

Reflection Guide for “Troubled Waters” by Gary Chamberlin

In Preparation for Diocesan Convention 2009



Session 1: Chapters 1 and 2

Pray:

Water flows from high in the mountains.
Water runs deep in the Earth.
Miraculously, water comes to us and sustains all life.

Thich Nhat Hanh

Ponder:

1. As you read these chapters on the place of water in the life of several religious traditions, what were the significant insights or learnings that you gleaned? What did you find to be the greatest challenge?
2. Which of the several non-Christian traditions held the most interest for you? Why?
3. If you were going to describe briefly your understanding of creation from your Christian perspective, what would you say? What is God's role? What is the role of humankind? How do we "relate to" creation?
4. What are some ways water has significance in Christian practice? Do you have a memory or experience to share that relates to water in this way?
5. What other topics from these chapters would you like to discuss?

Practice

Discover what Christian organizations have an interest in stewardship of the earth and particularly the stewardship of water. What groups within the Episcopal Church and Anglican Communion are involved in this ministry?

Session 2: Chapters 3 and 4

Pray

In the beginning, O God,
when the firm earth emerged from the waters of life
you saw that it was good.
The fertile ground was moist,
the seed was strong,
and the earth's profusion of colour and scent was born.
Awaken my senses this day
to the goodness that still stems from Eden.
Awaken my senses to the goodness that can still spring forth
in me and in all that has life.

Amen

J Philip Newell in Celtic Benediction

Ponder:

1. As you read about water's biography in Chapter 3, what were two or three things that stood out for you? What was most challenging about this chapter?
2. If you were to tell the 'story of water' in your own biography, what would that story look like? What were some significant encounters with water? What role has water had in your own health and wellbeing?
3. What is your personal experience of polluted or contaminated water? What was the source of pollution or contamination? How was this addressed?
4. If you had the power to make water policy, what would be the most important factors in assuring safe and sufficient water supplies for the world?
5. How has reading chapter 4 changed the way you think and act about water?
6. What other topics in these chapters would you like to discuss?

Practice:

Each deanery in the Diocese of Spokane is named for a river in its region. Discover something about the life of the river in your deanery. Is it a healthy river? What are the blessings of having this river? What are the challenges to keeping it safe?

You might also want to read the pastoral letter on the Columbia River written by the Roman Catholic bishops of our region in 2001. You can find it on the internet at <http://www.columbiariver.org/>.

Session 3: Chapters 5 and 6

Pray:

Lord our God, you renew the face of the earth
and bring newness to our world:
Restore the waters,
Refresh the air,
Revive the land,
Breathe new life into all your creation,
and begin with us. Amen

David Adam in The Rhythm of Life

Ponder:

1. Dams are an integral part of the life of the Inland Northwest, providing irrigation water, facilitating navigation and producing electrical power. What did you learn about dams from Chapter 5 that were new insights for you? Do you think the negative impact of dams overshadows the positives? Why?
2. What agricultural water use issues are you aware of in your region?
3. What would you consider to be the most crucial and immediate issue of the several listed in Chapter 5? Why?
4. What do you see as the pros and cons of water privatization?
5. What do you think would be necessary to avert “water wars” as supplies dwindle?
6. What other topics in these chapters would you like to discuss?

Practice:

Make a list of some things that you could do to conserve water or use it more wisely. Follow through on at least one of them.

Session 4: Chapter 7

Pray:

Father of all creation, we thank you that you
have given us a world rich in resources,
and made us stewards of your mysteries;
help us to act responsibly,
not wasting or destroying what we do not need,
not polluting the earth, or sea or sky,
that we may act with love towards all things,
and so reflect the great love that you have for the world.

Be with us, Lord God, creator of all,
to strengthen us on our journey,
to guide us in all our doings,
that we may share in the love and care for your world.

David Adam in The Rhythm of Life

Ponder

Is water a basic right? Why? Why not?

2. What do you think are the components to build an equitable sharing of water worldwide? What keeps us from having such a system today?

3. The author describes how several ethical systems might address water. Which of these seems most sensible to you? How would you paraphrase it?

4. What other topics from this chapter would you like to discuss?

Practice

Give thanks consciously every day this week every time you use or encounter water. (You also may want to put a few coins in your convention offering can as you do this.) How has this practice changed your awareness of the role of water in your life?

Session 5: Chapters 8 and 9

Pray:

O merciful Creator, your hand is open wide
to satisfy the needs of every living creature:
make us always thankful for your loving providence;
and grant that we, remembering the account we must one day give,
may be faithful stewards of your good gifts;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns,
one God for ever and ever. Amen

The Book of Common Prayer, page 259 (Collect for the Stewardship of Creation)

Ponder:

1. As you read the summaries of each of the religious traditions, paraphrase at least one of these that you find interesting. What is the particular challenge to Christianity? What are some ways that Christian groups have addressed the issue of water?
2. How do you pray for water, especially after reading this book? In what way would you like your church to continue praying?
3. What scripture passage or part of our liturgy speaks most poignantly to you of the issues around water?
4. As you look at the strategies, techniques and technologies for water in Chapter 9, which seem to you to be practical and possible? Why? How might you advocate for one or more?
5. What other topics from these chapters would you like to discuss?

Practice:

Compose a prayer for water that you can use in your personal prayers or that you can share with your church. Share with at least one other person an insight or two from your study of this book and the subject of water.

Questions of comments on this study: contact the Rev. Canon Kristi Philip
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