

Worship at Home for January 10, 2021

You may choose to read right through this document, stopping for your own reflection at any time, or only read the prayers or the scripture or reflection. You might read with family or friends, or alone. Links will take you to music that may enhance your experience as you move through the worship, but you might choose to visit them later, or not at all. Feel free to share this with anyone who might be interested.

If you'd like to comment or have a question, please call or email me directly:
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In the Spirit

Rev. Joanne

Centering Prayer

In the tiniest drop of dew,
in the roar of ocean waves,
your Spirit of life and renewal persists.
Holy God, open us to your Spirit as we enter a time of worship this day.
Amen

Opening Music: "My Soul is Thirsting for You" MV 109
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VlnE8xNXx88>

Opening Prayer

God of eternity,
whose spirit hovered over the waters of creation,
whose voice echoes down the rivers of history
and proclaims that we are and help it flow
your beloved children:
we step into a time to worship you this day.
May we feel the power of your love
surrounding us and supporting us.
And when we set this time aside and return to other routines,
may we take this love and help it flow
in all the sacred places of our lives and in the world
that cry out for the refreshing presence of your Holy Spirit.
In the name of your beloved child Jesus we pray.
Amen

(From 'Prayers for all Seasons Year B' adapted and used with permission)

Scripture Mark 1:4-11

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

Reflection

Water - undoubtedly the most essential element. Whether we think about the waters of baptism or the water we need to survive, it is both basic necessity and precious commodity. All life depends upon a source of clean water, and nature is full of examples of creatures who find fresh water creatively, like birds that drink dew, or desert dwellers that collect the same, cacti that store it deep within their spiky bodies. Water is plentiful here in Canada - clean water is not. Water is also symbolic for us, not just in our faith lives, but throughout society and throughout time. Water is powerful and life-giving. Water is powerful and death-dealing. We try to control water, yet water in its many forms does indeed control us. Frozen water can be dangerous on roads and sidewalks, or a bridge to remote communities when lakes and rivers freeze. Running water can be full of fish and so provide nourishment and a mode of transportation, as well as the tranquil sounds that can soothe us. Raging waters like floods or tsunamis or tidal surges can bring death and destruction. When clean water is plentiful, people and animals and growing things can thrive. When water is contaminated or polluted, it brings disease and discomfort. Some percentage of the world's population lives without easy access to clean water, and many spend hours of each day in the pursuit of water that may not even be really safe to drink.

We might recall those descriptions of a brand new world created in Genesis, and we might be able to imagine a pristine wilderness, where waters run clear and fresh through a landscape unpopulated by humanity. The oceans are teeming with life, without the residue of plastics or toxins dumped by unthinking or uncaring people. All is just as it should be – as it was created by God. But it really doesn't take long, in our biblical story, for water to be described as tainted or scarce. Think of the plagues of Egypt - water running red and unusable, and the importance of watering holes and water for a nomadic people wandering in the wilderness.

We might remember that much of Jesus' ministry took place close to the Sea of Galilee, a major source of water for his time. And especially we think of this story shared today from Mark's gospel – Jesus' journey in ministry begins in the waters of baptism, in the flowing water of the Jordan River. Like many in our United Church tradition, I do not remember my baptism; I cannot recall how those waters felt as they were splashed on my head. I can imagine, though, how the water must have swirled around Jesus' legs, soaking his garments, feeling heavy, and

yet the lightness of John's touch as he drew Jesus deeper into the water, pulling him into a new experience and a confirmation from Creator God that he was "my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

I invite us all to contemplate the waters of our lives – have we felt thirst? Have we known the joy of splashing playfully in a lake or river – or even a puddle? Have we travelled oceans or rivers? Has clean water been plentiful for us or a daily worry because we do not have enough? Do you recall your own baptism in the waters of life? Has water played a part in your own journey of faith?

I pray that we are all drawn into the waters of life with deep appreciation for the gift it represents, and in response find ways to ensure that refreshing, life-giving water – of both Spirit and earth – is available to all God's creation.

Music: "When Jesus Comes to be Baptized" VU 100
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VInE8xNXx88>

Prayers of the People

*Our prayer for this day is partly a meditation on a simple glass of water.
You may wish to pour a glass before you read this prayer.*

*Spend a moment looking at the water you have poured, or imagine a glass of cool, clear water.
Remember that through the actions of evaporation, condensation and precipitation, this water may have travelled the globe in many forms before being poured into this glass.
Thank God for this water, and take a sip.*

Providing One, help us at all times be in awe of the many ways that creation sustains us. Help us to continue to learn about the processes that keep all life flourishing, so that we can make good and right decisions, and encourage our leaders and politicians to do the same.

Imagine a watery place that is important and life-giving to you – it could be a lakeshore, a seashore, a pond or river.

With gratitude, take another sip.

We thank you, wondrous God, for our planet home,
and for the water which sustains us and all life.

We thank you for the salty seas, and the creatures that call it home.

We thank you for thundering waterfalls and for trickling creeks, for rivers that refresh the landscape and move people through the land,
for streams that provide water and life to wildlife and birds.

We thank you for water in all its sacredness.

Remember the many around the world – and even in our own country - that do not have access to healthy water, and take another sip from your glass.

Compassionate One, grow our hearts and our determination to ensure that all people have

access to clean water, especially those who are vulnerable, especially those in our remote Indigenous communities.

Remember those who have died of water borne illness, or from the lack of any water at all, and take another grateful sip.

We pray for those who are still living with the effects of the Walkerton water tragedy, and for children around the world suffering from water borne illness. We remember, Loving God, that we must all be diligent in keeping our waters clean and healthy, and we pray for those who live with water scarcity, and with the daily struggle to provide clean water for their families.

We pray God, for those in our community and those in our hearts – send courage and hope to those who are worried and fearful, send your love and care to those who are ill in body, mind or spirit, send us the wisdom and compassion to care for them in your name. Amen

Closing music: “Water Flowing From the Mountains” MV 87
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LN_u2vJjQDI

Blessing

With living water, may God renew us.

With sacred water, may Christ refill us.

With holy water, may the Spirit inspire us –
this day and all days. Amen

Music “Behold, behold I make all things new” MV 115
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Xgmsynls3k>