

SUMMER
2010

Families

WEAVE A TAPESTRY OF FAITH

STORY FOR ALL AGES

Water,
stewardship,
and
justice

The Family pages are
adapted from Tapestry
of Faith lifespan faith
development programs.

[www.uua.org/
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The Clearwater

In the summer of 1969, the same year a rocket ship landed on the moon, along the Hudson River a group of people came together to build an old-fashioned sailing ship—a sloop, with wooden beams, strong ropes, and a towering mast more than 100 feet high.

That ship was the *Clearwater*. It didn't go to the moon. It sailed the Hudson River. It had no thundering rockets or powerful thrusters; it had great white sails—like the wings of a gull—that caught the breeze and carried it forward on a whisper of the wind. And she still sails the Hudson River today.

The *Clearwater* started from the idea of one man, folksinger Pete Seeger, who had lived with his family next to the Hudson River for many years. When he first moved there, trees grew all along the banks. Otters slid down the muddy slopes into the water. Fish swam in the river. Birds nested in those trees. The Hudson was a living river.

But as the years went

by, people cut down trees and put up oil tanks and high-rises. They dumped old cars and made a junk heap right

across the river from Pete's house. People built factories on the banks and dumped chemicals into the river. People built homes near the river and dumped their dirty water and garbage in it.

After a while, the water got so dirty the fish couldn't live there anymore. With the fish gone, the otters had nothing to eat. With the trees gone, the birds had no place to nest. The Hudson wasn't a living river anymore. It was barely even alive.

Pete Seeger knew this was wrong. He decided to build a great sailing ship, like those that sailed the Hudson centuries ago, back when the river was clean, to show people what had been and what could be again.

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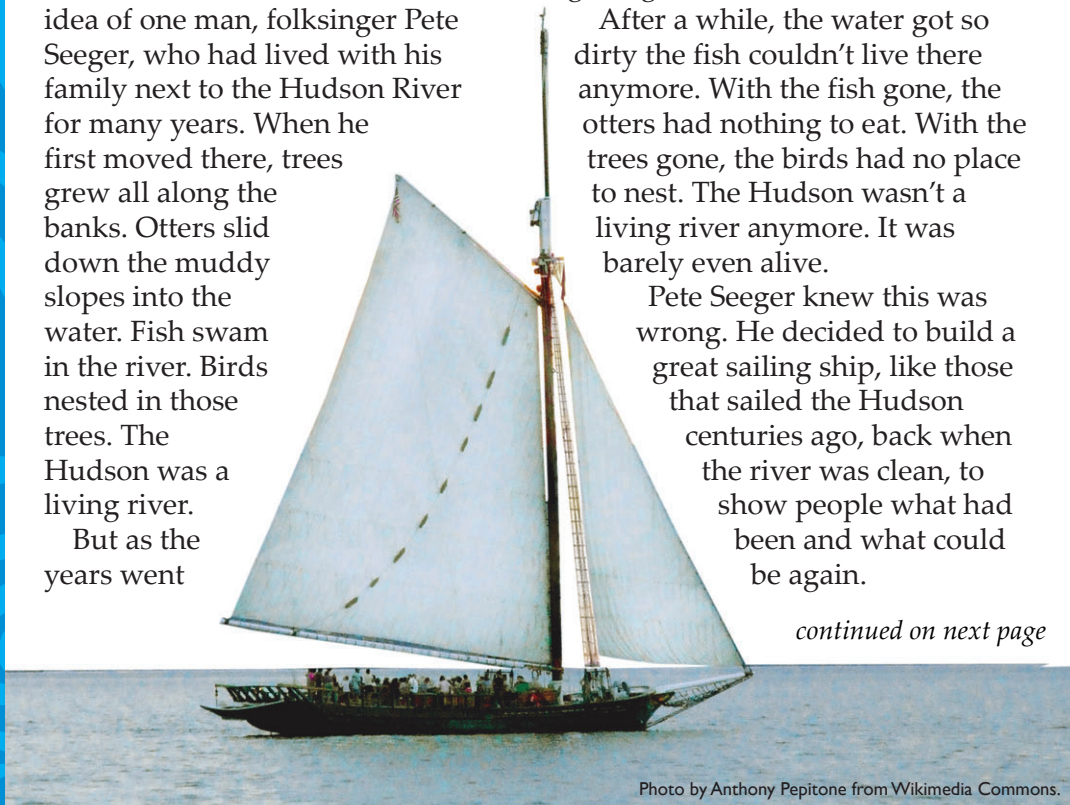


Photo by Anthony Pepitone from Wikimedia Commons.

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Pete couldn't build a ship all by himself, any more than he could clean up the river all by himself. So, he asked for help. He wrote letters, and talked to people. But mostly what he did was sing to people, as he had been doing all his life and still does today.

Pete Seeger's music helped people believe they could make a better world happen. He sang at campouts, colleges, temples, and churches, including a Unitarian Universalist congregation in New York City. His concerts raised \$60,000 to build the *Clearwater*, and thousands of people sent more money to help.

In July of 1969, the *Clearwater* slipped into the water, and her sails caught the breeze, flying like a gull on a whisper of wind.

The next year, on the very first Earth Day, *Clearwater* helped teach people how to help keep our land clean and our water clear—because *Clearwater* is more than a ship. She's a school. More than 10,000 people go on board every year to learn about fish and grass and all the things a living river needs. Teenagers who crew the *Clearwater* hoist the sails, tie the ropes, and scrub the decks. When they sleep aboard the ship, they often sing songs, just like sailors do, just like Pete Seeger.

The Hudson is cleaner now, but not as clean as it used to be, hundreds of years ago. Not as clean as it could be. Not as clean as it ought to be.

That's our job—to make the land clean, the air fresh, and the water clear. Together, we can do it. After all, we went to the moon! That was an amazing thing, no doubt about it. 🌟

What's in
that plastic
bottle...besides
the water?

When you buy a
bottle of water, you
also consume...

MORE WATER—an additional two bottles-full used to produce it.

FOSSIL FUELS—as much as 1/4 bottle-full to fill, transport, store, and dispose of it.

BREATHABLE AIR—compromised by about three tons of carbon dioxide for each ton of polyethylene terephthalate (PET) manufactured for bottles.

Filtered tap water in a reusable container can taste as good and cost you, and the Earth, much less.

Statistics from a 2006 Pacific Institute study:
www.pacinst.org.



Illustration © Ricardo Levins Morales / rlmarts.com

UUs for Water Justice in Ecuador

Water justice is complicated. When the city of Guayaquil privatized water services in 2001, residents were told a private company, Interagua, would bring water and sanitation into more homes and buildings in the city's neighborhoods.

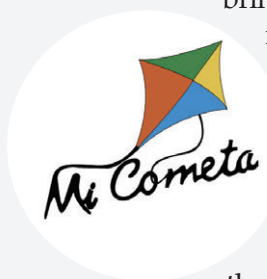
But, promises were broken. Prices went up. Hepatitis A broke out in Guayaquil. Residents were billed for water they had not used.

Mi Cometa (My Kite) Movimiento, a community group in the poor neighborhood of Guasmo Sur, reached out to other neighborhoods experiencing the same frustrations. They formed a coalition to test

water quality, gather citizen testimony, and draw media attention to the city's water and sanitation management. They got no response. Then, the coalition approached the World Bank, which had helped fund Interagua. The bank got Interagua to begin negotiating with 3,500 Guayaquileños to correct unfair water bills.

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, which funds and provides technical assistance to Mi Cometa, promotes water justice worldwide, including for the families of Guayaquil.

For more information: www.uusc.org.



Water Fun—Is It Fair?

Some of the world's children die for lack of clean water to drink. Other children have plenty to drink. Some even live near a water theme park where they can spend all day having fun with water and drink all they want, too.

Closing all the water parks, golf courses, and snow-making ski resorts in the United States wouldn't bring drinkable water where it is needed. But we who have enough clean water to use some for recreation can express our gratitude by helping in other ways.

How much would you spend to visit a water park or ski resort for a day?

Share those funds with Water for People, WaterAid America, or another organization that helps communities build sustainable, local water and sanitation

solutions. Contact the management of recreational parks that use water. Ask what they do to protect local water resources. Engage them, in the spirit of generosity, to help make water access more equitable around the world.



Home Conservation Experiment

When you want a drink, do you turn on the faucet and wait until the water is the right temperature?

Try this: ☀ Put a stopper in your kitchen sink and run the tap. ☀ When the water is cold enough to drink, measure the water you have collected. ☀ You can use it for watering plants. ☀ Now fill a container with water and place it in the refrigerator to keep it cool. ☀ The amount of water you used to water the plants is the amount you'll save every time you take a cold drink.



All photographs © istockphoto.com

Tomorrow is the big family reunion. It better not rain.

The well was dry last week. And still it has not rained.

If there's no swimming pool, at least we can spray a hose all around.

We will have to cook with water from the river. The animals use that water and it does not smell good. Oh, why can't it rain?

Oh, don't let it rain. I'll pray for a hot, sunny day!

Please, let it rain. We will fall to our knees, right in the puddles, and give thanks.

Water Stewardship Pledge

I pledge to honor my connection to the web of all existence by protecting Earth's waters. I will conserve water whenever I can. I will not waste water when I can help it. I will remember what I do upstream affects all life downstream. I will work to help more people around the world get the clean water they need.



[SIGNED]

Water Justice Meditation for Two Voices





As leaders in our families, in stewardship of the interconnected web, and in justice activism, we each find our own flow. Like water itself, we might at different times embody power or depletion, nourishment of others or self-nourishment. Try this meditation together with your family.

Imagine your favorite body of water. It may be ocean, or lake, or brook, or something else. Notice how the water moves, the way it holds its space between land and air. Come closer. Notice the color of the water, and its smell. Notice what the water carries—bits of plant, particles of soil or sand, swimming fish, creatures too small to be seen. Touch the water. Is it cool? How does it taste?

Become one with the water. Take its form, and join its natural journey. Feel your power and strength as you shape your own path. You are full of joy, and an energy that can literally move mountains.

Now settle yourself and become a fresh water lake. As water spills in, you are constantly renewed, and constantly sending your own living waters forth. You feel full, but not overfull, strong and deep, filled with activity yet stable in your lake bed.

Now it is time to move. Follow the pull into the mighty river. You carry nature's life and human commerce as you hurry, pushing on downstream. When snow melts into you or heavy rains fall, you spill from your riverbed, covering the land with destruction yet leaving

soil and nutrients that will enrich the land as your waters recede.

You are left behind, a small, stagnant pool. Your ecosystem is isolated. There is calm here, but also decay. Soon, you evaporate into the atmosphere.

You return to Earth as rain, falling into the vast, rolling ocean that answers to the forces of moon, wind, and weather. Now you are the place where life arose on Earth, the cradle for billions of species, too big, broad, and deep for even a tsunami to fundamentally change you. You are the complement of air and earth, as permanent as anything can be. Feel your timeless motion as your waves rise and churn.

Now come back to your human self, your human life.



REFLECT: When have you acted like an ocean? Like a river? Like an isolated pool? How can you bring a sense of oneness with Earth's water into your daily life? Commit to your stewardship of ocean, river, and lake—the waters you and all Earth's life depend on.

Adapted from "Harvest the Power", a Tapestry of Faith adult leadership development program.

Access to clean, safe, sufficient, affordable water for our daily needs is a basic human right.

FAMILIES: WEAVE A TAPESTRY OF FAITH

Provided by the Lifespan Faith Development staff group of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

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www.uua.org/tapestryoffaith

FIND OUT MORE

- Watch and discuss a film about the right to water, such as *A Drop of Life* (2009) or the documentary *FLOW* (2008).
- On our planet, 2.5 billion people lack access to adequate sanitation. Learn how sanitation promotes community health and ways you can help: www.wateraidamerica.org.
- About 60 percent of our human bodies is water that existed before we lived, and will exist after we die.
- The multigenerational Tapestry of Faith program, "Gather the Spirit," develops UU faith through water stewardship, with stories and activities to use at home.