

Water: Sacred Gift, Sacred Trust

A Welcoming Water Ritual

This ritual was prepared by Sister Priscilla Solomon CSJ, an Ojibway, for DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE and KAIROS. It can be used at meetings or prayer gatherings during Lent as our reminder of our interconnectedness and solidarity through water with people in the Global South. It incorporates aspects of the four directions, but it does not represent a traditional Anishinaabe water ceremony. Thank you to Sister Priscilla for her generous sharing of this ritual.

The ritual requires a lead reader and four participants with pots of water, and a single bowl set up (perhaps in the centre of the room) to receive the waters from each direction. One person stands in each direction and, in turn, each holds up a jug of water. While the person in the east holds up the water, the group prays the prayer, then the person pours the water into the large bowl. This is repeated for each of the directions. Finally, the lead reader reads "The Sacred Water Pot" as a closing (adapted from Indian environmental thinker and activist, Vandana Shiva in *Water Wars*).

Introduction

Lead reader: The oceans of this precious planetary jewel we call our home are one. They greet each other in countless places, sharing their waters and releasing them. Waters once called Atlantic are sooner or later Pacific, or Arctic. Waters once swirling around our northern lands will, or have, graced the shores of India and Antarctica. The sacred gift that we call water journeys through stream and river, sky and earth to find communion with itself in other waters. In its search for union and oneness, it calls to the human community to also seek communion.

Always, water is sacred gift with the sacred trust given to it by God, the Creator, to bring life, healing, and transformation. These are water's instructions from the Creator. Beautiful and powerful, ever ancient yet ever new, it relies upon us to care for and protect it, enabling it to carry out the Creator's instructions.

Opening Prayer

ALL: Creator God, we give you thanks for the precious gift of water. We remember the instructions you gave to water, and we long to ensure that your sacred gift will forever bring life, healing and wholeness to all creation. Amen

Welcoming the Waters

Holder of water in the east: I am the water that stands in the east, the water of newness, the water of life.

All: Just as the morning light dispels the darkness, so also I dispel death and destruction. Where drought, flood, quake, tsunami or frost destroy, I bring new life. Green appears, hope arises, community forms.

I seek your care and protection.

Holder of water in the south: I am the water that stands in the south, the waters of healing.

All: Where sickness prevails, I heal. Yes, I carry disease, but it is not mine by nature. By my nature and my call, I bring healing. My instructions are to carry nutrients and goodness for healing, but I am forced to carry contaminants, pollutants and disease.
I seek your care and protection.

Holder of water in the west: I am the water that stands in the west, the water of transformation.

All: From the beginning I have used my power to transform, shaping land and shore, rock and mountain. My power brings life and death. Whether I come as vapour, mist, liquid, ice or snow I transform. But others have sought to control and use my power for their profit.
I seek your care and protection.

Holder of water in the north: I am the water that stands in the north, the water of wholeness.

All: Like the blanket of snow in the north that brings all together as one, or the ocean that becomes one with the horizon, I call all to know the oneness of life, the kinship of all creation. In the wintry cold, I am the promise of new life. I am given for the wholeness of creation, for the life of all creation. Yet, there are some who take possession of me as though I belong to them alone.
I seek your care and protection.

Closing: The Sacred Water Pot

Lead reader: *Sacred waters, carry us beyond the marketplace into a world charged with myths and stories, beliefs and devotion, culture and celebration...We are all... thirsting for waters that liberate and give us life — organically and spiritually. The struggle between those who nurture and those who exploit is ongoing. Each of us has a role in shaping the creation story of the future. Each of us is responsible for the kumbh, the sacred pot.*

All: Amen