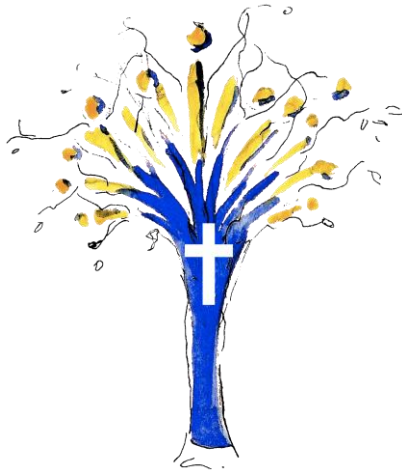


# Off the Record



From **MAGOR  
BAPTIST CHURCH**

*Growing and sharing  
in God's love*



**SUMMER 2026**



## The Difference Jesus Makes

Summer has a way of slowing us down. The longer evenings, holidays, and time spent outdoors can create space to notice things we often rush past: the beauty of a garden, the laughter of children, the joy of sharing a meal with friends.

In the Gospels, Jesus seemed remarkably attentive to ordinary life. He noticed birds, flowers, fishermen, farmers, weddings, and dinner tables. He taught that God's kingdom was not about escaping this world, but about God's life and love breaking into it.

Many people assume that faith is mainly about what happens after we die. Yet Jesus spoke repeatedly about life here and now. "***I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full***" (John 10 v10). His invitation is not to believe certain truths, but to discover a different way of living.

What difference does Jesus make? He teaches us that we are loved before we have achieved anything. He frees us from the exhausting need to prove our worth. He teaches us to forgive when resentment would be easier. He reminds us that people matter more than possessions and that rest is not laziness but a gift from God.

In a culture that often celebrates busyness, Jesus invites us to slow down enough to notice God's presence. In a world marked by anxiety, he offers peace. In times of loneliness, he offers companionship. In moments of failure, he offers grace.

The Christian life is not about being perfect. It is about learning, day by day, to walk with Jesus and to see the world through his eyes. As we do, we often discover that the greatest changes happen not in dramatic moments but in the ordinary rhythms of everyday life.

This summer, perhaps the invitation is simply to pay attention: to the beauty around us, to the people we love, and to the quiet voice of Christ who still says, "***Come to me.***" We may find that his presence makes all the difference.

**Mark**

***I have come that they may have life,  
and have it to the full (John 10 v10).***

## Fellowship News

from Helen Ellwood



Well, here we are entering July and what a roasting we have all had. Temperatures have reached all-time highs of late, and I think many of us have found it a challenge. Particularly with certain health conditions and with sleeping at night. It does however make us realise how fortunate we are to have ready access to clean drinking water or indeed any water at all. So many countries do not have this luxury we take for granted.

For Easter Sunday we had our usual sunrise worship gathering at Black Rock. There was a good attendance of early risers and the usual very welcome refreshments provided by Sian and family were much appreciated, our thanks to them as always.



In April we had our second Family Fun Day Event of the year, it was a great success, very well attended and great fun. Thanks to everyone who made it happen.



In May we had the wonderful occasion of celebrating baby Orla's dedication. It was a truly blessed family gathering for Nicola and Adam. We continue to pray



for them all as they watch Orla grow in the love of this family, and her church family, God bless.

The chapel was filled to (more than) capacity for the funeral service of Andrew Cox (Oz/Ozzie,) on 29<sup>th</sup> May. The service was led by Rev Mark Thomas, and very moving tributes were given by his daughters Natalie and Leah, their mother Claire and Clyde Cartwright with Jason Davies gave a tribute at the crematorium on behalf of the football club. Andrew was a well-known figure in the village showing much kindness to everyone he met. We extend our love and prayers to Natalie, Saurin, Leah, and Hugo as well as sister Helen and John and the wider family. (Thanks to Val Jones for these notes.)

We also enjoyed sharing special birthdays recently with Gaynor and Bas, both celebrating their 90<sup>th</sup> birthdays. What a blessing to rejoice with them, praise God for He is good.



And last but not least I am sure we would all like to wish Mark a very blessed and enjoyable birthday for the first week of July.



Our 210<sup>th</sup> Church Anniversary was celebrated with guest speaker Tim Rowlands from Evangelical Alliance, Wales and included a buffet lunch enjoyed by many where strawberries featured prominently.



Please continue to pray for those in need of pastoral prayer, those who are bereaved, sick or undergoing treatment, also for those who may be anxious, afraid, or isolated. Please pray for one another you know through your house groups. Also continue to pray for and encourage new people visiting us, let's make them feel welcome and part of our church family.

## More Than a Trophy: Faith and the World Cup

Every four years, the FIFA World Cup captures the imagination of millions. Pubs and living rooms become gathering places, and conversations are dominated by predictions, performances, and penalties. For a few weeks, people from every corner of the globe are united by a shared love of the beautiful game.

There is something deeply compelling about the World Cup. We celebrate teamwork, perseverance, and the ability to perform under pressure. We marvel at moments of skill that can change the course of a match in an instant. We admire the minnows - those countries with little chance of winning the tournament, but they are there taking their place on the global stage.



Yet the World Cup also reveals something about the human heart. Players dream of lifting the trophy, nations long for glory, and supporters invest enormous emotional energy in the success of their team. While there is nothing wrong with passion and enthusiasm, major sporting events can prompt us to ask an important question: **where do we place our ultimate hope?**

The Bible often uses sporting imagery to describe the Christian life. The Apostle Paul compares discipleship to running a race with purpose and discipline. Writing to the Corinthians, he observes that athletes train hard to win a crown that will not last, whereas Christians pursue an eternal reward (1 Corinthians 9 v24-25).

The contrast is striking. Even the greatest achievements in sport are temporary. Champions eventually retire. Records are broken. The excitement of victory fades. A player who is celebrated around the world today may be largely forgotten in years to come. Sport offers many wonderful things, but it cannot provide lasting identity, security, or meaning.

That is why the Christian message is such good news. Through Jesus Christ, our worth is not based on our performance. We do not earn God's love through success, popularity, or achievement. Instead, we are loved because of what Christ has done for us. In a culture that often measures people by results, the Christian message reminds us that our deepest value comes from being known and loved by God.

For Christians involved in sport - whether as players, coaches, officials, or supporters - this changes everything. We can pursue excellence without making success our god. We can celebrate victories with gratitude and endure defeats without despair. Our identity rests not in the result on the scoreboard but in our relationship with Christ.

As we enjoy the drama and excitement of the World Cup, let's give thanks for the gift of sport and the opportunities it creates for friendship, community, and joy. But let's also remember that the greatest victory is not found on a football pitch. It was won at the cross on Calvary and confirmed

**Athletes train hard to win a crown that will not last,  
whereas Christians pursue an eternal reward**

by the empty tomb in the garden. Long after the final whistle has blown and the champions have been crowned, that victory remains. And it is a victory that is open to people from every nation, tribe, and language - a truly global invitation that far surpasses even the World Cup.

**Mark Thomas**



## In Cardiff from 10 – 29 September

*The world's largest floating bookfair, Logos Hope remains in each port for about two weeks and opens the gangways to thousands of visitors each day. On average, one million visitors have been welcomed on board one of our ships every year! The floating book fair offers over 5,000 titles.*

Logos Hope is one of the two Christian ships run by Operation Mobilisation (OM). The crew and staff are all Christians, on a training programme for evangelising.. There is a large bookshop with bibles in the language of the host ports. The books range from colouring books for the young to a wide range of educational, classical, practical eg cooking or motor mechanics. Travelling all round the world a visit's success is counted by the number of bibles sold.

During the visit to Cardiff you can visit the book fair and also have the opportunity to look round the ship and see the programme of events, on and off the ship.

### **Gaynor Chapple**

More information from <https://www.gbaships.org/en/LogosHope>

## Faith Report from Evangelical Alliance – Wales

The original *Faith in Wales* report was published in 2008, which was groundbreaking in its findings regarding the contribution of faith communities to Welsh society. The report has updated statistical information regarding the impact that Welsh faith communities are currently having within our local communities, particularly in terms of the social outreach projects, economic benefits and political engagement.

The 2025 *Faith in Wales* report bridges the 17-year gap since the first report was published and updates our understanding of the role that faith communities play in Welsh society, demonstrating the huge contribution they make, and the even greater impact they could have in the future.

### Encouraging Highlights

**Social and community impact** – 97% of faith communities offer some form of social action initiative

**Economic contribution** – Faith communities provide at least £250 million to the Welsh economy every year through staff, volunteers and premises

**Heart of the community** – Places of worship are often community hubs

**Mental health and resilience** – Faith is strongly linked to better mental wellbeing and increased resilience in everyday life

**Political engagement** – Faith community leaders are engaged with the political process.

More information from <https://www.eauk.org/about-us/nations/wales/faith-in-wales-2025-report>



To have the greatest impact on every level, we work with street children in three separate stages of their journey:



### **Prevention**

Vulnerable children and families sometimes need help. Toybox supports projects where the child or family are in danger of becoming reliant on the street. It is easier to help a child before they become deeply dependent to the street, meaning our chances of keeping children off the streets are much higher.

### **Intervention**

In a crisis, children and young people on the streets need direct help and they need it quickly. We support children who are living and/or working on the streets with practical and urgent support as well as helping to build their confidence to leave the streets.

### **Reintegration**

Children on the streets often need protection from abuse and neglect. Toybox works to trace family members to help children return home and reintegrate with their families and communities. This can also include helping children to access school or learn vocational skills.

## **Emergency Response**

Emergency situations are terrifying and traumatic for children. Without parents, other family members and a safe home street children are often the most vulnerable in these situations. We take an adaptive and agile approach to our work. This allows us to respond quickly and effectively in an emergency situation ensuring we're able to provide the support most needed.

## **Disability**

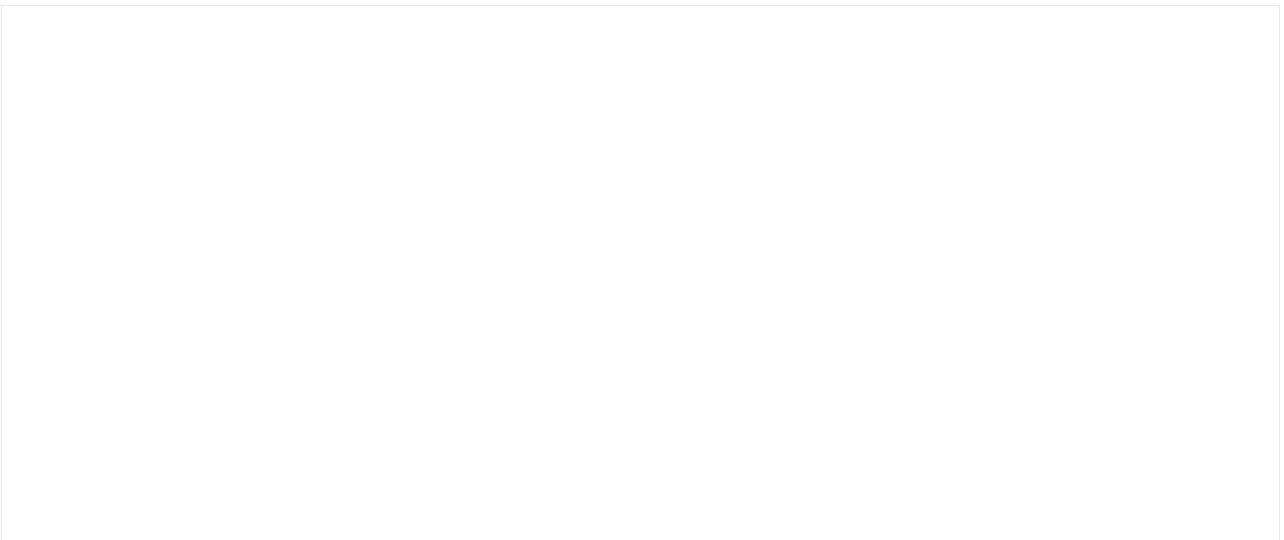
Many children with disabilities end up on the street due to stigma and rejection from their family or community or because their parents are unable to provide the care they need. For others, it's their caregiver who has a disability, leaving them on the streets and responsible for the family income. Our global plan sets out our intention to include these children in our programmes. Working with our partners we can help protect and empower them.

## **Our Partners**

We believe local organisations are best placed to understand the context, processes and needs of each country. By partnering with these organisations, many of whom are already working with street children, we ensure our project activities can be as successful as possible.

We encourage and facilitate our partners to share the unique aspects of their projects and learn from one another to explore and adapt activities for their location.

## **Toybox is our charity offering for August**



## Christian Nationalism is NOT the Kingdom of God

Are you familiar with the phrase *Christian nationalism*? While it's often associated with developments in the United States, we are seeing British versions of the same impulse: appeals to a supposedly Christian national identity, nostalgia for a lost moral order, and the suggestion that political power can be used to secure the future of the faith.

*Christian nationalism* becomes problematic when it confuses the Kingdom of God with the fortunes of a nation. Scripture consistently warns against this temptation. The Old Testament people of Israel were repeatedly judged by God's prophets for assuming that national identity guaranteed divine favour. God's concern was not with preserving a political brand, but with justice, mercy, faithfulness, and care for the vulnerable (see Micah 6 v8; Amos 5 v21).



In the UK today, *Christian nationalism* often appears less as a formal movement and more as a mood: the claim that Britain is fundamentally a Christian country whose traditions must be defended against secularism, immigration, or cultural change. Yet Jesus refused the temptations of power, coercion, and national glory. When questioned by Pilate, he declared, "My kingdom is not from this world" (John 18 v36).

Too often Scripture is misused to legitimise exclusion, fear, and hostility towards outsiders. Yet the Bible's overarching story points in the opposite direction: God's people are called to welcome the stranger (Leviticus 19 v33), seek peace (Jeremiah 29 v7), and recognise the image of God in every human being (Genesis 1 v27). Any vision of society that requires us to view neighbours primarily as threats should make Christians pause.

This does not mean Christians should withdraw from public life. We should engage in politics, advocate for justice, and contribute to the common good.

But our primary allegiance is not to Britain, England, Wales, Scotland, or any national project. As Paul reminds the Philippians, "our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3 v20).

our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3 v20).

Christian hope rests not in the creation of a Christian Britain, but in the coming Kingdom of God, where people from every nation, tribe, and language are gathered together in worship and peace (Revelation 7 v9). That is a vision far larger and far more hopeful than nationalism can ever offer.

**Mark Thomas**

## **Some mysteries of prayer**

from Hazel Lucas

For many years now, I have received regular requests from John Loebel, saying, would I like to write something for the Magor Baptist Church magazine? Until recently, the answer was always yes, because I was learning new things from God and very glad to share them. But I am now 83 and my inspiration works more slowly or I don't remember what I learned yesterday. However, this week I was struck afresh on the subject of prayer, which is something I can still do, and could be doing more.

My first reading came from 1 Chronicles 4:10. "*Jabez called upon the God of Israel, saying 'Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from harm so that it might not bring me pain!' And God granted him what he requested*". I have included the full quote from the ESV, because that is an accurate translation and the Bible should not be read in phrases taken out of context. I am certain that many unwell people, perhaps in old age, have seen the word 'pain' (which was actually the meaning of Jabez's name) and thought 'That's me! Please God, hear my request too!' But Jabez asked for a lot more than that, and maybe some of the other phrases are more important.

My second reading came from Luke 11: 5-13, where Jesus promises; '*Ask and it shall be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you.*' He goes on to say that if we, being evil, would not dream of giving our children a stone or a scorpion when they ask for bread or a fish, surely we can trust our heavenly Father, who is 100% good, to give us good

gifts when we ask, in particular, the Holy Spirit! Perhaps, like me, you have thought, why on earth did he say that? The Holy Spirit is not an alternative to bread or a fish! The children wanted something simple and specific, like Jabez trying to improve his farm and avoid the pain associated with his unfortunate name! Sometimes God does do exactly what we ask but on other occasions he certainly does not, and we are left asking Why, Lord?

In one of the worst situations of my life, which happened while I was attending Magor Baptist Church, God did not answer my prayers in at all the way I wanted and I was devastated. At one point I lost the confidence to

pray at all. Then a large section of the Wentwood Forest became available for sale and the Woodland Trust wanted to buy it, but they needed donations from those who lived in the area to raise the money. We feel strongly about our responsibility towards the natural world and we donated. At the same



time, I prayed, all right, Lord, if the Woodland Trust are given enough money for this purchase, then I will believe that you really do answer prayer and I will be able to start praying again. And it happened as I asked. Slowly, my confidence built up again, and I resumed my life of prayer. I learned that my view of God had been too narrow and too small, a complete rethink was necessary. A difficult lesson in one's 50s but I got there and it made a huge difference. I really don't understand sometimes, but he's still the only God I want to follow. Prayer is a conversation with our heavenly Father, who is 100% good, and he doesn't give us stones and scorpions. He knows when we are asking for the wrong thing.

Jabez asked that God's hand might be with him, and perhaps that's his equivalent of the Holy Spirit. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit brings us forgiveness, acceptance by our Father, understanding, transformation (even from the hang ups of childhood), strength to cope and guidance into the future. There truly is no good gift we could ask for, like the person of God Himself. I understand that now, and I need to, as old age takes its toll and I try to get closer to Him.

## Snippets from the magazine 50 years ago, June – August 1976

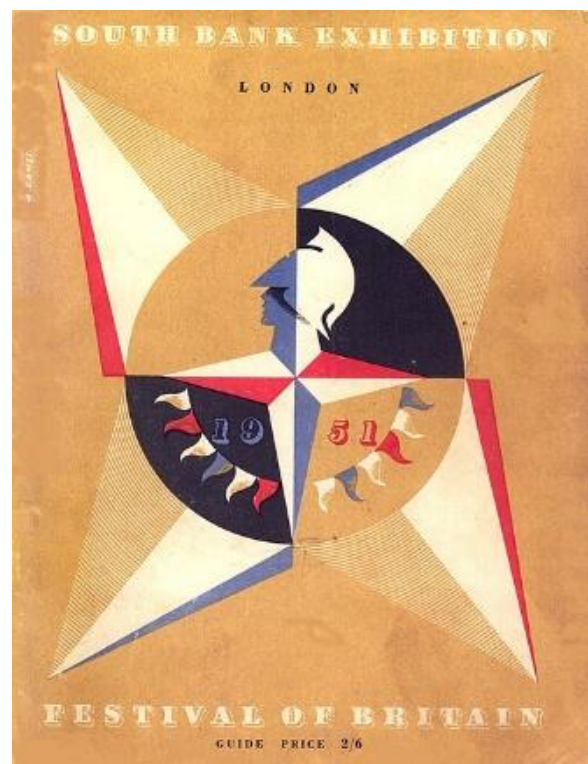
### June 1976

Magor Cubs, Scouts, Guides and Brownies thanked those who had supported their April show, which raised £95.47 to be divided between the groups. They also asked if anyone over 65 would like firewood for the autumn as they would be starting the wood cutting in June.

Church members growing sunflowers is not new. *'A number of young people from Ebenezer entered a sunflower-growing competition in mid-May, to grow the tallest sunflower. Between now and September they will be looking for sponsors and so much per inch, the proceeds being to support the magazine fund.'* The editor added that it was not too late become a grower, and five giant seeds were available.

### July 1976

The Family Festival Week would run from Saturday 10th until Sunday 18th July, starting with a Gwent English Baptist Association Youth Rally at Siloam. The next day was the Sunday School's 136th anniversary. On Monday there would be a family prayer fellowship and on Tuesday a women's evening. Wednesday would be a rehearsal for the Friday production of 'If my people' – a musical experience in worship and intercession. Perhaps some of you may remember that. On the Saturday there would be an afternoon picnic on the Dinchill and in the evening a barbecue at Magor Seawall. The church's 160th anniversary services on Sunday 18th rounded off the week. The summer of 1976 also saw the 25th anniversary of the 1951 Festival of Britain, which ran from 3 May to 30 September, to celebrate the centenary of the Great Exhibition of 1851. Perhaps some of you went. It had been a nationwide showcase of optimism and creativity to promote British science, technology, industrial design, architecture and the arts after years of wartime austerity. There were exhibition sites in Belfast, Cardiff and Glasgow, plus a touring exhibition on the ship *Campania* (in Cardiff, 31 July – 11 August 1951). However, the main Festival site was on London's South Bank, which now houses the Jubilee



Gardens and the London Eye. It was an area that had suffered bomb damage during the war but, even before that, was made up of largely derelict Victorian industrial buildings. London County Council owned that site and always intended that the Royal Festival Hall would be a permanent venue. There were also plans either to extend it or to build nearby a national theatre once the Festival was over. However, building materials were in short supply and the government prioritised housing and industrial reconstruction over leisure and entertainment. Those plans would have to wait and it was not until 25 October 1976 that the National Theatre was opened by the Queen.

## **August 1976**

The church hoped to raise enough to purchase an offset litho printing machine in the autumn, *'but this week we went to Birmingham in reply to an advertisement and found just what we were looking for at the very reasonable price of £500. A new machine of this model sells at £1,350 and this one was in excellent condition. So we brought it back having mortgaged ourselves in the process!* There were reminders to sponsor the sunflower growers, and forms were sent out to the non-local people who received copies of the magazine by post and would not therefore be approached in person for sponsorship. *'Our motto has always been, what's worth doing at all is worth doing well. And we are determined not to allow inflation to lower our standard.'* In total, 650 copies of the magazine were distributed.

As we are currently experiencing heatwaves, many will remember the summer of 1976, one of the hottest in the UK in the 20th century, with a persistent high-pressure system dominating from late May until late August, resulting in record-breaking temperatures and prolonged dry conditions. Rainfall during July and August was roughly half the annual average, and many areas experienced continuous sunshine, with an average of more than 14 hours of sunshine a day. Temperatures had exceeded 32°C in many places, and Cheltenham recorded 35.9°C on 3 July. There was a 16-week dry spell (the longest since 1727) which led, in August, to Parliament passing the Drought Act to ration water. The church magazine mentioned the weather, *'many weeks of real summer weather took its toll, drying up everything in record time – how many times did we pray for rain? Nevertheless the farmer got his hay in, the folks who went on outings or holidays had good weather.'* Indeed, over 330 enjoyed the Sunday School outing to Weston super Mare.

The August 1975 magazine had mentioned the young people of the Coffee Bar and Image had a project to renovate a caravan, In August they would not be meeting officially, just unofficially, as work on the caravan would be restarted now it had been re-sited.

Finally, thanks were expressed to the conductor, organist, pianist, guitarists, drummer, sound engineer and the choir who helped make 'If my people' such a success. They had been asked *'to repeat the presentation on Sunday 10 October ... at the 'After Church Service' at Queen's High School, Stowe Hill, Newport, ... and at the Woodcroft Conference Centre on Saturday 11 September.'*

Chris Leighton

## **Chris Leighton**

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### **Solo Diners**

**from Gaynor Chapple**

This is a strange name for the group from Ebenezer who have a regular visit to the Wheatsheaf for a Sunday roast. Our name comes from our normal habit of eating alone. I'm not certain, but I think we have been going some 11 or 12 years now. We started with 5 from our housegroup and quickly grew to 15, but there is still room for more.

If you would like to know more you can contact Gaynor Chapple on 01633 882488 or Rod Lewington on 07751 140557.

## More, More about Jesus

Written by Eliza Hewitt: (1851-1920)

The frustrated pupil who did not like being corrected about his work took his school slate and hit the teacher in the back. It must have been a very hard swipe as the teacher's back was so badly injured that she had to be nursed in a body case and given bed rest for 6 months. That was the kind of treatment used in 1887. There appears to be no record of the name of the pupil, but the teacher was Eliza Edmunds Hewitt, born on June 28<sup>th</sup> 1851 in the city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania USA.



Eliza was the 2<sup>nd</sup> child of 6 in her family, her father was James Stratton Hewitt and he was a very successful Sea Captain. She had 4 brothers and a sister. The children all enjoyed a good education and went on to become



NORTHERN HOME FOR FRIENDLESS CHILDREN  
Twenty-Third and Brown Streets, Philadelphia.

doctors, lawyers, businessmen and teachers. Eliza graduated top of the class from the Girls' Normal School of Philadelphia and went on to train as a teacher. She was teaching at the Northern Home for Friendless Children (pictured), when she sustained her injury.

What does a bright, gifted, intelligent young woman do when confined to bed? She studied English Literature and started to write poetry! In many of her poems she proclaims her faith in the Lord and His grace and mercy. One of her poems found its way into the hands of John R. Sweney, a well-known hymnist at the time, and he asked her to write some more poems for the purpose of turning them into hymns. Soon other musicians started asking her to write for them as well. Gradually over the years Eliza wrote over 1,000 hymns many of them in a joyful Gospel style. Sometimes Eliza collaborated with other hymn writers, and her circle of friends included Fanny Crosby, (the writer of great hymns like To God be The Glory,) and Emily Wilson, a composer.

"*More about Jesus*" is a personal hymn that reflects a spiritual hunger to know Jesus beyond the initial salvation. In the first verse the singer yearns to "*know more of His grace,*" "*more of His saving fullness see,*" and "*more of His love who died for me.*" These lines echo the Apostle Paul's desire in Philippians 3:10: "*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.*"

Each verse builds upon this theme, drawing the worshipper into deeper levels of discipleship. Verse 2 is about learning from the Lord directly—through His Word and voice. The third verse emphasizes the victory and guidance Jesus gives, His triumph over sin and Satan, and His kingly authority in the believer's life. In the fourth verse the hymn is tied together with a desire for communion and growth: "*More of His kingdom's sure increase; more of His coming, Prince of Peace.*" The recurring refrain, "*More, more about Jesus,*" reinforces the central message of the hymn - our walk with Christ is one of ever-deepening relationship and understanding.

All this was achieved through what seemed to have been a disaster for Eliza as she was unable to carry on with her teaching, and possibly marriage and family life. Her gifts were used to reach thousands and to help them to progress through their walk with the Lord and in their Christian lives. Eliza died on April 24, 1920, at the age of 68. She was born, she lived, and she died in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, but her hymns reached all the way around the world.

**1. More about Jesus would I know,**  
more of his grace to others show,  
more of his saving fulness see,  
more of his love—who died for me.

Chorus

*More, more about Jesus,  
more, more about Jesus:  
more of his saving fulness see,  
more of his love who died for me.*

2. More about Jesus let me learn,  
more of his holy will discern;  
Spirit of God, my teacher be,  
showing the things of Christ to me.

Chorus

3. More about Jesus in his word,  
holding communion with my Lord;  
hearing his voice in every line,  
making each faithful saying mine.

Chorus

4. More about Jesus on his throne,  
riches in glory all his own;  
more of his kingdom's sure increase;  
more of his coming, Prince of peace!

Chorus

*More, more about Jesus,  
more, more about Jesus:  
more of his saving fulness see,  
more of his love who died for me.*

**Christine Miles**

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