



*Drops of water turn a mill.
Singly none, singly, none.*

CONNECTIONS

Welcome to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga. My name is Matt Hoyt and I am a member of the congregation. We begin each Sunday at this time with Connections. This is a time of community and contemplation, where we share the joys and the sorrows going on in our lives. This is not a time for announcements, politics or expressions of personal anger, but a time of deep sharing, where we are reminded that we are all human beings and we're all in this together.

Sit still for just a moment and listen to your breathing. When you are moved to speak, please come forward, tell us your name and what's on your mind. Take a breath after each person has spoken so that we may focus our attention on the moment.



Let us pause to dwell inward. Spirit of Life, please meet us where we are, in the struggles we choose for ourselves; in the ways we move forward in our lives, and bring our world forward with us. It is right that we pause to remember those who need love and support; who are ill or in pain, either in body or in spirit; who are lonely or have been wronged. Let us open our minds and hearts to a place of quiet, to a silent prayer for the healing of pain, and the soft, gentle coming of love. In this time of silence let our thoughts be with those who have spoken or been spoken about this morning. Amen and Blessed Be.

Please rise now and greet your neighbors at the door. Welcome them into the sanctuary with a hand of warmth and a smile.

HYMN 389, Gathered Here

Water Communion & Ingathering
A Worship Service by the REV. JEFF BRIERE
Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga
September 12, 2010

GREETINGS

FRANK. Thanks so much for joining us in worship today. We hope you find the service rewarding and that you leave here inspired and uplifted.

- There is an emergency exit over here to my right
- now is the time to put your cell phone in “Worship Mode”
- and childcare for the young and the restless is available downstairs in the nursery.

If you have a particular joy or sorrow or something you’d like added to the prayer of the people, please clearly write it on an index card and drop it in the basket back there.

Today is our annual Ingathering and Water Communion service. I hope you brought with you a small container of water that was gathered at a place meaningful to you. If you are visiting with us today, you are more than welcome to participate in this ritual with us. In the back of the sanctuary, there is a container of “representative water” for you to use if you forgot or if you are visiting.

Later on in the service, we will combine our separate waters to express our own contribution to the life of the church. We would like the children to stay with us here in the sanctuary today. There is no religious education program today. Children of kindergarten age and younger are welcome to hang out in the nursery. First grade and older kids please sit tight and enjoy this special service.

I have three important announcements that you should hear. First, registration for small group ministries ends today. If you’ve been thinking about joining a group, now is the time to act. Please stop at the table in the fellowship area. For more information, ask Dez

Papendorp or Wendy Sapp.

This Wednesday evening, the Rev. Michael Dowd and Connie Barlow will present a free program here in the church. They are known as America’s Evolutionary Evangelists, and their program is “Deep Time Wisdom: An Inspiring Vision of Humanity’s Future.” It draws on material from Dowd’s bestselling book, *Thank God for Evolution*. Dowd explores how the reconciliation of science and religion will transform our lives and our world. That’s at 7 Wednesday evening right here at the church. Ask Jeff Briere if you have questions.

And on the 24th, Friday evening, we will sponsor a singing meditation here in the sanctuary as part of a weekend seminar. The Friday night session will be an introduction to singing meditation and is free and open to the public. You don’t have to be an accomplished singer to enjoy this session, just be open to the music deepening your spiritual connection to the world. See Kate Briere for more information.

A complete listing of announcements is included with the bulletin and is available on our web site. The best way to find out what’s going on around here is to sign up for a weekly e-mail. To do that, please see Chris in the office.

For a prelude, Kate heard a song by Bill Staines and was moved to sing it for us. This is “River.”

PRELUDE: River

LIGHTING THE CHALICE

To light our chalice today, I bring you the words of Tom Rhodes, the minister at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Raleigh, North Carolina. This is a responsive reading, and your words are in italics.

Now is the time of gathering.

*From the scattered drops and rivulets
of our individual lives
we come together.*

Singly and in community,
our lives merge, separate,
and merge again.

From the rush and cascade
of our daily activities,
we come to this place of quiet reflection
*where we may pool our hopes and dreams,
pause, and peer beneath the surface
to consider the deeper currents of our lives.*

Like rivers to the sea,
we come to this, our spiritual home.

*May we each be lifted up,
may we pour ourselves out,
receiving and sharing
the blessings of this time and place.*

SONG: "Listen, Listen"

Listen, listen, listen, listen, listen to the water
Calling us like rivers, running to the sea.

STORY: WATER DANCE

A unifying theme for today's service is the various forms and immutability of water. Water exists in many forms and is often hidden in vegetables and plants. Water is everywhere, even dissolved

into the air we breathe. And we know that water is critical for life, more important than food.

Water moves around in this world, changing shapes, nourishing plants and animals, cooling tea, making beer and coffee, and refreshing bathers. Water moves through life like a dancer.

I showed this last year, and I'd like to do it again, if that's OK with you. Please join me in a responsive reading about the dance of water. Your words will appear underneath the pictures. I have about 4 or 5 lines to read, then your line. OK?

Some people say that I am one thing.
Others say that I am many.
Ever since the world began
I have been moving in an endless circle.
Sometimes I fall from the sky.
I am the rain.

Sometimes I cascade.
I tumble down, down,
over moss-covered rocks,
through forest shadows.
I am the mountain stream.

At the foot of the mountains,
I leap from a stone cliff
Spiraling. Plunging.
I am the waterfall.

In the shadows of the mountain
I am still and deep
I fill and overflow
I am the lake.

I wind through broad golden valleys

joined by streams, joined by creeks.
I grow ever wider broader and deeper
I am the river.

I pass through a gateway of high stone palisades
leaving the land behind
Cool silver moonlight
sparkles and dances on my waves
I am the ocean.

Drawn upward by warm sunlight
in white–silver veils
I rise into the air and disappear
I am the mist.

In thousands of shapes I reappear
high above the earth in the blue sky
I float. I drift.
I am the clouds.

Carried by winds from distant seas I move
growing heavier growing darker
returning to land.
I am the storm front.

At the wall of the mountains I rise up
as gleaming power–filled towers
in the darkened sky
I am the thunder head.

I blind the sky with lightning
the earth trembles with my thunder
I rage. I drench the mountainside.
I am the storm.

Storms come. Storms pass.

I am countless drops of rain
left floating in the silent air
I reflect all the colors of the sunlight.
I am the rainbow.

***I am one thing.
I am many things.
I am water.
This is my dance through the world.***

SONG: “Listen, Listen”

Listen, listen, listen, listen, listen to the water
Calling us like rivers, running to the sea.

OFFERTORY: River Song

Once a month, this congregation donates the entire offering to another organization working to make the world a better place. Today we’ll share the plate with Living Waters for the World.

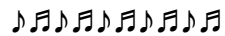
Living Waters for the World trains and equips teams to share the gift of clean, sustainable water with communities in need. Their water treatment systems and related educational programs fill a critical niche in the world water crisis by helping communities with available but contaminated water.

Living Waters for the World was conceived by Wil Howie, a minister who believed that an organization could literally bring life-saving, “living” water to people throughout the world. Since its inception, Living Waters has empowered local community leaders to install and operate over 300 clean water systems in major developing areas of the world and recently, it expanded its mission to address water quality issues in the Appalachian Region of the United States. On average, one new clean water system is installed somewhere in the

world each week.

The need for clean water is overwhelming. According to the World Health Organization and other sources, over three million people die each year from water-related illnesses, most of them children.

We'll collect the morning offering now, for the support of Living Waters for the World. If you have an annual pledge payment, please mark it as such. As always, the Wood–Wilhoit Memorial Food Bank is happy to accept your donations of non–perishable food and household items for the Community Kitchen. The collection basket for that is by the front door. And thank you very much for your generosity. If you wish to light a personal candle of joy or sorrow, you may step up here and Mary Hunter will assist you.



Eternal Spirit of life and love, we are profoundly thankful for the blessings we experience today. Would that we recognize our blessings every day and be thankful for them. Instead of our Hymn of Thanksgiving, let's sing Listen, Listen again.

SONG: "Listen, Listen"

Listen, listen, listen, listen, listen to the water
Calling us like rivers, running to the sea.

ORISON

Dona Nobis Pacem. Give Us Peace. Dona Nobis Pacem.

Rev. Peter Morales, President of the Unitarian Universalist Association, issued the following statement on Wednesday:

“As we approach September 11th, there are some among us who feel

compelled to act out of pain, fear, or cynicism, and incite intolerance and violence toward our Muslim brothers and sisters. Unitarian Universalists are called to denounce all such acts of bigotry. We are called to defend our inherent right to worship as we choose, and to honor the rich history of America's multicultural communities. We are called to stand on the side of love. [*The words of the Rev. Peter Morales, president of the UUA.*]

Rosh Hashana began at sundown Wednesday. Ramadan ended Friday night. Nine years ago yesterday, on September 11th, 2001, nearly 3000 people died because a few fanatical men came to believe their delusions were real.

This was the first major attack on Americans at home since Pearl Harbor. As such, it scared many people who feared they might be next. In turn, this spawned a rush of blind patriotism in many Americans.

Because the attackers clothed themselves in an esoteric and wrong-headed interpretation of their religion, their actions spawned a wave of fear and indignation focused on Islam and Muslims. This, in turn, spawned a wave of xenophobia, a fear of all foreigners. Otherwise level-headed people became frightened and suspicious of anyone who didn't look or sound "American." Charges of intolerance, bigotry, discrimination and prejudice have been lodged by many peaceful people caught up in this net of over-reaction.

It's an irrational fear. I think President Roosevelt was correct when he said that "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror." So today, I pray that we overcome our fears and think twice before we react. I pray that we begin to think and act like the level-headed people we are and refuse to be co-opted by those who would exploit these times for political purposes.

Today I pray together with Jews, Muslims and Christians, and all

others.

Beloved Children, you who cover the land
in numbers greater than the stars,
I petition you, I pray you,
because you are the fruit of God's promise to me;
because you hold a piece of the truth of all that is;
because the vision of Beloved Community needs you.

I pray you

Show loving kindness for one another,
use wisely the unique gifts of your humanity:
your free will, imagination, creativity, compassion;
your knowledge, power, understanding, and awareness;
all that is an image of the Highest Good.

See the beauty in your brother's eye;
the wisdom in your sister's smile.
Hold one another with tenderness,
and allow love to transcend fear;
fear that darkens your thoughts and poisons your heart.

Come together followers of Moses, Jesus, and Muhammed,
(Peace Be Upon Them All).
Embrace the children and followers of all the prophets;
all the seekers and people of good will;
adore all that emerges from the mystery of life.
Treasure one another.

Call forth wholeness for your fellow creatures.
Protect the sustenance for life: the earth, the air, the water;
hold the fire with gentleness;
use it wisely for growth and goodness.

Come together from the deserts,

the mountains, the wetlands and the shores.
Lift the veil of indifference, I
earn to understand one another's plight,
and share in the beauty, wonder, joy and awe of life.

Love mercy and kindness,
walk humbly with one another,
and with all creation.

Love your neighbors as you love yourself.

Give to others the full measure of your goodness,
so they will give unto you the same.

As you honor the covenant of your traditions,
may you also covenant with all people of good will:
a covenant of love, compassion, humility,
generosity, gratitude and celebration.

May it always be so. Amen.

In this time of silence, let us hold close to our hearts those who died
in New York City, at the Pentagon and in Somerset County,
Pennsylvania. Let us reconcile with strangers and let us always
remember those who suffer the fallout of war.

Dona Nobis Pacem. Give Us Peace. Dona Nobis Pacem.

SONG: "Listen, Listen"

Listen, listen, listen, listen, listen to the water
Calling us like rivers, running to the sea.

WATER DROPS

Once each year, at the end of summer, on the first Sunday after Labor Day, this congregation engages in a ritual we call water communion and a worship service called *Ingathering*.

Used to be, many years ago, that the Unitarians in the northeastern United States would suspend worship services for July and August. Some people attribute this to the lack of air conditioning and others believe that the Unitarians were closely tied to the academy and followed school calendars. I have always thought that the Unitarians were the only people God trusted to return to church after a two-month vacation.

In any case, when they got back together, the first service in September was special, because people hadn't seen each other in awhile and friendships were renewed. And it became the custom to use the first Sunday after Labor Day as the service that would gather the flock back into the church.

This is our *Ingathering and Water Communion*, a service we re-create each September as the church year begins and we rejoin our friends and colleagues. This emphasis on starting the year in September is a residue of an agricultural system that began in New England several hundred years ago. In those days, the harvest would be done, or nearly so, and people could afford time to go back to school or church before a harsh winter drove them back inside.

The central feature of this service is a communion of symbolic waters. The waters we bring together here symbolize the various gifts that we bring in to the life of the church. We all bring something different to this place.

Carolyn McDade and Lucile Shuck Longview created the Water Communion for a conference in 1980. The service they created was intended to speak to the worship needs of women, which had been ignored up to that point. McDade is a social activist and songwriter.

She wrote *Spirit of Life*, a favorite hymn around here. Each woman attending the conference was invited to bring a container of water with her and each took home a container of the mingled waters. McDade recalls that "It was very moving, the women bringing water from places of spiritual importance."

Thirty years after its creation, the water communion has spread to most every Unitarian Universalist congregation and it speaks to a deepening awareness of our solidarity with people everywhere who lack the precious resource of water. For the last few years, the lack of water has been on our minds and in the news around here. This year, as last, it seems to me that in eastern Tennessee, we could have easily used much more rain for our crops and flowers and vegetables.

As to what will happen to the water, after sterilization, we'll use it for re-dedicating our memorial garden next May and for any child dedications that may occur this year.

How about this half of the congregation going first. The rest of you sit tight, we'll get to you in just a moment. If you have brought a little water with you this morning from some far away place, please bring it forward and tell us about it first and then place it in the vase. Just line up over here and after you tell us about your waters, mingle them in the vase.

This is not meant to be a travelogue nor a report on your summer vacation, but more about what the water means to you and how it changed you or what you learned. Or perhaps, why you chose to bring it here and add it to the other waters.

If want to participate but forgot to bring water, in the back of the sanctuary, you will find some would-be waters to use. And I'll go first.

HYMN 100, I've Got Peace Like a River

WATER DROPS

And now we'll get to the rest of the congregation. As the others did, line up over here and make your contribution to our collected water.

SONG: "Listen, Listen"

Listen, listen, listen, listen, listen to the water
Calling us like rivers, running to the sea.

EXTINGUISHING THE CHALICE

_____, would you extinguish our chalice,
please?

We extinguish this flame,
but not the light of its truth
the warmth of this community
nor the fire of our commitment.
These we carry in our hearts
and share with all the world.

POSTLUDE: "Somos el Barco"

I often say "We're All in the Same Boat" as a reference to the interdependent web of existence. And this song for the postlude expresses that sentiment very nicely. You may know it, but if not, listen closely and when you feel comfortable, please join us in the chorus.

*Somos el barco, somos el mar,
Yo navego en ti, tu navegas en mi
We are the boat, we are the sea,
I sail in you, you sail in me.*