



**A JOURNAL FOR THE DIOCESE OF EXETER**

# CULTIVATE

*Welcome to the first edition of Cultivate, a new journal written by, and for, the people of the Diocese of Exeter*

Our hope for Cultivate is that it can be a source of encouragement, a seedbed for exploring different themes and a place to share ideas.

## Following Jesus as lifelong learners

*Written By Jon Curtis*

When we first had the idea for this journal, we hoped that we might get a person or two willing to explore some ideas through this format. I'm absolutely delighted to be able to share four very different, but all wonderfully inspiring articles from across Devon. As the Lay Discipleship Project Manager for the Diocese of Exeter, it won't surprise you know that I believe that discipleship and learning go hand in hand.

For me, discipleship has perhaps best been encapsulated by the journey that Simon Peter undertook - from being a fisherman called on the beach with little knowledge of where he was heading, via the person who

declared to Jesus that 'we have come to believe and know that you are the holy one of God' in John 6. We also need to acknowledge that Peter stumbled when he told the crowd that he didn't know Jesus. But he ultimately became someone who Jesus knew would be given the keys of the Kingdom because of his passion, trustworthiness and commitment to the Gospel.

This journey is one that we too are called to take, a journey of lifelong learning that must allow us to reflect on who we are, and where we're going. A significant part of this can be learning, sharing and thinking through writing and conversation, and it is our hope that this journal can be something that encourages you to engage in this way.

So a huge thanks goes to Richard, Joanna, Angela and Lydia who have contributed here. If you'd like to contribute in the second issue, please do send submissions via the email address on the last page.



# CULTIVATE

## ***Living with Benedict - Ancient teaching for modern day living***

*Written By Richard Frost*

During the last few years, Benedict has become a friend of mine. I guess I am a friend of his too. But that's difficult to know, really. He's helped me think about my life a lot more – and certainly helped me grow closer to God.

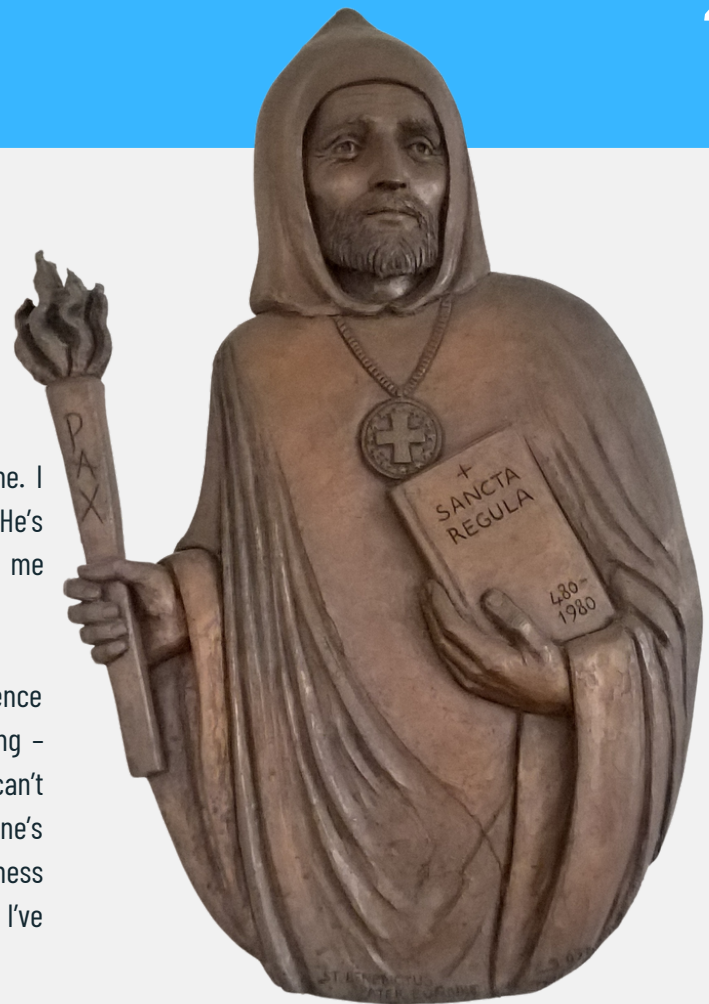
Benedict has taught me the importance of what he calls obedience and I call listening. The words mean pretty much the same thing – although sometimes we can see the former as rather 'negative', can't we? He's helped me understand more about the need to change one's life (or conversion, as he calls it) in a way that enables that closeness to God to be enriched and deepened. Put those two together and I've found that life and faith are much more stable.

Benedict has also taught me the value of regular patterns of prayer and the integral part scripture plays, especially through the Psalms. Now lest you think I am writing about my spiritual director – although I'm sure you've worked it out already – this friend, or at least an acquaintance, is of course St Benedict of Nursia. And his teachings of 1500 years ago remain relevant to our 21st Century lives in ways that are both surprising and helpful.

Born c.480AD in central Italy, St Benedict is generally acknowledged to be the founder of Western monasticism. He founded several monasteries, most notably at Monte Cassino where, in the years preceding his death in 540AD, he wrote a Rule for Monks to guide life in a community. Drawn partly from earlier writings, what became called the Rule of St Benedict covers spiritual and practical aspects of being in community and became the established norm for monastic living in Europe.

Rooted in the Bible, the Rule is still used today to provide wisdom and guidance for nuns and monks and also for individuals who have adopted a similar approach to faith and daily living such as oblates: lay or third order members.

For Benedictine nuns and monks, three vows have particular significance and meaning, and the principles of these vows can be helpful for everyone. They are, as indicated above, obedience (listening), conversion of life (change) and stability. For those of us not called to the monastic life, the principles of the vows can still be seen as threads running through our faith.



*words by Richard Frost*

*"His teachings of 1500 years ago remain relevant to our 21st Century lives in ways that are both surprising and helpful".*

## Stability

For many people, the word 'rule' brings back memories of school life or 'breaking the rules'. Rules may govern or influence how a job was done or what we can and can't do where we live. At various points in the pandemic, there have lockdown rules to follow. We also have 'unwritten rules' and those times and places where rules are followed but no one knows quite why.

The ten commandments could be described as rules. Christ himself gave us a new rule: 'That you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another' (John 13:34).

In his Rule, Benedict writes about a vast range of topics such as leadership and humility. He focuses on the importance and structure of the opus dei, the divine office (prayer times) and quotes from Psalm 119:164, 'Seven times a day have I praised you'. While probably many of us struggle to have just one specific times for prayer each day, it is the routine and the intention that is important to Benedict. Indeed, he writes a lot about what we might think of as the rather routine aspects of life such as sleeping, eating, drinking, clothes and travelling.

Routine, routine, routine. In some respects, the Benedictine approach could be viewed as a boring, unstimulating concept: doing the same thing, day after day. And yet, we mustn't underestimate the value of routine. Indeed, routine is most often noticed when it's absent. Loss of routine, such as that which many of us experienced in times of lockdown, often leads to loss of confidence and contact with others. It leads to a loss of stability.

So, in practice, these very practical things in life, our normal day to day routines sit alongside the intentional practices of prayer and worship. All contribute to our a sense of stability.

*"we mustn't underestimate the value of routine".*

## Change

Many people find change difficult. Be that relatively minor ones to routine or the process by which a particular task is done. Or even just getting a new mobile phone. Larger scale changes can also be difficult – whether it's a change of manager or minister; a change in family life due to bereavement, birth or marriage; or in health due to accident, diagnosis and even recovery.

In such times, we're often keen to hold on to that which remains the same. Hence why sometimes we may be resistant to change, be that at work, home or church.

So how do we cope in times of change?

David Bowie wrote 'Ch-ch-ch-ch-changes, Turn and face the strange.'

Part of the difficulty in 'turning to face the strange' is that while the world around us changes at a very fast rate, as human beings we change much more slowly. Rather like a pair of cog wheels that can't interlock properly – one's going too fast for the other one. This 'mismatch' is often due to the fact that as we go through life being shaped by events and other people, the core characteristics of who we are as individuals can take years to develop.

*"While the world around us changes at a very fast rate, as human beings we change much more slowly".*

Whether change happens slowly or overnight, it is the transition that often takes the time. Transition is the internal adjustment to change and is intimately connected with the sense of who we are and where we belong within such times. We can plan and organise the practical aspects of change but managing the process of transition is often more difficult.

You may like to think about how your life has changed in the last 5, 10, 20 years – and how might it change in the next 5, 10, 20. What changes are you facing at this precise moment?

Do you turn and face the strange – or just keep looking in the usual direction and avoid it?

## Listening

A few years ago, I had some hearing tests. I had a sense that perhaps something wasn't quite right – particularly if there was a lot of background noise. I was referred to the hospital and they did a range of tests all of which were perfectly normal. I sat with the consultant. 'You appear to have an obscure auditory dysfunction,' he said. 'So, you mean you don't know what it is?' I replied. 'Correct,' he said magnanimously. 'What you need to do is to focus your hearing.'

So in the same way that many of us wear glasses to focus on what we are seeing, so too do we need to focus our hearing. Listening to God amidst all the background noise of our surroundings and the constant chattering of our mind takes practice. God doesn't speak on command but often when we're not expecting it. He speaks not always in words.

So, it is by giving God intentional attention that we learn to focus our hearing on how and when God speaks to us. Of all the voices going on in our head to be able to identify that which is God's. For some it may sound very slightly different: a distinctive tone, pitch or phrasing of words. Perhaps coming from thoughts that have not been our own.

Sometimes the listening takes place over a period of time. Maybe days, weeks, months, perhaps even years. We sit with what we think God may be saying and we wait to see if those thoughts remain. To see if they are confirmed by others; or by the practicalities of following through what we think God might be saying; or by what the Bible or other words that come to our attention confirm or not.

We are as St Benedict puts it, to listen with the ear of our heart.

For as we listen to God we become increasingly aware that in order to change, stability is needed; and in order to be stable, we are also to change.

*Richard Frost is the author of Life with St Benedict, which offers daily reflections on the Rule and is published by BRF. A Licensed Lay Minister (Reader), Richard is also a Chaplain to South West Ministry Training Course and an Oblate of the Benedictine Monastic Community at Alton Abbey. More details about his work are on his blog at [workrestpray.com](http://workrestpray.com)*





## Care Home Ministry in Plymouth

Joanna Bound writes and reflects on her role in the instigation of care home ministry, pastoral care and Anna Chaplaincy.

In October 2012 I was asked by my incumbent if I could take a Remembrance event in the local dementia care home. It was arranged with the Activities Worker, who also asked me if I could take communion to a male resident. I took him communion every fortnight for 2 years till he died. I believe he died at peace with his Lord. As I watched God at work in his life, he changed and became a gentler person. His stepson noticed this and asked me to tell them what we talked about at his funeral, which as a reader I was able to take. I continued to visit the care home, getting to know some of the residents, their relatives and staff.

I was later asked by a staff member, of another faith, if I could help with meeting the spiritual needs of residents. I started taking a Christian monthly service to which anyone was welcome, as well as visiting at other times. We began the services with a church member who could play the piano. I was given a small keyboard which was ideal. She asked if she could do alternate months. She was hesitant about the commitment to such a ministry. After the first service she volunteered to come every time. I also had a few volunteers to come and help with the singing and so add volume. I found I could not lead, turn pages for residents, focus on residents who were struggling in any way. I also needed more volume with the singing.

Sadly, after a couple of years our pianist became unwell and later died. I had to find an alternative. I had a couple of CDs of Christian hymns sung by choirs. These did not really work, the number of musicians and choir members confused us as we tried to sing with them, especially when they sang in parts. I found 'Hymns We Have Loved' by Kevin Mayhew. These had one musician and one singer, so easy to follow especially as this was a nursing home for people with dementia. It was wonderful to watch residents come to life and sing the hymns they knew and loved. The residents were from different backgrounds and denominations so the services were not specifically "Anglican". However I always put a cross, a Bible and a candle on a table, or on a trolley! I reminded residents what they stood for. I discovered, when I was taking a service, that I had to be ready for the unexpected.

A woman I had befriended loved 'All things bright and beautiful'. She deteriorated slowly till she became almost totally withdrawn. One day I got down in front of her chair, made eye contact and started to sing 'All things bright and beautiful'. She smiled and began to sing with me. The staff were amazed, they had not seen her so animated for months. I learnt to recognise the tiniest movement or change in facial expression as a sign of recognition of a hymn. One or two of the relatives joined in and noticed the changes in their loved ones.

The activities worker introduced me as 'chaplain' to a resident who told me he wanted nothing to do with God, so we talked about sport and the weather. He deteriorated and after a couple of years had to spend his days in the lounge as he was unsafe to be left in his room. One day after a service, I felt compelled to tentatively ask him if I could pray for him. "I wish someone would" he replied. A few weeks later we noticed that he had joined in singing one of the hymns. It was not long after that he died. The Lord had done something in his life.

*"The staff were amazed. They had not seen her so animated for months".*



I watched the Lord work in residents, relatives and occasionally staff members. I took the funerals of several residents. It was such a privilege to take the funerals of people: I knew this was of value to the relatives as well. I learnt how the staff supported each other and also how they knew and supported the relatives. I was aware that every resident who died left a gap for members of staff and they grieved.

As I became known by the staff I was called into the care home for specific reasons. There was a lady who was convinced God had forgotten her because

of the sin in her life. I was asked if I could support the family of a man who was dying and prayed with them all.

I prayed with a woman unable to go to her husband's funeral. I spent some time with a Pentecostal couple and their daughter. I sang with the wife / mother who had come to the point of refusing her medication, then she stopped eating, and lastly she stopped drinking. I had to ask the husband to teach me some Pentecostal choruses we could sing together. They valued the support I gave them as we talked about loss and letting go.

*"I watched the Lord work in residents, relatives and staff".*

I had been chaplain of this dementia care home for about 2 years when I had the opportunity to volunteer with Churches Together in Plymouth to revitalise the Care Home Chaplaincy scheme in Plymouth. This was an ecumenical project with volunteers from different denominations. My professional background in health and social care, mainly with older people both at home and in care homes equipped me for this piece of work. There were a few volunteers from the earlier piece of work. I contacted the Dignity in Care Home Forum (Plymouth City Council) and was given the opportunity to talk at one of the quarterly meetings of care home managers. I was asked if I would create a questionnaire.

The result showed that the majority of managers would like some form of pastoral care visiting. They appreciated the church leaders who took monthly services but it was not enough. I gradually made contact with some of the care home managers. A resident in one of the care homes was appointed as chaplain for the home where he lived. He was relatively mobile and knew several of the residents. The manager later told me he was a changed man. He had purpose and was valued by the staff.

I realised, as I began to get to know some of the staff of other care homes, that many of them had little idea of God and how to use the volunteers. The management team of one home agreed for me to do a session with some of the staff on the spiritual needs of older people. The staff began to identify certain residents who might be helped by a such a volunteer.

Early on I realised I needed some formalised prayer support. 5 members of my church volunteered to pray for me, so I sent them regular prayer letters. I had asked for prayer for the ministry from the CTiP city prayer group who met weekly. They were very supportive as was the chair of CTiP.

As I began to recruit more volunteers I knew they needed to have DBS checks and safeguarding training. The manager of the homes agreed to do the DBS checks in the same way as they did them for their staff. The volunteers attended the city council adult safeguarding training. I also realised they needed pastoral care training. I worked with the Derriford Hospital chaplaincy team and arranged for the care home volunteers to join the hospital chaplaincy pastoral care visitor training courses. Supervision, support and encouragement of the volunteers was important. We had meetings which I said were “mutual supervision and support”. Most of the gatherings were half time teaching with visiting speakers and the second half was a time of sharing and prayer. The chaplains were all so different with different skills and experience. They were from different denominations. Most were retired.

I was introduced to the idea of Anna Chaplains by an article in the ‘Reader Magazine’ (now Transforming Ministry) in Spring 2016 written by Debbie Thrower who was the first Anna Chaplain. In the same magazine there was an article by a Lay Reader who was appointed as “Lay Worker for Older People” based at his local church. I was inspired by these 2 articles and knew Plymouth needed an Anna Chaplain. Chris Forster, from Transforming Plymouth Together, and I had a meeting with Bishop Nick, Bishop of Plymouth, on 7th December 2017. He was enthusiastic and encouraging. I had a strong feeling that this was the beginning of a journey. Bishop Nick later offered to take a service for the chaplains to encourage existing volunteers and others caring for older people. I prayed often for someone to help me and so did my prayer team and the CTiP prayer group. By this time I had about 18 volunteers going into care homes. I had to discern who was suitable to volunteer for this role. I also discovered much of what the churches were already doing. We had our mutual support and supervision meetings every 6 to 8 weeks. I talked about training with the Derriford hospital chaplaincy team who agreed to include one or two potential chaplains in their pastoral care training for volunteer hospital visitors. They emphasised the need for reflective practise.

Karen Grimshaw, who attended a Pentecostal church, had heard me talk at a Plymouth Dementia Action Alliance meeting and had taken one of the leaflets about the scheme. When Karen retired 2 years later, she made contact and agreed to help me. Her skills, training and professional experience were ideal for the task. Soon we were sharing the work and then in early in 2020 it was time for me to hand over the reins but stay supportive of her. She was happy to be involved with the training so there was no further need to send volunteers to the hospital.

Early in 2019 I was invited to a meeting at the Old Deanery in Exeter, to be part of a working group to look at the discipleship of the over 60's. I had taken the article by Debbie Thrower which created a lot of interest. I later met with the Chair of the House of Laity, Annie Jefferies, who was at the meeting, and shared with her the work done so far regarding pastoral care in care homes.

We later met with Karen. I had been to Debbie Thrower's Anna Chaplaincy envisioning gathering in 2018. I was very encouraged by the presentations and discussions about how the role of Anna Chaplains was evolving across the country. Karen and Annie came with me in October 2019. Annie was enthusiastic about the idea of Anna chaplains and had meetings with Debbie Thrower and the diocesan Bishop, Bishop Robert, who wanted to see the role of Anna Chaplains extended across Devon. This had to be an ecumenical project.

On Wednesday afternoon January 13th 2021 there was a meeting of 12 interested people from across Devon including the Devon County Ecumenical officer, Paul Snell. Bishop Robert had agreed at a meeting that morning, that all was ready to take steps forward to cement the scheme across the Devon Diocese, with the Plymouth Archdeaconry as a pilot.

I was reminded of that first meeting in 2016 with Chris Forster and Bishop Nick. I have watched the Lord slowly bring this together.

There has been lots of prayer support, frustration, heartache, and joy. Frustration came when I felt I had let a care home down when a chaplain was unable to continue, or the care home manager changed. Heartache was felt when I have walked out of the dementia care home in tears asking the Lord, "Why does it have to end this way?". I had seen the intense pain in relatives. There was joy when I saw folk in end stage dementia obviously touched by God, there was also joy when a wife, not interested in church, was baptised, and is now an active member of the church. There was also joy when a shy, anxious, would be chaplain, became a respected, valued unpaid member of staff taking light and joy into staff and residents. The first chaplain I worked with, free church, was later to become "Plymouth's Volunteer of the year" due to the faithful work he did with one difficult resident over nearly 3 years. The resident accepted Christ as his Saviour shortly before he died.

I had a supervision session with another chaplain, a Baptist, together with the care home manager. The manager was full of praise for all he did; "He filled a gap I did not know was there." I had a call from another manager asking about the chaplain who had not been in for a while and was missed. The chaplain concerned had no idea she was valued and started visiting again. This showed the importance of affirmation. Sometimes I would have everything agreed for a chaplain to visit a care home but the communication within the home had not taken place, or the manager would change and the new manager would say 'no thank you'.

I pray that more and more isolated, frail, lonely older people and their loved ones, both in their own homes and in care homes, will have spiritual support and a greater sense of self worth and value from the Anna Chaplain Ministry. Also that they will realise there is an eternal hope available for us.

We pray for volunteers to come forward from across the denominations with their church leaders and church family committed to support them. God cares about older people. Psalm 71 vs 9 is a cry from the heart of a devout old man. "Do not cast me off in a time of old age; do not forsake me when my strength fails,-----"

May we be the answer to that prayer.



Some of the newest Anna Chaplains with Bishop Robert at their Commissioning.

The promotion of Anna Chaplaincy across Devon continues with new chaplains being trained and commissioned. More details can be found at [www.annachaplaincy.org.uk](http://www.annachaplaincy.org.uk)

Joanna Bound is a Licensed Lay Minister (Reader) in Plymouth.



## Prayer Boots

Angela Sumner is a Hospital Chaplain based at Torbay Hospital and an Associate Priest in the Brixham Mission Community.



*'To everything there is a season,  
and a time to every purpose  
under the heaven.'*

*Ecclesiastes 3:1*

Deciding what to select and write about is a real joy and blessing, and needs much thought and consideration. A key part of my Prayer time and my preparation includes time with my 'Prayer boots'; thinking, praying and listening to God as I walk along. Recently one such walk found me up at Berry Head and I share some photos which I hope that you will enjoy too.

As I looked out over the Bay, truly a stunning view on a beautiful sunny day, words from scripture came to mind. But I trust in you, Lord; I say 'You are my God'. My times are in your hands. Psalm 31; 14-15.



Christ of the seven directions is with me.

- Christ above me to uplift me
- Christ beneath me to support me
- Christ before me to guide me
- Christ behind me to protect me
- Christ on my left to meet me
- Christ on my right to greet me
- Christ within me to strengthen me.

On my walk I was reminded of the words of David Adam; that relaxation is one of the best preparations for Prayer. 'We need to learn to be still in body, mind and spirit, to let go of the tensions of our lives. We need to heed the words 'Be still and know that I am God.' It is only by relaxing into His presence that we make room for God to work, make room for His peace, His love, His joy to flow into us and through us to others.'

# PRAYER BOOTS



The Father of many resting places  
grant you rest,  
The Christ who stilled the storm  
grant you calm,  
The Spirit who fills all things  
grant you peace,  
God's light be your light,  
God's love be your love,  
God's way be your way.  
Amen.

David Adam 'The Open Gate'

Living, loving God,  
help me to set times and spaces apart this  
day for me to meet with You.  
And in between those times  
be the breath behind my words,  
the impulse behind my actions  
and the reason behind my thoughts.  
Amen.



***GOD ABOVE.  
GOD AROUND.  
GOD WITHIN.  
AMEN.***

*'The Way Within' People of the Way*

Until next time, I hope that you are able to enjoy moments of peace and stillness too, hopefully with sunshine as well. May the Lord bless you and keep you safe.

# THE SPIRITUALITY OF SEA-SWIMMING

by Lydia Perris

11.

If you've ever been sea-swimming (or dipping in my case) you will know how hard it is to describe just how painful yet amazing it is. Unless you've done it, it's hard to know what it's like. This is what I explored in my undergraduate Geography dissertation, titled: 'Into the Blue: exploring the embodied experiences of and meanings associated with sea-swimming'.

'Wild' swimming has hugely increased in popularity in recent years, and the academic research on 'blue-spaces' has widened too, but there is so much more to explore. My dissertation aimed to contribute to this emerging area by bringing together understandings of the physiological experience and psychological impacts of sea-swimming, to understand what it is really like, and what it means to swimmers. To do this, I studied videos of people who swim in UK seas regularly, all year round, without wetsuits. I found loads of interesting themes: pain, breath, rhythms, and mindfulness, to name a few. If you would like to read or know more, please email me,

The swimmers talked about their relationship with the sea in almost spiritual terms, as something that transcends the sum of the experiences of the body and the mind, and something they just can't quite put their finger on. This got me thinking about the spirituality of sea-swimming. I didn't have scope to explore this third dimension in my dissertation, but I think it's a really interesting research area. Our body, mind, and spirit continually affect each other, are totally interlined, and are all important for our holistic health and wellbeing. The swimmers I studied used words that we often associate with religion to describe their experience. Below are some thoughts on the spirituality of sea-swimming, and, from a Christian perspective, what the sea, and our relationship with it, can teach us about God and faith.

## Self-discipline

The self-discipline it takes to go sea-swimming, especially when it is freezing, wet and windy, is immense. Swimmers make themselves do it, regardless of their emotions, or if they are the only one. This discipline is a habit which spills over into other areas of their life which are challenging. In terms of your faith, do you know the value of self-discipline, and do you practice it regularly? What is your equivalent to getting into the sea?

## Humility

It's easy to become the centre of your universe but being physically immersed in such a huge space such as the sea reminds you that you are a very small part of a much, much bigger picture. You can't comprehend how vast the

seas and oceans are, let alone God in all His fullness. All nature displays the glory of God, and when we situate ourselves within that, we gain a new perspective of God, and of ourselves. When I swim, I am, perhaps surprisingly reminded, of the passage from the Prayer of Humble Access which is often read at communions: 'I am not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs from under Your table.'



# SEA SWIMMING

## **Surrender**

The sea is so powerful, and once you are in the sea, you have to surrender your body to its forces: the waves, tides, currents, conditions etc. Equally, there is a certain surrender in making yourself experience the pain of cold water, knowing that your mind will not be able to focus on anything else. You surrender your conscious thoughts to your subconscious, bodily experiences. Similarly with faith, we are called to surrender all of ourselves, body, mind, and spirit, as a living sacrifice.

## **Awe and wonder**

There is something amazing about the scale of the sea. Seeing the horizon, especially when you are eyelevel with the water, gives you a new sense of perspective, awe and wonder. It's so easy to say 'wow'. Are we in positions in our daily life where we easily say 'wow' to God's goodness?

## **Simplicity**

Sea-swimming is a very simple, non-technical activity. Sometimes it is easy to get caught up in the detail and complexities of life, and faith. I think the simplicity of being in the sea can teach us a lot about our faith.

## **Peace**

Attention restoration theory refers to when your indirect attention is stimulated, giving the conscious mind a rest from fatiguing, directed attention. The natural movements of water, or flames, hold and captivate our attention, but don't tire us. This leads to a deep sense of peace and stillness, which is true corporeally, emotionally, and spiritually when in the sea. It's like taking the Sabbath, where you let your body mind and soul catch up with each other and rest. Both leave you feeling deeply refreshed and sustain you in the long run. It's important to proactively take time to rest. Are there ways you could deepen your Sabbath?

## **Personal relationship**

Each sea-swimmer in my dissertation referred to their personal relationship with the sea with joy and contentment. Each swim is different: you come with different emotions, experiences and expectations, and the sea is also always different due to tides, weather conditions, lighting, temperature, seasons etc. This relationship with the sea, through swimming regularly, is fluid and dynamic. Same with our faith: we are always learning more about God, we are changing, we emphasise different parts of our faith in different seasons.

## **'Daily baptism'**

That's how one of my dissertation subjects described sea-swimming. He felt renewed, restored, and ready for whatever the day would bring. For so many, sea-swimming is a ritual that helps them to cope with everyday life, as they feel like they press the reset button. When you swim in cold water (below 11 degrees) your blood surges to your core organs to protect them. When you are back on dry land, your body slowly starts to circulate the blood back around the whole body fully. This acts as a detox for almost all your body systems: lymphatic, nervous, digestive etc. It's interesting that they see swimming as a break from their routine and daily life, when itself is engrained into their routine. It's perhaps their only time in their day for solace, meditation and to take a deep breath (literally). What's your daily baptism? How do you recognise your deep need for God each day?

# SEA-SWIMMING

## Joy!!

Swimming in the sea, especially with friends, is really fun. It's a great chance to be childlike, and I think I often need reminding that I am a child of God. The 'swimmers high' refers to the strong sense of vitality and joy after a swim due to the production of dopamine, serotonin and endorphins, which are released when you are immersed in cold water to help deal with the pain. Dopamine is an active hormone, so it makes sense that some people do feel addicted to cold water swimming. This high spurs swimmers on to share about their experiences.

## Evangelism

If you know anyone who swims, the likelihood is that they talk about it a lot, and it creeps into conversations that you didn't realise could be relevant to swimming. They are known for loving swimming, and they want everyone to enjoy it and reap the benefits. It's obvious the impact it has on their lives. It oozes into every aspect of their life, and they practice what they preach. What a lesson for us as Christians. I hope and pray your love of God seeps into every area of your life, and that you are known for being Christlike through your actions and words.

Being in the sea is a very spiritual experience for me, as it directly points to the nature of God and his relationship with us. I hope and pray you find time to go to the sea and experience God in new, fluid ways. I would really encourage you to dip and try it for yourself!



If you're interested in exploring more, here are some clickable resources:

- [A selection of short films](#)
- [Books about water and swimming](#)
- [Connect with a local swimming group](#) (there are loads in Devon and Cornwall)

Lydia Perris is the Social Justice and Creation Care Officer for the Diocese of Exeter, and a very keen sea swimmer. Her email address is at [lydia.perris@exeter.anglican.org.uk](mailto:lydia.perris@exeter.anglican.org.uk)




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Thank you for downloading and reading the first issue of Cultivate. I hope you've found it interesting and inspiring. I've loved reading these articles. We're very keen that more people get involved, so please do have a think about what you might like to create. We may in the future look to curate themed editions, so if you have any ideas around potential subjects, we'd love to hear them. Submissions and comments can be sent to Jon Curtis via [jon.curtis@exeter.anglican.org](mailto:jon.curtis@exeter.anglican.org)

Please distribute as widely as possible - it is our hope that this becomes a resource for all the people of the church in Devon, and even further afield.

With all best wishes, Jon