

LOVE IS THE WATER THAT WEARS DOWN THE ROCK
ANNUAL INGATHERING WATER CEREMONY
The Rev. Julie Stoneberg
Unitarian Fellowship of Peterborough
September 10, 2017

OPENING WORDS ~ Kok-Heong McNaughton and Holly Near
(A mash-up adaptation of words from two different people)

We are but drops of water. Alone, we would disappear, be dried up by the scorching sun or sucked up by the dry, thirsty earth.

But together, we can wear out stones, carve out canyons, make streams and rivers, and find our way to the sea.

As individuals, we are like drops of water falling on the stone...splashing, breaking, dispersing in air, weaker than the stone by far.

But together, as time goes by, the rock will wear away, and the water flows on and on.

Welcome to this time together. Welcome to this shared work.

STORY FOR ALL AGES *Just a Drop*
(Using the book "Have you Filled Your Bucket Today?" and the story of [Higgins](#), we imagined what could happen when all of our individual drops come together.)

REFLECTION *Love is the Water That Wears Down the Rock*

Lao Tzu said, "Water is fluid, soft, and yielding. But water will wear away rock, which is rigid and cannot yield. As a rule, whatever is fluid, soft, and yielding will overcome whatever is rigid and hard. This is another paradox: what is soft is strong."

There's a wonderful UU musical trio called Brother Sun, and they sing a beautiful song called "Love is the Water". Love is the water that wears down the rock. (This is based on a verse from Job.) Love is the power that won't be stopped. Love can make a mountain come tumbling down. Every boulder turns into a grain of sand.

Metaphors are always a bit dangerous because they tend to reduce things to good/bad. We love rocks and stones. We use them in our ceremonies all the time. But in this case, the rock that love wears down, symbolizes the hardness of hatred, the walls of oppression, the rough edges where we'll not ready to let forgiveness in. The rock, as we heard earlier, is all the stuff that makes our world less whole, less loving, less healthy, less safe.

Of course love is not a magic cure...unfortunately it usually takes more than one drop to open hearts, or to change minds, or to reconcile differences. But still, give it time, and love will wear down the rock. When our small contributions, our drops of love, team up...when they are relentless and persistent and determined...even great stones are rubbed smooth. Love is the water that wears down the obstacles and brings change, making a way when there seems to be no way.

And, if water can wear down a stone, there's nothing we can't do together, with love.

READING *Be Like Water* ~ Kendra Ford (adapted for community use)

May we be like water, running deep, running clear
filling any space to its
own dimensions
responding to the moon, to gravity
changing colors with the light
holding our temperature longer
than the surrounding air
taking the coast by storm
going under ground
bending light.

May we be the one thing people need, even when they're fasting.
Let us eat boulders, quietly,
with our love as a universal solvent

CLOSING WORDS ~ inspired by Phillip Booth's "First Lesson"

We leave this place of gathering and renewal and go out into the world.
When that world becomes too hard, or too overwhelming, remember the water.
Lie back, and let your head be tipped back into its cup of support.
It will hold you.
Spread your arms wide, lie out on the stream and look at the gulls.
Remember this place when fear cramps your heart.
Lie gently and wide to the light-year stars. Lie back. The sea will hold you.

Go in peace, knowing you are held and you are loved.

So be it.