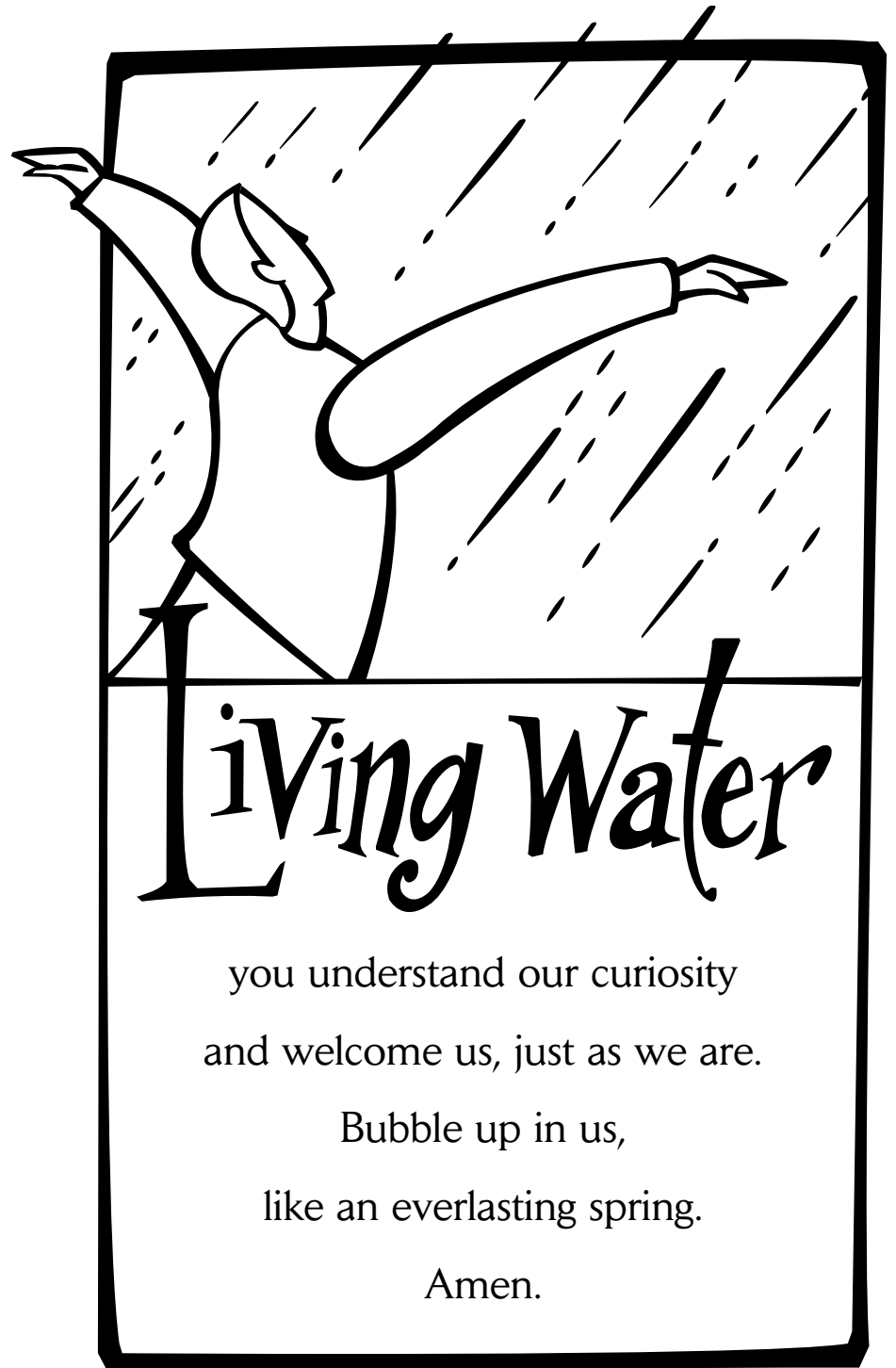


Prayer Practices

- ♦ Providing clean, safe drinking water is one of the most important ways to assist the developing world. It improves basic health standards and empowers people to live longer, healthier lives. Contact your denominational office for information on how your congregation could support such an effort. Then choose a favorite beverage and, for each serving you have this week, challenge yourself to make a special “thanks offering” for the privilege of living in a place where safe and clean water is readily available.
- ♦ The story of the Samaritan woman invites us to stop and think about people we may be judging. Think of a situation like this and write or draw something to represent your disapproval and disappointment. Each day this week, pray for the strength to understand and care for the person, rather than judge them. As you do this, color over, erase, fold, tear, or transform the paper in some way so that over time, the picture grows smaller as your desire to understand and stop judging grows stronger. Talk to someone about what you are learning about yourself as a result.
- ♦ Return to Matthew 6 and rephrase verses 14-15 in your own words.

Let this be your focus for the week. Recall it as part of your prayers, during walks, when you volunteer to serve, or as you use a labyrinth. Remember times you have known what its like to be thirsty as well as ways you have experience refreshment in the love of Jesus, the living water.



Thirsty for community

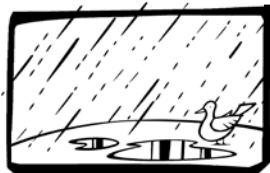
In John 4 we learn the story of the Samaritan woman who met Jesus while she was at the village well. Everyone needed water each day – water for cooking, bathing, drinking. So each day, someone from each household needed to go to the well. In this way, the well became a community meeting place.

But the Samaritan woman came to the well alone. John tells us that she was probably shunned by the community because of the way she lived. She may have thirsted for friendship and acceptance, but she came when no one else would be there to judge or mock her. Instead, she met Jesus.

Jesus is alone, tired, and thirsty from his journey. We don't know why he doesn't go into the town with his disciples, but here he is at Jacob's well, when the woman approaches. Jesus asks her for a drink of water.

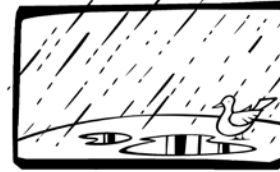
This might sound like a simple enough request, but the scene is charged with social customs that would make it inappropriate. First, Jewish men didn't speak to women in public. Besides this, she is a Samaritan – considered by Jews to be unclean. No one in Jesus' day would approve of this conversation; yet it is the longest recorded encounter Jesus has with anyone.

Jesus' thirst is a sign of his full humanity. Thirst is his deep connection to the Samaritan woman. It is also a connection to us, and to all those in our world who lack safe drinking water, as well as those who are thirsty for justice.



Read John 4:5-11. When have you experienced “dry times”? Was it physical, spiritual, or both? What, if anything, did you do to satisfy your thirst and longing? What help, if any, did you receive?

Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutierrez writes, “Discipleship is rooted in the experience of an encounter with Jesus Christ.” After she met Jesus and talked with him, the woman went out and kept on talking! She told everyone she knew about Jesus and as a result, they came to meet Jesus too.



In John 4:29 the woman tells anyone who will listen, “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done!

He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” The woman who had been branded as “unworthy” became a powerful witness about Jesus. Name some surprising people or places who have taught you about Jesus. How surprised are you that Jesus would spend time with someone that people in the community thought of as unworthy?

We may remember this story as one in which a woman is “saved” after Jesus offers her living water, but at the heart of the story is *Jesus'* need. He comes to the well, tired and thirsty. In the same way he continues to come to every place where someone is without the necessities of life.

This story reminds us that as we journey, we all experience times of thirst and need. At times we must be willing to ask for living water; at other times we are called to respond to the needs of others. Both are signs of our baptismal calling. It's a natural consequence – as we find deep refreshment in the living water Jesus offers, that water bubbles up within us and out to others.