

# Off the Record

From **MAGOR BAPTIST CHURCH**

*Growing and sharing  
in God's love*



CHRISTMAS 2022

## A Message from our Moderator – Mark Thomas

### Dealing with the Joy Deficit

"*Britain has a joy shortage.*" So says the Christmas advert for one of the big supermarkets. True enough. It's hard to argue given the cost of living crisis, the climate change crisis, war in Ukraine, and now that feared word 'recession' has made a comeback in the top ten joy-diminishing media buzz words.



Life is hard for some folk - which makes it interesting reading the Psalms and noticing the way the same prayer can talk about how hard life is, and then go on to say things like,

*"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning."*  
(Psalm 30v5)

In our day you'd call that a 'soundbite', suitable for a politician to slide into their every answer (regardless of the question!), suitable for a hospital visitor to comfort a patient, suitable as a meme on Facebook or Instagram.

Now nobody is helped by unrealistic promises that the difficulties we face aren't important and don't matter. Tears are real, worry is sickening, and yes, there's a joy shortage. For folk struggling to heat their homes, care for their children, and work out how to get through the winter, false cheerfulness doesn't help much.

Unless. Suppose we thought up and put into action ways we can practice **joy-making** for our neighbours, our friends, those we know who are struggling. Maybe there's a joy shortage because we've forgotten how to make joy happen as a gift to others.

How about donations to the foodbank, a knock on the neighbour's door, the text that eases loneliness, a thank you to the bus driver, the nurse, the shop assistant, the teacher, the bin men and women – why not make your own list?

Instead of bemoaning a joy shortage, and so adding to the joy deficit, we can become entrepreneurs, manufacturers in the **joy industry**. Then we may well find this is true:

*"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning."*  
(Psalm 30.5)

And what joy that morning brings - Christmas morning - so much joy, as a result of the coming of God's Son. **Jesus** is the source of our ultimate joy, the One who ...

came in incognito,  
A thinly veiled disguise  
The not so subtle son of man,  
A human with God's eyes.

The messianic secret,  
Left many unawares  
A God had walked upon the earth  
And shared our human cares.

We did not see his glory,  
At least not at first glimpse,  
It took an Easter wake up call,  
Before it all made sense.

The truth of Incarnation,  
Of dwelling within flesh,  
Shows goodness in creation,  
And Word of God made fresh.

Standing on the boundary  
Twixt earth and heaven above  
A Jew who hailed from Nazareth  
But came from God's great love.

Born of humble parents,  
Installed inside a stall  
This king required no entourage  
No pomp or falderal

No person was beneath him  
No angel o'er his head,  
He came to serve the human race  
To raise it from the dead.

His death a great conundrum,  
How can the Deathless die?  
But if he had not bowed his head,  
Life would have passed us by.

Though we are dying to be loved,  
And long for endless life,

He was dying in his love,  
And thereby ending strife.

Perhaps the incognito  
Belongs instead to us,  
Who play at being human,  
And fail to be gold dust.

But there was once a God-man  
Who played the human's part  
And lived and died and rose again  
Made sin and death depart.

Yes now through a glass dimly,  
We see the visage royal  
And feebly honour his great worth  
And his atoning toil.

We cannot see his Spirit,

But moved by its effects  
We are inspired to praise his worth  
And pay our last respects.

Yet that too brings him glory  
That too makes a start,  
The journey of a million miles  
Begins within one's heart.

And someday we shall see him  
And fully praise his grace,  
Someday when heaven and earth  
collide  
And we see face to face.

He comes in blinding brilliance,  
A not so veiled disguise  
The not so subtle Son of God,  
A God with human eyes.

**Ben Witherington**

## **CHURCH NEWS from Keith Arnold (Church Secretary)**

As this year draws to a close it is a time for reflection. We can thank God that the Covid pandemic continues to diminish although it can still have an effect on people's lives. It is good to see that our congregation has continued to grow during the year and is now nearing our pre-pandemic levels. This is particularly heartening as we have had to come to terms with Harry's retirement in August.

The Church profile and Pastoral Vacancy form have been submitted to the Regional Minister and will be included on the national Pastoral Vacancy List in the middle of December. Please continue to pray that the Lord will lead the right person to become Minister of our Church.

At this time I would like to thank you all for the work that is done in running Church activities. I know that it is much appreciated throughout our community. It just remains for me to wish you a Happy Christmas and best wishes for the New Year.

***Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.***  
*Romans 15 v13*

### **Christmas Dates**

#### **December**

Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup>	11.00 am	Nativity Service
	6.00 pm	Carol Service
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup>	10.00 am	Christmas Celebration

#### **January 2023**

Sunday 1st	No Morning Service	
	3.00pm	New Year Meditation
	4.00pm	Communion
Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup>	6.00 pm	Joint Service at Caldicot

**Jean and Rachel Thomas** wish all at Magor Baptist Church a very Happy Christmas and every blessing for 2023, God bless.

## Fellowship News from Val Jones

This last month seems to have flown by. Five years ago yesterday we were in Stevenage in the snow and unable to come home and had to stay another day. I know snow is a hazard but I love it. It was wonderful walking down the cycle paths with the trees overhanging covered in snow. Of course we didn't have the problems with the cost of heating then, so there were no worries in that direction.

It certainly has been cold this last week. It was incredible that the begonias in the chapel wall were still in full bloom until a week ago when the very severe frost took them. My daughter, Sansha, came down from Nantymoel to help take them out which was quite difficult because of the frost and despite having thick gloves on our hands we were frozen. The bulbs will have to wait to be planted until after the frost has gone.

I'm please to say that numbers in the fellowship continue to rise and we thank God for all the ministers and lay preachers who have taken our services over the last few months. We have been blessed as a fellowship that many of our congregation are able to help in this way. We are especially pleased to see new faces in the church and pray that they will find a home here. We pray for a new minister for the church to take us into the future, serving God where he has placed us.

In recent weeks we have been busy with the Tearfund Big Quiz Night which was enjoyed by about 30 folk and raised over £200, part of the £140,000 raised across the country for the vital work of Tearfund. We had the usual Gift Day for Raven House which saw the platform full of donated goods and presents. Then there was the Frost Fayre when the church tea room raised £130 for Raven House and the bric-a-bac stall raised over £250 for the Ukraine appeal.

We were pleased to hear of the safe arrival of Bonnie-Anne on 10<sup>th</sup> November. Second daughter for Beth and Matt Turner, sister for Eleri and second granddaughter for Ann and Graham James. We send our love and pray for them as a family (right).

We think especially of the older members of our congregation at this time and pray that they will be able to keep warm and free from flu or covid.





It was with sadness, yet joy, that we heard of the passing of Barbara Jones. Barbara had been poorly for some time and she is now reunited with husband Clive in her heavenly home. A celebration of her life took place on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> December at the church which was taken by Harry Place. Barbara was a much loved member at Ebenezer being a deacon and trustee as well as being involved in many other organisations in the church such as the Flower Festivals (pictured right), Womens Hour and latterly at Munchies. We pray for Ruth, Philip and family, Chris, Sian and family and her sister Madeline. We thank God for the life of Barbara and pray for all her family and friends as they come to

terms with their great loss.

We think of other countries where there is war and famine: Too many countries to mention names but we pray for God to intercede for them. We pray for our own country for the prime minister and leaders that they may have wisdom to lead the country out of recession. We pray for King Charles that he will rule wisely following in the footsteps of his mother the late Queen.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all the blessings that only Christmas can bring. May you move from seeing the Christchild to the man dying on the cross and rising that we all may live.



## FROM GLOOM TO GLORY!

By Ann Nias



We live in a murky world! Many people, worldwide, cannot see how they are going to cope. Many cannot see what the future holds. Many cannot see how to feed their children. Many cannot see an end to the war, the famine, the abuse, the exploitation they live under daily.

Many cannot see the point.

Around seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus, the Jews were in this kind of fog. They had lost their way, lost their identity as the people of God, lost focus and direction, times were tough. Then Isaiah came on the scene with words of diagnosis for their murky condition, words we still need to hear today (Isaiah 8:20-22).....

*'Consult God's instruction...if anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light...they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom...'*

BUT, and here is one of the biggest buts in the Bible, it does not need to be this way. We CAN have hope, we CAN find our way through the murk and fog of today's world if we have a guide to navigate the gloom.....

*'Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom....the people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in a land of deep darkness a light has dawned.'* (Isaiah 9:1-2)

Oh don't we need this today? And the source of that dawning light? The reason for hope that the murk can be dispersed? It is, of course through a relationship with Jesus, the Light of the World, as Isaiah so beautifully foresaw those 700 years before it happened.....(Isaiah 9:1-7)

*'For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'*

How deeply and urgently we need this true news of wonder, might, permanence and peace which Jesus can give us.

As Mary so honestly asked the angel Gabriel about how Jesus could be born,  
*"How can this be?"*

People without hope still ask today, "How can God make any difference?" Isaiah's answer is *'The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.'* God is keen to make this happen in our lives. We know the politicians don't have the answer. We know the economists are struggling, we know diplomats seem powerless, we know ordinary people feel they are victims of something beyond their ability to control. We SO need Someone to lead the way and provide hope, Someone who can see the dark murk but is able to disperse it with His powerful light.

You may not put up so many lights this Christmas because of power saving, but the Light of the World shines constantly, wooing us out of our murk into His powerful Light!

*'Light of the world, You stepped down into darkness, open my eyes, let me see; beauty that made this heart adore You, hope of a life spent with You. So, here I am to worship, here I am to bow down, here I am to say that you're my God. You're altogether lovely, altogether worthy, altogether wonderful to me...'*



On behalf of Magor Baptist church the Editor would like to thank all contributors, printers and distributors for their hard work during the year. Ruth and I would also like to send best wishes for a peaceful and safe Christmas to all our readers.





## Christmas update from Tomi

There is a lot that is going on for children and young people at Magor Baptist this Christmas time!

### Schools work

I have very much enjoyed going into Magor, Undy and Archbishop Rowan Williams primary schools and sharing fortnightly assemblies with them using Old Testament stories to show how God keeps his promises! The children have been most receptive and taken part using various props, and even a harp! And, of course, the ultimate promise was that *"a virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel (which means God with us)"*, the promise God made to Isaiah some 800 years before Jesus was born!



We have also had the joy of inviting Undy Primary children to join us at the church. So Reception (ages 4-5) came to do a nativity play with us (complete with costumes for all 46 of them!) as we explored the story in more detail, sang some carols and used stickers to make a manger scene each to take home. Indeed they had so much fun, they've asked to return at Easter!



Meanwhile, Year 2 (54 children aged 6-7) have asked to come and share their Christmas concert with us on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> December at our final Coffee Morning of the year. If all goes well, they are hoping to join with us on a regular basis to encourage their children to spend time with the elderly and learn from each other.

Our after school club, **Superheroes**, held a Scratch Nativity, where the children spent their hour learning a Nativity play and carols which they then performed for their parents who came to collect them. We had a lovely time, as we reminded the children that Jesus was a little child once, so He knows what it's like, and they can bring all their requests and concerns to Him.



### Family Nativity Service

Come and join us on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> December at 11 in person or on Zoom for our Family Nativity Service. This is a no rehearsal nativity, so all children who attend will be able to dress up and join in! The service will be followed by coffee and mince pies.

Wishing you all the joy of the Lord this Christmas!

## Uganda News

In August we were able to send £1,708 towards the upgrading of the public examination school rooms in Kitetikka and Peter has reported that the progress is very pleasing. The work is finished and the students have undertaken their national examinations successfully in the restructured room. *God bless you Magor for your generosity, Peter.*

Also pictured below is the huge new church and community centre that is being built on the farm site at Busiika. This will seat over 1,000 people when fully fitted out as well as providing facilities for the community.



Peter and Rose and their two daughters, Phyllis & Rebecca, visited Magor at the beginning of November as part of a two month UK tour. We were able to share some time with them as the picture shows and they spoke and sang briefly at the Sunday service.



# PLANTS OF THE BIBLE 8

By Christine Seabridge

**FIG** Mark 1:13, Gen 3:7, 2 Kings 20:7

The fig tree is mentioned about 50 times in the Bible. An important tree in ancient times, it is still valued today. Bearing fruit twice a year, the first crops are eaten fresh and the second are dried and kept for winter. Figs also have medicinal value. Indigenous to S Europe, the trees are still planted in groves and gardens.

**ACAIA** Ex37:25

This tree grows widely throughout tropical Africa and Arabia. Growing in dry, arid regions, these trees, whose Greek name Akakia means "a thorny tree", have several interesting characteristics. Many have extremely large thorns which protect the plant against being eaten. The pods and seeds look ornamental and the flowers are of interest in floristry as "mimosa". It grows very slowly and some varieties are valued for the hardness of the reddish coloured wood.

**CEDAR OF LEBANON** Psalm 92:12

Since the time of King Solomon the wood of these majestic trees has been in constant demand, with the result that in SW Asia where they grow, some areas are now denuded of them. Despite current efforts to remedy this deforestation and soil erosion, success will probably be unlikely in these war torn countries for many years.

**CAROB** Luke15:16

Found in the Mediterranean area, this is an unusual tree. Its flowers grow directly on the old wood. The pods are used for cattle food and the fruit is used for syrup. Interestingly, the term "carat" is derived from the uniform weight of the large seeds.

References: D Smit Plants of the Bible

FN Hepper Planting a Bible Garden

## TEARFUND Update from COP27 by Sarah Wiggins

*'I've always talked about hope rather than optimism... Hope grapples with suffering... We don't despise our suffering. Suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character and character hope, and hope doesn't disappoint.'* Marvin Rees, Mayor of Bristol and Tearfund Ambassador

I am home now, from the UN climate talks (COP27) in Sharm El Sheikh, reflecting on what happened. It's quite hard to sum up: there were some positive outcomes, but we need to see more, from all of us.

That's not to say I feel defeated – far from it, actually. There are many reasons to have hope...

- Together, indigenous people, young people, women and representatives from organisations such as Tearfund raised our voices. Anecdotally, many felt we displayed greater strength and unity than at previous COPs. One leader in this space said: *'We're unstoppable.'* *I believe that, now more than ever.'*
- I gain energy from an inner assurance that if collectively we hadn't run our petitions and talked to our MPs, and been there in Egypt, the outcomes could have been so much worse. At Tearfund's 'overdue bill' demonstration, one wealthy country negotiator took a photo of our messages and said to me, with real conviction in her eyes: ***'This is really important what you're doing, really important.'*** We help create space for negotiators to act.
- It can only be because of these united efforts that we saw a symbolic and important win from this COP for climate-vulnerable countries – the establishment of a 'loss and damage' funding facility for climate impacts that have happened or can't be avoided. (Even if there are no significant new pledges of money, this opens up space for progress in 2023.)

However, we needed to see so much more in Egypt on big issues (as well as loss and damage). COP27 did not take us much closer to justice for those suffering the worst effects of the climate crisis:

- On climate finance, COP27 did the very least it could do: recognise the ongoing failure of wealthy nations to deliver the long-overdue \$100 billion promised to climate-vulnerable communities. Worse, it weakened a COP26 commitment to double finance for communities to adapt to this crisis. Wealthy nations have stated that the \$100 billion will finally be reached in 2023. Let's keep praying that they do finally deliver.

- On limiting warming, the trajectory saw no improvement. COP27 ended with the world still on course for around 2.5°C of warming – the same as it was after COP26 in Glasgow – and that’s only if countries implement their current plans.
- On phasing out fossil fuels and shifting to renewable energy, the final COP text failed to make this call. Although we heard a lot about the benefits of renewables, the fossil fuel industry was out in force at COP27. This is a colossal failure that lets polluters off the hook.

### **What’s next?**

Tackling the climate crisis is never just about negotiations at a two-week conference. The crisis is a daily reality for millions of people living in poverty, and demands a daily response. In the weeks and months ahead, we need actions that meet the scale of the crisis – from governments, from large corporations and from all of us.

I had the privilege of interviewing Marvin Rees at COP27. He is the Mayor of Bristol and a Tearfund Ambassador. When I asked him about the role of churches in all this, he spoke with passion: *‘Churches have a huge role to play... They should be teaching their congregation, their members, that the planet is important.’*

And so **let’s not stop raising awareness in our churches, praying, taking action and speaking up**, because poverty is not God’s plan – you are. Read our guide to daily choices you can take to tackle climate change and find lots of resources to engage your church in climate action on our website.

I saw at COP27 that this makes a big difference. Let’s persevere in holding our leaders to account for keeping their promises and urging wealthier nations to step up to their responsibilities. Next year, in this decisive decade for climate, we hope for more, much more.

**Sarah Wiggins** - *Tearfund Action*

## **SOLO DINERS**

We are a group of single people who live and usually eat alone. Once a month we join together and enjoy each other’s company and Sunday lunch at a local pub.

We’ve been going for four years now and have grown a lot from the original five from our housegroup. However we are not exclusive and if you worship at Magor Baptist Church and live alone you would be most welcome.

**Contact Gaynor Chapple on 01633 882488.**

## **The Air We Breathe:** How We All Came to Believe in Freedom, Kindness, Progress, and Equality - by Glen Scrivener.

This book celebrates God's amazing sovereignty and common grace at work in every generation for the past 2,000 years. Glen Scrivener, an Anglican evangelist, eloquently argues that today's world is not as post-Christian as many think! British culture is still categorised by our Christian heritage without most people recognising it. Even though for the first time the recent census found less than 50% of people describing themselves as Christian. Today's cherished values originate from that first century "**Jesus Revolution**" which turned the world upside down.

In the Roman Empire human lives were very unequal. Slavery and cruelty were normal, unwanted infants were routinely abandoned, the sick and destitute were uncared for and women and children were considered inferior. By contrast the early church championed the rights of the most vulnerable and were reviled for caring for the outcasts. In every generation since Christians have spoken up for the rights of the vulnerable - widows, orphans, immigrants and the poor.

*This is such a well-written, captivating book; I could barely put it down. Glen shows us that human rights, equality and justice have been ludicrous and offensive notions for most of history. These notions hold sway today only because the Christian world view won. Don't believe it? Read the book.*

Tim Farron MP

Although an authoritative historical tour-de-force, this book is in fact an easy and rewarding read. It is widely available from the Good Book Company and can even be downloaded as an electronic book for just £2.53! It would make a good present to sceptical friends.

**John Loebi**



**To all my Church Family and Friends - Christmas 2022**  
As many of you will already know, I am now living at Bethany Care Home in Chepstow. I celebrated my 96<sup>th</sup> Birthday in March and the 1<sup>st</sup> Birthday of my Great Grand Daughter - Robyn Angharad - in October. I continue to enjoy church services at Magor when able to do so. I am well blessed! Thank you for including me in your thoughts and prayers this year. I would like to wish you all a Joyous and Peaceful Christmas and a Happy New Year.  
**With Much Love from Joan Collings.**

## Happy Christmas to you all from Sudbrook Fellowship!

We enjoyed our Carol Singing, starting outside the chapel by the Christmas tree in the picture. We sang carols around the streets of Sudbrook and were thrilled at the responses we received. We look forward to the new year as we continue to reach out to the community.

Thank you so much to those of you who have been able to support us directly and for all your prayers.

May the Lord richly bless you.

**Jeremy and Ruth Lock**



The men enjoyed their annual **Curry Night** at the Mango House this December with good food and excellent company.

**DECEMBER 1972**

**Bus stops.** Bus drivers had not been driving into Magor Square for some weeks because parked cars stopped them driving their buses round the monument. Instead, they stopped near the Wheatsheaf. One could hardly blame the bus drivers but it became a very emotive topic, involving the parish council, Traffic Commissioners and the police. There was a bus shelter in the Square, built at the villagers' expense, and it was considered so much safer for the buses to stop in the Square, rather than on the main road.

The January magazine reported that the Red & White buses had received permission from the Traffic Commissioners to use the two temporary bus stops until a permanent decision be made. They had also filed an application, supported by the parish council, that the temporary stops become permanent. Back in 1970, the police and Commissioners had recommended a 'no parking' area in the Square, but were powerless to enforce it as such matters were the sole prerogative of the Highway Authority – Monmouthshire County Council.

It was considered that the **Obscenity Laws** were inadequate to ensure public decency in the media and in children's education. There was a nationwide petition, sponsored by Mary Whitehouse's National Viewers' and Listeners' Association, with support from the Nationwide Festival of Light. A copy was in the vestibule for people to sign demanding urgent Parliamentary action to revise the Obscenity Laws.

**CHRISTMAS GREETINGS ISSUE**

There was a special magazine of Christmas greetings in aid of the Baptist Missionary Society's '**Hungry Children Fund**', which had started ten years previously after a missionary suggested one penny would buy a biscuit that would feed one hungry child in India for a day. The fund was originally called the 'Biscuit Fund'. For a donation of 20p people sent in their Christmas greetings.

Christmas greetings were also sent to readers in the following countries, who were regularly sent copies of the monthly magazine: Arabia, Australia, Canada, Cyprus, Eire, Malawi, Nepal, New Zealand, Nigeria, Rhodesia, South Africa, USA, Yugoslavia, Zambia.



The January issue thanked readers who had participated since April 1972 in the Birthday & Christmas Greetings scheme. Over £130 had been sent to BMS.

## **JANUARY 1973**

The Sunshiners' letter references looking forward, not backward, and trusted that 1973 would bring a better spirit throughout the world. It then quoted a poem by **Adam Lindsay Gordon**, (1833-70):

*Question not, but live and labour, till your goal be won;  
Helping every feeble neighbour, Seeking help from none;  
Life is mostly froth and bubble, Two things stand like stone;  
Kindness in another's trouble, Courage in your own.*

After a particularly trying year for the royal family, Elizabeth II quoted that last line in her 1992 Christmas message.

Another article asked if anyone had any **old photographs or postcards** of the district, adding *'many of our folk have no idea what Magor and Undy looked like years ago (they have never seen the Mill Pond, or our church when it had an oil lamp over the front gate!)*

If anyone has any such photos or postcards, as someone who has only been in the area for 20 years, I would certainly be interested in seeing them. Perhaps we should organize an exhibition.

## **FEBRUARY 1973**

The extension fund-raising committee had planned an **organ recital** by Vernon Gill of Cardiff Organ Works - the firm who built the church organ in 1929. I wonder what happened to that organ?

An article encouraged tax-payers to sign deeds of covenant (forerunner to Gift Aid). It detailed how much extra the church would receive, based on the tax rate at the time of 30%. And we think we pay too much **tax** today!

The church minibus had been bought, and then maintained, by the Young People's Bible Class Fund for the past four years. As from 1 April 1973 the minibus would become the responsibility of the church itself. However, the church members passed a resolution *'that a new minibus should be purchased which would become both minister's and church transport. This would effect some saving in Road Fund Tax and insurance – at the moment the minister's car and the minibus have to be insured – and the minibus would not stand idle for certain days of the week.'* The minister was anxious that the new minibus should retain the slogan **'Wheel get you there'** on its sides



## "Angels From the Realms of Glory."

Based on Luke 2: 13-14

James Montgomery was born on November 4, 1771 in Scotland to Irish parents. His father, John Montgomery, was the only Moravian pastor serving in Scotland at the time. In due course John Montgomery followed his calling to reach out to the slaves in the West Indies and left James in the care of the Moravian community.

After a varied and not very successful schooling James Montgomery only had one passion in life, and that was to write poetry. At 19 he unsuccessfully attempted to have some of his poems published. He had to search for a job and responded to an advert for a job as assistant to the publisher of the Sheffield Register. Mr Gale the owner of the Sheffield Register newspaper was a man of principle who was willing to criticise the government if he felt they had made an unwise law. In 1794 Mr Gale had to escape from England to avoid prosecution for his 'radical' views. James Montgomery at the age of 23 took over the paper, changed its name to the Sheffield Iris, and then continued to edit it for 31 years. James was also a man of outspoken views and principles. He spoke and wrote protesting against slavery, boy chimney sweeps, and lotteries, which he called 'a national nuisance'. He himself was imprisoned twice because of his outspoken views. One jury condemned him as '*a wicked, malicious and seditious person who has attempted to stir up discontent among his Majesty's subjects*'. This was during the reign of George the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

He was recognised as a gifted poet, well respected both by Percy Shelley and Lord Byron. James became very well known as a public speaker giving lectures on poetry both in Sheffield and at the Royal Institution in London. He travelled extensively as an advocate for Foreign Missions, the Bible Society, and the abolition of slavery. He was so well regarded that in 1833 he received a Royal pension of £200 a year, and in his old age was a much-loved citizen of Sheffield. At the time of his funeral the whole city stopped

work and was silent. When asked how if he expected people to remember his poetry his reply was "*No – except, perhaps, a few of my hymns*".

He wrote over 400 hymns and has been considered the third greatest hymn writer after Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley. James had an easy outlet for his poetry as he could publish it in his paper where there had always been room for people to contribute items like short stories and poems.

On Christmas Eve 1816 he was reading the Christmas story in Luke 2 when the words of the angels appearing saying "*Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth, goodwill to all men*", appealed to him. He was inspired to write this hymn and to publish it in the Sheffield Iris that day. It was first sung in a Moravian Church, in England on Christmas Day 1821 and from that day on the world has had a wonderful carol, but it was not until it was published in the Christian Psalmist in 1852 that it became an overnight success. In 1867 Henry Smart composed his tune for Angels From the Realms of Glory; and the hymn and tune (entitled Regents Square) were published in Psalms and Hymns for Divine Worship, and have been sung together ever since.

Each verse speaks for a different group of people and this is one of the most inclusive carols that has been written. It is possible for anyone and everyone to sing this carol and to find a message within for every individual.



Angels from the realms of glory,  
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;  
Ye who sang creation's story  
Now proclaim Messiah's birth.

*Come and worship, come and  
worship,  
Worship Christ, the newborn king.*

Though an Infant now we view Him,  
He shall fill His Father's throne,  
Gather all the nations to Him;  
Every knee shall then bow down:

*Come and worship, come and  
worship,  
Worship Christ, the newborn king.*

**Christine Miles**

## **CHURCH CONTACTS**

### **Ministry**

*Tel Church Office 01633 881342 or contact Keith Arnold*

### **Church/Community Officer**

Tomi Brown

*Telephone 07759 159260*

*Email: [tomi@magorbaptistchurch.org.uk](mailto:tomi@magorbaptistchurch.org.uk)*

### **Church Secretary**

Keith Arnold

14 Queens Gardens

Magor, Caldicot. NP26 3BU

*Telephone 01633 880371*

*Email: [enquiries@magorbaptistchurch.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@magorbaptistchurch.org.uk)*

### **Finance Deacon**

John Loebel

### **Magazine Editor**

John Loebel

The Knollbury, Undy,

Caldicot. NP26 3BX

*Telephone 01633 880318*

*Email: [jloebel@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jloebel@hotmail.co.uk)*

### **Room Bookings**

Christine Miles

*Telephone 01633 882316*

*Email: [bookings@magorbaptistchurch.org.uk](mailto:bookings@magorbaptistchurch.org.uk)*

See [www.magorbaptistchurch.org.uk](http://www.magorbaptistchurch.org.uk) for the latest news and also recordings of sermons or ring 01633 358328 if you don't have internet access.

Published by Magor Baptist Church  
The Square Magor Caldicot NP26 3HY