

2018 Spiritual Growth Study
Embracing Wholeness: An Earth Perspective for Covenantal Living
By Jessica Stonecypher

The 2018 Spiritual Growth Study, *Embracing Wholeness: An Earth Perspective for Covenantal Living*, is the second in a two-part series about covenantal living. Part 1, *Living as a Covenant Community* by Evy McDonald explores the scriptural definitions of covenant in order to bridge these definitions with their application and their implications for the modern church. Part 2, *Embracing Wholeness: An Earth Perspective for Covenantal Living*, is designed to build on this work; it explores the ways God has called us to live in covenantal relationship with all of creation and challenges readers to work toward stronger and healthier relationships with creation, their communities, themselves, and God.

Chapter 1 begins the text with the theological and biblical foundation for our covenantal relationship with creation and moves forward into our community, our relationships, and our very selves. Each chapter explores both our personal and corporate responsibilities to those around us and addresses current issues, such as climate change, social responsibility, and justice concerns.

Chapter 2 examines our relationship with creation. Stonecypher examines the sacred community, our relationship with others, and what the Bible and other theological voices say we ought to do in order to live faithfully. This includes topics such as the importance of worship, acts of justice and mercy, the work of being in solidarity with others, and the social responsibility of seeking happiness.

Chapter 3 discusses our relationships with ourselves and how we are indeed sacred. Stonecypher encourages her readers to consider the biblical command to love ourselves and to explore vocation, identity, play, happiness, and the fall, among other topics. The final chapters explore the more practical side of covenantal living and work toward helping the reader to develop a covenantal living plan, or rule of life.

Stonecypher is a United Methodist deacon in ministry with God's creation seeking to bring wholeness and dignity to people, plants, animals, and the land, which others deem unworthy of care. She is the Abbess and a founding member of the Wesleyan Order of Saint Francis, a religious order called to live faithfully in solidarity with the marginalized, voiceless, and undervalued members of God's creation through the lens of Wesleyan and Franciscan theology. Committed to ministry rooted in her place, Jessica lives in her hometown of Zanesville, Ohio, where she serves as the urban agriculture specialist at Muskingum Soil and Water Conservation District and the farm manager of marketing and administration at her family's cattle farm.

Leader Guide: Ellen Lipsey, Faye Wilson