

Blessing for Groundbreaking
UCF Sanctuary Building
June 10, 2021

First, water.

Each year, in a ritual we call Waters of Ministry, members and friends of this Unitarian Coastal Fellowship gather to mark moments of ministry that have touched our lives. We bring to the gathering small samples of water associated with those moments: tears, or sweat; rain or snowmelt; freely running fresh or salt water from places that have blessed us. We pour these waters together, into this chalice, the symbol of our Unitarian Universalist tradition – a vessel open to hold blessed wine or water; a vessel open to share its blessings with all who would partake. And, each year, we bless our gathered waters with stories, with prayers, with song.

In this bottle are the Waters of Ministry that we have gathered and blessed and offered to one another and to the world over the past eighteen years. Dancing in these waters are a million moments of ministry that have caught you and me and those whose lives have touched ours. **I pour these waters into this chalice**, that the blessings they hold may be present among us now.

And now, the land, and the people.

For thousands of years, Iroquoian people known as the Coree and the Tuscarora lived in this place. They made their homes here, lived their lives here, loved and honored and cared for this land. Let us invite into our midst the spirit of these Indigenous people and of their descendants, who still live in this area. May their history and their legacy be a blessing on this place.

In 1950, Faith Free Will Baptist built a church in this place. For seventy years, here, they worshipped God and served humanity; they loved and honored and cared for this small piece of land. Let us invite into our midst the spirit of these faithful people who ministered here; who tended this ground and passed it along to us. May their history and their legacy be a blessing on this place.

In 1980, as Melva has recounted, the founders of this Unitarian Coastal Fellowship dreamed of a growing, thriving, welcoming church that would embody the Spirit of Life and Love; that would serve the world with vision and compassion. We who gather here today – we are our forbears' wildest dreams! We come to ground those

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dreams in this place. We invite into our midst this day the spirit of these forbears. May their history and their legacy be a blessing on this place.

We ask a blessing on this land, that it may be a firm and steady foundation for ministry far into the future.

We ask a blessing on those who have guided and counseled us – surveyors and inspectors; city officials and consultants; our New Building Team who asked all the questions and found all the answers.

We ask a blessing on those who will build, on this land, a building strong and beautiful. The designers and the engineers from Smithson, Inc. Those who have brought together the materials and the machines needed for this project – and those, farther back, who harvested and produced the very materials that will constitute this building.

We ask a blessing on the workers who will pour the footings and the foundation; who will raise the walls and the roof; who will install the windows and the utilities; who will finish the floors and the ceilings. We ask a blessing on those whose love and labor will create, on this place, a church home: a place for worship, for service, for community. A place where this congregation will live its vision: building a just world through spiritual enrichment, compassionate action, and free religious inquiry. A place for ministry that will move beyond these walls to enrich the lives of all who are touched by it.

We ask a blessing on all our partners and collaborators in ministry: local religious communities, beginning with our nearest neighbors – the Salvation Army. Those who serve to bring justice, mercy, compassion, and grace into this world.

And we ask this blessing through the power of faith, working through every one of us gathered here. And so, as our groundbreakers move to take up shovels and begin the work of building, I invite each of you as you can to come forward and dip your fingers into these Waters of Ministry. Frame your own prayer, your own blessing on this place. And then seal your blessing with water, sprinkled from your hands, onto the land, and the people. For your hands are the hands of the Holy – the hands of God in this place. Blessed be and amen.