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The Messenger

AI: How Do We Respond?
Welshpool: A Church Growing &
On the Move
Missional Hubs in Ghana
Introducing our new Presidents
and more...

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Editorial

SUMMER 2026 *note*

In this summer's edition of The Messenger, we hear from our new General Secretary: Rev. Simeon Baker. Simeon shares with us some of his reflections this summer on the theme of "treasures old and new", and the call to persevere in shining God's light to our communities...



This summer the "Antiques Roadshow" visited Caerphilly Castle to see what treasures the good people of Caerphilly have to share with the experts and to listen to the stories behind them. Hopefully, there will be that wonderful moment when a person discovers the true value of previously discarded family relic / heirloom.

'Bringing Treasures old and new' was the title of our July Ministers' Zoom call, led by Rosa Hunt and Ed Kaneen, taking a fresh look at the call of Samuel. Despite his age, his blindness and his sons, Eli still has a role to play in helping Samuel to hear the call of God. It was only after Samuel's fourth visit that Eli realised God was about to do something new among them. Samuel simply needed an Eli to help him hear. It's significant that all this happens at a time when the author tells us: "The lamp of God had not yet gone out." (1 Samuel 3:2)

I wonder how often we have felt the lamp flicker and nearly go out? When have we said to ourselves, "I'm too old, too weak, too tired—I've done all I can"? Perhaps there is still treasure yet to be discovered and God is asking us to bring our treasures old and new.

When some say that Christian faith in Wales will disappear by 2050, I want to confidently say: 'The lamp of God has not yet gone out'. Far from it. As you read this edition of the Messenger, I hope you will be encouraged to see evidence of God's grace and the work of His Holy Spirit in Wales today. May God help us during these summer months to discover hidden treasure, so that the lamp of God may shine brightly in our churches in ways both old and new.

P.S Read on to hear about: stories of missional training in Wales - and in Africa! (ps. 3 and 7); the breakneck-speed development of AI and our relationship with it as believers (p.4), an inspiring story of church growth and movement in Welshpool (p.5) and introducing our new Presidents for 2026/7 (p.6)!

In Christ,

Simeon Baker (BUW General Secretary)
& **Sioned Graves** (Missions and Communications Officer)

MISSION COLUMN:

Following His Call

Over the past few years, it has been wonderful to welcome new members into our new **Missional Ministry Learning Community**. As we hear their stories, we are reminded once again how the Lord is continuing to call people to the work of His Kingdom here in Wales. In this edition, we hear **Nikki's story** as she has followed the Lord's call to develop her missional calling in Brecon....

My journey into mission has grown slowly and faithfully over a lifetime in Watergate Baptist Chapel. I began attending as a child, moved through Sunday School, and was baptised at twelve. Those early years planted a deep awareness of God's love and a sense that He was gently calling me forward. After living away in Cardiff, returning to Brecon felt like stepping back into the place where God had always been shaping me. My faith was renewed, and serving the chapel as Deacon, pulpit secretary, and later secretary drew me into a deeper relationship with God and a growing desire to serve Him more fully.

A significant turning point came in 2023 when I retired from my role as a Senior Trading Standards Officer. The work had

become very physical and stressful, and stepping away created a necessary pause — a quiet space in which I could finally recognise the call God had been placing on my heart for many years. The compassion, fairness, and care that shaped my professional life did not end with retirement; instead, they were redirected. I came to understand that God was releasing me from one form of service so He could lead me into another. This transition did not feel like a career change but the unfolding of a calling that had been quietly maturing within me.

The Missional Ministers Training has been the place where this calling has taken clearer shape. It has been a formation, a stretching, and at times a holy disruption. Through the 'Living' thread, I discovered that discipleship is not simply a practice but a daily work of God within me. The 'Listening' retreat in Bala taught me to hear God in Scripture, silence, community, and the landscape around me. The Leading retreat at

Tregoyd reshaped my understanding of leadership, revealing Jesus as the one who leads from the road — through humility, compassion, and presence. These experiences did not merely teach me about mission; they illuminated the path God had already been guiding me along. Missional ministry in Brecon today is rooted in presence, relationship, and gentle service. I lead worship, support older members, and help shape the life of Watergate Baptist. Founding Brecon Street Pastors remains one of the most rewarding experiences of my life, showing me how mission flourishes when Christians step out with compassion into their community. Mission, for me, is about being attentive to where God is already at work and joining Him there.

Looking ahead, I hope to see Watergate develop as a vibrant, welcoming missional hub — a place where creativity, hospitality, and discipleship flourish. I want to deepen community partnerships, develop accessible worship, and lead in the humble, road-shaped way I have been learning. My desire is to continue being shaped and sent, walking the road with Christ and helping others discover His presence along the way.

Being part of the Missional Ministers cohort has strengthened this calling. Writing my first poem was unexpectedly transformative,

opening a deeper and more honest expression of faith. The retreats grounded me in listening and servant leadership. The cohort itself has been a gift — a community of fellow pilgrims who encourage, challenge, and inspire me. All of this — my lifelong roots in Watergate, the turning point of leaving my job, the formation of the training, and the mission unfolding in Brecon — has led me to this moment. I stand ready to step into ministry, still being shaped, still being sent, and still being held by the God who has guided every step of the way.

"I could finally recognise the call God had been placing on my heart for many years."

"Mission... is about being attentive to where God is already at work..."



AI: HOW DO WE RESPOND?

Reflections from the annual Edwin Stephen Griffiths Lecture (Cardiff Baptist College) with Rev. Dr Sally Nelson ~ *Reflections by Sioned Graves*



In Spring 2025, the Global Attitude Survey found that 76% of adults in 25 nations held a significant degree of concern about the increased use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) across the world. At the same time – the UK government has prioritised investment in AI - in a significant way! From Alexa and Siri, to AI-generated songs and search results, to 'deepfakes' of famous figures and increasing cyber attacks... the presence of AI around us is unlikely to diminish any time soon. How do we feel about this... as individuals, as believers, as churches?

It's an important question to ask in this age - and one we might not always feel permission to consider, while the world around us just 'assumes' breakneck speeds of development. Many in the church have real and genuine fears about the development of AI, with many calling for great caution in the way forward - seeing its potential societal, personal and spiritual dangers. Others see positive potential and possibility, with an awareness of how the new technology might even serve the 'Great Commission' in many ways. An example of this might be recent reports from Wycliffe Bible Translators' as they speak of the incredible acceleration of Bible translation around the world, being aided by AI-assisted translation techniques. However, even those such as Wycliffe who talk of these benefits caution of a real need to be very careful in its usage - and wise moderation.

Are there helpful voices around us that can help us as Christians think carefully and biblically about AI and our attitude towards it? There are indeed. Recently, Cardiff Baptist College hosted the Rev. Dr Sally Nelson in the annual Edwin Stephen Griffiths Lecture. Sally is a Baptist Minister and a Lecturer – with a particular research interest in theological anthropology. She asked the question that many of us may be grappling with in relation to AI: "Do I call you Servant or Friend?"... and is there also a place for dissent? Like a good

Baptist theologian, the Rev. Dr. Sally Nelson did not offer us clear-cut black and white answers – but she did offer some wise considerations that might help us in our way forward.

Firstly: personhood. Many fears about AI revolve around whether AI can or ever *should* take the place of people – whether that be in economies and jobs, or even in writing Sundays sermons (it happens!). Sally pointed us to John 15:15 when Jesus says that "the servant does not know what the Master is doing; but I have called you friends". Sally reminded us that we are made in the image of God, and as part of that - we are invited into friendship with Him. Could AI ever become more than a servant – could it become a friend? Sally's view is that while AI can be brilliant imitators of human thought and language, personhood is God's gift and God's call alone.

Secondly, in our practical usage of AI – Sally cautioned that there are ethical questions which we would be wise to be asking. While there are great societal goods that can come out of particular forms of AI (e.g in medical fields) she advises us that it would be wise to continue to ask critical questions of society's relationship with

"Sally invites us to consider our discernment... as believers, and the need to develop a kind of 'ethics of the heart'"

AI, and our relationship with it as believers and churches. On a personal level, for example, use of AI chat-bots can increase dependency on quick and easy answers and reduce critical thinking - especially in formative years. On a collective level, AI-driven search engines will only scan the data that is available, and there will often be a bias towards popular sources of data. What narratives might this feed in our society - and in our churches? Sally invites us as believers to exercise discernment regarding issues such as these (*these are only examples!*). Sally also presented us with four examples of ethical considerations that might help us as we seek to discern. These are: the Ethics of Authority (i.e Whose knowledge is prioritised in our usage of AI?); the Ethics of Truth (Is there a potential for truth to be distorted?); the Ethics of Consumption (What resources are needed to sustain our use of AI?); and the Ethics of Relationship (How might relationships suffer as we turn to AI?). While it may be difficult to always pin down precise 'rights' and 'wrongs' with regards to every use of AI, Sally believes there is a need, as individuals and communities of believers, to prayerfully develop a kind of 'ethics of the heart' towards AI, with the help of the Spirit, and the Word of God. *A call to pray and discern together indeed.*





A CHURCH GROWING ... & ON THE MOVE

Montgomeryshire may be among the least populated of the historic counties of Wales. However, one of the BUW churches that is experiencing significant growth is located in this relatively quiet region of Wales! We sat down recently with Rev. Rob Saunders, who shared some of the story of Welshpool Baptist's recent growth, and some of the new challenges that have come with it...



While growth is a desire many of us surely have for our church communities, what makes the current story of Welshpool Baptist inspiring is the faith that has also been required to match the challenge of numerical growth.

"Similar to many congregations, we did see growth in our church attendance after Covid-19," Rob shares, "but this growth has continued and intensified particularly over the last 2-3 years." Welshpool Baptist has seen attendance almost doubling - now exceeding the chapel building's comfortable capacity of c.65.

Rob emphasizes that this growth hasn't just been a sudden phenomenon, but he believes that it has resulted from years of commitment by the church to the place and people around them. Rather than turning to new outreach methods (although Rob believes there is a place for these!), the primary focus of the church in recent years has been on strengthening their identity as a church and understanding who they are as followers of Christ. Part of this has been understanding the call to reach out to the community around them - as well as a strong commitment to prayer.

Rob shares that long before he arrived, "the church had a strong tradition of prayer - prayer meetings, prayer in home groups, in Sunday services... even 24 hrs of prayer! They prayed about everything, and we continue to pray about everything!". Rob firmly believes that the blessing they are currently enjoying as a community is therefore first and foremost the Lord's doing - and not his or theirs as a church. Some of these answers to prayer have included seeing new people moving to the area, being drawn to their church, and choosing to stay. Equally, they have also seen those who have lived in the area for a long time who once had past church connections - but for whatever reason had drifted from faith - returning and making Welshpool Baptist their home. The additional numbers have in fact

brought challenges to the church - ones that Rob admits many pastors like him who pray for growth don't necessarily realise can arise! A very practical challenge is that regular numbers of attendees can often exceed the comfortable capacity of the Chelsea Lane chapel building. This has meant that the church has needed to get on the move - and meet in venues other than Chelsea Lane. These have included: the town hall, community centres, local hotel buildings among others. However - none of these venues have presented themselves as ideal: with many taking bookings that take priority over the church.

Rob doesn't yet know what the future holds for them as a church: their prayer is to

find a larger, permanent space to call home, but no obvious options have yet arisen. This season of growth and 'journeying' as a church has in fact been a test of faith, with a need to sometimes decide to 'embrace the chaos'. Rob expresses that he has been "really impressed" with how the congregation has risen to challenges, embraced uncertainty, and maintained willingness to try new approaches. The church may not be in an "easy" season after experiencing the dual blessing and challenge of growth - but they are certainly well placed for a journey of faith as they continue to seek the Lord for their next steps, one that they pray is growing them in faith and character as well as in number.

"This has meant that the church has needed to get on the move..."

"Rob shares that long before he arrived, 'the church had a strong tradition of prayer - prayer meetings, prayer in home groups, in Sunday services... 24 hrs of prayer!'"

NEWS FROM across



Introducing our New Presidents for 2026/27

We are delighted to introduce our new Presidents for 2026/27! This summer we welcome two new Presidents to our midst.

We welcome the **Rev. Dr Rosa Hunt** as President of the Welsh-Language Wing. Originally from Malta, Rosa is minister of Tabernacl in Cardiff City Centre, having also previously ministered in Salem, Tonteg and having served as Co-Principal at Cardiff Baptist College. Some of Rosa's hopes for her presidential year include exploring the theme of pilgrimage (inc. hosting



a real pilgrimage to Malta in 2027!), and looking at the question of language and positive bilingual (or multilingual!) engagement across the life of our churches. We also welcome the **Rev. Paul Smethurst** as President of the English-Language Wing. Paul



Momentum 2026

At the beginning of June, over 200 people came together for the Momentum Conference at the Halliwell, Carmarthen.

This year we focussed on the theme "Finding His Way: Keeping in Step with Jesus". Joined by friends from SWBA, BMS World Mission and Cardiff Baptist College - the day was a wonderful weaving together of all-age worship, creative prayer, and inspiring stories of encounters with Jesus on the journeys of life.

We were incredibly blessed to not only have Dot Tyler from 24/7 Prayer GB joining us, but also Kang-San Tan and a diverse team from BMS World Mission, as well as other speakers throughout the day. One of the key threads during the day was the idea of our pilgrimage and journey with Jesus – particularly as experienced in and through prayer. This year we had a greater collective engagement with prayer – particularly in various creative prayer activities

lives in Talgarth with his wife Robyn and serves as the Missional Minister for Breconshire and as Pioneer Lead for the BUW. Paul has also - incidentally! - chosen 'pilgrimage' as a key theme this year, and hopes to explore the need for the heart of pioneering mission to be restored to us as a Baptist family. He believes that tracing our roots back to early Baptist believers in Wales who risked much to worship our Lord Jesus Christ - and to share Him with others - can help us in our consideration of mission today! *Croeso, Rosa a Paul!*

... and Diolch to our outgoing Presidents!

We also extend our thanks to the Presidents of 2025/26, the Revs. Maggie Rich and Rob Nicholls with gratitude for all their service and contribution to the BUW family.

We asked Maggie (President of the English-Language Wing) what the highlights of her terms were. They included: "getting to know people from the Welsh Wing and enjoying the melody of the language even if I only understood a very small percentage! It was great to work together!". Rob (Welsh-Language Wing) shared that the "greatest privilege was to visit the Associations, and to meet the 'faithful remnant' who are keeping the flame burning... as they witness to the grace and love of Jesus in their communities.". *Diolch, Maggie and Rob!*



throughout the day. The new 24/7-inspired prayer room was very busy at many points, and it was special to gather together in the closing all-age celebration as we engaged in creative activities designed to inspire our prayers (from DIY stain-glass windows to a huge collective prayer chain!).

As always, Momentum also had a focus on mission during the day – not only in hearing global stories with BMS World Mission, but also in considering how we can live out our faith in day to day contexts, inspired by a diverse panel in the afternoon. The children and youth were also inspired from great sessions at Esgyn and in their various streams, and were reminded that they are never too young to pray and engage with the Lord! All in all – Momentum this year was an creative, faith-fuelling and inspiring day: for all ages!



BMS World Mission: From Everywhere to Everywhere



Mission has traditionally been seen as being “from the West to the rest”. But in Ghana, there’s a very different story playing out – involving our partners at BMS World Mission.

As a young Christian, Ghanaian Kwame Adzam dreamed of being involved in sharing the gospel. And he’s certainly doing that: these days, he heads up BMS World Mission’s Heart for the Gospel ministry. But he also had another, more specific dream. “When I became a believer, I was thinking, ‘When will Ghana be able to send mission workers to other places?’” he remembers. “I’ve always been praying, ‘Lord, would you open the doors for the Global South Church so that we can become significant partners in fulfilling your mission?’” Now, finally, this vision is taking shape. Over recent decades, mission agencies have begun thinking of mission less as

Undeb 2026: Caerdydd

On the 18th – 22nd of June, members of the Baptist Union of Wales’ Welsh-language wing came together for four days of meetings, fellowship, worship in Cardiff. This was a special year – with the Rev. Dr Rosa Hunt being inducted as president of the Welsh-language wing - if not as the first ever president born outside Wales and England, certainly as the first woman among those rare few! The first two days were varied as we discussed and considered a wide range of issues at our business meetings – from the new Esgyn initiatives with young people, to buildings and potential innovation, to historian T M Bassett’s life and story as a new library was opened in his name at Cardiff Baptist College.

A highlight of the weekend was the President’s Service on the Friday evening as we welcomed the Rev. Dr. Rosa Hunt as one of our new Presidents. Rosa shared on the theme of ‘Walking in Love’ based on Ephesians 5:2, challenging us to think of God’s love as a powerful, dynamic force – which can redirect our plans in drastic ways, and lead us to the places where the Lord is at work in the world around us! *Thank you to Tabernacl Church and to Rosa for such a great welcome this June.*

NEWS FROM ACROSS *the World*

something belonging to the West, and more as an enterprise “from everywhere to everywhere”. While the Western Church is struggling, Christianity in the Global South is thriving and growing. And with this vibrant faith comes the desire to spread the gospel. “BMS was beginning to change posture, thinking about the gift of God that lies within the Global South Church,” says Kwame.

In 2024, with support from BMS and local partners, the African Oasis Mission Hub was born. It’s a centre in Ghana where Christians from across Africa can gain the knowledge and skills they need for engaging in mission – in their own continent and beyond. Kwame says: “It’s the first of its kind. It’s deliberately and strategically working with churches, mission agencies ... amongst others, to identify, recruit, train, send and support mission workers from Africa to other places.”

The story doesn’t end with the Ghana hub. BMS has recently started making plans for a second missional hub in Thailand, which could reach an incredible 1.6 billion people. *You can find out more about Kwame’s story and the developing work of BMS at: bmsworldmission.org/ from-everywhere-to-everywhere*

Getting to know...

Bryan and Anne



In this edition of 'Getting to know', we hear from **Bryan and Anne Collis** from Seion Waunarlwydd and some of their life and faith journey up until this point. We also hear some of their prayers for the future....

Thanks Bryan and Anne for sitting down with us! Firstly – could you tell us a little about yourselves, and your story up to this point?

Anne is Welsh, valleys-born but was adopted at birth to family over the border. Bryan is English, born in London to parents from Devon and Hampshire. We met at university and we've now been married for 38 years. We both have doctorates, we're both neurodivergent, and we are also both social entrepreneurs (Bryan runs Wild Plant Paper and drives for Tesco & Anne does business and social inclusion coaching, as well as other creative stuff!).

We have three adult kids. Anne has long Covid, so Bryan is also her carer. We have been in Waunarlwydd for 10 years, after 24 years in Bangor and before that, we moved around. We have worshipped at Seion since coming down south, and gradually became its current leaders. I (Anne) will also be one of the trustees for the new Glamorgan CIO.

How did you both come to faith – and then later to ministry?

Bryan: I came to faith through a school Scripture Union group from no Christian background but with a praying grandmother. I was baptised at Kirkintilloch Baptist on my 18th birthday.

Anne: My adoptive mum attended the local Anglican church, and used to take me. But it only became real as a teen through my school Christian Union. I found out later I too had a praying - birth - grandmother. I planned to forget God at university, so 'accidentally' dropped a note about my college prayer meeting. Bryan picked it up – he had been praying to meet another Christian. So I didn't stand a chance! Instead we ended up engaged and thought we were heading to ministry in China.

Bryan: Instead, after a year at Glasgow Bible College, ended up in Bangor and serving God in Penrallt

Baptist Church. God used the training there. Later, the BUW Forge training reinforced earlier learning and helped build our sense of belonging in the Union.

Anne: Gradually, we felt God calling us to a new role as members of Seion Waunarlwydd. We were already organising Sunday services and sharing leadership roles. Last September was an emotional time for us as our chapel, dosbarth, association and the Union recognised God's calling on our lives as members of Seion to be locally recognised ministers.

What are your prayers for your community - and Wales - looking forward?

We have two prayers. One is for Seion and chapels like ours. Seion is small. We are all older. Many of us have health limitations. As a chapel, we see the challenges and we also see God. Seeing both means we aren't defeated but we are realistic. We pray. We look at what God has given us. We use what he supplies creatively and missionally. For example, we now have a couple of weeks before Christmas and Easter when we run creative, interactive activities and our local schools bring pupils - rather than running weekly children's activities. Are we seeing people flood into the chapel? Nope! But are people being changed? Definitely! We pray that we won't lose heart and that all our current members will live long enough, by God's grace, to see the first fruits from the younger generations.

The other is for missional Christians. Preparation for China taught us the need for Christians who can live full-time for Christ through their secular work, family life, and community involvement. Christians cannot delegate responsibility for missional activity to paid 'professional Christians'. Our prayer is that the new Regional CIOs will be able to support the Associations to support the churches to make it easier for everyday Christians to know how to live everyday life intentionally for Christ and in a missional way.