

“Stronger Together”
Rev. Lynda Sutherland
Sunday Sept. 11, 2016

I love ingathering! The first Sunday of the church program year, we come back together in full force; full of hope, full of stories to share, full of dreams for what is possible. Here, we can bring our whole selves, our joys, our sorrows, our concern and compassion, our longings, our unique perspectives. Each brings what only they can bring; and coming together, we share a bit of our lives with each other.

We celebrate this coming together in our ritual of Water Communion. It is traditional to gather a small amount of water from someplace we have been during the summer months; often this is a place that has some particular meaning for us. Whether from far away or as close as our kitchen faucets, the water is symbolic of a place that touches us deeply. A place that holds our hearts; a place where the longing of our souls may be heard and honored. Some of us bring actual water; some of us bring “virtual water” – it’s all water today.

Water makes a good symbol. We have to have it. Our bodies are about 60% water, and we can’t go for many days without it. We need it to water our gardens, make food crops grow, and ensure that our animals have what they need to drink, too. Water is our friend.

Since we moved here to Mass., I have experienced water in a new way: you know the tiny, misty droplets that kiss your face, so softly you can hardly feel them? I love being outside when it is “misting,” and when it’s sprinkling, and even when it’s raining. In a dry year like this, the rain is such a blessing.

And while I have been enjoying our rain – and lots of sunny days, too – our friends back in Decorah, IA, are now dreading the rain. The raindrops have fallen so fast and frequently, that parking lots have become ponds, rivers have become rushing torrents that have swept away bridges, and even carved new riverbanks. Water can have amazing power, when a lot of it gets together.

Just as individual drops of water combine to make small streams, rushing rivers, and vast oceans, our lives mingle together, and we become more together than we each are alone. Remember the amount of noise all our “droplets” made in our Rain Meditation? A lot more noise than they could make alone!

I remember visiting the Grand Canyon in Arizona. A mile deep! And made by the carving of water drops, running together as a rushing river, for years and years, until they wore away all that rock! For sure, many drops of water are much stronger together!

And we are, too. When we come together as community, we can help each other out. We make each other stronger with our care and sometimes, our help when needed....

When we come together as community, we can help make the world a better place. When we put our names with hundreds or thousands of others on a petition, we can help persuade business owners or politicians to change things for the better. When we raise our voices together for peace and justice, we can get people’s attention! Just like the voices of the choir,

making more beautiful harmonies than any of us can by ourselves, our work together can make our world a more beautiful place to live.

In June, I stood here before you and talked about some of the many ways I had seen the people of First Parish UU working together, to bless each other and all whose lives you touch. We ended last year's church season with this challenge: "Let's be bold! Let's envision a future that inspires our best. Together, we can build upon our strengths and the strengths of generations yet to come."

Having been among you for the past month and a half, I am even more convinced of our collective strength and power for good in the world.

Today is the beginning of the future that we will fashion, together. Today, we share our hopes and dreams, our talents and strengths. Today we bring a little water, and pour it into a common bowl. Today, we look to the future, with courage, with joy, and with love, stronger together.