

SageWoman

Celebrating the Goddess in Every Woman



Sacred Lands

A Night on Glastonbury Tor · Danu: The River is Flowing
Earth Angel · Fairyland in a Factory Town
Ancient Mothers of Loch Lomond

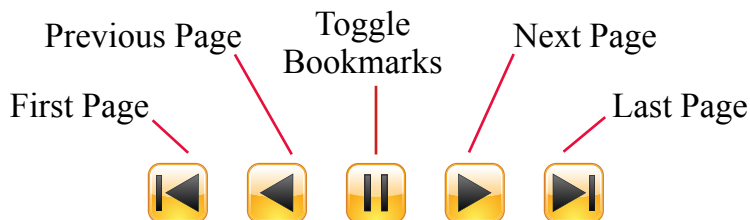
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Living the Dream: Letter from the Editor

by Anne Newkirk Niven

*Cherish these times
They're already leaving
They're already bound
For a brighter unknown*

*Love with your mind
Love all that you're seeing
Love all that is real
Love all that you know*

John Fullbright,
"All That You Know"
Songs

We all know that there are places where the mists that separate this world from all others are thinner, enabling us to see just a bit further into the Beyond. Whether made holy by choice or by chance, such places may attract intense attention or conversely be so obscure that they are hidden except to a few.

I believe that there's three types of sacred places: the Sanctified, the Numinous, and the Hallowed. The Sanctified place is easily recognized since it is formally designated as sacred: the church, temple, mosque, or other religious site. What sets such places apart is human in origin. Uniquely among the unnumbered species that fill the earth, we humans create edifices to commune with our gods. *Here*, we say — with architecture, with design, with devotion — *is a special place*. Whether humble or grandiose, the holiness of the altar, the temple, or the shrine stems from our will and from our conscious desire to set a place apart.

When we humans build sacred sites, we have a tendency to go big. We demonstrate our devotion to the divine — whether to the classic Greek gods of the Parthenon or the Virgin Mary of the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe — by giving the utmost measure of effort of which our society is capable. Such places can be truly awe-inspiring: my favorites include the soaring limestone buttresses of the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. and the uncanny megaliths of Stonehenge and Avebury in southern England. Built to greater-than-human scale, such sites convey a sense of permanence and power: attributes of gods that tower over us in their majesty and divinity. Such sites offer us solace, calm, and reassurance, especially in times of chaos and destruction.

Numinous places, on the other hand, simply knock us onto our knees without any human intervention. Majestic mountains stretch up into the darkening clouds; seashores crumble into unknowably endless seas; naked desert sands expose themselves to the infinitely star-sprinkled skies. Such places are holy, too: they effortlessly remind us of how small a single human life is compared to the vastness of the universe, and break open our hearts by their sheer beauty. We find solace in their lonely grandeur: the mountains, deserts, forests, and seashores, are so refreshing and inspirational that entire industries are devoted to helping make our pilgrimages to such remote places possible.

Both of these types of sacred places are set apart from our ordinary lives: one by being dedicated to the Divine, and the other by sheer distance. But that separation is not accidental: most sacred places are set apart because our ancestors knew that encountering Deity can be very dangerous. So, if a place was known to be the dwelling place of the Gods, the ancients built their homes far away from the god-haunted locale. Likewise, building a consecrated house of the gods in a village gave the Holy a place to safely dwell — safely secured away from we fragile mortals.

This basic truth of religious experience is no longer obvious: the prideful illusion that we humans control the forces of life and death undergirds our civilization. We may even be tempted — while worshipping in a consecrated house of God/dess or enjoying a scene of inspiring natural beauty — to believe that the Sacred is benevolent, understandable, and that Its purposes align seamlessly with our own.

But this illusion is extremely fragile. It takes only a moment in time — a chance encounter, an accident, a diagnosis, a change of weather — for our wishful fantasies to be trampled into dust. When that happens — when the unfathomable occurs and all that the human heart can do is shatter and then try, impossibly, to heal — the most ordinary places can become extraordinary. Touched by the Sacred, they can become Hallowed.

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Issue #87 "Sacred Lands"
Spring into Summer, 2015

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Editorial Notes

We encourage all Goddess-loving women to write for *SageWoman*. Most of our articles come from our readers! *SageWoman* publishes primarily first-person prose written to our announced themes.

Visit www.SageWoman.com for writing guidelines, subscriptions and blog links. You can also call 888-724-3966, or write via postal mail to: SageWoman, P. O. Box 687, Forest Grove, OR 97116.

**Next issue #88 "Serenity"
Deadline is past.**

**#89 "Roots & Wings"
Deadline August 1, 2015**

How do we balance our contrasting impulses to break free from what binds us and yet root deeply in what keeps us centered? For this issue, please send us your stories about how you find inspiration to spread your wings while not losing contact with what keeps you grounded.

Coming Soon:

#90: *The Magic of Trees*

#91: *Worlds of Faerie*

Such places — sites made sacred, not by human design nor by inspiring beauty, but seemingly by chance — occur across the world. Many commemorate the spot where a human soul suddenly encountered Eternity without warning. Such a place is located in the small town of Forest Grove where I live.

The "Love Rocks" sacred site doesn't have any billboards advertising it on the highway. But there are signs, if you know how to look. Colorful pinwheels dot the yards of the neighborhood, and closer in, placards in red with white letters appear, reading sternly: "DRIVE AS IF YOUR CHILDREN LIVED HERE."

The story of the Love Rocks shrine began on a warm autumn evening in October of 2013. Two sisters were playing in front of their home and innocently decided to cover themselves in a pile of fallen autumn leaves on the quiet road. A young woman on her way home from work drove through the leaves and Anna (6), died instantly, while Abigail (11) was airlifted to a local hospital where she died the next day.

After the accident, the girl's mother, Susan Dieter-Robinson, started a blog. (<http://love-drenched-life.com/>). In one early post, she wrote: *Tom and I have had to navigate grief that we wouldn't wish upon anyone. ... We decided shortly after the girls went to Heaven that their legacy would not be this tragedy but rather the love and joy that they poured out to everyone who knew them and hopefully everyone who would hear their story.*



"Love Rocks" tree and shrine.

Susan and her daughters had decorated small river rocks with collage as a family project for a wedding several years prior to the accident. Since then, Susan has created the "Love Rocks" project, creating decorated rocks and sending them to people in need.

The project has now received worldwide attention and thousands of Love Rocks have spread their message of joy in honor of Anna and Abby.

Today, a year-and-a-half later, the sweet gum tree next to the road has become a living shrine. Wrapped in multi-colored fabric, adorned with radiant pictures of the girls, and visited by a constant trickle of well-wishers, it is a symbol of love overcoming unimaginable sorrow.

It's not a consecrated church, nor a place of awe-inspiring beauty. It's an unprepossessing tree on a quiet street in an ordinary town. But to me, it is more sacred than any other place I have ever been. As Susan wrote to me just this morning, "The base of that tree is the most peaceful place on earth for me...it's where my girls met Jesus."

To me, a place where our human lives touch the Divine is the very definition of sacred. I hope that this issue of *SageWoman* brings you and yours peace, joy, and the loving presence of the Goddess.

Blessed be,

ANNE NEWKIRK NIVEN is the Editor of *SageWoman*, *Witches&Pagans*, and *Crone* magazines. She and her family live in the lovely state of Oregon.