

Adopt a Body of Water Curriculum

Lesson Plan 4: Water as Subject: Teeming with Love

To be sent ahead

1. "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/>
2. "Endangered Amazon River Gets Personhood Status," Associated Press,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hl5R93bvErE&t=200s&ab_channel=AssociatedPress
3. 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>

Optional—

For further study:

- 1) Susan Nerberg, "I am Mutehekau Shipu: A river's journey to personhood in eastern Quebec," *Canadian Geographic*, April 8, 2022, <https://canadiangeographic.ca/articles/i-am-mutehekau-shipu-a-rivers-journey-to-personhood-in-eastern-quebec/>
- 2) Enrique Salmon, "Kincentric Ecology: Indigenous Perceptions of the Human-Nature Relationship"

Title

Water as Subject: Teeming with Love

Session

4

Governing Scripture

Amos 5:24

Place

Local church meeting room, public library, or place marked as central to your local watershed.

Day

Time**Posted upon arrival**

On two separate pieces of large butcher paper or post-it:

That landscapes are alive has been reiterated again and again, throughout Native American history. In 1855, for instance, an Indian chief, a leader of the Cayuse of what is now Oregon, refused to sign a treaty because he felt that it excluded the voice of the Earth: "I wonder if the ground has anything to say?" he asked, "I wonder if the ground is listening to what is said?"

Girolamo Benzoni, the Italian-born conquistador whose *History of the New World* was published in 1565, described Indigenous perceptions of Europeans with these words: "They say that we have come to this earth to destroy the world. They say . . . that we devour everything, we consume the earth, we redirect the rivers, we are never quiet, never at rest, but always run here and there, seeking gold and silver, never satisfied, and then we gamble with it, make war, kill each other, rob, swear, never say the truth, and have deprived them of their means of livelihood."

Posted for later display

The nine rights of the Magpie River

- ⊕ The right to the respect for its natural cycles.
- ⊕ The right to evolve naturally, to be protected and preserved.
- ⊕ The right to maintain its natural biodiversity.
- ⊕ The right to perform its essential functions within its ecosystem.
- ⊕ The right to maintain its integrity.
- ⊕ The right to be free from pollution.
- ⊕ The right to regenerate and be restored.
- ⊕ The right to sue.

Materials

1. Non-plastic glasses placed around the table, water pitcher.
2. Bibles

Technology

A way of showing the photo of river system in the United States.

Handouts

Discernment Homework Handout printed on a separate sheet of paper 4C

1. Posted for people upon arrival/entrance

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2. Prayer for our relative

Creator of the Universe, this time of prayer and discernment, leading us into action, is for our relative. Mother Water is part of every birth story in this room. She surrounded us, protected us, signaled our arrival into the world. Sister Water is our substance. We are made of Her and She courses through us. So we know deeply that how She goes, we go. If we do not protect Her, we lose life—all life. Wax up our courage to be your Water Protectors. Wax up our courage to protect Mother and Sister from all harm and abuse. You tell us of the day when you shall bring liberation, freedom, and healing. On that day you tell us the water shall be crystal clear, flowing from your seat of power and glory. Make us strong as Water Protectors so that that day becomes real among us. Amen.

3. Reflection and discussion

- Would anyone be willing to summarize one or more of the videos/articles shared at the end of the last session?
- Record the answers to the following question on butcher paper/large notepad for all to see. What are the values you see represented in each video or article?
- How do indigenous peoples understand their relationship with bodies of water? (You may want to add reflections from articles/videos for further

study) How is this understanding different from Western/conventional thought?

- Why is this important?

4. The nine rights of the Magpie River (written previously to now reveal)

- ⊕ The right to the respect for its natural cycles.
- ⊕ The right to evolve naturally, to be protected and preserved.
- ⊕ The right to maintain its natural biodiversity.
- ⊕ The right to perform its essential functions within its ecosystem.
- ⊕ The right to maintain its integrity.
- ⊕ The right to be free from pollution.
- ⊕ The right to regenerate and be restored.
- ⊕ The right to sue.

Have individual participants read through the rights, one by one.

Questions:

- What do you think is the most powerful right? Why?
- How do these rights reflect the values, viewpoint, or culture of indigenous people?
- Are these rights we would want for our local body of water? If so, how do we begin to make that real? What would be our initial steps?

5. Indigenous science, wisdom, and culture

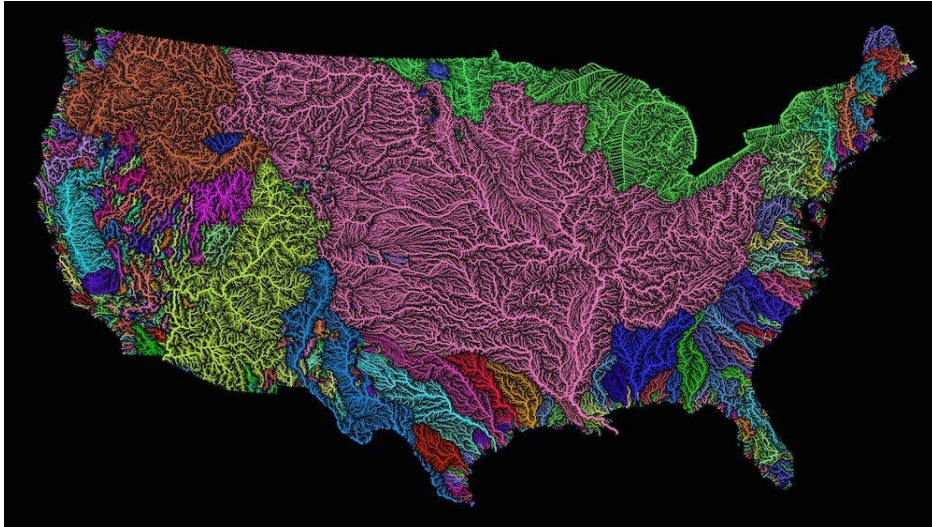
To be said:

Many environmental justice advocates recognize that the damage we have done to the environment has happened out of mindset or culture which understands the earth as disposable and something to be transcended. We cannot bring about environmental justice without a transformation of these cultural assumptions.

Strains of Christianity begin with our material body as something disposable, sinful, or evil with and to be transcended in a more virtuous or purified existence. Valuing water and earth also reflects valuing and glorifying in our material bodies. Land and water are an extension of our bodies. Therefore, these advocates recognize a need to turn to indigenous science, wisdom, and culture for a more healthy and just understanding of our earth.

Indigenous people saw creation as a subject not an object, as teeming with Creator's love.

To display: Photo of the United States river system.



Questions:

- What do you think this is a photo of?
- What might be a good metaphor for this system?

This is a good example. Indigenous peoples have referenced waters, streams, and rivers as the circulatory system for Mother Earth (earth's body).

- How might that wisdom be applied to our body of water?
- What do circulatory systems require?
- What do healthy circulatory systems require?

6. *Lectio Divina*

Have participants turn to Amos 5:24 in their Bibles. *Lectio divina* is an ancient practice referred to by the ancients as "like a cow chewing its cud" or "praying the Scriptures." We go over and over the Scripture, knowing that it will move on us and through us.

1. Begin with one reader reading the passage slowly, listening for a word, phrase or short segment that attracts you or "glimmers."
2. Have a second reader read the Scripture passage.
3. After you settle on a word or phrase, spend the time in silence reflecting upon it. (1-2 minutes). At the end of the time, share that word or phrase **without elaboration.**

4. Have a third reader read the passage, with the presenting question, "Remembering your word or phrase, how or why does God act as water in this Scripture passage?"
5. Reflect on that question and its answer in more silent meditation. (2-3 minutes) Share any reflections that came to you in answering the presenting question.
6. Have a fourth reader read the passage again, reflecting once more on your word, phrase, or short segment and ask yourself, "Remembering how God acts as water in this Scripture passage, how are we called to act as water in the world? Or, remembering how God acts as water, what is our faithful relationship to be with water?"
7. Reflect or meditate on those presenting questions. (2-3 minutes) Share any answers that come to you from these presenting questions: "Remembering how God acts as water in this Scripture passage, how are we called to act as water in the world? Or, remembering how God acts as water, what is our faithful relationship to be with water?"
8. Pray silently (keep it short) for the person on your right, that they might be faithful in how they act as water or in relationship with water.

7. To be sent ahead for reading:

Dr. Stephen J. Patterson, "The Early Christians Were Focused on Solidarity Across Race, Class and Gender. Then Things Changed," *Time*, October 1, 2018.

<https://time.com/5410308/early-christian-solidarity/>

8. Discernment Homework:

These discernment questions and this educational experience are to eventually move you, your family, your faith community, and the wider community to action. As you answer these questions, be aware of God hovering in this moment.

- If your congregation were to do baptisms at your local body of water, would you be willing to be baptized in that body of water? Why or why not?
- How would it change the meaning of baptism in your church?
- What would have to happen for baptisms to take place at your local body of water?