



CHURCH of  
the SAVIOUR

2537 Lee Road  
Cleveland Heights, OH 44118-4136  
Telephone: 216-321-8880  
Website: [www.COTSumc.org](http://www.COTSumc.org)

## **“Make a Splash!”**

**July 10, 2022**

*Genesis 1:1-2, 9-10*

*Rev. Amanda Moseng, Pastor of Discipleship*

My first year of summer camp at Sr. High Institute was in 2001 when I was a rising freshman in high school. One of the most fun parts of camp was the afternoon activities. There were many different options: music, sports, water activities, art, board games or card games. There was something for everyone. I decided to be adventurous and try something I had never done before: canoeing. Sr. High Institute was held at Epworth Forest, which was on Lake Webster. For five afternoons, my canoeing partner and I carried our canoe down to the non-beachy part of the lakeshore, climbed in, and paddled our way around Lake Webster. I remember the distinct instruction to not go through the lily pads, which is asking quite a lot of teens who have mostly never canoed before. I can recall the gentle lapping of the paddle in the water, being sure to “make it in the shape of a J for Jesus” with each stroke. I can feel the warmth of the June summer sun, the splashing of water, the joy of exploring the lake. I loved it. However, one particular afternoon turned a bit treacherous. We were out on the water when all of a sudden, the sky turned dark and covered with clouds. The once smooth waters started getting choppy. I was in the back of the canoe and I could see my partner bearing the brunt of the waves as the canoe slapped down on the water with each wave. We all headed back to the lakeshore, doing our best to go perpendicular to the waves so that we would not exhaust our energy fighting the waves. We did not have very far to go, but it was enough to be scary. Either we had read the story of Jesus calming the waves that week or I just happened to remember it, because I prayed and asked God to help us, to calm the waves and for us to not be afraid. I looked back and the water behind us was still. We still had waves to get through, but I was confident and assured of God’s presence with us in that moment.

Today we are continuing in our July sermon series, Summer Camp. I am having a lot of fun sharing about my camping experience and in the next few Sundays we will hear camping stories from Rev. Call and people from Church of the Saviour. This week we will Make a Splash by exploring the theme of water all throughout scripture. Most importantly, we will consider how God is asking every one of us to Make a Splash, to live out our unique calling in the world. Let’s dive in!

Water is crucial to life. According to the United State Geological Survey, approximately 71% of the earth is covered in water.<sup>1</sup> The oceans hold about 96.5% of all the Earth’s water. Water also exists in the air as water vapor, in rivers and lakes, in icecaps and glaciers, in the ground as soil moisture and in aquifers, and in living beings such as you and me. In fact, the human body is composed of roughly 60% water, credit again to the USGS. Water is essential to life. Water is crucial to all of our organ systems and helps keep everything balanced and regulated. We all know how it feels to be dehydrated. It takes a toll on our entire body. Kudos to anyone who is now feeling the need to get a drink of water. The power of suggestion is strong!

Not only is water essential to life, but it is also an essential part of scripture. Water is included at the start of the bible and at the very end, as well. Our passage today from Genesis 1 reads, “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.” There were primordial waters present at creation, waters and chaos that would soon be ordered. At the end of the bible, we have Revelation 22:17 reads, “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let everyone who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift.” In this case, water of life can be understood as a metaphor for salvation, water infused with eternal life, living water. We will circle back to the concept of living water.

Water is mentioned 722 times in scripture. This means that water is mentioned more often than love, faith, hope, and worship! This tells us that water is a significant theme in scripture. Water flows all throughout scripture. If

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<sup>1</sup> USGS, <https://www.usgs.gov/special-topics/water-science-school/science/how-much-water-there-earth>.

scripture was a river, Genesis would be the source, or the headwater, while Revelation would be the mouth, or delta. It all flows together, a current that supports all of scripture. Water has both physical and spiritual meaning.

When you think of water in scripture, what is the first passage that comes to mind? For me, I most often think of Jesus calming the storm. There are many scripture stories that revolve around water. I want to raise three broad categories of symbolism for water in scripture: creation and order from chaos, healing and renewal, and baptism. We will look at each category and ultimately, see how God is calling us to make a splash.

First, creation and order from chaos. This is represented in the second portion of our scripture for today, Genesis 1:9-10, "And God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. <sup>10</sup> God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good." On the first three days of creation, God created the major domains of the cosmos by creating new things and using them to separate the primeval materials of chaos. God gathered all of the waters into one place to let the dry land appear. The separation of the waters and the land completed the ordering of chaos that was necessary to support life. This is a story about chaos and order, particularly God bringing order to chaos. God continues to do this work in our lives and the world God continues to bring order to our chaos. God is restoring, remaking, rebuilding, and refining.<sup>2</sup> This idea of chaos and order reminds us of Noah's ark and the flood, Moses and the Israelites crossing the Red Sea, Jonah and the whale, Jesus walking on water, and Jesus calming the storm. With just a word the seas obey God. When God commanded the seas to move, they moved. God brings order to chaos. What parts of your life are feeling chaotic? Where are the waves becoming too much? What would it mean for you to hear Jesus speak, "peace, be still"? It feels like complete and utter chaos in our nation right now, not to mention the world. We might not see the fullness of God bringing order to chaos, but we trust and hope that God's word is true. The wind and the waves obey Jesus. It might feel like we are drowning but his hand is reaching out, ready to keep us steady.

Second, water represents healing and renewal. For me, this brings to mind a cold drink of water on a hot day, a hot shower or bath after a long day, splashing in the waves at the beach. Water is so refreshing and critical to a vibrant, healthy life. We see that water was an agent in many healing narratives in scripture, including the healing of Naaman, the Syrian healed of leprosy in the Jordan River in 2 Kings 5, the blind man who was healed by washing in the pool of Siloam in John 9, among many others. In addition, the healing and renewal do not need to be physical. When Jesus encountered the Samaritan woman at the well, he asked her for a drink of water. She said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>10</sup> Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink", you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.' <sup>11</sup> The woman said to him, 'Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?' <sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?' <sup>13</sup> Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.' <sup>15</sup> The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.'" In this passage Jesus introduces the concept of living water, something he would define a few chapters later as the Holy Spirit. Jesus was offering her spiritual renewal. This living water was infused with life and salvation. Through Jesus we have renewal and restoration. What areas of your life need the stream of living water to flow through them? Where do you need renewal and healing? Jesus offers these things to us.

Third, water represents baptism. Baptism itself symbolizes cleansing and new life. In the United Methodist Church, we believe that baptism is an outward and visible sign of the grace of God, through which grace we become partakers of Jesus Christ's righteousness and heirs of eternal life. Baptism symbolizes cleansing, rebirth, and new life. In baptism we participate in Christ's death and resurrection, dying to our old self and being raised to new life. This is particularly evident with baptism by submersion, but the water sprinkled or poured on us at baptism is representative of that raising to new life. Baptism is a sign of rebirth and new life in Christ. Jesus Christ himself was baptized by John the Baptist. Matthew 3:13-17 tells the story: <sup>13</sup> Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. <sup>14</sup> John would have prevented him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' <sup>15</sup> But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfil all righteousness.' Then he consented. <sup>16</sup> And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. <sup>17</sup> And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved,<sup>[d]</sup> with

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<sup>2</sup> Ashley Danyew, <https://www.ashleydanyew.com/posts/2017/worship-planning-theme-water>.

whom I am well pleased.” The Gospel of Matthew is essentially bookended with baptism, when we consider Jesus’ Great Commission in Matthew 28:19, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

We have explored three main themes of water in scripture: creation and order from chaos, healing and renewal, and baptism, and you might be wondering, what does all of this have to do with making a splash? Is that just a fun, catchy sermon title? Well, yes! But when I think of making a splash, I think of a personal contribution. What am I doing to make a difference? For this, we are going to back up into baptism once again. Through baptism, God calls and commissions us to the general ministry of all believers, also known as the priesthood of all believers.<sup>3</sup> This ministry, which we do individually and corporately, is the work of discipleship. This ministry is grounded in the awareness that we have been called into a new relationship not only with God, but also the world. Our task as Christians is to embody the gospel. We exercise our calling as Christians through prayer, witnessing to the good news of Jesus Christ, caring for and serving other people, and by working toward reconciliation, justice, and peace in the world. My call to representative and set apart ministry as an Ordained Elder came to me in my baptism. I am living out my baptismal call. We all have a calling that originates in our baptism. How are you participating in God’s mission? How are you witnessing to the good news of Jesus, caring for and serving others, and working for reconciliation, justice, and peace? How are you making a splash?

Water flows all throughout scripture, all throughout this earth, and all throughout us, as well. God is creating, recreating, and bringing order out of chaos. God speaks to the storms of life with “Peace, be still.” God is granting us healing and renewal. Through Jesus we have access to the living water, water infused with life and the promise of eternity. God is pouring out grace to us through baptism and offering us new life. As the community of the baptized we all have a calling. We all have ways to serve, give, and love. How about you? How will you make a splash? Jump on in! The water is fine. Thanks be to God. Amen.

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<sup>3</sup> By Water and the Spirit, <https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/gbod-assets/generic/BWASWITHINDEXINTRO.PDF>, 14