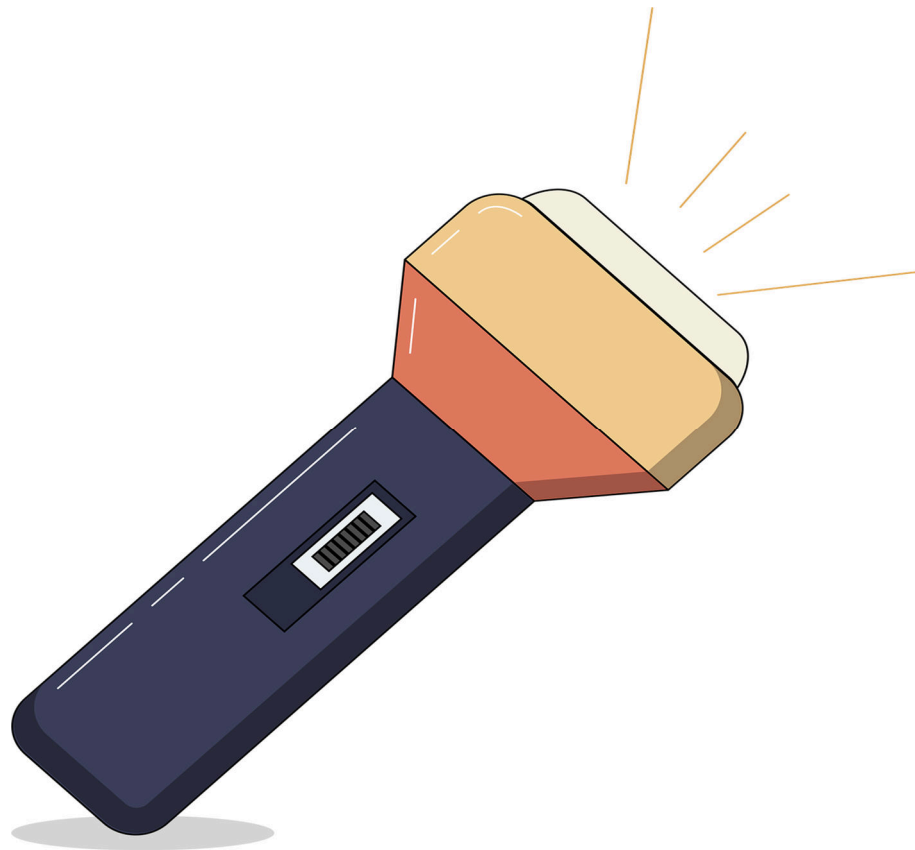


Knightrider Street News



JULY 2025

MAIDSTONE
BAPTIST CHURCH

The logo for Maidstone Baptist Church. It features a green cross on a hill, with a green arc above it. The text "MAIDSTONE" is in a green serif font, and "BAPTIST CHURCH" is in a bold green sans-serif font.

Taking the Good News of Jesus into our lives and into God's World
www.maidstonebaptist.net

Maidstone Baptist Church

Knightrider Street, Maidstone, Kent. ME15 6LU

Registered in England as a charity, no. 1128948

“Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!”

Genesis 1:31a (NLT)

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e-mail: minister@maidstonebaptist.net

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General Administrator: **Helen Jones**

Tel/Ans/Fax: 01622 686013

Church Office

e-mail:office@maidstonebaptist.net

Church Secretary: **Position vacant**

Church Treasurer: **Barbara Williams**

Tel: 01622 726006

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Church publications:

Monthly notice sheet:

Information for the notice sheet should be sent to the
General Administrator, c/o the church office.

***Monthly magazine:* Knightrider Street News**

Editorial Deadline: *Second Sunday of previous month:20.00hrs by e-mail only*

Editor: **Paul Tebbutt**

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Knightrider Street News Postal Distributor:

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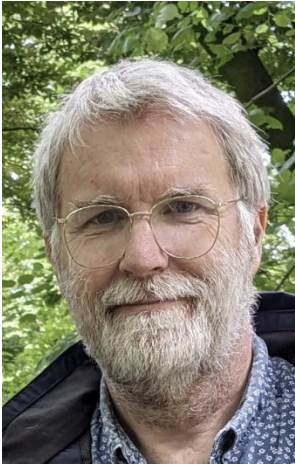
Views and opinions expressed in KSN articles are those of individual contributors, and are not necessarily those of the Church leadership or editor.

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### Pastoral Visits:

At Maidstone Baptist Church we are happy to offer pastoral visits - for prayer, communion, or simply a chat. We can meet at church, in your home, or elsewhere, such as in a park or coffee shop.

If you feel this would be helpful, please speak to Nigel or Al, or to your Pastoral Leader.



I often speak about how good it is to see God at work and on the move in our church, to see our numbers growing week by week, and to have people asking for baptism and church membership. These are indeed things to be thankful for: we shall continue celebrating them and giving God the glory for these and for every other sign of His growing kingdom.

But I do recognise that some of us might find all of this a touch uncomfortable. Maybe things feel as though they're moving too fast. Maybe some feel a little remote from these signs of growth, or even that they are in danger of being left behind. Maybe your faith is feeling a little bit precarious because church doesn't look like it used to. Maybe circumstances of life have dealt you a hard blow in recent years and you are wondering where God is in it all. Maybe failing health, old age, family circumstances or work, or even the evolving nature of how we do things means it can be hard for you to engage with church in the way you'd like to. **If you identify with any of those emotions, that's ok.**

It can sometimes feel very hard to voice our concerns when those around us are full of enthusiasm. It can be very easy to take a step back, hide away in the shadows, let our doubts take hold and, if we're honest, lose at least some of our faith. But these are often the very times when we should turn to God and to each other. Maybe they are opportunities rather than uncomfortable challenges.

Let me use the analogy of a torch. When a torch begins to grow dim or stops working, do you throw it away? Of course not - you try and fix it! When we see others who find themselves in dark places should we sit by and do nothing? Of course not - we try to help and - as with the torch - we might need to help them change their batteries! Just as different torches need different batteries, different people need different kinds of help. Some need **AA** - attention and affection. Some need **AAA** - attention, affection and acceptance. Some need **C** - compassion. Some need **D** - direction. Maybe they need a combination of those. Others are rechargeable and just need help plugging in again. And if it takes a while for them to shine

brightly again, don't walk away: find time to sit quietly and share your light with them.

There are of course many scriptures which talk of God wanting to encourage and sustain us in tough times. Here's an example:

***Isaiah 41:10: "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."***

But where possible we should join in with God's work, and so as we journey through this season together - when our fabulous church continues to grow, but faces challenges too - do please do some strengthening and sustaining of your own: check in on each other, and remain keen to shine your light into dark places.

***"In humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others" - Philippians 2:3-4***

I am always happy to come and have a chat if you need it, as are the pastoral leaders or the deacons. Please reach out if you need to. Let's see God's light shine brightly, ensure your light is working properly as well, and let's be amazed as we watch His Kingdom grow.

*Nigel*

-----OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO-----

## **1<sup>ST</sup> JUNE 2025: INTERNATIONAL DAY**

Maidstone Baptist Church has seen such amazing growth since returning from the 'Covid-19' period and within that has been a tremendous increase in diversity, meaning that just a few years on we are a flourishing international community. We have seen so many benefits of this and therefore as a way in which we could celebrate our diversity we held "International Sunday" on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2025.

Those who either grew up or who had strong cultural connections with a different country were encouraged to participate in the service either by suggesting worship songs/taking part in readings/being willing to talk about life growing up in an alternative country etc. Or simply by wearing traditional clothing and bringing food representative of their countries to a bring-and-share lunch.

The service was a brilliant mix of vibrant colour, joyful worship, a mix of languages and the freedom to worship God even when you couldn't necessarily pronounce all the words correctly! The church was decorated with flags of the world and Maggie had painted signs saying "God is Love" in Cantonese which were placed on the walls around the church. We sang a Zulu song "We are Marching (Siyahamba)"; Diana lead us in a Zimbabwean song "Makanaka Jesu" sung in Shona; Maggie & Lee lead "To God Be the Glory" which we sang in a combination of English and Cantonese; and we finished with the great English hymn Amazing Grace. David talked about life growing up in two Nigerian Baptist churches; Naomi sang to us a worship song in Ndebele a



language from Zimbabwe; Chi Chi and Othello read the first half of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm verses 1-3 in Ebo, a Nigerian language and Dhan read verses 4-6 in Nepalese; Chris talked to us about memories of her, David and their young family living and attending churches all over the world but particularly in Dubai, Yemen & Southern

Ireland; whilst Abby and Lottie dusted off their dance shoes and performed some Irish dancing for the congregation.

At the end of a packed service, we all gathered for a bring-and-share lunch where there wasn't a quiche in sight! Instead we had an incredible mix of foods from all over the world and the opportunity to share in fellowship and admire the beautiful traditional clothes being worn by so many. All in all, the celebration was a great success, and I hope we have another one in the not-too-distant future.





## CHURCH FAMILY NEWS



In recent weeks we have had the joy of 2 baptisms, Kieran Banfield and Alistar Burston. We give thanks for their witness to family and friends and the Boys' and Girls' Brigades. Please pray for these young men as they continue their journey of faith.



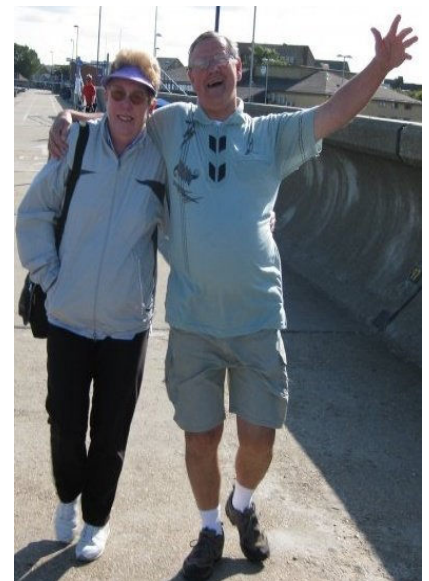
We also welcomed Alison Muir into membership. Alison has been worshipping with us for some time now and she is keen to share her gifts within the fellowship. Welcome, Alison!



On 24<sup>th</sup> May we celebrated the wedding of Anne Okonkwo and Ian Berwick-Moore. It was a joyous occasion, a real fusion of their Nigerian and British families and traditions. Just a few days later we bade them farewell as they moved to Guernsey to start new jobs. Please

pray for them as they settle into married life, new home and new adventures.

We also say farewell to Barbara and Tommy Small. They have been part of our fellowship for nearly 18 years. We thank them for their service and their friendship. Please pray for them as they move to their new home and that they will soon be welcomed into their new church family.



## Nathan Jeché

Nathan Jeché joined Whitstable Town about 6 weeks ago and has since signed for them and in the Quarter Finals of the FA Vase scored on his debut and then in the Semi-Finals scored the important first goal which helped them to get to the final. The manager of Whitstable Town stated that signing Nathan was great for the club as he stated he could be the missing link in the team and was an important player in the squad. Nathan has been playing football for years and started at Queens Park Rangers where in his last season as a Youth team player he won Player of the Season but was later released. He then went to Hemel Hempstead, Snodland, and Cray Wanderers and played for them this season before transferring to Whitstable. He has since played 13 games, scoring 8 goals; not bad for a nineteen-year-old.

Nathan played for Whitstable Town against AFC Whyteleafe in the FA Vase Final at Wembley Stadium (May 11<sup>th</sup>, attendance approx 12000) He was substituted in the 85<sup>th</sup> minute. Whitstable did not play that well in the first half but sorted themselves out in the second half and were rewarded with an equaliser which then forced extra time. Both sides looked leggy but Whitstable found that little bit extra and scored in the first half of extra time and then defended their lead to win the trophy. When the final whistle went the players went wild and Nathan seemed to be the cheerleader as he had a selfie stick showing all the celebrations that went on.

*Darrell Harman (Kent Sport News)*







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## Pop-up café



Would users please note that the Pop-up  
Cafe will be closed throughout the month  
of August.



## **VE Day – 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945**

*Some interesting memories from a few of our congregation....*

### **From Mavis Seagrove:**

‘I was 7 years old on VE day, living in a Hampshire village, having left London, which was our home. When VE was announced the children of the village were given coloured glass jars with a lighted night light in. We were to march to the village green where a huge bonfire was to be lit when we arrived. They had put so much petrol on it that when it was lit we children ran away and our Mum spent the rest of the evening trying to find us!’

### **From Pauline Jordan:**

‘I was born in 1938 before the war started, living on the outskirts of London. I remember hearing sirens go off to tell us to go to the shelters in the garden, or at night into the Morrison shelter along with my mother and younger sister. Sometimes we just went under the kitchen table, which I am sure wouldn’t have kept us very safe. I remember having ration books. I wore a rubber face mask which I hated – mine was shaped like Mickey Mouse.

In 1945 when the war was finished, we had a street party which was in the tennis courts opposite where we lived. I had red, white and blue ribbons to tie up my long curly hair into bunches.’

### **From Audrey Kingston:**

‘I have always felt recognition should have been made to the folk who opened their homes to evacuees. As one of a family of six children, aged five when war was declared, I was 8 years old and with my older brother, and younger brother and sister, we were taken by coach to St. Leonards in

Sussex. When my Mum arrived in Tunbridge Wells and asked for her family there was no record of us – she had “lost” four children. My father was in the merchant Navy, and eventually she found us playing on the beach at St. Leonards. A retired couple with no children took all four of us in and loved and cared for us.

It was later decided we were too close to the coast, and we were transferred to Wales. Nobody wanted four children, so my brothers went in with a farmer and my sister and I to an invalid lady and her husband. We were loved and cared for until my Mum and baby brother were able to join us. My Dad’s ship was later sent to Milford Haven in Wales and he searched for us. At a pub in Whitland he met the farmer who had taken in my brothers, so we were all reunited – what a miracle. The villagers made a disused cottage available to us and with Dad’s help, whenever he was on leave, made it habitable for the remainder of the war, after which we returned to Greenwich.’

**From David Ashby:**

‘I was seven years old, so I don’t have many memories but do remember a tea party on a local farm with a long table and all of us sitting on bales of straw. They had no horse available so were given a ride on cow! I have a few war time memories. At the party I was given a mug which I still treasure.’



**From Jen Townsend: (Jen gave me a 12 page account of the war she had written for her grandson – excerpts!)**

‘Towards the end of the war, when soldiers etc. started to arrive back to their homes, the front of houses would be decorated with flags and bunting with a large sheet stretched above saying “Welcome Home”. There would be endless parties when peace was finally declared, and I vividly remember

the American soldiers giving us young people rides in their army jeeps and handing out packets of chewing gum. There were bonfire nights and great celebrations, including street parties. Somehow a gramophone and records would appear, and grownups and children all enjoyed eating, drinking and dancing.

Looking back generally, my memories are of good times with my family – our house always seemed to be full of lively conversation, lots of visitors and much laughter. The things I hated were the nights in the Air Raid shelter, especially in the winter, with those creepy crawlies and of course that dreadful cream coloured coat with large brown buttons I had to wear!’

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## BMS Birthday Scheme.

|                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| July 5 <sup>th</sup>  | Alan Fishwick         |
| July 14 <sup>th</sup> | Pam Tucker            |
| July 25 <sup>th</sup> | Jane Haslam           |
| July 25 <sup>th</sup> | Ian Brazier           |
| July 26 <sup>th</sup> | Dr. Austin Woodbridge |



## Happy Birthday to you all!

\*\*\*\*\*

**Deadline for August Knightrider Street News:**

**Sunday July 13<sup>th</sup>**

Please e-mail contributions to the address on inside front cover

*No later than 20.00hrs on this date*





# Prayer Points

## JULY 2025

- Tue 1<sup>st</sup> Let us pray for the current situation in the world, with the worsening tensions in the Middle East, the war in Ukraine and the changes within our own Government.
- Wed 2<sup>nd</sup> May we pray for the devolved parties in Wales and Scotland under the leadership there, that plans will meet the needs of their people.
- Thur 3<sup>rd</sup> As we are approaching the middle of the year may we find lasting peace with the never failing love of Jesus in the mid summer sunshine as we enjoy times with family and friends.
- Fri 4<sup>th</sup> Pray for those in our church who have lost loved ones - husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, sons or daughters. Pray for the comforting arms of Jesus around them in these uncertain times, particularly if they have lost family due to chronic illness.
- Sat 5<sup>th</sup> Remember those who are persecuted in the Middle East for their commitment to the Christian faith, and those fleeing cruel treatment in their country of origin. Let us remember those who are victims of crime and still trying to escape even in times like these.
- Sun 6<sup>th</sup> Pray for the youth in Maidstone who are soon embarking on new careers and leaving full time education, that they will be guided and strengthened to meet the challenges ahead. Pray that they do not lose heart.
- Mon 7<sup>th</sup> May we pray today for wisdom and responsibility in the words

we speak and the things we do while we are in the workplace or classroom.

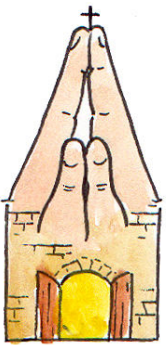
- Tue 8<sup>th</sup> Pray today for a closer walk with the Lord Jesus: ask Him to answer those deep questions and the deep yearnings we have which only he knows about. There are times we are unable to even pray due to the sheer weight of anxiety and stress. Hang on to the strong arms of the Lord.
- Wed 9<sup>th</sup> Let us pray for the outreach of the 5 and 2 lunch service, that it will continue and make a certain difference to the homeless in Maidstone.
- Thur 10<sup>th</sup> Pray for local schools and colleges as they prepare for the Summer holidays and a well earned break. Pray for all the young people leaving this year.
- Fri 11<sup>th</sup> Pray today for all those who are still sleeping rough in Maidstone and who have no fixed abode. Pray that the local authority will be able to meet their needs especially at this time of hardship and high cost of living.
- Sat 12<sup>th</sup> Pray for our Boys' and Girls' brigades and their work and projects in Kent and districts far and beyond. Pray for Alastair in his work in Maidstone as youth pastor and also for Nigel our senior minister and his wife Margaret.
- Sun 13<sup>th</sup> Let us pray for the continuing work of the Street Pastors and their work in sometimes dangerous situations.
- Mon 14<sup>th</sup> Pray today for our elderly folks around us and those who are in residential care and those who are contemplating doing so, that the right place may be found.
- Tue 15<sup>th</sup> Pray for our music team as they meet to practice for the services each week as they accompany the worship songs.



Wed 16<sup>th</sup> Let us pray for our local council and community departments as they try to deal with all aspects of care and problems in the local area such as housing and environmental issues.

Thur 17<sup>th</sup> As we are in the middle of the week, pray that we will be contagious as we live the gospel message in word, deed and thought, asking Jesus to help us practice what we are taught.

Fri 18<sup>th</sup> Remember in prayer the young people of Sunday school age, praying for their perseverance as we go through this time.



Sat 19<sup>th</sup> Pray for our church leadership team and deacons as they move in these times of great challenge for church unity.

Sun 20<sup>th</sup> Let us pray today for anyone who is experiencing harassment and bullying of any kind; pray for the deliverance and peace that only Jesus can give.

Mon 21<sup>st</sup> Pray that Maidstone and surrounding districts will be infused with the light of Gods people and the sweet aroma of His grace. When the going gets tough and times get hard, may Gods people set the standard required to see it through in total reliance on His provision.

Tue 22<sup>nd</sup> May we pray for our church youth club and the leaders - Alastair and his team - for help giving guidance and direction to the young people.

Wed 23<sup>rd</sup> Let us pray for all those who are seriously sick in our midst and those who are in hospital at this time, that the great physician will pass their way.

Thur 24<sup>th</sup> Pray again for our government ministers and leaders who are making decisions each day, that the ruler of the universe and the great I AM will guide and lead them to make the right decisions.

Fri 25<sup>th</sup> Let us pray for all the churches in Kent that they will be united



when it comes to proclaiming the gospel message.

Sat 26<sup>th</sup> Remember all our parents in prayer as they try and steer their young children in the right pathway.

Sun 27<sup>th</sup> Remember all those who are experiencing addictions of any kind, that they will be released from them.

Mon 28<sup>th</sup> Let us pray for all those who are finding the path of life challenging and difficult, sometimes feeling that it is impossible to go on. Pray for Jesus to be near those people when desperate times come.

Tue 29<sup>th</sup> Pray today for any one who feels suicidal because they feel there is no other way out of the turmoil they are in. Ask God to be near them.

Wed 30<sup>th</sup> Pray for our emergency services here in Kent and Maidstone that they will be equipped to deal with the tasks set before them. Pray for our NHS Doctors and nurses as they deal with people who have been struck down with sudden illnesses.

Thur 31<sup>st</sup> Pray for our members who sometimes feel lonely and afraid and so anxious, that they will be comforted when they know Jesus is nearby.



## THE FARMERS' PROMISE



*‘So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today – to love the Lord your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul – then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your corn, new wine and olive oil. I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied.’ (Deuteronomy 11:13–15)*

This promise of this blessing may sound ‘nice’ to those of us raised in more urban settings, for whom our food generally arrives by delivery van or over the counter at our local supermarket. Weather, for us, is generally: a safe conversation topic for small talk; the difference between taking a coat or not when we leave the house; and the deciding factor when planning camping/a picnic/the modern-day-rain-dance-known-as-a-barbeque. But, for the people Moses was speaking to in Deuteronomy, as with our local farmers and many of the people around the world in places where Tearfund works, inappropriately timed weather has the power to destroy their livelihoods.

The promise of rains in season and grass in the fields, then, is not a ‘nice to have’, but a promise of life. A promise of provision. Of mouths fed, investments protected, livestock flourishing, homes built, children educated, medical bills paid, and peace of mind. All the crucial things we need to survive.

**FARMING CAN BE FRAGILE. TEARFUND IS HELPING FARMERS AROUND THE WORLD AVOID EXTREME HUNGER WHEN THEIR CROPS FAIL.**

Once again, like him or like him not, Jeremy Clarkson has been on our screens sharing his particular brand of farming prowess (or, at times,

notable lack thereof). Whether we find his trials and tribulations greatly amusing or less so, amongst the banter and TV-ready antics, he is making some very succinct points about some very significant things (including ones that Tearfund cares about deeply).

Things like how heavily reliant the success or failure of an entire livelihood and provision system (both for the farmers and their families, as well as the wider communities their crops provide for) is on the timing of rainfall and sunshine. And how a changing, increasingly unreliable climate has the potential to push people toward (or into) poverty and threaten food security.

And, this season, Clarkson has also raised vital conversations about women in farming, as well as the mental health repercussions faced by farmers when farming goes wrong.

### **Farming to survive**

Clarkson himself points out, when his most expensive and lucrative crop failed, that he is in the fortunate position of not relying on his farm income to survive, but he draws our attention to the farmers around him, who do.

And, as we consider them, and their very real distress and loss, we're reminded that here in the UK, farmers live in a country where education for our children and vital medical care are free services. Our social infrastructure, however flawed, means that even at their worst point, it's unlikely, currently, that our farmers will face extreme hunger or die for lack of clean water. While the struggles they face may be serious, terrifying and devastating, for many small scale farmers around the world in places where Tearfund works, who rely utterly on their crop to provide all of these things for their families, the situation is even worse. There is no fall-back support and the failure of their crops can mean the difference between life and death.



Particularly in light of recent widespread reductions in foreign aid provision, when the rains don't come in season – when they arrive too early or too late or too much or not at all – families are pushed into poverty and hunger, losing the ability to provide their families with the things they need, whether that be medical help or education that will give their children the opportunities they need for the future.

### **Mental health and farming**

And, along with the physical struggles, there can be a heavy toll on mental health taken by this uncertainty and the heavy losses and inability to provide – especially after investing money and long hours of often lonely, heavy toil.

### **What is Tearfund doing to help small scale farmers?**

Because of all this, Tearfund works with farmers facing poverty to help provide them with support. We do this through things like providing training in more climate-resistant farming techniques and crops, and also in finding alternative sources of income.

### **Disaster risk financing\* (not nearly as boring as it sounds)**

And another way we're starting to help farmers facing crop (and potentially livelihood) losses is through disaster risk financing. For smallholder farmers in Malawi earlier this year, this has proved to be a lifeline. An insurance payout to Tearfund of over £80,000 has meant that, so far, 1,200 households reliant on farming in Malawi whose crops had dried out because of drought, have been provided with seed to plant drought tolerant crops, such as sweet potato vines and cowpeas, along with high value horticultural crops like tomatoes, aubergines and onions. 'This is a key tool in tackling malnutrition,' says Elizabeth Myendo, Tearfund's Regional Lead for Southern and Eastern Africa. She explains, 'We are preventing a hunger crisis before it takes hold.'

### **How do they know when to pay out drought resistant finance?**

Instead of reacting after a crisis hits, this finance can ensure that aid is delivered swiftly and efficiently before the full effects of the disaster are felt. This also helps communities to be more prepared to cope and to recover more quickly!

It works through an innovative measuring tool that uses satellite data to work out how much water is available for crops in a specified area of farming land. When the level of soil moisture falls below an amount that has been pre-agreed, the drought payout is automatically triggered.

This means that Tearfund can access fast, transparent and reliable financial assistance, allowing us to provide relief to farmers and/or the community, mitigating their risk of extreme hunger.

### **Women in farming (there are a lot!)**

Clarkson's farm introduced us to a new character called Harriet this season. She's strong, knowledgeable and capable. And she, like women in many of the places where Tearfund works, is a farmer.

In fact, it's very common for women to be the ones who work the fields, labouring long hours to provide for their families, while also looking after their children, cooking and doing all the other household tasks.

That's why, when Tearfund responds in situations like the drought in Malawi, we make sure that women farmers are looked out for, fully represented and included in any support provided.

### **Please pray:**

For farmers – particularly those in many of the places we work – who, more and more, are being affected by changing weather patterns, which force them into (or further into) extreme poverty and hunger.

*Tarryn Pegna*

13/6/25

Tearfund One Voice in Prayer

## Three years of resistance, struggle and hope

*As we mark the three-year anniversary of the war in Ukraine, we share these reflections from BMS World Mission partner, the Ukrainian Baptist Union.*



In the suburbs of Kyiv, where the central office of the Ukrainian Baptist Union is located, it is almost always loud. Over the past year, the sounds of repeated massive kamikaze drone attacks have become more frequent here. However, this noise no longer confuses anyone, as there is a saying among our people that dangers should not stop you if you want to achieve something. This principle guides all local churches during the war: to be with their people, to give them hope, and to do even more under these circumstances.

Russia's war against Ukraine continues to bring numerous sufferings, sorrows, and losses to the Ukrainian people, the destruction of cities and civilian infrastructure, and the brutal violation of rights and freedoms in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine. [There has been] religious persecution, church closures, torture, killings of religious leaders, mass migration, family separations and horrific treatment of military and civilian prisoners. [And yet], in the three years of war, 86 churches have been established within the Baptist Union. 154 Ukrainians have been baptised. Despite 261 pastors leaving during the war, 315 new pastors were ordained, and 19 returned from overseas. A total of 467 deacons left Ukraine, while 592 new ones were ordained. Overall, 906 pastors and deacons were ordained during the war.

Without the help of foreign friends and partners, our brothers and sisters, we would have accomplished little. The prayers and love of hundreds of thousands of brothers and sisters from our large family in the European Baptist Federation are a constant source of support, strength, and inspiration. If a church worries about how their pastor will support their family, how the church will survive the winter, how to heat the premises and feed people, it will be less effective in evangelising. But when its basic needs are met by a caring helping hand, it opens many new doors. Therefore, we are grateful to all our international partners [including BMS World Mission supporters] who, in countless ways, have shown us their



support and helped Ukrainians to survive and to protect our freedom and democracy.

Looking back, we are filled not just with tears of sorrow and loss, but with tears of gratitude and admiration for God's grace.

The winter period is particularly troubling and tense for us. Thousands of people found themselves in despair, and fortunately, many of them found refuge in local churches. Besides assistance with accommodation, food, and other humanitarian needs, winter support includes services for the children of servicemen, the missing, and low-income families, encompassing 42,596 children this winter, providing churches and Christian organisations with heating materials, offering psychological and spiritual support to the population, and implementing mobile kitchens for the most needy, where over 6,000 hot meals were distributed in three Ukrainian cities just in January 2025.

In serving society, churches are not superheroes; they remain just as vulnerable and weary.

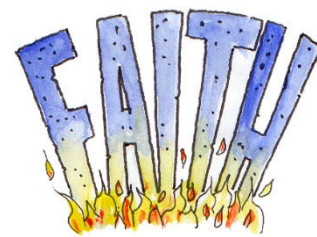
Meanwhile, we have to find the right words to say to disheartened soldiers, to say to the families of the deceased. Christians in Ukraine have learned not to live under any illusions — focusing not on passive waiting for peace and victory, but on hard work, with no expectations of what might still happen. Therefore, we need to continue to strengthen, save immortal souls, and place our hope in God alone. A sign of God's blessing was the law recently adopted by the Ukrainian Parliament to establish a National Day of Prayer annually on 24<sup>th</sup> February. We believe that all of you will stand with us on this day before God in intercessory prayer and thanksgiving. Imagining this unity in prayer, we feel grateful beyond measure!

*This piece has been edited and abridged with permission for the BMS website from a longer piece by Valeriy and Igor, on behalf of the Ukrainian Baptist Union.*

**Author:** Valeriy Antonuk and Igor Bandura, President and Vice-President of the Ukrainian Baptist Union.

**20/2/25**

## FROM VIETNAM



### *Long and Ha's story*

It was the middle of the night when Long\* and his wife, Ha\*, woke to shouts from their village elder. “Go! Leave the village right now or we will destroy your house!”

Only months earlier, the couple from the H're tribal group lived undisturbed in their village in central Vietnam. That all changed when Pastor Tan\* reached their home to share the gospel. They became Christians, began attending gatherings with believers from other villages and, in an enormously courageous move, stopped participating in their village's religious traditions.

The H're people, who are mostly subsistence farmers, follow animism. The belief systems holds that everything – from stones to plants, forests to weather systems – have spirits that, in some cases, make them idols of worship. Animists believe that if anyone in the community abandons the village traditions, the village elder won't be able to summon these spirits to their village – the spirits that are supposed to bring luck, health and wealth.

### **Helpless and Homeless**

This is why Long and Ha faced hostility from their community. Despite growing pressure, they continued to embrace Christianity as they were disciplined by Pastor Tan. But then came the night when the village elder – accompanied by the village chief, police officers and a baying crowd – disrupted not only the couple's sleep, but their whole lives. The village elder and the police demanded that Long and Ha leave the community. When they refused, the mob tore down their home in a matter of moments. Long, Ha and their young son had no choice but to flee in the dead of night, leaving their belongings behind. To make matters even more fraught, Ha was eight months' pregnant.

The family are far from alone in the ordeal they faced. Open Doors researchers have found evidence in the past year of Christians being forced

to leave their homes in 78% of the countries on the World Watch List. In some countries, like Myanmar and Nigeria, the number of affected believers is enormous. In Vietnam, this form of persecution is relatively rare – but every forced displacement is, of course, devastating to the Christians facing this cruelty.

### **Caring Church**

Pastor Tan and his church are rallying to support Long, Ha and their family, helping them find temporary refuge. Unable to provide new construction materials, church members bravely returned to the family's destroyed house to salvage anything they could find to build the family a temporary shelter. Open Doors local partners are also providing food and clothing.

Despite fleeing their village, opposition remains in a different form, with the authorities now blocking them from officially being part of another village. This is making it difficult to look for jobs, receive social services support and enrol their son in school. But with the constant care and encouragement of Pastor Tan and their church, and Open Doors supporters, Long and Ha are persevering in their faith. They know they aren't alone but have a worldwide family who are standing with them.

\*Names changed for security reasons

### ***Did you know?***

Vietnam dropped nine places in the World Watch List, largely due to a drop in incidents of violence. However, as Long and Ha's story shows, many Christians remain vulnerable to violent attacks.

### **Pray**

“Please pray that Long's family will continue to look unto Jesus. May they continue to be encouraged through the community God has provided them.”

OPEN DOORS LOCAL PARTNER  
*Open Doors magazine May/June 2025*



## **2<sup>nd</sup> Maidstone Girls' Brigade & 1<sup>st</sup> Maidstone Boys' Brigade**



It was so good to share with our members, their families and some church friends at our Awards and Celebration evening at the end of May. Thank you to those who came along or prayed for us, we do very much appreciate your support and interest.

After a short time of worship we heard from some of the children and young people about some of the activities that they had done over the course of the year, and the younger groups shared the Parable of the Loving Father along with their paintings, and a short drama and one of the older groups used the puppets to do a memorable performance to the song My Lighthouse, whilst the other prepared a booklet with some of their years' highlights.

Many of the youngsters received badges they have earned over the session, some of the youngsters moved to new sections, and we welcomed those who had joined us since last Awards evening with a small Brigade gift and a copy of a Brigade Testament, kindly donated to us by Good News for Everyone (formerly Gideons UK).

There was a photo presentation about Camp Amazing giving those present a good idea of the fun and games had whilst we were recently away. We were grateful to Ian Packham, our local Boy's Brigade Battalion President for coming along to present the awards and say a few words.

We are now well into our Summer Programme activities which are an opportunity for a more relaxed time together. We have walks, games in the park, challenges and games at the Church, and swimming amongst our planned activities and a family picnic to round off the Brigade year in mid July.

Please continue to keep the children, young people and their leaders in your prayers.

***Jane Haslam  
mbc-415@highg.net***



## **Regular Sunday Meetings.**

Every Sunday: 10.30hrs In-person Worship at Knightrider Street

*Services also streamed via Zoom and YouTube when possible.*

**Please Note:** For safeguarding reasons photography and/or moving image recording, using any type of device, is **NOT** permitted in the church without **prior** permission.



Would you like to join  
our Street or Prayer  
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[maidstone@streetpastors.org.uk](mailto:maidstone@streetpastors.org.uk) for more information



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