

SACRED SPACES

IN MY EARLY DISCIPLESHIP FORMATION, I FELT LIKE GOD WAS ONLY AVAILABLE IN SACRED PLACES. NOW I UNDERSTAND THAT GOD IS ALWAYS AVAILABLE FOR SACRED MOMENTS.

There is no place that is not already sacred because there is no place where God does not already await us.

For many of us, the footprint of our daily lives shrunk during the COVID-19 pandemic. We were advised to stay home and leave only for essential reasons. Our normal rhythms were disrupted, and in-person church activities were cancelled. We struggled as spaces for work, play, socialization, and contemplation were compiled into the same area. Where is sacred space to be found when we can't go to the places where we normally find solace?

But we were also given time—time to slow down, time to recognize fleeting sacred moments, and time to pursue a more Spirit-aware life. Some were renewed by spending extra hours in nature. Some simplified or reorganized their living space. Some practiced a new hobby. Some relished the ability to connect online. Some carved out time to read and

explore other perspectives.

Hopefully, we've become more aware that God is waiting in every moment for us to connect, listen, and respond. The Spirit isn't confined to a sanctuary, just as Jesus' call isn't limited to a past context. In our journey toward Jesus, the peaceful One, new sacred spaces are emerging within ourselves and our communities. There is always more to explore. In this section, five authors describe their own encounters with the sacred.

"Opportunities abound in your daily lives if you choose to see them."

—Doctrine and Covenants 165:1c

—Emma Gray Pitt, Communications team

Picture your sacred space. This reflective statement often arises when someone is helping guide you toward finding a connection with God. Many of us have places that are special because of previous Spirit-filled experiences we had there. Sacred spaces are created in sacred moments.

I remember as a youth looking forward to the camp worship experience at a place called Inspiration Point at Camp Woodland Hills in Missouri. Some called it Perspiration Point because you had to hike down a hill to a river and then climb up a steep pathway, avoiding copperhead snakes and poison ivy. It seemed like it took forever to get there, and the first few times I made the trek I wondered if it was really worth it. It was. Inspiration Point was a sacred space where I found Christ's peace deepening my relationship with God and the faith community while growing as a disciple.

In my early discipleship formation, I felt like God was only available in sacred places. Now I understand that God is always available for sacred moments. The key is for me to be awake and looking.

When Moses saw the burning bush, he was told that he was standing on holy ground (Exodus 3:5). He didn't go to a sacred space to find God. Instead, when he opened his awareness to the presence of God and listened, the space where he was standing became sacred.

In the Jerusalem temple, there was the Holy of Holies. This was a sacred space in the inner chamber reserved for God's presence. Only the high priest could enter and only on specific days. This idea pushes against our understanding today of God's omnipresence in the world. But at the time, many believed they were not worthy to have a personal connection with the Divine.

The Apostle Paul tried to break down the idea that access to God was limited to only a few. He explained to the Corinthians that God was with them. He also dared to say that God wasn't just in a building. Paul reframed God's relationship with the temple by describing that God was in the temple of our being: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Perhaps a sacred place is anywhere you find yourself moving toward Jesus, the peaceful One.



STASSI CRAMM
FIRST PRESIDENCY MEMBER AND PRESIDING BISHOP

scramm@cofchrist.org