

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

As you walk down the Marylebone Road,
there's an overwhelming sense of movement, noise, and the by products
of the internal combustion engine. Onward and onward moves the traffic
proceeding like a river of smoky steel through this great city.

On the one side are the green spaces of the Regents Park; trees, grass, flowers.

On the other is this great church of St Marylebone, built to the glory of God,
and committed to the healing and wholeness of men and women
created in his image.

And as we sit adjacent to the river of steel,
there is another river flowing through this building.
I'm not talking about the secret river Tyburn.
These days it flows through a pipe through Baker Street Station.

I'm talking about another river, the river of the water of life.
As our reading put it, this river, as yet invisible to us,
flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb,
down the middle of the great street of the city.

The water of life is a theme that runs throughout the Bible,
from the river that watered the garden of Eden,
to the river that runs through the heavenly city in Revelation.
The meaning of this water is somewhat mysterious,
but it most likely represents the Holy Spirit,
flowing as a river from the heart of the Trinity outwards into the world.

In John's gospel, Chapter 4, a Samaritan woman, an outsider,
asks for and receives the living water that Jesus offers her at Jacob's well.
As a result, her life is transformed, her vulnerability is healed,
and her community receive the good news of God in Christ.
She is blessed and becomes a blessing to others.

Like us, she encounters the Lord who knows her completely,
and loves her completely, and who has the power to change lives.

Soon after this Jesus stands up in the Jerusalem temple and cries out
'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me,
and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said
'Out of the believers heart shall flow rivers of living water'

Tonight, at this service of prayer for healing and wholeness,
we pray, along with the Samaritan woman, *Lord, give us this living water.*
We bring our sadness, our sins, our vulnerabilities, our thirst,
and we come to the living water, praying together
that we may know the power of God's spirit flowing tonight.

We may feel overwhelmed by the grey river of cynicism, despair,
and man made folly that flows through our lives and our world.
It can bring a spiritual dehydration.

But just as the trees and flowers of the Regents Park over the road
bloom in their season, so the water of life brings growth to the *tree* of life,
and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

Healing is so dearly needed, in our fractured society, in our families,
in our relationships and in our individual souls and bodies.

May the living water of the Holy Spirit flow freely, cleansing, healing,
bringing new life to us, spiritually rehydrating us.

And as this happens, may the living water then flow out of our hearts
into the communities where God has placed us.

As we are blessed, may we be a blessing to others.

Lord, give us this living water, always. Amen.