

S + Mary's &  
S | Laurence's

BHCT\*

Parish of Goring-by-Sea

Dear church family,

As part of our mission giving we wanted to support a Christian charity that was involved in supporting those with mental health and wellbeing issues. The churchwardens thought that the Beachy Head Chaplaincy Team would be a good fit for this and once the decision had been made they approached me to write an article for you. I have been involved with BHCT as a trustee and volunteer chaplain for a number of years now and I am now 'Chaplain to the Chaplains'. We would greatly value your support so please do read on!



The Beachy Head Chaplaincy Team is based in Eastbourne on a headland stretch of the Seven Sisters coastline. What started off as a Christian response to a concern for mankind has developed into an organisation

that plays a vital role in the area in which they have been called to work. Whilst well known as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a well visited holiday spot and part of the frequently travelled walking paths of the South Downs Way, the south coast headland known as Beachy Head has been a place of death for hundreds of years.

In 2004 the charity of the Beachy Head Chaplaincy Team was formed in response to a Christian vision to help those who come to end their lives by suicide. The Christian call to work here is twofold. Firstly, BHCT is primarily an intervention and search and rescue service trying to save those who are intent on ending their lives and secondly, BHCT chaplains aim to offer the gospel where appropriate in these situations.

Under the stewardship of the Trust, God's plan for BHCT has developed and expanded. They still act as the first line of emergency response for search and rescue and intervention and the task they face is staggering. In the last two years there were just over 2,800 incidents at Beachy Head where people come not only from all over the UK but also from all over the world to end their lives.



Such is the success of BHCT providing their twenty four hour coverage, seven days a week with foot and car patrols and equipped with night

vision equipment that they have become the first emergency response for crisis rescue and intervention and are supported by National and Sussex police services, the UK coastguard and NHS mental health Triage Team. The work they do is highly valued by these other frontline services as they realise the unique expertise offered by the chaplains in saving so many lives. Hospitals and medical facilities are also aware of the expertise these chaplains have developed in the area of suicide and as such have invited them to talk to medical students and doctors about suicide, how it works and how to deal with people as they have become national experts in this field.



At the heart of this global suicide tourism is an ongoing spiritual battle calling for a Christian response to bring light where there is darkness, life where there is death. The team spend time praying on the headland in a spiritual battle to win back the area for God. Everyone who is brought back from the edge is offered immediate counselling and medical triage and often the gospel is shared and lives are saved along with souls. Stories of conversions, church attendance, baptisms and new life are abundant amongst those who have met the faithful chaplains who patrol this area. In addition to this they still encounter hundreds of people each day and night who move through this place on foot and to whom they offer guidance, conversation and a friendly smile.



We would love you to consider whether you can support BHCT. One way to support is to subscribe to the prayer newsletter and partner with us in prayer. We never underestimate the power of prayer and more often than not it is the difference between life and death.

Another way to support would be through financial giving. Details can be found on the website: [bhct.org.uk/](http://bhct.org.uk/)

I am currently making plans to walk a **'prayer pilgrimage'** from St. Mary's Church in Goring to Beachy Head via the South Downs Way this summer. I will be praying for Sussex and the south Coast as I walk and there will be opportunity for others to join me at various stages. We will be asking churches along the way to pray for us, send us prayer requests and support me. At each stage I would welcome prayer support for the parish of Goring-by-Sea and in addition to prayer requests it will be possible to sponsor the walk / pilgrimage should you wish to. We will be inviting our whole church family to join us in an outdoor Eucharist service at Beachy Head on the day I arrive there. We will send you more details about this nearer the time.

Yours in Christ,  
Fr. Neill