

Salt, Soil, Seawater:

A Feast of Creation/Creation in Christ Six Week Study

This **Leaders' Guide** accompanies the Individual Participant's Edition of the study.

A printable PDF Participant's Workbook is also available

This Guide is part of a Study & Worship Series for Congregations

Find the series at umcreationjustice.org/library

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Salt, Soil, Seawater: A Feast of Creation/Creation in Christ Six Week Study for Congregations. This study is designed to accompany the Salt, Soil, Seawater: A Feast of Creation/Creation in Christ Worship Series, but can also be used as a standalone study. Find the full series at umcreationjustice.org/library.

Individual Participant's Edition for this study is available as an EPUB and ereader PDF. Participant's Workbook available as a printable PDF. Leaders' Guide available as PDF. For downloadable copies, see the United Methodist Creation Justice Movement website: umcreationjustice.org/library

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Part One

— *Materials and Curriculum* —

— Why Salt, Soil, and Seawater? —

For this study and accompanying worship series, the intent is to work with Earth-centered elements present at Creation, elements that continue to be vital to life on this planet. Salt and saltwater seas were present from the earliest time. Salt is essential to living things, as essential as the soils of Earth from which life grows.

— Learning Objectives —

Year 2026 is the first year that Creation in Christ/Feast of Creation is to be celebrated across the Christian world. This study and worship series brings the holy observance into the local church context, with the hope of offering rich worship and a deeper understanding of creation care and stewardship, the relationship between humans, the Triune God, and the Creation, and creation itself as an expression of divine love for people, planet, and life itself *from the beginning*. This Study blends personal devotion, group learning, and ideas for activities and everyday actions. Participants are invited to engage in faithful reflection and meaningful action in order to grow closer to Christ and live as stewards of God's Creation.

— About the Study and Leaders' Guide —

- Use this study guide to accompany the Salt, Soil, Seawater Worship Series or as a standalone 5–6-week study.
- This study is designed for use over six weeks. For those needing a 5-week option, the last class meeting of the series, Week Six, can be dropped. Invite participants to read that final week's reading on their own.
- This study focuses on the Year A texts from the Common Lectionary for Creation in Christ Sunday, but can be used any time.
- The series includes curriculum for one day a week of class time through the series. In addition, study participants are provided with reflections for each day, which they are invited to work through at home.

— Class Time and Class Outline —

Structuring Class Time

The class time structure allows the weekly portion of the study to be completed in 60 minutes. If your class period is 90 minutes, this will allow more time for the reflection questions.

Class Outline

- **Set Up:** Set up the classroom space with chairs in a circle. Include a small wooden table as part of the set up. Initial set up includes a candle on the table, with other items to be added to the table over the next five weeks. Those items are listed under “materials,” below.
- **Gathering:** Allow 10–12 minutes to gather participants, check in, and offer pastoral prayer.
- **Opening:** Open the study session by lighting the candle on the table. A prayer during candle lighting for each week is listed in the curriculum. Allow 2 minutes.
- **Weekly Reading:** Allow 6–8 minutes to read the weekly reading out loud in class.
- **Weekly Reading Reflection Questions:** Allow 10–14 minutes to address the one or two questions listed for reflection. Depending on class size, break up into small groups so more participants will have the opportunity to share their thoughts.
- **Image Meditation:** Each Scripture reading has a corresponding image for reflection as the Scripture is read. Participants can find this image as part of the classroom work each week in the PDF/epub edition. Allow 2 minutes for participants to bring up this image to view.
- **Scripture Reading:** Read the Scripture together out loud. Scripture lengths vary from 3 to 7 minutes depending on the week.
- **Scripture Reflection Questions:** Allow 12–14 minutes to address the one or two questions listed for Scripture reflection. Depending on class size, break up into small groups so more participants will have the opportunity to share their thoughts.
- **Taking Action:** Allow 5–7 minutes to talk about potential actions participants can take outside of class time. Depending on class size, break up into small groups so more participants will have the opportunity to share their ideas.
- **Closing Prayer:** Allow 2 minutes to pray the closing prayer together.

Daily Reflections for Participants

The Individual Participant’s Edition includes the readings and questions for every class meeting. In addition, Week One through Week Five also include daily readings and reflections for the participants to complete at home during the week. There are no daily readings for Week Six.

Taking Action and Creation Justice Tips

In addition to readings and reflections every week, participants will be invited to take action for creation care. The weekly curriculum includes an opportunity during class time for participants to report on what actions they have taken. Participants are also encouraged to report on their action progress during their daily reflections. For more information about the Creation Justice Tips and more Tips see umcreationjustice.org/tips.

— Weekly Materials and Salt Exercise —

There is a special exercise for participants to experience during class time on Week Five. For that week, participants are invited to taste bread and salt as part of their time together. The curriculum builds anticipation for the exercise with special prayers and objects added to the center table over the five weeks.

- **Week One – Candle.** Place a candle on the table. This candle will be re-lit every week, including the optional Week Six.
- **Week Two – Two Pottery Bowls.** Add two earthenware or clay bowls to the table next to the candle this week. The bowls should be small, about the size of a dessert bowl, or smaller.
- **Week Three – Salt:** Add one tablespoon of sea salt to one of the bowls. The sea salt should be ground into the granular size of regular or coarse table salt.
- **Week Four – Flour:** Add one tablespoon of flour into the other bowl. For the flour, you can use any flour that is appropriate for your ministry context.
- **Week Five – Bread:** Add a plate of crackers or pieces of bread to the table with enough to serve all participants one cracker or one piece of bread. Use the appropriate type of bread/cracker for your context. If possible, find a low or no-salt bread/cracker. Also, add to the table, or make available, a pitcher of water and reusable or recyclable cups. Clear the table and clean up after the Week Five class session.
- **Week Six:** For Week Six, return to a single candle on the table.

Part Two

— *Background for Feast of Creation/Creation in Christ* —

— Ecumenical Roots of Feast of Creation/Creation in Christ —

Many people of faith from many traditions have raised the need for Christian people to better understand God's will concerning the Creation. The Eastern Orthodox Church is credited with originating worship to commemorate the day God began creating the Cosmos, and so the beginning of time itself. The day traditionally recognized as the beginning of everything is September 1st. Creation in Christ/Feast of Creation as an observance is the outcome of deep discernment from denominational leaders who came together specifically to respond to the Holy Spirit's urging to raise up and reflect the magnitude of this beginning, of God as Creator, as Christ as Word, as the sweeping of the Spirit, and Creation itself.

Texts and observance materials are available beginning in 2026, and published through denominational calendars and in the Revised Common Lectionary. While the process of developing the celebration has enjoyed ecumenical participation, the invitation is for Christians the world over to encounter the new observance according to their contexts, teachings, and traditions, all while celebrating the shared roots of an ecumenical effort that has ensured worldwide recognition of the feast.

— Revised Common Lectionary Year A Texts —

This study offers opportunity to reflect on a few different Scriptures, but focuses primarily on the Year A texts chosen for observance:

- **Genesis 1:1-2:24.** The wondrous design of Creation all together, whole, fertile, and balanced. We, as humankind, are created in a world teeming with life. God commands us to keep it in good order.
- **John 1:1-5.** These verses speak to the wondrous mystery of Creation and is specific in teaching that everything was created through Christ. In Christ also lies the redemptive power to forgive and a path to restore the balance that has been lost.
- **Acts 17:22a, 24-28.** In keeping with the message of the Book of Acts in general, this passage underscores that the good news of Jesus Christ is good news for *all* people. This particular passage grounds that message in the surety that, as God created the whole world, therefore God also created and loves all people.

- **Psalm 148.** In this joyful psalm all Creation sings in praise of the Creator. The living beings God has made share *all together* in the goodness. Even as readers now might shed tears of sorrow to acknowledging what humans have done, nonetheless, tears of joy can be loosed also, in praise of the blessings and goodness of God.

— The Creator, the Creation, and Creation Continuing —

The dialogues to bring about Creation in Christ/Feast of Creation included prayerful discernment and study exploring the theological, Christological, and trinitarian mystery of the Creation. Each of these aspects of the Creation played a part in the final outcome and agreements for the observance:

- **God the Creator.** Referred to at the dialogues as *la Creazione*, a vital focus for humans in celebrating the feast is to remember the Creation as an act of God who creates. The power of God as Creator is central in this focus and invites praise of God in creating the entire cosmos—everything from nothing—including this planet and everything on it.
- **Christ as Word.** In keeping with the focus of *la Creazione*, the emphasis here is the Christology of the Creation and recognizing Jesus Christ as present from the beginning, together with God, and through whom all creation is reconciled to God.
- **The Mystery of Creation.** A third aspect of a focus on the Creator, *la Creazione*, is a trinitarian view of the Creation. In the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, there is an invitation to celebrate the mystery of creation out of nothing, and the first breath of life.
- **In Praise of the Creation.** This focus, referred to at the dialogues as *il creato*, addresses the need for a renewed appreciation of and for the Creation itself, as a showcase of God's glory and goodness.
- **Creation as Ongoing.** This reflects the *Creatio continua*, that God's will for creation actions to continue. For this study, aspects of *Creatio continua* appear in the material of the soil that continues to raise up growing things and support the multiplication of species and continuation of life. The invitation to humankind is to participate.
- **Righteousness and Justice.** What is required of us as humankind? To tend and keep the garden, to be faithful stewards, and to not only protect the life God created, but see it multiply. The environmental damage to God's Earth has placed the planet's fresh water, forests, and climate systems in peril. It is time to ensure right actions to ensure a just future.