

Third Sunday of Lent

WATER SUNDAY

An order of worship prepared for Water Sunday (March 19, 2017), the Sunday closest to World Water Day March 22, in the context of British Columbia.

Introit

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

OPENING SCRIPTURE: Amos 5:24

INTRODUCTION

We learn in Amos 5:24 that God wants Justice to roll down like waters and Righteousness like an ever flowing stream. Today we live in a context where water has stopped rolling in many places and the ever flowing streams have dried up and become “never flowing”. Part of the cause of this is Climate Change, creating more extremes of weather and climate, and exacerbating drought. The Industrialized North bears the largest burden of responsibility, by burning fossil fuels like Oil, Coal, and Natural Gas at an ever-expanding rate, and releasing methane in fracking, LNG and other operations.

Even where waters still flow, pollution often threatens its integrity and life-giving aspects. In British Columbia, fracking operations consume huge

volumes of water, and threaten surface and underground streams and reservoirs.

In this context, this service invites us to worship the God of Justice with the hope that water justice will flow like a river and eco-righteousness will permeate our hearts and minds like an overflowing stream.

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: As many rivers merge together into the sea, we have come together to worship our God, the fountain of living water. As we worship God in spirit and in truth, let our hearts overflow with praise, let us be cleansed by the waters of God's grace and forgiveness.

All: Let us be refreshed and restored by the Christ who promises us the waters of life.

OPENING PRAYER

One: Creating God, you are the fountain of all goodness. You are the source of the deep ocean and the tiniest brook. You give us the gift of water that sustains all life. At this time of worship we remember with thanksgiving the manifold manifestations of your grace through the gift of water:

One: We remember the Exodus in the desert and the miracle of waters at Massah and Meribah and

All: *We praise and thank you for you are the God of gracious provision*

One: We remember the healing waters of the pool of Siloam and

All: *We praise and thank you for you are a God of ceaseless compassion*

One: We remember the waters of the river Jordan, the water of Baptism and

All: *We praise and thank you for you are a God of transformation*

One: Let this worship enable us to be responsible stewards of your provision, channels of your compassion and agents of your transformation.

All: Amen.

OPENING HYMN (see the attached hymn suggestions)

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

One: God, you are the very source of life, whose Spirit hovered over waters at the time of creation. You came to us in Jesus Christ, who gave us Living Water to quench the thirsty. Today we remember that we have not always treated your gift of Creation and life-giving water with the respect they deserve. We have let attitudes of greed and dominance hold sway and have not always spoken out when your gifts have been mis-used.

All: *Let justice roll down like rivers, and let rivers roll out in justice*

Leader: We confess that we have sometimes been irresponsible in using waters and have wasted a lot for our comfortable living. We humans have made water, the natural resource, commoditized and have

privatised water and yet have denied access to clean water to many indigenous people in our country.

All : Let justice roll down like rivers, and let rivers roll out in justice

Leader: In the name of Growth and Development water bodies have been drained for fracking and other operations, and have been polluted with toxic fluids and industrial wastes, causing risk to humans and the flora and the fauna, who need clean water to live.

All : Let justice roll down like rivers, and let rivers roll out in justice

Leader: In the name of Progress we make plans to hold up rivers and flood farmland and sacred indigenous sites for more power, and to destroy Salmon habitat in order to ship LNG.

All : Let justice roll down like rivers, and let rivers roll out in justice

Leader: In the name of Jobs we approve pipelines that threaten our coastal waters.

All : Let justice roll down like rivers, and let rivers roll out in justice

Leader: Even now, we as faith communities have often been silent in addressing the violation of our waters and seek forgiveness for lack of political will in crying out for the integrity of Mother Earth.

All : Let justice roll down like rivers, and let rivers roll out in justice

Leader: We come to your presence asking forgiveness for our inactions, for our lethargy, for our

insincerity towards abusing waters and other natural resources. May we instead be challenged to use the blessing of water carefully, and conserve and preserve water for future generations.

All : Let justice roll down like rivers, and let rivers roll out in justice. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE (based on John 4)

One day, Jesus was thirsty and came to a well. Though there was clean water, he had no means of drawing it. A woman came to join him and together they sat and talked of possibility, of a vision in which all would have enough. With this understanding they drank, and were fulfilled. Soon they were invited into community. Just so does God invite us to dream of a world where all have enough and so abundance is shared. In that sharing, we too will be fulfilled and God will bless us.

TIME WITH THE CHILDREN

-see attached

SCRIPTURE READINGS for Lent 3

Exodus 17:1-7

Psalm 95 1-7 VU 814 Part 1

Doxology

(Romans 4:1-5, 13-17)

Gospel Lesson: John 4: 1-5, 13-17

REFLECTION AND SHARING:

-see the attached possibilities

HYMN 2

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

(A glass of Clean Water, a glass of salted water, a bottle of coke and an empty glass are used). Soft music played in the background.

Leader: Let us pray for the whole universe.
(Holding the glass of clean water) God of Life, we thank you for the blessing of the waters of Creation, the sea of photons and particles, light and dark matter that came into being as the Universe unfolded. We thank you for the gift of water in which all life on Earth began. Let this glass of clean water remind us of that gift and the sources of fresh drinking water that still exist today.

All: Fountain of all life, we thank you.

Leader: *(Holding the glass of salted water)* Let this glass of salted water remind us of the tears of those whose lives have been threatened by the pollution of their water resources by industrial operations. Let those who contribute to the rising sea levels by needlessly burning fossil fuels and releasing Methane shed tears of repentance and learn to lead a simple life so that others can 'simply live'. Help us to protect the gift of water and utilize it with the spirit of sanctity and responsibility. May our lives be so balanced that greed makes way for need and the tendency to waste makes way for a commitment to save.

All: Creator of new life, transform us so that we may be channels of life.

Leader: (*Holding a bottle of coke*) God of justice, we pray for all those who are resisting multinational corporations and developmental processes which plunder our natural resources and threaten the livelihood of millions. We remember all those organizations which are involved in the preservation of water, your gift of life. Help them guide them and sustain them in their endeavours.

All: God of justice strengthen those who seek to preserve your creation.

Leader: (*Holding the empty glass*) God of Community, we pray for all the communities who are involved in the issue of water justice. Sensitize us to walk with all the people whose waters are threatened. Fill us with a vision of solidarity and fellowship so that we can liaise and work with other likeminded people in conserving the gift of water.

All: God of justice give us your vision.

Leader: God of Faith, we pray for the universal church and its mission and vision. Sensitise the church to work towards water justice. Transform our lives so that we may be channels of justice – not so much by what we “preach”, but by what we ”practice”. Let your churches be role models within our communities in conserving water and preserving life in all its fullness. Make your churches work together so that justice will prevail and water will be available for all in our generation and beyond.

All: God of hope make us instruments of hope.
Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER (*Paraphrase*)

*All: Our God, the father & the mother, from,
through and to whom all lives flow;
Your name is holy for you water every creature
with life;
Your reign of justice come down like a torrent
and dwell among us;
Give us waters sufficient for our living, and help
us to share waters and our resources with those
that are dying in thirst;
Forgive us of our irresponsibility toward the gift
of water;
And teach us to listen to and forgive one another;
Lead us not into the temptation of accumulation
and domination;
But deliver us from our own life styles;
For your word is like waters cleansing us from
evil;
And your reign is righteousness flowing like an
ever flowing stream dissolving powers and
principalities, from generation to generation,
from history to history, forever and ever.
Amen*

CLOSING HYMN

BENEDICTION:

One: May the God of creation, who caused water to form and water the whole face of the earth before

humankind was even a thought, fill your lives with living water.

One: May Jesus the Christ who spoke with a woman from Samaria beside a well, give us a vision of a world shared for the benefit of all.

One: May the Spirit of Life continue to inspire and challenge all of us to become channels of water justice.

All. May Justice “roll down as waters” both now and forever more. Amen.

Postlude

Some prayers adapted from: *An Order of Worship for the Seven Weeks for Water Campaign, Ecumenical Water Network 2013.*

Fracking and LNG references taken from “Ethical Reflections on Fracking” KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

mv- More Voices

VU- Voices United

Opening Hymn:

Morning has Broken (VU 409)

Crashing Waters at creation (VU449)

Hymn #2:

Water Flowing from the Mountains (mv 87)

Touch the Earth Lightly (VU 307)

Called by earth and Sky (mv 135)

Closing Hymn:

Like a Healing Stream (mv 144)

River (mv 3)

Let All things Now Living (VU 242)

All Creatures of Our God and King (VU 217)

Doxology:

Know that God is Good (mv 104)

Praise God from Whom all Blessings Flow (VU541)

TIME WITH THE CHILDREN

Materials:

Several bowls
Spruce or fir boughs
Large pitcher of water.

Discussion

Ask the children what their bodies are made of. Point out that in addition, 70% of their body is water. Pour the water from the pitcher into the bowls. Ask them what use we make of water. Tell them that water is a precious gift from God, a blessing. All animals and all life need it, so we need to be careful how we use that gift. We need keep it as clean as possible, and not pollute it.

Tell them that once the ancient people of Israel were lost in the desert with no clean water that they could drink. They were hot, tired and thirsty. God helped them to find pure water, from a spring. Today we will remember that gift and the gift of our baptism by giving a shower of blessing. As the water touches us we will remember God's blessing of water.

Action:

Help the children "aspurge" by going down the aisles(s) dipping the boughs in water and sprinkling the water over the heads of the people gathered. Suitable baptism or water-related music could be played while this happens.

REFLECTION

Reflection Possibility #1

Show the short animated KAIROS Video about Fracking at <http://www.kairoscanada.org/short-animated-primer-fracking>.

Break into groups of 4-6 and ask/answer the following questions:

1. What most concerns you about the practice of Fracking?
2. Who benefits from fracking? Who pays?
3. What are the alternatives to fracked gas?
4. What can we do to help build a sustainable future for our planet and its water resources?

Reflection Possibility #2

Hand out copies of the brochure on fracking included with the resources or to be found on the KAIROS website. Break into groups of 4-6. Read the brochure and ask/answer the following questions:

1. What most concerns you about the practice of Fracking?
2. Who benefits from fracking? Who pays?
3. What are the alternatives to fracked gas?
4. What can we do to help build a sustainable future for our planet and its water resources?

Reflection Possibility #3

-see attached narrative reflection “living Water”

Living Water

A Reflection for the Third Sunday of Lent 2017
(Water Sunday)

Based on:

Exodus 17:1-7
John 4:1-5, 13-17

So... there they are, the people of Israel, wandering in the desert...lost... and they're thirsty... and they're afraid, and they're mad. There's not enough water. They have come from slavery, have been freed, but they are not happy. They are looking to someone to save them... blaming... finger-pointing.

Like the ancient Israelites, we too, are in many ways a lost people. We are unsure of where we are going and that can make us fearful and angry. Many of our hopes and dreams have not worked out. The world is not as we would want it, so we look for someone to blame. In the recent United States election, the theme that won out was *change at all costs*. The great American Dream is not working out for most. Fingers have been pointed at whoever is handy: the "elites", Muslims, Mexicans, seldom at ourselves, our own choices.

Neil Diamond wrote a song once about the human condition in the 21st Century:

*I am I said;
to no-one there.
And no-one heard at all not even the chair.
I am I cried.
I am said I
and I am lost and I don't even know why
Leaving me lonely still.*

We are a lonely people, by and large; thirsty and discontented. That is how the great Consumer Culture was born. In an attempt to fill the void within, we consume more than we need. We want to be winners. We demand yet more or are seduced into it. It's never enough. We put a huge strain on the earth's resources. The Economy dominates our thinking. We think we have to have more and more, growth at all costs. Why?

In British Columbia, an LNG industry fed by fracking operations, created to export this fossil fuel to Asia, is being promoted. Why? What more do we need? In BC we have the fastest growing economy in Canada and the second highest employment rate in the country. The unemployment rate of 5.9% is considered full employment by most measures. An LNG industry, once established, creates relatively few ongoing jobs. On the other hand, fracking operations needed to release the natural gas consume huge volumes of water. One well pad alone in BC used 980,000,000 litres of water. The water and a cocktail of chemicals are pumped underground at high pressure to fracture the rock and release the methane trapped in the shale beds.

Caleb Behn, a young Indigenous lawyer and moviemaker has likened the practice to breaking Mother Nature's bones. The earth groans and earthquakes are sometimes created. Methane can escape in the process. Methane is a greenhouse gas 83 times as potent as carbon dioxide over a 20-year period. Groundwater is at risk of contamination. Long trains of trucks hauling the water and chemicals need an even larger network of roads, disrupting the cycles and territory of wildlife and Indigenous peoples. The wells have a very short production life, so drilling and fracking is constant in order to maintain the flow. It's frantic. It's never enough. Communities are often disrupted by boom and bust cycles, and creation of haves and have-nots.

In the Old Testament story, Moses goes off to find water, and lo and behold he does- from a rock of all things. The surprise isn't that he found the water, but that it isn't enough. The people of Israel had been, in the days of Abraham and Jacob, a desert people. Finding such a spring in the wilderness would have meant that they could dwell, and raise their herds, and their children, and be happy. It was an amazing grace, and an amazing blessing; but it is not enough. They have come from Egypt, and have seen might and power, and the lifestyle that brings, even if slaves were needed. They want that for themselves: Not just a place to live, but a land flowing with milk and honey. Abundance.... overabundance. Ignoring the fact that other people might already live there, they would take it over,

change it, appropriate it for themselves, exploit it; and so they moved on, looking for progress. In the search for prosperity, they left the spring behind. Of course, when they got to the land of the Canaanites, they weren't happy there either after a while. They then wanted a king and a kingdom and power in the region, but that's another story.

We too, have left the spring behind, looking for progress, for prosperity. We have taken over the planet, appropriated it for ourselves, changed it, bent it to our will. Global warming is one result. And now other nations have bought on to the consumer lifestyle and clamor for what we have . China and India are next in line for embracing Consumer Culture. More CO2 in the air; more air pollution. Meanwhile, the planet gets warmer and warmer. We rush to meet the demand for fossil fuel in the US and Asia and emerging nations. We can't exploit it fast enough, even though it too is finite. It's not enough; we need more pipelines to burn more gas to release more bitumen and to ship more oil.

In the gospel story, Jesus too is thirsty, and meets a woman at the well. This woman is not a part of the local insiders; she is considered an outcast. She dips for water at different times than the mainstream, but is willing to share. She has had her own trouble of course; a string of failed relationships. She probably wanted to join the crowd, but instead, that day, she meets a stranger who talks of living water once again, of water for the soul that will truly satisfy;

and so she takes the message back, unafraid. She proclaims that there is something else, another way, waters beneath the well of a kind never dreamed of: Water that will satisfy; a connection with God and others, contentment... a sense of place, a sense of community.

Guy Dauncey, a futurist from British Columbia has written a book entitled "*Journey to the Future*". In his book, he questions the basis for our economy. According to Dauncey, our economy is based on the notion that people are basically self-interested, self-centred, and so accumulation of private capital at the expense of others has become the basis of the economy. It turns out that this is a false premise. In fact, surveys show that the vast majority of people are compassionate, empathetic and community-oriented.

Dauncey envisions a whole different economy, based on community, a whole-earth community. In this community, the common welfare is the concern. Infrastructure is designed with sustainability in mind. Villages, towns and cities are designed around meeting space instead of privacy and disconnection. Renewable energy only is used. All share in outcomes. The abundance created is a spiritual one. We are fed with living water. Our wants give way to needs of others and the Planet, yet we have enough. We are whole beings.

Some First Nations communities are showing us the way to a greener future. One Lubicon First Nation, led by a young woman and some friends, have installed a solar power generation system shared by the community. A community garden will soon be created around the plant. Other communities, Indigenous and non-indigenous alike, are re-thinking their dependence on mega-projects and large infrastructure. Smaller is becoming better. Farmers markets are expanding. The concept of the Commons, of land and resources shared that existed before Enclosure, private property and the industrial revolution emerged is being re-visited.

The situation we are facing, many believe, is dire, and urgent, and difficult, but not hopeless, especially with a new approach, a new paradigm. Einstein said once that we cannot solve a problem using the same mindset, worldview and perspective that created it. It is a deeply religious and spiritual project: to find the living water that can truly satisfy before it is too late, but it can happen. May it be so. Amen.

Fracking and LNG information taken from *Ethical Reflections on Fracking*, KAIROS Canada.