



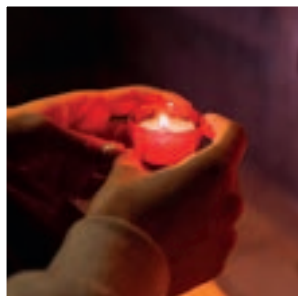
Prayer Resource



Ancient Wisdom



Set 2



How to use this Prayer Resource

About the Ancient Wisdom Prayer Resource

The Prayer Resource contains 20 prayers on the theme of Ancient Wisdom.

The prayers are in two sets – which can be used interchangeably.



SET 1

1. Ancient wisdom
2. Connection to the Earth and Cosmos
3. Attentiveness and Presence
4. Community
5. Seeking the Way
6. Uluru Statement from the Heart 1
7. Uluru Statement from the Heart 2
8. Story Telling
9. Sacred Living
10. Protection

SET 2

1. Connection
2. Hospitality
3. Ritual and Celebration
4. Sacred Symbols
5. Prayer
6. Friendship
7. Creativity
8. Childhood
9. Pilgrimage
10. Sacred Places


For ease of use, the prayer resource is presented in two folders. Each folder contains 10 copies of each of the ten prayers, and an Acknowledgement of Country.

The prayer cards contain a reading on the theme, a follow up reflection and discussion question as well as a scripture quote and a prayer (references are included for all sources).

Prayer is essential at the commencement of meetings in a Catholic ministry for focus, to reinforce Catholic identity and to call God's blessings on the proceedings. Prayer time is also formative as it allows those present to examine aspects of life, faith and experience.

Connection

Physical and spiritual connection to land, to animals and to fellow travellers was at the heart of the Christian tradition and to most ancient and indigenous spiritualities. As O'Donohue teaches, ... *each one of us wants to belong. No-one wants to live a life that is cut-off or isolated...* (*Eternal Echoes*. 1998. p.364). Listening to the land, caring for other creatures, building inclusive communal structures, celebrating the richness of creation, welcoming the stranger, caring for the vulnerable – these are the marks of Divine blessing in our world and we are the agents who deliver this blessing. This agency is not an added extra, something we choose or commit to – it is part of our essential being – part of the Divine love within us all.



We are born social and relational. We yearn to belong, to be part of a larger whole that includes not only friends and family but neighbours, community, trees, flowers, sun, earth, stars. We are born of nature and are part of nature; that is, we are born into a web of life and are part of a web of life... We belong to one another because we have the same source of love; the love that flows through the trees is the same love that flows through my being... (Ilia Delio accessed at Center for Action and Contemplation. 2017).

Aboriginal people understood that the land pre-existed but was transformed into life by the spiritual figures whose tracks across it are known and celebrated in story... the power to transform is given within the land and is available to the human psyche or soul. Soul and land are intersubjectively as one. Land is the medium of all aliveness and soul is the human's ability to participate in that aliveness. (Fletcher, F. *Jesus and the Dreaming*. 2013. pp.224-225).

Stand at the crossroads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies; and walk in it.

(Jeremiah 6:16)

**How
can your
ministry be
an agent of
connection in
the world?**

God of Love, thank you for living and loving in us and through us.

May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and all beings.

Listen to our hearts' longings for the healing of our world. [Please add your own intentions] . . .

Knowing you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer these prayers in all the holy names of God
Amen

(adapted from Rohr, R. accessed at *Centre for Action and Contemplation. Daily Meditations*. 2020).

Hospitality

In the ancient world where travel was difficult and dangerous, people relied on the kindness of others. Consequently, hospitality became a central tenet of all spiritual traditions: welcoming the stranger, caring for others, ensuring visitors are comfortable and well-fed. In many places welcoming someone into your home was also considered a sign and covenant of faithfulness and peace. Today we live in a very different world, but hospitality remains a profound personal, communal and spiritual act. To welcome another and make them feel at home, to notice those in the room who are alone and greet them, to smile and chat with those whose paths you cross every day, these are the hospitalities of the heart – daily sacraments of loving awareness and central tenets of the Christian tradition.

The Celtic monastic communities were not only places of prayer and learning – they were also places of sanctuary and hospitality. It is said that before he went to Iona, St. Columba's Monastery in Derry fed up to 1000 callers everyday... their hospitality was scripturally based and placed a high value on the sacredness of the individual soul... (Clunie, G. *Sacred Living*. 2012. p.21).

For the people of Ancient Israel, understanding themselves as strangers and sojourners, with responsibility to care for vulnerable strangers in their midst, was part of what it meant to be the people of God... Paul urged fellow Christians to welcome one another as Christ had welcomed them... in fact hospitality was a qualification for leadership in the early Christian communities. (Pohl, C. *Making Room*. 1999. p.5).

**How do
you practice
hospitality in
your ministry?**


Abraham
looked up and saw three
men standing near him. When
he saw them, he ran from the tent
entrance to meet them, and bowed
down to the ground. He said, "My lord, if
I find favour with you, do not pass by your
servant. Let a little water be brought, and
wash your feet, and rest yourselves under
the tree. Let me bring a little bread, that
you may refresh yourselves, and after
that you may pass on—since you
have come to your servant."

(Genesis 18:1-6)

God of Welcome
May we be your agents of welcome and compassion.
Open our homes and ministries
to those in need of rest and care.
Give us, like Abraham, a heart for hospitality
and a deep concern for those
who pass through our lives.
Amen

Ritual and Celebration

Ritual enacts deeply held beliefs and values. Rituals mark the passing of milestones: attaining adulthood, marriage and death. In the ancient spiritual traditions, rituals also marked the seasons coming and going, particularly in the Northern Hemisphere, with the coming of Spring and the miracle of rebirth. The link between ritual and Earth was strong and spiritual celebrations were held in the open air with the elements – wind, water, earth and fire. In the Catholic tradition, Eucharist gathers believers together to remember, celebrate and pray as community. As Pope Francis says, *The Eucharist joins heaven and earth – it embraces and penetrates all creation...* (Francis. *Laudato Si'*. n.236).



Great ritual creates an imaginative and symbolic frame which can awaken the numinous otherness, the tenderness and the danger of the Divine.

(O'Donohue, J. *Eternal Echoes*. 1998. p.300).

Maori welcome rituals begin with a challenge or dance from one or more men (we see this ritual in the Haka which precedes a football match). In a spiritual welcome, a female elder will sing, weaving a sacred space, making it safe for the meeting to take place. In her song she welcomes, not only the visitors, but also all their ancestors. This ritual reinforces connection to land, to traditions and to hospitality and welcome.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

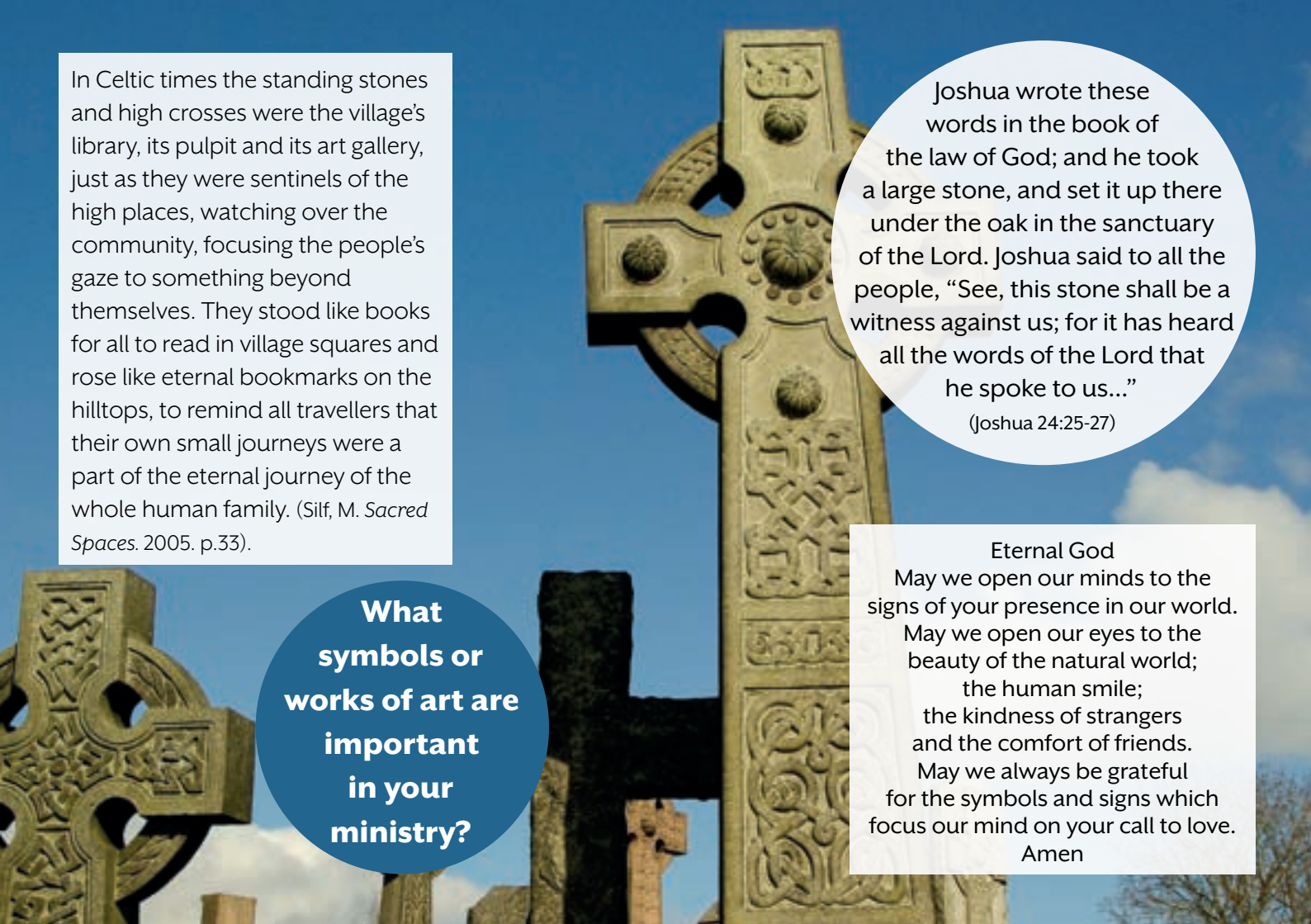
(Acts 2:42)

What rituals are important to your ministry?

God of Love
We are called to be people of prayer and ritual.
Open our hearts to the power of ritual to praise, bless and restore.
May we recognise you in one another and in our gathering and celebration.
Amen

Sacred Symbols

Ancient wisdom invites us to be attentive to those symbols which surround us; both natural and human-made. The Christian cross, the Buddhist wheel, the Jewish Star of David, the Torii gate of Shinto, the Kora-spiral of the Maoris, representing the unfurling of the silver fern, and the wells and standing stones of the Celts: all speak of deeper truths, deeper connections with the Divine. Symbols communicate without words, directly to the heart, as Mor observes: ... *symbols opened the consciousness, allowing the soul to learn and remember experiences beyond each life. Symbols were also pointers which kept the soul walking on the right path through life, guided by the spirit* (Mor, C. *The Moon on the Lake*. 1998. p.60).



In Celtic times the standing stones and high crosses were the village's library, its pulpit and its art gallery, just as they were sentinels of the high places, watching over the community, focusing the people's gaze to something beyond themselves. They stood like books for all to read in village squares and rose like eternal bookmarks on the hilltops, to remind all travellers that their own small journeys were a part of the eternal journey of the whole human family. (Silf, M. *Sacred Spaces*. 2005. p.33).

**What
symbols or
works of art are
important
in your
ministry?**

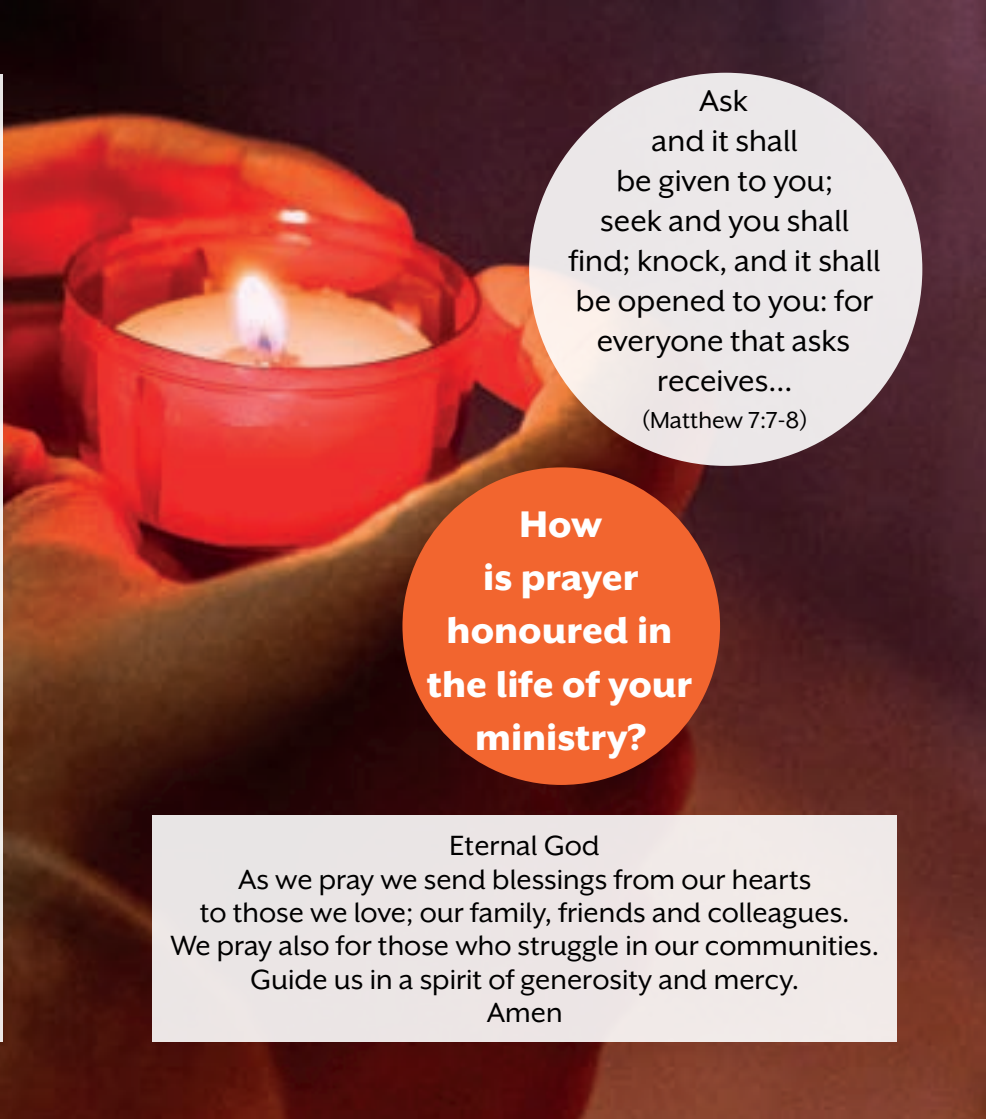
Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak in the sanctuary of the Lord. Joshua said to all the people, "See, this stone shall be a witness against us; for it has heard all the words of the Lord that he spoke to us..."

(Joshua 24:25-27)

Eternal God
May we open our minds to the
signs of your presence in our world.
May we open our eyes to the
beauty of the natural world;
the human smile;
the kindness of strangers
and the comfort of friends.
May we always be grateful
for the symbols and signs which
focus our mind on your call to love.
Amen

Prayer

Prayer is an ancient human practice, a search for connection to something bigger than ourselves. Yet ancient wisdom teaches us that prayer is so much more powerful for individuals and communities. John O'Donohue writes: *Every time you pray, you add to the light and harmony of creation... each day when we wake and each night when we gather ourselves in sleep, we should gently send the light of prayer from our hearts.* (*Eternal Echoes*. p.303). Prayer is not simply words spoken from memory, although there is comfort in this, we are prayer in our very being. We are blessings for our world and prayer helps us bring every person we meet into the Divine embrace.



St. Francis' life shows us that if we persevere in prayer, we will find God in the centre of our lives and the bitter will become sweet... For prayer, that deep relationship with God breathing in us, requires change and conversion. And where there is change, there is letting go of the old and the giving birth to the new. (Delio osf,l. cited in *Franciscan Media*. 2004. p.28).

Prayer is never wasted. It always brings transformation. When you really want to pray for something and you do not receive it, you tend to believe that your prayer was not answered. Such a prayer has a powerful intentionality... unknown to you, that prayer has secretly worked on another aspect of the situation and effected a transfiguration which may become visible only at a later stage. Unknown to you, prayer is always at the service of destiny. (O'Donohue, J. *Eternal Echoes*. 2000. p.270).

Ask
and it shall
be given to you;
seek and you shall
find; knock, and it shall
be opened to you: for
everyone that asks
receives...

(Matthew 7:7-8)

**How
is prayer
honoured in
the life of your
ministry?**

Eternal God

As we pray we send blessings from our hearts
to those we love; our family, friends and colleagues.
We pray also for those who struggle in our communities.


Guide us in a spirit of generosity and mercy.

Amen

Friendship

In his book *Anam Cara*, John O'Donohue examines the Celtic tradition of love and friendship. Anam is the Gaelic word for soul and Cara is the word for friend.

The soul friend can be a teacher, mentor or spiritual guide. Young or old friends come into our lives as blessing. Ancient wisdom honours friendship and reminds us that travelling life's paths with others who care and support you is the greatest gift of all.



Friendship is the sacrament of possibility. It is trusting that those for whom I care and who say they care for me will reveal to me what I cannot see in myself and prod it to fullness. The realisation that friendship is one of the greatest spiritual resources of human existence drives us beyond the superficial to the meaningful. It leads us to create relationships that count for something... it may, in fact, be the friends we make who most accurately measure the depths of our own souls. (Chittister, J. *The Friendship of Women*. 2006. pp.14,16).

In everyone's life, there is a great need for an anam cara, a soul friend. In this love, you are understood as you are without mask or pretension... Love allows understanding to dawn, and understanding is precious. Where you are understood, you are at home. (O'Donohue, J. *Anam Cara*. 1997. p.36).

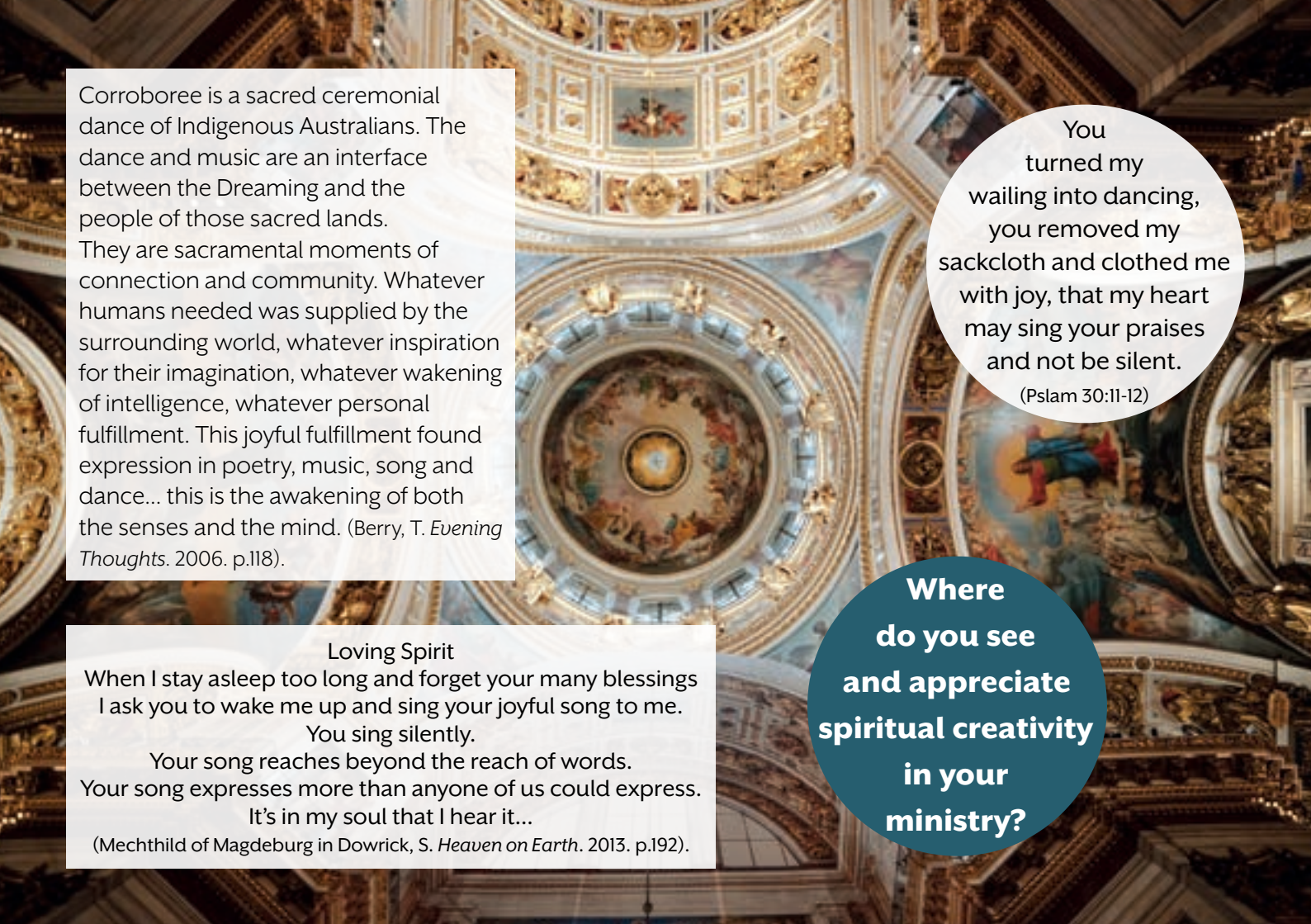
**Consider
your
friendships. How
do they support
and enrich your
life?**

Two
are better
than one... If the
one falls, the other
will lift up.
(Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)

A Friendship Blessing
May you be blessed with good friends.
May you learn to be a good friend to yourself...
May you treasure your friends.
May you be good to them and may you be there for them;
may they bring you all the blessings, challenges, truth,
and light that you need for your journey.
(O'Donohue, J. *Anam Cara*. 1997. p.60).

Creativity

Ancient wisdom balances the need for silence and contemplation with the importance of creativity in spiritual life. Consider the great works of art, music and literature which have been inspired by religious and spiritual beliefs, values and stories. To sing, to dance, to draw, to write; all are ways to praise and worship which are very common in indigenous spiritualities. In the Christian tradition also, figures like Hildegard of Bingen were known for creativity, dance, music, poetry, manuscript illumination and wisdom. This way of celebrating the glory of God was unusual in Hildegard's time, as it is today in some forms of traditional worship.

The background of the entire image is a photograph of the interior of a grand, ornate church dome. The dome is covered in intricate frescoes and is surrounded by a series of smaller, similarly decorated domes. The architecture is highly detailed, with gold leaf accents and classical motifs. The lighting is warm, highlighting the textures and colors of the artwork.

Corroboree is a sacred ceremonial dance of Indigenous Australians. The dance and music are an interface between the Dreaming and the people of those sacred lands. They are sacramental moments of connection and community. Whatever humans needed was supplied by the surrounding world, whatever inspiration for their imagination, whatever waking of intelligence, whatever personal fulfillment. This joyful fulfillment found expression in poetry, music, song and dance... this is the awakening of both the senses and the mind. (Berry, T. *Evening Thoughts*. 2006. p.118).

You
turned my
wailing into dancing,
you removed my
sackcloth and clothed me
with joy, that my heart
may sing your praises
and not be silent.

(Pslam 30:11-12)

Loving Spirit
When I stay asleep too long and forget your many blessings
I ask you to wake me up and sing your joyful song to me.
You sing silently.
Your song reaches beyond the reach of words.
Your song expresses more than anyone of us could express.
It's in my soul that I hear it...

(Mechthild of Magdeburg in Dowrick, S. *Heaven on Earth*. 2013. p.192).

**Where
do you see
and appreciate
spiritual creativity
in your
ministry?**



Childhood

Many ancient spiritualities held special rituals for the birth of children and also for the transition from childhood to adulthood. Traditionally Aboriginal women gave birth on country with other women around them and while these practices varied from country to country, the importance of companionship, introduction to country and the lighting of a welcome fire was clear. Childhood is a sacrament of potential and ancient wisdom recognised this. The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem is one of the great feasts of the Christian tradition celebrating God's incarnation in the form of a vulnerable child.

Baptism as we understand it, in the Christian rituals, comes from the Jewish tradition. For the Jewish people, the heart was the centre of all the emotions. The heart is anointed as a main organ of the baby's health but also as a place where all its feelings will nest. The prayer intends that the new child will never become trapped, caught or entangled in false inner networks of negativity, resentment or destruction towards itself. The blessings also intend that the child has a fluency of feelings in its life; that its feelings may flow freely and carry its soul out to the world and gather from the world delight and peace. (O'Donohue, J. *Anam Cara*. 1997. p.27).

**What
have
children taught
you about
life?**

And
calling to him a
child, Jesus put him in
the midst of them and said,
Truly I say to you,
unless you turn and become
like children, you will never
enter the kingdom
of heaven.

(Matthew 18:2-3)

God of love
Remind us of
the importance of childhood.
May we always care for
and nurture children
and help parents
and caregivers in their role.
Bless our ministries:
the teachers, the carers
and the health professionals.
Bless, guide and empower
them to see and meet
the needs of the children
in their care.
Amen

Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage is an ancient human endeavour, found in all traditions. Christianity, in the Middle Ages, honoured the concept of pilgrimage as a way to unite with God through physical travel toward a spiritual goal. The pilgrim's journey served a variety of functions: ... to be healed, forgiven, enlightened, found worthy or simply to deepen faith. Whatever the reason, you knew the journey would be life-changing with far-reaching consequences for society and culture as a whole. St. Augustine endorsed spiritual travel as a retreat from worldly concerns. Today is no different with many pilgrims on a quest to rediscover themselves by connecting to ancient pathways.

On pilgrimage we are able to be more perceptive to the new environment in which we find ourselves... the practice of pilgrimage calls us to reconnect with a more nomadic spirituality that is willing to leave the safety zone of familiarity and to go out on a journey of spiritual discovery, open to where God wants to guide us. (Clunie, G. *Sacred Living*. 2012. p.45).

Pilgrimage has strong biblical origins: we think of Abraham's journey on God's promise of a great nation, Moses' journey to the Promised land, the missionary travels of St. Paul and even the journey of the Magi to the birth of Christ. All these were journeys of faith; a human search for God; a pilgrimage of understanding and transformation. Today pilgrims still flock to places of spiritual significance: Rome, Santiago de Compostela and Marian shrines to name but a few, along well documented pilgrimage paths across the world. Prayer, meditation, contemplation and shared experiences combine with opportunities to stand in places of holiness to give pilgrims times of sacrament and grace.

**Where
would you
choose to go on
a pilgrimage?**

So, they took
their journey from
Succoth and camped
in Etham at the edge of the
wilderness. And the Lord went
before them by day in a pillar of
cloud to lead the way, and by
night in a pillar of fire to give
them light...
(Exodus 13:20-21)

Let's pray this blessing for all those who are travelling,
whether the journey be long or short.

May you travel in an enlightened way
gathered wisely into your inner ground;
that you may not waste the invitations
which wait along the way to transform you.

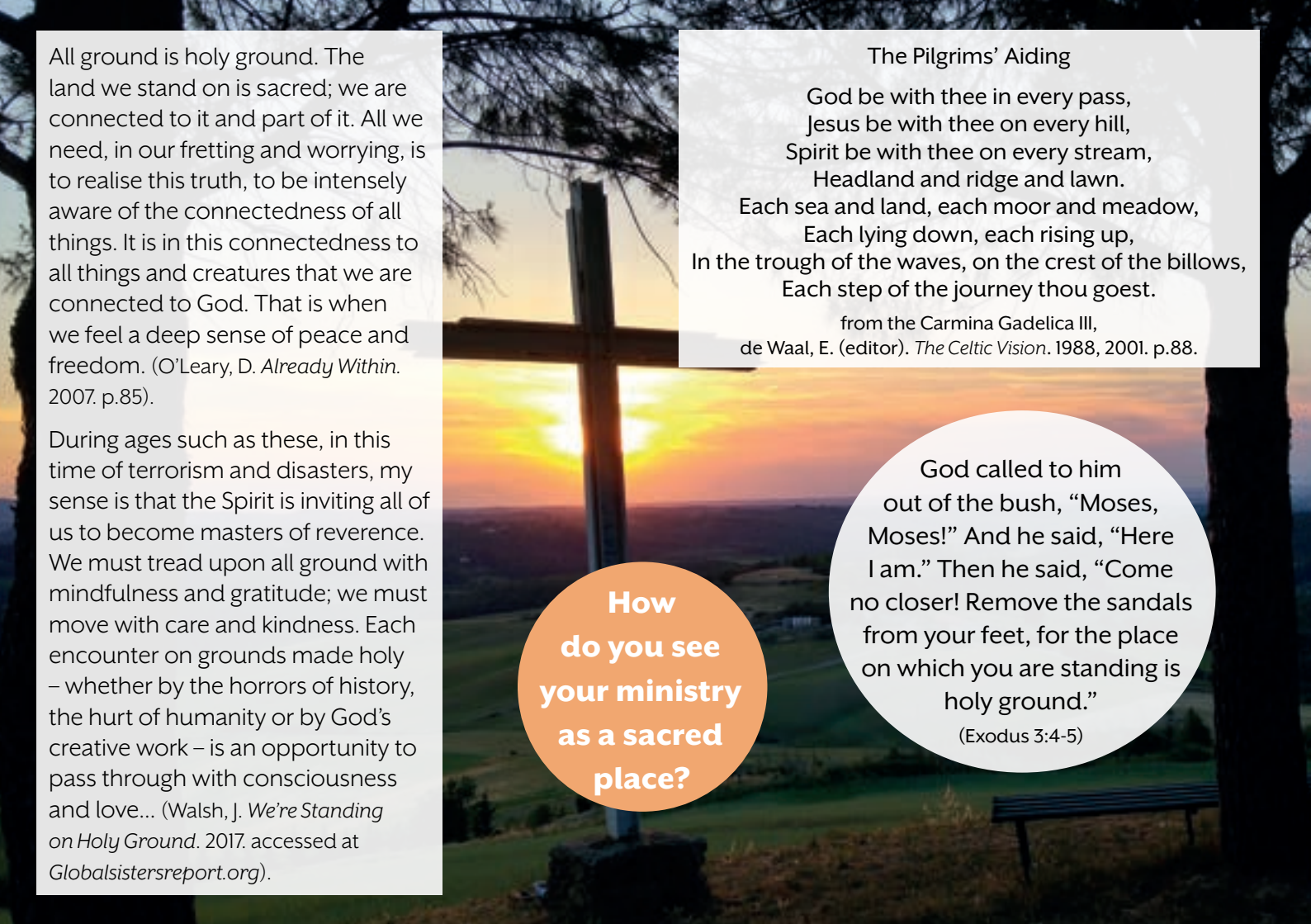
May you travel safely, arrive refreshed
and live your time away to its full.

Return home more enriched and free
to balance the gift of days which call you.

(extract from O'Donohue, J. *Benedictus*. 2007. p.69)

Sacred Places

The whole world is sacred. The beautiful hymn Holy Ground captures this ancient understanding: *for the Lord is present and where God is, is holy*. In this sacred world, particular places were seen by ancient spiritualities as especially suffused with Divine power and connection – wells, groves and mountains for the Celts, Mecca for Muslims, Varanasi for Hindus, Uluru for Indigenous Australians. Sacred places are soul places – places of remembrance, worship, celebration and peace.



All ground is holy ground. The land we stand on is sacred; we are connected to it and part of it. All we need, in our fretting and worrying, is to realise this truth, to be intensely aware of the connectedness of all things. It is in this connectedness to all things and creatures that we are connected to God. That is when we feel a deep sense of peace and freedom. (O'Leary, D. *Already Within*. 2007. p.85).

During ages such as these, in this time of terrorism and disasters, my sense is that the Spirit is inviting all of us to become masters of reverence. We must tread upon all ground with mindfulness and gratitude; we must move with care and kindness. Each encounter on grounds made holy – whether by the horrors of history, the hurt of humanity or by God's creative work – is an opportunity to pass through with consciousness and love... (Walsh, J. *We're Standing on Holy Ground*. 2017. accessed at Globalsistersreport.org).

**How
do you see
your ministry
as a sacred
place?**

The Pilgrims' Aiding

God be with thee in every pass,
Jesus be with thee on every hill,
Spirit be with thee on every stream,
Headland and ridge and lawn.
Each sea and land, each moor and meadow,
Each lying down, each rising up,
In the trough of the waves, on the crest of the billows,
Each step of the journey thou goest.

from the Carmina Gadelica III,
de Waal, E. (editor). *The Celtic Vision*. 1988, 2001. p.88.

God called to him
out of the bush, "Moses,
Moses!" And he said, "Here
I am." Then he said, "Come
no closer! Remove the sandals
from your feet, for the place
on which you are standing is
holy ground."

(Exodus 3:4-5)