

SEA SUNDAY '26.

I wonder how many of you remember learning to swim? I wonder how many holidays you remember with your fishing net eagerly seeking out crabs, or getting in a boat for the first time? We are so lucky living beside the Deben with a working boatyard, a marina which attracts boats from near and far. I wonder how many of you remember that global sensation in 2016 when the public overwhelmingly wanted to name the UK's famous polar research vessel, "Boaty McBoatface"? The RRS Sir David Attenborough as it was officially named, used the name 'Boaty' instead for its yellow underwater vehicle which is deployed on expeditions to gather deep-sea climate and marine data. I am old enough to remember 'Thunderbird 4' which had the same role! I remember Jacques Cousteau and his seductive French speaking and enthusing.

So the sea conjures up different memories and different meanings and emotions – whether for leisure and pleasure, research and exploration, conservation – and trade of course. We were reminded last year that Felixstowe is still the busiest UK port. And then there's the controversial state of today's Royal Navy and how far we have lagged behind other nations in our spending. When Russian submarines have recently entered UK waters, when the Strait of Hormuz is used as a bargaining tool by oppressive regimes, there is a dark side too. And we must not forget its opposite, the work of the RNLI who rescue lives instead of hurting them or for that matter, The Samaritans and the ecumenical chaplaincy team who I know also save lives in the biggest suicide spot today,

at Beachy Head. The international charity we are supporting tonight, 'Mission to Seafarers' bring great comfort and shelter to those who work on the sea for months at a time, missing their loved ones, missing the safety net or security of home.

So tonight's a good time to thank the Lord for all who work on our behalf on the great oceans, who instinctively know how important it is to plan ahead, to keep safe, and to enjoy those 'spots of time' when they see and experience every kind of weather – bleak, or beautiful – and every kind of horizon at dawn or dusk.

Our Town Mayor recommended to me the short poems of Lemm Sissay who composes a short poem (just 4 lines each) nearly every morning. His collection is called 'Let the light pour in' and it is indeed life-affirming and full of wonder. I am spoilt for choice which one to share. I have chosen this one:

“The moon tells the sky
The sky tells the sea
The sea tells the tide
And the tide tells me.”

Who can forget too, the immortal words of Alfred, Lord Tennyson's 'Crossing the Bar' which our own choir have also sung at a funeral or two. The sea is such a moving and powerful metaphor as our two Biblical readings explore. Children particularly love the story of Jonah and the whale even though they could not know the 'fear of the Lord' as we do, or as those first disciples and fishermen felt so keenly.

Jesus calms the storm, and stills their anxiety. Even the wind and sea obey him says, St Mark.

I think I have told this story before when, as a teenager, I was on a school cruise on SS Uganda and we hit a Force 9 gale in the Bay of Biscay. Seeing the table-tennis tables sliding away and crashing into walls, made me rush to the outer decks nearest to the raging waves. I just remember singing hymns very loudly; I was a very holy and fragile child! Perhaps I am imagining all this and I really sang one of the many Beatles hits from 'Yellow Submarine'....

"Peace, be still" are the words of Christ which still resound and echo in our hearts and prayers. Our weekly Meditation group believe that, our weekly Morning Prayer 'zoomers' believe that. All listeners and participators in Choral Evensong believe that.

At a time right now when we are rightly banned from using our garden hosepipes, just ponder instead about drawing deeply from the wells of abundant life and refreshing waters in which only Christ can be our beacon, captain and guide.

AMEN.