

# Adopt a Body of Water Curriculum

## Introduction

### **Preparation:**

#### *A move toward action*

As you prepare to lead out this curriculum, know that the primary intent of this curriculum is to lead participants into real and tangible action for a local body of water—to be its protector, to begin to know the local body of water as an agent, an actor, as kin.

#### *Discernment and work*

So put before the participants discernment questions that prepare them for that action. As there are six sessions, thinking that each session will be at least a week apart, participants will have at least six weeks to work on those questions throughout your time together. Bring that to their attention every week.

In publicizing the educational experience, make sure everyone is aware that work will be involved and think about asking people to be a part of a covenant to do the work as a way of mutuality and reciprocity.

#### *Outside time*

At least three of the sessions are planned for outside near a local body of water. Take into account local weather as to how viable locations work. Remind people to dress appropriately and take healthy precautions for outdoor time.

#### *Potential baptism*

One of the sessions (Session 5) offers a potential baptism experience. If you are a layperson and your clergy and congregation do not object to this experience, also make sure that clergy are not offended or disagree with this experience being led by a layperson. If clergy, I recommend bringing it up before the governing Church Council/Board as a way to heighten awareness of the event.

Alternative dialog and discussion is provided for those who do not believe the experience is faithful to their faith tradition.

For Session 5, seek out a restaurant following the experience where the whole group may share informal reflect on the experience and what it meant to them and how they knew water as an actor in this sacrament.

## **Discussion Questions: an introductory meeting**

Before you even begin, hold an introductory meeting to distribute these questions among participants to be answered by them at your last session together (Session 6). Use these questions then as a springboard for action.

- ☞ How is this body of water regularly cared for?
- ☞ What are the natural forms of care provided by other parts of its ecosystems?
- ☞ What individuals or organizations watch over, care for, and advocate for this body of water?
  - What regular recommended actions do these organizations put forward?
  - What recommended actions are they asking for presently?
  - How might a faith community join with this body of water in bringing about health and life to its wider community?
- ☞ What are this body of water's safeguards or buffers?
- ☞ What ecosystems are a part of this body of water? (swamps, forests, aquifers, creeks, etc.)
- ☞ What Native people are a part of this ecosystem? Or what Native people once were a part of this ecosystem? (<https://native-land.ca/>) How did Native people interact with this body of water?
- ☞ 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 your body of water
- ☞ What are the regular threats to the health and life of this body of water's ecosystem?
  - For example, how much plastic is regularly dumped into this water's ecosystem? (Estimated that 10,000 metric tons of plastic is put into the Great Lakes every year: <https://theconversation.com/tons-of-plastic-trash-enter-the-great-lakes-every-year-where-does-it-go-100423> )
  - What agricultural run-off is a part of this water ecosystem?
  - How is waste treatment handled around this water ecosystem?
  - Who is responsible for whatever toxicity or pollution enters this water ecosystem? (Resources like the Environmental Defense Fund's Chemical

Exposure Action Map might be used:

[https://chemicalactionmap.edf.org/?\\_gl=1%2A19p638f%2A\\_gcl\\_au%2AMTY4MjQ4MDg4MC4xNzA4OTA4NTk0%2A\\_ga%2AMTA2MjM0MjQ3OS4xNzA4OTA4NTk3%2A\\_ga\\_2B3856Y9QW%2AMTcwOTA3NDQ5MC4yLjEuMTcwOTA3NDYxNC42MC4wLjA.](https://chemicalactionmap.edf.org/?_gl=1%2A19p638f%2A_gcl_au%2AMTY4MjQ4MDg4MC4xNzA4OTA4NTk0%2A_ga%2AMTA2MjM0MjQ3OS4xNzA4OTA4NTk3%2A_ga_2B3856Y9QW%2AMTcwOTA3NDQ5MC4yLjEuMTcwOTA3NDYxNC42MC4wLjA.) )

- ☞ How do the regular threats to the health and life of this body of water's ecosystem affect other parts of the ecosystem around it?
  - Plant and tree life?
  - Animals?
  - Humans?
- ☞ What are the recent struggles or crises which have affected this body of water?
- ☞ Four international climate scientists have developed great discernment, barometers, and critical questions for developing healthier water systems. Read the article here: <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-024-00886-z> How might you use their wisdom for bringing critical questions to your body of water?
- ☞ As you pray over and with this body of water, what do you hear this body of water saying in concert with you?

## Theme Song for the Educational Experience

Some groups enjoy music as part of their experience and it makes their time together richer and fuller. For other groups, music can put a strain on group dynamics due to embarrassment or just not a comfort with song or singing. Use your best judgment with this beautiful song that could be used to begin or end every session.

I list it in the final session. The lyrics and tune are here:

<https://www.echoesofpeace.org/water-is-life> a beautiful rendition by the songwriter done in consultation with leaders from Standing Rock. The version could be played to encourage singers among your participants.

## LYRICS

### Water Is Life - Mni Wičoni

All my relations, come  
Every nation, come  
All my relations under the sun  
We are one

We are praying, come  
We are praying, come  
We are the song and we are the drum  
We are one

We are the river, come  
We are the river, come  
We are the boat, the paddle, the shore  
We are one

#### **Chorus:**

Mni wičoni, sing (Mitakuye Oyasin...)  
Mni wičoni, sing  
Mni wičoni, "water is life"  
for everything

We are the water, sing  
We are the water, sing  
We are the water  
We are where all life begins

We are the ancient ones  
We are the ancient ones  
In your breath and bones we sing on  
We are one

We are the meadow, come

We are the meadow, come  
We are the lark that sings  
the new day has begun

We are the new day, run, run, run  
We are the new day, run, run, run  
We are the old and we are the young  
We are one

### **Chorus**

We are the earth and sky  
We are the thunder cries  
We are the fire,  
We are the light in your eyes

We are standing strong  
Like a rock, like a stone  
On this sacred ground we belong  
We are home

### **Chorus**

All my relations, come  
Every nation, come  
All my relations under the sun  
We are one

—words & music by Sara Thomsen

# Adopt a Body of Water Curriculum

## Lesson Plan 1: Introduction

<b>To be sent ahead</b>	Directions to local body of water or local watershed with accessibility to the water. Advise participants to wear appropriate clothing for the time of year/weather.
<b>Title</b>	Introduction
<b>Session</b>	1
<b>Governing Scripture</b>	Genesis 1:2
<b>Place</b>	If possible, local body of water or local watershed
<b>Day</b>	
<b>Time</b>	
<b>Posted upon arrival</b>	John Wesley Powell quote
<b>Materials</b>	
<b>Technology</b>	
<b>Handouts</b>	As people leave, handout drawing of watershed, Handout 1C

- 1. Posted for people to see upon arrival/entrance:** John Wesley Powell (the first non-indigenous person to run the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon in 1869) defined a watershed as:

*...that area of land, a bounded hydrologic system, within which all living things are inextricably linked by their common water course and where, as humans settled, simple logic demanded that they become part of the community.*

- 2. Prayer over water:**

Praise and gratitude to you, Creator, for sacred waters of the world, to the oceans, the mother of life, the womb of the plant life that freshens our air with oxygen, the brew that is stirred by sunlight and the moon's gravity into the great currents and tides that move across the earth, circulating the means of life, bringing warmth to

the frozen Arctic and cool, fresh winds to the tropics. We give thanks for the blessed clouds and the rain that brings the gift of life to the land, that eases the thirst of roots, that grows the trees and sustains life even in the dry desert. We give thanks for the springs that bring life-giving water up from the ground, for the small streams and creeks, for the mighty rivers. We praise the beauty of water, the sparkle of the sunlight on a blue lake, the shimmer of moonlight on the ocean's waves, the white spray of the waterfall. We take delight in the sweet singing of the dancing stream and the roar of the river in the flood.

We give thanks, in particular, for this watershed (body of water) and how it has fed and nourished us, how it continues to form the substance of our lives. May we, in gratitude and reciprocity, protect this, our sister, so that she flows as from your presence, crystal clear and free from our poisons. Blessed be her. Amen.

-adapted from Starhawk

## **2. Genesis 1:2**

... the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while the Spirit of God swept over the face of the waters.

This is how it all begins, with God hovering over the face of the waters. This is how we begin, immersed in our Mother's/mother's water.

**3. Introductions and intimacy:** Have each person introduce themselves by sharing a body of water that has been important to them or to their families. Why was that body of water important to you or your family?

**4. Observation:** Brock Dolman, a permaculturist in Northern California, believes that the only way we will halt our civilizational slide into ecological disaster is to re-orient our thinking toward **"watershed consciousness."** He writes:

*Watersheds underlie all human endeavors and form the foundation for all future aspirations and survival. The idea is one of a cradle, or a container as water flows overland, collecting into a river, and sometimes making its way to the ocean.*

(Brock Dolman, *Basins of Relations: A Citizen's Guide to Protecting and Restoring Our Watershed*. Occidental, CA: Water Institute, 2008)

Questions:

- Do you know the name of your watershed?

- Or what are important bodies of water close to you that provide nurture and sustenance for you, your family, and your community?
- In seeking to protect the Missouri River and Lake Oahe, the Native/First Nations protest at Standing Rock in North Dakota, USA, used a phrase that became representative or a rallying cry of their movement: "Water is Life!" (*Mni Wiconi*: M'Nee wee Choh née).
  - What does it mean to say, "Water is life?"
  - What does that mean for you, your family, and your community?
  - What did it mean to those Water Protectors at Standing Rock?

- 5. Active Reflection:** Now encourage everyone to cup their hands and to take some of the water from the body of water where you are.



As people stand with water in their hands:

Now remember those bodies of water that we all shared as historically important to you, your family, and to your community that we all shared to introduce ourselves. You all shared intimate things.

Brock Dolman illustrates a watershed by cupping his hands which looks like a boat, concluding "Your home basin of relations *is* your lifeboat."

Dolman believes we can't save the whole planet. But we *can* engage in the struggle to preserve or restore the health of our watershed. And watersheds are, of course, interconnected in larger ecosystems.

- 6. Discernment Homework:** If you have time, you may want to solicit answers for this session and ask participants to also research and imagine for next session.
- What are the elements of a watershed?

**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 you knew your life depended on this watershed, what questions would you ask for its care and protection?

- If you understood or knew this body of water as your sister, what daily, weekly, monthly, and annual practices would you make part of your routine, your family's routine, your community's routine?

## **7. Blessing:** Adapted from Robin Wall Kimmerer

Water falls freely from the sky and waters our gardens and makes food grow and makes flowers bloom. This water that can be dew, it can be clouds, it can be snow, this long traveling molecule that animates life all over the planet, without which life simply would not exist. Water is a gift. This, our sister, is part of a reciprocity economy, a circular economy.

Water blesses us. In turn, today, we will end by holding out our hand, in gratitude and reciprocity, to bless this water. Water blesses us. Now say how you bless or shall bless water.

(You may want to go first to help people share simple blessings over the water. For example,

- "I bless this water with my gratitude."
- "I bless this water with a new dedication to protect this watershed."
- "I bless this water with my commitment to not use pesticides or insecticides on my garden which might leech off to harm this, my sister."
- "I bless this water by giving thanks every day in my prayers for it as a gift in my life."
- "I bless this water by drinking it as a gift from my tap to start each of my days."

## **8. Handout 1C: Watershed Drawing**

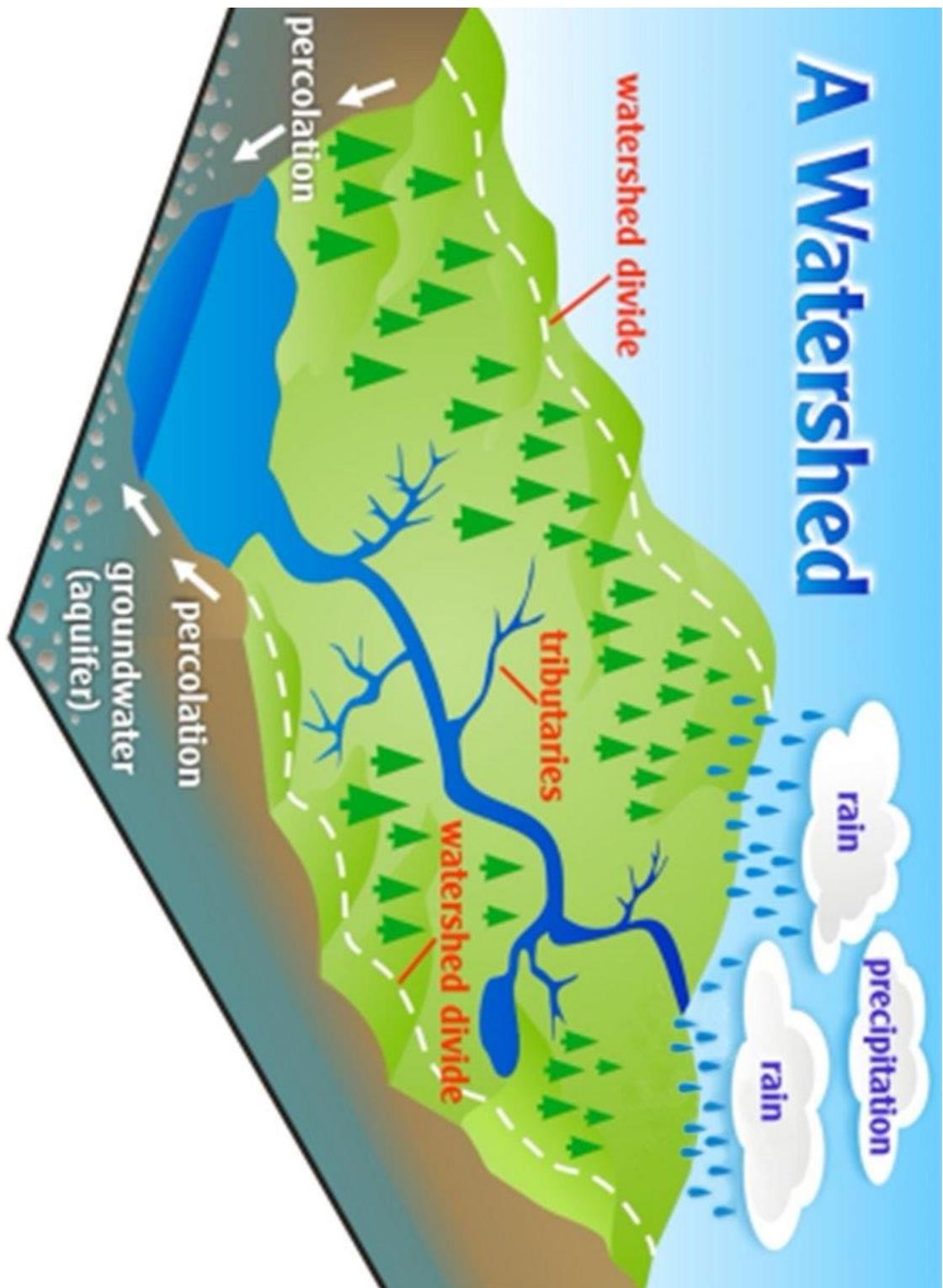
Send out these questions as homework for the next session together, hoping people will have more time to research and imagine answers.

- What are the elements of a watershed?
- If you knew your life depended on this watershed, what questions would you ask for its care and protection?

- If you understood or knew this body of water as your sister, what daily, weekly, monthly, and annual practices would you make part of your routine, your family's routine, your community's routine?

**Handout 1C**

# A Watershed



# Adopt a Body of Water Curriculum

## Lesson Plan 2: Developing Our Permeneutics

<b>To be sent ahead</b>	What are the elements of a watershed?  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. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ If you knew your life depended on this watershed, what questions would you ask for its care and protection?</li><li>○ If you understood or knew this body of water as your sister, what daily, weekly, monthly, and annual practices would you make part of your routine, your family's routine, your community's routine?</li></ul>
<b>Title</b>	Developing Our Permeneutics
<b>Session</b>	2
<b>Governing Scripture</b>	Mark 1:1-20
<b>Place</b>	Local church meeting room, public library, or place marked as central to your local watershed.
<b>Day</b>	
<b>Time</b>	
<b>Posted upon arrival</b>	On large butcher paper or post-it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Watershed ecclesiology quote: Ched Myers, <i>Watershed Discipleship</i> (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2016), p. 216.</li><li>○ Map clearly marking your watershed and your place on the map.</li><li>○ Questions sent ahead</li></ul>
<b>Materials</b>	Non-plastic glasses placed around the table, water pitcher

**Technology**

**Handouts**

2A Prayer over water; 2B Permaneutics with Mark 2:1-20

**1. Posted for people to see upon arrival/entrance:**

- Ched Myers, watershed ecclesiology quote:

*Developing a watershed ecclesiology simply involves consciously rethinking our collective habits, large and small, inwardly or outwardly oriented.*

- Map of watershed with your location marked within that watershed.
- Reflections and questions sent ahead:
  - What are the elements of a watershed?

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 you knew your life depended on this watershed, what questions would you ask for its care and protection?
- If you understood or knew this body of water as your sister, what daily, weekly, monthly, and annual practices would you make part of your routine, your family's routine, your community's routine?

**2. Prayer over water:**

Instruct each person to pour water in their glass as they read one line from the prayer. When the prayer is complete, have all people drink from their glass.

God of rain and river,  
of stream and storm,  
of sea and silent pools,  
of waterfall and waterhole,  
of wells and waves,  
of aquifer and aqueducts,

Hear us as we pray  
for water fresh and pure for all.  
And guide us to partner with your water  
wisely and well, to share in reciprocity with it,  
ensuring that all your creation  
can share in your bounty. Amen.

Adapted from Ruth Williams, used by churches of England, Wales, and Northern Island for World Day of Prayer.

### **3. Reflection**

Without comment, ask the questions that were sent ahead for reflection on three separate pages that can be posted in the room. Record answers and encourage people to continue adding answers/discernment questions throughout future sessions as people come up with them.

- What are the elements of a watershed?
- If you knew your life depended on this watershed, what questions would you ask for its care and protection?
- If you understood or knew this body of water as your sister, what daily, weekly, monthly, and annual practices would you make part of your routine, your family's routine, your community's routine?

### **4. Permaneutics**

Write out the term “Permaneutics” and share and summarize the following information to explain the term.

- Hermeneutics literally means “interpretation,” as in an interpretation of texts, particularly Scripture using critical study. That definition has been extended to metaphorical texts to speak about how we interpret life in its context or matrix.
- Permaculture
  - Bill Mollison was an Australian biologist and environmentalist known for co-developing permaculture, a sustainable agricultural design system that emphasizes the interconnectedness of natural ecosystems. He founded the Permaculture Institute.
  - Permaculture is primarily a system of ethical land use and design for sustainable human settlements. The study of Permaculture Design

encompasses traditional knowledge, ecology, sustainability, organic food production, efficient energy use, natural home design, recycling, appropriate technology, ecological economics, and much more.

Permaculture Designers realize that the present systems of big agriculture and agribusiness, their use of harmful chemicals, GMOs, and pesticides, the unnatural treatment of animals, and monoculture farming (corn, soybeans, corn, soybeans, corn, soybeans....) are all seriously flawed. Scientists speculate that these practices are responsible for the disappearance of many species, and are the main cause of disease in countries that still farm using these outdated methods. When humans fail to work with their watershed and instead impose their own will, economy, and destructive methods on it, all humans and the rest of nature inevitably suffer.

The Permaculture approach is to **work with nature through careful planning and design and create systems** that nourish the earth and ourselves – with less work and more favorable yields. "Permaculture is a dance with nature – in which nature leads." – Bill Mollison

- Principles of permaculture can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

## 5. MadLibs: Permaneutics with Biblical Story--Mark 1:1-20

Instruct people to substitute local places for the Biblical places found in this Biblical text using the key following the Scripture passage. After completed, read the Scripture verse with the substitutions. Ask participants for reflection on how the meaning of the passage changed, felt awkward, or came to life with the substitutions.

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ.

<sup>2</sup>As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
    who will prepare your way,

<sup>3</sup>the voice of one crying out in the **wilderness**:

'Prepare the way of the Living God;  
    make God's paths straight,' "

<sup>4</sup>so John the baptizer appeared in the **wilderness**, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.<sup>5</sup> And the whole **Judean region** and all the people of **Jerusalem** were going out to him and were baptized by him in the **River Jordan**, confessing their sins. <sup>6</sup>Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and

he ate locusts and wild honey.<sup>7</sup> He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals.<sup>8</sup> I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

<sup>9</sup> In those days Jesus came from **Nazareth of Galilee** and was baptized by John in the **Jordan**.<sup>10</sup> And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove upon him.<sup>11</sup> And a voice came from the heavens, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

<sup>12</sup> And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the **wilderness**.<sup>13</sup> He was in the wilderness forty days, tested by Satan, and he was with the wild beasts, and the angels waited on him.

<sup>14</sup> Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to **Galilee** proclaiming the good news of God<sup>15</sup> and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the Empire of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

<sup>16</sup> As Jesus passed along the **Sea of Galilee**, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers.<sup>17</sup> And Jesus said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people.”<sup>18</sup> And immediately they left their nets and followed him.<sup>19</sup> As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets.<sup>20</sup> Immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

**Wilderness:** a liminal or border place strongly associated with a spirituality of purifying intent and will. In the wilderness, the Children of Israel learn their rules for living in the Promised Land. In the wilderness, the Satan challenges Jesus. The wilderness is also outside the confines of the dominant economic system.

**Judean region:** the large geographic region containing much of the Jewish population which had the Mediterranean Sea to the west, Syria to the north, Egypt to the south, and some of the Decapolis to the east.

**Jerusalem:** city considered to be the spiritual, historical, and national center for the Jewish people which also had strong association with monarchial or religious elite overreach critiqued by the prophets.

**River Jordan:** river which had strong meaning and association with Jewish liberation as they made their way out of Exodus into the Wilderness and then crossing over into the Promised Land. Largest river in Palestine/Israel.

**Nazareth:** backwater, rural community found just outside the Jewish revolt city of Sepphoris.

**Galilee:** a largely rural Roman client state that was predominantly Jewish and depended on agriculture and fishing for livelihood. Much of the population became peasants

(farmers without land) as tremendous debt forced farmers to sell their land. This, in turn, led to strong animus against city populations and those who imposed and enforced taxes. Galilee was known to be a place of political unrest, banditry, and resistance.

**Sea of Galilee:** area body of water fished by the local population as attested by Biblical story and archaeological evidence. Jesus made Capernaum, on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee a focus of his ministry. Probably not coincidentally, on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, people of Capernaum could see the city of Tiberias being built. Herod constructed Tiberias as a way to pay homage to the Emperor.

## 6. 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?

## 7. Blessing: What do you call living water and bless this day?

Christ was called “the Living Water.” Ask each participant: What do you call Living Water that blesses you? What do you bless by naming Living Water?



# Adopt a Body of Water Curriculum

## Lesson Plan 3: Water Bathing

<b>To be sent ahead</b>	The Healing Effect of Water
<b>Title</b>	Water Bathing
<b>Session</b>	3
<b>Governing Scripture</b>	Psalm 42; Psalm 1
<b>Place</b>	Local stream, brook, lake that provides quiet
<b>Day</b>	
<b>Time</b>	
<b>Posted upon arrival</b>	
<b>Materials</b>	Ask people to bring filled water bottles for after the experience. Bring along some dietary inclusive snacks for after the experience.
<b>Technology</b>	Use the recording and ask people to bring along their cell phones or read the reflection to them.
<b>Handouts</b>	(to also be sent by email) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ "How a river in Quebec won a right to be a legal person," Global News, <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbtWp31L7MY&amp;t=559s&amp;ab_channel=GlobalNews">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbtWp31L7MY&amp;t=559s&amp;ab_channel=GlobalNews</a></li><li>Article: <a href="https://globalnews.ca/news/8230677/river-quebec-legal-person/">https://globalnews.ca/news/8230677/river-quebec-legal-person/</a></li><li>○ "Endangered Amazon River Gets Personhood Status," Associated Press, <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HI5R93bvErE&amp;t=200s&amp;ab_channel=AssociatedPress">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HI5R93bvErE&amp;t=200s&amp;ab_channel=AssociatedPress</a></li><li>○ Kate Evans, "The New Zealand River that Became a Legal Person," BBC, March 20, 2020 <a href="https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20200319-the-new-zealand-river-that-became-a-legal-person">https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20200319-the-new-zealand-river-that-became-a-legal-person</a></li></ul>

## **1. Prayer over water: Begin by reading Psalm 42**

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

<sup>2</sup> My soul thirsts for God,  
for the living God.

When shall I come and behold  
the face of God?

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

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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 <sup>6</sup> 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)

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

<sup>8</sup> 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.

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

<sup>10</sup> As with a deadly wound in my body,  
my adversaries taunt me,

while they say to me continually,  
    "Where is your God?"  
<sup>11</sup> 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 bubbles. 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 brought 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

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

<sup>3</sup>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.

<sup>4</sup>The wicked are not so  
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

<sup>5</sup>Therefore the wicked will not stand for justice,  
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous,  
<sup>6</sup>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](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](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>

# 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](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](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

<b>Title</b>	Water as Subject: Teeming with Love
<b>Session</b>	4
<b>Governing Scripture</b>	Amos 5:24
<b>Place</b>	Local church meeting room, public library, or place marked as central to your local watershed.
<b>Day</b>	

<b>Time</b>	
<b>Posted upon arrival</b>	<p>On two separate pieces of large butcher paper or post-it:</p> <p>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?”</p> <p>Girolamo Benzoni, the Italian-born conquistador whose <i>History of the New World</i> 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.”</p>
<b>Posted for later display</b>	<p>The nine rights of the Magpie River</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊕ The right to the respect for its natural cycles.</li> <li>⊕ The right to evolve naturally, to be protected and preserved.</li> <li>⊕ The right to maintain its natural biodiversity.</li> <li>⊕ The right to perform its essential functions within its ecosystem.</li> <li>⊕ The right to maintain its integrity.</li> <li>⊕ The right to be free from pollution.</li> <li>⊕ The right to regenerate and be restored.</li> <li>⊕ The right to sue.</li> </ul>
<b>Materials</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Non-plastic glasses placed around the table, water pitcher.</li> <li>2. Bibles</li> </ol>
<b>Technology</b>	A way of showing the photo of river system in the United States.
<b>Handouts</b>	Discernment Homework Handout printed on a separate sheet of paper 4C

### **1. Posted for people upon arrival/entrance**

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?”

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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**

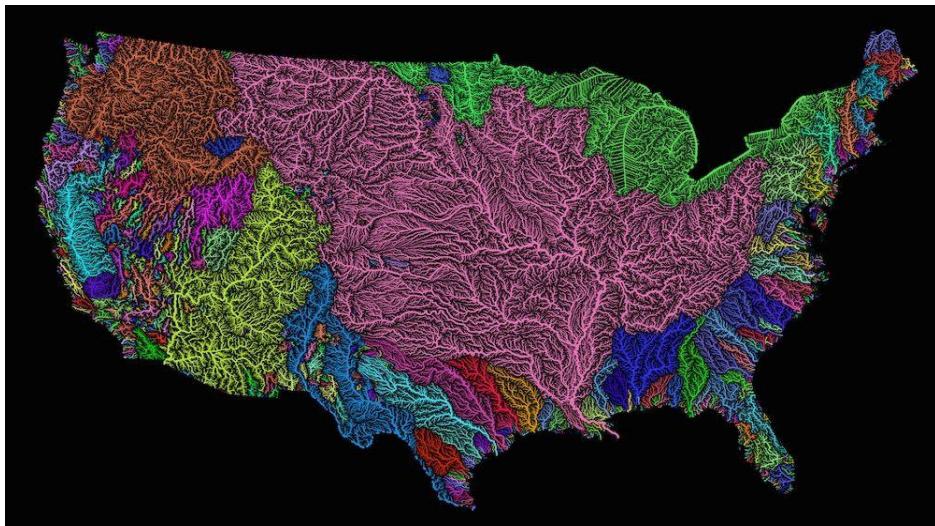
*To be said:*

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.**

- o 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?
- o How would it change the meaning of baptism in your church?
- o What would have to happen for baptisms to take place at your local body of water?

## Adopt a Body of Water Curriculum

### Lesson Plan 5: Water as Transformation

**Caution:** This lesson interfaces with the transformational nature of the sacrament of holy baptism. As such, there may be clergy and congregations who expressly disagree and even forbid a “re-baptizing” of people or practicing the sacrament outside the church polity and building.

If this is the case, consider skipping this lesson and moving on to the next.

Possibility: Here are some potential alternatives

- Using this lesson to talk about the meaning of baptism and how it interfaces with environmental justice.
- Ask participants to design a baptism done regularly with your adopted body of water with questions about if it is even possible given the health of the water.
- What other preparations might need to be made for the baptism outside, in a local body of water?
- How would it change the meaning of baptism?
- What would be the objections to this change? If you were an advocate for the change, how would you respond?
- Read through the liturgy provided. What do you like about it? What do you not like about it? What meaning does it point toward?

#### **To be sent ahead**

- This could be an excellent time to go out for a meal after the session to reflect on what everyone experienced during the session, to talk about what the whole of the educational experience has meant, and to reflect on how the group is moved to action after the last session.
- Send this quote from United Methodist pastor, Rev. Christine Bowden, to set the tone for the upcoming session:

Around our planet, within God’s creation, water is a living, moving, even breathing participant.

Seasonal cycles of rainfall drive massive wildlife migrations. Unseasonable droughts or deluges affect food supplies worldwide. Water carves canyons and moves sediments to fertile banks and deltas. The circulation of the atmosphere is engaged with the flow of ocean currents. On a smaller scale, water is the critical element of individual survival for all creatures. Without water we die, quickly. In every environment water is life.

Many peoples have recognized this and respected rivers and springs and oceans as holy. As we celebrate the baptism of the LORD this Sunday, we are incorporated not only into God's human family, but also into the lifeblood of God's creation and we are echoing the ancient wisdom of our common humanity as well. We receive a glimpse into the deep, ever flowing and lifegiving power of God's love, which is our life.

In this light, anything that we do to grab water resources for ourselves or to violate the purity of water anywhere is a sin against God and against the created order and against our neighbors. Sin is self-destructive, which is why it leads to death. In this case, to the death of environments and of people, In baptism God invites us instead to an eternal participation in the pulse of growth and fruitfulness.

A baptized life begins with water. Without water we cannot be baptized. To disregard the health of our waters disregards the sanctity of our baptism as well. A baptized life will include awareness of, and careful and humble stewardship of the waters which literally gives life to us and to all of creation. (Rev. Christine Bowden, "A Baptized Life," January 13, 2025, <https://substack.com/home/post/p-154767586>.)

<b>Title</b>	Water as Transformation
<b>Session</b>	5
<b>Governing Scripture</b>	Galatians 3:26-27
<b>Place</b>	Local body of water that has the depth for immersion

**Posted upon arrival**

**Posted for later display**

**Materials**

1. Swimsuits, towels, sunscreen
2. Copies of the liturgy (one waterproofed for the baptizer)

**Technology**

**Handouts**

**1. Baptisms Practiced**

**2. Discernment questions for possible discussion at meal afterwards.**

**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?

# Adopt a Body of Water Curriculum

## Lesson Plan 6: Moving to Action

### **To be sent ahead**

- ❑ How is this body of water regularly cared for?
- ❑ What are the natural forms of care provided by other parts of its ecosystems?
- ❑ What individuals or organizations watch over, care for, and advocate for this body of water?
  - What regular recommended actions do these organizations put forward?
  - What recommended actions are they asking for presently?
  - How might a faith community join with this body of water in bringing about health and life to its wider community?
- ❑ What are this body of water's safeguards or buffers?
- ❑ What ecosystems are a part of this body of water? (swamps, forests, aquifers, creeks, etc.)
- ❑ What Native people are a part of this ecosystem? Or what Native people once were a part of this ecosystem?  
(<https://native-land.ca/>) How did Native people interact with this body of water?
- ❑ 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 your body of water
- ❑ What are the regular threats to the health and life of this body of water's ecosystem?
  - For example, how much plastic is regularly dumped into this water's ecosystem? (Estimated that 10,000 metric tons of plastic is put into the Great Lakes every year:  
<https://theconversation.com/tons-of-plastic-trash-enter-the-great-lakes-every-year-where-does-it-go-100423> )

- What agricultural run-off is a part of this water ecosystem?
- How is waste treatment handled around this water ecosystem?
- Who is responsible for whatever toxicity or pollution enters this water ecosystem? (Resources like the Environmental Defense Fund's Chemical Exposure Action Map might be used:

[https://chemicalactionmap.edf.org/?\\_gl=1%2A19p638f%2A\\_gcl\\_au%2AMTY4MjQ4MDg4MC4xNzA4OTA4NTk0%2A\\_ga%2AMTA2MjM0MjQ3OS4xNzA4OTA4NTk3%2A\\_ga\\_2B3856Y9QW%2AMTcwOTA3NDQ5MC4yLjEuMTcwOTA3NDYxNC42MC4wLjA.](https://chemicalactionmap.edf.org/?_gl=1%2A19p638f%2A_gcl_au%2AMTY4MjQ4MDg4MC4xNzA4OTA4NTk0%2A_ga%2AMTA2MjM0MjQ3OS4xNzA4OTA4NTk3%2A_ga_2B3856Y9QW%2AMTcwOTA3NDQ5MC4yLjEuMTcwOTA3NDYxNC42MC4wLjA.) )

💡 How do the regular threats to the health and life of this body of water's ecosystem affect other parts of the ecosystem around it?

- Plant and tree life?
- Animals?
- Humans?

💡 What are the recent struggles or crises which have affected this body of water?

💡 Four international climate scientists have developed great discernment, barometers, and critical questions for developing healthier water systems. Read the article here: <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-024-00886-z> How might you use their wisdom for bringing critical questions to your body of water?

💡 As you pray over and with this body of water, what do you hear this body of water saying in concert with you?

**Title**

Water as Subject: Teeming with Love

**Session**

6

**Governing Scripture**

Revelation 22:1-5

**Place**

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

<b>Day</b>	
<b>Time</b>	
<b>Posted upon arrival</b>	<p>Revelation 22:1-5</p> <p>Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup>through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup>Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and God's servants will worship the Creator of the Universe; <sup>4</sup>they will see God's face, and God's integrity will also be their own. <sup>5</sup>And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Living God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.</p> <p>How shall we partner with God and with _____ (local body of water) to have water that flows from the throne of God?</p>
<b>Posted for later display</b>	
<b>Materials</b>	Butcher paper or something similar with markers to record answers and then post in the room
<b>Technology</b>	
<b>Handouts</b>	Pod-maps and their instructions.

## **1. Posted for people upon arrival/entrance**

Revelation 22:1-5

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb <sup>2</sup>through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. <sup>3</sup>Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and God's servants will worship the Creator of the Universe; <sup>4</sup>they will see God's face, and God's integrity will also be their own. <sup>5</sup>And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Living God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

How shall we partner with God and with \_\_\_\_\_ (local body of water) to have water that flows from the throne of God?

## **2. Read what is posted for people on arrival/entrance**

### **3. Prayer**

Creator of the Universe, now is the time for action. We have learned much. We have worked hard. We have experienced our mother and sister, this water, acting upon us. Now is the time to be Her protector. Give us the wisdom to know direction and the courage to act.

### **4. Reflection and discussion**

Ask for answers to the discussion questions that were provided and assigned at the introductory meeting. Record the answers on the paper and post for all to see.

- ☞ How is this body of water regularly cared for?
- ☞ What are the natural forms of care provided by other parts of its ecosystems?
- ☞ What individuals or organizations watch over, care for, and advocate for this body of water?
  - What regular recommended actions do these organizations put forward?
  - What recommended actions are they asking for presently?
  - How might a faith community join with this body of water in bringing about health and life to its wider community?
- ☞ What are this body of water's safeguards or buffers?

☞ What ecosystems are a part of this body of water? (swamps, forests, aquifers, creeks, etc.)

☞ What Native people are a part of this ecosystem? Or what Native people once were a part of this ecosystem? (<https://native-land.ca/>) How did Native people interact with this body of water?

☞ 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 your body of water

☞ What are the regular threats to the health and life of this body of water's ecosystem?

- For example, how much plastic is regularly dumped into this water's ecosystem? (Estimated that 10,000 metric tons of plastic is put into the Great Lakes every year: <https://theconversation.com/tons-of-plastic-trash-enter-the-great-lakes-every-year-where-does-it-go-100423> )

- What agricultural run-off is a part of this water ecosystem?
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☞ As you pray over and with this body of water, what do you hear this body of water saying in concert with you?

Ask for general reflection on what the participants learned through researching their questions and over the course of this educational experience.

## 5. Pod-Mapping

Distribute pod maps with these instructions:

We are going to develop a pod-map which is a tool used by Mutual Aid Networks to bring community effort and solidarity to an issue or ministry desperately needed in our community. Today we are going to build that pod-map to begin work as Water Protectors for our body of water. We have done some of the work. Now let's get started.

A "pod" is a microcosm of "community." Since it's more concrete, it's easier to get organized—to connect, make a plan, and follow through if and when it's needed. There may be certain qualities you look for in the folks in your pod(s): maybe they're really reliable, well-resourced, generous, committed, kind. Maybe they have certain skills that you don't and need. Maybe they live nearby.

In the center circle, write your name, and our body of water.

The dark circles are your pod. It's important to write specific names, as well as what supports they can provide.

For example, if we were working on a neighborhood pod, we might ask of potential additions to our pod, "Is it a neighbor who has a generator that will charge your wheelchair when the electricity is out? Is it someone who can buy and drop off groceries? What about a friend who will take care of you when you're sick? Talk to your people and ask what they feel able to provide. Then ask them what they need from you to be in *their* pod, or let them know what you can offer. (Mutual aid is mutual.)

The dotted lines are people who are movable—they could become part of your pod if you have some conversations and build relationships.

The larger circles on the outside are bigger community groups, networks, organizations, etc., that could be resources for you.

As we have more information, we can continue to fill it in. Like, "Do you want to be part of my water protection pod? OK cool, what do you feel like you can contribute? Some might say, "I can do clean up with these materials." Others might offer to bring meals to a meeting. Some do regular water testing. While others still offer to write letters to the editor on a regular basis. Some know how to schedule meetings with local and state

officials. Others can participate just by praying for the whole group. Others can provide lodging for an expert or speaker who will come in to help with discernment.

Begin by filling out your individual pod. If you get stuck, don't hesitate to ask others for help. We're going to try and have one pod we do all together at the end.

Give about 10 minutes for individual pod-mapping.

## **6. Collective pod-mapping**

Now try to come together to build a pod for our whole group. Share resources. Figure out where you fit and what resources you can recommend.

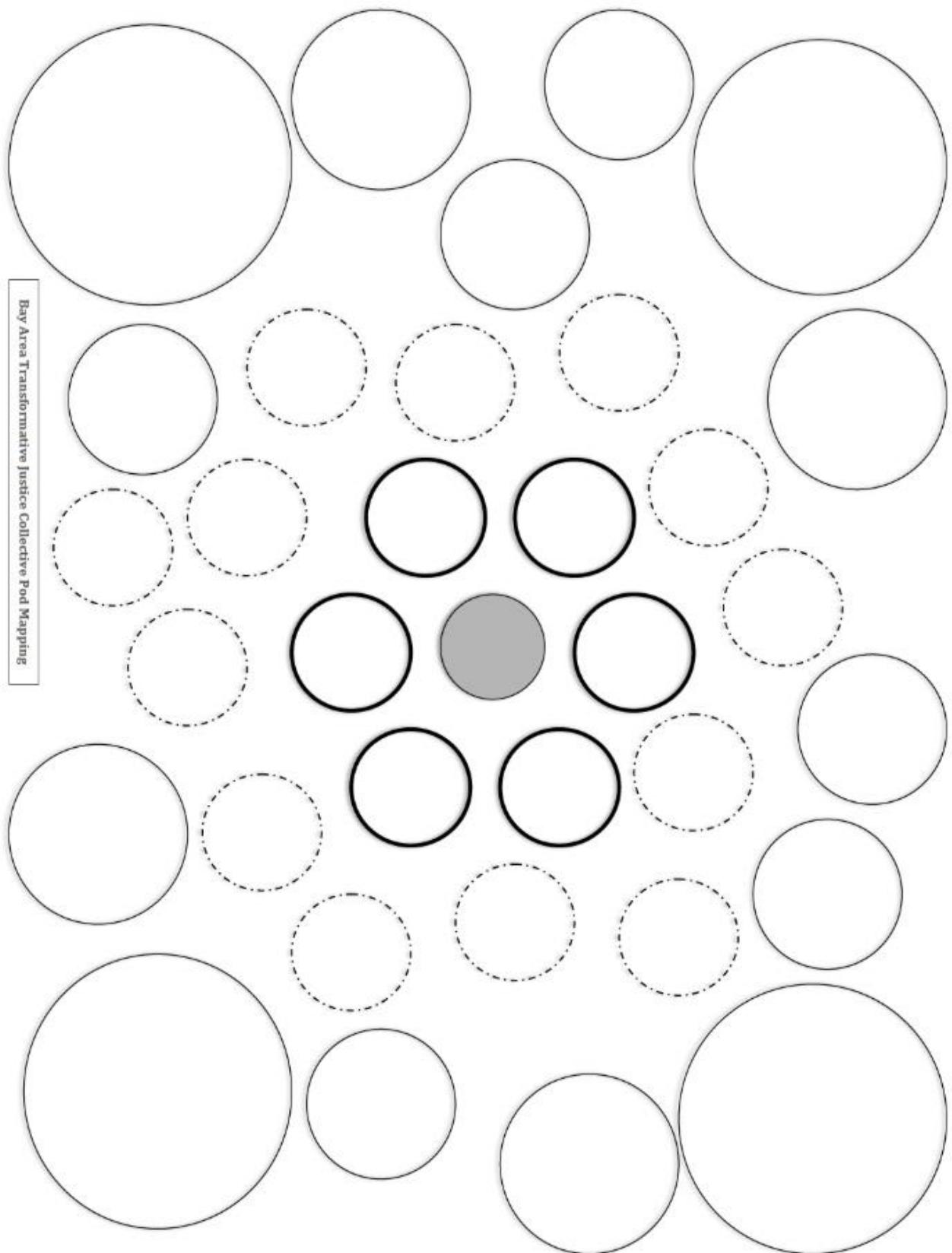
Go to: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-QfMn1DE6ymhKZMpXN1LQvD6Sy\\_HSnnCK6gTO7ZLFrE/preview?tab=t.0](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-QfMn1DE6ymhKZMpXN1LQvD6Sy_HSnnCK6gTO7ZLFrE/preview?tab=t.0) for a pod-mapping sample that you may want to share with the whole group.

## **7. Action (write the answers down to then send to the whole group)**

- Let's give our pod a name that goes along with our body of water.
- Now discern who might be the two central leaders of your pod and a clerk to record your work.
- What is your next step? Make it easy. You could start out by saying, "At the least, we could do this . . ."
- Set the date and time for your first meeting together as \_\_\_\_\_ Pod.

## **8. Express gratitude to the group for participating.**

## **9. End your time together by singing *Water Is Life* one last time.**



Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective Pod Mapping