fund for a permanent building, culminating in the opening of the new church building on Saturday 15 June 1968 by Rev. Monger (by then Baptist minister in Monmouth and at the Moravian church in Brockweir). The new church seated 200, had six additional classrooms, and was registered for weddings. One of Sir James German's daughters, Mrs Morgan Jones, attended the 1968 opening. The following day c.150 primary and c.100 seniors attended Sunday School and it was noted that there was a great need with some thousand children on the estate.

Some readers may remember seeing the old huts before they were demolished in the early 1990s.

July 1973

Preparations were under way for '**Calling on Caldicot**' – a joint venture with the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Methodist churches of Caldicot to visit every house there in July. In addition, Caldicot Christian Crusade would be held in the Big Tent at King George's Playing Fields from 8-26 July, led by Glyn Morgan and his team

'Until 1939, Caldicot was a ribbon development of c.1,500 inhabitants, ... and is now a town of 8,000 ... and plans to reach 14,000 residents.' [2021 census = 9,813] *'Some 2,500 children are being educated in the six schools within the town boundary. Four new schools have been built since 1955 and two public houses in the past five years.'* It added that there were four churches (Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist and Elim Pentecostal) and as about 30 adults and 150 children from Caldicot attended Ebenezer, it was time Caldicot had its own Baptist church. In January a plot of land at Neddern Way had been purchased by the Gwent English Baptist Association

for £3,010. Churches in the Association were asked to support the venture and Magor pledged £100 a year for seven years.

(Ed – there will be more to come on that story)

August 1973

About 220 children, parents and friends enjoyed the **Sunday School** outing to Weston super Mare. Writing about the anniversary service: *'There is something marvellous about a good-sized congregation overflowing outside the doors and singing a good hymn with real enthusiasm. The items were presented by the children very well and challenged us to think about our life and the way we are going.'* A day retreat at Caldicot College [now Caldicot School] was planned for the teachers later in August, and prayer was requested *'that this meeting will be fruitful in making the work of the Sunday School more effective'*. Unlike many church organizations, Sunday School would not stop during July and August; indeed many would visit from other churches whose Sunday School did close for the holidays.

Plans to extend the church met with many different ideas. Then, *'suddenly we were stimulated into action. ... At the rear of the church we have half an acre of garden. Monmouthshire County Council have served us with a compulsory purchase order and intend to take the lot. This was land we had earmarked for future development should our church buildings prove inadequate for the needs of Magor as its population increases to 6,000 over the next 15 years.'* Within 28 days, plans were presented to the Council for an extensive and comprehensive building programme, keeping enough of the land for the church's future needs. The plan was to retain half the land, build a new manse on it and sell the existing one, build a new sanctuary to seat 350, and redesign the interior of the present sanctuary and schoolroom to give a hall and classrooms. *'The work, to extend over three years, could cost about £20,000.'*

(Ed – another story with a long history to come on the church extension)

All people that on earth do dwell

Written by William Kethe

Based on Psalm 100

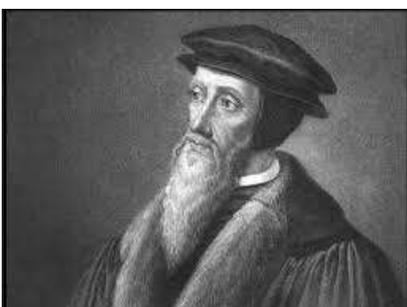
The 1500's was a century of upheaval and change right across the whole of Europe. Just as the past few years had been a time of upheaval for the man standing in the middle of Geneva in the middle of the century.

In Britian there had been the end of the War of the Roses and a settled time with Henry VII coming to the throne in 1485. He was followed by his son Henry VIII who reigned from 1509 to 1547 and who broke away from the Roman Catholic Church over being able to divorce Katherine of Aragon and marry Anne Boleyn. In 1547 Edward VI came to the throne to be followed by Mary his elder sister in 1553. Mary wanted to reunite England and Wales to the Roman Catholic Church and this led to the country being plunged into a bitter blood bath. Many Protestants fled to Europe with its more tolerant views of religion.

In Germany a monk called Martin Luther proposed an academic discussion of the practice and efficacy of indulgences in his *Ninety-five Theses* of 1517. This led to a break away from the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church about indulgences and other practises. There was now a Reformed Church with a new way of experiencing the Christian faith, a new theology. This had become the time marked as The Reformation.

All these changes brought about a period of radical rethinking about how people should be governed, how children should be taught and how worship should be expressed to be more understandable to the ordinary person

In Geneva in front of the beautiful Medieval St. Pierre Cathedral stood William Kethe. He was looking for John Calvin. William, a Scotsman, had left his home in Dorset to escape the persecution of the Protestants by Queen Mary. William had travelled to Frankfurt but he had not settled there. Now he was at the centre of the protestant movement to both learn and work.



John Calvin, a French theologian and practical visionary, had been very influential transforming Geneva into a modern autonomous state and reconciling its people to the Reformed theology. He had visited in 1536 but moved on quickly only to return in 1541 to help elevate the city to the rank of

a Protestant Rome. The intellectual influence of the Reformation extended to all realms of Genevan life: politics, economy, and administration.

It was this Calvin that William Kethe was looking for, and he found him. John Calvin was working on the Geneva Psalter (a book of 150 metrical Psalms and three other Scriptural songs and 126 melodies). It was considered that it was good for everyone to be able to sing together in church but only words from the Bible should be used in a service. Across Europe groups of Reformed Christians were putting together Psalters (Psalm books with tunes) that could be printed and easily distributed for use in churches as well as at home.

William Kethe worked on preparing the Geneva Psalter and wrote a number of psalm settings for the book. The most widely used has been *'All People that on Earth do dwell'* a setting of Psalm 100. When the psalter had been completed, he then worked on the translation of the Bible from Latin to English. The music that most of us would sing to this psalm is 'Old Hundred' composed by Louis Bourgeois a leading composer of the day. Bourgeois had come from Paris to Geneva to be involved in the music for this Psalter.

When Elizabeth 1 come to the throne William Kethe felt it was safe to return to England and became the Rector of Childe Okeford in Dorset (1561–1593). After retiring he remained in the village, but he died within a year. Whilst serving as vicar, he had also had two spells as a military chaplain under Ambrose Dudley, 3rd Earl of Warwick at Le Havre in 1563 and 1569.

All people that on earth do dwell,
sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.
Him serve with mirth, his praise
forthtell;
come ye before him and rejoice.

2. Know that the Lord is God indeed;
without our aid he did us make;
we are his folk, he doth us feed,
and for his sheep he doth us take.

3. O enter then his gates with praise;
approach with joy his courts unto;
praise, laud, and bless his name always,
for it is seemly so to do.

4. For why! the Lord our God is good;
his mercy is forever sure;
his truth at all times firmly stood,
and shall from age to age endure.



**The Parish Church of St Nicholas
Childe Okeford**

Christine Miles

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