

My Soul Has Grown Deep Like the Rivers
August 24th, 2008

Water: Water colors, water lilies, water coolers, water slides,
water melons, water beds, water beetles, water falls.

Water: lakes, rivers, sounds, creeks, oceans, springs, ponds,
pools, puddles.

Water: thirsting for, drinking up, diving in, wading through,
splashing round, flying over, hosing down, sailing on, jumping
over, hopping out.

If we allow ourselves to stop, and hop out for moment of
our go-go-go lives, we can discover and remember how
surrounded by and made up of water we are! Did you happen
to read the quote on the cover of the order of service this
morning? Rabindranath Tagore says, “the same stream of life
that runs through my veins night and day runs through the
world.” And do you remember the Langston Hughes reading

that Liam lead us in? There's a part where Hughes says, "I've known rivers ...older than the flow of human blood in human veins." Whether we think of what runs through us as a stream of life or the flow of human blood in human veins, water is a major part of that stream and flow. In fact, the watery liquid, called plasma, which makes our blood, and therefore our lives flow, is made up of about 90% water. That's nine parts water to one part everything else. Even though we are land folks for the most part, breathing air and walking on the earth, we are very, very watery. Makes you think that if you put your ear up to your heart, or someone else's, instead of hearing, "boom-boom, boom-boom," you might heard instead, "splish-splash, splish-splash."

Our wateriness also shows up in our tears, which are made of mostly water. And, on hot, hot, hot days like the ones we have had for about three our four months in a row, the sweat we sweat (or the glow we glow, if we're ladies) is also

made up of water. Thank goodness for the rain, also known as water, that finally came in just this past week or so, to cool things down at least a little bit.

But what's our being watery, both inside and out, have to do with coming to church on a Sunday morning? Especially, what's it have to do with Unitarian Universalist church, which uses as its symbol, not water, but fire, in the form of our flaming chalice?

Well, the way I see it, just as we live our lives within our individual, very watery bodies, we need to remember that this beloved Earth we share is one watery body, too. And just as we know we need to take care of the stream of life that runs through each of us, we also need to take care of the stream of life—the Euphrates, the Congo, the Nile, the Mississippi; the Atlantic, the Indian, the Pacific, the Antarctic—that runs *through* and *in* and all *around* the body of the Earth.

In fact, just as the poet Philip Larkin says that, “If I were called in to construct a religion I should make use of water,” I believe too that we need to *worship* water. That is, we need to hold it as worthy. That’s what worship means: to hold up and honor what is worthy, or valuable to us. Think about our world travelers, all the places they took you this summer—Russia, whose shores touch upon the Baltic Sea, the Caspian Sea, the Barents Sea, and even the sea of Japan; Hawaii, a string of islands way out in the middle of the Pacific ocean; Ecuador, whose rainforests drip rain and whose rivers are as many as the veins in one’s hands; mountains that were climbed with the help well-knotted ropes, and the snow (also known as very, very cold water) that capped those very mountain tops; even our own home of Texas, dry and rugged in so many places, with its winding Colorado and its Rio Grande, and the Gulf, waiting for them at their journeys’ end.

What would our world travels be like without water? What our daily lives be like? I, for one, would be very, very thirsty. And I'm afraid that the threads of the interdependent web of which we are a part, would become very, very dry, and perhaps even snap, and that would not be so good. We need our web to be healthy and whole. We need our Earth to be healthy and whole. We need to remember to honor the "dot a dot dot," the "spack a speck flick a flack fleck" of the water not only "freckling the windowpanes," but dripping from our kitchen sinks, filling up our bathtubs, draining from our glasses down into our thirsty bellies. For, water is indeed the stream of life that runs through our veins and through the body of our beloved Earth.

So it is in that spirit, that I invite you to form a line, and bring together, in communion, the water you have brought from your various journeys this summer. As you pour your water into the common bowl, I invite you to say *just two*

things: where your water came from, and, briefly, why you are grateful for its existence. Let the communion begin.

AFTER WATER IS POURED.

We celebrate the journeys we have taken, and the water that has sustained us throughout our journeys. To honor the stream of life, of which water is so central to ourselves and to this earth, during the postlude, I will carry the bowl outside and return all but a small portion of this water to the earth, where it will once again nourish and sustain life. Those of you who wish to are welcome to join me.

Now let us stand as we are able and join in singing hymn #1007, "There's a River Flowin' in My Soul."