



# Living Spirituality Connections

## Resources for deeper living

### Newsletter Summer 2023

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## Introduction

By Petra Griffiths, Newsletter Editor

We begin this issue by looking at topics connected with a Living Spirituality Connections' key theme: the flourishing of the earth and all life. We examine the recent climate protests over four days in April in Westminster, which attracted a broad range of people and organisations, including Christian Climate Action. We go on to look at an inspiring project growing seeds into the food of the future on the southside of St James's Piccadilly. A new era is beginning and we as a species have choices and agency in making it an Ecozoic era (an idea that Geologist Thomas Berry developed), where planet earth again becomes home for all our kindred species. We conclude that section by looking at the importance of living for the whole.

In our section on the creative spirit in adversity we draw inspiration from ***Dancing in the Darkness. Spiritual Lessons for Thriving in Turbulent Times*** a book by Otis Moss III that reweaves Black spirituality into our current context, in response to the experiences of violence that black people in the States constantly face.

In our look at spiritual journeying we have reflections by respected spiritual leader Sarah Bachelard of Benedictus Contemplative Church in Canberra on a new book by Kerrie Hide called ***Love's Oneing*** (a phrase from Julian of Norwich). The communion consciousness spoken of here imparts a greater awareness of our wholeness, including ourselves, all of creation and the whole of cosmic expression. This book imparts nuanced wisdom on **how to nurture heart-awareness**, and a sense of sacred presence that is simultaneously *enstatic* – enclosing, still and abiding, and *ecstatic* – outpouring, creative, evolutionary.



We also carry an interview with Felicity Warner, founder of the spiritual midwifery movement in the UK, which aims to lovingly ease the passage of those dying, to ensure that death is a dignified and peaceful experience.

Finally we begin a series in which partner organisations talk about their vision and their work. Sarum College in Salisbury is the first to feature.

*With good wishes from the Living Spirituality Core Group: **Linda Courage, Heather-Jane Ozanne** and myself, with invaluable help from **Bridget Cambridge**.*

# The Flourishing of the Earth and of all Life

## Reflections on the Climate Protests 21-24 April 2023

By Deborah Colvin and Petra Griffiths



*Protesters from St James's Piccadilly and Living Spirituality Connections at the start of the pilgrimage to Westminster with the Climate Stripes showing the increase in global temperatures.*

An estimated 60,000 people from all over the country joined Christian Climate Action and 200 other environmental organisations in Parliament Square over the four-day weekend of 21-24 April. The protests issued a strong challenge to Government policy on fossil fuel extraction and called for greater public engagement through citizens assemblies. This was a moment when the climate protest movement got much broader, with many more people willing to witness publicly to the need for urgent action on the climate emergency.

On Friday, Christians of many denominations joined the 'No Faith in Fossil Fuels' service at St John's Waterloo, where the church and entrance were filled to capacity, with many others in the garden. We then walked in pilgrimage along the South Bank and over Westminster Bridge to Parliament Square, stopping at the Shell building en route to sing Amazing Grace and hand in a letter.

On Saturday, Earth Day, many thousands participated in a Biodiversity March and die-in, and leaders of Black majority churches led worship for the Christian community. Sunday's theme, 'Running out of Time' coincided with the London marathon, with Race Director Hugh Brasher expressing his support for the protest – and many protestors getting a great view of the race as it passed through Parliament Square. On Monday in the pouring rain,

with parliament in session, the core messages were restated: no more fossil fuels, and greater democratic participation through citizens assemblies.

Val, a participant, said:

““

*I found Friday's protest inspiring. I have come home with renewed hope to keep fighting for this beautiful earth and all its life. I found it very powerful to be worshipping outside Shell's headquarters, and also gained huge hope and courage from talking to people who had come from all over the country to protest together.*

””

Right – participants with prayer placards as requested by Christian Climate Action.



To read more: **Why participate in public witness and direct action?** and **What did we learn?** go to:

<https://livingspirit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Reflections on the climate protests.pdf>

**Deborah Colvin** was born 318ppm. (This number signifies the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The current concentration is 417ppm, a staggering increase over my lifetime.) Deborah is part of the Earth Justice team at St James's Piccadilly, and is an educator and environmental activist.

**Petra Griffiths** is coordinator of Living Spirituality Connections, Pastoral Care Coordinator at St James's Piccadilly, and member of the Earth Justice team there.



## Die-ins: a gentle act of resistance at the threshold between life and death

By Ayla Lepine



*Thousands participate in a die-in at Westminster during the Biodiversity Procession for Earth Day*

Yesterday was Earth Day. It was also the mid-point in the climate emergency protests surging through London. Across these days in which thousands and thousands of people are fighting for change and for the planetary home we share, and exploit, there is hope and heartbreak binding people together in the streets nearby. People are defending nature, the human uniting with and expressing the voices of the beyond human. God's earth – past, present, and future is at stake moment by moment. Whether you're part of the protest – and I encourage everyone to join our eco-church team to go with them after church today – we're all part of the movement. Every time we imagine the world to be a better place, now and tomorrow, we're saying 'Amen' to the God who desires, above all, love and justice to immerse and transform every heart.

Beth Sawyer, a lecturer in microbiology at the University of Westminster described it like this: "Climate change is actually very like an infectious disease, in the sense that the solutions are political not just medical," she said. "We know what the problem is, and we know the solution. It's a political decision not to save lives." Not just human lives, but the lives of around a million species facing extinction.

One of the non-violent, peaceful actions that many, many protest movements have done in the past – and that some groups are participating in this weekend here in London – is a 'die-in'. People lie down. Still. Quiet. Their bodies pressing against the hard, tough asphalt. Meters beneath their backs, their heads, their outstretched arms, the soil, I believe, responds to the presence of their warm bodies, signalling the thresholds between life and death. Why 'play dead'? It is a gentle act, I believe, of resistance. Lying down. We do it

every day. Not typically in the middle of a road, but it's one of the basic postures of our bodies. When I've done this before, it's been weirdly sort of peaceful. A bit scary, it's civil disobedience of course – but really honestly peaceful. A kind of meditation on what it is to be alive, while physically expressing the shared reality – human and beyond human – of mortality, too soon, and life being, too often, a fragile and precarious gift.

In her essay titled 'War Talk', Arundhati Roy says this:

*'The corporate revolution will collapse if we refuse to buy what they are selling – their ideas, their version of history, their wars, their weapons, their notion of inevitability. Remember this: We be many and they be few. They need us more than we need them. Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.'*

Every die-in, as a political and hope-driven act, is actually a **'live-in'**. It is not a message of final extinction. Not for Christians. It can't be. It's a message of the promise of renewal. Not just in the next world of the New Jerusalem, but right now...

Go to: <https://livingspirit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Ayla Lepine sermon 23 April 23.pdf> to read more about the meaning of the vision statement 'Rooted in God's earth, we envision a just society and a creative, open-hearted church.'

**Rev Dr Ayla Lepine** is Associate Rector of St James's Piccadilly.

## Food for the Ecozoic

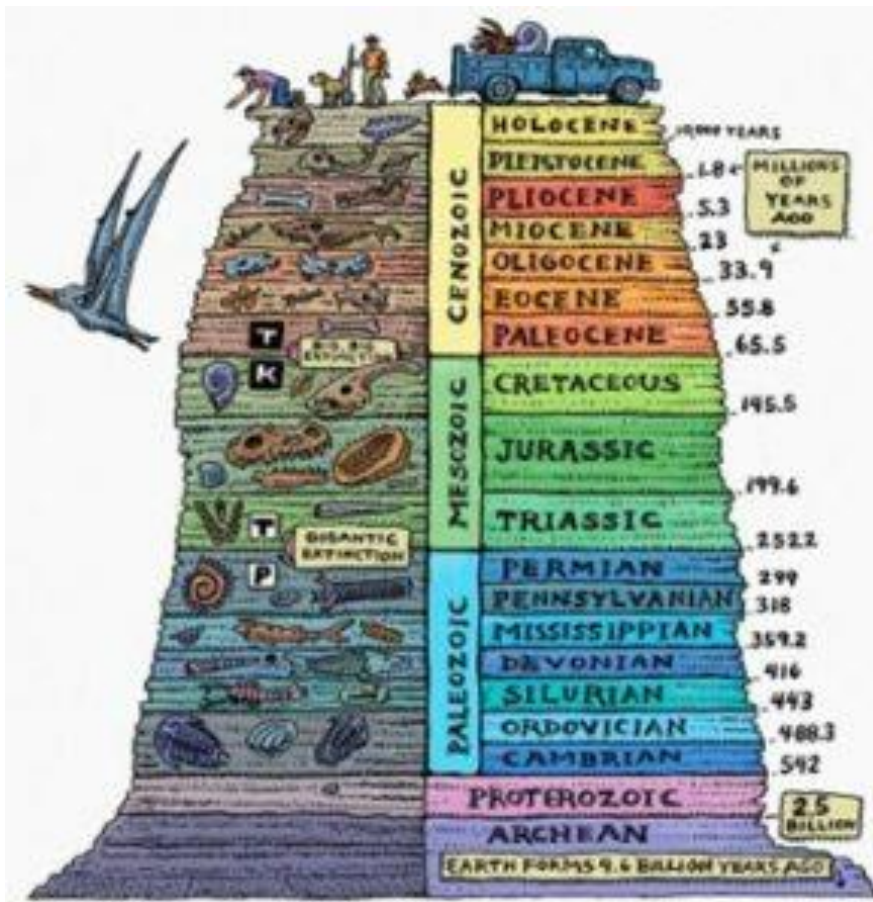
By **Deborah Colvin**



In March we launched a new growing project on the sunny, south-facing side of St James's Church. Previously in this series of projects, **Daily Bread** <https://www.sjp.org.uk/earth-justice/daily-bread/> explored the role of wheat in human history and culture, and **Aftermath** <https://www.sjp.org.uk/earth-justice/aftermath/> engaged with the 42 species of plants that sprang up in the bombed nave of the church in 1940.

The word Ecozoic was coined by Thomas Berry last century. Berry, who described himself as a 'geologist', lived a deeply earthed Christianity, calling for a unified sense of the sacred community of life. The word Ecozoic literally means 'a home for life' (all life) and Berry envisioned a new geological era characterised by a transition away from our current destructive industrial civilisation towards a mutually life-giving human presence for planet earth.

A quick dive into Deep Time shows why we need to hold a planet-sized perspective and think in geological time:



Complex life on earth really got going about 540 million years ago with an explosion of 'forms most wondrous'. We know this era as the Palaeozoic ('ancient life'), and it came to an abrupt end 252 million years ago with a huge extinction event – the 'Great Dying' – in which 95% of all life on earth disappeared. This was probably caused by massive volcanism and ejection of carbon dioxide into the air, creating conditions similar to those we are beginning to experience today. So began the Mesozoic ('middle life') era which lasted 200 million years or so – until an asteroid strike wiped out 50% of all life, including the dinosaurs, all over again. And so the Cenozoic ('new life') era was ushered in, and life quite literally bloomed as flowering plants thrived and diversified, ultimately leading to human agriculture.

See <https://www.geologyin.com/2016/12/10-interesting-facts-about-geological.html> for this evocative graphic and more information.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century of our Common Era, scientists warn that the next huge global extinction event is well underway, this time caused by the activity of some humans. A new era is



beginning and we as a species have choices and agency in making it an Ecozoic era, where planet earth again becomes home for all our kindred species.

How we feed ourselves is a crucial part of a just transition to this new era.

**Signposting the project on Jermyn St, at the southside of the Church:**



For the full article on **Food for the Ecozoic** go to:

<https://livingspirit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Food for the Ecozoic.pdf>

**Deborah Colvin** was born 318ppm. (This number signifies the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The current concentration is 417ppm, a staggering increase over my lifetime.) Deborah is part of the Earth Justice team at St James's Piccadilly, and is an educator and environmental activist.

To get involved with **Food for the Ecozoic** email: [ecochurch@sjp.org.uk](mailto:ecochurch@sjp.org.uk)



## Living for the Whole: A Concept for our Times

By Heather-Jane Ozanne



*"We are not just citizens of one nation or another, but of the human and cosmic community."*

—Barbara Holmes

In Spirit of Peace we are working with the idea of "living for the whole" and its importance in creating a just and sustainable future for all life on planet Earth. In many ways "living for the whole" or "life for the whole" is not a new idea and has been expressed in many traditions in different terms. The essence of many religious and spiritual traditions and creation narratives is love for your neighbour and care for the earth.

At surface level we are separate beings but beneath this we are more deeply connected than is often imagined. Even though we may not recognise it, our decisions, thoughts and actions impact the world around us in ways we don't always understand or realise.

*"You could not remove a single grain of sand from its place without thereby...changing something throughout all parts of the immeasurable whole."* Johann Gottlieb Fichte, The Vocation of Man

Living for the whole means educating ourselves and taking a look at the big picture to make effective change and asking ourselves important questions about how our actions may affect not just ourselves but our neighbours, our communities and the planet. The circumstances of our world can feel overwhelming and this can cause people to deny or close their minds to the bigger picture. We need to shift into the consciousness of 'living for the whole' to address the grievous and urgent imbalances and injustices we face. We need to remain hopeful and take positive actions in the light of the many catastrophes and conflicts.

The idea of living for the whole may seem overwhelming. However, if we can at least hold the thought in our minds, it can gradually help us do things differently, little by little, step by step.

For Earth and Human flourishing for all to become a reality, living for the whole needs to become a core value for humanity and in this way huge and urgent change can happen. Our choices matter! Especially if we want to follow Gandhi's advice to *"Be the change you wish to see"*.

From the Dalai Lama: *"I believe that to meet the challenge of our times, human beings will have to develop a greater sense of universal responsibility. We must all learn to work not just for our own self, family, or nation, but for the benefit of all humankind. Universal responsibility is the key to human survival. It is the best foundation for world peace, the equitable use of natural resources, and through concern for future generations, the proper care of the environment."*

**Heather-Jane Ozanne** is Chief Executive of Spirit of Peace [www.spiritofpeace.co.uk](http://www.spiritofpeace.co.uk)

## The Creative Spirit in Adversity

### *Dancing in the Darkness: Spiritual Lessons for Thriving in Turbulent Times.*

Interview between **Otis Moss III** and **Diana Butler-Bass** in January 2023



DBB: Rev. Dr. **Otis Moss III**, senior pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, who makes good trouble wherever he goes, shared wisdom from his new book, ***Dancing in the Darkness: Spiritual Lessons for Thriving in Turbulent Times.*** The book is a readable reweaving of Black spirituality into the current context, especially as practised by Howard Thurman and Martin Luther King, Jr. It offers engaging and challenging stories from Dr. Moss's own life and ministry. There are eight short chapters on different themes — and it

would make a perfect book to read together with a group of friends or in a church group over four or eight weeks.

In addition to talking about the book, I asked Dr. Moss how these spiritual practices spoke to the events around Tyre Nichols's death (a young black man killed by police 1 January 2023). Two spiritual practices in particular relate to these events: "Redirect Your Rage" and "Prophetic Grief." The discussion moved toward the painful history of the "justice" system, the meaning of justice itself, and the problems around policing and incarceration. I learned a few things — especially regarding the current tensions between those seeking to reform policing and those arguing for abolition. His remarks — and obvious passion — made me want to listen to and explore these issues more deeply.

Otis Moss the interview began by saying the book is written out of the heart and space of people of African descent in America: helping people to understand that space by being particular and universal at the same time. Hoping people will see the power of resistance when you tell the truth wrapped in love. You can elevate a moment of utter tragedy, into something that allows you to sing the blues with a little bit of Gospel. Otis Moss had written a letter to his son, which was published in the Sojourners' Magazine <https://sojo.net> / after the death of a young black man in 2016, to let him know that he was loved and was beautifully and wonderfully made. You can read it free of charge at: [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/post\\_b\\_10974782](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/post_b_10974782) The letter also let his son know how he needed to navigate this world as a black man in the U.S. The hope he spoke of in the letter has been expanded into eight windows into hope in the new book, delving deep into black spirituality, and the traditions of resistance and resilience. In these traditions you have to always link love and justice. You consecrate chaos, rewrite origin stories, learn how to redirect your rage, learn to listen and deal with your biases. Otis Moss hopes that people will realise there is a tradition of resilience and resistance that has always sought to expand our democracy. When people of African descent have fought for freedom it's never just for people of African descent. It's always to expand for everyone. I want people to understand that it's not so localised that it doesn't wrap its arms round everyone else.

To read the full interview extract and more about the work of Otis Moss and Diana Butler – Bass go to:

[https://livingspirit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Otis Moss Dancing in the Darkness.pdf](https://livingspirit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Otis%20Moss%20Dancing%20in%20the%20Darkness.pdf)

**Rev Dr Otis Moss III** is Senior Pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, civil rights activist and author. <https://www.trinitychicago.org/rev-dr-otis-moss-iii/>

**Diana Butler Bass**, theologian, author and founder of The Cottage, a cross between a retreat centre and a think tank. <https://dianabutlerbass.com/the-cottage/>



# Spiritual Journeying

*Love's Oneing: A Book About Contemplation.* By Kerrie Hide



Reflections by **Sarah Bachelard**

© Sarah Bachelard

I have found this text an incredibly rich reflection steeped in the practice and transfiguring knowledge of which it speaks. There are, as Kerrie notes, 'a growing number of excellent books about contemplation' and many introductions to the practice of meditation. What's different about this book, however, is that it's written expressly with 'mature contemplatives' in mind – those who are 'already steeped in the central movements' of the contemplative journey, but who 'seek more nuanced wisdom on how to nurture heart-awareness, [and] discern and foster a more stable contemplation'. It's a book addressed to the journey that many of us are on, and I hope I can give you even a small glimpse of its bounteous resource!

The key image in ***Love's Oneing*** is 'one-ing'. It's a word that comes from the 14th century English contemplative, Julian of Norwich, who says that 'prayer ones the soul to God'. What's striking about the verb 'one-ing' is that it expresses a sense of the vital, dynamic process of becoming one with God as well as the centring, grounding and abiding at-onement of the soul in God. Kerrie notes that 'the classic definitions of oneing as being joined or united, fall short of conveying the original creative dynamism and fluidity of the oneing that is [Trinitarian] love'. For the communion of love that constitutes God, the

unity that God is, is not a static, or self- enclosed identity but an ever-fertile movement of love pouring itself out and receiving itself back. And this has profound implications for how we imagine our contemplative journeys. Because we're not striving one day to arrive at an end, to get 'there' and possess our spiritual achievement; rather, we're being drawn into an eternal dynamism of love which, Kerrie insists, is simultaneously enstatic – enclosing, still and abiding, and ecstatic – outpouring, creative, evolutionary.

In the Christian imagination, this one-ing in Love is conceived as an en-Christing journey. It's how we come to share the mind of Christ or awaken Christ- consciousness, and – crucially – this affects not just the possibilities of our own lives but the unfolding of life itself. The final three chapters of Kerrie's book explore the thought of three more or less contemporary mystics.

To read the full reflection go to:

<https://livingspirit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Loves-Oneing-reflections.pdf>

**Sarah Bachelard** is the spiritual director of Benedictus Contemplative Church in Canberra, Australia. Sarah is a theologian, retreat leader and a teacher in the World Community for Christian Meditation. <https://benedictus.com.au/>

**Benedictus Contemplative Church** in Canberra offers a rich programme of in-person and online events exploring meditation and the works of the contemplatives.

**Kerrie Hide** is a spiritual director, retreat leader and author.

<https://contemplatio.com.au/dr-kerrie-hide>

## Soul Midwifery

### Interview with **Felicity Warner**



Writer of two ground breaking books and founder of the International Soul Midwifery movement, Felicity Warner shares her story as a part of a series of conversations with people shaping today's bereavement sector.

Interviewer: *Tell us a little bit about your background and how you came to find yourself in the death/bereavement sector?*

FW: Seeing my grandmother die when I was just 14 had a profound effect on me. I was brought up with her from the age of six and she developed lung cancer when I was 13. Very gradually, I became her carer. I visited her in the hospital the

night she died, and I was shocked at the cold, sterile room she was in. It was harshly lit by stark overhead lights, and it smelled of disinfectant. It was a harrowing experience and left me wondering how we could experience death in a better way.

Later, as a health journalist specialising in palliative care, I documented the experiences of six young women who were dying of breast cancer. My work allowed me to spend a great deal of time listening, we had many deep conversations about how it was to be dying and the effect it had on those around them. They spoke of becoming their “illness” losing their identity and feeling isolated.

*How did Soul Midwives start?*

FW: My journey from journalist to soul midwife happened quite organically. After writing several features about women dying of cancer I started volunteering at our local hospice and campaigning for compassionate end-of-life care. I began developing a holistic method for caring for the dying using simple therapies such as touch, sound, mindfulness and devising a therapeutic model for the psycho-spiritual aspects of dying. I started teaching and lecturing on this method and wrote two books ***A Safe Journey Home*** and the ***Soul Midwives Handbook*** which have become best sellers in the death and dying market.

*What is the main aim of Soul Midwives?*

FW: In modern palliative care, we are great with bodies, good with minds but un-easy when it comes to the soul. Soul midwifery offers a broad spectrum of care and support. We're non-medical, holistic, and spiritual companions to the dying person and their immediate loved ones. We are there as a “constant” anchor during the dying time and act as advocates as well as offering practical help such as feeding the cat or accompanying friends to hospital appointments if asked. Our approach recognises the needs of the dying person and ensures they feel valued, loved, and supported, whether they are dying in a hospital, hospice or at home. Every dying person is treated as the most precious person in the world by us and cared for as if they were a dearly loved friend, which is our word for the people we look after, rather than patient or client. We help people to create their end of life wish plans, such as where they would like to die and who they would like to have with them, and then we help facilitate that.

To read more about Soul Midwifery, go to:

[https://livingspirit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Soul Midwifery interview.pdf](https://livingspirit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Soul_Midwifery_interview.pdf)

The **Soul Midwives' Portal** <https://www.soulmidwives.co.uk> is the official website of **Felicity Warner**, the international Soul Midwifery Movement and the Soul Midwives School.

**Life Ledger** <https://lifeledger.com> helps to make death notifications easier and its services are free of charge. Thank you to Life Ledger for this interview from March 2022.



# Partner organisations share their vision and their work

## Sarum College Salisbury: Learning to Nourish your Spirituality

By **Christine Nielsen- Craig**

Have questions and ideas you'd like to explore about faith? Doing an MA degree may not be the first thing that springs to mind but having distant-memory or even no experience of higher education needn't be an obstacle.

And if you just want to dip your toe in, you can try a day course or join a module but as an 'auditor' – no essays, just learning for pleasure.



*The Common Room at Sarum College*

One short course participant on **Clare of Assisi** study day said: 'Having entered a rather "fallow time" or "malaise" in the last two or three years as far as study is concerned, the course has given me the confidence – "a jolt" - to think again about how I make my Tertiary commitment more meaningful and how I can take it forward. The course has left me more positive and ready to see what else I can now research -- for myself if nothing else.'

A participant on the **Fruits of the Spirit** lecture said: 'Listening to an art historian with a feminist, priest, younger, more alternative voice talk about paintings was wonderful. Church isn't exciting me at the moment and this stuff did.'

The **Sarum learning community** is especially adept at nurturing the intellectually curious person who might be nervous about embarking on postgraduate study. ‘Assessments and modules help the student to develop ideas through to a final dissertation, where a specific issue or question can be explored in much more depth,’ said one external examiner in his quality assurance review.

The friendly learning environment here includes study skills sessions, face-to-face and online tutorial support and a community of like-minded people to learn with and from. ‘People are very supportive here. You can go at your own pace and you get help when you need it,’ says Alison, an MA graduate. ‘I think the fact that everything is on site gives a sort of cohesiveness to it as well as friendliness. Also I found the support that you get from the team really encouraged me that this would be a good place to be.’

There are a wide range of modules to choose from, including a Guided Reading Module which can be shaped according to your specific interests and supervised by an expert in that field. ‘Sarum faculty members are all active researchers, and we bring in guest lecturers for each module who are experts and active researchers on the topics they teach,’ says Dr Michael Hahn, Programme Leader for the Christian Spirituality Programmes. ‘So teaching is always research-led and students benefit from a wide range of lecturers.’

Having a busy life is no reason to be put off, either. The courses are very flexible and can be sped up or slowed down to suit you, with interruptions if needed. Teaching schedules are designed to fit around other commitments, so you can take up further study without having to give up your job or abandon your family and friends.

Postgraduate programmes in **Christian Spirituality** and in **Theology, Imagination and Culture** are validated by the University of Winchester. Both programmes offer a one-year Certificate, two-year Diploma or a three-year Master of Arts. More information about joining a postgraduate course without academic credit.

Interested? Browse the course calendar here for all short and accredited course listings <https://www.sarum.ac.uk/short-courses/>

If you’d like to explore degree work, you can join a taster session online Tuesday 18 July from 7-8pm or contact the MA Administrator [maadministrator@sarum.ac.uk](mailto:maadministrator@sarum.ac.uk) / 01722 424827 to arrange an appointment. Applications are accepted through August for an Autumn 2023 start and until early December for a January 2024 intake.

**Christine Nielsen-Craig** is Director of Marketing & Communications at Sarum College.

*Aerial View of Sarum College in Salisbury Cathedral Close: next page.*

