

PRAIRIE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY

Sunday, August 27, 2006

Prelude: ~~Reuben~~ and Madeline Arnold Hornpipe from Water Music

Hymn #100 - *Peace Like a River*

Accompanist, Aileen Nettleton

Welcome - Mike Briggs

Chalice Lighting and Opening Words -

Barbara Chatterton

Moment of Silent Meditation

Joys and Concerns

Hymn - *Shall We Gather at the River**

(lyrics printed inside-sung a capella)

Readings by Prairie members

Offertory - ~~Reuben and~~ Madeline Arnold *Au claire de la lune*
"In the Silver Moonlight"

Introduction of Guests & Visitors

Announcements

Hymn #108 - *My Life Flows on in Endless Song*

Closing Words - Barbara Chatterton

*stand as you are able

1. Shall we gather at the river,
where bright angel feet have trod,
with its crystal tide forever
flowing by the throne of God?

Refrain:

Yes, we'll gather at the river,
the beautiful, the beautiful river;
gather with the saints at the river
that flows by the throne of God.

2. On the margin of the river,
washing up its silver spray,
we will walk and worship ever,
all the happy golden day.
(Refrain)

3. Ere we reach the shining river,
lay we every burden down;
grace our spirits will deliver,
and provide a robe and crown.
(Refrain)

4. Soon we'll reach the shining river,
soon our pilgrimage will cease;
soon our happy hearts will quiver
with the melody of peace.
(Refrain)

Words & Music: Robert Lowry, 1864; first published in *Happy Voices*,
1865, number 220

Welcome to our service! We are glad you are here. Please join us after the program for coffee and conversation. The presider today is Mike Briggs, Prairie President, and the coordinator is Dorothy Krause. Barbara Chatterton introduced the water ceremony several years ago, and it has become a Prairie tradition. Our musicians today are Aileen Nettleton, Reuben Arnold, and Madeline Arnold. Thanks to everyone for their service.

Announcements

Humanist Union meets today at noon for potluck and discussion on "Public Attitudes toward Atheists and Effective Responses"

Special Meeting - Prairie's Capital Fundraising Committee has scheduled an informational meeting for friends and members to share the progress that has been made with fundraising for Prairie's new home, and to brainstorm on where we go from here. Meeting will be at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, August 30, following the meal.

Annual Retreat registration forms are available in the lobby. See Robin Proud with any questions on registration, and Mary Mullen with program ideas.

EnAct Program can show you how to save money -- and the planet. See Prairie Fire for details or contact Judy Skog.

Circle Dinner signup is still going on. The sheet is on the table in the lobby. See Paula with any questions or concerns.

Calendar

Sunday, August 27

12:00 noon. Humanist Union meets for potluck and discussion on "Public Attitudes toward Atheists and Effective Responses"

Tuesday, August 29

5:00 a.m. Prairie serves breakfast at Men's Homeless Shelter.

Wednesday, August 30

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal @ Prairie

7:00 p.m. Building Progress Review Meeting.

Sunday, September 3

10:00 a.m. "Labor with Dignity" presented by Tracy Suprise

Wednesday, September 6

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal @ Prairie

Sunday, September 10

10:00 a.m. "Sacred Voices: A Pilgrimage of Story and Poem Into Sacred Traditions," presented by Andy Fraenkel.

Friday-Sunday, September 15-17

Prairie Retreat at Bethel Horizons.

together easy. At Lucile's home, they spent many rewarding hours brainstorming and writing the service. Everything they produced held up nature and community. McDade believes that this ritual "broke the long silence of laywomen. The creation of a sacred space for and by women happened with a circle and a simple bowl."

This "celebration of connectedness," as McDade calls it, empowered women instead of calling them to serve others. The water symbolized the birth waters, the cycles of moon, tides and women, and all the waters of this small blue planet. Each woman attending the conference was invited to bring a container of water with her. McDade recalls that "It was very moving, the women bringing water from places of spiritual importance." This ceremony was also designed to demonstrate solidarity with women globally, as women the world over traditionally draw and carry water.

Almost thirty years after its creation, the water ritual speaks to a deepening awareness of our solidarity with brothers and sisters globally who lack the most basic and precious resources. It also speaks eloquently of our interdependent web of life.

While many UU congregations celebrate a water service in which each person or family pours their water into a common bowl, the water doesn't need to be collected in a single vessel to serve as a way to connect with others. Water poured on the ground or at the base of a special tree or plant enters the water table, a huge and interconnected underground water system which does the mingling for us.

Sharing of the Waters: Water Ritual:

Each person pours the water they've collected *into the common bowl*, naming the place from which it came. then name the place where the water will be poured out, such as a special plant, memorial garden, or cemetery.

First Reading: The Story of the Water Service by Eliza Blanchard *Church of the Larger Fellowship* (adapted)

This month many of our Unitarian Universalist congregations celebrate the opening of the church year at a service called variously "Ingathering," "Water Service," or "Water Communion." People generally bring a small container of water collected from a special place during the summer's travels or closer to home. Pouring it into a common vessel, they share their inner or outer journeys.

The idea of a Unitarian Universalist ritual may feel strange to some of us. We have Unitarian Universalist theological roots that rest in the rejection of established ritual and of the authorities who controlled both the content of these rituals and the participation in them. For example the ritual of the chalice of communion wine which was a privilege reserved for men who had been ordained as priests. For many people, however, rituals are concrete and meaningful expressions of joy and sorrow. As Unitarian Universalists we are free to create rituals and to celebrate life passages in ways we feel express our values and our faith. The Water Service provides one way to celebrate the return to community after a summer's pause.

Water is the key ingredient of this service, and many people think about a special spot from which they can collect their water. Planning ahead is helpful. I recommend you store the water in the freezer to keep microbes from developing. Water gathered from a visit to the house of grandparents or grandchildren, relatives or friends will carry special meanings and memories for some. Others enjoy gathering water from a stream, ocean or lake. The backyard kiddie pool, the garden hose that watered favorite flowers, or the kitchen sink can also provide memories. Camping, picnicks, the trip of a lifetime, or an ordinary vacation are often sources of connection that we want to remember.

This service originated with angry women. Carolyn McDade and Lucile Shuck Longview were asked to create a ritual for the Women and Religion Conference at East Lansing, Michigan, in 1980; their service was intended to speak to the worship needs of women, which some felt had not been widely included in our movement up to that point. As McDade, social activist and songwriter, recalls, "It was a strong service, about community taking power...about creating a political and liberating theology."

McDade and Longview both shared a vision of justice as well as commitment to the environment that made working