

# WATER@MICHIGAN –SUMMARY & BIOGRAPHY

## ROLF BOUMA

### PRESENTATION SUMMARY

#### **Re-enchanting the Religious Symbolism of Water**

*Topic Area:* Citizenry and Ethics

Religious systems use symbols to signify foundational beliefs, with some symbols (such as water) having an ecological dimension. Many of these symbols go back to the origins of a particular religious tradition, expressing fundamental orientations and values. These symbols, which have a didactic and shaping function, are not static. Through the vagaries of time and cultural evolution, symbols can shift meaning, lose/gain currency, and amplify/fade within community consciousness. My research interest is in the role of re-activated symbols in fostering an ecological ethos within religious communities such that the ecological ethos is not considered tangential (or opposed) to community identity and expression, but central to it.

### BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

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Academically, I teach environmental ethics, religion and ecology, and values in public policy. My training is in eco-theology, philosophical theology, and religious studies. I am an ordained minister in a Protestant denomination and have held leadership positions in ecumenical religious organizations.

Past co-produced research projects include:

**Life Sciences & Society Genetics and Religion Working Group** (now Genetics & Faith) –  
School of Public Health, UM Medical Bio-ethics, Association of Religious Counselors

**Solar Faithful Program** – Michigan Interfaith Power & Light, City of Ann Arbor Sustainability  
Program, Campus Chapel

**Dialogues in the Watershed** – Urban Planning, SEAS and PitE, Huron River Watershed  
Council