

Salt, Soil, Seawater:

A Feast of Creation/Creation in Christ Six Week Study

This printable **Participant's Workbook** accompanies the
Individual Participant's Edition
A Leaders' Guide is also available

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

Find the series at umcreationjustice.org/library

Study by Rev. Richenda Fairhurst
with Creation Justice Tips from Crys Zinkiewicz

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About

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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WEEK ONE

— *Good Order* —



Daily Reflections for Week One

Work through the reflections for this week, one for every day between the weekly lessons. Use a notebook to record your responses. Or, you can print a PDF of the lesson sheets for the study series at umcreationjustice.org/library

— Reflections for Week One —

Daily Action, Reading, and Prayer

1.) Read the Scripture and address the reflection question for the next six days. Use the reflection prompts to dig deeper. Prompts include drawing out ideas from the verses, or even just highlighting a single word to think about from the text itself.

2.) Take some action toward praising God for creation, an action that honors the commandments to love God, love neighbor, and—essential to both those things—to tend and keep creation.

Over the week, reflect on the progress you take on your action. If you complete an action, make a note of how it went. Did it go as you expected? What did you learn? What are you most glad for? What would you do differently next time? As you complete actions, choose new ones to try.

To help with ideas, I suggest linking to the Creation Justice Tips, created by Global Ministries EarthKeeper Crys Zinkiewicz, and hosted by the United Methodist Creation Justice Movement: umcreationjustice.org/tips

3.) Close your reflection time with this prayer (inspired by Psalm 148):

— Week One Daily Prayer —

Praise God, Praise the Creator! Praise God from the heavens and on the heights! Sun and moon, praise God! All of you bright stars, praise God! All the creatures of the land and seas, praise God! All the humans, young and old, praise God! Let all praise God the Creator, for God gave the command and they were created! God set all things in place, and in good order forever and ever. Amen.

— Day One of Week One —

Day One Reading Genesis 1:1-5:

When God began to create the heavens and the earth—the earth was without shape or form, it was dark over the deep sea, and God’s wind swept over the waters—God said,

“Let there be light.” And so light appeared. God saw how good the light was. God separated the light from the darkness. God named the light Day and the darkness Night.

There was evening and there was morning: the first day.

Reflection: Once without form, the Earth is now filled with mountains, valleys, canyons, coasts, and more. What Earth formation can you see just by stepping out from your front door?

Action Report: Which action did you choose to begin this week? Write down what action you have chosen. Why did you choose this particular action?



Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

— Day Two of Week One —

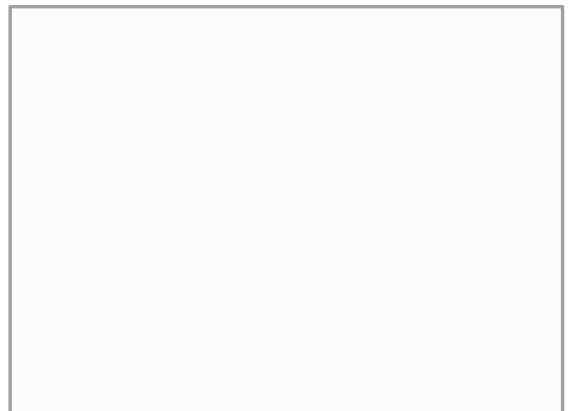
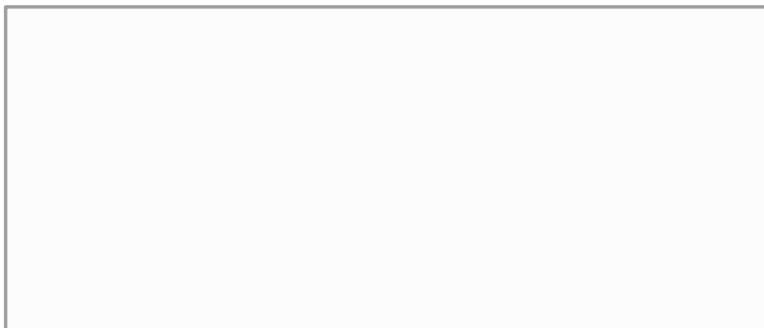
Day Two Reading Genesis 1:6-8:

God said, “Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters to separate the waters from each other.” God made the dome and separated the waters under the dome from the

waters above the dome. And it happened in that way. God named the dome Sky. There was evening and there was morning: the second day.

Reflection: What’s in a dome? For this verse, it is all about the dome. From the reading, it seems as if this dome is all about making space, making room for more life to appear. Are there places where you emulate God by creating spaces for life to grow?

Action Report: What first steps have you taken so far toward your chosen action?



Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

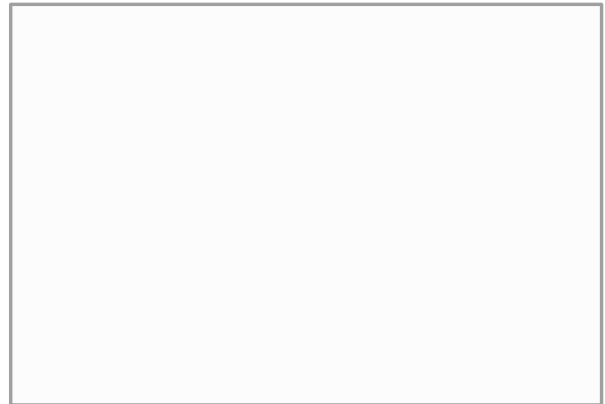
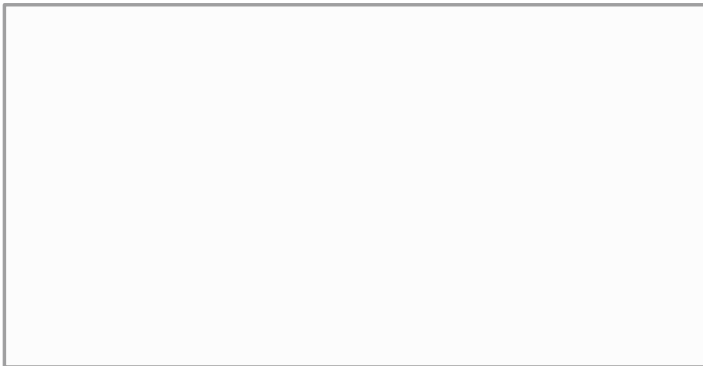
— Day Three of Week One —

Day Three Reading Genesis 1:9-13:

God said, “Let the waters under the sky come together into one place so that the dry land can appear.” And that’s what happened. God named the dry land Earth, and named the gathered waters Seas. God saw how good it was. God said, “Let the earth grow plant life: plants yielding seeds and fruit trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind throughout the earth.” And that’s what happened. The earth produced plant life: plants yielding seeds, each according to its kind, and trees bearing fruit with seeds inside it, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was. There was evening and there was morning: the third day.

Reflection: “Let the earth grow plant life.” Praise God for plants! Take a look at the plant life around your home or wherever you are right now. What plants surround you. Describe them. Whether they are “weeds” or towering sunflowers, Praise God for them!

Action Report: Continue with your chosen action. Report here on how it is going, and what steps you are taking. If you need to change your action, do so. If you complete your action, choose another!



Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

— Day Four of Week One —

Day Four Reading Genesis 1:14-19:

God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will mark events, sacred seasons, days, and years. They will be lights in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth.” And that’s what happened. God made the stars and two great lights: the larger light to rule over the day and the smaller light to rule over the night. God put them in the dome of the sky to shine on the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw how good it was. There was evening and there was morning: the fourth day.

Reflection: Light takes shape in this reading. The sun, moon, and stars are born. The dome here is again, space! God has created space for billions of stars and the enormity of the cosmos. Light that touches the earth shines down from the sun, reflects from the moon, and travels from the stars. And amazingly, we get day and night. Can you write three words in praise of stars and three words in praise of day and night?



Action Report: Over this week and the next few weeks, use this space to support new practices and actions. It is okay to try and try again. It is okay to write about what isn't working, and what the sticking points are. Choose new actions when you are ready.



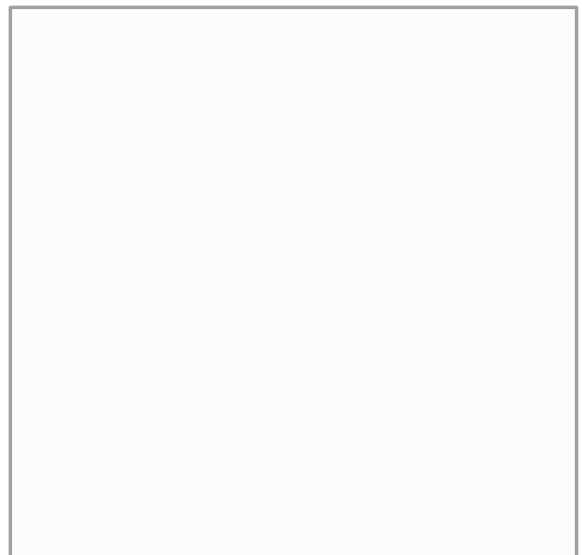
Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

— Day Five of Week One —

Day Five Reading Genesis 1:20-23:

God said, “Let the waters swarm with living things, and let birds fly above the earth up in the dome of the sky.” God created the great sea animals and all the tiny living things that swarm in the waters, each according to its kind, and all the winged birds, each according to its kind. God saw how good it was. Then God blessed them: “Be fertile and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.” There was evening and there was morning: the fifth day.

Reflection: When God creates living creatures, the Bible tells us these animals are created in such numbers that to describe them we must say they were “swarming” and “multiplying.” Yet the reality right now at this time on Earth, animal species, insects, marine and land animals, and birds, are in smaller numbers than ever. There are, for example, only 300 leatherback sea turtles left on Earth. For this reflection, think about turtles. Have you ever kept one, or seen one? Draw a picture (it’s okay if the drawing is simple!) of a turtle. Write three words in praise of turtles!



Action Report: Over this week and the next few weeks, use this space to record new practices and actions, successes and stumbling blocks.



Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

— Day Six of Week One —

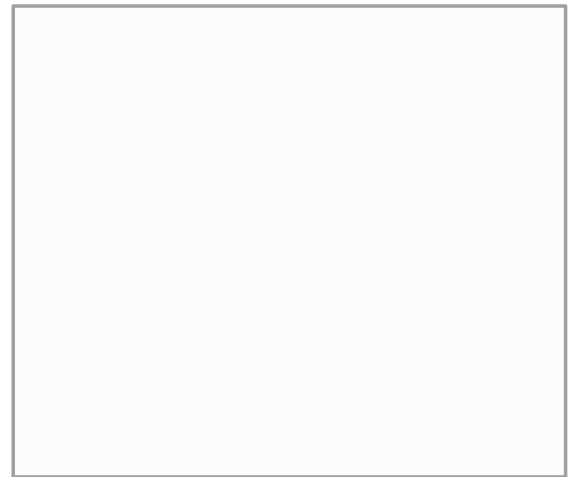
Day Six Reading Genesis extracts from 1:24-31:

God said, “Let the earth produce every kind of living thing: livestock, crawling things, and wildlife.” And that’s what happened. God made every kind of wildlife, every kind of livestock, and every kind of creature that crawls on the ground. God saw how good it was. Then God said, “Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth.” God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good. There was evening and there was morning: the sixth day.

Reflection: God created humans out of love. God also gave humans a job to do. What can humans do to ensure all of Earth’s creatures are preserved for future generations, so that children can blink in wonder at a zebra and be charmed by the praying posture of a bright green mantis?



Action Report: Over this week and the next few weeks, use this space to record new practices and actions, successes and stumbling blocks.



Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

WEEK TWO

— *Worthy of Forgiveness* —



Daily Reflections for Week Two

Work through the reflections for this week, one for every day between the weekly lessons. Use a notebook to record your responses. Or, you can print a PDF of the lesson sheets for the study series at umcreationjustice.org/library

— Reflections for Week Two —

Daily Action, Reading, and Prayer

- 1.) Read the Scripture and address the reflection question. Prompts include drawing out ideas from the verses, or even just highlighting a single word to think about from the text itself.
- 2.) Over the week, reflect on the progress of your chosen action(s). If you complete an action, make a note of how it went. Did it go as you expected? What did you learn? What are you most glad for? What would you do differently next time? As you complete actions, choose new ones to try.
- 3.) Next, pray the Week Two Daily Prayer to close your reflection time:

— Week Two Daily Prayer —

Creator God, bringer of light, oceans, mountains, and wide, grassy plains. Out of nothing you created all life, including my life. You brought me out of the clay with humankind. And when we sinned, you stepped into the Creation to show the way back to you. By your Word, we are loved and forgiven. We are freed to do better, for ourselves and all living things. I praise your name! Amen.

— Day One of Week Two —

Day One Reading John 1:1-3a:

In the beginning was the Word
and the Word was with God
and the Word was God.

The Word was with God in the beginning.
Everything came into being through the
Word,
and without the Word
nothing came into being.

Action Report: Over this week and the next few weeks, use this space to record new practices and actions, successes and stumbling blocks.

Reflection: The beginning of the Gospel of John is poetic and sweeping. The verses speak to something human beings can only barely imagine. These verses speak to “everything” and “nothing.” Reflect on those words today. What is “everything” to God?

Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

— Day Two of Week Two —

Day Two Reading John 1:3b-5, 9:

What came into being
through the Word was life,
and the life was the light for all people.
The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness doesn’t extinguish the
light ...

The true light that shines on all people
was coming into the world.

Action Report: Over this week and the next few weeks, use this space to record new practices and actions, successes and stumbling blocks.

Reflection: The poetry of these lines continue to invite us to imagine creation all over again, with Christ as the source of all that is made. In these verses, reflect on what the gospel writer says, that “the Word was life” and that “life was light for all people.” What do life and light mean for you, here?

Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

— Day Three of Week Two —

Day Three Reading John 1:10 & 1 John 1:6-7:

The light was in the world,
and the world came into being through the light,
but the world didn't recognize the light.

If we claim, "We have fellowship with Jesus,"
and live in the darkness, we are lying and do not
act truthfully. But if we live in the light in the
same way as he is in the light, we have
fellowship with each other, and the blood of
Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from every sin."

Action Report: Over this week and the next few
weeks, use this space to record new practices and
actions, successes and stumbling blocks.

Reflection: These two readings continue
to talk about what the "light" might be.

Today's readings tell us that "fellowship
with Jesus" and "fellowship with each
other" is about living in the light.

Recognizing that all of this took place on
this actual planet, our Earth, and the
apostle John is not talking about some
heaven far away, why do you think light
is part of "fellowship"?

Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

— Day Four of Week Two —

Day Four Reading John 1:14:

The Word became flesh
and made his home among us.
We have seen his glory,
glory like that of a father's only son,
full of grace and truth.

Action Report: Over this week and the next
few weeks, use this space to record new
practices and actions, successes and
stumbling blocks.

Reflection: This is the amazing part, that Christ
would "become flesh" and "make his home
among us." And not a flashy home sterilized and
removed from nature, but a normal home, with
laundry, dirty sandals, leftover fish, goats, and, of
course, gnats. In this context, what might it mean
for the gospel writer to say that in the midst his
"home among us" that we have "seen his glory"?

Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

— Day Five of Week Two —

Day Five Reading Colossians 1:15-17:
The Son is the image of the invisible God,
the one who is the first over all creation,
Because all things were created by him:
both in the heavens and on the earth,
the things that are visible and the things that are
invisible.

Whether they are thrones or powers,
or rulers or authorities,
all things were created through him and for him.
He existed before all things,
and all things are held together in him.

Action Report: Over this week and the next few weeks, use this space to record new practices and actions, successes and stumbling blocks.

Reflection: This reading is part of an ancient hymn, one of the first hymns of the early church. The hymn rejoices as it praises God who holds all things together. What favorite song or hymn do you have that raises praise for the Creation? Note the lyrics that are most memorable for you.

Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

— Day Six of Week Two —

Day Six Reading Colossians 1:19-20:
Because all the fullness of God was pleased
to live in him,
and he reconciled all things to himself
through him—
whether things on earth or in the heavens.
He brought peace through the blood of his
cross.

Action Report: Over this week and the next few weeks, use this space to record new practices and actions, successes and stumbling blocks.

Reflection: In the reading, we see more of the song of praise from the early church, raising gratitude that God through Christ brought all things to himself. A short teaching follows this song, including a warning that we must “stay rooted in faith” (Colossians 1:23). What are the ways you stay *rooted* in faith?

Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

WEEK THREE

— *Side By Side* —



Daily Reflections for Week Three

Work through the reflections for this week, one for every day between the weekly lessons. Use a notebook to record your responses. Or, you can print a PDF of the lesson sheets for the study series at umcreationjustice.org/library

— Reflections for Week Three —

Daily Action, Reading, and Prayer

- 1.) Read the Scripture and address the reflection question. Prompts include drawing out ideas from the verses, or even just highlighting a single word to think about from the text itself.
- 2.) Over the week, reflect on the progress of your chosen action(s). If you complete an action, make a note of how it went. Did it go as you expected? What did you learn? What are you most glad for? What would you do differently next time? As you complete actions, choose new ones to try.
- 3.) Next, pray the Week Three Daily Prayer to close your reflection time:

— Week Three Daily Prayer —

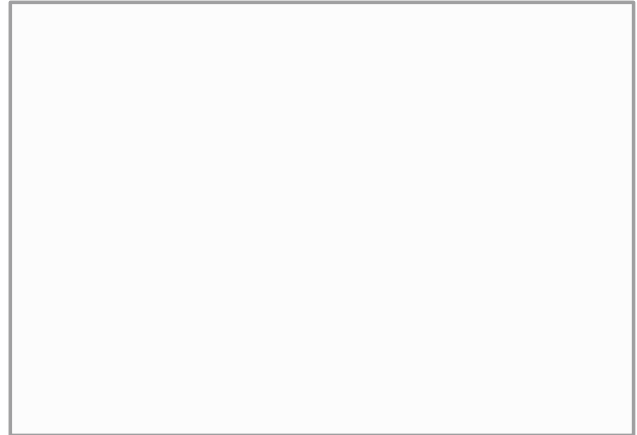
Creator God, we thank you! We thank you for ocean fish that run side by side up and along flowing rivers to spawn upstream. We thank you for the freshwater rivers that run side by side from the coasts and along forest pathways, which in turn run side by side through rolling hills and rising mountains. Creator God, we thank you for other human beings that stand side by side together, in praise of you, and united in the effort to restore, protect, and preserve this Earth, your creation, our home. Amen.

— Day One of Week Three —

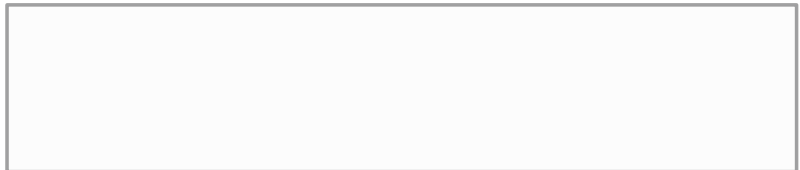
Day One Reading Genesis 2:4-7:

This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. On the day the Lord God made earth and sky—before any wild plants appeared on the earth, and before any field crops grew, because the Lord God hadn't yet sent rain on the earth and there was still no human being to farm the fertile land, though a stream rose from the earth and watered all of the fertile land—the Lord God formed the human from the topsoil of the fertile land and blew life's breath into his nostrils. The human came to life.

Reflection: This reading ends with the sentence, “The human came to life.” These few small words are thunderous! From the steaming earth God breathed breath into human beings. Humans had nothing to do with it, it wasn't about being worthy or unworthy. It was simply God's decision and delight to make human beings. A lot has happened since humankind drew breath! What words of advice might you give to humankind in Genesis 7 about stumbling blocks ahead and caring for the Earth?



Action Report: Over this week and the next few weeks, use this space to record new practices and actions, successes and stumbling blocks.



Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

— Day Two of Week Three —

Day Two Reading Genesis 2:8-9, 15-17:

The Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east and put there the human he had formed. In the fertile land, the Lord God grew every beautiful tree with edible fruit, and also he grew the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The Lord God took the human and settled him in the garden of Eden to farm it and to take care of it. The Lord God commanded the human, “Eat your fill from all of the garden's trees; but don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because on the day you eat from it, you will die!”

Reflection: There are volumes and volumes written about the “tree of good and evil.” But for a moment, for this reflection, let go of all those complexities. Instead look at just the plain words in front of you. Next, think of when you have seen a tree that was so grand, or gnarled, or ancient that it was as if life itself was reflected in it. Perhaps a towering coastal redwood tree, or one of those scraggly pine trees clinging to a clifftop boulder, as a storming ocean and the salty wind tries to make it bow. Now, those trees have seen a few things! Write about or draw a tree you have seen that drew your notice for its beauty or sheer audacity.



Action Report: Over this week and the next few weeks, use this space to record new practices and actions, successes and stumbling blocks.



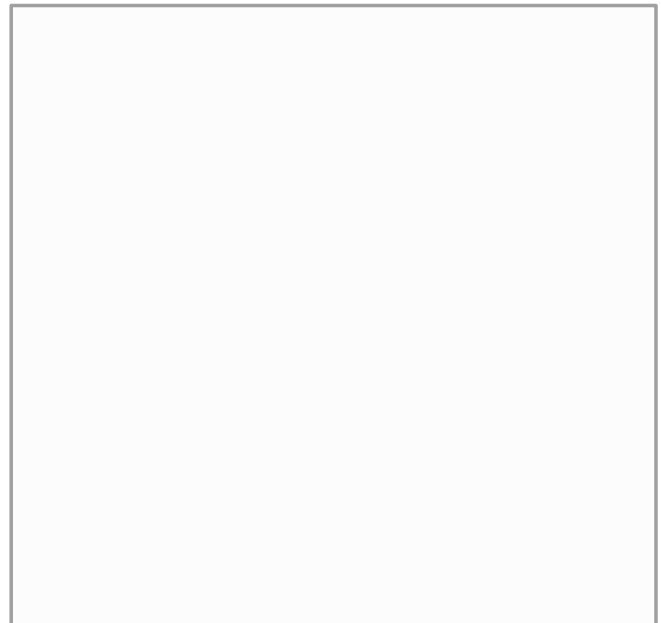
Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

— Day Three of Week Three —

Day Three Reading Genesis 2:10-14:

A river flows from Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides into four headwaters. The name of the first river is the Pishon. It flows around the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. That land’s gold is pure, and the land also has sweet-smelling resins and gemstones. The name of the second river is the Gihon. It flows around the entire land of Cush. The name of the third river is the Tigris, flowing east of Assyria; and the name of the fourth river is the Euphrates.

Reflection: Ah! Sweet smelling resins and gemstones! Also gold, and the rushing waters of Eden! Today’s reflections take us back to the raw beauty that is part of God’s amazing Earth. Rest in that beauty today. Go outside. Touch grass, as they say. Remember that the foundations of the Earth are sure. That God laid the cornerstone. Take time today for a walk, or a run, or time in the park on a bench, and drink in the beauty of Earth shapes and forms wherever you can see them, perhaps a running creek, or a hilltop. Note the green or red or gold of growing things. Note the color of the soils and rocks. Make a note of what it was like to be part of all of that today (and every day!).



Action Report: Over this week and the next few weeks, use this space to record new practices and actions, successes and stumbling blocks.



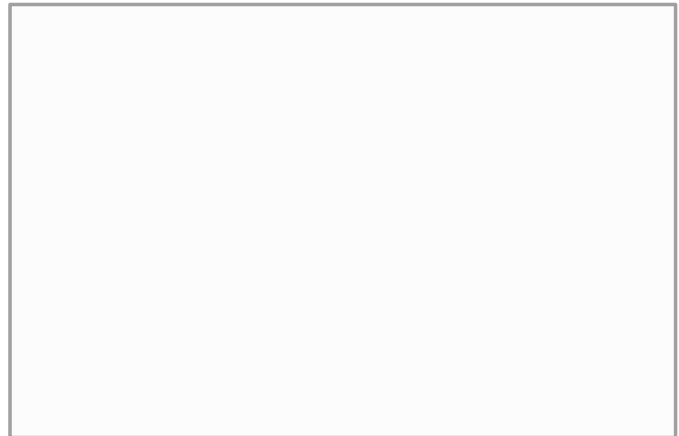
Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

— Day Four of Week Three —

Day Four Reading Genesis 2:18-20:

Then the Lord God said, “It’s not good that the human is alone. I will make him a helper that is perfect for him.” So the Lord God formed from the fertile land all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky and brought them to the human to see what he would name them. The human gave each living being its name. The human named all the livestock, all the birds in the sky, and all the wild animals. But a helper perfect for him was nowhere to be found.

Reflection: Today, if you can, return to the spot outside where you were yesterday. If not, pick a new spot. Yesterday, you noticed the landforms, plant life, and running water. Today, look for the creatures. Fellow humans too, maybe, but also birds, insects, lizards, whatever you might see. Make a note of what you saw. Think about how, in sitting and enjoying the many species of creation, God and Jesus have done this, too!



Action Report: Over this week and the next few weeks, use this space to record new practices and actions, successes and stumbling blocks.



Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

— Day Five of Week Three —

Day Five Reading Genesis 2:21-23:

So the Lord God put the human into a deep and heavy sleep, and took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh over it. With the rib taken from the human, the Lord God fashioned a woman and brought her to the human being. The human said, “This one finally is bone from my bones / and flesh from my flesh. / She will be called a woman / because from a man she was taken.”

Reflection: This reading shows the care God took in addressing the loneliness of the human. The human, already brought to life by the breath of God, now becomes two beings. As the human sleeps, God draws out one “side” or “chamber” from the human and in that instant, humankind forms a first relationship. From that first relationship, countless others have followed. Despite the challenges humans have faced, God has remained steadily faithful. What are the ways God has been faithful in your own life?

Action Report: Over this week and the next few weeks, use this space to record new practices and actions, successes and stumbling blocks.

Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

— Day Six of Week Three —

Day Six Reading Matthew 6:9-13:

Our Father who is in heaven,
uphold the holiness of your name.
Bring in your kingdom
so that your will is done on earth
as it's done in heaven.
Give us the bread we need for today.
Forgive us for the ways
we have wronged you,
just as we also forgive those
who have wronged us.
And don't lead us into temptation,
but rescue us from the evil one.

Reflection: Most of us know the Lord's Prayer by heart. This is how that prayer appears in the Book of Matthew (CEB). As you read the verses, rest in the familiarity of the prayer. Notice that the prayer calls for God's will to be done “on earth.” When it comes to caring for creation, what might that part of the prayer mean today?

Action Report: Over this week and the next few weeks, use this space to record new practices and actions, successes and stumbling blocks.

Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

WEEK FOUR

— *Holding Things Together* —



Daily Reflections for Week Four

Work through the reflections for this week, one for every day between the weekly lessons. Use a notebook to record your responses. Or, you can print a PDF of the lesson sheets for the study series at umcreationjustice.org/library

— Reflections for Week Four —

Daily Action, Reading, and Prayer

- 1.) This week's reflection looks a little different. In the place of reflection prompts, instead, there are steps to complete to write a prayer, one line at a time. Then, when the prayer is complete, share it with your study group!
- 2.) Over the week, reflect on the progress as you continue to work on your chosen action(s). When you complete an action, make a note of how it went. Did it go as you expected? What did you learn? What are you most glad for? What would you do differently next time? As you complete actions, choose new ones to try.
- 3.) Next, pray the Week Four Daily Prayer to close your reflection time:

— Week Four Daily Prayer —

Creator God, God of light and salt, who formed stars, the soil, and roaring seas. The creation you formed with your hands, and filled with living things, is under threat. Help human beings stand strong against the pollution that destroys your handiwork. Strengthen the faithful to speak for those most harmed! For your hand is the hand of power! By your word people will draw together, neighbor with neighbor, to be the steadfast stewards you created us to be. Amen.

— Day One of Week Four —

Day One Reading Psalm 148:1-3:

Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord from heaven!

Praise God on the heights!

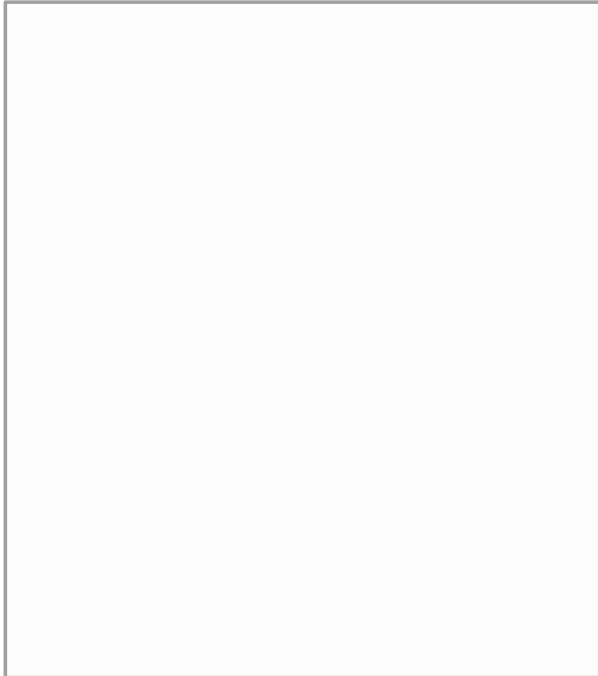
Praise God, all of you who are his
messengers!

Praise God, all of you who comprise
his heavenly forces!

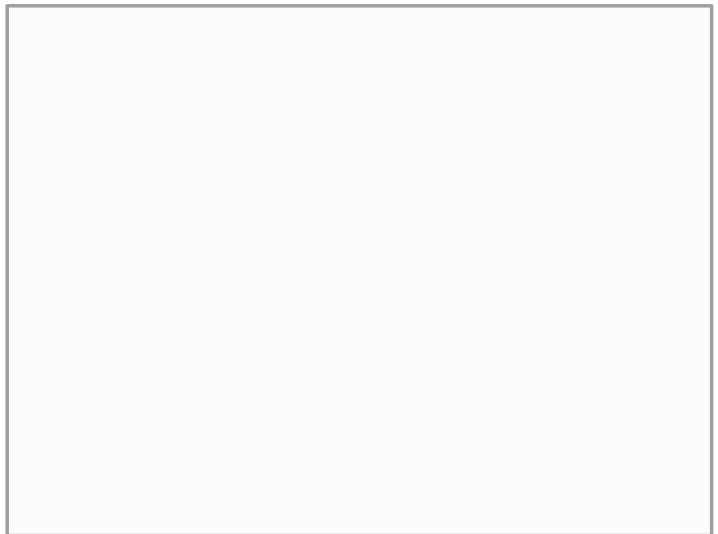
Sun and moon, praise God!

All of you bright stars, praise God!

Action Report: Over this week and the next few weeks, use this space to record new practices and actions, successes and stumbling blocks.



Reflection: This week's psalm reads like a prayer or hymn. It has so much energy and praises God in high style. For this week's reflection time the goal is to write a prayer, one line at a time. Today, start by writing the first line of the prayer. The first line is simply an address, a "hello." This "hello" takes the form of an address, like in a letter or email. So more formally this means you use the name of the person you are addressing, so for a letter you might open with "Dear Dr. Jones." For a prayer, you are opening by addressing God by name, also. The address can be any respectful and appropriate name for God (Redeemer, Life-Giver, Almighty, Christ Jesus...). Think of the first line as an opener to get God's attention and call God's name. Examples could be "Dear Beloved God" or "Dear Heavenly Father" or "Lord of Heaven and Earth" or for this study maybe "Creator God" or "Divine Creator" or "God of all things." You got this!



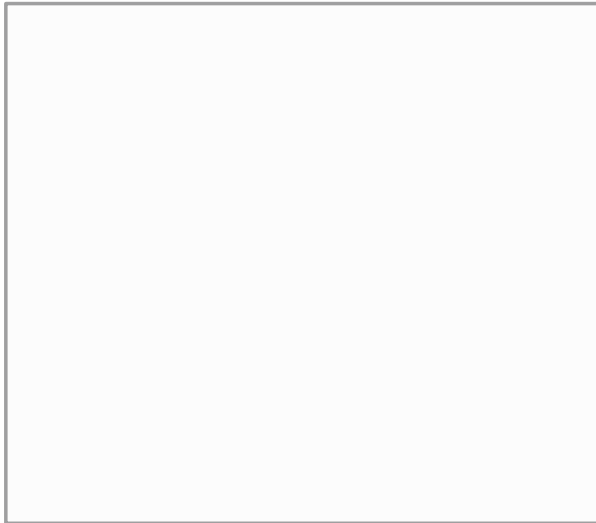
Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

— Day Two of Week Four —

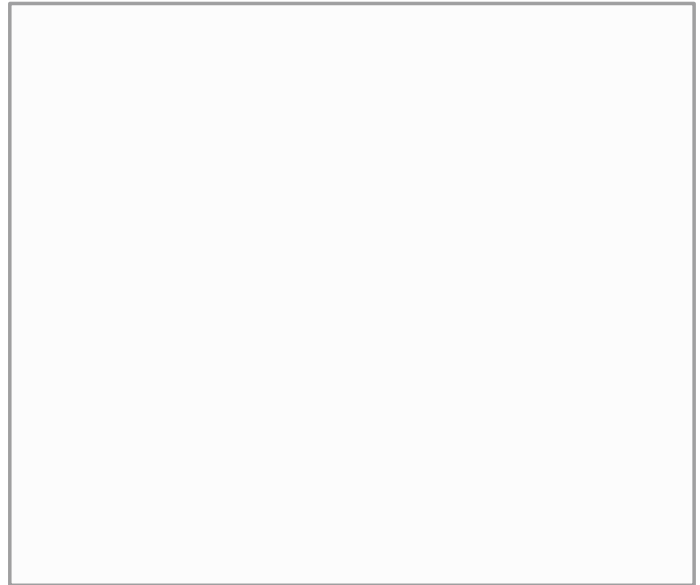
Day Two Reading Psalm 148:4-6:

You highest heaven, praise God!
Do the same, you waters that are above
the sky!
Let all of these praise the Lord's name
Because God gave the command and
they were created!
God set them in place always and
forever.
God made a low that will not be
broken.

Action Report: Over this week and the next few weeks, use this space to record new practices and actions, successes and stumbling blocks.



Reflection: Today, speak to God's power. For the second line to the prayer you are writing, name a characteristic of God that is true and relevant for your prayer. If, for example, yesterday's address was "Divine Creator," today add something more about that. Examples could be, "Divine Creator, Maker of Heaven and Earth," or "Divine Creator, One who sees all and guides all," or "Divine Creator, who formed humankind to care for this planet, Earth." Naming an important characteristic of God is a way to show your confidence that it is in the very nature of God to step in and help you with what you are asking for your prayer.



Your Prayer:

Address (Day One) _____

Name or Characteristic (for today) _____

Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

— Day Three of Week Four —

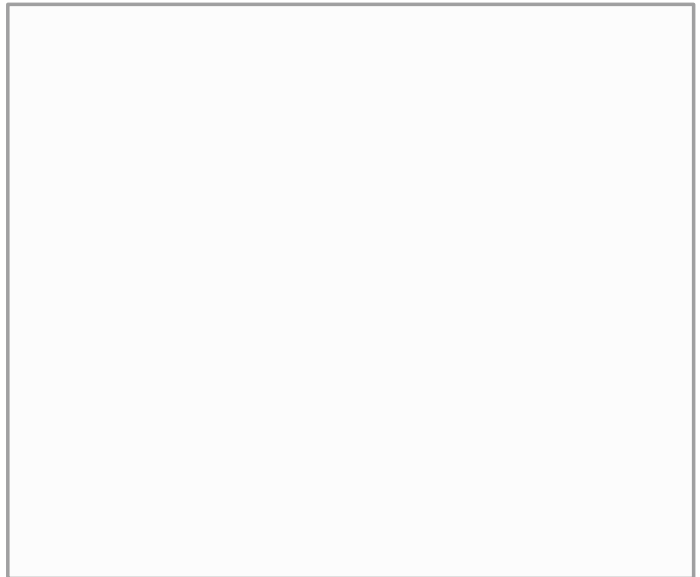
Day Three Reading Psalm 148:7-8:

Praise the Lord from the earth,
You sea monsters and all you ocean
depths!
Do the same, fire and hail, snow and
smoke,
Stormy wind that does what God says!

Action Report: Over this week and the next few weeks, use this space to record new practices and actions, successes and stumbling blocks.



Reflection: Name the "trouble." For the next line of the prayer, add a line that states what trouble needs to be remedied. Don't ask for anything yet, the "ask" is for the line to add tomorrow. Today, just name the trouble you feel in your heart that you are bringing to God for prayer. For example, if we have already written something like "Divine Creator, One who sees and guides all," you can add something like, "all is not well with your creation," or "humans are struggling to be caretakers as you commanded," or "the heat of summer is hard to bear." Or your third line could be a combination of related troubles that you want to bring to God in prayer.



Your Prayer:

Address (Day One) _____

Line two (from Day Two) _____

Line three (for today) _____

Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

— Day Four of Week Four —

Day Four Reading Psalm 148:1, 9-10:

Praise the Lord!
Do the same, you mountains,
every single hill,
fruit trees, and every single cedar!
Do the same, you animals—
wild or tame—
you creatures that creep along
and you birds that fly!!

Action Report: Over this week and the next few weeks, use this space to record new practices and actions, successes and stumbling blocks.

Reflection: Today is “The Ask.” For the next line of your prayer, think of the thing you want to ask God for, and write it down in your prayer.

Yesterday, you named the trouble that needs God’s attention. Today, make your plea. Ask God to help, guide, or inspire action to remedy that trouble. You can be specific. Yet remember there is a balance in asking for something with clarity while not getting too far into the weeds, so to speak. An example for this exercise might be that if you wrote, “humans are struggling to be the caretakers you called us to be,” you can now ask “Help us to care for the Earth, so that we can slow climate change and restore the rivers and green forests you created.” Or whatever works with the prayer you are composing.

Your Prayer:

Address (Day One) _____

Line two (Day Two) _____

Line three (Day Three) _____

Line four (for today) _____

Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

— Day Five of Week Four —

Day Five Reading Psalm 148:1,11-12:

Praise the Lord!

Do the same, you kings of the earth
and every single person,
you princes and every single ruler on
earth!

Do the same, you young men—young
women too!—
you who are old together with you who
are young!

Action Report: Over this week and
the next few weeks, use this space to
record new practices and actions,
successes and stumbling blocks.

Reflection: This is the “good news!” Today, in
writing the last part of the prayer, read your “ask”
from yesterday. Now, think of the good news that
will result when God answers the prayer! Write
that as your next line. Tell about the good thing(s)
that will happen as a result of the action God can
take. In the psalm reading today the psalmist asks
everyone—“kings!” “princes!” “young and
old!”—to call out with the joy that results from
God's goodness. There is anticipation in these
verses! This line of your prayer today will meet

that anticipation and tell the good news of what will
happen when God responds to your ask and moves to
remedy the trouble. This is good news that will
transform the life of the people and the world. For
example, if your ask was for God to “restore the
polluted river,” then you could write the good outcome
would be “so the otters can return to the river and all the
wildlife and people will rejoice!” Or, the outcome could
be “so the children can be healthy and grow up praising
God!” Other psalms and prayers also give examples of
how God's attention to problems can transform trouble
and sorrow into joyful praise.

Your Prayer:

Address (Day One) _____

Line two (Day Two) _____

Line three (Day Three) _____

Line four (Day Four) _____

Line five (for today) _____

Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

— Day Six of Week Four —

Day Six Reading Psalm 148:13-14:

Let all of these praise the Lord's name
because only God's name is high over all.

Only God's majesty is over earth and
heaven.

God raised the strength of his people,
the praise of all his faithful ones—that's
the Israelites,
the people who are close to him.

Action Report: Over this week and
the next few weeks, use this space to
record new practices and actions,
successes and stumbling blocks.

Reflection: Congratulations! You are almost
finished with your prayer. You have completed
these steps: the address and naming of God,
writing the trouble, asking for remedy, and
sharing the good outcome! The last part of the
prayer is simply the closing. In a letter you
might write “sincerely” or “yours truly” to sign
the letter. For a prayer, you can just add an
amen. Amen means truly! And, amen indicates
your sincerity. If you want to be fancy, you can

add more praise of God, or name God more specifically,
in the closing. For example, sometimes people say, “in
the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen.”
Or, in keeping with the topic of your prayer, you could
close with something like, “in the name of the One who
created all things, amen.” Or whatever you might be
inspired to do.

Your Prayer:

Address (Day One) _____

Line two (Day Two) _____

Line three (Day Three) _____

Line four (Day Four) _____

Line five (Day Five) _____

Copy out your prayer all together:

Prayer: Pray the prayer you wrote to close your reflection time today!

WEEK FIVE

— *Salt of the Earth* —



Daily Reflections for Week Five

Work through the reflections for this week, one for every day between the weekly lessons. Use a notebook to record your responses. Or, you can print a PDF of the lesson sheets for the study series at umcreationjustice.org/library

— Reflections for Week Five —

Daily Action, Reading, and Prayer

- 1.) This week we return to the same daily reflection pattern we used for weeks one, two, and three. For this week, Week Five, each day below offers a Scripture reading and an invitation to reflect.
- 2.) This is our final week of choosing actions and trying out different actions for the purposes of this study. Hopefully there have been some actions that have gone well, and perhaps you are planning to continue after the study term is over? Some overall questions to consider include how you thought it went, if it went as your expected, what you learned, what you would do differently next time, and what you are most glad for.
- 3.) To close your reflection time each day, offer this Week Five prayer:

— Week Five Daily Prayer —

Creator God, you made the Earth and everything in it. You made the whole of the universe, every blade of grass, every distant star. And you made humans. In you every human drew breath. Bless us to be the humans you would have us be, as we endeavor to live faithfully according to your word. Amen.

— Day One of Week Five —

Day One Reading Acts 17:22a:

Paul stood up in the middle of the council on Mars Hill, and said...

Reflection: During class time, one of the reflection questions included a question about how hard it can be to stand and speak in front of others, perhaps especially about matters of faith? When have you been in a situation where you did not speak up, but wish you had?



Action Report: Over this last week, use this space to record what actions you have been working on, and are still practicing. What were your successes and stumbling blocks?



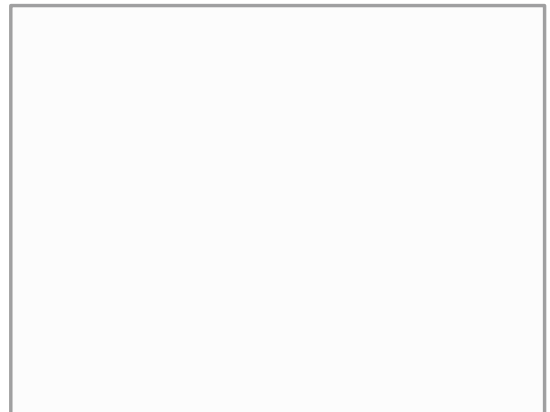
Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

— Day Two of Week Five —

Day Two Reading Acts 17:22a, 24:

Paul stood up in the middle of the council on Mars Hill, and said...“God, who made the world and everything in it, is Lord of heaven and earth. He doesn’t live in temples made with human hands.”

Reflection: Imagine what a big deal it was for Paul to suggest that “God doesn’t live in temples”! Generations and generations of people before Paul had served God faithfully as priests of the Temple, taking turns using their human hands to burn incense and tend to holy things. The work of those generations was honorable and continues to be. Paul, however, speaks here to something new. A new understanding of God was dawning. Still, as we know all too well, change is hard. Have you had an experience where someone asked you to change your ways and worship or celebrate in a way that was new to you? What was that like?



Action Report: Over this last week, use this space to record what actions you have been working on, and are still practicing. What were your successes and stumbling blocks?



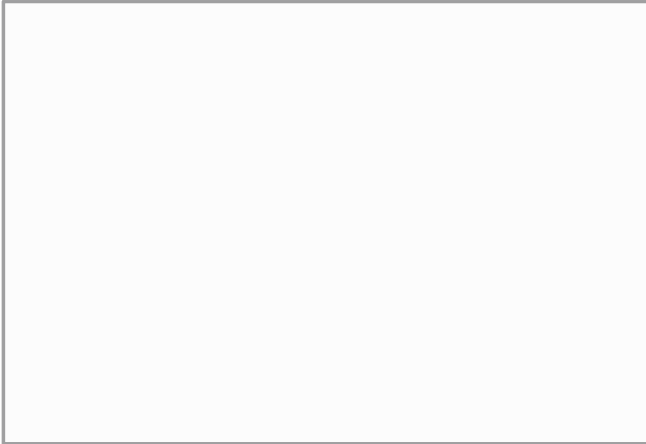
Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

— Day Three of Week Five —

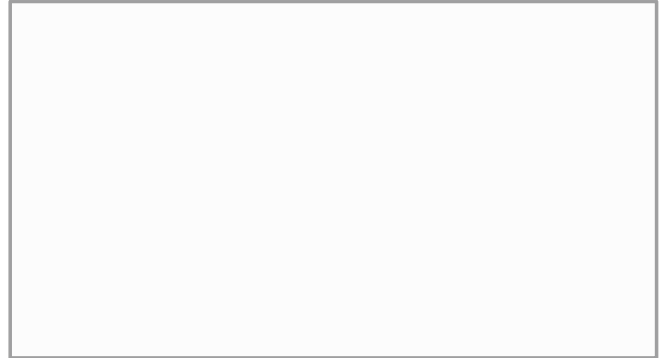
Day Three Reading Acts 17:24-25:

God, who made the world and everything in it, is Lord of heaven and earth. He doesn't live in temples made with human hands. Nor is God served by human hands, as though he needed something, since he is the one who gives life, breath, and everything else.

Reflection: In this verse, Paul tells us that God is the one who gives life, breath, and everything else. Write down today what “everything else” might include, and what you are grateful for.



Action Report: Over this last week, use this space to record what actions you have been working on, and are still practicing. What were your successes and stumbling blocks?



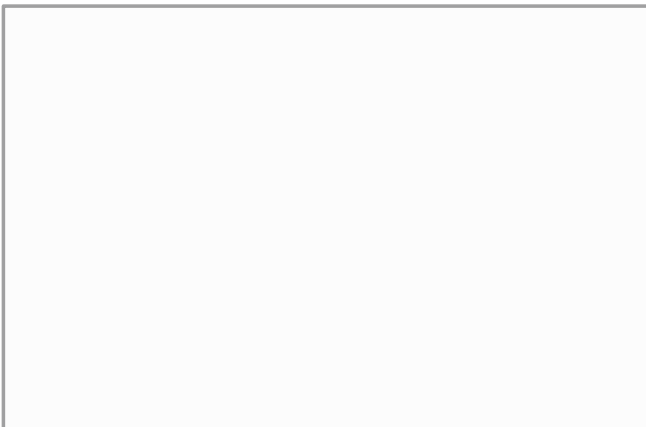
Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

— Day Four of Week Five —

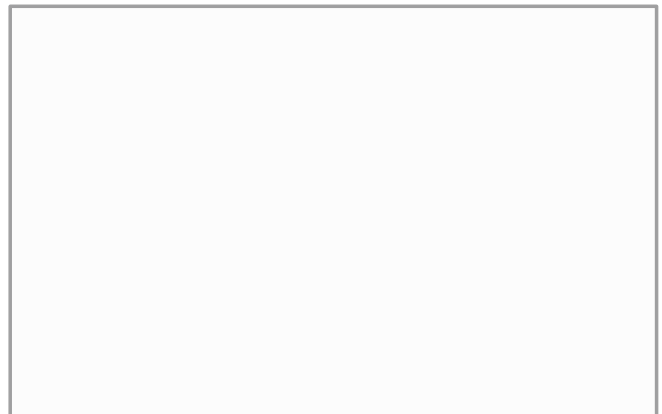
Day Four Reading Acts 17:26:

From one person God created every human nation to live on the whole earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their lands.

Reflection: Paul speaks here of human nations and God's whole Earth. The creation is far bigger than any national border could ever be. How does Paul's effort to speak to differences of people and nations also showcase the inclusive love of God and shared creation?



Action Report: Over this last week, use this space to record what actions you have been working on, and are still practicing. What were your successes and stumbling blocks?



Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

— Day Five of Week Five —

Day Five Reading Acts 17:27:

God made the nations so they would seek him, perhaps even reach out to him and find him. In fact, God isn't far away from any of us.

Reflection: This reading has a small but wonderful segment: "God isn't far away from any of us." What does that mean for you in daily life, and when times are stressful? What might it mean for the feeling you get when you step outside into the natural world and take a good, deep breath?



Action Report: Over this last week, use this space to record what actions you have been working on, and are still practicing. What were your successes and stumbling blocks?



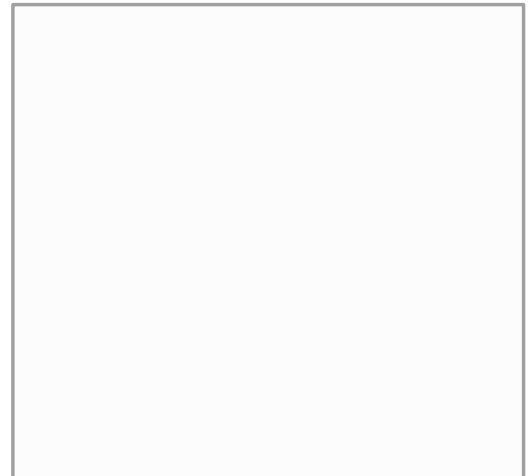
Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

— Day Six of Week Five —

Day Six Reading Acts 17:27b-28:

In fact, God isn't far away from any of us. In God we live, move, and exist. As some of your own poets said, "We are his offspring."

Reflection: We close this week's reflections with the wonderful realization that, not only is God never far from us, but also "we are his offspring." We humans are siblings with every human being, and we are all children of God. And part of the proof of this is the work of the Creator *in the beginning*. "God made the whole world and everything in it," including every ladybug beetle, every lodgepole pine, every pilot whale, every African bush elephant, every common wombat, every whiskered treeswift, and all of us humankind. Knowing this, what can we do together to remedy the environmental challenges we face, and be the keepers and protectors of Earth we are all called to be?



Action Report: On this final day of daily reflection, what last things do you want to note about taking action for God's people and God's creation?



Prayer: Pray the Week One Daily Prayer to close your reflection today.

WEEK SIX

— *Cleaning Up and Making Whole* —



Wrapping Up in Week Six

Daily reflections wrapped in Week Five, yet opportunities for good stewardship are ongoing. Turn to Week Six of the Study for another week of Tips to try. Then, challenge yourself and encourage others to make big and small changes for this good Earth as you celebrate A Feast Day for Creation/Creation in Christ.

Some of the actions suggested in this study will only take a few moments. Others will take weeks to figure out and years to practice. Isn't it always so? To begin something is just the start of mastery. It might be helpful to keep a notebook, start a chat with friends, or otherwise find a way to record and share your efforts, challenges, and successes.

Consider keeping up on the Creation Justice Tips shared during this study. Find monthly Tips online through the United Methodist Creation Justice Movement: umcreationjustice.org/tips