

**Sunday, September 13, 2015**

**Ingathering - Water Ceremony Sunday**

**Homily "Sacred Connections" Rev. Joan Javier-Duval**

This summer, Jared, Liam and I spent a good deal of time in the water. Once the June rains had passed and the temperatures rose, we frequented the Montpelier pool and Wrightsville reservoir. We had previously only spent time at the pool when it was a skating rink this winter and what a relief it was to jump into the refreshing water on some of those hot days.

The water, whether at the pool, the river, the reservoir, or lake, was a place of discovery for us, of working through fears, of sharing playful moments.

On Lake Elmore, we delighted in spotting a mama duck and her ducklings. Observing how they traveled together and apart and then together again.

Water brought us together as a family and reminded us of our connection to the larger world.

As we gather here this morning, we celebrate our connections.

To one another in this religious community.

To the broader human family.

And to the great, interdependent web of all existence.

These connections can sometimes work in mysteriously life-giving ways.

Masaru Emoto was a scholar and author best known for his claims that human consciousness had an effect on the molecular structure of water. He began conducting experiments in the 1990s in which he would expose water to either positive or negative written words or music or thoughts and then he would freeze the water and take photographs of the ice crystals that formed.

For example, he would place water in bottles and wrap the bottles in written notes. Some notes would say something positive, like “thank you.” Others would say something negative, like “you fool.”

He found that the water that had been exposed to positive and beautiful words and music and thoughts would produce brilliantly colored ice crystals with beautiful geometric patterns. Conversely, water that was exposed to negative expressions would produce malformed and misshapen crystals.

Now, I can’t vouch for the scientific integrity of Emoto’s work, although he did go on to write many books on the subject and to dedicate decades of his life to protecting water.

On this Ingathering Water Ceremony Sunday, Emoto’s observations invite us to honor our connections and to reflect on how we affect one another through our deep interconnectedness within this religious community.

The connections we have with one another here at UCM are powerful.

Some of these connections were made decades ago and have been made stronger through caring for one another in times of need or banding together to put on the Holiday Fair or laughing together over a delicious potluck meal.

Some of these connections have been made more recently, perhaps even just today. Connections created through a warm smile or a conversation during coffee hour or simply just being together in this worshipful space.

Our connections are also made stronger and deeper through our collective experience as a community.

The past couple of years here at the Unitarian Church of Montpelier were a time of transition and upheaval. With the sudden departure of a minister, the loss of beloved members of the congregation and loved ones and most recently the loss of your beloved former music director.

It has been a time of heartbreak and slow healing and coming to new understandings of who you are as a community and who you want to be.

Now, we begin together a new chapter in the story of the Unitarian Church of Montpelier. Everything this community has experienced together the last few years and even before that is a part of who we are now and who we will become.

And, now, we can ask ourselves, how will we deepen our connections to one another and to the broader community this year and in the years to come?

One example of deepening connections that I have had the honor to witness this past month and want to mention now has been the Monday community lunch.

Many of you know that at the end of June, UCM was asked to help support the community meal that had been hosted here by the Washington County Mental Health Services. It soon became clear that they would no longer be able to continue putting on these meals and the Stone Soup Kitchen was in danger of ending here altogether.

A hardy group of volunteers got together to make sure the meals would continue. Finding food donations, getting trained in proper procedures. Since that time the number of people coming here to UCM for that meal has grown and more and more of you have come to help prepare and serve food and have given donations.

The atmosphere that has been created on these Mondays - with music playing and volunteers and community members sitting and eating and talking together - this atmosphere holds up the idea that we are connected, that we are a community.

Today, we have come again to this place to be a part of this welcoming and justice-seeking community. With water as our witness. Symbol of specific places and memories and also of our own changing natures, onward journeys, and interconnection.

Some have come for the first time, some for the 30th year. We have come seeking communion with one another, with the divine, with the great mystery of life. We have come to find a sanctuary from our fears, to discover new truths, to put our energy and our strengths together with others in service of a higher mission. We have come for a new season, a new chapter, a new beginning. We have come with our hearts flowing with love, strong and powerful like a river.

And, I have come with gratitude for all that you are, for the opportunity to serve as your minister, with gratitude for all that we will become together.

Welcome back.

Welcome home.