

“Communal Reflection”
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Meriden, CT

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Intergenerational Water Communion

“...it holds the life. We thought we did it on our own.” The words we just heard in song remind us that our lives are held in a river of life—the Hudson, the Connecticut, the Clarion, the Tigris, the Euphrates. Rivers known and strange, rivers, new and ancient. From whence does life emerge?

Swimmers we are in those nine months of taking form before the moment when we burst forth like an Olympic gymnast into what we call life.

First voice:

My warm pool started to churn. Something was about to happen. Then...the water broke. Ready or not, I was about to be born.

Once we're born, it's vital that we stay “hydrated,” that is, with enough water to sustain us and make it possible for us to grow and thrive. Our needs before and after birth are radically different but overlap in our dependence upon water.

As newborns and lifelong we're nourished by water. We are mostly water. Without it we would die.

As we gaze into a starlit sky, we wonder if there's life out there. What do scientists look for as they study that possibility through the largest and most refined of telescopic lenses? Water! Even a trace of water suggests that life is possible.

Water is the most primal of earth's elements. Water is the most plentiful of earth's elements. Close to three-quarters of our planet is water.

Second voice:

“Water flows from high in the mountains.
Water runs deep in the Earth.
Miraculously, water comes to us,
and sustains all life.”

writes the Vietnamese poet, Thich Nhat Hanh.

Third voice:

We drink it, bathe in it, cook in it, swim in it, float on it, splash it, marvel at it.

We ARE water. Water IS, therefore we can BE. Our water ceremony is a water communion, a profound sharing of stories gathered into a life-giving substance. Each of you is a treasure trove of stories. Each of you comes forth with your own sacred pond taking up as much space in your bodies as the seas do on the body that is our earth.

Fourth voice:

Water is sacred. When we dedicate a child, we dip a flower into water, an ancient symbol of consecration and blessing. In some faiths, children and adults are dedicated by total immersion into a body of water, an ancient symbol of purification.

Water is a human rite—that is the medium for ritual—and a human right, a creature right—not a privilege, but a right.

Fifth voice:

Oil and water might not mix, but both are the stuff over which wars are fought.

How is it that water is anyone's property? Is air? Can that which is sacred ever be bought or owned? Somewhere this morning children and mothers and fathers will seek their water from a well. Not everyone has a kitchen tap. [Invite a child to come up and take a pitcher and pour it into the bowl.]

[Name of child] has gone to the well of [her/his] village, lowered the family pitcher and hoped to bring up water for drinking, cooking, and bathing. S/he brings it home. Her/his family trusts that s/he will pour this life-sustaining substance into other receptacles to sustain the life of this family. [Child pours an empty pitcher.]

Child:

The pitcher is empty. The well was dry.

How many other children and families will stake their hopes on a well that is dry? Our well is full. We are lucky. For all whose wells are empty, we can do something.

“Got Water?” is a campaign of our Unitarian Universalist Service Committee “to ensure sustainable access to safe, sufficient, affordable water to every person by enshrining the human right to water into law — internationally, nationally, statewide, and locally.”

We can be caring neighbors and join with our UUSC in advocating water as a human right, a creature right.

Remember again the story that accompanied your offering of water. **What is the story of a child, a man, a woman, who cannot give such an offering? It too is a special story, a sacred story of hope and yearning.**

The water too holds stories. Can we, will we, listen? Can we, will we, share the stories that blend and flow with the currents of the rivers of life? Can we, will we, share the water that was never ours? Can we, will we, flow with grace and gratitude through the currents of the river known as Common on into the great ocean of forever?

Amen.

Sources:

Thich Nhat Hanh, “Cultivating Peace, Joy and Happiness,” in *Thich Nhat Hanh Dharma Talks*, November 25, 2009, <http://tnaudio.org/2009/11/25/cultivating-peace-joy-and-happiness/>. .

Dar Williams, “The Hudson,”

Kara Smith, blog, http://www.uusc.org/blog/entry/3202/ritual_and_rights.