

Williamsburg Unitarian Universalists
Call to Worship, September 7, 2008
Rev. Jennifer Ryu, Co-minister

An old dusty trail runs through the Amargosa Desert near Death Valley.
Along the trail is an old well.

I'm guessing that there are some younger members of our congregation who may not know what a well is.

Well--a well is basically a very deep hole in the ground that people dig to get water.

It may seem like water comes from your bathroom sink or your kitchen sink.
But actually, water comes from the earth. Sometimes the water is right there in plain sight—like a lake, or a river.

But if you're in the desert where there are no lakes and no buildings and no sinks, you can dig a very deep hole and you're likely to find water.

Anyway, back my story...

This old well in the middle of the Amargosa Desert is the only source of fresh water for miles.

Wired to the pump handle is a rusty baking powder can and inside the can is a handwritten note that informs the traveler that there is a bottle of water buried in a hole under a rock next to the well. The note warns the thirsty traveler not to drink the water in the bottle. Instead, the finder of the well must use about a quarter of the water to soak the leather washer, then pour the rest of the bottle in while pumping the handle up and down very quickly. Water will then come out of the pump.

P.S., the note said, it is very important to make sure to fill up the bottle again and put it back under the rock for the next person.

The note was signed 'Desert Pete--1932.' (From a story told in Dare to Live Now by Bruce Larson)

Apparently, every person since 1932 had filled up the water for the next thirsty traveler.

Most of us know what it's like to be a weary spiritual traveler.

We remember what it feels like to become dry in our search to find meaning and purpose for our lives.

For many of us, finding this, or another Unitarian Universalist congregation, was like finding that well in the Amargosa Desert.

In many ways, this community is a well—
a place where thirsty souls can find fresh, clean water.

This community is a well--

an opening into the deep reservoir of one's divine nature.

The water refreshes and nourishes.

It also brings a sense of belonging and connection—

not only with each other but with the whole of creation—

It reminds us of our highest aspirations.

to cultivate greater love within ourselves and in the world around us.

to be fully awake-- mindful and conscious of the true nature of our being.

This community is a well.

Unlike the water from a fountain, or a bubbling stream, access to well water is not easy.

The digging of the well takes tremendous effort, as does the retrieving of the water.

You need a pump, powered by machine or muscle or you have to lower an empty bucket and pull the water up.

Getting to the water takes a willingness to seek out the deep places.

As we gather this morning to begin again, we affirm our readiness for this kind of seeking.

We come prepared to share our vulnerable selves, our honest selves, our needy selves, our loving selves.

Come, bring your thirsty souls to well

Come, let us worship together