

26<sup>th</sup> April 2022

## Streams

**"In life's last scene what prodigies surprise,  
Fears of the brave, the follies of the wise?  
From Marlborough's eyes the streams of dotage flow,  
And Swift expires a driv'ler and a show."**

*Samuel Johnson, The Vanity of Human Wishes*

I'm in reflective mood. My thoughts on "epitaphs" yesterday have caused me to ponder my journey of life. And my mind has returned to the "mid-ministry" weekend I referred to, a significant time of reflection for me.

One of the sessions was with an art therapist. Now, I'm no artist, and though the therapist reassured me it was the meaning of the art I produced that mattered and not the style, I was uncomfortable expressing myself in this way. The art therapist was, however, both patient and affirming. She invited me to paint a stream in watercolours to illustrate how I saw my life: the source; the beginnings of the flow; the countryside the stream might pass through; the rivulets that fed it along the way; the bends; the rapids; the shallows; the tributaries that went sideways; the dangerous parts; where the stream is now; how it might develop in the future. I haven't kept the painting. But I remember the challenge, the feelings the exercise created and the significance of what appeared in front of me. Not from my eyes did "the streams of dotage flow" – I was only in mid-life, for goodness' sake! But the depiction of my journey of life through a medium that took me outside my comfort zone, had such a powerful impact on me that I can recall it even now.

Why not give it a try? Where did your stream begin? How has it developed? What has fed you, and how has the flow of your stream fed others? How has its course changed? How wide was it, or how narrow did it become? Where were the rough parts? When did it meander gently? What's happening to it now, and where do you think it might flow next?

Johnson's scenes, fears, follies, surprises? They'll all be there as you give thought to the flow of the stream of your life. You can become your own art therapist. It needn't be the best of painting, and no one else needs to see it. But it's your stream, and you'll learn much as you ponder its flow.

### **A prayer for today**

*"Where streams of living water flow my ransomed soul he leadeth,  
And where the verdant pastures grow with food celestial feedeth."*

*(Henry Williams Baker)*