

Adopt a Body of Water Curriculum

Lesson Plan 3: Water Bathing

To be sent ahead	The Healing Effect of Water
Title	Water Bathing
Session	3
Governing Scripture	Psalm 42; Psalm 1
Place	Local stream, brook, lake that provides quiet
Day	
Time	
Posted upon arrival	
Materials	Ask people to bring filled water bottles for after the experience. Bring along some dietary inclusive snacks for after the experience.
Technology	Use the recording and ask people to bring along their cell phones or read the reflection to them.
Handouts	(to also be sent by email) ○ "How a river in Quebec won a right to be a legal person," Global News, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbtWp31L7MY&t=559s&ab_channel=GlobalNews Article: https://globalnews.ca/news/8230677/river-quebec-legal-person/ ○ "Endangered Amazon River Gets Personhood Status," Associated Press, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hl5R93bvErE&t=200s&ab_channel=AssociatedPress ○ Kate Evans, "The New Zealand River that Became a Legal Person," <i>BBC</i>, March 20, 2020 https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20200319-the-new-zealand-river-that-became-a-legal-person

1. Prayer over water: Begin by reading Psalm 42

¹ As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, O God.

² My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.

When shall I come and behold
the face of God?

³ My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me continually,
"Where is your God?"

⁴ These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:
how I went with the community
and led them in procession to the house of God,
with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,
a multitude keeping festival.

⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God, for I shall again praise the Creator of the Universe
my help ⁶ and my God.

My soul is cast down within me;
therefore I remember you
from the land of Jordan and of Hermon,
from Mount Mizar. (feel free to substitute local landmarks here)

⁷ Deep calls to deep
at the thunder of your torrents;
all your waves and your billows
have gone over me.

⁸ By day the CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE commands their steadfast love,
and at night the Living One's song is with me,
a prayer to the God of my life.

⁹ I say to God, my rock,
"Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I walk about mournfully
because the enemy oppresses me?"

¹⁰ As with a deadly wound in my body,
my adversaries taunt me,

while they say to me continually,

"Where is your God?"

¹¹ Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?

Hope in God, for I shall again praise the Creator of the Universe,
my help and my God.

2. Reflection

Lead people through the Water Bathing reflection. Or supply the recording for Water Bathing reflection.

Adapted from Kimberly Ruffin, "A Forest Walk," *Emergence Podcasts*

<https://emergencemagazine.org/audio-story/a-forest-walk> , May 14, 2024

WATER BATHING

During this walk of faith, the working definition of faith is a continuous exchange of belonging. The exchange occurs among you, an outdoor place you determine, and the other elements of nature there. In essence, it's an opportunity to let nature support you and to give a little of yourself in the support of the rest of nature.

Here are a few suggestions for getting ready. The walk will be about 45 minutes long, including the time when I am speaking and the timed silence included for you to connect with the natural world through your senses. I'll let you know good places to pause if you'd like more time.

Connection to the ambient noise around you is important, so I recommend that you disable notifications on your phone and use the speaker feature so that my voice can guide you throughout the walk. Alternatively, you might listen with only one earbud. Choose a site with which you're already familiar.

This is an adaptation of forest bathing—the reality that you can become immersed in a forest such that the forest moves and acts on you. Even its name, the word "bathing" recognizes a common practice involving water. We become aware of how water moves and acts upon us, how we are kin to water. *Mni Wiconi*. Water is life!

As with forest bathing, find a stream, a river, a lakeshore, that is familiar to you. Look for a place where you might move along a shoreline for an extended period of time, or the length of a brook or stream that babbles. If possible, maybe even a familiar place of water that has a slight change in topography like a current that rushes faster, a tide that changes in appearance, a waterfall that emerges.

This experience is not intended for areas that are new to you. Though you may not be physically “immersed” in the water, the experience is intended to have the water move on you as a subject.

The experience concludes with an opportunity to sit and reflect using an article of faith, a small, easily carried item that has personal significance. The outdoors can be a place that gives us comfort, speaks to our hearts, puts our minds at ease, and reminds us of all the other beings with which we share this home. We can let water support us through our senses.

All we have to do is drop into the interaction of our bodies with water in a place. I'm here to help you ease into this belonging and to assure you that this will all unfold in the way it was meant to be. If there was a right way to do this, then you've already done it, because your body knows how to be here.

All you need to do is to let it lead. The prompts for you to let your senses lead are called invitations.

I'll be using this sound throughout the experience (*sound of a chime*) to mark the end of one invitation and the beginning of another. So if you feel like taking more time with an invitation, just press pause at the sound of the chime, and when you press play again, you'll be in the right spot to continue. If you finish before the end of an invitation, just take time to connect with your breath and enjoy being outside.

Are you ready? Even if you're almost ready, come on, let's move to this place where water may move on you, flow into you, remind you that this is the substance of life, of your life.. Move to where you want this experience to officially begin.

Have a good spot? If not, take a pause here and get situated. All right, let's sink in.

(bell chime)

Our first invitation is called Pleasures of Presence. Notice your breath wherever you feel it most vibrantly. Your nose, your chest, your belly.

Take a few more breaths.

Notice how the air coming from you connects to the air around you. Be aware of how air and water make this place full of life.

As you breathe, plants and animals are also breathing and sharing this air. Notice how the atmosphere holds you, holds you and the living things in this place where you belong. Begin to shepherd your field of vision closer to you, perhaps to some point in the water directly in front of you.

We will now turn our attention to other senses, but feel free to keep a soft gaze going or let your eyelids hover gently. Or if you feel comfortable, close your eyes completely. Turn your attention to your sense of touch.

Our bodies are supported by incredible underground worlds beneath us.

Notice your body, how it feels to be supported by this place. Safely rich into the water with your hands and cup a small amount of water in your hands.

I invite you to rock back and forth. Shift your weight around if you like, until you find a pleasing position.

Let the earth and water help you feel centered.

Let your cares be drawn to the feelings of water on your fingers, on your bare skin, and sensations. Is it cold? Warm? Dripping through your fingers? What kinds of qualities are in this experience of touch?

Notice what touch sensations are giving you pleasure.

Invite that pleasure in. Now I invite you to make a shift to your hearing. What sounds of the water are around you?

Notice the variety of sounds.

Notice any interaction of the sounds with each other. Is there a rhythm to the sounds as the water comes into contact with impediments like rocks or stone, tree limbs, shoreline? How is the water being held? How is the water holding this place?

Take a moment to connect with the furthest sound you can hear.

Now bring your attention to the closest sound you can hear.

Take a moment to tune into the sound of your own breathing.

Let it blend in with the sounds around you. Thank you.

What is it like to be a part of the music of this water?

What within the experience of sound is giving you pleasure?

Invite that pleasure in.

You'll now turn your attention to the two closely related senses of taste and smell. Open your mouth and breathe through your mouth and nose together. Just notice the textures of the air. Reach down and cup a small portion of water again. Take a small sip of it as if you are tasting the finest wine.

Taste receptors are all over the tongue, so you may even want to stick your tongue out to better taste the biotic conversation going on around you. Don't worry, the water, in its grace, is not going to take offense.

Are there new scents that weren't apparent at first?

Raise your head and smell the air. Then dip your nose into the water you have cupped. Is there a scent to the water also with the way it feels on your nose?

Slowly cup some more water into your hand.

Smell again. Are there any differences in the two experiences? Is the difference in you or in the two different cups of water?

Raise your head and breathe deeply the water source before you.

Thank you. Where in this experience of taste and smell does pleasure appear?

Invite that pleasure in.

(bell chime)

If you haven't done so already, if it feels right, you can have your eyes closed for the last part of this invitation. Imagine you're in the middle of a circle that has four directions marked.

To begin, turn a quarter of this circle to the right, to the first direction. Don't worry about how accurate you are. Just take this opportunity to feel. Where does this put you in relation to the water?

With your hands out and your entire body sensing as one knowing organ, just feel the presence of this direction and notice what it is like. How does your sense of the water change with this new direction? In this movement, are there any creatures or parts of creation you become aware of that are supported with the life of this water?

And turning another quarter circle to your right, eyes closed or in a soft gaze, take in the presence of this direction, and just notice what it's like, its way of being present. How does it feel? Sound?

Smell? How does your sense of the water change with this new direction? In this movement, are there any creatures or parts of creation you become aware of that are supported with the life of this water?

And once again, turn a quarter circle to your right.

Do you feel qualities of this direction that are different than the qualities of the other directions? What are these qualities and how are your senses letting you experience them? How does your sense of the water change with this new direction? In this movement, are there any creatures or parts of creation you become aware of that are supported with the life of this water?

And turning a quarter circle to the right, give yourself the opportunity to feel this fourth direction, its presence, and how it touches into you. What is revealed by being present in this direction? How does your sense of the water change with this new direction? In this movement, are there any creatures or parts of creation you become aware of that are supported with the life of this water?

Hold your hands slightly out and put your palms forward. I invite you to get a second helping of one of these directions. Just slowly rotate your body in a circle until it arrives at a knowing of what direction it wants to face, a direction where you feel the most connected to the water.

Just find that place where your body is saying yes. Yes.

And still, with your eyes closed, breathe in this direction with your heart. Hear the water claiming you as your mother. As your sister. The water calls for your kinship.

In a moment, but not until I say so, you will open your eyes or focus your gaze. And when you do, I invite you to see what appears using your heart sense, like you were seeing it for the first time. And now, open or focus your eyes.

Is there a gesture you want to make toward that which you are seeing? What are you noticing? Take a moment to honor your sensations in this place you've chosen.

Thank Our bodies, primarily composed of water, moving in so many ways. Run, jog, dance, walk. And we can move like sloths, carefully moseying up a tree.

The next invitation is called What's in Motion. And this is an opportunity to explore an unhurried pace of movement that will let you sense what's in motion on the inside and the outside. Now, your mind is one part of you that might want to go faster and race around to this, that, and the other thing while you're walking leisurely.

If that's going on, all you have to do is usher your body back to the question, What's in Motion? So maybe go a little slower than you usually do and give this place that you've chosen a stroll or a saunter and take the question, What's in Motion with you? You'll hear the chime when it's time to continue.

(bell chimes)

Witnesses are a part of bathing therapy. They're non-judgmental observers that summon relationship. There are a host of ways that more than human nature is acutely aware of what's going on around it.

This place knows you're here and is witnessing you right now. The water and all the life around you sees without eyes, smells without noses, and feels without hands. Some researchers have concluded that plants even remember. The water remembers you: in the womb, the first time you stepped your toe into it, when you bathed and swam, and as a part of your own system now, the largest element of your body. Water is all one system moving in , with, through you, and providing life for your well-being, goodness, and shalom.

Through these sensations of water, other living things serve as a witness to your presence in this place. So the name of this invitation starts with a blank that you'll fill in. It's called blank as my witness.

Take a wander and use sight, sound, and touch to notice all of the natural witnesses around you. For instance, you might look at the soil near the bank, soil on the beach and say soil or sand as my witness. Or let yourself be drawn to a nearby tree, touch it and utter in your mind, tree as my witness. Finally, cup your hand in the water again and name the water as your witness.

Feel free to linger with any of these witnesses and yield your attention to their senses and yours. You'll hear the chime when it's time to continue.

(bell chime)

How are you feeling? Ready? If not, take a pause here before we continue.

Now sense the water. Where is it in relation to you? How is it your kin? How has it been your kin?

Of course, there is no new water, so the raindrop that dripped down a dinosaur's forehead is still on earth somewhere. Even if you're not near a pond or a puddle, at any given time, water is where you are. And you have more than your vision to help you find it.

Let the water in you be drawn to the water outside. In whatever form you find it, take a moment to sense where this water has been, any of its past places. You might even want to name these places out loud and use sound to connect you with the water of this place.

A frog-filled pond, Cleopatra's Cup, deep inside a tree. Take some time now to sense where's water. You'll hear the chime again when it's time to move on.

Find the horizon for this place of water—where it ends within your eyesight. This is our next-to-last invitation, so you can use this opportunity to make your way to where you'd like to sit and end the walk.

Keep that horizon in view as you walk now along shore or bank, along the water's edge. Imagine yourself now as Skywoman, being gently led down to the water to find a place for you.

(bell chime)

Now softly close your eyes as you once again listen to the water next to you. Imagine your day of birth, when waters broke to signal your entrance into this world. Give that water now a voice. As those waters broke to give birth to you, what did those waters say to you and about you as you entered the world?

Imagine as well your baptism immersed in these waters. As you were submerged in these waters, what were they saying to you? As you arose out of these waters, still wet with their goodness with and for you, what did these waters say to you? What did these waters say about you to the world? How would these waters stay with you? Continue to inform you and speak to you after your baptism?

(bell chime)

You've come this far by faith, the continuous exchange among you, the place you're in, and the water here. This last invitation is called An Article of Faith, and it's an opportunity to deepen your memories of this experience as you begin to move back into your regular activities with the water coursing through your body. If you wish to sit, please do so now.

Here's a little time to get situated. You'll hear my voice again for the close.

(bell chime)

Remember that object I asked you to bring? Now it's time to take out your article of faith and hold it. As you hold it, take some time to let the memories you want to keep of your walk surface.

Imbue your memories on this special item as you hold this article of faith, or simply put your memories in the pockets of your mind. To help this along, I'm going to recount slowly the names of the invitations used in this walk. Pleasures of Presence.

The sight, sound, touch, and smell of water.

The directions and their perspectives.

Walking with the horizon.

Born in this water breaking. Born in this water as baptism.

An Article of Faith.

Now, as you take some final moments to reflect, feel free to write, draw, or imprint with any materials you brought. Relax and refresh with water and a snack as you like. To close, I'd like to thank the place you chose to do this walk, and you for taking this walk of faith.

And to end this experience with three notes of the chime, we will close our time.

(the bell chimes three times)

3. Community

Invite people to gather in a circle to share in the drinks they bought into the group and the snacks brought for the group.

4. Prayer to end time together: Psalm 1

Happy are those
who do not follow the advice of the wicked
or take the path that sinners tread
or sit in the seat of those who scorn justice

² but their delight is in the Path of the Living God
and on this Way they meditate day and night.

³ They are like trees
planted by streams of water,
which yield their fruit in its season,
and their leaves do not wither.
In all that they do, they prosper.

⁴ The wicked are not so
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand for justice,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous,

⁶ for the Living God helps the way of the righteous endure,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

5. Share resources for next week: (also then shared by email)

- "How a river in Quebec won a right to be a legal person," Global News,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbtWp31L7MY&t=559s&ab_channel=GlobalNews
Article: <https://globalnews.ca/news/8230677/river-quebec-legal-person/>
- "Endangered Amazon River Gets Personhood Status," Associated Press,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HI5R93bvErE&t=200s&ab_channel=AssociatedPress
- Kate Evans, "The New Zealand River that Became a Legal Person," *BBC*, March 20, 2020
<https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20200319-the-new-zealand-river-that-became-a-legal-person>