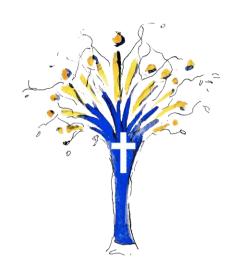
Off the Record



From MAGOR BAPTIST CHURCH

Growing and sharing in God's love



EASTER 2025

Godforsaken



The Feast of the Chocolate-Laying Bunny (otherwise known as Easter) is the perfect British religious festival. It has all the ingredients of a long weekend, plenty of sport on the TV, an orgy of chocolate consumption, and one of the expensive presents or messy family reunions of Christmas.

What's more, in the cultural-spirit of tolerance, it's a religious festival which could offend no-one. Who could possibly get upset by the cute little bunny distributing hollow chocolate?

More than just Facts

Christians, of course, can be relied upon to spoil a good, inoffensive, religious holiday. They are always so concerned with the facts, the history and the truth. For example, is it spoil-sport-ish of me to point out that the first Easter had nothing to do with Spring, or chocolate, or rabbits? Rather, it's about a Jewish itinerant preacher named Jesus who was executed in the first century by crucifixion. The historical evidence for this event is clear and reliable.

But bare facts won't do. To agree to the facts of Easter - that Jesus died - is not to say that you are a Christian. The fact of Jesus' death doesn't tell us why this particular Jewish man changed the course of human history. It doesn't explain why we get a holiday called Easter. And it doesn't explain why millions of people have given their allegiance to this man and his cause. It is not enough to know that Jesus died, we need to know why?

And it's got to be worth at least more than a passing thought because there aren't many historians who wouldn't agree that Jesus' death transformed the Jewish religion, undermined the Roman empire, changed the course of Western civilisation and rewrote the lives of millions. No one can afford to be ignorant of the meaning of Jesus' death.

Famous Last Words

"Die?" exclaimed the patient, as the Doctor told him of his fate, "Die? That's the last thing I'll do!"

People are often fascinated by last words. We note a person's dying utterances as if we hope somehow to find a clue to the hidden truths of life and death as the person crosses from one to the other. We tend to invest them with special meaning.

Jesus' final words as he died on the cross are recorded in the New Testament: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Jesus died feeling godforsaken. We use the word 'godforsaken' when something has been condemned or declared beyond hope. It makes us think of destruction and despair. It makes us think of Gaza and part of Ukraine. It makes us think of Mandalay in Myanmar and places in South Sudan. And it makes us think of brokenness and loneliness - experiences in life and relationships in life that were once lovely but now gone. If you have ever been through a difficult relationship breakdown, or the death of someone close to you, you will have some idea of what it is like to feel godforsaken.

As he died on the cross, Jesus was literally forsaken by God. He had already lost two of his human friends. Now, at his death, he was losing his Father. This hurt most of all, for Jesus' relationship with his Father was so close that he said of it "*I and the Father are one*", yet that was now torn apart - godforsaken.

Godforsaken - but not because of anything he did. Rather, precisely because of the things we do. Unless you've lived a very sheltered life you'll be aware of 'the human propensity to muck things up'. We see it in our relationships with others - parents, children, work colleagues, neighbours. The relationships can be good, really good, but there is always the tendency to muck things up by something we say or do. And what is true of our relationships with each other is even more true of our relationship with God

Jesus' act of sacrificial love, willingly dying in our place, is the very thing that makes Good Friday so good, that makes Easter so amazing

where, on account of our sin, there is a fundamental breach in that relationship.

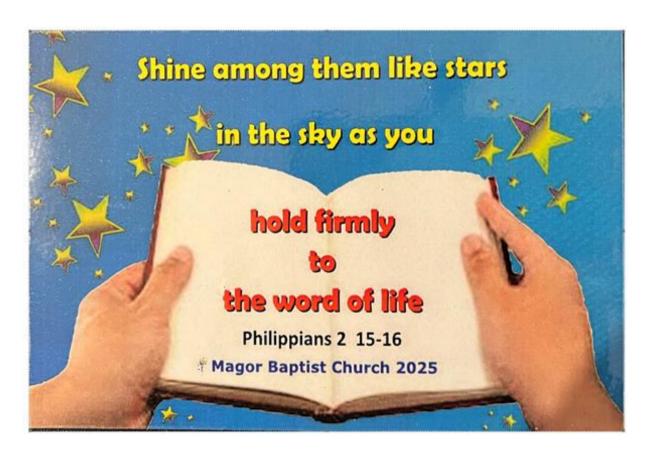
But the brokenness can be bridged, the love restored, and the situation redeemed by Jesus who himself explained that he came 'not to be served by to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'

Jesus paid the price for our sin, took the rap for our wrongdoing, standing in our place to face the aloneness of being separated from the Father - just as we are, having turned our back on God. Yet, as the bridge between our sin and God's righteous justice, Jesus takes the penalty that we deserve for the wrong that we have done.

Jesus' act of sacrificial love, willingly dying in our place, is the very thing that makes Good Friday so good, that makes Easter so amazing, that makes the invitation 'be reconciled to God' so important. That is something a fun-loving Bunny and some hollow chocolate would never be able to achieve.

Mark

Church Motto for 2025



Easter and Other Dates

Prayer Times-

Monday 14th) Tuesday 15th)9.00 -Wednesday)9.30am 16th April

Holy Week quiet prayer

Maundy Thursday 17th April at 7.00 pm. Joint service at St Mary's

Good Friday

18th April at 10.00 am. Joint meditation at the chapel

Easter Sunday

20th April at 6.00 am Sunrise service at Blackrock

11.00 am Easter Family service



May Day Fayre - Monday 5th May

Fancy a cuppa or a special cake – try the Tearooms for a nice sit down or check out the bric-a-bac stall. All proceeds go to charity.

Church Anniversary - Sunday 6th July at 11am with Revd Dr Peter Morden - Principal of Cardiff Baptist College



CHURCH NEWS

April Charity Offering - Tearfund, Myanmar

In view of the recent, devastating earthquake in Myanmar Tearfund along with the Disasters Emergency Committee is appealing for urgent donations for vital help in Myanmar - so the church is making this need the focus of our April charity offering.

The church will MATCH all giving to Myanmar this month and has already sent some money to help with urgent relief work. Contributions can be made on Sundays and also through online giving (reference charity, Tearfund or Myanmar).



Your donation is urgently needed

A deadly earthquake measuring 7.7 magnitude struck central Myanmar on 28 March, destroying lives across the region. Over 3,000 people have been killed and 4,700 injured. Many more are still buried in the rubble, and these numbers are expected to rise. Those who survived the terrifying earthquake now face a desperate humanitarian crisis.

- ♣ People are in urgent need of medical care, shelter, food and water, and access to safe sanitation and hygiene.
- A Hospitals are so overwhelmed that injured patients are being treated in car parks and streets.
- * Essential infrastructure like roads, electricity and internet have been severely damaged, making communication challenging.

Jesus calls us to stand alongside people in crisis. Will you make a life-saving donation today?

Election of Deacons and Officers

At the Church Members' AGM the following members were elected:-

- * Kathy Allen as Church Secretary
- * John Loebl as Church Treasurer
- * Andrew Leighton, Christine Miles and Suzie Roberts as Deacons.

The completion of an extended period of service as a deacon for Chris Foster was also acknowledged, with very grateful thanks for all that she has done. Please uphold these folk in your prayers.

Two Book Reviews of Timothy Keller, 'The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness'

I felt a bit confused at the beginning. My mind wondering what is this all about!? Then my thoughts went on different paths. Paul's description possibly about my own personal development or thinking about what is going on in our hearts and minds in any given moment.

Self-esteem, ego, self-worth all play a part and sometimes take over. "My conscience is clear but that doesn't make me innocent," is what Paul said, and it does apply to me, is what really stood out. So, I will continue to re-think (re-examine) my thoughts. Psalm 139:23-24 will be helpful to remember.

23 Search me, God, and know my heart;test me and know my anxious thoughts.24 See if there is any offensive way in me,and lead me in the way everlasting.

Jane Matthews

When reading this pocket size book, it was comforting to believe that being human, (i.e. worried about what others think of you, trying not to beat yourself up over people's conflicts), can be liberating if you just ask God to show you your heart, not loving or hating yourself too much. Having close friendly conversations with the Lord will take you away from being self-absorbed, and knowing that there is always someone worse off than yourself. The booklet was truly a 'passage to freedom' read. *Jenny Tilton*

Fellowship News from Val Jones

What wonderful weather we have had over the last few weeks. I will have to water the chapel wall. Spring is certainly here. I have a birds nest in the garden with three eggs so far and the birds are nesting in the hedgerows and everywhere you see them pairing up and looking for nesting materials. We have been blessed with so many flowers in the gardens, and on the sides of the motorway the daffodils have been in full bloom together with the blackthorn and even the may blossom is now coming into bloom. We are fortunate to live in such a pretty part of the world. But we are mindful of those less fortunate that ourselves and think in particular of Myanmar and the earthquakes that have taken place there and pray that aid will be allowed in.

As we look forward to Easter Sunday we first think of the great sacrifice Jesus made for all who believe in him - dying on the cross so that we may be saved. Then we look forward to his rising and the Easter Celebrations. Details of our church services are mentioned elsewhere in this magazine and we welcome you to any or all of our services as we celebrate the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray for all our members and friends who have had operations over the last few months that they may regain strength and be able to enjoy life to the full. We also pray for all those who have either been poorly or have problems. Unfortunately we are not allowed to name names but please pray for one another and the wider world. Since the last magazine (Christmas) was issued we have lost two members of the fellowship right at the end of 2024 – namely June Lewington and Joyce Escott and we send our love and sympathy to the families concerned.

We sent our love and prayerful support to Joyce Homan on the home calling of her husband Tony. Joyce together with sister Christine were children of the manse when Rev. Jack Lawford was minister here from 1957-1964 both marrying local lads. Tony was from Underwood and Howard from Undy. Tony led our Youth Group when I was a teenager (many, many years ago!) and they moved away when he became a minister. They have shared a long and happy life together and I am sure that Tony is now singing God's praises in his heavenly home. We assure them of the love and prayers of the fellowship.

We thank God for all the ministers and their wives who have served him in Magor over the years. We thank him too for our current minister Mark and wife Anne. We have indeed been blessed with such wonderful leadership over the years which continues today.



Last Saturday the church was able to give out over 100 Easter eggs as a special blessing to those folk passing by – causing quite a surprise. Inside the church the Welsh Folk Music Group rendered a wonderful accompaniment to the proceedings.



Update from Peter Waddup, CEO of the Leprosy Mission, about the situation and ongoing efforts in Myanmar.



I'm sure you will have been as sad as me to read about and see the distressing photos following the earthquake in Myanmar. There have also been aftershocks across the country, including a further earthquake with a magnitude of 5.1.

Life in Myanmar was already difficult because of the ongoing civil war, recent flooding and huge hikes in food and transportation costs. Now the high temperatures of around 40C are adding to the challenges of finding food and clean water. On top of this, the monsoons are expected to arrive in two weeks' time.

Damage to infrastructure is slowing down rescue efforts. Communication is limited with only SMS occasionally possible. Electricity is not working in most areas.

We thank God that three of the Leprosy Mission team in Mandalay were able to evacuate the 8th floor office safely during the earthquake. We also give thanks that two further team members who were in the field were not hurt and were able to return to Mandalay despite badly damaged roads.

The building opposite the office has sunk into the ground and is unstable, which means the surrounding area is now unsafe. Sadly, staff members have lost their homes and face a time of uncertainty.

God has been so good to us, and the Taungoo workshop is also still standing, but will need some work to reinforce the building.

Finally, we are giving thanks for our wonderful regular givers. Because of your faithful support we are able to respond to urgent needs, including provision of aid and building work. We are working with the team to find out

longer-term needs of people affected by leprosy and will share more about this in the coming months. (Editor:Leprosy Mission is our charity offering in May)

Please join us in prayer as we stand with our brothers and sisters in Myanmar.

- -for the dedicated team, many of whom have lost homes and friends.
- -for communities affected by leprosy, that we can get the food, water and medicines they need
- -for wisdom as to repair or move of Mandalay office

Thank you for praying and continuing to be a blessing to people affected by leprosy and the teams who serve them.

Every blessing

Peter Waddup



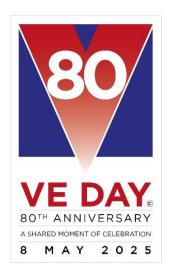
An Easter Reflection

from Hazel Lucas

This Easter, I found myself with some new responsibilities during Lent, leading to quite a lot of thought. I have been asked to lead two open ecumenical prayer meetings during Holy Week on the stations of the Cross, (which I had almost never heard of) and found myself forced to think about what Jesus faced during that week and what he did in response. I chose the unjust trial by the Sanhedrin and the interview with Pilate, as actually less distressing (to myself) than some of the later events.

I don't like being distressed, nor being treated unjustly. So when I read "we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance character, and character hope...." (Romans 5:3), I thought Paul had learned a difficult lesson that is highly relevant to me, and to the other elderly people who will be at those prayer meetings. Paul is saying that some of the worst challenges he had to face (which were many), were serving to make him more Christlike, which is what God the Father is trying to bring about in everything he permits to happen to us. "All things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose." (Rom 8:28) This doesn't mean that all things ARE good, but that God can bring good according out of everything, so that we will be conformed to the image of His Son (v 29). This understanding set Paul free from worrying about the injustices of life and he rejoiced for all kinds of reasons. He rejoiced when he heard that his converts were growing in the faith and remaining faithful under persecution, because his ministry had borne fruit, and he knew that he would gain profitable labour if he lived and the presence of Jesus if he died. So he was able to rejoice either way! (Phil 1: 19, 22). He rejoiced when he was counted worthy to suffer for Jesus's sake. Remember him and Silas singing hymns in gaol in Philippi after being beaten and put in irons? (Acts 16:25) I wonder if that was a bit like the songs of troops going into battle?

As we get older and face all kinds of problems, we need that freedom. The world tells us we're useless, but if we're still here, God still has a purpose for us, and he is with us. We can still look for those good purposes in everything that happens to us, and we can also help to bring about good purposes in the lives of family and friends, so helping to build the kingdom of God on Earth. Jesus looked to 'the joy that was set before him' as he faced the Cross (Heb 12:2), looking forward to being reunited with His Father, and with the huge crowd of brothers and sisters that his death would accomplish! Amazing. And he is the founder and perfecter of our faith also.



To commemorate the 80th anniversary of VE Day, **Redwick History Group** is preparing a free exhibition in Redwick Village Hall on Saturday 10 May, telling how war affected Redwick and the surrounding areas.

As pictures speak a thousand words, we are looking for WWII artefacts or photographs that the group may borrow. Artefacts will be displayed in locked cases, and photos can be scanned so you keep the originals. If you have any such artefacts or photos that you would be willing to lend us, or local war-time stories to share, we would love to hear from you.

We are particularly interested in the following:

- the GI / Prisoner of War Camp at Underwood both photos of the buildings and information about any of the POWs who worked on local farms, etc.
- the Royal Navy Propellant Factory at Caerwent again buildings or people who worked there
- the Local Defence Volunteers (Home Guard and Seawall Patrol)
- the Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery at Pye Corner
- the local Auxiliary Unit (the Secret Army) at Coed-y-Caerau
- people who were (or hosted) evacuees
- VE Day in 1945

If you can help, please have a word with me. And don't forget to put the date in your diary to come and see the exhibition! Thank you.

Chris Leighton

Mary's Meals feeds more than 70,000 children every school day in South Sudan!

South Sudan, officially the Republic of South Sudan, is a landlocked country in East-Central Africa which shares borders with six neighbouring countries including Ethiopia to the east, Sudan to the north, Uganda and Kenya to the south, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Central African Republic.

South Sudan became the world's youngest nation when it gained independence from Sudan, on 9 July 2011. The current economic climate is making life intolerable for the vast majority of people in South Sudan, with 7.5 million people (about two thirds of the population) identified as being in need of humanitarian assistance. Almost 43% of the population earn below the International Poverty Line (\$2.15 per day).

More than one third of all children under five years old suffer chronic malnutrition, and over 70% of primary school-age children are out of school – **the highest figure anywhere in the world** and a stark reminder of the need for Mary's Meals in South Sudan.



Mary's Meals in South Sudan

Mary's Meals has been serving school meals in South Sudan since 2008 (originally in Sudan).

We work with two partners, the Diocese of Rumbek and Mary Help Association. Together, we are reaching more than 70,000 children every school day. We would love to be able to reach more.

March - May 1975

In light of 'the greatest food crisis the world has ever known', there was one theme which ran through all three magazines: 'live simply that others may simply live'. The United Nations Food Conference shone a spotlight on dwindling food supplies and how 460 million people endured hunger. In Britain, we not only ate more than our fair share, but more than was necessary for our health. Various books and campaigns encouraged us to look at excess - whether our consumption of food, accumulation of goods, our plunder of fuels and minerals, or waste and pollution.

In March it was suggested we should eat less, have less, consume less and give the money thus saved to alleviate hunger and promote agricultural development. 'If 400,000 people gave up a 30p meal a week they would raise £6,000,000 in a year'. It quoted the Foodshare Manifesto, which suggested asking our MPs to urge the government to 'press the EEC to double its present food aid commitment'.

In April we were encouraged to lower the temperature in our homes by a few degrees, walk rather than drive, car-share whenever possible, and drive at the most economical speed. In May it spoke about the growing 'Lifestyle' movement which had been started by Rev. Horace Dammers, dean of Bristol. Since 'our greed denies another's need', it focused on not buying what we don't need, conserving earth's resources, challenging wasteful packaging and built-in obsolescence. Read more about the movement at: https://www.lifestylemovement.org.uk. All sound familiar today?

March 1975

Many people who had moved away from Magor maintained their subscription to the magazine, but often complained that it did not mention what was happening to the village and places they knew. Those still in the village were missing the 'Magor Bulletin' which used to be issued by the parish council to keep people in touch with what was happening or planned. Under the heading 'A miracle?', the editorial said, 'Two years ago when the parish council had failed to register any protest against the building of a huge brewery, I had said that it would take a miracle to stop it. Now it is announced that when site work is completed, because of the deteriorating financial climate, building will be delayed for at least two years. Who said the age of miracles had passed? Finally, a number of people have suggested the formation of a Magor Conservation Society to keep an eye on

present development and express public opinion in the right quarter at the right time.'

'Wales for Christ' was a joint mission by all churches in Wales. Locally there was a series of joint lectures with St Mary's church on Mark's gospel. Then, in the week preceding Easter, all churches in Undy and Magor united to present every household with a modern version of that gospel as part of the Wales for Christ initiative. Later, in June, all the houses in Caldicot would get a copy. The Tuesday after Easter was St David's Day, and the new Welsh translation of the New Testament was published.

April 1975

The editorial referred to the total ban on tobacco advertising adopted by eleven countries. In the UK the only ban was on TV advertising, though local bye-laws made by public transport or local authorities prohibited smoking in certain places. Cigarette manufacturers had been obliged to include a health warning on packets since 1971. Because of the health hazards, some advocated 'a total ban on the sale of tobacco. Cynics say that no government could support that threat to a substantial revenue from tobacco duty. The UK Government gets £1,086.5 million a year from tobacco duty.'

More development news - down memory lane:

- `A very large area to the north of the Eastern Approach Road to Spencer Works has been developed into a flat site for the future building of a brewery. This has covered the lane that ran from the Newport Road near Mount Pleasant to Llandavenny (which was often referred to as a Devon Lane, and was a favourite walk for picking primroses in days past [now illegal!]). Greenway Lane still remains for the moment as a route from Magor to Llandavenny.
- The field on the St Brides Road, opposite Langley Villa (at a spot known in days past as 'New-found-out') ... is one of the first to be completed by the County Council for sale as building plots. (Langley Close)
 - The narrow lane leading to Trout Cottage is being made into a wide road giving access to what we know as the 'Second Cowleaze', where more development will take place.
 - The meandering millstream ... where we fished and boated in the past, has now been converted into a straight 'Dutch Dyke' type of waterway to what used to be the entrance to the Mill Pond, and from here it will be piped under the proposed by-pass which will run from Tithe Farm to Mill Common diverting through traffic from Magor village entirely.

- That part of the Cowleaze that stands below Undy Council School has been converted to another housing estate, now ready for the builder (Mill Reen), and the Dancing Hill road will soon come straight down and cross the Cowleaze to join the new by-pass, instead of turning left to pass the Dinchill steps and join the Undy Road at Mill Common.
- The hardcore foundation has already been laid for yet another by-pass road from the Newport Road, opposite Manor Cottage, through what used to be the Magor Tennis Court, skirting the orchard at the back of the Baptist Chapel, and passing between Magor House and The Lawns, to join the road to West End in front of the farmyard of Court Farm, thus joining on directly with the Redwick Road as it proceeds over the railway bridge (known years ago as 'The Ramp'). This we understand will make it possible to close the road from the Wheatsheaf past the Baptist Chapel and into the Square and then on towards the old railway station, and the centre of the village will become a pedestrian precinct.
- Some readers will remember the Square when there was a wooden lamp post in the centre which was removed in the early 1920s to erect a War Memorial. Soon we understand we will be able to sit in the Square under trees which will be planted.
- On 29 March 1975 Mrs Pritchard put up the shutters of her newspaper shop for the last time. ... It was not only a newsagent but an iron-mongers, hardware, confectionery, etc., with a blacksmith and farriers at the rear.'

May 1975

At the Annual church meeting, the church treasurer noted the increase in price of everything. However, 'the one item that had increased far more than any other and by 56% was your giving to the Hungry Children Fund the sum of £322.76 was an all time record.'

The Head That Once Was Crowned With Thorns Thomas Kelly (1769-1855) from Christine Miles

A bright and gifted young man went to London to train as a lawyer after the completion of his BA degree course in Dublin. He was the son of Thomas Kelly a judge of the Court of Common Pleas (Ireland). This young man was also named Thomas Kelly, born in 1769.



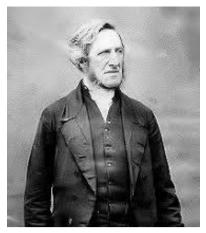
It was noted "Mr. Kelly was a man of

great and varied learning, skilled in the Oriental tongues, and an excellent Bible critic. He was possessed also of musical talent, and composed and published a work that was received with favour."

Much to his family's disappointment Thomas did not complete his training as a lawyer but commenced to study Theology and took Holy Orders in 1792. During his time in London Thomas had become friendly with the musician Jeremiah Clarke and had heard both John and Charles Wesley preach and share their hymns.

Thomas returned to Dublin as a priest in the Church of Ireland and he became well known as a very powerful preacher. Eventually the Archbishop of Dublin prohibited him from preaching in the diocese because of the evangelical emphasis of his message. It was not suitable for the Church of Ireland, Thomas therefore starting preaching as an independent minister at dissenting chapels. Those who followed him were known as 'The Kellyites'. During this time of change and challenge in 1795, he married Elizabeth Tighe (eldest daughter of William Tighe 1738–1782), and she brought a fortune to the marriage. This enabled them to build churches and meeting halls for his congregations. He was not only a gifted preacher but was also very generous, openly contributing to the poor, especially during the Dublin famine of 1847.

Hymn writing seemed to come to him naturally and in the 51 years of preaching he wrote 765 hymns, that is at least one a month. Many of his hymns were written to accompany his sermon texts.



The head that once was crowned with thorns is one of his best-known hymns and is now considered an Ascension hymn. For the opening lines of the hymn, Kelly owes much to **John Bunyan** (1628–1688), from his extended poem *One Thing Is Needful* (ca. 1665) That Head that once was Crown'd with Thorns, Shall now with Glory shine, That heart that broken was with Scorns, Shall flow with Life Divine

Thomas Kelly said that the scriptural basis for the hymn is Hebrews 2:10; and Philippians 2:8–10.

1 The head that once was crowned with thorns Is crowned with glory now;
A royal diadem adorns
The mighty victor's brow.

2 The highest place that Heav'n affords Is his, is his by right,
The King of Kings and Lord of Lords,
And Heav'n's eternal light.

3 The joy of all who dwell above, The joy of all below, To whom he manifests his love And grants his name to know 4 To them, the cross, with all its shame, With all its grace is giv'n; Their name an everlasting name, Their joy the joy of Heav'n.

5 They suffer with their Lord below, They reign with him above; Their profit and their joy to know The myst'ry of his love.

6 The cross he bore is life and health, Tho' shame and death to him; His people's hope, his people's wealth, Their everlasting theme.

This hymn is now considered one of the greatest hymns in the English Language; Erik Routley, the hymn writer and musicologist, described this hymn as "perhaps the finest of all hymns; Thomas Kelly has here comprehended the whole Gospel, and he tells of the Good news and of the mysterious mercy by which we may lay hold of it"

Very few hymn writers of this time period wrote texts *and* tunes, but Thomas Kelly had the skill and desire to do both. Not all of his texts were given tunes, but in this case "The head that once was crowned with thorns" was included in his music edition, vol 8.

Today the tune mainly used is *ST. MAGNUS* by Jeremiah Clarke (1674–1707). Hymn scholar J.R. Watson said, "It is a magnificent tune, rising to a wonderful climax at the beginning of the last line". When we read these words let our hearts sing with all the saints.

Christine Miles

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