

Soul Matters Lesson 1: Recommit to Community

(Water Communion Focus)

Theme Angle:

Our faith asks us to continually renew and recommit ourselves to our church community. It also reminds us that religious community is a primary source of renewal for human beings. So what's one of the ways our faith guides us into becoming a people of renewal? It tells us to "Recommit yourself to your church community and let your church community nourish your spirit!"

Introduce It (Object Lesson)

A Really UU Service: Water Communion Reflection

Reflection Object: Running water

Options:

- A physical fountain with running water ([here](#)) and ([here](#).)
- Two glasses with you slowly pouring water from one glass into the other.

Suggested Script:

Invite focus on the sound of running water, lifting up how it is a universally soothing sound and represents those parts of life that calm us, "fill us up" and quench our thirst. [Invite a family with a fountain or stream to show their running water and share how it calms them] This symbolism is the reason we UUs use water as the centerpiece of the ritual that begins every new church year.

Many of the holidays we honor and lift up come from other religions and traditions – Christmas, Easter, Halloween. One of the ones that was created by Unitarian Universalists and is one of our very own is the Water Communion or Water Service. The original service was created by a group of women in 1980. Here are some of their words describing why they used water as the central symbol (share the readings with your co-leaders, if desired):

“Celebrating now our connectedness, we choose water as our symbol of our empowerment. As rivers in cycle release their waters and regain new beginnings, so do we cycle. For us as women these beginnings are powerful, but not easy. But still we come to create and to celebrate and to live by the only spirituality worthy of our devotion—a spirituality that uplifts, empowers and connects.” – original words from the Original Water Service

<https://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/featured-new/water-rituals-and-ingatherings-revitalized/>

“The core symbolism of the Water Communion is that we all come from water: as a species on a planet where life began in the ocean, as mammals who float in amniotic fluid as we are readied for birth, as beings whose cells are mostly water. And yet we are separate from each other, and we have been apart—since there tends to be a slowing-down, a different rhythm in the summer months, even in churches that have services and religious education right on through the summer—and now we are reuniting. We are separate and together, the way water scatters into rain and streams and clouds and springs and ponds and puddles and yet flows together again and again, one great planetary ocean. Not only is no drop of water superior to any other; all water comes from the same place.”

From the blog post by Rev. Amy Zucker Morgenstern

<https://sermonsinstones.com/2013/06/13/lifting-water-communion-above-privilege-and-trivia/>

And so once a year, UU congregations from all over the country invite their members to bring in water from a place or activity that renewed them over the summer. It could be from the kitchen tap, garden hose, favorite swimming pool or from a trip one took over the summer. We combine these waters as an act of renewing our commitment to our church community and as a reminder that truly nourishing water is one that welcomes the “many unique streams” of everyone.

Connecting this wonder box/object lesson to your water communion ceremony:

We know you are all doing water communion in different ways....so we offer a few suggestions.

- For instance, you may be offering it as a Drive Through Water Communion (as suggested in the Connecting with Other Families Section of this packet.) You could then emphasize the Water Cycle of Life and how the water poured into the ground or stream becomes part of all of the water on our planet.
- If you are offering it online and virtually, you may wish to turn on your tap water to illustrate how simple it is to collect water, since it is all coming from the same fixed source of water on our planet.
- If you are simply sharing memories about past Water Communions, you could invite a family to share their memories of what they did in previous Water Communions.

Lead With Strategy:

Invite a family who has a fountain or a nearby stream. Or invite someone who can share past Water Communion services that they remember.

Transition Tool: Use between the readings or sections.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jkLRith2wcc>.

A video of water noise

Tell It and Talk About It (Story)

Higgins: A Drop with a Dream

By Christopher Buice

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/higgins>

Engaging the Children: Afterward invite the children to share their own take away from the story. What do you think the lesson of the story is?

Remember props make the story all the more exciting. Having a bucket and a water dropper are two easy options.

Lead with Strategy: Invite a social justice leader in your congregation to join you on the zoom call. Explain to the kids that you've invited this person here because they've had a special experience, you'd like them to hear about. Then have the person tell a very brief personal story of feeling inadequate to make a difference, but then were surprisingly joined by others and learned that lesson that together we can make a big difference. Afterward, explain that this is what today's story is all about. Invite them to read/tell the story.

Online Permission Note: Worship web material has been authorized for online use. See "[Permission Source](#)."

Meditate on It (Mindfulness Practice)

Water Meditation**Option #1: We Are Water**

Prep: Gather a larger clear glass and then another glass of the same size that is filled with water.

Suggested Script:

For our moment of mindfulness, I want to invite us to think about our own personal connection with water. See this glass. I want you to imagine that it is your body. How much of your body do you think is made up of water? Let's take some guesses.

[fill the glass 1/4 up]

So here's about 25% full. How many of you think our bodies are made up of 25% water?

[fill the glass 1/2 up]

So here's about 50% full. How many of you think our bodies are made up of 50% water?

[fill the glass 3/4 up]

So here's about 70% full. How many of you think our bodies are made up of 70% water?

Right! [Scientists say](#) we are made up of about 70% water! That's amazing right? I would have never guessed it would be that much. Water molecules can be found in every part of our body. It is what keeps every part of us healthy and functioning well.

But here's what I like to think about the most: So many other things are also full of water - not just oceans and rivers, but animals, plants and other people. Which means that *water connects us all!* It's something we all share. It makes me feel connected to everything.

So let's all take a moment of stillness to be more mindful about that.

Centering: I invite you to move into our meditation position.

Sit comfortably in your chair or on the floor.

Put your hands on your lap or on your knees.

Sit up nice and tall.

Focus your eyes in front of you.

Find your breath moving in your body by taking in one breath through your nose and then slowly breathing it out through your mouth.

Now focus on the glass of water and imagine all the water floating around inside you.

As you do so, take in another breath through your nose and let it out slowly through your mouth.

Now as you keep focusing on the water, imagine a body of water you love, like a river or the ocean.

As you do so, take in another breath through your nose and let it out slowly through your mouth.

And finally imagine looking out at everything as being able to see it in everything, the plants, in people, in animals, in nature as a stream or falling from the sky as rain.

Now in a very quiet whisper, repeat after me: "I'm so thankful for the water that keeps us alive and healthy." [repeat] "I'm so thankful for being connected to all living things." [repeat]

Now can you take one last breath? In through your nose; out through your mouth.

Thanks so much you wonderful water containers! :)

Option #2: Waterfall Visualization

Invite the group to find a relaxing position, close their eyes and take some deep breaths. Then offer the following meditation and visualization:

“A beautiful waterfall of white light is flowing down on you. It flows down on your head, helping your head to relax. You feel your head relaxing. It moves down over your neck and shoulders. Your neck and shoulders are relaxing. Now it flows down over your arms. You feel your arms relaxing. It flows down your back. Your back is letting go and relaxing. It flows over your chest and stomach, helping your chest and stomach relax. You feel your chest and stomach relax. It moves down over your legs and feet. You feel your legs and feet letting go and relaxing. The beautiful waterfall of white light is flowing over your whole body. You are very peaceful and relaxed.” From <https://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhism/meditate/water.htm>

Lead With Strategy - Who is known as a spiritual person, who has that voice you love to hear? Invite them to offer meditation!

Explore It

(online small group activities and experiential learning)

Online Rainstorm

From UUA's Deep Fun <https://www.uua.org/youth/library/deepfun/bond-building>

Talking Points and Takeaways:

- Introduce the activity by highlighting how water communion teaches us we are all connected, like many streams that flow into one river.
- To play with these ideas, we're going to try to *feel* connected through pretending to be water. But not just *any* water: a storm!
- Remember: We are all connected, like many streams that flow into one river.

Activity:

Explain that this is a follow the leader activity, with you starting a motion that they will then imitate.

Invite everyone to turn up the volume on their computers before they begin.

The order of the motions is:

1. rubbing hands together
2. rubbing hands on thighs
3. snapping fingers
4. clapping hands
5. stomping feet and clapping hands

Once you reach #5, repeat the motions in descending order. The last motion to be passed around is stillness and silence.

Chat about It Prompts/Questions:

- What was your favorite step? The snapping? Clapping? Stomping? And why?
- When was the last time you stomped in a puddle or ran through a sprinkler?
- Do storms scare you? Or do you enjoy them?
- What other kinds of activities make you feel connected to people? Singing in a choir? Playing on a sports team? Chanting at a social justice rally?

Lead With Strategy: Find a youth who has done this at a con!

Take It Home (Home based activity)

This section provides ideas for your weekly follow-up emails to parents, giving them some ways to build on themes and activities you did in your online worship and groups.

Family Sharing Tips & Lesson Follow Up

- **Possible Script for Email:** “Hello Parents! As you know, during the Meditation that was focused on how we are recommit to community through the Water Communion, we learned how much of our bodies are water. Ask your child(ren) if they remember the percent. Enjoy together the [Star Trek episode](#) when a silicon based life form calls us “Ugly sacs of mostly water.” (note: they say we are 90% water in the episode, but [scientists say](#) we are about 70%.)”
- Or **share stories about the bodies of water** that are special to your family, and what makes them special.
- Or **Build Your Own Water Fountain**

As a way of continuing to lift up church community as a source of “nourishing water,” invite your families to build their own water fountain.

Purchase a [small submersible fountain](#), place in a bowl, then decorate with small plants and rocks for a table. Here’s a video on how to build an easy water fountain outdoors: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKyEHC6vmXA>

Make it a “UU Fountain” by using a marker to draw some chalices on the rocks in your fountain.