

## Unitarian Presentation Spirituality of/in water

### Meditation:

Think of a fresh, clean clear cool mountain spring flowing to a creek no wider than you can step across.

Imagine as this small stream is grown into rushing torrent much like Tongue River in a good runoff year.

Further on the stream flattens out into a river as it makes the run to Yellowstone River and the mighty Missouri flowing into a river miles across as the Mississippi and onto the Gulf.

The snow from the BigHorn is dispersed into the seven seas.

Such as is our lives connected to others world wide, far into the past primordial time and into the future we cannot imagine. We share.

The water continues. It changes form solid-liquid-gas. But it continues.

Ring crystal

I am here with yet another seemingly common topic, one often taken for granted. In the past I have presented topics on food, farming, hunting, I think I even did one on prayer. All fairly common stuff. Things we may take for granted until we really need or miss them.

Now water:

\*The spirituality of water viewed by world religions.

\*The connection with life

\*The challenges of keeping and accessing this life giving juice

Water is the essence of life and an intrinsic aspect of religions. German poet, thinker and dramatist Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote:

*"The human soul is like water:*

*It comes from the sky,*

*It ascends to the sky,*

*And again to the earth it must,*

*Ever changing."*

Water is a prominent part of many religious and spiritual traditions both East and West. It can symbolize a cleansing of the soul or even represent the divine. Virtually all religions - from Shintoism, Hinduism and Buddhism to Judaism, Islam, Christianity and native American traditions - have stories of great floods in one form or another - floods that

swept the Earth and allowed it to start again, refreshed and renewed. I especially like the Indian story of the earth residing on the back of a turtle.

Tibetan Buddhists use water for ritual washing of the hands, feet, face and mouth, while

Zen Buddhists pour water at funerals in reference to the oceans and thereby symbolize the infinite.

Shinto shrines frequently feature water basins for people to wash their hands in or drink from before entering a sacred space.

Hindus consider water and the intersections of bodies of water to be of great spiritual significance, the Ganges River in particular. Funeral rites typically take place near or on bodies of water, and water-cleansing rituals are common.

The Jewish use water for a number of symbolic cleansing rituals as well, from washing hands before and after meals to washing oneself after performing what are considered impure actions, such as coming in contact with the dead.

Likewise, in Muslim traditions, water is often used for ritual purification and cleansing, though typically before rites of passage or other religious rituals.

In Christian traditions water is used to baptize and thus initiate children and other newcomers to the religion - it represents a clean slate for the soul. Holy water is also used for various significant transitional rites of life and in ceremonies of death.

QUOTE? "God's spirit hovered over the water." (Genesis 1:2)

There are references to both floods and water-rites in various religions from the Americas, Africa and Asia, found in stone tablets, architectural inscriptions and in verbal traditions passed down for generations. Water has clearly been symbolically important to people all around the world since well before the beginnings of recorded history.

## PART 2 - CONNECTION

Curiously, our bodies are of similar proportional makeup of water as the blue planet we inhabit.

Moving or living water stirs us, enhances our well being, broadens our perspective, and energizes our lives. From our evolutionary roots we are attracted to water.

Since the formation of this planet, water (hydrogen, oxygen) played the key role with methane, carbon and basic building block elements to create life on earth.

Life first emerged from the seas, the chemical bubbling pot that first cooked up bacteria and one celled organisms, early plants. Add the effects of time and evolutionary success to achieve the higher life forms, still connected to and dependent upon the water.

Ever think that the same water you drank today may have been consumed by an Allosaur some 80 million years ago? Or run through an aqueduct to grow the wheat fields of an expanding Roman Empire in the second century B.C?

What messages are we receiving from our ancestors when we drink?

Save for an occasional contribution from a wayward icy meteor, the planet's hydrologic cycle is a closed system.

Evaporation, precipitation, infiltration, consumption...as a cycle again and again  
Without this cycle, water is THE limiting factor.

***QUOTE ?***

### **CHALLENGES**

The conflicts over accessing clean water are worldwide. Often, one thinks of sub Saharan Africa where village women travel for miles every day to lone spring from which they quench their thirsty needs.

It is a worldwide survival issue. In underdeveloped countries it may frequently be lack of supply or clean, disease-free sources in highly populated areas. In the "developed" world countries, pollution, price and access too serve as barriers as we contaminate surface and groundwater with toxins from manufacturing, mining, processing and numerous other threats from living in a fossil fueled and fast paced society.

Over the last ten years the coal bed methane play in this basin has allowed vast quantities of effluent (water) to run downstream or to evaporate as a "waste by-product." Some of this water will not recharge aquifers in our lifetimes.

Proposals to sequester carbon from the atmosphere with future coal gassification plants will require removal of deep, briny ground water in massive quantities to allow co2 under pressure to be stored. The placement or disposal of this water is yet to be determined.

We conflicts of limited supply play out in our own back yards.

The Yellowstone Compact of 1950, intended to divvy-up use of this supply system between our state and neighbors to the North, has become now before the US Supreme Court.

A bit further south, the desert growth nexus' of Las Vegas, Arizona and California continue to look greedily on our Wyoming headwater state from which the Green and Colorado Rivers issues forth.

During the recent drought years of the early 2000's, we saw Sawmill Lake, the main domestic source for City of Sheridan, run practically dry.

Irrigation use for producing food and fodder became inaccessible for many farms and ranches throughout the West. Conflicts ensued.

The Dinwoody Glacier, high in the Wind River Mountains, has shrunk significantly since the 1950's as has that source for the Big Horn Basin and downstream to the Yellowstone and beyond.

The source water found in glaciers around the globe and in our northern ice cap are disappearing as we warm beyond any historic and biological records.

We are even seeing droughts in usually high precipitation areas like the East Coast of the US, even Florida.

### **SOLUTIONS**

We hold a unique position as residents in the arid lands west of the great Mississippi. With the La Nina's and global heating, we have lived with the knowledge of what a limited, precious resource water truly is.

We can act to conserve, plan and construct our lives to use the minimums without waste or contamination. We can utilize technology to grow crops and create clean even recycled drinking water – if we and our vast array of decision-makers choose to do so.

The greatest challenge is making action happen to provide for future sources. It's happening. The occasional tests we face with drought and coveting by neighboring metropolitan areas is spurring some action. We know that without water, we are nothing.

John Wesley Powell, was the first to explore from Wyoming's Green and Colorado River system through the Grand canyon in 1869 (?). This visionary was a man of many abilities, Hydrographer, soldier, planner among them. As a student of anthropology he divided human populations into categories of: "Barbarism", "Savagery" and "Civilization."

In the spirit of this pioneering water planner and explorer, what category we fall under will have much to do with how we treat our most precious resource – the water of life.

As the creeks pop open in spring breakup and flow like Champaign from an uncorked bottle and rivers rise with snowmelt and rains, Consider as they progress onwards their place in our lives as they flow to the sea...I pray, forever..

Music : Down to the river to pray, (Oh Brother)

**END**

## Ref. “The mystery of Water”

Water is the central source of our beings. It is part of every cell and fiber in us; it is our very essence. Could water be the common denominator that weaves us all (earth, animal, human, and plant) together as one? Is it the ultimate connector? It's awesome and humbling that water carries so many entrained messages, especially when we consider that there has been the same water, and the same amount of water, on the earth for millions of years. What messages are we receiving from our ancestors when we drink? And it is overwhelming to think that in the past 60 years alone, the human hand has imprinted so much pollution on the water, bringing it out of healthy balance. It is our spiritual obligation to be water's caretaker and cause it no further harm.

### **Meditate with Water**

This wonderful water meditation and bath was created with the generous, perceptive, and experienced help of William E. Marks, the author of *The Holy Order of Water*.