

## MWA Devotional Paper June 2015

### With God in the Garden

Just before I sat down to write this paper I was swimming - and it was bliss. I have arthritis, I'm sure there'll be many other MWA members who do too. So to help me cope I swim three times a week, it does really help, but the unexpected bonus has been how much I love it, the joy of the pure clear blueness and light on water as I swim. So when I read last month's paper about healing living waters it really resonated with me.

The garden we focus on this month is the garden that we hear about at the very end of the bible - and it has water at its heart. Read together now **Revelation 22. 1 - 5**.

As well as the clear water running through the middle of the city it is surrounded by trees with leaves for the healing of the nations. I am reminded of how so many of the medicines we rely on, like digitalis from foxgloves for heart medicine, salix (willow) which gives us aspirin, colchicum (meadow saffron) for gout treatment, come from plants. There are many other examples and additionally many new drugs being developed. Daffodils grown on high land in Wales are the source of a hopeful new treatment for Alzheimers, yew trees yield a potent new cancer drug, there is a coleus derived treatment for glaucoma - and the list goes on. God gives us what we need but we have to work, both together and in harmony with nature to achieve it.

Pure clear water and trees for the healing of the nations. A new vision of paradise at the end of the bible. Of course the garden of Eden at the beginning of the bible is Paradise. Full of beauty and promise, four rivers flowing through it, plants and trees flourishing and bearing fruit, and all for Adam and Eve! It's a story redolent with beauty and meaning - but above all it shows us the human propensity to mess things up, even Paradise - big time! We all know the unhappy ending.

The garden in Revelation, right at the other end of the bible, is a very different garden because this garden flows through the middle of a city, a place not just for two, Adam and Eve, but for many many people. And yet how different this city is to the cities we live in. The water is crystal clear and bright and the trees bear fruit for healing. It's another glimpse into paradise but this time around people are truly reconciled with God and therefore there is cooperation and community and joy. They offer God service and worship, and the shining of God is all the light anyone needs. So, on the last pages of the bible, a vision of a truly happy ending.

It is a vision of how life can be when we learn to live in harmony in God's world, right with each other and right with God. It sounds so simple, but is so hard to achieve. We know from Adam and Eve that just two people couldn't manage it, we know from human history and from our own painful experience that we cannot either.

In between the Garden of Eden and the garden revealed to us in the Book of Revelation have come all the books of the bible, exploring and recording humankind's relationship with God and, most crucially, the gospel story. The opportunity for new relationship with God offered to us by and in Christ was a reality for John who had this Revelation vision. So he offers us this beautiful garden picture of the Kingdom with God at its heart. It is a vision to inspire us to work and pray for the Kingdom to come. The very last words of this chapter, and therefore of the whole bible are, "Come, Lord Jesus! May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with everyone." May it be our prayer too.

And for you, this adapted version of a traditional Celtic prayer:

Deep peace of the crystal clear waters to you  
Deep peace of the flowing waters to you  
Deep peace of the fruitful trees to you  
Deep peace of God's shining to you  
Deep peace of the Son of Peace to you.

*Beth Torkington*

### For Discussion

1) For me it's swimming. What for you is a healing activity? Gardening, walking, other recreations? Note that the word "recreation" literally means to "re-create". What helps you do that? Make a list between you all.

2) Can you think of any ways, apart from healing services, in which the church can become more of a healing space for people?