

'WINDOWS OF CONNECTION'

A 'Book of Nature' Practice for Advent

This Advent, why not take some time to experiment with a 'sit spot' practice. This is a practice which invites us to take some regular time to intentionally become present to the wider world around us and, in the process, more open to how God may be seeking to encounter us through the sacred text of the 'Book of Nature'.

"There is the music of heaven in all things" – Hildegard of Bingen

The practice is a special time of reverent 'sacred waiting'...sitting patiently and curiously to see what might want to approach us or draw our attention and then gift us with its unique presence.

There are so many 'attention traps' in our world today. This practice acts an antidote to these traps and invites us to intentionally focus our attention in a way that re-connects us with our own selves, with the natural world around us and with God who is continually present to us in and through it. We can think of it as a conscious choice to switch from 'screen time' to 'green time'. Here are some steps to help make it as easy as possible for you to get going.

Step 1: Find your sit spot in nature.

To start with, your Sit Spot will most likely be somewhere in your garden, if you don't have a garden then perhaps a seat by a window with a view.

Once you get into the practice you may start to venture further to places that offer more nature connection, such as your local park, woodland or nature reserve.

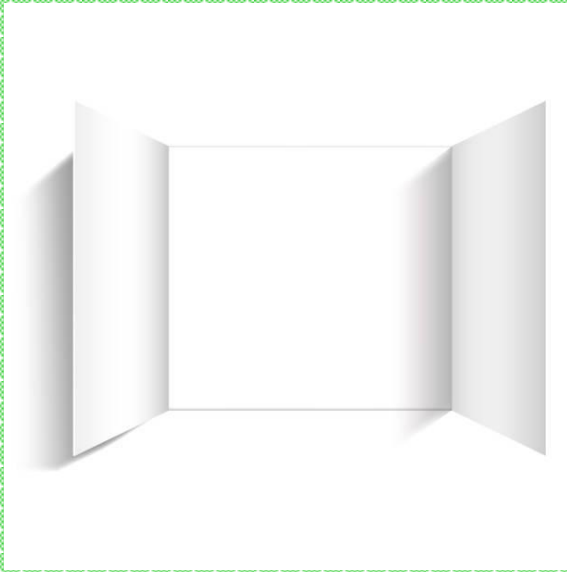
Your Sit Spot location must have natural features and should be somewhere you: can visit daily or as much as possible; can access easily; feel safe and comfortable; and, can find a practical place to sit for around 20-30 minutes.

Step 2: How to do a Sit Spot practice

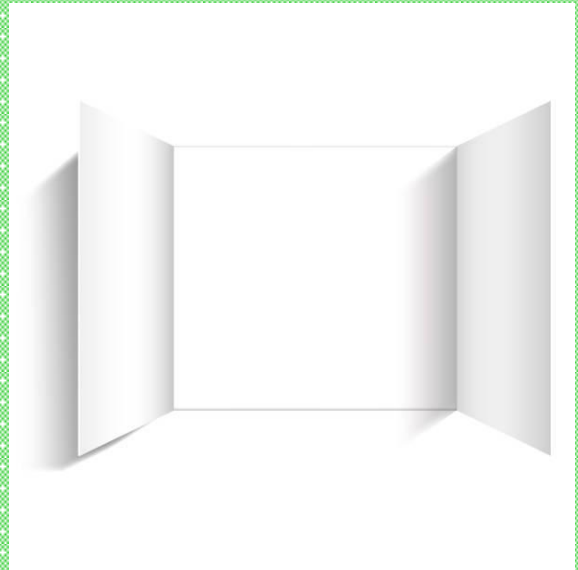
- It's important to be comfortable, make sure you dress appropriately for the expected weather conditions that day. It's a good idea to have a journal for recording your thoughts, insights or anything that you noticed externally or internally that day.
- When you are in your Sit Spot, it's best to prepare by consciously letting go of any thoughts, concerns or anything that may have been demanding your attention that day. To help you to become present, take time to intentionally awaken each of your senses which are our 'thresholds' for encountering the world around us.
- When you are fully present, start by simply observing your surroundings by gazing with a soft fascination. Open yourself up to being a witness to the scene. Are there any birds, insects or animals? What are they doing? What about the sky, is it clear or cloudy? Is the wind blowing or is it still? What plant life is around you? Notice different shapes and forms and colours. **It's really just about being patient, open and CURIOUS.**
- Notice what has changed since your last Sit Spot session, or perhaps what hasn't changed.
- If you get stuck or feel like you're being sucked back into the to do list, bring yourself back by focusing on your breath or working through your senses one at a time. What can you hear? What do you smell? What can you see?

You'll notice that overtime, this practice builds on itself. It is advisable to return to a regular spot so you can get to know the place and the place can get to know you – it gently becomes a reciprocal space of encounter.

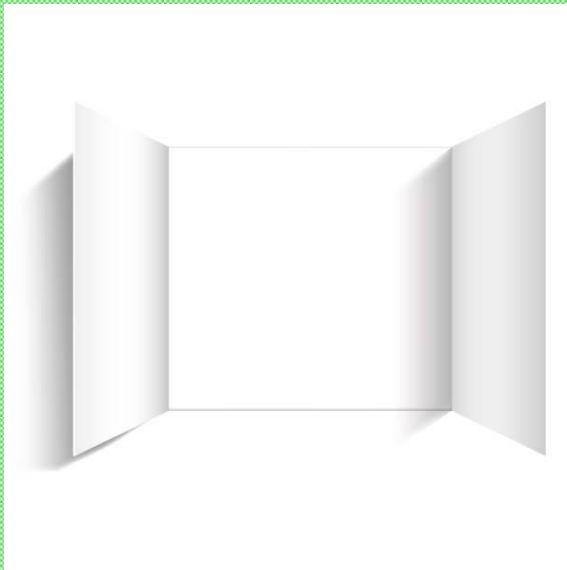
"Reverence bestows dignity and it is only in the light of dignity that the beauty and mystery of a person or a tree or a place will become visible. What you encounter, recognise or discover depends to a large degree on the quality of your approach. When we approach with reverence, great things decide to approach us." - John O'Donohue (Beauty, The Invisible Embrace)



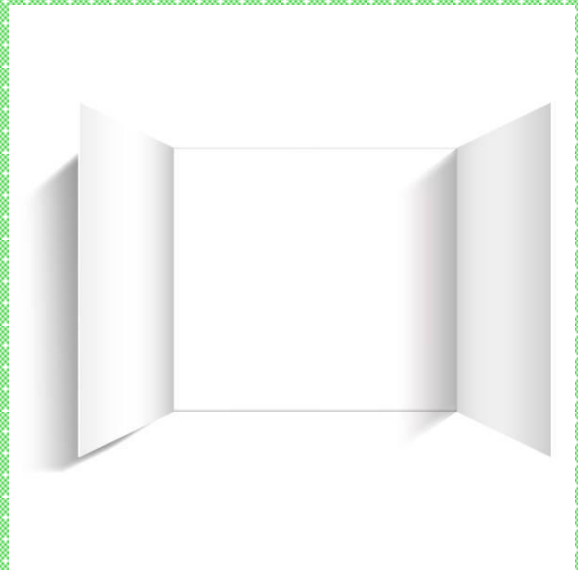
Advent Week 1



Advent Week 2



Advent Week 3



Advent Week 4

As you have practiced reverent waiting at your sit spot during each week...

- *What has come to meet you and gifted you with presence?*
- *In what ways might God be seeking to meet you in these experiences of encounter?*
- *Mark these as precious gifts to savour!*