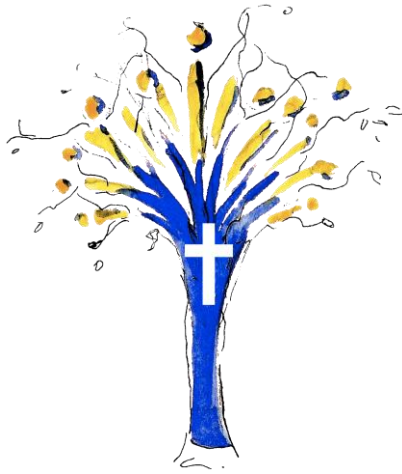


Off the Record



From **MAGOR
BAPTIST CHURCH**

*Growing and sharing
in God's love*



AUTUMN 2025

Keeping an eye on the time



I like watches. I have more than I need (which for some people means I have one!). They help me keep an eye on the time, but they don't always help me to be on time. I'm still liable to be late or rushed for something, but a watch means that I both know I'm late and I feel guilty about it.

Jesus told his disciples to watch.

He said "**watch yourselves** lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap" (Luke 21v34). That is to say: **keep a good eye on the time**. Not the time on the clock, but rather that the day when he returns may come without notice, when you are least ready for it. Watch, he says, so that the ways of the world do not entice or distress you, and you forget to keep a lookout for his return.

In the same vein, he tells his disciples a parable about the bridesmaids who did not prepare themselves for the arrival of the bridegroom and says to them: "**Keep awake** therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour." (Matthew 25v13) Perhaps we may feel a little sorry for the five sleepy bridesmaids. However, their drowsiness was more than a costly mistake. It was a failure to grasp the significance of the times and the nature of preparedness in these times.

Jesus is warning against a kind of spiritually disconnected state. This napping has dreadful consequences – the bridegroom does not recognise them. The five bridesmaids who are commended are watchfully alert for the coming of the bridegroom, not in that they successfully calculated the time of his arrival, but that they were prepared for his coming.

A tension with the future

How are we to be ready? Firstly, we need to know that we are not at home in this world. If we are watching for Jesus, we will feel a cultural tension.

But the tension is with what is to come, not with what is in the past. A great mistake of some contemporary Christian cultural analysis is that it is nostalgic for a time when 'Christian' was a byword for 'ethical and decent' in Western culture.

This is not just about 'wokeness'. We can give too much credit to 'woke'. In part, 'woke' itself is a strange mix of radical autonomous individualism and more standard left-leaning collectivism. Incoherently, it sees people as

radically free individuals AND as 'communities'. There are all kinds of internal tensions within it - the rights of women and trans rights being one example. Another is the call for protection of the vulnerable against domestic abuse whilst seeking the removal of protections against coercion to prematurely end life. It seems to me that you can't simply play the 'rights' game forever. In the end, rights come crashing into each other. Rights are the wrong place to focus.

Faithful alertness

The posture we need as Christians for 'this present time' is not manufactured panic but **faithful alertness**. If we now feel a cultural tension, it may be that we failed to feel it in years gone by. We should always have felt it, apocalyptically. To be apocalyptic is not to be Jonah, and give a one-side prophecy of disaster. It is to proclaim the judgement of God which also discloses the wonderful mercy!

We live between the cross and resurrection and the return of Jesus to judge both the living and the dead. With joy even amid tears, we lean into hope. There is no place then for the manufactured panic of the prophets of doom. Fear and resentment are not our hallmarks. These are entirely worldly - they show a grasping for what shreds of power and significance we can retain.

Our question is: what does witness to Jesus Christ look like in this present moment? It could look like many things. But it will surely feature:

Every time is a time for
bold gentleness

Courage without belligerence. The times call for unusual fortitude. But let us not confuse bravery with belligerence. Nothing justifies being a jerk. We are called to live at peace with everyone, so far as it is up to us. There is no case for saying 'oh, that was the time for gentleness, now is the time for boldness'. Every time is a time for bold gentleness - answering with respect, even when that is not returned. Render no-one evil for evil.

Joy and hope that feel contagious in a climate of fear. Instead, we respond to the climate of fear with joy and hope that witnesses to our longing for the future! These are such plaintive and far-off-sounding words in a world that has lost its moorings. But what a privilege to be able to speak them meaningfully, here and now!

With joy even amid
tears, we lean into hope

An Antidote to Despair

I have recently found a new word, to me at least. "**doom-scrolling**" It refers to that addictive continuum of social media and online news, which hooks you in with clickbait to read of the horrors that have happened, are happening, and might happen.

Somewhere in our mental storehouse there's a place for "**hope-scrolling**," and I've been wondering if that might revive the practice of memorising Scripture, "Your Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

Here's a good starting verse. I've changed the pronoun to make it a first person plural personal prayer:

"May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace as we trust in him, so that we may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."
(Romans 15v13)

Lord, deliver me from
doom-scrolling.

Rev. Mark Thomas

Fellowship News from Val Jones

It's hard to believe that it is the end of September already. The last few months have flown by. Because of the late rain the leaves are only just changing colour and we have yet to see the beautiful colour of red, yellow and gold which we associate with autumn. The berries are ripe on the hawthorn and other bushes in abundance which, whether an old wives tale or not, I associate with a harsh winter. We will just have to wait and see.

We have, of course, the wedding of Georgia and Nico to look forward to in October and we wish them every happiness as Mr & Mrs not forgetting little Ezekiel. It has been good that they have all joined us as a family in worshipping God together.

We had a Family Fun Day in August which was attended by lots (60+) of children who were asking when the next one was going to be. Thank you to all who worked so hard to make this a success enabling children to get to know more about Jesus whilst having fun.

The Ceilidh held in September with the Welsh Music Group was a new innovation but turned out to be a complete success and everyone is asking when the next one will take place.



We have just enjoyed our Harvest Festival Service when we came together to thank God for our daily food and to worship him. Thank you to all the ladies who brought food and laid out the token harvest display on the Saturday before. Also to all those who gave with items of food for Raven House or monetary gifts for the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS World Mission) 2025 Harvest Appeal – Refugees Welcome.



We have also embarked on two new projects "Forget Me Nots" which is a fortnightly meeting on a Wednesday for those suffering from memory loss to come along for a cup of tea and a chat with their loved ones. Also CAP; "Don't Fudge It, Budget" held at 7pm on a Thursday to chat about money worries and what can be done to help.

We extend our love and prayers to Chris Thomas, Andrew, Gemma and the whole family on the death of Howard at the end of July. Howard was part of the Ebenezer Family from when he was very little, being brought along with his Mum and Dad Gwyneth and Roy Thomas. He married the minister's daughter Christine Lawford. They have both served the Lord all their lives as did their parents before them. We thank God for Howard and ask him to surround Chris and the family with his love and peace at this time of parting. Kay and John Autherson are moving to Cawston near Rugby to be closer to their family and we pray that they will soon settle in there.

The celebration service for the long life of Beryl Cox (97) took place at Ebenezer on Friday 26th September and all the hymns reflected the love of Beryl for her Lord and the music she played. Beryl played the pipe organ when in the old chapel and the new organ and keyboard where we worship at present until she became hard of hearing and had to resign. She played a very active role in the many activities within the church Sunshiners, Ladies

Friendship, Women's Hour to name but a few. Such a lovely Christian lady and the life she lived was an example to us all. We pray for God's peace and blessing to be with the whole family as they come to terms with their sad loss.



Guess who won the sunflower competition?

????????? Big Quiz Night is back! Save the date!

At 7.30pm on Saturday 15th November at the church.

Dear Friends

ATOM : A Taste of Mission

Visit Uganda in March 2026

Come to Uganda with us?

Anne and I are planning to visit Uganda in March 2026 to join Peter & Rose Kasozi and see the work they are doing in 'Rock Projects Uganda'.



Rock Projects originated just 7 miles outside of Uganda's capital city, Kampala, in a village called Kitetikka, where they now have a Primary School, High School, church, and both girls & boys dormitories all located there.

<https://www.rockprojectsuganda.org/about-us>

In 2014 work started on developing a site in Busiika, where there now stands Sunbeams Nursery, Primary & Secondary School & both girls & boys dormitories. All of these different facilities are focused on the care of under-privileged children.

If you're ready for 'a taste of mission' (ATOM) have a word with Mark or Anne. The planning is at the early stages and there are many details to sort out, but that is the exciting nature of ATOM!

BMS Harvest Appeal – Sunday 28th September



This harvest we are supporting BMS World Mission's ***Refugees Welcome*** harvest appeal. At the heart of the appeal is a welcome centre aiding refugees in Cyprus, offering essential services such as a food bank, help in processing paperwork and provision of computing classes. Through the appeal, our harvest offering will keep the vital foodbank running. We encourage everyone to join us in making a

meaningful difference in the lives of those in need. Together, we can bring hope to those who have lost everything. Special donation envelopes are available or gifts can be made online with reference Harvest.

Financial Reserve Grants

Following on from the decision by the church members to start reducing our excess financial reserves a number of proposals were submitted to the deaconate. A small sub-group recommended the following proposals for specific projects which were agreed at the September church meeting. Already many of the recipients have indicated their appreciation of these gifts (see below) and we will support our gifts with prayer as well.

Bridge Christian Counselling - Hello John

Could I first offer to you, on behalf of the Trustees, management and whole Bridge Team the sincerest thank you for your award of £2,000 to the Bridge. Our praise and thanks goes to the Lord for placing us before you and for your response.

It couldn't come at a better time! After 2 years at the Gaer, our landlords, Liberty church decided to end their Sunday meetings at Llanwern High School and come over to the building where Bridge was sited. This meant them needing our premises, and thus giving us notice. 24 hours later we received an invitation to go to Bishpool Methodist Church, on your side of Newport. Everything clicked and on 5th September Bridge moved!

There is work to do, and we are much in prayer for the finances we will need. We have taken over a large room at the back of the church. By putting up a partition wall we can turn the room into office and counselling rooms, with a room next door which can be used for counselling in the meantime, but as an 'overflow' in the future.

We further need to update some electrics, re-install our intercom service and, but of little cost to us we have to have telephone and broadband installed. BMC has no connections of any kind and, on Openreach's inspection last week we are going to need them to cut a trench across the road, to bring a cable to the church! Our Tech people are looking into interim solutions - which may cost some money.

Counselling wise we are very busy and hope to be taking on soon our 3rd student on placement. We will have then 10 counsellors. We also are looking for additional Trustees, a supervisor and more Admin volunteers. Please let the saints at Magor know!

Health Help International - Dear John,

Many thanks of thinking of HHI. £1,000 will help a lot with those who are vulnerable in India and Zambia.

Quest Busters Monmouthshire – activities for children with special needs

- Dear John,

Thank you so much for reaching out and for awarding our project such a generous donation. We are very grateful to your members and organisation – this contribution will make a real difference and enable us to support even more children and families!

Fuelcast Daily bible videos - Hi Mark,

Thank you so much for this, we are so very grateful. Please pass on our gratitude to your deacons and church members.

London School of Theology bursary for students from Wales – Dear Mark

I wanted to write to you to personally thank you for your generous grant and enthusiastic support.

We have learnt of the tragic closure of Spurgeon's College which has been faithfully training thousands of men and women for ministry and serving for 169 years.

We lament for our brothers and sisters who are affected by this news and want to support them the best way we can in prayer, as well as offering some suitable next steps for current students who may be considering London School of Theology to complete their studies. Earlier this month, we hosted two Q+A sessions, as well as an undergraduate online open event. It now seems that several undergraduate and post graduate students, who have lost their funding, will continue their studies at LST. So, your generous grant for the scholarship & bursary fund has been even more welcome at this moment, as the school attempts to reach out to more students in need.

Please let me know if you have any questions or require any additional information, and please pass on our sincerest gratitude to your leadership team and all the families at Magor Baptist Church for your prayers and generous provision.

Natalyas Fund – Bughangu school fittings - Dear church,

Thank you for accepting our proposal for use of budgeted reserve funds, and for your prompt payment of the £2,600 we requested in our bid. We have transferred the sum to Bughungu Primary School. It should not be long before children will no longer have to sit on the concrete floor for their classes. You had already helped us raise the money to build three

classrooms and an office. This kind donation is enough to fully furnish those classrooms with wooden desks, chairs and tables, to provide a large cupboard for the office, and in addition to provide some benches for the children to sit on in chapel.

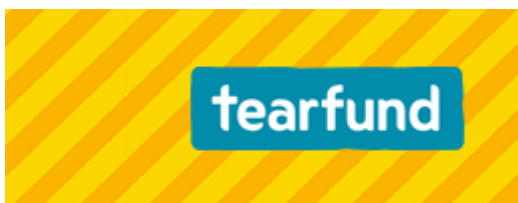
This project was the top priority for the headteacher, Teddy. She is naturally overjoyed at the prospect of the work being done. To quote from her, "*God is Great and his name be glorified all the time.*" The children will of course be excited to receive their new furniture, as will the teachers. Many thanks for changing lives.

Peter Kasozi Rock Projects Uganda - Nkudumali school fittings & borehole - Dear John and friends at Magor, greetings from Uganda.

What a joy to hear about the donation of 5,000 pounds! The work in Nkudumali still needs a lot of support and this one is quite substantial. We know already how we are going to spend the money by God's grace. I will keep you informed of all the progress.

When friends from Magor visit early next year I will be so delighted to show them the difference in terms of impact. We, on the receiving end are so delighted and pray that the Lord will grace you all with a real more blessed joy of Acts 20 verse 35. God bless you richly.

In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'



News from Tearfund

Dear Friends,

Two earthquakes have hit Afghanistan in the last month. The first was on Sunday 31 August; an earthquake with a magnitude of 6.0 in eastern Afghanistan, leaving more than 1,400 people dead and 3,000 reported as injured. A second earthquake hit the region on Tuesday 2 September.

You may have seen the devastating scenes on the news. Parents digging through the rubble, searching for their children. Homes, schools and roads

reduced to dust. People injured and in shock. Families with nowhere safe to sleep.

Those who survived are facing the crushing loss of their loved ones and homes. **Survivors are in desperate need of emergency shelter, food and clean water to survive.**

Rescuers are struggling to reach remote villages because of the mountainous terrain. Some places are cut off by landslides and roads have been destroyed.

You can bring help and hope today.

Right now, we're working with our partners in eastern Afghanistan to provide life-saving aid and relief to people affected by the earthquake. In a disaster like this, every minute counts.

Your gift today will save lives and help people recover from this crisis.

Will you show God's love to people in need?

- **£18 could provide three families with clean water and sanitation for a month**
- **£49 could provide a family with emergency shelter for a month**
- **£120 could provide two families with food for a month**

'Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,' says the Lord, who has compassion on you.' (Isaiah 54:10)

Please donate if you can, and pray for God to bring protection, comfort and healing to all those impacted by this disaster.

Thank you for your faithful support.

Yours in Christ,



Kate Woods

Wales Church and Supporter Executive, Tearfund

www.tearfund.org

You can't build God's kingdom with the enemy's tools

When the people on the platform are promoting violence and hate, Christians should have no part in the protest.

One day, long ago, in a time of great political uncertainty not unlike our own, a man had a vision. His vision was so transformative that it set him on a course that would bring him into conflict with the leaders of his day. It was a vision that emboldened him to speak courageous words to power. It was a vision that still inspires many of us today.

"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord," says Isaiah (6v1). "And he was high and lifted up...and the whole earth was full of his glory." Later, Isaiah got the chance to apply this to a very real, very troubling, situation.

Forging shady alliances with those in power will not build God's kingdom

King Ahaz was considering his options in the face of a threat. "Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what it fears," Isaiah told him (8v12). God, through Isaiah, was instructing the king not to use the logic of human power and strength; not to make his decision based on the pragmatics of army size or wealth; but to trust the God who is seated on the throne above the heavens and the earth, and fills the earth with his glory.

King Ahaz was having none of it, piously declaring that he would most certainly *not* seek a confirming sign from the Lord. And two things happened. The Lord gave him a sign anyway, the sign of Immanuel - the sign that would ultimately be fulfilled in the birth of a tiny baby under the boot of the Roman Empire. But before that, the other thing happened; Ahaz made his alliance with Assyria, and Assyria proved to be no friend.

Assyria offered assistance to Ahaz. It purported to be an ally. But it was serving its own purposes. And there are important parallels playing out right now.

FEEL THE FEAR AND TRUST GOD ANYWAY

What I saw on my TV screen just a few weeks ago were Christians who seemed to be following the example of Ahaz, and not the advice of Isaiah - Christians who were accepting alliance with people like Tommy Robinson (convicted of multiple offences) and Elon Musk, who recently called for the

revolutionary overthrow of the British government, telling protesters in London that “violence is coming” and “you either fight back or you die”. These are not light matters.

What brought many Christians onto the streets of London was fear and concern - concerns that are not unreasonable. Some are concerned about the moral decline in our nation; some are concerned about the residents of council estates who are experiencing generational unemployment and substandard housing; and some are concerned about a level of immigration which, to some, feels out of control.

But these fears are stoked by certain prominent individuals - by politicians and wannabe politicians - including the likes of Robinson. The fears are exploited; they are used to bait the hook.

What does it mean, in such situations, to follow Isaiah’s advice and not fear what others fear? It means to trust that God is on the throne. The temptation is to respond in the ways that we have been accustomed to respond since Cain killed Abel - with the use of power, the pursuit of superior numbers, louder voices or bigger weapons. So, when someone influential comes along and offers a treaty, it’s tempting to take the offer - even if they are a bit dodgy.

Even if they promote violence, use racist language or distort the truth? When someone comes along speaking smooth words and sounding for all the world like a Christian - or at least an ally of Christians - it’s tempting to do the deal. The end justifies the means, surely? This is the logic of Ahaz. But try to ride a tiger, and it will turn to bite you.

Try to ride a tiger, and it will turn to bite you.

BUILDING SOMETHING BETTER

What does it mean, in these times, that God is on the throne? Here’s what it doesn’t mean. It *doesn’t* mean that we are called to establish heaven on earth by the pursuit of power or the forging of shady alliances.

“My kingdom is not of this world,” Jesus told Pilate (John 18:36). So, though we are called to *testify* to the values of the kingdom, and to *live by* them, we are not called to *impose* the kingdom.

"Our enemies are not of flesh and blood," says Paul (Ephesians 6:12). Tell that to the bishop who stood in Trafalgar Square and spoke of Muslims as enemies rather than neighbours to be loved.

No, God is on the throne, and he doesn't require a helping shove from us to enthrone him. Our responsibility is to live as though we believe it. God is on the throne and so we don't need to make dodgy deals to put him there.

God is on the throne, and so we can trust that he will grow his kingdom. And how does his kingdom grow? Like seeds, like yeast. Slowly, patiently, gently. Through love and mercy, through unexpected forgiveness and outrageous hospitality. Through the relentless pursuit of justice with peace. In the weakness of a baby, in the humility of a cross.

We cannot build the Lord's kingdom with the enemy's tools. But we can cooperate with his gentle, truthful, patient Spirit while he builds it, in his way and in his time.

Can we trust the Lord's way of building?

**Rev. Dr. Helen Paynter.
Bristol Baptist College**



Thank you for your generous donation to our **Myanmar Earthquake Appeal** earlier this year.

Six months on from the devastating earthquake, your gift has had an incredible impact. With your support, Tearfund and our partners have been able to reach 15,000 people – providing food and water, medical care, trauma counselling and support to rebuild their homes and lives. Thank you for showing God's love to people in need.

You've made a huge difference for people like Zhin, a nursery teacher who lost her home and business in the earthquake. Read on for Zhin's full story and to see how your gift is helping people find new hope for the future.

The impact of your gift



Because of your generosity, Tearfund continues to work with our partners and local churches in Myanmar to meet the most urgent needs of communities, delivering life-saving aid to people in need.

Zhin - the teacher who rescued her children

When the 7.7 magnitude earthquake struck on 28 March, 30 children were sleeping at the childcare centre Zhin ran in her home. *'Saving the lives of the children was the first thing that came to my mind,'* she says. Acting quickly, she managed to move all of them to safety.

But moments later, a second, stronger tremor struck. This time, her entire house collapsed. Bricks and debris destroyed all her belongings. Though deeply distressed by the loss of her home, Zhin found comfort in knowing the children were safe.

Zhin's livelihood was gone. With her home destroyed, she had nowhere to run her childcare centre and had to shut it down. Without the income from school fees, she had no money to afford even basic essentials like food.

Thanks to your generous support, Tearfund's partner was able to step in and provide Zhin with food, water and cash support.

Your compassion showed her God's care and made her feel hopeful. She said she was deeply moved by the kindness shown by her neighbours and local churches, who offered help without discrimination.

Zhin, 54, proudly shows a Tearfund staff member the iron sheets she has purchased, with your support, as she starts to rebuild her home.



You're providing a new start

When we visited her, Zhin had already begun repairing her home with support from her community. She proudly showed the iron sheets she had purchased – some with her own savings and some donated by individuals through our partner church. She shared how she felt genuine love and kindness from the Christian community during her time of need.

Once her house is fully repaired, Zhin plans to reopen her childcare centre. She is also actively supporting Tearfund partners by collecting data on affected families and helping to distribute cash support.

'I am thankful for the assistance and care I received in such uncertain times', she says. 'Now I have hope to restart my life, rebuild my home and continue to lead our self-help group so we can support each other.'

Thank you for showing God's love to people in need.

Pray with us

- Pray for strength and resilience for the people of Myanmar, who have faced so much adversity over the last few years. Pray that our peace-building activities will bring unity and healing to the affected communities.
- Pray for strength and safety for our local partners as they continue to work tirelessly to deliver life-changing support.
- Pray for protection during the monsoon season, which lasts until October. Pray for mild weather, minimal rain and no flooding.

'The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.' (Psalm 145:8-9)

You're helping to reach thousands more people in Myanmar with food, shelter materials and medical help so they can start to rebuild their lives.

Thank you for showing God's compassion and kindness to people in need.



News from Mary's Meals

Dear Friends

I wanted to get in touch and share some super exciting news. Thanks to the fantastic generosity of supporters like yourselves, I am proud to announce, Mary's Meals is now reaching **3 million children every school day!** We could not have reached this huge milestone without your support and hope you are just as thrilled as we are to celebrate this occasion. We are hosting an exclusive webinar in October to mark this achievement, so do keep your eyes peeled for an email coming soon with more information!

To give a bit of background and context to this brilliant milestone, at the start of 2024, Mary's Meals were feeding 2.4 million children every school day. Over the course of the year, we reached an **additional 343,000 children**, including those affected by violence in Ethiopia, Haiti, and South Sudan, and launched a new school feeding programme in Mozambique. In 2025, we have expanded to bring Mary's Meals to **a further 462,000 children** in eight countries including Madagascar, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The children at Namingwere Primary School are part of this – you can watch their first day receiving Mary's Meals [here!](#)

As wonderful as this accomplishment is, Mary's Meals never stops striving to achieve more. Looking ahead, we are working toward an ambitious goal - **reaching four million hungry children every school day!**

You are part of a community that is fuelling hope for generations to come, so that the children we feed now, will be the ones to lift their communities out of poverty in the future.

A huge and heartfelt thank you for being a part of this movement. Together we can work to ensure that one day, every child receives a daily school meal.

With very best wishes,

Anoushka

Anoushka Negi
Philanthropy & Partnerships Officer
Mary's Meals



Megan, flanked by Kadi and Steven, with James and Isata in the front.

Some of you may remember **Megan Kanneh** whose photograph, along with her four young children, appeared on the cover of the April 1975 magazine when she became a member of Ebenezer. Many more of you, however, will know of her grandchildren - the internationally famous and musically-talented Kanneh-Masons. Megan's story is quite remarkable.

She trained to be a teacher at Hereford Training College, which had links with Saltley College, Birmingham. The two colleges would hold joint dances, which is where Megan met her future husband, Bernard Kanneh, who came from Sierra Leone. After he qualified he had to return to Sierra Leone. She followed a year later and the day after she arrived they married. They had four children: Steven, Kadiatu, Isata and James. Sadly, in 1970, when James was just five months old, Bernard died aged 35. Megan returned to the UK and lived for four years with her parents in Essex where her father, James Edwards, was a Baptist minister, though nearing retirement. Megan taught in a local Essex primary school, but wanted to return to Wales, where she had been born. She applied for teaching posts and got a job at Llanmartin Primary School. She moved to Caldicot with the children in 1974, buying Bernard and Pam Hill's home when they moved to Undy. Her children attended Llanmartin, then Caldicot, schools. The following year her father retired and her parents also moved back to Wales, buying a house in Sandy Lane, Caldicot, and Megan moved to her present house. She taught all the children to play the piano.

Her elder daughter Kadi married an Antiguan, Stuart Mason, at Caldicot Methodist in 1995. He too is musical, playing piano and cello. They have seven children, all very musical: Isata (piano - a finalist for BBC Young Musician in 2014; Braimah (violin); Sheku (cello - winner of BBC Young Musician in 2016, played at the wedding of Prince Harry and Megan Markle in 2018, and awarded an MBE for services to music in the 2020 New Year's Honours List); Konya (piano and violin); Jeneba (piano); Aminata (piano and violin) and Mariatu (cello and piano). They are all proud of their Welsh, Sierra-Leonian and Antiguan heritage, and maintain strong links with family in the different countries. They all perform at concerts around the world, and have variously appeared in many radio and TV programmes, including the Baftas (2018), the Royal Variety Show (2019) and several Prom concerts. They have variously made many recordings, but two albums involve all seven siblings: *Carnival* in 2020, and *River of Music*, released recently (12/9/2025).

Kadi has written a book about her family: *House of Music: Raising the Kanneh-Masons*, which has won several awards. A second book, *To Be Young, Gifted and Black*, was published earlier this year, and focuses on growing up as a black artist. Sheku has also written a couple of books also published earlier this year: *The Power of Music*, and a children's book, *Little Sheku and the Animal Orchestra*. To read more about the family, see their website: <https://www.kannehmasons.com>.

This article did not appear in the 50 years ago snippets in the Easter magazine as I wanted to check that Megan was happy for me to write about her. I am extremely grateful that she not only agreed, but also gave me a lot more information.

Chris Leighton

Snippets from the magazines, 50 years ago **by Chris Leighton**

September – November 1975

September 1975

More about Megan and her family

Having just written the article about Megan Kanneh from the April magazine, I opened the September one to find her mentioned again. The minister had been presiding at the Chapel of Ease at Abercarn on 10 August, and *'we were pleased to welcome Rev. James Edwards, BA, BD, to our pulpit. His messages were enjoyable and helpful to us all, and we look forward to*

hearing him again. Rev. and Mrs Edwards have come to live in Caldicot, to be near their daughter, Mrs Megan Kanneh, and their four grandchildren, so we look forward to them sharing worship with us.'

For a 10p donation to the BMS Hungry Children Fund, people could put birthday greetings in the magazine. One of those grandchildren, Isata Kanneh, received such a greeting from *'Mummy, Steven, Kadie, James, Nana & Grandpa, and the Primary Class'*.

Incidentally, the Chapel of Ease at Abercarn is probably now a home. Three years ago an article in the *Caerphilly Observer* stated that the former chapel, built in 1876 and rebuilt in 1895, hadn't operated for a number of years and was set to be converted into a home.

Magazine circulation

In the past 10 years, circulation of the magazine had increased from under 100 copies to nearly 700. The cost of paper had doubled in the past three years and postage more than doubled. To save paper and postage, people were encouraged to avoid repetition!

Additional minister

The church had been praying and exploring *'several avenues trying to discover the Lord's wishes for the effective working of both preaching and pastoral ministry in the enlarged Magor/Caldicot district'*. Then, at the suggestion of the area superintendent, two deacons visited the Baptist College of Regent's Park in Oxford and met Rev. Alison Jones, and outlined the work. She promised to give the matter prayerful consideration and later visited the area. After further prayer, she was again to visit to meet the rest of the deacons and congregation. Alison was born and educated in Stockport, then got a BSc in Botany at Edinburgh and PhD in Botanical Ecology at Durham. Although coming from a Presbyterian background, she became a member of Durham Baptist church in 1968. In 1975 she completed her BA in Theology and was ordained on 5 July.

October 1975

It's a Knock-out

In the September magazine, the youngsters from Ebenezer had been congratulated for winning the 'Christian It's a Knock-out' in Pontypool Park, beating Pontypool, Bridgend, Aberaman and Abertillery. A fuller report in October stated, *'We had the largest team, 35 young people in all, and with their enthusiasm to take part in the games, cheer their comrades on, and praise and witness for the Lord to the large crowd assembled at a every opportunity, their winning cup was well deserved.'* On the Tuesday before they *'had a practice in the Square at the games they were going to play'*.

November/December 1975

A combined magazine, it featured a photo on the cover of Rev. Alison Jones, who would be inducted to the co-pastorate on 8 November.

Extra

There was not space to include this adaptation from Matthew 25 which had appeared in the June 1975 magazine. As we have just celebrated harvest, I thought I would add it in here.



'Hungry?'

I was hungry and you blamed it on the Communists
I was hungry and you circled the moon
I was hungry and you told me to wait
I was hungry and you set up a commission
I was hungry and you said, "so were my ancestors"
I was hungry and you said, "we don't hire over 35s"
I was hungry and you said, "God help those ..."
I was hungry and you told me I shouldn't be
I was hungry and you told me machines do that work now
I was hungry and you told me you had defence bills to pay
I was hungry and you said, "the poor are always with us"
Lord, when did we see you hungry?'

Chris Leighton

My eyes have seen the Glory

Julia Ward Howe

An e-mail drops into my computer; it is time to prepare my article about a hymn for the next copy of Off the Record. As I look at the date to submit my 'copy' it is Harvest Sunday. Therefore, a harvest hymn is not really required. It is autumn and it is predicted to be a very splendid autumn and the scientists tell us the lovely sun of the summer has built up the sugars in the leaves of the trees and this year we will get much brighter colours and a wonderful autumn display. Are there many hymns about leaves? I walk over to the hymn book collection which covers nearly 100 years of hymn books. From a very early Sankey's Sacred Songs and Solos (my Grandmother's copy

with only 890 hymns not the thousand plus of latter copies) to a Complete Mission Praise via Baptist, Methodist, Congregational /URC hymnbooks and others, I am thinking which hymn shall I choose.

With the thoughts of autumn and hymns running around my head the lines **Glory, glory, hallelujah!** comes to mind. These words are the first line of the chorus to **My eyes Have seen the Glory of the coming of the Lord** otherwise known as the Battle hymn of the Republic This hymn can be used to remind us that the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His holy angels as in Matthew 16 v27.



Julia Ward Howe was born on May 28, 1819, in New York. In 1848 she married Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, MA the Director of the Perkins Institute for the Blind in Boston. They were greatly interested in humanitarian causes, including abolition. Julia was active as a writer, and published three volumes of poetry, *Passion Flowers* in 1854, *Words of the Hour* in 1856, and *Later Lyrics* in

1866. In December of 1861, eighteen months after the American Civil War had begun, Mr and Mrs. Howe, and their minister from the local church James Freeman Clarke, visited Washington, DC, with Gov. Andrews of Massachusetts and his wife. They went to watch a military review at a Union Army camp on the Potomac River. The stirring character of the music caught their attention and Clarke suggested that Mrs. Howe could pen better lyrics for the melody.

Julia Howe wrote *"I went to bed that night as usual, and slept, according to my wont, quite soundly. I awoke in the grey of the morning twilight; and as I lay waiting for the dawn, the long lines of the desired poem began to twine themselves in my mind. Having thought out all the stanzas, I said to myself, "I must get up and write these verses down, lest I fall asleep again and forget them." So, with a sudden effort, I sprang out of bed, and found in the dimness an old stump of a pencil which I remembered to have used the day before. I scrawled the verses almost without looking at the paper."*

On her return to Boston, Julia Howe showed it to James T. Fields, editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, who published it in Feb., 1862, under the title "Battle Hymn of the Republic." That gave the hymn its name. Partly through the tune (John Brown's body) but also because of the theme of fighting a religious war the hymn became very popular very quickly. What is often overlooked is that there is a message in every verse as well as the uplifting chorus.

The first verse pictures the Lord's coming as in Act 1:11; he will judge the world as symbolized by the trampling of the wine press Rev. 14:19 and then the judgement through the word of God.

In verse 2 the trumpet is the gospel message that began blowing on the day of Pentecost and ever since then has never sounded retreat: and we should be ready to spread the message far and wide. When we come before the judgement seat we need to be ready to give an account for ourselves and how we have passed the message on.

Verse 3 is a reminder that Christ spoke of the lilies of the field because they were a part of His surroundings, and He was born across the sea. Christ died for us, so what do we give to keep people free; the altered words of the hymn now-a-days says "Let us live to make men free".

Today it is unlikely that this hymn will be found in the newer hymn books. Some compliers find the martial concept of the hymn difficult, or find the music trite. For others it could be considered to fly-in-the-face of a Peaceful faith. Whatever the reason it seems a shame that there will be those who will not have the joy of singing **Glory, glory, hallelujah!**

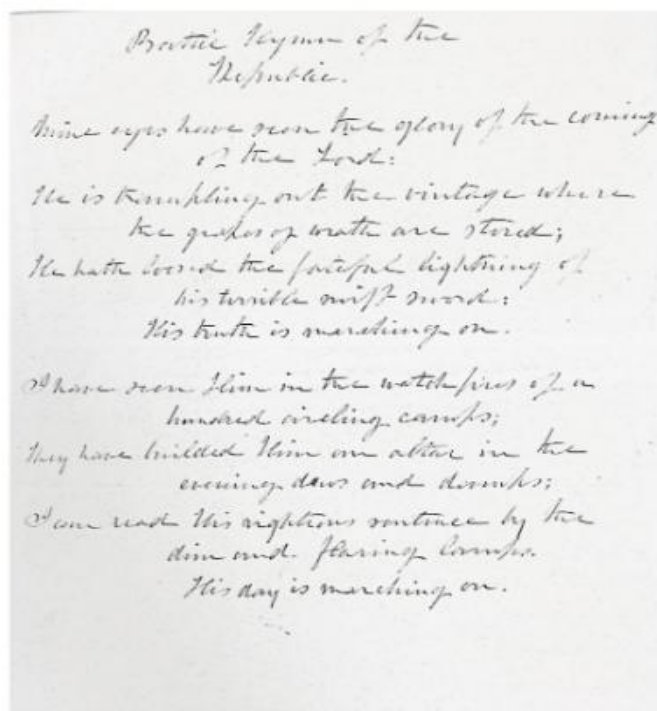
Mine eyes have seen the glory of the
coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where
the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning
of his terrible swift sword;
His truth is marching on.

Refrain:
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!
His truth is marching on.

He has sounded forth the trumpet
that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of all
before His judgment seat;
O be swift, my soul, to answer Him;
be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on. [Refrain]

In the beauty of the lilies Christ
was born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that
transfigures you and me;
As He died to make us holy,
let us live to make men free,
while God is marching on. [Refrain]

Below is the hymn as Julia Ward wrote it. This is now at the Pearce Museum, Cook Education Centre, Navarro College campus, Corsicana, Texas. They have an extensive American Civil War archive.



Battle Hymn of the Republic.
Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming
of the Lord:
He is trampling out the vintage where
the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of
his terrible swift sword:
His truth is marching on.
I have seen Him in the watch-towers of an
hundred circling camps;
They have builded Him an altar in the
evening, dews and damps;
I have read His righteous sentence by the
dim and flaring lamps.
His day is marching on.

Christine Miles

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Published by Magor Baptist Church
The Square Magor Caldicot NP26 3HY
Sunday morning services at 11am.