

**Pour Yourself In
Water Communion Homily
Rev. David A. Morris
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Outer Banks
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I imagine a circle of women gathered around an empty bowl, with small pitchers of water in front of them. These women at the 1980 Women and Religion Continental Convocation of Unitarian Universalists, these women in a small group led by Carolyn McDade and Lucille Schuck Longview, are about to share a new ritual for the first time.

Each of them pours a little water into the bowl, and speaks of the work they are doing for the rights and the health and the spiritual lives of women in their home towns. Sharing the stories and mingling the water shows that they are connected. They live far apart and each one brings something different, and yet they are working together.

Like most of the powerful rituals that have grown out of the women's spirituality movement, this new one is built around a fundamental element of life: earth, air, fire, water. This one is water, the birthing place of life, symbol of the tides and the cycles of life. It is physical, not just words spoken. It represents something real and significant in each person's life. It shows that they are all part of something larger. Those are things that make rituals powerful, and this one has a profound effect. It is so moving that many of the participants take it home, and teach it to their own circles and their congregations.

And from that small beginning, the ritual we call the Water Communion has become a treasured part of the life of many Unitarian Universalist congregations. Many, like us, share it during a service that's often called "Ingathering," a service that marks the end of summer and the beginning of the church program year.

It's changed over time. Nowadays we bring our own water, from many sources. Sometimes, in some communities over the years, there's been a little bit of a feeling of dueling summer vacations, and some folks have felt left out. In most places, though, like we do here, the focus is not just on where the water comes from, but on what it represents in our lives. And of course our circles are much larger now, so we each say just a few words.

And this water we mingle together is a symbol of our life here in this community of love we call the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Outer Banks. Just as it did from the beginning, the Water Communion shows how each of us brings something different, something special and important to the life we share together. I think it shows something else too, something about the community life we make together. The life of a community is created one tiny bit at a time, just as this water is a gathering of single drops creating one larger whole.

We grow our community one drop at a time.

Here's a drop. . . a smile on the face of someone you haven't seen for a while, maybe even someone you don't know. . .yet.

Here's a drop. . . . a hand reaches out to touch someone who lives alone, someone who may not be touched in a caring way by another human being even once in the whole week between Sunday services.

And here's a drop. . . . a child builds a connection with an adult they're not related to, someone who thinks they are important, someone who treats them like their opinion is worth hearing.

And here's another drop. . . . you learn about the life of someone you probably would never have spoken to anywhere but here, and suddenly justice feels *personal* to you.

And here's another. . . . a musician spends hours preparing a gift which touches all our hearts.

And another drop, and another. . . . a friend stops by to see you in the hospital. . . . a face lights up when you share an idea that sheds new light in someone's life. . . . a minister hands a rose without thorns to a baby, who takes a big bite out of it a simple dinner dropped off at someone's door changes their whole experience of that day. . . . an elder spends an hour in the company of a first grader

Drop by drop, moment by moment, touch by touch, story by story. This is how we gather in community. This is the very water of life, the life we share together, the life which is made more rich by what each of us brings—the life which enriches each of us.

What do you bring? The community comes to life for you—as it does for all of us—when you pour yourself in.