

Blue Revolution: Unmaking America's Water Crisis

Cynthia Barnett

Creating a Water Ethic at Your Place of Worship



Individuals and congregations approach water, both symbolically and in actual ritual and practice, from different traditions – Baptism among Christians, ritual washing in Judaism, the Muslim purification ritual before prayer – and with different core beliefs, from stewardship to justice. Water as a basic human right is a universal tenet of faith, and many congregations are already engaged in the global work of achieving access to clean water for all. Closer to home, here are some hands-on ideas for sharing the ethic inside your place of worship:

- Organize member educational trips/talks to learn about your local watershed. Helping residents know and understand where their water comes from is one of the most important things you can do.
- Devote a sermon and/or Bible study to the roles of water and stewardship in your faith.
- Host a congregational read of one of a variety of books on water. Check to see what is written on this subject in your own faith tradition.
- Devote a Sunday school session to water, educating children on biblical themes surrounding water.
- Create a family demonstration project with the adult and children's Sunday school, such as painting a rain barrel or building a rain garden.
- Launch a water-conservation retrofit for all buildings and facilities. Changes as simple as screwing on faucet aerators and installing hand-sanitizer stations save thousands of gallons. Make posters to show members how much they've saved.
- Become a role model for water-friendly landscaping, gradually switching irrigated sod for native landscaping. Visually show members how beautiful water-friendly grounds can be.
- Seek Green Certification for your place of worship such as the interfaith Greenfaith.org, UUA's Green Sanctuary Program, or a variety of others that are available.
- Organize/sponsor volunteer water projects, such as a local river clean-up.
- For other field trips, consider the sewage-treatment plant. How does your community deal with wastewater? What about stormwater? How could your church help curb stormwater runoff?
- Host a half-day water forum with a series of speakers to help members learn about water issues locally, nationally and globally.
- Cohost a water lecture series with other congregations or your local Interfaith Alliance chapter that links water-use ethics and local water-resource issues. Join fellow congregations to share experiences, learn best practices and set benchmarks for a higher water-stewardship ethic.
- Finally, if water issues are divisive in your community, consider your place of worship as a source of unity to bring opposing sides together. Just as the faith community helped us heal in the wake of 9/11 and other difficult times, your role as mediator could be invaluable in sparking civil dialogue and finding common ground.