

Welcome



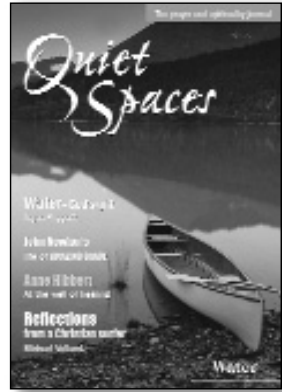
NAOMI STARKEY

There is something about water that captures our imagination, in the UK at least! Maybe it is something to do with living on an island. Websites devoted to selling waterside property show the premium placed on something with a sea/river/lake view, if only a rather rickety boat on a cramped canal mooring. Even if we don't live by water, we may love sailing, swimming, surfing or simply walking by it.

As a number of the articles in this issue mention, water is inescapably—and obviously—a global issue. So often taken for granted in relatively cool and rainy northern countries, access to water (or the lack of it) is literally a matter of life or death for far too many people around the world. Ours is a blue planet, almost wholly water when seen from space, but we squander this precious resource at our peril.

In the Bible, water is a dominant image used to express something of God's blessing and also his transforming power. From 'creation to re-creation' (in the words of Jo Bailey Wells), from Genesis to Revelation, this most evocative of symbols speaks to us of our maker and redeemer, and demonstrates his unflinching love and care for us. When we thirst, he offers us the living water that truly satisfies, and in the waters of baptism we see a reminder of his saving love, bringing us from death to eternal life.

Quiet Spaces



CONTENTS

- Irrepressible blessing,
heavenly overwhelming4
Jo Bailey Wells
- Drinking water and living water11
David Douglas
- Orders for an anchoress17
Veronica Zundel
- Water—God's gift.....18
Joyce Huggett
- Reflections from a Christian surfer ..24
Michael Volland
- The Community of Aidan and Hilda
and the Holy Island of Lindisfarne....28
Ray Simpson
- Wash and flood33
Nigel Holmes
- Ministering angels37
Carol Hathorne
- Music for the soul: Many waters
cannot quench Love.....38
Gordon Giles
- The hidden life of the oyster.....41
Emma Garrow
- At the well of healing.....44
Anne Hibbert
- John Newton's life
of amazing grace50
Jean Watson
- The seawater kingdom53
Naomi Starkey
- Prayer through the week.....59
Tony Horsfall
- Musings of a middle-aged mystic61
Veronica Zundel

Drinking water and living water

© Ian Joy Photographic



David Douglas heads two non-profit water organizations, the Santa Fe-based Waterlines and Water Advocates, based in Washington DC. He is the author of 'Wilderness Sojourn' (HarperCollins, 1989), and co-author with his wife Deborah of 'Pilgrims in the Kingdom: Travels in Christian Britain' (BRE, 2004).

I write these words from Santa Fe, in the US's arid south-west, where we count ourselves fortunate to get 15 inches of rain annually. This tally compares to a nearly 30-inch average for St Andrews, Scotland, where Deborah and I once lived. Every rainfall in that beautiful university town on the Fife coast delighted us parched New Mexicans. Our enthusiasm for 'dreich' weather evoked astonishment and dismay from our Scottish neighbours.

My appreciation for rain began under grudging New Mexican skies, while experiencing occasional water shortages at our home. An unreliable

**'I was thirsty
and you gave me drink'**

well and pump led to a demoralizing hiss of air emerging unpredictably from empty taps. One night in 1985, our six-month-old daughter was sick. At 4am, carrying her in my arms, wearily pacing back and forth in the bedroom, I knew that our house's water supply would soon be fixed. But as I walked I found myself asking this question: 'What if you lived in a

**Over a billion people
had no access to clean
drinking water**



© Comstock Images/Alamy

part of the world where you never had clean water to bathe a sick child or rehydrate her?’

That question led me into years of writing magazine articles about international drinking water and sanitation. As I carried out my initial research, I had trouble comprehending the cold statistics provided by aid agencies: over a billion people had no access to clean drinking water; twice that number lacked adequate sanitation. Diseases related to water and sanitation triggered 80 per cent of sickness in the developing world and half of the world’s infant mortality.

One drawback to writing is that a writer is never quite sure who is out there reading. At the end of the day, I wondered whether my words on paper should not be matched with water projects in the field, so as to get water actually flowing in a village. Before long, several friends and I started an all-volunteer charity called Waterlines, designed to link donors in the US with rural communities abroad that needed clean drinking water. In the past two decades, Waterlines has provided technical expertise and funds for over 200 drinking water projects in a dozen developing countries.

Waterlines’ first projects in Mexico were funded by New Mexican churches. In the process of deciding whether their congregation should get involved in the first place, members of a church would sometimes come to an understanding of the global

problem via their professional lens.

A scientist, for example, would speak of scarcity, noting that 97 per cent of the globe's water is saltwater, two per cent is frozen away in ice caps, and only one per cent is available for drinking, irrigation and all the other freshwater uses made by humanity. A teacher would be appalled that half of all schools in the world lack access to drinking water and sanitation. A businessman would grasp the consequences of billions of workdays lost as a result of waterborne sickness. A working mother would point out that the average African woman has to walk six kilometres each day to collect water for her family.

In addition to all these concerns, church members would recall stories of water shortage echoing through the Bible. They would know that the Hebrews were no strangers to physical thirst, particularly in the Sinai desert: 'And the Lord said to Moses, "Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water. So you shall bring water out of the rock for them and give drink to the congregation and their cattle"' (Numbers 20:7-8, ESV).

Then from scripture, most agonizingly, there were those two indelible words from the cross: 'After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfil the Scripture), "I thirst"' (John 19:28). As the writer Willa Cather noted in her novel of

New Mexico, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, 'Of all our Lord's physical sufferings, only one, "I thirst", rose to His lips.'

Perhaps most importantly for any congregation debating whether or not to respond, there was the scriptural imperative of Matthew 25:35: 'I was thirsty and you gave me drink.' Jesus told his disciples that whenever they ministered to one in thirst (or hungry, sick or in prison) it was as if they were ministering to him. 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me' (v. 40).

**'Tell the rock
before their eyes
to yield its water'**

Once aware of the casualty toll and scriptural mandate, many congregations chose to respond. Some supported water projects through their own ecclesiastical links abroad; other churches funded well-regarded secular water charities working in developing countries; a few advocated on behalf of increased foreign aid for international drinking water.

One Presbyterian church in Santa Fe made water part of its Lenten devotional material. The pastor preached on the worldwide need. Over a hundred members of the

Any congregation can link itself to a single project

**97% of the globe's
water is saltwater,
2% is frozen away
in ice caps**

congregation, each time they used water in their homes, set aside a contribution towards a water project at a primary school in East Africa. Paying unaccustomed attention to water usage, parishioners were stunned by how often they turned on taps. (The average American uses 100 gallons per person per day; United Kingdom per capita usage is about half that. The minimum necessary for basic health is five gallons per day—something that 1.1 billion people around the world currently lack.)

The odd nature of the world's drinking water supply—dispersed and fragmented, with hundreds of thousands of communities lacking safe, affordable access—renders the

problem susceptible to small-scale, targeted responses involving one-to-one relationships. Any congregation can link itself to a single project so as to ensure an adequate water supply for a community, church, school or clinic.

Of course, the need that must be addressed also includes spiritual thirst. As Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well: 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink", you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water' (John 4:10).

The opportunity to work with villagers in obtaining clean drinking water 'tends to be so full of blessings', as one volunteer recalled, that it makes it hard to distinguish donor from recipient. Recently back from inaugurating new water cisterns at Kenyan schools, one American volunteer chronicled ceremonies marked throughout by prayer and thanksgiving:

Yesterday a village elder said he tried to think of what to give us to show how thankful he is. He said he thought about giving us a cow

because he has a cow, but decided the cow would grow old and he wanted to give us something that would last. He decided asking for God's blessing on us was best.

Another volunteer reported that she had gone to inspect the capacity of water tanks, but found that it was her own Christian faith that was enlarged by the prayerful lives of Kenyans that she met.

At times, physical and spiritual thirst intersect even more tangibly. Not long ago in a village in Chiapas, Mexico, the water committee explained to a visiting architect that the remote community of thatched-roofed homes needed a better supply of drinking water. Their proposal? A cistern that could hold rainfall running off 'a large roof of tin'. The visitor listened to their proposal, and pointed out that the community 'did not have a building with a large tin roof'. 'Well, yes,' one of the villagers admitted. 'But we also need a church.'

Only briefly taken aback, the architect considered the dual need and soon provided a design—an open-air sanctuary whose tin roof channels rain via gutters into two cisterns serving double duty. One cistern is also a buttress while the other provides a church tower. The ingenious architecture offers a model for other rural sanctuaries in regions of abundant but episodic rainfall.

Here in Santa Fe, few days pass without the local newspaper chronicling a water-related story. Each

year, more of the globe's newspapers come to look like Santa Fe's, as headlines report water shortages caused by dropping aquifers, pollution, deforestation and population growth. Together with climate change, water will be the environmental story of the next decade.

As consequential as global warming is likely to be, its toll on human health remains largely prospective. Water-related casualties are here today. Around the world in the next 24 hours, 4500 children will

Together with
climate change,
water will be the
environmental
story of the
next decade

die from preventable diseases caused by contaminated water and insanitary conditions. There are considerable reasons for hope, however. Between 1990 and 2004, more than 1.2 billion people gained access to improved drinking water sources, as coverage



...it is critical for people of faith to begin with prayer

Solutions to the water problem are myriad

increased from 78 per cent of humanity to 83 per cent. From national governments and the UN to smaller-scale efforts of charities and private citizens, initiatives are being launched daily to improve drinking water supplies.

I spoke not long ago to someone who wanted to solve the water crisis. 'I don't want to do a single project,' he said. 'I want to solve the global problem.' So does everyone—but the problem is not capable of a single solution. Unlike a vaccine discovery for polio, solutions to the water problem are myriad.

Facing so many options, it is critical for people of faith, as they decide how to respond, to begin with prayer. By forgetting to ask what God would have them do, the risk exists, metaphorically and literally, of hewing out 'cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water', as the prophet Jeremiah once warned (Jeremiah 2:13).

Anchoring water work in prayer will remind congregations that they are involved not in abstract social issues but in seeking to respond to Christ. As Jesus promised, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, "Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water"' (John 7:37–38).

No congregation can conclude that the global water problem is too vast. There is a role for each member of the body of Christ to offer to others both drinking water and living water. ■

Orders for an anchoress

*First go to water, any water:
brook, river, lake or sea, all speak
incessantly in tongues of liquid eloquence*

*Sit blind on bank or shore
face tipped to the wind, the sun
basting you like a baked stone*

*Hear the great swell wash and pull
the small stream chuckle and chatter*

*Rock till you too are wave
flesh flowing into the tide's sway*

*Run, run with the eddy's course
drench loose in the breaker's flail and shout*

*and then
swing still*

*and when your soul's swirl
balances
go*

the living water's pulse in your blood

VERONICA ZUNDEL

Water

God's gift



Joyce Huggett is trained in counselling and spiritual direction—skills used when she and her husband David became missionaries with Interserve. These skills also led to many of her books on marriage, listening to others and listening to God. Now living in England, Joyce leads retreats and Quiet Days for missionaries and others, and spends time with her five grandchildren.

In many countries
**drinkable tap
water does
not exist**

‘What a relief to be able to drink *tap water* without boiling it!’ That’s a comment I made as, after a long walk in the Derbyshire hills, I sipped and savoured a glass of iced tap water.

My husband and I had recently returned to our home in Derbyshire after spending years overseas, where our role, responsibility and privilege had been to provide pastoral care and spiritual resources for missionaries. Sometimes the missionaries would come to us in the place in Cyprus where we led retreats. Often, we would visit them in the country to which God had called them. In many of these

countries, drinkable tap water does not exist, and you drink at your peril water that has not been boiled.

For countless people, drinking water is a luxury—like the children I encountered in one country we visited. Hundreds of them are homeless. They live on the bank of a river that runs through the centre of a town. In the absence of drinking water, in the stifling heat of the day, they frequently resort to drinking the filthy river water. Their hungry faces still rise before my eyes whenever I see water being wasted.

Our stay in that country was so short that we had no opportunity to minister to children like these. The reason we were there was to give water to other thirsty people—the missionaries working in that land. Like many missionaries in many countries, they were spiritually thirsty. While we were with them, ours was the joy of underlining the invitation God gives us through Isaiah: ‘Come, everyone who is thirsty—here is water! ... Plenty of water, like a spring... that never runs dry’ (Isaiah 55:1; 58:11, GNB).

God gives us a similar invitation in the book of Revelation when he promises a drink from the fountain filled with the water of life to anyone who is thirsty: ‘Come, whoever is thirsty; accept the water of life as a gift, whoever wants it’ (Revelation 22:17).

Receiving the gift

How do we receive God’s promise and drink ‘the water of life’? I am often asked this question. One way is to drink with our eyes. I loved doing this as I sat at my desk in our home in Cyprus. Whenever I could, I would go there to watch the rising sun slide out of the bright blue sea before soaring slowly, like a golden ball, into the cloudless blue sky. The serenity of this silent but spectacular scene raised for me a question: ‘What kind of being must he be who created sunrises and sunsets as well as the azure blue sea and sky?’

Their
hungry
faces still
rise before
my eyes
whenever
I see water
being
wasted

Plenty of
water, like
a spring...
that never
runs dry

I had never lived so close to the sea before but such was the magnetism of this vast expanse of water that, most days, I would walk to the nearby beach to pray. My husband and I also went there regularly to swim. As I walked and gawked and swam, I was so overwhelmed by the beauty, majesty and buoyancy of the sea that often I would find myself caught up in the kind of experience that the great woman of prayer Catherine of Siena described so beautifully: ‘You, O eternal Trinity, are a deep sea into which the more I enter, the more I find, and the more I find, the more I seek. O sea profound, what more could you give me than yourself?’

Over the years I have feasted on those words as well as feasting on the sight of the sun-splashed sea. I also echo those words and, as I pray, I marvel that the deep sea of the holy Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—not only welcomes me but supports and refreshes my spirit in the same way that the Mediterranean Sea used to buoy up my body when I had the joy of swimming in it.

**Overwhelmed by the beauty,
majesty and buoyancy of
the sea**

Responding to the gift

My husband and I now live in England, in an apartment that provides us with glimpses of the sea. Our home is also close to the beach, which means that it is easy to go there early in the morning where the vast expanse of water, the splendour of the sunrise and the sight and sound of seagulls squabbling over the shellfish being washed on to the shore fill me with awe and wonder and childlike delight. With equal delight, I watch how the waves wash away the flotsam and jetsam and litter that lie in the sand, as well as the way, little by little, the sea water seems to be reshaping the beach.

‘Change *me*’ is the prayer I often pray as I watch the water’s many ministries. ‘Cleanse *me*. May I bring food to others and may my life reveal your footprints.’



Little by little,
the sea water
seems to be
reshaping the
beach

Every time I go to the beach or simply stand and stare at the sea from the cliff top, I marvel as I contemplate this cameo of God's creativity—so much so that I echo many songs sung by the psalmists, particularly this one:

*The Lord is the great God,
the great King above all gods...
The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hands formed the dry land.
Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.*

PSALM 95:3, 5–6 (TNIV)

I marvel as I
contemplate
this cameo
of God's
creativity



Milford Sound, New Zealand

**my spirit soars
silently**

The fiord is
rather like
your life

Often, I find, the glory and the grandeur before me is so great that I am stopped in my tracks. My body can do nothing but stand still, my eyes can do nothing but stare while my spirit soars silently and can do nothing but give God heartfelt praise and gratitude for these symbols of his grandeur. The day before I wrote this article, for example, the strong beams of the afternoon summer sun shone so serenely on the sea, which had seemingly turned to gold, that I found myself silenced and stilled, able to whisper over and over again just one word: 'Glory!' Then came a short prayer: 'You are the King of Glory.'

Being changed by the gift

In many countries of the world, as we have seen, people have little or no access to drinking water. In many other countries, people can be changed

The deep sea of the holy Trinity
not only welcomes me but supports
and refreshes my spirit

simply by contemplating the Creator as they marvel at the wonder of water or tune in to the message God gives through this powerful visual aid.

I think of the time when my husband and I visited Milford Sound in New Zealand. While he was queuing to buy tickets for the boat that would enable us to explore the fiord at leisure, I was marvelling so much at the beauty that I determined to discover more about the magnificent expanse of water before me. My research revealed that the top 40 metres of the water consisted of melted snow. These metres provide a home for creatures that thrive in fresh water. Underneath this top layer of water, though, lies a hidden mass of salt water that never sees the sunshine but provides a home for certain unique sea creatures.

As I marvelled at this mystery, a small voice that I took to be God's voice whispered to me: 'The fiord is rather like your life. You also have an upper layer where you know my Spirit is at work. But there is another deep, hidden layer that also needs to be owned and explored. These are also parts of your God-given personality that must be both named and befriended.'

I turned those words over and over in my mind and heart as we boarded the boat and absorbed the beauty that surrounded us on all sides: the stillness of the sky, the wonder of the water, the splendour of the snowcapped mountains. That day, and whenever I look at pictures of Milford Sound, I find myself echoing another observation made by the psalmist: 'The voice of the Lord is over the waters... The voice of the Lord is powerful' (Psalm 29:3–4, TNIV). ■

**Give God
heartfelt praise
and gratitude
for these
symbols of his
grandeur**

O sea profound,
what more
could you
give me than
yourself?