



GLOBAL
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COUNCIL OF
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CLASS OF 2008-9

Networking
Newsletter II

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Christian Mission

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March, 2009
Water & Christian Mission

TROUBLED WATERS

By Holly Adams, Yale Divinity School

Water covers nearly 75% of the earth's surface. Yet, water is at the heart of justice concerns and has been since the beginning of time. The problem is that less than 3% of it is fresh water, and of that, only 1% is available and accessible, the rest being permanently frozen or in deep underground aquifers. As a result,

- ✦ Over 1.2 billion people (almost 17%) have no access to safe fresh water;
- ✦ About 80% of disease in two-thirds of the world stems from unsafe drinking water and sanitation;
- ✦ More than 3 million people, mostly children, die annually from preventable water related diseases;
- ✦ Over 33% of global households have no water inside the home, requiring long treks to distant sources usually for women and children;
- ✦ Half of the world's poorest countries will face serious water shortages by 2025 because of the depletion and contamination of watershed areas.

(Source: Food and Water Watch; Pacific Institute; Church World Service, and National Council of Churches USA)

Water is not only a scarcity. Water, that life-giving and life-sustaining force, has moved from a sacred heritage to a lucrative commodity. The privatization of water has placed the right to economic freedom over the rights of people to a natural life-giving resource. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) have become the most common model of water privatization: the government grants a lease to deliver water service and maintain the operating system; the corporation receives all the revenues and surplus; and the consumers must pay up to 150% more (as in France), or 50% of their income as in Lima.

("Nothing Sacred: The Privatization of Water," *Horizons*, March/April 2005, 4-7.)

This is prohibitive to many. In 2002, the UN Commission on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights issued a document, later amended as General Comment No. 15, that recognized the human obligation to provide humanity with an adequate standard of living and the right to health through accessible and safe water.

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**“Let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”
By Rebekah Cypert, Brite Divinity School**

Water is the common thread in the fabric of life. Water is essential, indispensable, and life-giving. Our reliance on water is abundant; we need water to quench our thirst, cook our meals, grow our crops, as a source of power, to build, travel, clean, sanitize and so much more. It's hard to think of an aspect of life that doesn't involve water. Additionally, images of water flow throughout scripture: the deep waters of creation, waters of chaos with the flood, women at wells, parting seas, and baptisms in flowing rivers. A familiar and frequently quoted biblical verse embedded with water is Amos 5: 24, "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." In this passage, the vigorous use of water imagery appears in Amos' vision for justice and righteous is both cleansing and constant. However, more than one billion people worldwide do not have access to clean water and water-related diseases are the leading cause of death in the world, taking the lives of 6,000 people a day.

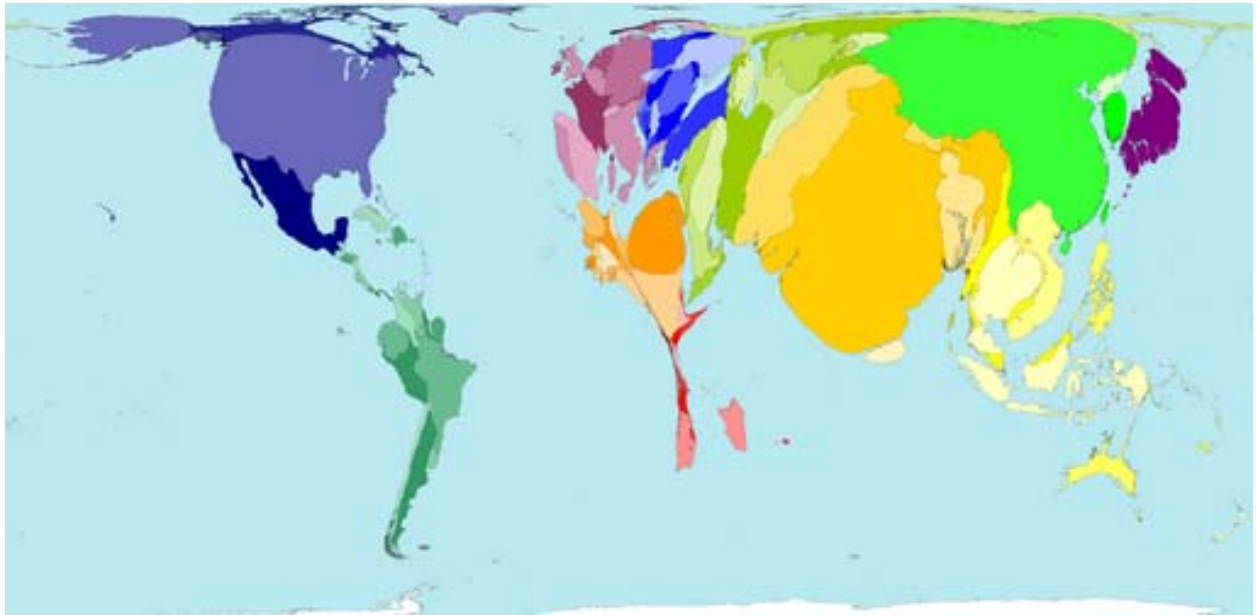
(www.churchworldservice.org/site/PageServer?pagename=action_what_water_main)

What does it mean for God's justice to come like a waterfall and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream? For Amos' context, "the hope of ever flowing water was surely a potent and wondrous image from Amos's ancient Israelite audience, who generally observed dry streambeds that were only occasionally filled with water when carrying the runoff from a heavy rain." (Susan Ackerman, "Amos 5:18-24," *Interpretation* 57, no. 2 (2003): 190-193).

The powerful imagery in v. 24 is obvious when placed next to v. 7 for comparison. "Ah, you that turn justice to wormwood, and bring righteousness to the ground!" (Amos 5: 7) Wormwood because of the bitterness means "undrinkable." "Easton's Bible Dictionary," [cited 2008]. Available from <http://eastonsbibledictionary.com/w/wormwood.htm>.)

Therefore, "justice as rolling down like waters" perhaps is intended to represent justice as life-giving drinkable water. Justice rolling down like undrinkable water is a violent image. But justice rolling down like life giving drinkable water is a hopeful image. It is no wonder why Martin Luther King Jr. drew upon this passage to highlight "the fierce urgency of now" and the "cleansing action of revolutionary change." Ackerman, *Amos 5: 18-24*, 190-193.

Amos paid close attention to the roots of injustice in his prosperous context. If we were to pay close attention to today's prosperous context of "Hummers" and bottled water, we would notice the roots of ecological injustice. As people in today's world, we need to hear the call of God and see with real clarity water related injustices. Amos challenging the status quo was risky, but justice should roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing steam. If justice were to come like a mighty waterfall, what consumption practices might get washed away? If righteousness were to come like an ever-flowing stream, what environmental habits should we sustain?



Territory size shows the proportion of worldwide water use occurring there.

Four thousand cubic kilometers of water are used by people each year around the world, for domestic, agricultural and other industrial purposes. This does not include non-consumptive uses such as energy generation, mining, and recreation.

China, India and the United States use the most water. These are also the territories where the most people live. But water use per person is about three times higher in the United States than it is in India and China.

Whilst everybody needs water, people use hugely varying quantities. On average, people living in Central Africa each use only 2% of the water used by each person living in North America.

www.worldmapper.org/display.php?selected=104

Water and War

By Kathy Weaver, Philips Theological Seminary

"For my part, I am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life..." Genesis 6:17.

"Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herders and my herders...Lot looked about him and saw that the plain of the Jordan was well watered, everywhere like the garden of the Lord..." Genesis 12:8-10.

"But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." Amos 5:24.

"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." John 4:10.

Images of water and strife fill the Bible. Likewise, water-metaphors for grace, justice, and forgiveness balance the war motifs presented in the ancient stories of the first and second testaments.

Civilization began in the fertile levants and watershed areas of the globe. Conflict over what was then an abundant source of life centered on the control of rivers, lakes, and shores of available bodies of water. Seasons dictated by the cycles of drought and flood controlling the planting and harvesting of crops.

Life centered on the threshing floors and wells in villages. Many socio-cultural studies of life in the Biblical era stress the major importance of water in the peasant life of the ancient world.

Implied in these stories of journeys, communities, and honor/shame paradigms are flocks, crops, wells, and family cohesion around a common water source. Water is life. Where there is no water, there is no life. This basic truism holds for the 21st century, just as it did for the ancient world. Because water is such a precious commodity, its control has always been a source of strife.

Because the earliest biblical writers took this fact for granted, it also held true in the oral tradition from which the writings evolved. Water has always been a source for war and conflict.

Many nights on television images are projected showing refugee camps in other countries where the availability of drinkable water reaches crisis proportions. Many times the groups controlling the camps control the water to keep the inhabitants submissive.

The sources of conflicts around the world are multi-valent and complex, but usually include the control of water sources in the dynamic. During the 2006 conflict in Lebanon, one event escaped the coverage of the multitude of incidents taking place. Israeli bombs of irrigation canals supplying water from the Litani River to farmlands along the coastal plain and parts of the Bekaa Valley threatened thousands of livelihoods.

Turkish dams on the Tigris and Euphrates river systems threaten multitudes of Syrian and Iraqi farmers.

Continued from page 4, Kathy Weaver

River diversion plans under consideration in China and India threaten farmers in Bangladesh.

In the Middle East, the world's "most severely water-stressed region," more than 90 percent of usable water crosses international borders. ("How to Avoid War over Water." www.commondreams.org/views06/0823-21.htm. Accessed 1/10/09.)

The United States is not immune to the water crisis. Georgia and Tennessee vehemently dialog about water in the Tennessee River. Georgia also claims access to two watersheds: The Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint Rivers with Alabama and Florida, and the Alabama-Coosa-Tallapoosa with Alabama. Complicating the situation is adherence to the Endangered Species Act, which mandates the amount of water that can be drawn from a particular source if an endangered species is present.

Similar conflicts exist in other parts of the United States. Of particular concern in Oklahoma, Nebraska, and Texas is the draining of the Ogallala Aquifer, which situates under these states. This aquifer supplies water to the three states, and contributes 31 percent of the water used in agriculture in the West.

If current levels of extraction continue, it will be dry within 25 years. (Angela Herrman, "We Americans Have Enough, Don't We?" in *Disciples World*, Volume 7, Issue 6, July/August, pages 12-14.) While armed conflict over water is unlikely in the United States, a future war over water is a distinct possibility, according to Klaus Toepfer, Director-General of the United Nations Environmental Programme. ("War Over Water Predicted by United Nations Environmental Official," www.sciencedail.com/releases/1999/01/990106075344.htm. Accessed 1/10/09.)

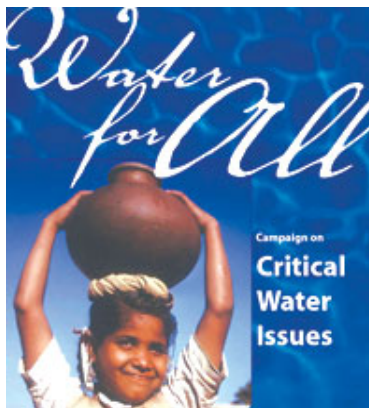
Desalinization of sea and ocean water costs over \$1,000 per acre-foot, too expensive for most developing nations. Additionally, instability in conflicted regions makes construction of such facilities risky, with no profit incentive.

Who owns the water? Who has the right to control the water? As a limited-renewable resource (condensation through rain), water ultimately becomes an issue of stewardship, ethics, and justice. Questions about who owns and controls the water quickly become questions about who does not have access to clean, drinkable water. This group generally consists of the poor, oppressed, and marginalized, the very group that Jesus taught we were to care for.

WATER for ALL

Over 1 billion people in the world lack sustainable access to fresh water. Global Ministries is raising awareness about the critical needs for fresh and accessible water around the world through the Water for All! campaign. We invite you to learn why water is a critical issue for study and action.

Global Ministries Advocacy and Education invites you to help support efforts on water conservation. Water is a vital ingredient for life. It is a gift from God for all creation and should be viewed as such a gift, not a commodity for profitable gain. As responsible stewards of God's gifts, we need to help protect the gift of water by going beyond verbal expressions of concern -- we must act.



Special Giving Opportunities

[Extension of the Clean Water System](#)

Honduras

[Special Giving Opportunities in Vietnam](#)

Vietnam

[Water Wells of Machaze](#)

Mozambique

[Synodical Board of Social Services](#)

[CNI Drought Relief Program](#)

India

[School water projects](#)

Lesotho

[Water Wells in Kenya and East Africa](#)

Kenya

[Loving people wells](#)

China

[Water: An Essential Ingredient](#)

Egypt

This document specified, "The human right to water entitles everybody to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses." (General Comment No. 15, Para 2, computed from "Identifying and Addressing Violations of the Human Right to Water," Ecumenical Water Network, [EWN_Right_to_Water.pdf](#).) This is good news, but not nearly enough to make clean water available everywhere.

Where governments around the world have failed to protect their waters as a shared legacy, church missions and other NGO's have

abundant opportunities for partnering with those areas with the least water in Africa and Asia.

At home, churches may develop a *Water Ethic* as part of its Green commitment, to educate communities on the common concerns for water conservation. Education begins with tracing the water from its abundant flow from the kitchen faucet back to its source, through a watershed. The water-shed is where heavy development has reduced the amount of drainable land surface, through a purifying system.

This is where technology removes water faster than it can be replenished, through streams receiving industrial waste and agricultural toxins for decades, and ultimately to its source.

As Jesus' disciples, what are we meant to do? Can we find a way to take the living water to someone in a land as strange as Samaria? Or help to dig a well so that a village can survive? Or advocate for the cooperative ownership of natural living waters? Or to turn away, because the 3 million deaths a year from water-borne illness are not our problem?

What would Jesus want **US** to do?

Resources to help you explore this issue and your mission involvement More Available at www.globalministries.org under Resources

[Water Activities: Water Jug Lift](#)

<http://globalministries.org/resources/youth-and-children/water-activities-water-jug-lift.html>

Description: Even when clean water is available, it often has to be carried a long way—sometimes many miles! This fun activity introduces children and youth to the realities of water accessibility for many children around the world.

[Water Activities: A Global Water Lesson](#)

<http://globalministries.org/resources/youth-and-children/water-activities-a-global-water.html>

About that 20-minute shower... Water is a precious natural resource. Because in many parts of the Western world water seems so abundant, we might easily take it for granted. This activity is designed to help participants visualize the world's distribution of water and see how important our conservation efforts are.

[Water Activities: Elma's Story](#) <http://globalministries.org/resources/youth-and-children/water-activities-elmas-story.html>

This activity helps children understand the realities that many children in the world live with in regard to accessible, clean water.

[Water for All: Worship Resources](#)

<http://globalministries.org/water/water-worship-worship-resources.html>

Prayers, liturgies, benedictions and more for congregations to use in worship in relation to water.

Examples

[Water Wells of Machaze](http://globalministries.org/africa/projects/water-wells-of-machaze.html) <http://globalministries.org/africa/projects/water-wells-of-machaze.html>

United Church of Christ in Mozambique

The scarcity of water in Machaze is a very serious problem and heavily affects women and girls who walk long distances and stand in line for hours to get one bucket of water. In many cases, girls are forced to abandon school to guarantee water for the family. In addition to the scarcity of water, past efforts to provide more access have had limited results because the water table in this area is very deep and wells have not been dug deeply enough.

The project will consist in the construction of four water wells with depths more than 110 meters. One well will be dug in the four communities of Chitobe, District Centre, Basane and Chidoko. It is estimated that about 100 families would benefit from each of these wells.

[Chilean Water Project](http://globalministries.org/lac/projects/chilean-water-project.html) <http://globalministries.org/lac/projects/chilean-water-project.html>

Shalom Center, Pentecostal Church of Chile

Chile has moved to democracy slowly after 17 years of a repressive military regime that left large sectors of the Chilean people in poverty and suffering the effects of 17 years of human rights violations and exploitation. The ghost of the military regime still haunts the country in many ways, even though democratic government administrations, sectors of Chilean congress, social organizations, and churches have challenged and continue to challenge the legacy of impunity of those who violated human rights for almost two decades. Reconciliation continues to be an issue of justice that still keeps the wounds open for many Chileans. The Shalom Ministry, a program of Global Ministries partner, the Pentecostal Church of Chile (IPC), endeavors to develop programs and resources that provide leadership in the reconciliation of this country. One such project is the Shalom Center and Campground "A Place for Re-encounters" (*Un Lugar de Reencuentros*).

Because, as everywhere, safe water is fundamental for life, the Shalom Center water project will improve access to existing safe water sources and will help to create the means necessary to access new sources. It is hoped that this will enhance other activities carried out at the Shalom Center.

[Globalization, water, and the Congo](http://globalministries.org/get-involved/justice-and-advocacy/water/globalization-water-and-the-co.html)

<http://globalministries.org/get-involved/justice-and-advocacy/water/globalization-water-and-the-co.html>

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has been affected by globalization in many ways. The most damaging of these effects can be shown in the recent war in the DRC...In many ways, this war in the DRC was a war over mineral resources used in the global economy. The DRC has valuable deposits of diamonds, coltan, copper, tin, and cassiterite. Another effect of the war, as the Oxfam GB report of 2001 stated, "Only 45 percent of the people have access to safe drinking water. In some rural areas, this is as low as three percent." In some ways this is another irony because the DRC lies within the basin of the Congo River, the second largest river in volume in the world. The vast majority of the population of the DRC lives within a few miles of a source of water. The scarcity is not the scarcity of water, itself. It is the scarcity of safe drinking water. This leads to a high rate of waterborne diseases

[Water and Sanitation Critical Situation in the Gaza Strip - Immediate Attention and Action with Israeli Authorities Called](http://globalministries.org/news/mee/gaza-sanitation-critical.html) <http://globalministries.org/news/mee/gaza-sanitation-critical.html>

Ms. Fadia Daibes, country representative of DanChurchAid has sent out this press release from the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility of the Gaza Strip on the dangerous situation of water and sanitation there.

Global Ministries Council of Theological Students Roster – 2008-9

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