

# Water Justice Ritual

## A word on Taizé worship

This ritual draws on elements from the Taizé tradition and has been adapted for use in Unitarian Universalist communities.

The Taizé community is an ecumenical monastic order with a strong devotion to peace and justice through prayer and meditation. Members of the 100-strong community of Roman Catholic and Protestant monks come from 30 countries throughout the world. It was founded in 1940 by Roger Louis Schutz-Marsauche (known as Brother Roger). The 90-year-old monk died in August 2005, after being stabbed during a prayer service. Today Taizé, a small village in central France, is one of the world's most important sites of Christian pilgrimage. Each year tens of thousands of young pilgrims flock to Taizé to share in the community's way of life.

Prayer and silence are at the heart of the Taizé experience. Ecumenism is the key to Taizé's appeal, making it a magnet for people of many different cultures and traditions. Taizé has spawned a unique style of worship that has become popular in churches, retreat centers, and seminaries throughout the world. The singing of distinctive and much-repeated prayer chants during candlelit prayer services is one of its trademarks. The music of Taizé highlights simple phrases, repeated or sung in canon. The repetition is designed to support meditation and prayer.

## Water ritual

This water ritual is an opportunity to witness the power of water in our lives. Please take part in any or all of the stations — there is no order. There is some setup needed — bring basins, towels, cups, and water. Copy the text for each station in a font size that can be easily read. Fill containers with water to carry between the stations. Be creative. Try carrying the weight of water between stations to symbolically acknowledge the burden of accessing clean, potable water in much of the world.

Ask for volunteers to be servers for the stations (you can rotate volunteers). Each station has a reading or is silent. (You can play background music; it will enhance the experience.) The readings need to be printed out in advance and ready at each station. The volunteer server will read a part; the participant will read the response. Participants can begin at any station and proceed in any order to the other stations. You will need towels, pitchers of water (no bottled water — use tap!), and some type of wash basin. Prior to the service, please ask people to bring water for Station 4 from their homes, a special body of water nearby, or a trip.

## Readings/instructions for the meditative stations

### *Station 1: Purification*

Servers, stand ready with pitchers and basins at your stations. Participants, when you come forward, place your hands, palms up, over the basin. The server will pour a few drops of water on your fingertips and speak the first line of the invocation by Buddhist monk and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh.

Server: "Water flows over these hands."

Participant: "May I use them skillfully, to preserve our precious planet."



PART OF THE  
**COMMIT<sup>2</sup>  
RESPOND**  
INITIATIVE

### *Station 2: Thirst*

Server, pour out a small cup of water.

Participant, take cup of water and look at it. Do not drink it. Do not drink it. Do not drink it. Focus on how looking at the cup of water feels. Finally, bring the cup to your lips and drink in the water very slowly. Say nothing. Merely feel the thirst and feel the quenching of thirst.

### *Station 3: Caring*

Wash the hands of someone else.

Washer: "May the waters of love cleanse you of isolation and renew your sense of connectedness."

Washed: "I am a child of the universe."

### *Station 4: Anointing*

Server, using the congregational joined water (brought from participants' homes, a special body of water nearby, or a trip), anoint the participant's forehead with a drop of water.

Server: "This water charges you with a duty."

Participant: "May I defend for all people and species the right to life-giving water."

Note: The above content is taken from Ballou Channing District Water Justice Day materials, developed by Ellen Snoeyenbos, April 2008.

### **Further exploration**

To learn more about promoting the human right to water in your congregation, check out the following resources:

- Climate Justice Sunday is a UUSC initiative to promote the human right to water in the face of climate change: [uusc.org/climate-justice-sunday](http://uusc.org/climate-justice-sunday).
- Commit2Respond is a coalition of Unitarian Universalists and other people of faith and conscience working for climate justice: [commit2respond.org](http://commit2respond.org).