

THOUGHTS FOR WATER COMMUNION
and OUR SHARED JOURNEY

With the devastation of Houston by the floods from Hurricane Harvey still ongoing and with Irma wreaking destruction on the outer islands and now Florida, the aggregated power of drops of water, in overflowing rivers and surging seas, is much on our minds. The parts of the West that are now burning in more than 70 major fires, covering more than a million acres in Montana alone, could use a lot more water, but Texas and Florida will be drying out for weeks, if they get a break without further serious storms. These are not ordinary times in which we are living. Though we may be little more than specks in the depth and breadth of the universe, the portents for even greater disasters are all too apparent in the shortsightedness that has allowed climate change to progress unabated and even accelerate. Contrary to ‘He who would make America Great Again’ (for the super-wealthy and owners of corporations), the impact of the TEA Party, do-nothing Republicans, and Trumpian policies is already falling hard upon the poor, immigrants, and the middle class. The decision to rescind DACA, another shortsighted and costly action continues to attest to the capricious and dangerous irrationality of Trump and his administration. All of this we must remember and be aware of, and all of these actions remind us how much we need each other and this community. These may not yet be the worst of times, but renewed fears of Nuclear catastrophe which had been receding for decades are suddenly added to the cyclonic reality of climate change.

Today we gather ourselves together once again, celebrating our Water Communion and In-Gathering on this first Sunday of our Fall Season. This service and our shared meal today offer us an opportunity to reconnect as we share our stories from summer travels and experiences. Many of us have had opportunities for vacations, while others needed to work through the summer. Some of us have not seen each other for weeks or even months, and so we cherish this opportunity to share our experiences, the stories of our continuing

journeys. Some of us are new to this community and have not had much of an opportunity to share our story or hear the stories of others yet. We did not share the stories of our summer travels aloud this year, so we encourage you to share your experiences in small groups as we eat and mingle together after the service. Remember, some of us have more resources and are able to travel while others do not have that opportunity. I remind us each to be respectful of the stories of others.

In times like this, we each need a community of people who will support us and listen to us, a place where we feel safe and at home. This is the great gift that we offer to each other when we gather, the safety of a home where we can be our true selves, where we can offer love and encouragement and hugs to each other during difficult times. The friendships forged here offer a depth often not so quickly found with work or neighborhood or online acquaintances. In this community we have people we can depend upon, even lean on, when times are hard. As we gather, we seek to keep it real with each other, to listen so that we can hear each other, not that we will always agree, but because we respect and value each other.

Some of us gathered here are deeply involved in one or more struggles for justice, while others come to rest from the struggle amidst a community which respects, accepts, and loves us as we are. For some this congregation is a base from which to continue efforts for justice for people and the health of the earth. For some this church offers a place to explore spirituality and discover a sense of the transcendent dimension of life. Whatever draws us to this community, here we find family.

The Water Communion is a relatively new ritual by which we symbolize our common experience, our desire to be involved with and engaged in a community of meaning and purpose, our gathering together after a time apart. We come from many different places but our journeys have led us to sojourn together here for a time. Over time, some of us will move on or pass on, and others will come to join in the flow of the congregational journey. In the great river of life, our gathering here is connected to other gatherings of people

throughout the ages, around fire and hearth, under starry skies, in cave and temple and chapel.

In the lifetimes of many of us, we have watched as our world transitioned from a simple post-war optimism through Korea, the Cold War, Vietnam and the upheaval of the 60s, suburban sprawl, the 70s, the Age of Aquarius, the 80s, the 90s, Y2K, 9/11, Iraq and Afghanistan, easy credit, boom and bust, unending commercialization of everything, the early 21st Century, and now the instant gratification of every desire, delivered almost immediately by Amazon! Some of us remember Ike, JFK, LBJ, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush the Elder, Bill Clinton, W, and Obama. Who could have imagined that having lived through all we have lived through, we would now be facing existential planetary annihilation in the age of the Donald? And yet, here we are!

At this moment in time, we need each other more even than in the turmoil of the 60s, more than during the wars that weren't even official wars, more than during the era of Mutually Assured Destruction, more than throughout the Culture Wars. We need each other now because this crazy world is on a new roller coaster with no good end in sight.

We don't all share the same beliefs in what lies beyond this world in terms of gods and goddesses, heaven or reincarnation, or none of those. We do share common beliefs in justice and the value of each person and in the importance of the religious community. We share a hope for a healthy planet, a desire for clean air, pure water, and healthy forests. We share a desire to replace fossil fuels with renewable energy such as solar and wind power. I expect that we are united in the hope for a world community sharing resources and offering everyone enough food, water, healthcare and work to live well.

In our country and in our religious tradition, there is a heritage of radical individualism. Even though many of our religious forebears were targets of McCarthyism, we also embrace the Walden Pond human isolationism of Henry David Thoreau. We continue to honor individual successes, but more and more we acknowledge too the value of the Democratic Socialism of Bernie Sanders.

In a world of more than 7.5 Billion people, a world showing the results of warming seas and greenhouse gas filled skies, a world with too much polluted water and too little water pure enough to drink, we cannot afford the costs of self-aggrandizing rugged individualism, especially in the top offices of the corporate wild west.

We need a redistributing kind of cooperation that helps everyone to have enough, not just in response to disasters but every day. We need to limit the economic distance between corporate emperors and the working masses. We need a living wage for all workers and we need honest representation of the people in the halls of congress. And we desperately need socialized healthcare, healthcare for everyone, not privatized healthcare that only the rich can afford. We need a world that recognizes the value of all work, so that everyone will be able to afford food, water, and a decent safe place to live.

We also need a world in which all persons, gay or straight or bi or trans are valued, a world in which the shade of your skin and your state of origin do not change your value, a world in which all respectful religions and philosophies are welcomed equally but none are sponsored or promoted by the state. In our church, we value differences and variety even as we recognize that all persons should be treated fairly and with respect and dignity. Whether we gather for meditation or personal growth or to engage in the work of justice-making, we do our best to live out our principles and honor the traditions from which Unitarian Universalism has grown and learned. We are challenged to make a difference even in the most difficult times and against long odds.

In good times or bad, we are there for each other. We care for each other. We take the time to listen and to get to know each other. We are a safe and strong community for each other and we are a base from which to work to change the world. As we gather today for our Water Communion, we celebrate all that we are and all that we may be. May our commitment to each other and to our shared values help to change our lives and transform the world for the better!

So May it Be! Shalom, Salaam, Blessed Be, Namaste, and Amen!