

Gifts of Celtic Christianity

The Hearth: Gather Us In



Session 1: Leader Page

PREPARING THE SPACE

Now is the time for the colour purple. You may wish to create an “alter-table” with a purple cloth. You may also want one candle or three candles (for the Trinity) to light during the Kindling the Flame prayer.

KINDLING THE FLAME

Traditionally, in every church and monastery in Celtic Britain, a fire was kept burning, day and night, summer and winter, as a sign of God’s presence.

As we kindle the fire upon my hearth, we pray that the flame of God's love may burn in our heart, and the hearts of all we meet today.

We pray that no envy and malice, no hatred or fear, may smother the flame.

We pray that indifference and apathy, contempt and pride, may not pour like cold water on the fire.

Instead, may the spark of God's love light the love in our heart, that it may burn brightly through the day.

And may we warm those that are lonely, whose hearts are cold and lifeless, so that all may know the comfort of God's love. (Traditional)

Light the candle(s).

PRACTICING HOSPITALITY

This is a time for all participants to “check in” and get to know one another. There is no cross talk or discussion. Start with yourself and go around the circle.

Share your name . . . and your response to this question: Does your name have a special meaning or were you named after someone special?

Notes on Planning Your Session

Gather items to help create your space.

You will need to download the audio recording and save to your laptop. You will need speakers so all can hear but you do not need an Internet connection once you have downloaded and saved the recording.

Make copies of the Participant Page. It has a copy of the prayer for Kindling the Flame and the Gathering Prayer.

A number of questions are offered to spark discussion. Don't feel you need to use them all. Let the conversation flow where it needs.

The session is designed for one hour but you can adapt for a shorter or longer time.

There is a recipe for Oatcakes in the resource section. You can adapt and use crackers or “bought” oatcakes.

GATHERING PRAYER

One: O Christ, the Good Shepherd, come gather your people.

**All: The lost and the lonely, the broken and breaking
The tired and tortured, the anguished and aching
The done-in and doubting, the waiting and wishing,**

One: O Christ, the Good Shepherd, come gather your people.

**All: The puzzled and pondering, the proud and pretentious
The sure and superior, the never inferior,
The bright and the bustling, the stirrers and shakers,**

One: O Christ, the Good Shepherd, come gather your people.

**All: From corner and lamplight, from mansion and campsite
From fears and obsession, from tears and depression,
From untold excesses, from treasured successes,**

One: O Christ, the Good Shepherd, come gather your people.

**All: Come and surround me, Great God of all time.
Surround me with friends, surround me with saints,
Enfold me in clouds of Witnesses great,
In prayer let me join with those beyond time,
Who stand by me now surrounded in light
To offer this prayer which is their delight.** (Ivan Gregan)

AUDIO RECORDING: SESSION 1: THE HEARTH: GATHER US IN

Janice and Ivan introduce each other and note the Celtic influences in their growing up. Ivan highlights some gifts of Celtic theology and describes the importance of the hearth as a gathering place in the lives of the Celtic people. We are “Sparks of God” burning with the stories of God.

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATIONS

1. What did you hear in the audio presentation that was meaningful for you today? What touched you in a new way?
2. Janice named some of the Celtic influences in the ‘wiring of her being.’ What are some of the early influences that shape who you are today?
3. Have you had an experience of a “thin place” where the spiritual and the material co-mingle? What words or images come to you as you re-visit this place in your imagination?
4. What did Ivan’s understanding of the Sacrament of Communion stir in you?
5. The Celtic understanding of the universe is that God is all around us. God is not above us. God is not a distant God. Is this comfortable? Familiar? Challenging?
6. What signs of Christ’s “active presence” are found in your congregation?
7. As a “Spark of God” how are you being invited to journey through these Lenten days?

THE CELTIC WAY: A LENTEN PRACTICE

When I lived on Iona (and perhaps still today?) the Sunday morning service in the Abbey ended by passing a basket of Oatcakes. All were invited to take one and take it outside into the place of the common life and break it and share it with another.

As a symbol of this practice of hospitality you are invited to take an oatcake (recipe in resource section), break it and share it with someone in the group you don't know well or haven't talked with in a while.

During the week be mindful of ways you offer hospitality or hospitality is offered to you.

BLESSING

Here is a Celtic blessing you might want to learn by heart.

“Bless to me, O God,
Each thing my eye sees.
Each sound my ear hears.
Each person I meet.”