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FAITH

without

BORDERS

Faith Without Borders
A Program Celebrating
and Empowering
the Effective
International Engagement
of UU Congregations



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**Water Ceremony /
Communion Sunday
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We Covenant to Affirm and Promote the Goal of World Community with Peace, Liberty, and Justice for All

Many Unitarian Universalist congregations have an annual tradition of celebrating a Water Ceremony/Communion early in September as a ritual of welcoming members of their congregation to a new church year.

Though these services vary greatly from congregation to congregation, they are generally an excellent opportunity for UU congregations to express their commitment to our Sixth Principle: ***We Covenant to Affirm and Promote the Goal of World Community with Peace, Liberty and Justice for All.***

This pamphlet describes a variety of ways that congregations can promote "Sixth Principle Ministry" during these services and the days surrounding them.

Congregations participating in the UUA's "Faith Without Borders" (FWB) program will find the structure of this pamphlet familiar as it offers suggestions for Sixth Principle ministry in 7 areas:

- Spiritually,
- Through Education,
- Through Advocacy,
- Through Partnership,
- Through Stewardship,
- Through Pilgrimage and Witness, and
- Through Associational Leadership.

Congregations who aren't participating in FWB may find this organizational method helpful as well.

If there are other ways in which your congregation expresses its commitment to our Sixth Principle during Water Ceremony/Communion rituals, please share them with the UUA's International Resources Office (IRO). And, if you have any questions about this pamphlet or would like further assistance, please let the IRO know.

Thank you! I hope your congregation will have a wonderful and meaningful Water Ceremony/Communion service this year.



Website links referenced:

1. "The Communion Book": <http://www.uuabookstore.org/productdetails.cfm?PC=424>
2. Interconnections article: <http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/leaderslibrary/interconnections/57521.shtml>
3. Intergenerational Worship: http://www.uuintergenerational.org/script_menu.htm
4. Misogi: <http://www.tsubakishrine.org/misogishuho/index.html> and <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2010/04/sacred-water/stanmeyer-photography>
5. Sinkford Text: <http://archive.uua.org/ga/ga03/2003sinkford.html>
6. Sinkford Video: <http://archive.uua.org/realaudio/ga03/2003.ram>
7. *Tapestry of Faith*: <http://www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith/toolboxfaith/session9/sessionplan/activities/109712.shtml>
8. Covenant Group: http://www.uusc.org/content/covenant_group_-_right_water
9. *Thirst*: <http://www.thirstthemovie.org>
10. Tap Water: <http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water/take-back-the-tap/>
11. Right to Water: http://www.uusc.org/content/international_human_right_water
12. Ministry for the Earth: <http://uuministryforearth.org/>
13. Green Sanctuary: <http://www.uua.org/leaders/environment/greensanctuary/index.shtml>
14. Water for the World: <http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/government/legislation/US-resolution>
15. World Water Decade: <http://www.unwater.org/w4life.html>
16. UUPCC: <http://www.uupcc.org>
17. Nagbinlod: <http://www.uupcc.org/communitydev/MayoBato.pdf>
18. BUILD project: <http://uudorm.wordpress.com>
19. Scholarship: <http://www.uua.org/giving/donatenow/22100.shtml>
20. ICUU: <http://www.icuu.net>
21. UUPCC: <http://www.uupcc.org>
22. UU-UNO: <http://www.uu-uno.org>
23. Witness to a Return Home: <http://www.uua.org/news/168264.shtml>
24. UUPCC Pilgrimages: <http://www.uupcc.org/trips.html>
24. UUA International Resources Office: <http://www.uua.org/international>

- Support for Unitarian/Universalist groups in Africa.
- Support the [Natalie Gulbrandsen Scholarship for International Studies](#).¹⁹
- Become a supporting congregation of a U/U organization like:
 - [The International Council of Unitarians and Universalists](#),²⁰
 - [The UU Partner Church Council](#),²¹
 - [The UU United Nations Office](#).²²

VI. Through Pilgrimage and Witness

- During the Water Ceremony/Communion service or following it announce a congregational pilgrimage to your partner church or an opportunity to participate in an international witness/service project like:
 - [Witness to a Return Home: A Trip to Uganda](#)²³: The UUA and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) are jointly offering an experiential learning JustJourney to Uganda, which took place in November 2010. Upcoming JustJourneys will be announced!
- Share information about [UUPCC pilgrimages](#)²⁴ – no partner church experience required.

VII. Through Associational Leadership

- Honor the international engagement leadership that a member of your congregation has provided locally or to the Unitarian Universalist movement.
- Commit to share your congregation's experiences in international engagement with other UU congregations – the [UUA's International Resources Office](#)²⁵ would like to help you do so!

I. Spiritually

- Schedule a Water Ceremony/Communion service and begin general planning.
 - ◇ Make use of the worship materials that are collected in Carl Seaburg's anthology "The Communion Book" ([available from the UUA Bookstore](#)).¹
 - ◇ Reflect on an *Interconnections* [article](#)² about making "Water Services" more meaningful.
 - ◇ Consider hymns and readings from *Singing the Living Tradition* recommended for Water Ceremonies (pages 653 and 680).
 - ◇ Browse [Intergenerational Water Ceremonies](#)³ collected by Reverend Greg Ward.
- Bring "Sixth Principle" themes into the Service:
 - ◇ Highlight how water is both a tangible and metaphorical symbol of global interdependence.
 - ◇ Invite congregants to re-shape their relationship to water as a spiritual discipline - offer examples of how water availability/scarcity varies around the world.
 - ◇ If water is collected during your congregation's service and later employed as a ritual element in other services during the year, lead a reflection on what makes water "holy" - especially from the perspective of global citizenship.
 - ◇ Share traditional religious stories from around the world about water: The Creation (Genesis, Enuma Elish), The Flood (Genesis, Epic of Gilgamesh), Streams of Water (Psalm 1), Still Waters (Psalm 23), Living Water (John 4:13; Bahá'u'lláh), Moving Water (Rumi), Fountains in Paradise (Al-Ghashiyah 88:11-12),
 - ◇ If congregants are invited to share travel stories during the service, frame international travel as an opportunity for spiritual growth, education, witness and service.
- Describe the meaning and power of other traditional "water" ceremonies including ["Misogi Suho" a ceremony](#)⁴ held

sacred by one of the UUA's closest interfaith partners: the Tsubaki Grand Shrine in Mie Prefecture, Japan. What makes this and other water rituals powerful? *Note: Former UUA President William G. Sinkford described his experience of Misogi during his President's report to the General Assembly in 2003. His concluding remarks describe a revelation from the experience. [Text](#)⁵ (See bottom of webpage) [Video](#)⁶ (beginning at 59:30). Tsubaki Grand Shrine was included in National Geographic's photo essay on [Sacred Waters](#)*

- As part of re-covenanting at the beginning of a new church year, invite members of the congregation to renew their commitment to Sixth Principle ministry during the Water Ceremony/Communion service.

II. Through Education

- Make use of the [Water Communion activity](#)⁷ included in the online UUA curriculum *Tapestry of Faith*.
- Offer small group ministry gatherings employing the UU Service Committee's [Covenant Group module "The Right to Water"](#).⁸
- Sponsor a forum on the status of drinking water and water laws in your community. Alternatively, invite members of your congregation to investigate water issues in their community individually, and then gather to share what they learned. Supplement local water issues with information about water issues internationally.
- Sponsor a screening and discussion of the film [Thirst](#).⁹
- Share an [FAQ about tap water](#)¹⁰ from "Food and Water Watch."

III. Through Justice Making and Advocacy

- Join with the UU Service Committee in its advocacy of the

[International Human Right to Water](#).¹¹

- Make use of the [UU Ministry for the Earth's](#)¹² resources. If your congregation participates in the [Green Sanctuary program](#)¹³, highlight the congregation's response to a "water audit". Or, plan to perform a "water audit."

IV. Through Partnership

- During the Water Ceremony/Communion service remember the importance of your congregation's international partnership with a U/U congregation in Transylvania, Hungary, India, the Philippines, or another part of the world.
 - ◇ If water is collected during your service, plan to include water from your partner church.
 - ◇ Describe differences and similarities between water resources in your partner church community and your own (beauty, availability, treatment, etc.)
 - ◇ Explore how partnership can be as healing and nourishing as providing water to the thirsty.
- If your congregation doesn't have a partner-church, invite a conversation to become involved with partner church ministry through the [UU Partner Church Council](#).¹⁶
- Share the Community Capacity Building experience in Nagbinlod, Philippines: ["Solving a Water Problem on Negros Island..."](#)¹⁷

V. Through Faithful Stewardship

- Request a special offering during your Water Ceremony/Communion service to support Sixth Principle ministry that your congregation is doing. Or, consider one of the following:
 - Support for the UU Church of the Philippines [BUILD Project](#).¹⁸