

Drinking mindfully

A GROUP REFLECTION ON THE VALUE AND WONDERS OF WATER

Items needed: a clear glass pitcher of cold water, a clear glass cup for each participant, plants, flowers, diving mask, toothbrush, soap or any other water related items.

Begin by pouring water into each person's glass.

LEADER: Take a sip of water, focusing on how it feels as it enters your mouth and as you swallow.

The hydrogen that makes up your water existed at the beginning of the universe. It is older than the Earth itself. Water now covers three quarters of our planet. It is frozen in polar icecaps, fills oceans and lakes, and flows in rivers and streams. Earth is the only planet in our solar system that has liquid water on its surface. Water is our planet's lifeblood.

LEADER: Take another sip and reflect on our blue planet.

The first living cell, Earth's first life, swam in primordial waters just as each of us swam in the waters of our mother's womb. The salty taste of our blood reminds us of the saline seas. Just as water travels the Earth, the water in our bodies moves from cell to cell, carrying necessary nutrients and removing wastes. Water is essential to life.

LEADER: Take another sip and reflect on the miracle of water.

Imagine waking up on a bright sunny morning. You turn on the kitchen tap but nothing happens. No water flows. You check every tap, indoors and out. They are all dry. You look in the fridge and in every cupboard and find no bottled water. You see the morning paper on the kitchen table and quickly read the headline news. There has been a major accident in your town. The government has declared a state of emergency. Roads are closed. At the bottom of the page is a map showing the locations of emergency water stations. Your heart sinks as you realize you and your family will have to walk over two kilometres for water.

Water has suddenly become a precious commodity. You can no longer take it for granted.

How will your life be affected?

Who will collect the water?

How often will you have to go for water?

What will you no longer be able to do?

LEADER: Take another sip and reflect on how you have taken water for granted.

In the majority of the world, having enough water to survive is a constant worry. Women and children are responsible for getting the household water. This can take as much as six hours a day, leaving little time for schooling, earning money or caring for one's family. As well, carrying heavy loads of water can cause serious health problems.

LEADER: Imagine you have just walked six hours barefoot in the hot sun to fetch the water in your glass. Now take another sip.

Water brings life, but it can also bring death, typhoid fever, cholera, diarrhea. As you drink this water, be assured it is cleaner than the water available to our sisters and brothers in the majority world.

LEADER: Take a sip and be grateful for clean water.

Water gives many gifts. We are relaxed and comforted by a warm bath, refreshed by a summer swim and invigorated by an ocean breeze. Our skates and skis, toboggans and snowboards travel over water transformed by cold. Our souls are fed by the magnificence of a waterfall, the serenity of a lakeside sunset, the companionship of a gurgling stream.

LEADER: Take a sip and reflect on the sacredness of water.

The last book of the Bible ends with these words: "And let everyone who is thirsty come.

Let anyone who wishes

take the water of life as a gift." (Revelation 22:17)

LEADER: As you finish your glass, be mindful of all that we have reflected on. Think of those who have no access to water.

You may wish to end with a prayer, a song, or a moment of silence, followed by a time for participants to express their thoughts or feelings on the meditation.

Adapted from text written by Marika Ince, DEVELOPMENT & PEACE member, Burlington, Ontario.