

**SEASON OF EPIPHANY  
“WATER”  
Sermon by Karen Hilfman Millson  
St. Paul’s United Church, Orillia  
January 24, 2010**

It has been suggested  
that for those of us  
who want to create a new future,  
the biggest crisis we’re facing now  
is a crisis of creativity and imagination.  
That gives me hope –  
we have an abundance of creativity  
and imagination  
when we set them free  
to consider possibilities.

As Margaret Mead so beautifully puts it  
“Never doubt  
that a small group  
of thoughtful committed citizens  
can change the world  
– indeed –  
it is the only thing that ever has.

A poem by Drew Dillinger

*it’s 3:23 in the morning  
and I’m awake  
because my great great grandchildren  
won’t let me sleep  
my great great grandchildren  
ask me in dreams  
what did you do while the planet was plundered?  
what did you do when the earth was unraveling?  
surely you did something  
when the seasons started failing?  
as the mammals, reptiles, and birds were all dying?  
did you fill the streets with protest  
when democracy was stolen?  
what did you do  
once you knew?*

Strong in our tradition  
where God gives us  
dominion over all the earth –  
us use it for ourselves ...  
and we have.  
A key concept  
that is repeated again and again  
by authors like past moderator  
of the United Church , Bill Phipps  
in his book  
*Cause for Hope – Humanity at the Crossroads*  
and Alana Mitchell  
also of the United Church  
in her books  
*Dancing at the Dead Sea and Seasick*  
is that we need to be living  
by a new story...  
our story whatever it is...  
tells us what gives meaning in life  
– informs us in ways  
we're not always conscious of.  
One of the stories  
that has informed our world view,  
our consciousness –  
is in one of the creation story  
in our tradition  
where God gives us dominion over all the earth  
– us use it for ourselves  
... and we have.

A new story,  
a new consciousness is needed..  
and whatever that new story looks like,  
whether its rooted in cosmology  
and the story of the universe  
like Brian Swimmer  
and Thomas Berry  
suggests or some other story –  
the kernel of wisdom,  
the awareness  
that needs to be woven into this new story –  
is the awareness that all of creation is One –  
we are all interconnectors –  
what happens to one part of creation –  
happens to us all.

And that understanding  
of our profound interconnectedness  
is beginning to make a difference.  
There are people  
all over this planet  
who are awakening to the reality  
of how destructive our behaviours have been  
... and changers are being made.  
We are alive at an unbelievably exciting time!

A poem I wrote  
influenced by the thinking  
of Thomas Berry, Brian Swimmer, Drew Dulenge and others.

*A choice is before us  
as we stand at the crossroads of tomorrow*

*we can continue down the path  
we have been travelling  
that sees the world in mechanical terms  
there for the taking*

*or we can choose a new route  
that will become the foundation of a new era  
that will be the new age*

*as the Cenozoic period of abundance  
draws to a close  
there are two distinct paths to choose from  
which will we choose*

*the one coined as Technozoic era where we place  
our trust in technology  
with an eye  
to growing domination  
or Ecozoic era where we are intentional  
about sustainability/understanding  
creation to be one*

*Two choices with one that seems so clear  
and yet this modern world  
barrels down the highway  
filled with wars to control a resource  
that is killing us  
with blustering generals  
claiming hollow victories.*

*A choice is before us  
as we stand at the crossroads of tomorrow..  
as trees groan their anguished loss\  
as water gasps and struggles  
with garbage filled beds  
as plastics made of ancient carbon  
invade our atmosphere  
the cry arises throughout creation*

*Dreamer Awake  
from this nightmare of destruction  
that we call living and progress  
and enter into  
a new dream  
that honours creation  
that honours our oneness  
that honours the wisdom  
of the cosmos  
that speaks of  
awe inspiring wonder*

(A clip from Awakening the Dream –  
Thomas Berry – ecological justice)

Drew Dellinger  
– will be here March 30 –  
He weaves Berry's thinking with  
Martin Luther King Jr.  
Brian Swimme –  
cosmologist –  
despair at what we are doing –  
but great hope in new stars  
Maude Boulon)

A poem I wrote  
based on the concepts  
of the Symposium Awakening the Dreamer Changing the Dream.

*Awaken  
awaken dreamer  
from a dream that destroys  
and drains the life from our planet home*

*Awaken dreamer  
and change the dream*

*the matrix we have been living in  
is one of culture's choosing  
accumulated choices  
that have created a nightmare  
of disconnection*

*Wake up  
to the reality that we are one  
...that what happens to one  
part of creation happens to us all*

*The tumbleweed dry pastures  
are a reflection of our soul  
dried up through lack of nourishment  
due to overwork and lack of care*

*The ancient trees crashing to the ground  
area reflection of our values  
cuts off above our roots  
for the sake of profit that brings loss*

*The waters of our oceans  
turning too acidic  
to sustain life as we know it  
are a reflection of the acid taste  
upon our tongues and  
deep in our guts  
as we live choices  
that escalate the destruction  
as polar bears, tigers  
and miniscule species  
cry out with dying breath*

*My eyes were opened  
by a short video  
that tells just how much water  
is used in different aspects of our lives:*

(power point)

When we focused on water  
this month at Wisdom Circle  
and then again at 3:30 Live! –  
it was an eye opener to me  
to hear statistics  
about just how much water

our life style here in Canada uses –  
where we seem to have  
the impression  
that the supply of fresh water,  
is not a problem we have to be concerned about.

*At 3:30 Live!*  
Fred noted  
that he was shocked  
to discover that the amount of water  
used to flush the toilet  
one time in a day –  
is equal or more water  
than many people in this world  
have available for use in a day.

It is estimated  
that if the current trends continue -  
two thirds  
of the people on the planet  
will not have adequate access  
to clean water by the year 2025 ...  
not only people who suffer –  
many of the watering holes  
for our much loved animals are already drying up.

Last year,  
water bottling companies  
put close to 170 billion litres of fresh water  
into plastic bottles –  
to sell to people like us –  
who have access to fresh water.  
At the presentation on water  
at Wisdom Circle  
we saw a video clip  
of women in India  
who had walked long distances to a common well –  
to discover there was no water –  
their anguish and anger was clear.  
But here –  
where water is in every tap in our homes –  
we have become a culture  
that use bottled water –  
that creates more pollution –  
because plastic bottles are made with oil  
and oil is an old carbon –

that our atmosphere can not sustain.

This sacred resource  
needs to be honoured –  
rather than polluted,  
diverted,  
wasted ...  
which is the pattern  
that has been escalating  
to the point where many say  
that we are on the threshold of a global water crises.  
Right now,  
approximately one third of the world's population  
is suffering from water scarcity.

Every 8 seconds,  
somewhere in the world,  
a child dies of water-borne disease.

Water – one of three sacramental symbols in our tradition.

Water, Bread, Wine

Each one – a sign of grace

Water – sacred – sacramental  
- nourishment for body and soul

...and yet  
we are causing destruction to this amazing gift.  
And without water –  
life cannot exist.  
The water we have now  
is all we ever will have –  
the same water that existed on earth  
billions of years ago is still here today.

Like many of us  
I have always been drawn to the water ..  
as a child I sat on a rock  
just off the rocky shore on Georgian Bay,  
surrounded by crashing waves –  
in a place that felt like abundance life.

Like many of us  
I return to water  
whenever I can  
on the shores of oceans  
or rivers, by waterfalls or lakes.

Memories of joy and connection and nourishment.