

Thoughts for Water Communion and Our Shared Journey

Water Communion as a way of coming back together in Unitarian Universalist Congregations is hardly an ancient tradition, in fact it was just becoming popular in the mid-1990s when I began serving UU congregations. It apparently was first used some time in the 1980s, and has been both popular as a multi-generational service and criticized because it can seem classist as those who have traveled far and often frequently have more to share than those who have been unable to travel due to financial constraints. In larger congregations, it can also result in a lengthy and tedious sharing by everyone of too many details and not enough meaning-filled experiences. Our changes in this year's service were intended to emphasize the sense of meaning that we each discovered during our summer experiences. We hope that you have found the new structure helpful and we look forward to hearing your thoughts about the service and other ways we might focus on meaning!

Wherever we each spent our time over the past several weeks, I hope that we have all found time to relax and re-energize for the fall season and that we gather today with new ideas and new energy for this religious community and the Unitarian Universalist movement.

Even though we may hold very different beliefs about God, the Goddess, or multiple gods, people, and the universe, we are here to share our journey with other open-minded persons who are seekers of truth and wisdom who care about other persons, the earth, the universe, and all living things.

Our individual stories may have many different details, experiences, people, and places, but most of them share a longing for authenticity and a desire to freely share aspects of our identity that we may feel we have to hide in other places.

Many of us have come from Christian traditions which were less open or not at all open to questioning. Some have come from traditions in which adherents were required to assert creeds ancient or modern as complete truth and practice within the confines of doctrine and dogma handed down and interpreted by religious authorities.

As Unitarian Universalists, we honor no religious authority as highly as the beliefs discovered on our own journeys nor demand practices beyond those expressing our own consciences so long as such do no harm to others. We do agree generally to express our beliefs and practices in harmony with our UU Principles and Sources but even those do not constitute a creedal expectation.

As we gather again here at First Unitarian Universalist Church today and in the days to come, I hope and pray that we each shall find encouragement for our individual journeys, that we shall find companionship here as we venture down both well-known, and less-worn pathways, that we shall all find welcome and acceptance and practice the same to all who enter these doors.

As we have shared sacred waters of our recent journeys, so let us share the stories of our lives and may we treat each other's stories as sacred knowing that our stories each express much sadness and much joy, much learning and ever-increasing wisdom. May the love and acceptance of this In-Gathering service set the tone for our shared journey during this church year and may this congregation continue to grow in love and wisdom as we continue to gather throughout the year!

So may it Be! Shalom, Salaam, Namaste, Om, Blessed Be, and Amen!