

LIVING WATERS

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Welcome to all especially to those who live outside of Birstwith.

Thanks to all for turning out

To Angus and Stuart Holmes for the flatbed and all their hard work

To our organist, John Hodgson. Welcome back.

To our Show Princess and her attendant

To George and Judy for supporting another wet idea

This service is our one opportunity in the year to praise God in his open air. This year our theme seems well chosen. The service is also intended to pass the time till lunch. It's full of singing, full of readings, most readings you wouldn't normally hear at a service. So, treat it as a show, as a party, as well as a service. And above all, enjoy yourselves. So, let's begin

BY SAYING OUR OPENING PRAYER, TOGETHER:

Creator God, we stand here in your presence to give you thanks and praise.

We thank you especially for your living waters that fall from the heavens, rise from the ground, water our land and wash our shores.

We thank you for the wonder of water and all the life that it contains.

We thank you for the pure waters that keep our bodies clean.

We thank you for the waters which join your world together.

We thank you, Lord, the fountain of living waters, for the liquid drops of heaven that link us directly to you.

HYMN

The King of love my shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am His
And he is mine for ever.

Where streams of living water flow
My ransom'd soul he leadeth,
And where the verdant pastures grow,
With food celestial feedeth.

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
But yet in love He sought me,
And on His Shoulder gently laid
And home, rejoicing, brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill
With Thee, dear Lord, beside me;
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,
Thy Cross before to guide me.

Thou spread'st a Table in my sight;
Thy Unction grace bestoweth:
And oh, what transport of delight
From Thy pure Chalice floweth!

And so through all the length of days
Thy goodness faileth never:
Good Shepherd may I sing Thy praise
Within Thy house for ever.

THE BIRSTWITH PRAYER - Please say the response printed in bold

For this world that you lend us
For this country where we live
For this dale which is our home
We praise and thank you, Lord
For the waters of the Nidd
For green valley fields of pasture
For the open hill-top moors
We praise and thank you, Lord
For the sound of curlews piping
For the silent bats of evening
For the gambolling lambs in Spring
We praise and thank you, Lord
For life-giving showers of rain

For the touch of falling snow
For the sunlight on the crags
We praise and thank you, Lord

For the sight of steeple towering
For the bells that gently toll
For our church upon the hill,

We praise and thank you, Lord

Grant us, Lord, a heart open to all you have given us, eyes and ears awake to your glory, and a voice to sing your praise. **Amen**

HYMN

Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God;
He, whose word cannot be broken
Formed thee for his own abode.
On the Rock of ages founded,
What can shake thy sure repose?
With salvation's walls surrounded,
Thou may'st smile at all thy foes.

See, the streams of living waters,
Springing from eternal love,
well supply thy sons and daughters,
And all fear of want remove.
Who can faint while such a river
Ever flows, their thirst to assuage:
Grace, which like the Lord, the giver,
Never fails from age to age.

Round each habitation hovering,
See the cloud and fire appear
For a glory and a covering,
Showing that the Lord is near.
Thus they march, the pillar leading,
Light by night and shade by day;
daily on the manna feeding
Which he gives them when they pray.

Saviour, if of Zion's city
I through grace a member am,
Let the world deride and pity,
I will glory in thy name.
Fading is the worldling's pleasure,
All his boasted pomp and show;

Solid joys and lasting treasure
None but Zion's children know.

FIRST READINGS

A - Ian Paxton

A reading from the book of Genesis

Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight,
and the earth was filled with violence.
And God said to Noah:
"For my part,
I am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth,
to destroy from under heaven
all flesh in which there is a breathe of life;
everything that is on earth shall die."

FIRST READINGS

B -GUY

A reading from The Harrogate Advertiser 15 August 1857

with apologies to those who have heard it before at our 150th anniversary
service

During the past week or 10 days the weather has been extremely variable,
accompanied in many places with dreadful thunderstorms which have
committed fearful ravage.....Towards the close of last week the rain fell so
heavily at intervals that the brooks and rivulets all around were swollen to an
alarming extent and the floods swept down the roads and streets like mountain
torrents.

FIRST READINGS -

C- Ffiona Aagard

The Rain Storm by Frank Chipasula, a poet from Malawi

The rain washed the coat of the wind,
dusted the nose of the mountain,
licked the blood off its peak,
and rinsed the fish oils across the tarmac.
Here the road that had left us behind
stopped and waited for us, asked us
where we had been when they skinned the land.
Then the road, braving the rain,
slithered between the mountains,

leaving us to marvel and to muse
where the thin tarmac was leading us.
And we wondered where the rain had been,
this rain that left drops of dreams
in our palms to sow in the soil of our hearts.
Under the eaves of the sky we set
Our open minds and filled them
With the purity that fell from heaven.

HYMN

Lead us, Heavenly Father lead us
O'er the world's tempestuous sea;
Guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,
For we have no help but Thee;
Yet possessing every blessing,
If our God our Father be.

Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us,
All our weakness Thou dost know;
Thou didst tread this earth before us,
Thou didst feel its keenest woe:
Lone and dreary, faint and weary
Through the desert Thou didst go.

Spirit of our God, descending,
Fill our hearts with heavenly joy,
Love with every passion blending,
Pleasure that can never cloy,
Thus provided, pardon'd, guided,
Nothing can our peace destroy

SECOND READINGS - A - Judy

A Poem by Edith M Bancroft, who was Guy's mother's headmistress and gave Guy his first poetry book

Strange indeed it is to think
That this water which I drink,
Sipping from a modern glass
Has seen countless ages pass.
Myriad changes it has known—
Now a mist o'er mountain blown,
Foam upon a green wave's crest,

Pool where quiet lilies rest.
Rising, falling, staying never,
Changing, yet the same for ever.
Haply these clear drops I see
Tossed amid the storming sea
Over which the galleys came
Conquering in great Caesar's name.
And perchance, who knows but they
Rocked a cradle ark where lay
An infant Moses calmly sleeping,
Entrusted to the old Nile's keeping.
But to-day I look on this—
(Latest metamorphosis)—
Protean form of flight and leap
Bid through leaden pipe to creep,
Subject to a plumber's will,
Transient glass of mine to fill.

SECOND READINGS - B - George

Drinking - by the 17th century poet Abraham Cowley

The thirsty earth soaks up the rain,
And drinks and gapes for drink again;
The plants suck in the earth, and are
With constant drinking fresh and fair;
The sea itself, which one would think
Should have but little need of drink,
Drinks ten thousand rivers up,
So fill'd that they o'erflow the cup.
The busy Sun (and one would guess
By 's drunken fiery face no less)
Drinks up the sea, and when h'as done,
The Moon and Stars drink up the Sun:
They drink and dance by their own light,
They drink and revel all the night:
Nothing in Nature's sober found,
But an eternal health goes round.
Fill up the bowl, then, fill it high,
Fill all the glasses there—for why
Should every creature drink but I,
Why, man of morals, tell me why?

CHOIR

What shall we do with the drunken vicar,
What shall we do with the drunken vicar,
What shall we do with the drunken vicar,
At the morning service?

Snore, snore and on he splutters,
Snore, snore and on he splutters,
Snore, snore and on he splutters,
At the morning service

Put him in the font with a hosepipe on him
Put him in the font with a hosepipe on him
Put him in the font with a hosepipe on him
At the morning service

Snore, snore and on he splutters,
Snore, snore and on he splutters,
Snore, snore and on he splutters,
At the morning service

**And the moral of that tale, of course, is - only drink Harrogate Spa water -
Come to think of it, they should have sponsored today's service! But now
let's sing a hymn to remind us that even drunken vicars may be forgiven -
There's a wideness in God's mercy**

HYMN

There's a wideness in God's mercy
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in his justice
Which is more than liberty.

There is no place where earth's sorrows
Are more felt than up in heaven;
There is no place where earth's failings
Have such kindly judgement given.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

There is grace enough for thousands
Of new worlds as great as this
There is room for fresh creations

"For this once," said a large and solemn tench beside his ear, "I will."
The Wart found it difficult to be a new kind of creature. It was no good trying to swim like a human being and he did not know how to swim like a fish.
"Not like that," said the tench in ponderous tones. "Do jack-knives."
He did jack-knives as the tench directed and found that he was swimming vertically downward into the mud.
"Use your feet to turn to left or right," said the tench, "and spread those fins on your tummy to keep level. You are living in two planes now, not one."
The Wart found that he could keep more or less level. He swam feebly off, enjoying himself very much.
"Come back," said the tench. "The trouble with you is that you swim as if you were a boy, bending at the hips. Put your back into it."
Wart gave two terrific kicks and vanished altogether in a clump of mare's tail several yards away
"That's better," said the tench, and the Wart backed himself out of his tangle in one terrific shove, to show off.
"Good," said the tench, as they collided end to end. "But direction is the better part of valour."

THIRD READINGS

C - Jane

A Fish Answers by Leigh Hunt

Amazing monster! That, for aught I know
With the first sight of thee didst make our race
For ever stare! O flat and shocking face
Grimly divided from the breast below!
Thou that on dry land horribly dost go
With a split body and most ridiculous pace
Prong after prong, disgracer of all grace
Long-useless-finned, haired, upright, unwet, slow!
O breather of unbreathable, sword-sharp air,
How canst exist? How bear thy self, thou dry
And dreary sloth? What particle canst share
Of the only blessed life, the watery?
I sometimes see of you an actual *pair*
Go by! linked fin by fin! most odiously

THE PAINTINGS

OFFERTORY HYMN

All creatures of our God and King,
Lift up your voice and with us sing,
Alleluia, alleluia!
Thou burning sun with golden beam,
Thou silver moon with softer gleam:

*O praise him, O praise him,
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!*

Thou rushing wind that art so strong,
Ye clouds that sail in heaven along,
O praise him, alleluia!
Thou rising morn, in praise rejoice;
Ye lights of evening, find a voice:

*O praise him, O praise him,
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!*

Thou flowing water, pure and clear,
Make music for thy Lord to hear,
Alleluia, alleluia!
Thou fire so masterful and bright,
That givest us both warmth and light:

*O praise him, O praise him,
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!*

Dear mother earth, who day by day
Unfoldest blessings on our way,
O praise him, alleluia!
The flowers and fruits that in thee grow,
Let them his glory also show:

*O praise him, O praise him,
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!*

Let all things their creator bless,
And worship him in humbleness;
O praise him, alleluia!
Praise, praise the father, praise the Son,
And praise the Spirit, Three in One:

*O praise him, O praise him,
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!*

OFFERTORY PRAYER TOGETHER:

note waters missing from 7th line

Lord God accept what we can give you, our money, our paintings, our skills, our love and our service. We give you what we can of ourselves and give it with joy and with thanks. We thank you, not for what you may do for us in the future but because you are God and we owe you everything. We all look to the joy that comes from your life giving waters. We look to follow the waters of your fountain as they lead from young stream to mature river and eventually meet with you again in the depths of your blue seas. And in our journey of joy, help us to live lives worthy of you and your Son, Our saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen

FOURTH READINGS

A - John Hindle

A reading from *The Water Babies* by Charles Kingsley

Tom the little chimney sweep had run away, run a long and dangerous way away. He was tired and delirious, and as dirty as he always had been. But the little old lady took pity on him and put him in an outhouse upon soft sweet hay and bade him sleep. But Tom did not fall asleep. Instead he turned and tossed and kicked and felt so hot all over that he longed to get into the river and cool himself; and then he fell half asleep, and dreamt that he heard the little lady crying to him, "Oh, you're so dirty; go and be washed." And then he heard the church bells ring so loud, close to him, too, that he was sure it must be Sunday; and he would go to church, and see what a church was like inside, for he had never been in one, poor little fellow, in all his life. But the people would never let him come in, all over soot and dirt like that. He must go to the river and wash first. And he said out loud again and again, "I must be clean, I must be clean." And all of a sudden he found himself in the middle of a meadow with the stream just before him. He lay down on the grass, and looked into the clear, clear limestone water, while the little silver trout dashed about in fright at the sight of his black face; and he dipped his hand in and found it so cool, cool, cool; and he said, "I will be a fish; I will swim in the water; I must be clean, I must be clean." So he pulled off all his clothes in such haste that he tore some of them, which was easy enough with such ragged old things. And he put his poor, hot, sore feet into the water, and then his legs, and the farther he went in, the more the church bells rang in his head. "Ah," said Tom, "I must be quick and wash myself; the bells are ringing quite loud now; and they will stop soon, and then the door will be shut, and I shall never be able to get in at all." But in that Tom was mistaken.

FOURTH READINGS

B - Jan Jobling

A READING BASED ON EXODUS

I will sing to the Lord for he has triumphed gloriously;
horse and rider he has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my
might and he has become my salvation.

The Israelites went into the sea on dry land, the waters forming a wall for them
on their right and on their left. You guided them by your strength to your holy
abode and planted them on the mountain of your own possession.

But at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth
and covered Pharaoh's chariots and his army. Not one of them survived. The
floods covered them;
they went down into the depths like a stone

.HYMN

Alleluia, sing to Jesus!
His the sceptre, his the throne;
Alleluia, his the triumph,
His the victory alone:
Hark the songs of peaceful Sion
Thunder like a mighty flood;
Jesus out of every nation
Hath redeemed us by his blood.

Alleluia, not as orphans
Are we left in sorrow now;
Alleluia, he is near us,
Faith believes, nor questions how:
Though the cloud from sight received him,
When the forty days were o'er,
Shall our hearts forget his promise,
"I am with you evermore"?

Alleluia, bread of angels,
Thou on earth our food, our stay;
Alleluia, here the sinful
Flee to thee from day to day:
Intercessor, Friend of sinners,
Earth's Redeemer, plead for me,
Where the songs of all the sinless
Sweep across the crystal sea.

Alleluia, King eternal,
Thee the Lord of lords we own;
Alleluia, born of Mary,

Earth thy footstool, heaven thy throne:
Thou within the veil hast entered,
Robed in flesh, our great High Priest;
Thou on earth both Priest and Victim
In the eucharistic feast.

FIFTH READINGS

A - Ian Paxton

THE STREAM'S SONG by L. ABERCROMBIE

Make way, make way,
You thwarting stones;
Room for my play,
Serious ones.

Do you fear,
O rocks and boulders,
To feel my laughter
On your grave shoulders ?

Do you not know
My joy at length
Will all wear out
Your solemn strength?

You will not for ever
Cumber my play;
With joy and a song
I clear my way.

Your faith of rock
Shall yield to me,
And be carried away
By the song of my glee.

Crumble, crumble,
Voiceless things;
No faith can last
That never sings.

For the last hour
To joy belongs;
The steadfast perish,
But not the songs.

CHOIR

Row, row your boat gently down the stream
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream

FIFTH READINGS

B - GUY

KENNETH GRAHAME, THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS

Mole was very happy once he'd "Hung spring cleaning" and bolted out of the house without even waiting to put on his coat. It all seemed too good to be true. Hither and thither through the meadows he rambled busily. And he thought his happiness was complete when, as he meandered aimlessly along, suddenly he stood by the edge of a full-fed river. Never in his life had he seen a river before - this sleek, sinuous, full-bodied animal, chasing and chuckling, gripping things with a gurgle and leaving them with a laugh, to fling itself on fresh playmates that shook themselves free, and were caught and held again. All was a-shake and a-shiver - glints and gleams and sparkles, rustle and swirl, chatter and bubble. The Mole was bewitched, entranced, fascinated. By the side of the river he trotted as one trots when very small, by the side of a man, who holds one spell-bound by exciting stories; and when tired at last, he sat on the bank, while the river still chattered on to him, a babbling procession of the best stories in the world, sent from the heart of the earth to be told at last to the insatiable sea.

CHOIR

Row, row your boat gently down the stream
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream

FIFTH READINGS

C - Sue Baugh

SEA-FEVER BY JOHN MASEFIELD

I must down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by,
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea's face and a grey dawn
breaking.

I must down to the seas again, for the call of the
running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds
flying,

And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the
sea-gulls crying.
I must down to the seas again, to the vagrant gipsy
life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the
wind's like a whetted knife;
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-
lover,
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long
trick's over.

CHOIR

slowly

Row, row your boat gently down the stream
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream

HYMN

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

When we've been there a thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun

SIXTH READINGS

A - George

The Shark by Lord Alfred Douglas

A treacherous monster is the Shark
He never makes the least remark.
And when he sees you on the sand,
He doesn't seem to want to land.
He watches you take off your clothes,
And not the least excitement shows.
His eyes do not grow bright or roll,
He has astounding self-control.
He waits till you are quite undrest,
And seems to take no interest.
And when towards the sea you leap,
He looks as if he were asleep.
But when you once get in his range,
His whole demeanour seems to change.
He throws his body right about,
And his true character comes out.
It's no use crying or appealing,
He seems to lose all decent feeling.
After this warning you will wish
To keep clear of this treacherous fish.
His back is black, his stomach white,
He has a very dangerous bite.

SIXTH READINGS

B -Judy

The whaling ship Essex sailed out of Nantucket in August 1819 never to return. On 20th November disaster struck, literally. The ship's mate was one of the survivors.

I observed a very large whale, about eighty-five feet in length. He spouted two or three times and came down upon us with full speed, and struck the ship with his head. The ship brought up as suddenly and violently as if she had struck a rock. He had stove a hole in the ship and I gave her up as lost. I turned to the boats with an intention of getting all things ready to embark in them. I was aroused with the cry of a man at the hatchway. "Here he is - he is making for us again". I turned around, & saw him directly ahead of us, coming down apparently with twice his ordinary speed, and to me at that moment, it appeared with tenfold fury and vengeance in his aspect. His course towards us was marked by a white foam which he made with the continual violent thrashing of his tail; his head was

about half out of water, and in that way he again struck the ship and completely stove in the bows.

The ship sank, more than a thousand miles from land. The legend of Moby Dick had been born.

HYMN

Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep :
O hear us when we cry to thee
For those in peril on the sea.

O Christ, whose voice the waters heard
And hushed their raging at thy word,
Who walkedst on the foaming deep,
And calm amid the storm didst sleep:
O hear us when we cry to thee
For those in peril on the sea.

O Holy Spirit, who didst brood
Upon the waters dark and rude,"
And bid their angry tumult cease,
And give, for wild confusion, peace:
O hear us when we cry to thee
For those in peril on the sea.

O Trinity of love and power,
Our brethren shield in danger's hour;
From rock and tempest, fire and foe,
Protect them wheresoe'er they go:
Thus evermore shall rise to thee
Glad hymns of praise from land and sea.

LIVING WATERS: A REFLECTION

What a lot of ways there are to think about water. Too many for just one service. Hardly surprising, I suppose considering that we're more water than anything else. Now that's a strange thing in itself, isn't it. We're mostly made of water. Perhaps that's why we're so fascinated by it. We all love water, don't we - we love washing in it, splashing in it, looking at it, listening to it. We go to it for comfort and relaxation. We feel at home by a riverbank or at the seaside. And perhaps that's understandable. After all that's where we came from. Scientists

seem pretty much agreed now that life on earth started in the mineral rich very hot waters of submarine volcanoes. And we mammals, well, we first crawled out of the sea some 250 million years ago, and of course some of us, whales and dolphins and so on, soon decided it was better in the water and so crawled back in. So, perhaps it's not so surprising that we want to join them sometimes.

But what else have we learnt about water today, from all those readings? Well we started where we came in this summer - with the problems of too much water. But, and this is not to deny the fact of global warming, we also were reminded that too much water is not a new problem. God sent a massive flood to devastate a sinning world long before our time. And we also learnt that there have been other times when lots of rain has fallen - in the weeks before our church was consecrated, for example. This summer has been unusual but nothing new.

But, enough of too much of a good thing. What about that lovely poem that Fiona read, that reminded us that water is a blessing. A wonderful and different, African perspective on rain - the purity that fell from heaven:

this rain that left drops of dreams
in our palms to sow in the soil of our hearts.

A reminder, of the power of water not just to fertilise the earth but also to bring life to our souls. And that thought in turn can remind us that civilisation - the creative power that comes when humans settle down in towns and specialise in using their particular talents - civilisation began in the great river valleys fertilised by annual flooding - the Tigris, the Euphrates and the Nile. Yes, we're very clever, but without the help of God's waters that made agriculture a good option we'd still be hunting and gathering rather than driving around in cars and going to cinemas. So we're back at our first hymn in which we sang of Jesus leading us to the green pastures and feeding us with heavenly food - thanking him for the abundance of well watered farm lands. I wonder how many times we've all sung that without thinking about how important those words are.

And our second hymn continued that theme - thanking God for his streams of living water that remove the fear of want. OK so we complain about getting too much of a good thing sometimes but where would we be without it?

Next we were reminded of the extraordinary fact that water isn't really new and fresh at all, but just keeps circulating round and round. So the water we drink today a dinosaur may have drunk millions of years ago. The water we wash in tonight may be the water that Jesus washed in. And the water that we're mostly made up of, well that's as old as time, too. A direct, physical link with the very beginning of things. Now that, I find a rather strange and scary thought.

Next, very unfairly setting up George to make a point. And the real point of the drunken vicar episode is to remind us that trying to improve on what God has given us can have its downside.

In the end, however much we may prefer man-made firewater, God's water is better for us. But, then again, we're only human and we will try these things, which is why we need God's mercy to be wider than the sea.

Then we had Jane's readings about how man sees fish and fish sees man with the education of Arthur in between. Readings that might make us think about the otherness of things. The submarine world is a very different world from ours, a world in which different laws apply, yet it is just as real and just as right and just as God-made as our world. Perhaps we should think a little more about what the whole of God's creation can teach us. Perhaps if we do, we can understand a bit more that just because we're right it doesn't mean that someone else is wrong. Right doesn't have to be balanced by wrong, it can be balanced by another right, just as valid, just as good as our right, but just as different as the submarine world is from ours.

Perhaps we should think about that a bit more in the way we treat others and go about our lives.

And from that we turn to the idea, central to many faiths, including ours of the power of water not just to wash away dirt from our bodies but, symbolically to cleanse our very souls. John read for us that lovely passage from *The Water Babies* in which poor dirty Tom washes off the sooty grime from his body and hears the church bells chiming that are calling his inner self to worship for the first time. A reminder of the importance of baptism to our faith, of the washing away of our dirt and sin. Even more important to the early church than to the Church of England today. I mean George does a good job of splashing a bit of water over a baby but that is nothing compared to an early Christian baptism. Go to the remains of any big Roman city that has a Christian church in it and there you will find a deep, deep bath, deep enough to drown in. In those days you really did take the plunge when you became a Christian.

Then Jan read about the crossing of the Red Sea. A story that deals with the power of water to save in a different way. For the Israelites the seas parted - or the tide went out, or they were guided through the marshes - and they found their way to freedom and a better life. But Pharaoh's pursuing army was not so lucky. A wonderful story of the power of water to both so divide and link our world that crossing it, trusting your life to it, can be the way to a new and better life. Just think of all the immigrants who crossed the Atlantic to a better life in America and what God's ocean meant to them - both a barrier and a pathway, a perilous road to freedom and human dignity. Just think of other boat peoples of more recent times, including those refugees who try to get into our country and share our good life. Perhaps we should be kinder and more charitable to them and welcome them better than we do.

Then we had a trio of readings that tell of the continuity of things, of the life cycle of a water drop, and by analogy of a human being, from playful young stream singing for joy to the wild call of the sea and a quiet sleep when all is done. Readings with a lot of music in them. A reminder that there has always been a strong connection between water and music, and that the sounds of running and moving water are music in themselves. From the carefree dance music of the joyful little stream to the awesome majesty of the sound of the oceans that draws us to the seas.

But, as our last readings reminded us, the oceans are dangerous places and not to be treated lightly. If we play on them or work on them or travel on them we should always respect them and if we don't, well they have a habit of biting back.

So that's what we've heard today about God's waters. They are absolutely essential to us, truly life-giving, they cleanse us body and soul, they bring joy and music to our lives, they give us food and drink, they teach us things, they provide us with new opportunities, they keep us safe and yet they are strange and different and can be perilous. In fact they are very much like God. Of all created elements perhaps water is closest to God in its variety, its power and its intangibility. Perhaps that is what Jeremiah was seeking to convey when he described God as the fountain of living waters. Certainly those who knew him or knew people who knew him portray Jesus as the master of the waters - he calmed the storm, walked on the lake, filled the empty nets with fish, turned water into wine. It is to Jesus, the Lord of the waters, that we look for help and salvation. St John was told in his vision that those who follow Jesus

Shall hunger no more neither thirst any more.
For the lamb which is in the midst of the throne
Shall feed them and shall lead them
Into living fountains of waters;
And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

In all our lives there are sadnesses, so heart-wrenchingly sad that, whoever, we are, we cry, and we cry, and we cry. Perhaps it is a little comfort to know that when we cry we are giving back to God some of the living water that he has given us. And when it comes to be our turn to set out over that sea or river from which there is no coming back, let us go bravely and let those that remain shed not too many tears as we return from whence we came. As the poet Tennyson so beautifully put it

And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;
For though from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,

I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

HYMN

Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure:
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

Not the labours of my hands
Can fulfil thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone:
Thou must save us, thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked come to thee for dress;
Helpless look to thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, saviour, or I die.

While I draw this fleeting breath,
When my eyelids close in death,
When I soar through tracts unknown,
See thee on thy judgement throne;
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee.

PRAYERS

Please say the response printed in bold

Wash us with your love, Oh Lord of the living waters

Lord of the waters, we thank you for your gift of water that gives us life and helps
keep us clean in body and in soul

Wash us with your love, Oh Lord of the living waters

Lord of the waters, we thank you for the merry melodies of the mountain streams
and the majestic music of the oceans

Wash us with your love, Oh Lord of the living waters

Lord of the waters, we thank you for the rivers and seas that for all human history
have helped us to meet and share with each other

Wash us with your love, Oh Lord of the living waters

Lord of the waters, we thank you for the otherness of life in your waters that
reminds us of our true place in the immensity of your creation

Wash us with your love, Oh Lord of the living waters

Lord of the waters, we know how perilous your waters can be. We pray for all
those who have been lost in them or hurt by them.

Wash us with your love, Oh Lord of the living waters

Lord of the waters, we thank you for sending us your son, Jesus Christ, the
walker on water, the fisher of men to be our guide and saviour

Wash us with your love, Oh Lord of the living waters

HYMN

Guide me, O thou Great Redeemer,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak but thou art mighty;
Hold me with thy powerful hand:
Bread of heaven,
Feed me now and evermore.

Open now the crystal fountain
Whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fiery cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through:
Strong deliverer,
Be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death, and hell's destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan's side:
Songs and praises
I will ever give to thee

CLOSING PRAYER

May the road rise up to meet you,
May the wind always be at your back,
May the sun shine upon your face,
The rains fall soft upon your fields,
And, until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of his hand.

Amen