



**Longer Tables, Lower Fences - Reflections for Lent 2019**  
**Week 1 – 10<sup>th</sup> March**  
**Written by Barbara Glasson**

**Water of life**

At the Red Centre of Australia lies the desert town of Alice Springs. Despite its name, there is no spring there although water lies deep beneath the surface of the desert and it is replenished infrequently by rain. Through Alice ‘flows’ the River Todd. It rarely contains water and the parched dust of the river bed is marked by the trees that manage to get their roots deep enough to drink. When there is water in the Todd, it can flow like a torrent, but it never reaches the sea, it disappears into the red earth long before it gets anywhere near the coast. It will however bring the desert into bloom: pink, yellow, orange, purple; suddenly the arid landscapes bursts into colour. But you might have to wait half your lifetime before you see it.

Jesus knew about deserts. He knew the harsh environment that could make his solitary imagination wonder whether he could turn stones into bread. He also knew that the temptation of a quick solution to his desert hunger would divert him from his true path. He needed to wait and wonder and not be distracted by immediate gratification.

In the UK we don’t always rejoice in the gift of water, in fact we are often grumbling about our sodden shoes or wet hair. But desert people know how to wait year on year, believing that one day water will come again. When we think about making longer tables maybe we shouldn’t imagine a table already full of good things to which we, as providers, will invite others out of the goodness of our hearts. Rather we could imagine an empty table at which we wait together with empty plates and glasses knowing we are dependent on God’s generosity to provide everything.

Lent is a waiting time, maybe we could begin by noticing every drop of water that we use and being thankful for it. And also being mindful that what we have in plenty is like gold for others. What could we use more wisely so that all the world can flourish?



Parched land around Uluru in the Red Centre of Australia

**To ponder:** What situations do we face in life where we feel parched? How can we make our ‘spiritual roots’ search for life giving water? How can I value water and help other people flourish - maybe have a look at the Water Aid website? [wateraid.org/uk](http://wateraid.org/uk) How can I share more generously this Lent?

**Prayer:** Creator of this glorious blue planet, maker of seas, waterfalls, tears and puddles, refresh us with the living water that you intend everyone to share. May the parched landscape of our selfishness be soaked by your generosity. Help us take practical steps to share what we have in abundance. Baptise us with your Spirit so that we can wait longingly for all to be refreshed at the long table of your love. Amen.

**Bible link: John 4:10, Matthew 4:1-11**

**Hymn: Singing the Faith 369** Baptise us with your Spirit

These Lent reflections are written to link with the 2019 Easter Offering Dedication Service, ‘Longer Tables, Lower Fences’ which will be used by most circuits of the Methodist Church in Britain during the weeks following Easter. Orders of service and other resources can be found at [www.mwib.org.uk](http://www.mwib.org.uk)