

Sermon: Caim and Lorica    Text: Luke 19:1-8    October 20, 2019  
Rev. Steve Clifton            Rideau Park United Church, Ottawa ON



from PRAYER AT RISING

(From Catherine Maclean, crofter, Naast, Gairloch)

Bless to me, O God,  
Each thing mine eye sees;  
Bless to me, O God,  
Each sound mine ear hears;  
Each note that goes to my song,  
Each ray that guides my way,

Bless to me, O God,  
The Three that seek my heart.

A young adult that I know recently reflected on her spiritual life. She was a part of a church, a United Church, but was looking for spirituality, for spiritual practice and she wondered if that quest would have to lead her out of her church. A Christian young person, earnestly seeking food for the soul, a connection to the great mystery, an ongoing encounter with the holy, wasn't sure if she could find it in her own tradition.



Outside the church community people are looking for spiritual nurture too. Reginald Bibby, the well regarded Canadian religion researcher has written of the paradox that is part of Canadian society. People are looking for a connection to something deeper and greater. They are wrestling with ultimate questions of meaning and belonging. But their search may not lead them to our doors.

And what about you? If you were looking to connect to God, to deepen your spiritual life, to discover a new spiritual practice, where would you go?

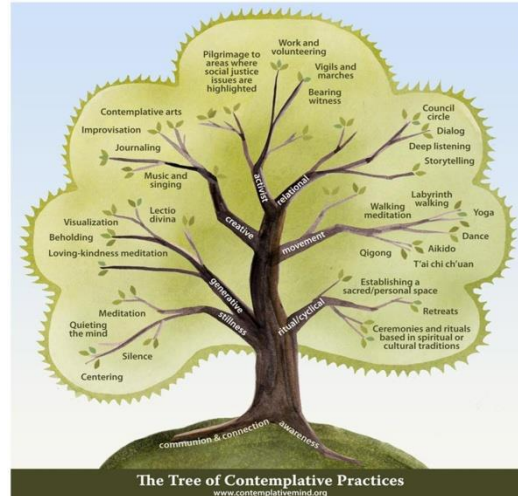
At Rideau Park I wonder if we notice the spiritual paths that we commonly explore here. They are familiar, part of the fabric of community life and so maybe we stop noticing.

We pray together. Every Sunday we pray in word and song. Communal prayer is prayer. It's a spiritual practice. And we are very regular in this practice together.

Every Sunday morning, all year round for some years now, a small group of us meet in the Meditation room at 9:10am and spend time in silent meditation. You can pay someone to teach you mindfulness meditation, but silent meditation in the Christian tradition is all about mindfulness and you can join in here for free anytime, try it any Sunday morning.

We have a prayer chain, a group of people who connect through email who pray for those in need as requested. You can request prayer or you can join the chain anytime.

Every Thursday afternoon a group of Healing Pathway practitioners meet here to meditate and to offer healing prayer for as many as three receivers each week. They make house calls. They offer prayer each Sunday after the service in the chapel. They will hold a service of healing prayer on the evening of Nov 17, like the one held on a Sunday morning in Lent last spring. Healing Pathway is very much a spiritual discipline and with a bit of training you can join in or make an appointment or stop in the chapel on Sunday to receive prayer anytime.

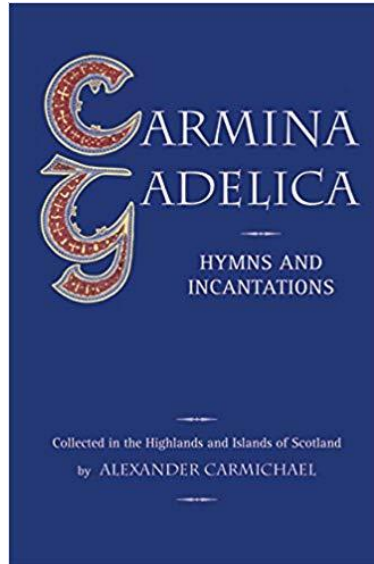


Our tradition is a deep well, a great tree, of spiritual practice and over the years we have had evenings and workshops and events focused on a whole range of prayer practices:

- Lectio Divina – which is meditation on Scripture,
- silent meditation,
- guided meditation,
- retreats,
- labyrinth prayer,
- taize prayer,
- Ignatian spirituality,
- movement prayer of various kinds,
- worship installations like Encarna,
- yoga prayer,
- contemplative prayer,
- journal writing, poetry...and more.

And if there is something you would like to explore or explore again, let us know...

In the gospel Jesus teaches his friends about prayer. And he invites us to persist in prayer, to keep at it, not to lose heart. And this word of encouragement to keep at prayer led me to think of yet another pathway of prayer in the Christian tradition that is all about persisting in prayer, praying through each and every day.



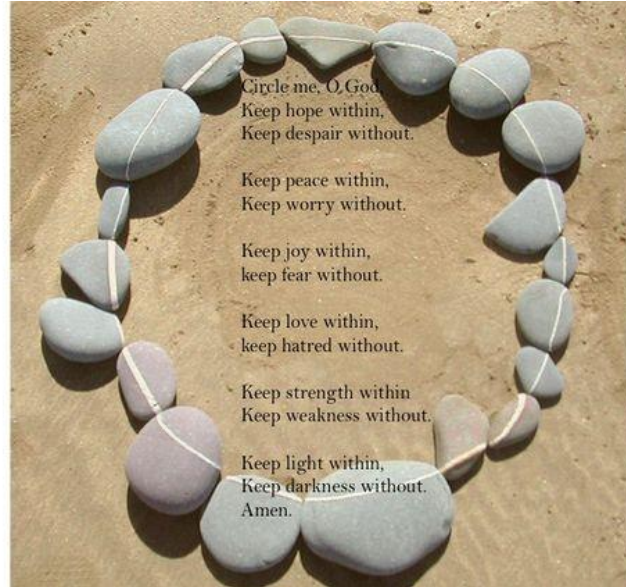
I began today with a prayer for morning. It's a Celtic prayer from the Western Hebrides, the islands off the west coast of Scotland. It was recited in the 1860s, from the memory of a farmer named Catherine MacLean.

In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century a folklorist named Alexander Carmichael travelled among the crofters, farmers and fishers of the western highland and islands of his native Scotland and recorded the oral prayer tradition that was alive among the people there. In 1900 he published a great volume of the traditions he collected, writing them down in his book, translated from Gaelic into English, the *Carmina Gadelica* (1900) or *Hymns of the Gael*.

Carmichael spent hours with peasants in their huts in front of peat fires listening as they recited poems and prayers in Gaelic, as they shared traditions that had been handed down over generations, for as much as 1500 years.

One of the characteristics of Celtic prayer is that it is woven into the common events of every day; there are prayers for morning, prayers for sleeping, prayers for lighting the hearth, prayers for cooking, prayers for herding and planting and for going on the sea, prayers that find God in Creation around, prayers that reflect the holy in wind and rain, in sunshine, shore and sea...

And there are some prayer forms that are unique to the Celtic world.



There is the Caim – the circle prayer.

In this prayer you are intentional to surround yourself with the protection and blessing of God.

An example of a caim

Circle me Lord, Keep protection near, And danger afar. /Circle me Lord, Keep light near, And darkness afar. /Circle me Lord, Keep peace within, Keep evil out./Circle me Lord, Keep hope within, Keep doubt without./ May you be a bright flame before me/May you be a guiding star above me,May you be a smooth path below me, And a loving Guide behind me,Today, tonight, and forever.







Jesus in today's gospel invites us to persist in prayer. We do pray together here in many ways. Our spiritual tradition is deep and broad and wide. It holds such a great variety of ways to pray. May we continue to persist in prayer together.

Let me share a Celtic blessings:



Deep peace of the running wave to you.  
Deep peace of the flowing air to you.  
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you.  
Deep peace of the shining stars to you.  
Deep peace of the gentle night to you.  
Moon and stars pour their healing light on you.  
Deep peace of Christ,  
of Christ the light of the world to you.  
Deep peace of Christ to you.

Hymn 410 VU This Day God Gives Me – (St Patrick's Loric)