



# Chair Letter

## CHRIS BRIGGS

*He can turn the tides, and calm the angry sea;  
He alone decides who writes a symphony.  
He lights every star that makes our darkness bright,  
He keeps watch all through each long and lonely night.*

Richard Mullen  
(American contemporary Christian music singer and songwriter)

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### *The Chair writes...*

Part of my ministry was spent in Portland and Weymouth. Twenty years of it! I often joke that clearly no one else wanted me or they wouldn't have left me there that long! I have always enjoyed being close to the sea, whether on family holidays when I was young, or later in life with friends, or during that wonderful period of living daily life near to the sea. When we moved to the Midlands, marvellous as this area is, we grieved a little for the sea. A kindly church member told us we should not worry too much as there was a nearby reservoir! We couldn't quite see the connection.

The wonder of the sea! Being close to the sea would often bring to the forefront of my mind something Rev Donald Rogers, a former minister (presbyter in today's language) said to me. He was the circuit superintendent of the Basildon circuit and the minister with whom I did my Local Preacher studies and under whom I candidated for the presbyteral

ministry. We would talk about the Bible often and, of course, we would consider that – for some – it is not an easy book to interpret. We all know that taking one text out of context can be very confusing, even if it sounds convincing on its own. Donald Rogers would say it helped him to think of the waves on the seashore when the tide was going in or out. If you look at an individual wave when it moves onto the shore it might give an impression of going in or out, contrary to what is happening to the tide.

It is as we stand back and observe the waves and the shore that we see the one wave in the context of an entire movement, still a part of the whole but needing the rest of the tide to make sense of it. I think this is a helpful way of looking at scripture when we are not quite sure of the direction we are to take.

I think the principle of not getting too focused on individual waves works in other directions too. Within our western society it seems that there has been a sustained

period of hedonism, individualism, questioning of the Christian faith and rejection of the church. Often, alongside that has been a distancing (even within the church) from the Bible as a foundation in matters of faith and practice. The liberal and intellectually lacking phrase 'Love is Love' has been but one manifestation of the way society has been going down a rabbit hole. It would be very easy to think we have lost our moral and spiritual compass completely.

I have tried to step back though and look at the tide rather than the individual waves. Some of those individual waves can be very distressing. I discern and believe the tide is turning though. There is clearly a change in the attitudes and minds of parts of society and, whereas some people were fearful of disagreeing with prevailing views in society, more are speaking up when they think they are being asked to believe something daft. Put that alongside the growing evidence of what has been called the 'Quiet Revival' and signs of growth within MET:Revive, I think we may be observing a sea change.

We will need to hold this is prayer and to keep discerning what the Spirit is saying to the churches, but the tide may be turning. I feel the Spirit is on the move in a different way. I do not want this to be a false positivism, but I do want to watch carefully for the signs of God at work. I do feel we can be quietly encouraged though.

Be encouraged. God is good. His Spirit is with us. The name of Jesus will be lifted high.

