

**THOUGHTS FOR WATER COMMUNION**  
**and OUR SHARED JOURNEY 2016**

Fifteen years ago this morning, the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were attacked with hijacked airliners by a group of Islamist Jihadists, mostly from Saudi Arabia. The plane that was aimed at the White House was brought down in a field by a group of passengers who foiled that attempt. Almost 3,000 people were killed in the most devastating attack on American soil since the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 that brought the US into World War II. Our world has been in a state of upheaval since 9/11/2001. There are few of us who have not been affected in some way. Today as we celebrate our in-gathering to begin the new church year, we remember all those who have lost their lives or suffered injury to this never-ending conflict.

As we celebrate the beginning of our church year, we cannot entirely set aside the events of the world, nor would we want to do so. We gather as one community of a rational religious movement which has been passed down to us from the earliest days of our nation, when the Unitarians especially were well known and often embraced by the founders. Our sense of religious liberty is closely aligned with that written of by Jefferson and affirmed in the foundational documents of our nation. We enjoy the freedom to pursue our own religious journeys within the context of a movement which is also on a journey. Whether we have traveled far and wide or stayed near to home through the summer, we enjoy the freedom to explore and discover truth and meaning as free individuals, bound only by the values we affirm in our UU Principles.

Like the solstices and equinoxes and seasonal holidays marking the passing of seasons, this day marks the beginning of the church year for us and many others. Fall is a busy time in most churches as it is with us.

This journey that we are each on as Unitarian Universalists has many paths, many opportunities for discovery and exploration, and it will yield more the more we put into it. UU Congregations provide the space for us each to find our own sense of truth and meaning, but the paths we explore are entirely up to us to choose. We will not tell you what to believe other than to encourage you to honor the broad framework of values expressed in our UU Principles. Your level of involvement, your engagement in the journey is really up to you. For most people who remain within Unitarian Universalism, this is exactly what they seek, while others hoping to be told what to believe will be disappointed and soon fall away. This journey requires a high tolerance for ambiguity, a desire to enter the quest for meaning, and a willingness to live with what may be only preliminary answers. This is not a journey for the faint of heart nor for those needing any kind of certainty. Unitarian Universalism is a journey that may take us round the world or into the depths of our own psyche. Today we celebrate all the possibilities open to us. Today we rejoice in the freedom we share to explore all the human expressions of religion. Today we remember again that the quest for religious truth may take us to the heights or to the depths of human experience.

May the images and thoughts we have shared this morning carry us fully into this fall's journey. May we explore all the questions that we wish to confront. May we find companionship for our quest with all the like-minded seekers who gather here. May we progress well on our individual journeys even as we contribute knowledge, wisdom, and willing hands to the work of this congregation! May we be blessed by our involvement in this congregation and may we create a Blessed Community here even as we create a healthier and loving world!

May the waters we have shared today be a blessing to carry us forward through the days ahead!

Shalom, Salaam, Blessed Be, Namaste, and Amen!