



# Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Athens

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## “Peaceful Ponds and Rushing Streams”

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A homily delivered on August 9, 2015

At the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Athens, GA

### Centering Thoughts

*No one can see their reflection in running water. It is only in still water that we can see.*  
Taoist proverb

*For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.* Ecclesiastes 3:1

*A brook can be a friend in a special way. It talks to you with splashy gurgles. It cools your toes and lets you sit quietly beside it when you don't feel like speaking.* Joan Walsh Anglund

### Homily

We have gathered together this morning and each of us had the opportunity to offer holy water to our bowl. Holy or sacred because it comes from our journeys and represents our lives. And it is infused with our hopes and dreams for this community and the world. These holy waters indeed make us one. /

Of water, the great Sufi poet Rumi said, “We can't help being thirsty. [We can't help] moving toward the voice of water...Everyone hears the intelligent sound and moves with thirst to meet it.”

Earth's water voice calls to us in a variety of forms—and each source says something to us. The calming silence of a peaceful pond and the busy-ness of a rushing stream speak of the contrasting rhythms of our lives.

Have you been to a pond or stream lately? It can be a valuable, intimate experience not found when visiting a lake, river or ocean. Those big waters are awesome, powerful and beautiful, but the smaller size of a pond, brook or stream makes them less overwhelming. You can usually see them in their entirety for they have no endless horizon. And these smaller bodies are often found in less wide-open locations—in the heart of a wood, at the edge of a field, or high up on a mountainside.

When I was a child visiting my grandparent's farm in Maine, I frequently explored the wood that lay beyond the field where my grandfather planted potatoes and other vegetables. Entering the woods from this field was like stepping into a magical world.

The dense foliage on the trees allowed little sunlight to break through to guide my way. What light did get through created broken patches here and there—just enough to see my way down an unruly path, and just enough to fire up my imagination. It seemed anything might live within these mysterious woods—mythical elves and fairies to hungry bears and raccoons.

But the risk of entering was worthwhile for the path led to an enchanted stream with a prosaic name—the Pump Box Brook.

Hanging trees overshadowed the babbling brook and its cool water dropped the air temperature around it, enhancing my sense of otherness and giving me goose-bumps. The brook's earthy smell and amber color also set it apart from blue-green oceans.

The brook happily seemed to babble over and around many rocks, some water finding rest in little side pools. And that's where I would go to sit in silence and observe. Though I didn't call it this back then, it was my spiritual practice, a sitting meditation.

But it wasn't just the still water I watched. Magically, on top of these tiny pools glided water striders, those long-legged insects making use of the water's surface tension. These odd creatures skated here and there in short bursts with no clear destination. These true fairies of the forest fascinated me.

Reflecting back, this small water world's magic and mystery called me, and my thirsty spirit followed its voice. Within that woods and around that source of water I found respite from family and school. I found a source of peace in that wilderness sanctuary that strengthened my spirit and made me ready to face the noisy stress of the rushing world. It is a balance I still need today, one spiritual and health authorities say we all need, young and old. /

In the coming year, may you find such a sanctuary, whether here, by a body of water, or somewhere else that calls to your spirit. May you find at least small moments of stillness to balance against the times when life feels overwhelming. May all your rushing streams find rest and balance with peaceful ponds. May it be so.

### **Questions for Reflection or Discussion**

1. Recall a time you may have explored a pond or stream. What memories remain strongest—sights, sounds, smells, an encounter with wildlife, or something else? How do these memories differ from experiences at a lake or river? (If you've had no such experiences, is it time?)
2. Does your life most resemble a still pond, a babbling brook, or something else? Please share.
3. What needs greater reflection and/or action in your life? What will encourage that?