

**Renewal of Baptismal Vows**  
**Saturday, March 28, 2009**  
**Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship**

*Baptism...now saves you...not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience..." 1 Peter 3: 21*

**Prelude**

**Invocation**

"Loving God, thank-you for the blessing of life, but even more for those who make life worth living, the gift of family, friends, colleagues, and fellow members of the body of Christ. Give us what we need to remain ever faithful to you and to the covenant we will make, that our lives may be enriched with mutual growth through Christ. Amen"

**Hymn**

As I went down in the river to pray  
Studying about that good old way  
And who shall wear the starry crown  
Good Lord, show me the way !

O sisters let's go down, Let's go down, come on down,  
O sisters let's go down, Down in the river to pray.

As I went down in the river to pray  
Studying about that good old way  
And who shall wear the robe and crown  
Good Lord, show me the way !

O brothers let's go down, Let's go down, come on down,  
O brothers let's go down, Down in the river to pray.  
O Fathers...

As I went down in the river to pray  
Studying about that good old way  
And who shall wear the robe and crown  
Good Lord, show me the way !

**Scripture**

**Matthew 3:13-16**

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

**Acts 16:**

14 Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.  
15 And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us.

**Hymn***Make Channels for the Streams of Love*

Words: Thomas J. S. Mikelson

Music: Traditional Irish Melody

Make channels for the streams of love where they may broadly run  
and love has overflowing streams to fill them everyone.  
But if we at any time we cease such channels to provide  
the very founts of love for us will soon be parched and dried

For we must share if we would keep this gift all else above  
we cease to give we cease to have such is the law of love.

**The Meaning of Baptism**

Rev. Kathleen C. Rolenz

What really happened that day with his childhood friend standing knee deep in the river?

Letting the water from your cupped hands fall back into the river, you see him  
approaching—the same boy you played in the Nazarene dirt with, the same one who left  
your town and never came back, same old Jesus, but now, grown, different, approaching  
the water and asking to be baptized.

I can't do it—you stammer...I shouldn't do it—you're the one, you say...you should baptize  
me—give me some of that living water that I see in you Jesus—give me some of what  
you've got.

Jesus just smiles—that smile you remember from boyhood, somewhere between love and  
sadness he smiles and steps into the water...he surrenders to you as you push him down  
into the flowing current—opening his eyes underwater he sees you like no one has ever  
seen you...and because of this moment, you have been changed forever—you know that you  
live and would die by this man...because of something you see in his eyes, in that moment  
of his baptism...the moment you cupped his head in your hands and the Jordan River  
surrounded him.

Luther urged Christians to practice the daily renewal of the baptismal covenant by placing a  
hand on the head each morning and saying, "I am a baptized person, and today I will live  
out my baptism." ...

This is the moment we re-enact, whether we renew our baptism or choose to become  
baptized. This ritual has become the subject of endless debates about its purpose and  
meaning. There are many conflicting doctrines about baptism. Some believe if you've been  
baptized once, whether you wanted it or not, you should not pursue adult baptism. Others  
say that only a "believer's baptism" makes sense, when a person has made the decision to  
follow Jesus. Still others say you should be baptized in your local church—with your  
community—on and on. While the UU Christian Fellowship wishes to be respectful of all of  
these differing dogmas, we decided to offer baptism or re-baptism in the tradition of the  
Anabaptists—a believer's baptism—that recognizes a person's relationship with Christ. And,  
while we appreciate all of the theological nuances that are involved with baptism, we cannot  
deny its power as both a ritual and a reality that binds all believers in Christ together. Like  
the woman Lydia, it is a way that we say to our God, "If you have judged me to be faithful  
to the Lord, come to my house and stay." Lord, we ask that you come to our house, and  
stay...

**Hymn***O Come, You Longing Thirsty Souls*

Words: Isaiah 55

Music: Ralph Vaughan Williams

O Come you longing thirsty souls, drink freely from the spring.  
And come, you weary famished folk, and end your hungering.  
Why spend yourself on empty air? Why not be satisfied?  
For everywhere a feast is spread that's always at our side.

For as the rain and snow above fail not in vanity,  
but for this purpose water earth to feed humanity.  
So shall the word of spirit serves as seed within our loam,  
that we may bear so rich a yield as brings the harvest home.

For we shall go in peace secure and leave in joy sublime!  
The hills outside will burst with song the trees will clap in time.  
No more shall thorns and nettles grow! The bay tree and the pine  
shall sign for us the eternal Name that makes the world a shrine.

### **Prayer of Confession\***

Eternal God, our judge and redeemer, you delivered us through water,  
but we long to return to Egypt.  
Your Word calms the storm, but we timidly cower in fear.  
Your justice would flow down like rivers, but we obstruct its flow.  
You bid us bathe and be healed, but we limp and struggle in pain.  
Cleanse us, O God. Grant us the gift of your grace that we might always reflect your  
radiance. Amen.

### **Blessing of the Water**

**Minister:** Like Jesus, we are brought to life out of the mysterious, life giving waters of our  
mother's womb. Jesus also was baptized in the River Jordan by John the Baptist. Jesus  
then became living water for the poor, the oppressed, and all who would knock on his door.  
Gracious God, pour out your life giving spirit on this hour as we renew our baptismal vows  
and by so doing, remind us of a life lived in the Spirit.

## **The Ritual of Baptism and The Renewal of Vows**

**Renewal of Vows** (spoken to all who wish to renew their baptismal vows)

Do you renew and affirm the promises made at your baptism?

**I do.**

Do you reject all proud rebellion against God?

**I reject them.**

Do you repent of the sins that separate us from God and neighbour?

**I repent of them.**

Do you turn in faith to Christ?

**I do.**

Do you then renounce all evil?

**I do, by God's help.**

Will you strive to live your life with Christian love?

**I will, by God's help.**

Do you believe and trust in a loving God, the God of Universal Salvation?

**I believe and trust in God.**

Do you believe and trust in the example set by the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, known to us as the Christ?

**I believe and trust in Him.**

Do you believe and trust in the Holy Spirit who gives life to the people of God?

**I believe and trust in that Spirit.**

*Music begins to play. Participants are invited to come forward to the bowl of water, touch the water and then touch their forehead and say "I am a baptized person and today I will live out my baptism."*

### **Responsive Prayer\***

In the beginning, O God, your Spirit moved over the water, and you created all that is, seen and unseen.

**We give you thanks for the gift of water that sustains all life.**

In the time of Noah, you destroyed evil in the water of the flood; and by your saving ark, you gave a new beginning.

**We give you thanks for new beginnings.**

You led Israel through the sea, out of slavery into the freedom of the promised land.

**We give you thanks for the gift of freedom and the gift of the land.**

In the water of the Jordan our Lord was baptized by John and anointed by your Spirit; by the baptism of his death and resurrection, Christ set us free from sin and death and opened the way to eternal life.

**We give you thanks for our own baptism and the gift of eternal life.**

The Lamb has come to lead us to springs of living water.

**We give you thanks for the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God.**

**We pledge ourselves to be servants to others, to seek not our own good, but to care for the hungry and thirsty people of the world.**

We renew our baptismal covenant with you, O God, praying for the strength to be faithful in all things, to your glory and for the service of your people. Amen.

### **Hymn 1864**

*Shall We Gather at the River?* **Words & Music: Robert Lowry,**

Shall we gather at the river,  
Where bright angels he has brought,  
With it's crystal tides forever  
Flowing by the throne of God

Yes, we'll gather at the river.  
The beautiful, the beautiful, river.  
Gather with the saints at the river,  
That flows by the throne of God

Ere we reach the shining river  
Lay we every burden down,

Praise our spirits will deliver  
And provide our robe and crown.

Yes, we'll gather at the river.  
The beautiful, the beautiful, river.  
Gather with the saints at the river,  
That flows by the throne of God

Soon we'll reach the shining river,  
Soon our pilgrimage will cease,  
Soon our happy hearts will quiver  
With the melody of peace.

Yes, we'll gather at the river.  
The beautiful, the beautiful, river.  
Gather with the saints at the river,  
That flows by the throne of God

### **A Unison Prayer\***

O God, we rejoice in your grace, given and received. We thank you that you have claimed us, that you wash us, strengthen us, and guide us, that you empower us to live a life worthy of our calling.

Make us as water in a dry and thirsty world. Make us places of refreshment. Root us and establish us in love, that with all your people, we may rightly and justly serve you.

Fill us with your fullness that our lives may overflow in service and love. Amen.

### **Benediction**

### **Postlude**

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\* Adapted from Source Materials found at <http://www.reformedworship.org> by **Arlo D. Duba**, professor of worship (emeritus) and former dean of the theological faculty, University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa.