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Let the River Run!
Merging of Waters Family Sunday



Unity Church–Unitarian
Sunday, September 10, 2023
9:00 and 11:15 a.m.
[Livestream](#) at 9:00 a.m.

ORDER OF WORSHIP
Sunday, September 10, 2023
**Please rise in body or in spirit.*

The story of the ocean and the story of humanity
Are one and the same, a Great River that
Knows no borders and notes no lines,
Only ripples.
While we might call it the Seven Seas,
Today we sing out your true name:
The one ocean.
For no matter how we try to separate your waters,
You are the colossus that connects us.

Water makes up 70% of Earth,
70% of the human heart,
And 70% of the human being,
All of us, bodies of water,
For we, too are oceans,
Or at least beings bobbing in the same boat.
To stand up for our ocean
Is to stand up for our own ship
The sea is a restless, strong collective of many pieces.
So are we.

— Amanda Gorman
Excerpt from "Ode to Our Ocean"

GATHERING MUSIC

When You Are a Wave

Words and music by Peter Mayer

PEALING THE BELL

PRELUDE

Let the River Run

Unity Choir and Band

Let the river run
Let all the dreamers wake the nation
Come, the New Jerusalem
Silver cities rise
The morning lights the streets that lead them
And sirens call them on with a song
It's asking for the taking
Trembling, shaking
Oh, my heart is aching
We're coming to the edge
Running on the water
Coming through the fog
Your sons and daughters

CALL TO WORSHIP

Rev. Kathleen Rolenz

KINDLING THE CHALICE FLAME

Ari Giles

WELCOME

*OPENING HYMN

There's a River Flowin' in My Soul
#1007 teal hymnal

*RESPONSIVE READING

I've known rivers: I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young. I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it. I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers: Ancient, dusky rivers. My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

INTERLUDE

Water

Words and music by Peter Mayer

We are molecules—two Hs and one O
And in most places we are ice and we are cold
But sometimes in the universe
When we find a place like earth
Where the sun is shining and the lovely breezes blow

CHORUS: We are water
Rising up to the highest cloud
Falling free in the rain come down
Flowing over and underground
We are water
Drops in the river and the wide ocean
Running in all directions then
Coming together again

We are mist and we are waves upon the sand
We're the ancient, holy place where life began
We are tea and morning showers
Home to sea horses and flounders

Cleaning shirts and quenching thirst and
Floating motor boats CHORUS

We are mirrors to the sky
We shine of all the stars at night
The sun and moon and clouds as they go by

If you find the time then here's what you should do
Take your heart down to the shore and be renewed
Climb into your sloop and ride us
Leap into us, stand beside us
We will turn your planet world the brightest shade of blue CHORUS

STORY FOR ALL AGES The River from the Temple Rev. KP Hong
(Inspired by Ezekiel 47:1-9)

EMBRACING MEDITATION | PASTORAL PRAYER Rev. Lara Cowtan

Each time we gather for worship, we set aside a moment to expand the caring ministry of this congregation. Together we recognize the cycle of life and death, the circle of love, compassion and witness that is at the center of this and every sacred community.

We stand at the side of parents and teachers and all those whose primary spiritual practice is caring for children; with those who live with grief or chronic pain, with illnesses seen and unseen, with mental disability or addiction.

We remember them.

We pray for our neighbors in prison those who care for family members in ill health, those who struggle with loneliness and those who strive to stay afloat amidst poverty. Our lives are blessed by those who face their final days with honesty, and by those who rise above heartbreak to challenge oppression in all its forms.

We care for them.

We pray for those in harm's way, for the wisdom and strength of the leaders of the world and for the people of this courageous congregation as together we live into our longing to embody and help to build the Beloved Community.

We hold them.

INTERLUDE Holy Now Words and music by Peter Mayer

When I was a boy, each week
On Sunday, we would go to church
And pay attention to the priest
He would read the holy word
And consecrate the holy bread
And everyone would kneel and bow
Today the only difference is
Everything is holy now
Everything, everything
Everything is holy now

When I was in Sunday school
We would learn about the time
Moses split the sea in two
Jesus made the water wine
And I remember feeling sad
That miracles don't happen still
But now I can't keep track
'Cause everything's a miracle
Everything, Everything
Everything's a miracle

Wine from water is not so small
But an even better magic trick
Is that anything is here at all
So the challenging thing becomes
Not to look for miracles
But finding where there isn't one

When holy water was rare at best
It barely wet my fingertips
But now I have to hold my breath
Like I'm swimming in a sea of it
It used to be a world half there
Heaven's second rate hand-me-down
But I walk it with a reverent air
'Cause everything is holy now
Everything, everything,
Everything is holy now

Read a questioning child's face
And say it's not a testament
That'd be very hard to say
See another new morning come
And say it's not a sacrament
I tell you that it can't be done

This morning, outside I stood
And saw a little red-winged bird
Shining like a burning bush
Singing like a scripture verse
It made me want to bow my head
I remember when church let out
How things have changed since then
Everything is holy now
It used to be a world half-there
Heaven's second rate hand-me-down
But I walk it with a reverent air
'Cause everything is holy now

OFFERING | OFFERTORY

HOMILY Let the River Run! Rev. Kathleen Rolenz

*MERGING OF WATERS LITANY OF REUNION

We arrive out of many singular rooms, walking over the branching streets.

We come to be assured that our siblings surround us, to restore their images upon our eyes.

We enlarge our voices in common speaking and singing.

We try again that solitude found in the midst of those who, with us, seek their hidden reckonings.

Our eyes reclaim the remembered faces, their voices stir the surrounding air.

*The warmth of their hands assures us, and the gladness of our spoken names.
This is the reason of cities, of homes, of assemblies in the houses of fellowship.
It is good to be with one another.*

Here, gathered at the well, to bless and to be blessed by beauty, we, who long to live lives of integrity, service and joy, now pledge again to organize our longing in the interest of a larger love.

The pitcher cries for water to carry. And a person for work that is real.

CONGREGATIONAL NEWS

*CLOSING HYMN Blue Boat Home Words and music by Peter Mayer

Though below me, I feel no motion
Standing on these mountains and plains
Far away from the rolling ocean
Still my dry land heart can say
I've been sailing all my life now
Never harbor or port have I known
The wide universe is the ocean I travel
And the earth is my blue boat home

Sun, my sail and moon, my rudder
As I ply the starry sea
Leaning over the edge in wonder
Casting questions into the deep
Drifting here with my ship's companions
All we kindred pilgrim souls
Making our way by the lights of the heavens
In our beautiful blue boat home

I give thanks to the waves upholding me
Hail the great winds urging me on
Greet the infinite sea before me
Sing the sky my sailor's song
I was born upon the fathoms
Never harbor or port have I known
The wide universe is the ocean I travel
And the earth is my blue boat home

*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Everybody In

Words and music by Peter Mayer

Jesus spoke entreating them
To live together in a great circle of love
And when his followers asked him then
Who should be included
Jesus said

CHORUS: Let everybody in
Everybody in
Everybody into the circle, circle
Everybody, Everybody
Everybody, Everybody
Everybody into the circle, circle

Oligarchs and tyrants try
To keep some in and everyone else outside
Till revolution sweeps across the land
And the people all stand
And the common folk cry CHORUS

Sometimes a circle is a class or creed
Sometimes a circle is made of only men
Until Susan B. Anthony
Says what about me
Let me in CHORUS

Sometimes a circle is a privileged thing
Excluding people for the color of their skin
Until the voice of Martin Luther King
Says let freedom ring
And let them in CHORUS

Gay and straight, rich and poor
Whole and broken, open up that door
The more we are the greater we become
And after all, we all are one
Bring in the people but don't stop there
Bring in the fish in the sea and the birds in the air
Bring in the rivers wide and the mountains tall
We go together or not at all CHORUS

Unity Church resides on the homelands of the Dakota Nation. We honor with gratitude the people who have stewarded the land throughout the generations and their ongoing contributions to this region. We acknowledge the ongoing injustices that we have committed against the Dakota Nation, and we wish to interrupt this legacy, beginning with acts of healing and honest storytelling about this place.

Freshwater Society is a leading public non-profit organization dedicated to preserving freshwater resources and their surrounding watersheds. It educates people about the role of freshwater to all living things, and the crisis in the quality of accessible fresh water. This collection will support volunteer street and sewer clean-up projects aimed at clearing away toxic nutrients which promote the growth of excessive algae and robs freshwater of needed oxygen. Donate to the offering online at bit.ly/sundayoffering.



Worship associate Ari Giles lives in the Mill District of Downtown Minneapolis. After taking time to explore other areas of the country, she's thrilled to be back in the Twin Cities. She's enjoyed rediscovering old favorites like the Minneapolis Institute of Art and Springbrook Nature Center. Though her membership is recent, her participation in Unity's community has deep roots after being raised in the church

Minnesota's Peter Mayer has been singing and songwriting full-time for 25 years, performing in venues across the United States and beyond. He writes songs for a small planet — songs about interconnectedness and the human journey—songs about life on earth and the mysterious and wondrous fact of our existence. He also writes about dress hats, pumpkins and pajamas, and other important stuff. His music has been performed by artists like Kathy Mattea, David Wilcox, Claudia Schmidt, Anne Hills, Priscilla Herdman, Darryl Purpose, Billy Jonas, and Ronny Cox, to name a few. His work has been included in song books, church hymnals, and folk radio playlists across the country. He is the recipient of fellowships from the McKnight and the Bush foundations. Peter has eleven albums to his credit, and has sold over 100,000 of them. He lives in Stillwater, Minnesota, with his wife and two daughters. www.petermayer.net

To access the Sanctuary's assistive listening system, please switch your hearing aid to "T" or request headphones or assistance from an usher. Large print orders of service are also available by request to an usher.