

Water Communion

Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship
Revs Paul Beckel & Tessie Mandeville
September 11, 2016

REFLECTIONS

Water connects us all. Water is what we are made of regardless of our age, race, gender, class, ability, or sexuality. Water is what we're made of and therefore water is what each of us needs to sustain us—for nutrition, washing, recreation, in the manufacture of all of our stuff...and spiritually as something of beauty, power, and comfort in its ancient reliability...as we dance in the rain and look upon our lakes, rivers, seas, and glaciers, or least, in the back of our minds, we know all of these things are around to take care of us.

Water connects us all, every particle of mist blown and flowing and traveling perpetually in global cycles. So when things go wrong with water, because of its nature to reach out to us wherever we are, when things go wrong with water, we are all affected. When things go wrong with water or land or air, water the universal solvent, will capture and convey to us, intimately, all that is.

So then what can we do? Can we enjoy and be grateful for water every day? We can. And can this joy and gratitude give us strength to share and protect the water? Oh yes.

But can WE make the water clean and fresh? To a degree, yes. Our thoughtfulness, our actions, our votes to choose and taxes to pay for contraptions that sanitize the water, all of these things help. But most of all we need to let it go, let it go on its natural course to filter itself through clean earth and sky in repeated cycles of filtration, percolation, evaporation, and condensation. Most of all, we need to let it go. Give this natural process time to complete its astonishing self-sustaining cycles without, in the meantime, making it worse.

And this is why I'm going to City Hall tomorrow to Stand with Standing Rock. Standing Rock is an Indian Reservation in North and South Dakota where filthy fossil fuels may soon flow within and of course beyond its porous pipeline.

What does oil in North Dakota, coming from Canada to be burned in Illinois—what does this have to do with me? For that matter, what do YOU have to do with me? Why should I care?

Living in Whatcom County, where rainy weather and waterfalls and fishing grounds are so much a part of our identity and sustenance, here we are particularly aware of the consequences of fossil fuels contaminating our waters. We cannot and must not forget the devastating incident in 1999 when a pipeline running from Cherry Point down to Seattle and Portland, leaked hundreds of thousands of gallons of fossil fuel into Whatcom Creek, leading to an explosion that sent a plume of smoke six miles into the air, forced the shutdown of I-5 and all marine traffic in Bellingham Bay, and killed three of our children. The explosion also destroyed our municipal water treatment plant.

We are all connected. The murderous destruction of 9-11, fifteen years ago today, was also connected to our excessive faith in fossil fuels, which we have prioritized over water land and air.

Through water, land, and air, we are all in relationship. WE CAN MAKE THIS a beautiful relationship! This is something WE can do! I believe that the *quality of our human relationships*—beginning in our homes and our congregation, and then expanding beyond these walls—the quality of our connections affects our spirits, our strength, our behavior...and therefore our willingness to attend to, and contribute to, healthy relationships both up- and downstream.

DISTILLING

Water creates, water nurtures, water destroys. The immensity and the necessity, and the power of water...humble us.

Water cleanses, and connects us all. Water invites us to know its cycles: to participate in these cycles...as it flows through us day after day and year after year.

I invite you now to reflect upon the waters. Allow your experiences with water in recent days or weeks to stir within you some insight, some deep truth.

In a few minutes we'll each have the opportunity to share the essence of our individual insights. By simply pouring a bit of ourselves into our common bowl we will contribute to and bless our entire assembled community.

Let's also take this moment to consider whether ours is water of the East, or South, West, or North.

Let me explain. By waters of the East, I mean waters of new beginnings. Waters of sunrise. [pause] By waters of the South I mean waters of fullness. Waters recharged by midday sun or waters churning and overflowing. [pause] By waters of the West I mean waters of harvest... journey's end, brilliant like the sun sliding off the horizon. [pause] By waters of the North, I mean waters of rest and renewal. Waters that flow from the wisdom of gentle darkness.

Each of us is made up of waters from the four directions. Following a short time of silence, I will invite you to come forward and pour your water, either from a pitcher or from your own source. I will call for the waters from each direction separately. But don't get too hung up on the directions, if you don't know when to come, just come.

As you pour, please share just one word (if you wish) the distilled essence represented within your water. During social hour after the service I encourage you to share at greater length what that word was, and what it means.

Children and adults, even if you're visiting us for the first time today, please share in and be a

part of this experience.

SILENCE (2:00)

WATERS OF THE EAST

The waters of the East. Waters of sunrise and new beginnings. We call on the waters that have nourished young children and animals, and new green life. We call on waters of springtime and freshness. Bring forward your waters of the East.

WATERS OF THE SOUTH

[bell] The waters of the South. Waters of summer and fullness. We call on waters of the heat of the day. Empowering, or perhaps overpowering us with their fullness. Bring forward the waters of the South.

WATERS OF THE WEST

[bell] The waters of the West. The waters of sunset. Bring the sweat of harvest time, waters of times of completion. Bring the cooling waters of autumn, rust colored and peaceful. Bring forward the waters of the West.

WATERS OF THE NORTH

[bell] The waters of the North, the waters of winter. Waters of quiet and of grace. Bring the waters of preparation, of becoming ready for that which comes further along. Bring waters of night, of rest. Bring the waters of the peace that comes without bidding. Bring forward waters of the North.

BLESSING OF THE WATERS

Rev Fran Manly

Blessed be these waters, gathered from far and near;

Blessed be the hands that gathered these waters and poured them out;

Blessed be the sharing of our lives and our stories that make this community a font of living water....

*Blessed be those whose lives are touched by these waters
that their thirst may be quenched.*

Blessed be this community of memory and hope; which in its coming together and in its sharing of joy and sorrow, blesses all who come here, and makes these waters holy.

Following the service today, I will carry this vessel of your joys and tears, peace, and love, and all the rest... to Whatcom Creek, and bid it to flow forth into the blue...from whence we all have come. We sing now to remember how water connects us all.

CHOIR

We Are One

SEJC COLLECTION

for HUMANITAS

SENDING SONG

For the Earth Forever Turning

CIRCLE 'ROUND