

Still Sacred: Pathways of Return

For Two Spirit & LGBTQIA+ Souls Healing from Spiritual Harm

This resource is made possible by the Women and Gender Equality grant from the Government of Canada

A WORD ABOUT THE COVER ART

The image on the cover represents a nautilus shell - a spiral shaped by time, patience, and continual becoming.

The nautilus grows by circling inward and outward at once, creating new chambers without abandoning what came before. In this way, it reflects a journey that is not about returning to an earlier place, but about deepening into what is already held. Each new chamber carries the memory of the last, widening the circle without losing the centre.

Two phrases follow the curve of the spiral.

One comes from **Julian of Norwich**:
"Between God and the soul there is no between."

These words speak of an intimacy that cannot be broken. They whisper of a nearness that does not depend on approval, purity, or belief. Nothing stands between the soul and the Sacred - not harm, not distance, not doubt, not the silence left behind when faith falters. They remind us that even when trust has been wounded, presence remains.

The second phrase comes from Sufi poet **Rumi**:
"The wound is the place where the light enters you."

This is not a blessing of suffering. It is a recognition that what has been broken open is not beyond grace. The wound is not holy; it is human. It names a truth many carry quietly: that what has been broken open may also become a place of awareness, compassion, and change. Sometimes - slowly, unexpectedly - light finds its way through what could not be closed.

Together, these words trace the spiral of the shell - circling pain and tenderness, rupture and belonging, absence and presence. They reflect the heart of this resource: that the Sacred does not wait on the other side of healing but meets us within what is still unfinished.

This image is offered not as a symbol to be deciphered, but as a companion. You may find meaning here, or you may simply let the colours and curves rest with you. Like the journey it represents, the spiral remains open - inviting you to move at your own pace, carrying nothing that is not yours to carry.

Whatever your path has been, and however unfinished it may feel, let it remind you: you remain - **still sacred.**

DEDICATION

For those who learned to survive
in spiritual landscapes that did not honour them.

For those who carried faith and fear
in the same body.

For those who left, those who stayed,
those who are still deciding.

For all who are learning, slowly and bravely,
that their lives are worthy of reverence.

You are beloved.
You are becoming.
You are still sacred.

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*****Some sections include brief acknowledgements for Two Spirit readers. These are offered to honour difference and history, not to define or represent Two Spirit experience.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & CONSENT STATEMENT

This resource is offered with care, humility, and deep respect.

It acknowledges that spiritual trauma, particularly as experienced by Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ people, is real, embodied, and often layered with other forms of harm, including colonialism, racism, misogyny, ableism, and the misuse of religious power.

Before you continue, you are invited to know this:

- You are not required to read this resource in full.
- You are not required to agree with its language or theology.
- You are not required to forgive, reconcile, or revisit experiences that feel unsafe.
- You are free to pause, skip, adapt, or set this aside at any time.

Consent matters here.

This resource seeks to honour your agency, especially if it was taken from you in spiritual spaces that demanded compliance, silence, or erasure. Nothing in these pages is meant to override your instincts, boundaries, or lived truth.

Some reflections may gently touch places of grief, anger, or longing. As you journey, listen to your body and your breath as trustworthy guides. If something feels too much, know that stepping away is an act of care, not avoidance.

Language about God, the Sacred, or spirituality appears throughout this resource, but belief is never assumed. Feel the freedom to reinterpret, translate, or refuse any spiritual language offered here. Silence, skepticism, and uncertainty are all welcome companions.

This resource is not intended to replace trauma-informed therapy, cultural support, or community care. If strong emotions or memories arise, reaching out to a trusted person, Elder, therapist, or healer may be a wise and loving choice.

Above all, this resource is offered in the spirit of accompaniment – never as correction, persuasion, or repair.

Travel here only by your own choosing.

TWO SPIRIT PREFACE: On Land, Ancestors, and Relational Belonging

“Still Sacred” acknowledges that the harm many Two Spirit people have experienced in Christian and church-related spaces cannot be separated from the ongoing impacts of colonization. For Indigenous peoples, Christianity was not only a religion imposed - but it was also used as a tool of displacement, assimilation, and cultural erasure. Teachings that condemned gender diversity and diverse expressions of love often arrived alongside the taking of land, the suppression of language, and the breaking of kinship systems that had long honoured relational and spiritual plurality.

Two Spirit identities existed - and still exist - within Indigenous nations as sacred, interpersonal, and community-rooted ways of being. They were never mistakes. They were never deviations from creation. The violence done to Two Spirit people was not only personal and theological; it was systemic and colonial.

This resource does not attempt to reclaim Christianity for Two Spirit people, nor does it ask Two Spirit readers to reconcile with traditions that have caused profound harm. Instead, it seeks to make space for something much older and far more enduring: relationship.

Relationship with land - which holds memory, resilience, and belonging beyond doctrine. Relationship with ancestors - whose wisdom and presence were never erased, even when names and ceremonies were forbidden. Relationship with community - human and more-than-human - where identity is not isolated but held in balance.

If you are Two Spirit and reading this, you are invited to engage with these reflections in ways that honour your own teachings, stories, and lived realities. You may wish to ground yourself in land, water, sky, or breath. You may wish to call on relations - known or unknown - or to move gently, without words at all.

This resource speaks toward a relational worldview, not over it. It does not claim to represent all Indigenous traditions, nor does it seek to define what Two Spirit identity means. Diversity and autonomy are respected here.

May these pages be a place where what was interrupted can be remembered - not as nostalgia, but as living presence. May what was never broken in you be honoured.

INTRODUCTION

"Still Sacred" is for those who have been harmed in the name of God. It is for Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ people whose bodies, loves, identities, or callings were judged, silenced, or erased by religious institutions or authorities - sometimes gently, sometimes violently, often in ways that linger long after the words were spoken.

If faith once felt like home and later became a place of danger, you are not alone. If you were taught that who you are was incompatible with the Sacred, this resource begins by naming what the Church and organised religion too often refused to say: the harm was not your fault.

Many people who experience spiritual trauma do not lose their longing for meaning, connection, or transcendence. What they lose is trust - in language, in authority, in 'God-talk' itself. For some, the safest choice is to walk away entirely. For others, there remains a quiet ache, a wondering whether the Sacred might be something other than what they were handed.

"Still Sacred" is written for those who stand somewhere in between - not necessarily seeking a return to the Church, not reclaiming a system of belief, but curious about the possibility of reconnection: with breath, with body, with Spirit - with the wisdom that survived beneath the harm.

This is not a program of repair. It is not a theological argument. It does not ask you to forgive, reconcile, or explain your pain.

Instead, these prayers, blessings, reflections, rituals and journal prompts are offered as companions. You are invited to take only what feels safe, to adapt language that resonates, and to leave the rest behind without guilt.

Throughout this resource, we hold these convictions with care:

It was not the Divine who inflicted the damage. What was done to you came through fear, control, and misuse of power by individuals and / or institutions - not through love. What you endured never should have happened.

If the word God feels unsafe, you may substitute words that feel comfortable for you: Higher Power, Higher Self, Universe, the Sacred, Mystery, Life, Love, Breath, or nothing at all. Silence is also holy. Your consent matters here.

This resource honours the truth that recovery is rarely linear, there is no direct path from harm to healing. Trust is rebuilt slowly, in layers, through attention, courage, and carefulness. Healing from spiritual trauma may involve anger, grief, numbness, or moments of unexpected tenderness. Some days the work will feel like remembering; other days it will feel like resting. All of this belongs.

Like shells, rivers, and seasons, healing grows by returning and widening - making room for breath, for memory, for becoming.

What follows is not a program to complete, but a series of invitations to move at your own pace …

This resource does not promise resolution. What it offers is permission - to be whole without approval, to be beloved without condition, to be spiritually alive on your own terms. This is not a return to what was - but an opening toward what might yet be possible.

It is an invitation to remember … You are Still Sacred.

A NOTE ON VOICE & LOCATION

This resource is written from the perspective of a queer person shaped by both Christian faith and Christian harm.

While it is offered with respect, in care and solidarity with Two Spirit readers, it does not attempt to speak from Two Spirit experience or to define Two Spirit identity. The histories, teachings, and lived realities of Two Spirit peoples are diverse, Nation-specific, and not mine to interpret.

This work is offered as accompaniment, not representation.

THE EARTH AS COMPANION

For many people healing from spiritual harm, nature becomes a first safe teacher.

The earth does not require belief.
Water does not demand answers.
Trees do not ask for purity.

Throughout this resource, you will find invitations to notice, walk, touch, listen, and breathe in relationship with the natural world.
These are not techniques.
They are ways of remembering that you belong to life.

You are invited to meet the Sacred - or simply yourself - in ordinary places.

THE BODY AS SACRED COMPANION

For many people who have experienced spiritual harm, the body became a place of tension rather than trust.

It learned to brace.
It learned to stay quiet.
It learned to endure.

In some religious spaces, bodies were monitored, disciplined, or treated as problems to be managed rather than gifts to be honoured. Desire was mistrusted. Fatigue was moralized. Pain was spiritualized. Over time, many learned to disconnect from physical experience in order to remain safe.

This resource offers a different understanding.

Your body is not an obstacle to spiritual life. It is one of its primary teachers.

Before you had beliefs, language, or doctrine, you had breath. You had sensation. You had the capacity to feel warmth, hunger, comfort, and fear. Your body learned how to survive long before you could name what was happening. Many of the responses you now carry - vigilance, withdrawal, compliance, restlessness - are signs of intelligence, not failure.

Healing does not happen only through insight. It happens through safety.

Safety is learned slowly through experience: through gentle movement, through rest, through being outdoors, through touch that is chosen, through noticing what feels grounding and what does not.

Throughout this resource, you will find invitations to breathe, walk, listen, notice, and seek respite. These are not techniques to master. They are ways of returning to relationship with yourself.

You are always free to decline these practices. You are always free to adapt them. Your consent matters - even with yourself.

For some, reconnecting with the body will feel comforting. For others, it will feel unfamiliar, tender, or complicated. Both are understandable.

There is no correct pace for this work.

As you listen to your body, you may begin to notice its quiet wisdom: when it needs pause, when it needs movement, when it needs solitude, when it needs companionship. Learning to honour these signals is part of reclaiming spiritual authority.

For some, this may also mean relating to a body that has changed - or is changing. It may mean learning to trust a body you once felt estranged from, or a body others refused to recognize as fully yours. It may mean inhabiting more fully a body you were once told was impossible.

For transgender and gender-diverse people, transition - whether social, medical, spiritual, or interior - can be an act of profound alignment. It can be a way of bringing body and truth into closer

relationship. The body that exists now may feel more like home than the one that was once endured. Or it may still feel complex. Both realities deserve gentleness.

Bodies do not all follow the same story.

Some have carried us through transition and transformation. Some have endured scrutiny, regulation, or denial. Some have required courage simply to exist in public space. Some have been reclaimed after long seasons of invisibility.

The body you have lived in - whether endured, transformed, reclaimed, or newly embraced – has carried your survival and your becoming.

It deserves your kindness.

Let it be a companion on the journey - not something to overcome, correct, or transcend, but something to listen to with curiosity and respect.

ABOUT MUSIC

For many people, music has been both a comfort and a complication.

Some have experienced music in religious spaces as emotionally overwhelming, manipulative, or tied to expectations of belief and response. Certain melodies, lyrics, or styles may carry memories that feel tender, confusing, or unsafe.

Others may have found music to be one of the few places where their spirit could still breathe.

Both experiences are real.

In this resource, music is offered as another form of companionship - not as instruction, persuasion, or spiritual requirement. It is one possible way of creating space for reflection, rest, and presence.

Music can shape the atmosphere in which reflection unfolds.

You may find that quiet, instrumental, or ambient music supports you as you read, write, walk, or pause. Slow piano, gentle strings, and natural soundscapes often allow emotion and thought to settle without directing them.

For some, however, healing does not come only through stillness.

It comes through movement. Through rhythm. Through breath that deepens and quickens. Through music that invites the body to sway, stretch, or dance.

Embodied expression - whether gentle stretching, walking in tempo, or full-bodied movement - can be a form of release and reclamation. For many queer and trans people, dance has been a place of joy, defiance, survival, and sacred aliveness. Rhythm can restore connection to a body that has endured scrutiny or silence.

You are invited to notice what your body needs.

Sometimes it will need quiet.
Sometimes it will need motion.
Sometimes it will need both.

Let music serve your pace, not dictate it.

There is no correct soundtrack for healing.
You may also find that silence serves you better.

Silence, too, is blessed.

You are invited to listen - or not - according to your own needs. You are free to turn music off, change it, return to it later, or avoid it altogether. Your consent matters here.

Music does not need to produce insight or feeling in order to be meaningful. Sometimes its gift is simply steadiness: something that holds the background while you attend to what is unfolding within you.

If music becomes part of your journey with this resource, let it be gentle.
Let it be spacious.
Let it serve you.

Like breath, like ritual, like stillness, music is another way of remembering that you are held in more ways than words can name.

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

"Still Sacred" is not necessarily meant to be read straight through or completed in order. It is designed to be entered slowly, selectively, and with choice. You are invited to move through these pages in whatever way feels most life-giving for you, or to put it down when you need to. There is no right pace. There is no finish line.

Follow your instincts. If something feels grounding or resonant, linger there. If something feels tight, overwhelming, or unsafe, you may step back without explanation or self-judgment. You might let it move past you for now, or meet it with gentle curiosity if and when you feel steady enough. There is no required pace. Pausing is not failure; it is wisdom.

Language throughout is flexible. You are free to substitute, soften, or refuse spiritual language. You are not required to hold any religious belief in order to belong here.

Journaling is optional. Prompts are invitations, not assignments. Writing, speaking, drawing, walking, or resting are all valid responses.

Honour your boundaries. This resource does not ask you to reconcile with institutions, defend theology, or rush toward hope. Its purpose is singular: to support your journey toward reconnection with yourself and whatever sense of the Sacred you choose - if any.

Strong emotions may arise. Reaching out to a trusted person or trauma-informed professional can be an act of courage and care. Take breaks. Choose yourself.

ABOUT LANGUAGE

Some words carry weight - especially for those whose harm came through spiritual or religious language. In this resource, traditional prayer language has been intentionally softened. You will find "Words for the Journey" offered in place of formal prayers. These are not requests, declarations, or acts of belief. They are invitations - to speak, to listen, to breathe, or simply to be present.
You are free to:

- Interpret these words in ways that feel safe
- Adapt the language or substitute your own
- Read them silently or aloud
- Let them pass without engaging

Silence is also sacred here.

BLESSING FOR LANGUAGE & CHOICE

May words loosen their grip
and return to you without demand.
May language no longer be a gatekeeper,
but a path you may enter - or not - in your own time.

May what was once used to bind you
become something you can hold lightly,
reshape,
or set down altogether.
May silence greet you kindly.
May your voice return without fear.

May the Sacred - however you name it,
or refuse to name it -
wait patiently, without offense,
for whatever comes next.

You are free.
You are still sacred.
You are already on the journey.

A MOMENT TO ARRIVE

A Grounding Practice Before You Begin
Before moving into the pages that follow, you are invited to pause.

Nothing is required of you here. You do not need to reflect, analyze, or remember anything.
This moment is simply about arriving in your body, in the present, as you are.

If it feels safe, find a comfortable position - seated, standing, or lying down. You may wish to place your feet on the floor or lean your body against something that offers support.
Take a slow breath in through your nose …
Let it out gently through your mouth.
Do this once more - only if it feels okay.

If breathing feels difficult, you may instead notice:

- The weight of your body where it is supported
- The temperature of the air on your skin
- A sound nearby
- A colour or object in the room

Let your attention rest wherever it feels easiest.

If you choose, you might place a hand on your chest or belly and quietly say - aloud or inwardly:

- I am here.
- I am safe enough in this moment.
- I can stop whenever I need to.

You may also wish to name something grounding around you:

- I see…
- I feel…
- I hear…

There is no need to finish the sentences.

If spiritual language feels supportive, you might hold this gentle intention:
May what follows be taken only in the measure that it serves my well-being.

If it does not, you may simply rest in the quiet.
When you feel ready - whether now or later - you may continue or simply close the book and return another time. Both choices are welcome.

I. NAMING THE HARM

✧ Orientation

Naming harm is often the first chamber in the spiral - a place where truth is given room to breathe. Before healing can be imagined, harm needs to be named - not explained away, not spiritualized, not hurried toward meaning. Naming the harm is not about reliving what happened. It is about telling the truth clearly, so that what was distorted no longer has the final word.

You are invited to enter this section gently. Skim, pause, or skip anything that feels too close.

Nothing here requires you to remember more than you already carry.

✧ Reflection

When Faith Became Dangerous
Spiritual harm often arrives quietly.
At the time, it may have sounded like concern. It may have been wrapped in scripture, prayer, or "love." It may even have come from people who believed they were doing the right thing.

For many Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ people, faith communities became places where survival required silence - about desire, about identity, about truth. The message was sometimes explicit and sometimes implied: Who you are is incompatible with what is holy.

Spiritual harm takes many forms. It can look like rejection, erasure, exclusion, or expulsion. It can sound like correction, shaming, or constant scrutiny. It can be enforced through silence - what is never named, never blessed, never allowed to be seen. It can be delivered through rituals that wound, teachings that distort, or authority that claims divine justification for control.

Sometimes the harm is overt. Often it is cumulative - a steady erosion of dignity, belonging, and trust.

Over time, this kind of harm reshapes the inner world. It teaches the nervous system to brace at the sound of spiritual language. It confuses love with acquiescence. It trains people to doubt their own instincts, to mistrust their bodies, to disconnect from their desires in order to remain acceptable.

Many survivors of spiritual harm carry its effects long after leaving religious spaces. The damage may surface as anxiety, shame, hypervigilance, grief, or a sense of spiritual numbness. Some feel cut off from meaning itself; others feel longing paired with fear - a desire for connection shadowed by the memory of harm.

This is spiritual trauma.

It does not mean you were weak - it means you were exposed to harm that no one should have had to endure - especially in a place that claimed to speak for love.
It does not mean you misunderstood God - it means God was presented to you through fear, control, or distortion.

It means something meant to nurture the soul became unsafe - not because of who you are, but because of how power was used.

Naming this harm matters because what is unnamed often turns inward - becoming self-blame, confusion, or silence. When harm is finally spoken aloud, even quietly, it begins to loosen its grip.
Please remember - You are not overreacting. You are not "too sensitive." You are responding to something real.

***** A Note for Two Spirit Readers
This section is written from a queer perspective shaped by Christian faith and Christian harm. If your experience includes the added weight of colonization, land dispossession, cultural interruption, or the targeting of Indigenous gender diversity, what you carry may not be fully named here.

You are invited to hold what resonates, to release what does not, and to honour your own teachings, stories, and relationships - especially where this language falls short.

✧ **Words for the Journey**
For Speaking the Truth Gently
I give myself permission

to name what hurt me
without defending it,
without minimizing it,
without rushing to forgiveness.

What happened to me mattered.
I am allowed to call harm what it was -
even if others could not,
even if they still will not.

I do not need to make sense of it today.
I do not need to heal it all at once.
Let truth be enough for now.

✧ **Blessing**
For Those Who Learned to Be Careful
May the part of you that learned to be vigilant
be honoured - not shamed.

May the caution that kept you alive
be thanked for its service.
May your body know
that ***naming*** harm does not summon it again -
it releases it from silence.

May you feel no pressure
to tell more than you choose,
to remember more than feels safe,
to explain what should never have happened.

Nothing about your survival was accidental.
Nothing about your response was wrong.

You are still here.
And that matters.

✧ **Embodied Practice:** Finding Ground
If possible, step outside - even briefly.
Notice:

- the ground under your feet
- the temperature of the air
- one living thing nearby

Let your eyes rest on something steady.
Quietly say:
"I am here now.
This moment is different."

Let the present hold you.

✧ **Music Companion** (Optional)

Theme: Safety, Grounding

Some people find it helpful to listen to steady, spacious music during this section - something that feels grounding and supportive.

You are invited to explore this only if it feels helpful.
Silence is also a gift.

Let your own needs guide you.

For Stillness

Music that allows grief, recognition, and steadiness without overwhelming emotion:

- **Spiegel im Spiegel - Arvo Part**
  Sparse piano and strings. Spacious, slow, and contemplative.
  On the Nature of Daylight - Max Richter
  Reflective string arrangement.
- Instrumental flute recordings by **R. Carlos Nakai**
  Breath-centered and grounded.

For Movement

Grounded rhythm for walking, swaying, or embodied release without urgency:

- **A Walk - Tycho**
  Steady pulse, gentle lift. Supports intentional walking.
- **Weightless Part 1 - Marconi Union**
  Rhythmic yet calming. Encourages slow embodied movement.
- Instrumental electronic works by **Hania Rani**
  Repetitive piano textures suitable for contemplative pacing.

✧ **A Simple Ritual**

A Ritual of Grounding and Safety

You may wish to try this when you feel ready - now, later, or not at all.

If possible, find a place where you feel reasonably safe and undisturbed.
Sit or stand in a way that feels supportive.

Place both feet on the floor or ground.

If you are outdoors, notice what is beneath you.
If you are inside, notice what is holding you.
Take one slow breath in.
Let it out gently.
Do this once more, only if it feels comfortable.
Now, quietly notice:

- one thing you can see
- one thing you can hear
- one thing you can feel in your body

You do not need to analyze these. Just notice.

If it feels helpful, you may place a hand on your chest or belly and silently say:
"I am here now.
This moment is different.
I am safe enough to tell the truth."

Stay as long as you wish.

When you are ready, gently return to the page - or take a break.
Let this be enough.

✧ **Journal Prompts**
(Choose one - or none)

- What did I learn about myself in order to survive spiritually unsafe spaces?
- What words were used against me - or withheld from me - that still echo today?
- What does my body remember, even if my mind prefers not to - and what helps me stay present with that memory?
- What truth have I never been allowed to name out loud?

You may write a sentence, a list, a single word - or stop entirely. There is no expectation of completion.

✧ **Closing Pause**
Before moving on, you may wish to take a breath, stretch, or look around the room. Notice something steady or ordinary.

Remind yourself:
I am here. It's okay to go slowly.

***Next Section**
II. UNTANGLING GOD FROM THE WOUND
When you're ready, we'll begin the work of gently separating what harmed you from what was called sacred - loosening the knots between fear, control, and the language of the Sacred, so they no longer hold authority over your inner life.

You are welcome to pause here, return later, or skip ahead.
The journey belongs to you.

II. UNTANGLING GOD FROM THE WOUND

✧ **Orientation**
As the spiral widens, what was once tightly bound can begin to loosen. When harm has been done in the name of God, it can feel impossible to tell where the wound ends and the Sacred begins. For many, the word God itself carries the echo of threat, shame, or abandonment.

This section does not ask you to reclaim belief. It does not ask you to trust spiritual language again.

It simply creates space to separate what was done from what was claimed to be holy - so that harm does not maintain spiritual authority over your inner life.

You may move through this section slowly, selectively, or not at all.

✧ **Reflection**

When God Was Filtered Through Fear

One of the deepest injuries of spiritual harm is not just what is done in the name of God or religion, but how it was justified.

God was invoked to explain exclusion. Scripture was used to authorize silence. Prayer was shaped into a tool for control.

Over time, many survivors learned to associate God not with love or presence, but with judgment, surveillance, or withdrawal. For some, God became indistinguishable from the voices that harmed them.

This confusion is not accidental.

When spiritual authority is misused, it borrows sacred language to protect itself from question. Harm is framed as truth. Obedience is framed as faith. Resistance is framed as sin.

Untangling God from the wound does not mean deciding what you believe. It means recognizing that no human system gets to define the Sacred at the expense of your humanity.

You are allowed to question the God you were given. You are allowed to refuse images of the Divine that require your diminishment. You are allowed to set God down altogether if that is what safety and integrity of the self requires.

For some, untangling will lead toward a gentler, wider sense of the Sacred. For others, it will lead toward silence, mystery, or non-belief.

All of these are valid outcomes.

The work here is not to rescue God - it is to rescue yourself from a theology that harmed you.

*****A Note for Two Spirit Readers

This reflection is written from a queer perspective shaped by Christian faith and Christian harm. If your experience includes the added weight of colonization - where Christianity was used alongside land theft, cultural suppression, and the targeting of Indigenous gender diversity - the harm may feel inseparable from broader historical violence. What was presented as "God" may have arrived hand-in-hand with displacement and erasure.

You are invited to hold what resonates here and to trust your own teachings, ancestors, and relationships where this language falls short.

✧ **Words for the Journey**
For Releasing Harmful Images of God
I release the versions of the Divine
that demanded my silence,
questioned my worth,
or required me to disappear.

I release the voice that told me
love must hurt,
truth must wound,
or holiness must cost me myself.
If there is something Sacred beyond this harm,
it does not need my fear to exist.

If there is nothing there for me now,
that, too, is allowed.

I choose safety over certainty.
I choose honesty over obedience.

Let what is not life-giving fall away.

✧ **Blessing**
For Those Reclaiming Autonomy Over Their Inner World
May you know that no one -
no leader, no doctrine, no scripture -
has the right to use God against you.

May the voices that once spoke with divine certainty
lose their power to define your worth.

May your inner authority return quietly,
without drama,
without demand.

May you trust yourself
more than any theology that necessitated your harm.

And may the Sacred -
if it is real,
if it is present,
if it is love -
be patient enough
to wait beyond fear.

✧ **Embodied Practice:** Letting the Wind Speak
Go where you can feel moving air - outside, near a window, near water.

Close your eyes if it feels safe.

Notice:

- air on your skin
- breath in your body
- sound around you

Imagine old words loosening.

Let them drift.

✧ **Music Companion** (Optional)
Theme: Release, Spaciousness
Some people find that gentle, flowing instrumental music supports moments of release and reflection.

You are invited to explore this only if it feels supportive.
Silence is also a gift.

Let your own needs guide you.

For Stillness
Spacious, light-textured music that allows disentangling without emotional overwhelm:

- Instrumental works by **Cris Derksen**
  Select lighter, spacious cello pieces that feel clarifying rather than heavy.
- Ambient organ compositions by **Sarah Davachi**
  Expansive tonal fields supporting loosening.
- Instrumental passages from **Wolastoqiyik Lintuwakonawa - Jeremy Dutcher**
  Choose orchestral segments that feel open and breathable**.**

For Movement
Music with a steady pulse and gentle lift - supporting walking outdoors or soft dancing:

- **Awake - Tycho**
  Light forward motion.
- Instrumental tracks by **Ouri**
  Fluid textures for embodied expansion.
- Instrumental electronic works by **Caribou**
  Gentle lifting and widening rhythm.

✧ **A Simple Ritual**
A Ritual of Releasing Harmful Words and Images
You may wish to try this when you feel ready - now, later, or not at all.

If possible, find a quiet place where you can be undisturbed for a few minutes.

You may want to have nearby:

- a small bowl of water,
- a glass,

- or access to running water.

If water is not available, this ritual can be done with breath and imagination.

Begin by settling into a comfortable position.
Take one slow breath in.
Let it out gently.

Now, bring to mind - only as much as feels safe - a word, phrase, image, or teaching that once carried spiritual meaning for you and later became harmful.

You do not need to relive it.
You do not need to explain it.
Simply notice that it exists.

If you are using water:
Dip your fingers lightly into the water.

As you do, imagine that word or image loosening its grip.

You may silently say:
"This does not define me.
This does not speak for the Sacred.
I release what was never mine to carry."

Gently dry your hands.
If you are not using water:
Place one hand over the other.
With each slow breath out, imagine the harmful words growing lighter.

Let them drift.

Take a few moments to notice your body.
Notice any sense of space, relief, or neutrality - or simply notice that you are still here.

All responses are welcome.
When you are ready, return to the page.

Let this be enough.

✧ **Journal Prompts**
(Choose one - or none)

- What images or teachings about God became unsafe for me?
- What did I have to accept or deny in order to remain "faithful"?
- What would it mean to let the Sacred be unknown for now?
- What do I need in order to feel spiritually safe - or safer - today?

Write, draw, speak, or simply notice what arises. Stopping is always permitted.

✧ **Closing Pause**
Before moving on, take a moment to notice your body.
If anything feels stirred, offer yourself steadiness - a breath, a stretch, a sip of water, or a pause away from the page.
Remember: I am allowed to choose what has influence in my life.

***Next Section**
III. LISTENING FOR WHAT STILL LIVES
When you're ready, we'll turn gently toward what survived beneath the harm - the quiet wisdom, longing, or glimmer within that was never erased.

As always, you're welcome to pause here, return later, or skip ahead. The journey belongs to you.

III. **LISTENING FOR WHAT STILL LIVES**

✧ **Orientation**
Sometimes what still lives in us is found in inner chambers we forgot were there. After harm has been named and damaging images of the Sacred have been loosened, something often remains - often quiet, easily overlooked, but real.

It may appear as a flicker of curiosity.
A moment of peace.
A memory of wonder.
A longing that refuses to disappear.

This section is about learning to listen for those traces of life - not to rush them into meaning, but to honour them as signs of resilience and of possibility.

You are invited to move through these pages slowly, and to trust whatever pace feels kind.

✧ **Reflection**
What Survived Beneath the Silence
Spiritual harm does not erase everything.

Even in seasons of numbness or distance, something often continues to breathe beneath the surface - a capacity for awe, a tenderness toward beauty, a pull toward meaning, a desire for connection. Many people who have been wounded by faith may be surprised to discover this. They assumed that what was lost was gone forever. Yet again and again, they notice small stirrings: moved by a piece of music, a sense of peace in nature, a quiet gratitude at dusk, a compassion that refuses to turn away.

These are not signs that you "should" return to anything.

They are signs that life has not abandoned you.

Listening for what still lives does not mean searching for spiritual certainty. It means learning to notice what feels real, gentle, and trustworthy in your own experience. It means letting your body, your breath, and your longings speak in their own language.

Sometimes what remains is joy.
Sometimes it is anger that protects dignity.
Sometimes it is grief that refuses to be rushed.
Sometimes it is simply the knowledge: I am still here, still breathing, still listening for the heartbeat at the centre of life.

All of this belongs.

The Sacred, if it is present, is often found not in grand declarations, but in these quiet fidelities - in what keeps turning toward life, even after disappointment.

*****A Note for Two Spirit Readers
This reflection is written from a queer perspective shaped by Christian faith and Christian harm. If your experience includes disrupted relationships to land, ancestry, language, or community, what still lives in you may be braided with memory, survival, and teachings that long predate colonial religion.

You are invited to honour those sources of wisdom - especially where this language cannot name them.

✧ **Words for the Journey**
For Trusting Quiet Signs of Life
I give myself permission
to notice what feels alive in me
without explaining it.

I do not need to justify wonder.
I do not need to defend tenderness.
I do not need to prove that longing is wise.

What rises in me
has its own integrity.

If something in me still turns toward light,
toward meaning,
toward connection,
I will meet it with curiosity,
not suspicion.

Let small beginnings be enough.

✧ **Blessing**
For the Life That Endured
May what survived in you be honoured.

May the parts that stayed soft
in a hard season
be protected.
May your capacity for awe,
for compassion,
for presence
be trusted again.

May you learn to listen
to your own quiet wisdom
without fear of being mistaken.

Nothing essential was erased.
It waited.

✧ **Embodied Practice:** Listening With All Five Senses
Go outside or sit near a window.

For one minute, notice:

- one colour
- one sound
- one texture
- one scent
- one breath

No meaning.
No analysis.
Just presence.

This is listening.

✧ **Music Companion** (Optional)
Theme: Attention, Stillness
Some people find that very quiet or minimal music helps create space for listening and attention.

You are invited to explore this only if it feels helpful.
Silence is also a gift.
Let your own needs guide you.

For Stillness
Warm, lightly melodic instrumental music that feels like early morning light:

- Instrumental cello works by **Cris Derksen**
  Fuller tonal warmth. Select pieces that feel steady and dignified rather than intense.

- Instrumental piano works by **Alexandra Stréliski**
  Luminous and restrained - gentle resilience.
- Ambient compositions by **Loscil**
  Textural electronic soundscapes that feel like horizon light emerging.

For Movement
Steady, rhythmic instrumental music for walking outdoors or embodied reconnection:

- Instrumental tracks by **Caribou**
  Gentle rhythmic pulse that supports forward motion.
- Instrumental compositions by **Ouri**
  Fluid, layered rhythm - embodied but not forceful.
- Instrumental ambient works by **The Halluci Nation**
  Select subtler rhythmic pieces - save full percussive strength for the next section.

✧ A Simple Ritual

A Ritual of Listening with the Senses
You may wish to try this when you feel ready - now, later, or not at all.

If possible, go to a place where you can see something living - a tree, plant, sky, water, animal, or even light through a window.
Settle into a comfortable position.

Let your shoulders soften.
Let your jaw relax.
Let your breath slow.

Take one gentle breath in.
Let it out slowly.

Now, begin to notice - one sense at a time:

First, seeing.
Let your eyes rest on one colour or shape.
Notice its texture, movement, or stillness.

Next, hearing.
Notice one sound near you and one farther away.

Next, touch.
Notice where your body meets what supports you.
Notice temperature, pressure, or weight.
Next, smell or taste, if possible.
Notice any scent or lingering flavour.

Finally, notice your breath.
Without changing it, feel it move in and out.

You are not trying to understand anything.

You are simply listening.
If it feels helpful, you may silently say:
"Something in me is still alive.
I am learning to hear it."

Stay as long as you wish.

When you are ready, gently return to the page.

Let this be enough.

✧ **Journal Prompts**
(Choose one - or none)

- Where do I notice moments of aliveness, however small?
- What brings me a sense of peace, grounding, or quiet joy?
- When do I feel most like myself?
- What has remained faithful to me, even when I doubted everything?

You are invited to respond in words, images, movement, or silence.

✧ **Closing Pause**
Before moving on, take a moment to notice something that feels steady - your breath, a sound, a familiar object, the light in the room.

Be assured: I am allowed to trust what is still alive in me.

***Next Section**
IV. ANGER, GRIEF, AND THE RIGHT TO FEEL
When you're ready, we'll turn toward the emotions that often accompany healing - anger, sorrow, disappointment, and longing - and explore how they can become honest companions rather than burdens.

As always, you're welcome to pause here, return later, or skip ahead.
The journey belongs to you.

IV. ANGER, GRIEF AND THE RIGHT TO FEEL

✧ **Orientation**
Strong feelings often rise when we reach layers we have never been allowed to touch before. For many people who have been wounded in spiritual spaces, certain emotions were discouraged, disciplined, or condemned.
Anger was called bitterness.
Grief was called weakness.
Questions were called rebellion.
Lament was called lack of faith.
Over time, many learned to manage their feelings in order to remain acceptable - to spiritualize pain, to minimize loss, to transform outrage into silence.

This section offers a different permission: to feel honestly, without apology, and without rushing toward resolution.

You are invited to meet your emotions here as companions, not problems to solve.

✧ **Reflection**
When Feeling Was Not Sanctioned
In many religious settings, emotional restraint is mistaken for spiritual maturity.

People are praised for being "gracious" in the face of harm.
They are encouraged to "let go" before anything has been named.
They are urged to forgive before they have been heard.

For those who have experienced spiritual trauma, this often means learning to swallow anger and compress grief in order to belong.

Yet anger is not the opposite of faith. It is often the voice of violated dignity.
Grief is not a lack of trust. It is the honest response to real loss.

When these emotions are denied or spiritualized away, they do not disappear. They turn inward. They surface as anxiety, depression, numbness, or chronic self-doubt. The body remembers what the language of faith refused to hold.

Many survivors feel conflicted about their anger and sorrow. They may worry that feeling too much will make them "unspiritual," "negative," or "stuck." In truth, unexpressed grief and unhonoured anger are what keep people bound.

Healing often moves like water and weather - returning, reshaping, widening the places where breath can live. Learning to feel again - slowly, safely, and with compassion - is part of reclaiming your full humanity.

You are not called to be serene about what wounded you. You are allowed to care deeply about what was lost.

*****A Note for Two Spirit Readers
This reflection is written from a queer perspective shaped by Christian faith and Christian harm. If your anger and grief are also connected to histories of displacement, cultural suppression, family separation, or the targeting of Indigenous identities, what you carry may be both personal and collective.

You are invited to honour the depth and complexity of those feelings - especially where this language cannot contain them.

✧ **Words for the Journey**
For Honouring Strong Feelings
I give myself permission
to feel what is real

without editing it.

I release the belief
that holiness requires calmness,
that goodness requires silence,
that faith requires forgetting.
My anger carries truth.
My grief carries love.

I will not shame myself
for caring deeply
about what was taken.

Let my feelings be messengers,
not enemies.

✧ **Blessing**
For Those Learning to Feel Again
May your anger be honoured
as a guardian of your dignity.
May your grief be received
as evidence of love.

May your tears, spoken or unspoken,
be held without judgment.

May you never again be told
that your pain is inconvenient to God.

May you learn to trust
your emotional wisdom
as part of your spiritual life.

Nothing about your feeling disqualifies you.

✧ **Embodied Practice:** Offering Feeling to the Earth
Find soil, grass, sand, snow, or stone.

Place a hand there.
Notice temperature and texture.

Silently name what you feel.

Imagine the ground receiving it
without judgment.
Stay as long as needed.

✧ **Music Companion** (Optional)
Theme: Containment, Depth
Some people find that slow, steady music can help hold strong emotions with gentleness.

You are invited to explore this only if it feels supportive.
Silence is also a gift.

Let your own needs guide you.

For Stillness
Music that can hold anger and grief without collapsing into sorrow:

- Instrumental cello works by **Cris Derksen**
  Her layered cello compositions often carry weight and tension without melodrama - grounded, contemporary, emotionally honest.
- **Infra 5 - Max Richter**
  Low strings with restrained intensity.
- Instrumental works by **Ola Gjeilo**
  Instrumental orchestral versions are deep and holding

For Movement
Rhythmic music that allows embodied release - stomping, strong walking, grounded dancing:

- Instrumental tracks by **The Halluci Nation**
  Percussion-forward Indigenous electronic music. Grounded, powerful, reclaiming.
- Instrumental electronic compositions by **Marie Davidson**
  Driving rhythm that allows assertive embodied movement.
- Instrumental tracks by **Kaytranada** (groove-forward instrumentals)
  Confident, grounded pulse - strong but not aggressive.

✧ **A Simple Ritual**
A Ritual of Making Space for Anger and Grief
You may wish to try this when you feel ready - now, later, or not at all.

Choose a place where you feel reasonably safe and private.

If possible, have nearby:

- a pillow,
- a blanket,
- a stone,
- or something solid you can hold.

Begin by sitting or standing in a way that feels supportive.
Wrap yourself in the blanket,
or hold the object in your hands.

Feel its weight and texture.

Take one slow breath in.
Let it out gently.

Now, notice what emotion is most present for you in this moment.

It might be anger.
It might be sorrow.
It might be numbness.
It might be something unnamed.

Whatever is here is welcome.

If it feels safe, silently name it:
"This is anger."
"This is grief."
"This is exhaustion."
"This is longing".

There is no need to change it.
There is no need to fix it.
There is no need to justify it.
Simply naming it is an act of dignity - a way of letting your body know it has been heard.

Place one hand on your body - your chest, belly, or arms.

Let that touch be steady and kind.

If tears come, let them.
If nothing comes, that is also fine.

You may imagine the earth beneath you receiving what you are carrying - holding it without judgment.
Stay as long as you wish.

Before finishing, take one more slow breath.

Quietly remind yourself:
"My feelings make sense.
I am allowed to feel.
I am still safe."

When you are ready, return to the page.

Let this be enough.

✧ **Journal Prompts**
(Choose one - or none)

- What am I angry about that I have never been allowed to name?
- What losses do I still carry quietly?
- When have I been encouraged to "move on" before I was ready?

- What might my emotions be trying to protect or honour?

You may write freely, briefly, or not at all.

✧ **Closing Pause**

If strong feelings have surfaced, pause and offer yourself steadiness - a breath, a stretch, a moment of grounding.

Take time to reassure yourself: My emotions are allowed. I am not too much.

***Next Section**

V. RECLAIMING YOUR BELOVEDNESS

When you're ready, we'll begin exploring what it means to rediscover worth, desire, and spiritual aliveness beyond approval - learning again that love does not need to be earned.

As always, you're welcome to pause here, return later, or skip ahead.
This is your journey.

V. RECLAIMING YOUR BELOVEDNESS

✧ **Orientation**

With each widening turn, there is more room for tenderness. Many people who have been harmed in spiritual spaces learned, slowly and quietly, that love was conditional.

Belonging depended on behaviour.
Blessing depended on conformity.
Acceptance depended on silence.

Over time, this teaches a devastating lesson: I am lovable only if I am acceptable.
This section invites you to begin unlearning that lie - not through positive thinking, but through gentle reconnection with your own inherent worth.

You are invited to move through this slowly, with tenderness toward yourself.

✧ **Reflection**

Learning Again That You Are Enough

Spiritual harm often leaves behind a subtle inheritance: the belief that something about you is fundamentally wrong.

Even after leaving unsafe spaces, many survivors carry an internalized judge - a voice that measures, compares, and questions their right to joy, desire, or rest.
It may sound like:
Don't get too hopeful.
Don't take up too much space.
Don't trust that you are wanted.

These messages **did not begin inside you**. They were learned.

Reclaiming belovedness is not about convincing yourself that you are worthy. It is about remembering what was always true before conditions were imposed.

Belovedness is not something you earn through correct belief, moral performance, or spiritual discipline. It is the simple fact of your existence - your breath, your presence, your unique way of being in the world.

For many queer and Two Spirit people, reclaiming belovedness also means reclaiming the goodness of their bodies, their desires, their ways of loving. What was once framed as sinful, excessive, or dangerous is often the very place where vitality and truth reside.

To say I am beloved is not arrogance. It is resistance to shame.

And it is often learned slowly - in fragments, through moments of kindness, creativity, laughter, and connection - rather than through declarations.

*****A Note for Two Spirit Readers
This reflection is written from a queer perspective shaped by Christian faith and Christian harm. If your sense of belovedness is bound up with land, kinship, language, ceremony, or community relationships that were disrupted or denied, reclaiming worth may involve remembering forms of belonging that predate colonial religion.

You are invited to honour those pathways in whatever ways feel true to you.

✧ **Words for the Journey**
For Remembering Your Worth
I release the belief
that I must earn love.
I release the fear
that I am too much
or not enough.
I receive my life
as gift,
not as test.

I honour my body,
my desires,
my creativity,
my need for rest.

I belong to myself.
I belong to love.

Let this be enough.

✧ **Blessing**
For Those Learning to Trust Love Again
May you feel worthy of tenderness
without explanation.

May joy return to you
without apology.

May your body be experienced
as home,
not problem.

May you learn to receive care
without suspicion.

May you know, in quiet ways,
that you are wanted in this world.

Nothing about you needs to be corrected
in order to be loved.

✧ **Embodied Practice:** Receiving Beauty
Go where you can see something alive.

It might be:

- leaves
- clouds
- water
- birds
- light

Let yourself look slowly.
Notice what draws you.
Allow pleasure without explanation.

This is worthiness in practice.

✧ **Music Companion** (Optional)
Theme: Tenderness, Warmth
Some people find that warm, tender music supports moments of rest and receiving.

You are invited to explore this only if it feels helpful.
Silence is also a gift.

Let your own needs guide you.

For Stillness
Instrumental music that feels expansive and luminous without sentimentality:

- Instrumental ambient compositions by **Sarah Davachi**
  Spacious organ and synth textures. Meditative and contemplative without directing interpretation.
- Instrumental piano works by **Alexandra Stréliski**
  Luminous, spacious compositions that feel quietly reassuring.
  Instrumental harp compositions by **Lori Pappajohn**
  Gentle and grounded without sentimentality.

For Movement
Music with confident rhythm - upright, embodied reclamation:

- Instrumental electronic works by **Caribou**
  Look for lighter rhythmic pieces.
- Electronic instrumental works by **Kaytranada** (instrumental versions)
  Steady groove for embodied movement and confident walking.
- Instrumental compositions by **Ouri**
  Ethereal electronic textures with subtle pulse - excellent for fluid movement and reclaiming presence.

✧ A Simple Ritual

A Ritual of Receiving Kindness
You may wish to try this when you feel ready - now, later, or not at all.

Choose something that feels comforting or beautiful to you.

It might be:

- a warm drink,
- a soft blanket,
- a favourite stone or shell,
- a piece of music,
- a candle,
- or sunlight through a window.

Place it within easy reach.

Settle into a position that feels relaxed and supported.

Let your shoulders soften. Let your breath slow.

Take one gentle breath in. Let it out slowly.

Now, bring your attention to the object or experience you have chosen.
Notice its colour, texture, temperature, sound, or scent.

Let yourself receive it without explanation.
You do not need to earn this moment.

If it feels helpful, you may silently say:
"I am allowed to receive goodness.

I do not have to deserve rest.
I am worthy of care."

Stay with this for a few breaths.

If discomfort arises, notice it with kindness.
You do not need to push past it.

Receiving is a practice.

When you are ready, return to the page.
Let this be enough.

✧ **Journal Prompts**
(Choose one - or none)

- When do I feel most at ease in my own skin?
- What parts of myself have I learned to hide or diminish?
- What would it mean to treat myself as beloved?
- Where do I already experience unconditional regard?

You may respond however feels kind.

✧ **Closing Pause**
Place a hand on your heart or somewhere that feels steady.

Remind yourself: I am worthy of love exactly as I am.

***Next Section**
VI. PRACTICES OF GENTLE RETURN
When you're ready, we'll explore simple, embodied ways of tending your spiritual life - without obligation, belief, or performance.

As always, you're welcome to pause here, return later, or skip ahead.
You are invited to set your own journey.

VI. PRACTICES OF GENTLE RETURN

✧ **Orientation**
Small practices become the scaffolding of new chambers. After harm, many people feel unsure how or whether to engage spiritual life at all.
They may long for grounding, meaning, or connection - and yet feel wary of anything that resembles obligation, routine, or "spiritual discipline." Practices that once offered comfort may now feel unsafe or hollow.
This section offers simple ways of tending your inner life that do not require belief, performance, or consistency. They are gentle invitations, not prescriptions.

You are free to adapt, abandon, or return to these practices as you choose.

✧ **Reflection**

Returning Without Returning

For many survivors, the idea of "returning" to spirituality is complicated.

It may sound like going back to something that harmed them.
It may feel like betraying their own hard-won clarity.
It may awaken memories of pressure, guilt, or disappointment.

But gentle return is not about going backward.

It is about discovering forms of spiritual attention that belong to you - shaped by your needs, your body, your history, and your boundaries.

Sometimes this looks like walking without headphones and noticing the sky.
Sometimes it looks like lighting a candle and saying nothing.
Sometimes it looks like journaling, stretching, singing in the car, tending plants, or sitting with a cup of tea in silence.

None of these need to mean anything.

They are ways of saying to yourself: I am here. I matter. This moment matters.
Spiritual life, in this sense, is not a ladder to climb. It is a relationship to cultivate - with yourself, with life, with mystery - at whatever depth feels safe.

You are allowed to invent your own practices.
You are allowed to stop them.
You are allowed to change.

Freedom is part of healing.

*****A Note for Two Spirit Readers

This reflection is written from a queer perspective shaped by Christian faith and Christian harm. If your spiritual practices are rooted in land-based teachings, ceremony, or community relationships that were interrupted or restricted, your path of return may involve remembering, reclaiming, or reweaving those connections in ways that feel possible now.
You are invited to honour those rhythms and authorities above anything named here.

✧ **Words for the Journey**

For Choosing Practices That Serve You

I release the belief
that spirituality must be difficult
to be real.
I choose what nourishes me,
not what impresses.

I trust small acts of care
to carry meaning.

I allow myself to practice
and to pause.

Nothing sacred is lost
when I rest.

Let my life be my prayer -
in whatever form it takes.

✧ **Blessing**
For Those Creating Their Own Path
May you feel free
to follow what feels true.

May your practices be light enough
to carry easily
and strong enough
to hold you.

May you never again be told
by fearful systems
that discipline is devotion
or that pressure is love.

May your spiritual life
fit your actual life.

And may that be enough.

✧ **Embodied Practice:** A Daily Nature Moment
Choose one small outdoor ritual:

- morning light on your face
- evening sky
- watering plants
- stepping outside after meals
- touching a tree

Do it without agenda.
Let it mark time gently.

✧ **Music Companion** (Optional)
Theme: Rhythm, Daily Life
Some people find that quiet background music helps establish gentle rhythms of reflection and presence.

You are invited to explore this only if it feels supportive.
Silence is also a gift.

Let your own needs guide you.

For Stillness
Music that supports breath awareness, stretching, and gentle embodiment:

- Ambient tonal works by **Sarah Davachi**
  Immersive but soft - supportive of breath awareness.
- Instrumental piano works by **Alexandra Stréliski**
  Light, grounded, and steady.
- Instrumental acoustic guitar works by **Bruce Cockburn** (instrumental selections)
  Rooted, organic, and embodied without heaviness.

For Movement
Music that invites walking outdoors, stretching deeply, or dancing with joy and release:

- Instrumental tracks by **The Halluci Nation**
  Percussive, beat-centered Indigenous electronic music - grounded, alive, embodied.
- Instrumental works by **Kaytranada**
  Groove-forward electronic compositions that invite confident, rhythmic movement.
- Instrumental electronic compositions by **Ouri**
  Fluid, layered textures with steady pulse - excellent for expressive, intuitive movement.

✧ A Simple Ritual

A Ritual of Creating Gentle Rhythm
You may wish to try this when you feel ready - now, later, or not at all.

Choose one small moment in your day that already exists.

It might be:

- the first sip of morning tea or coffee,
- stepping outside,
- washing your hands,
- feeding a pet,
- stretching,
- or preparing for sleep.

Let this become your gentle ritual.

When this moment arrives, pause for just a few breaths.

Notice where you are.

Notice how you feel.

Notice what is around you.

Engage your senses:

- What do you see?
- What do you hear?
- What do you feel?

- What do you smell or taste?

You may quietly say:
"I am here.
This moment matters.
I belong to my life."

There is no need to do this perfectly.
Missing days does not undo anything.

This is not a discipline.
It is a kindness you offer yourself.
Let it change as you change.

When you are ready, continue with your day.
Let this be enough.

✧ **Journal Prompts**
(Choose one - or none)

- What activities help me feel grounded or present?
- When do I feel most connected to myself or to life?
- What spiritual practices feel safe - or safer - right now?
- What would I like to try, without obligation?

Feel the freedom to experiment, imagine, or rest instead.

✧ **Closing Pause**
Notice something ordinary and beautiful around you - light, texture, sound, breath.

Know in your heart: My way of tending my spirit is valid.

***Next Section**
VII. LIVING WITHOUT RESOLUTION
When you're ready, we'll turn toward uncertainty, mystery, and the long unfolding of healing - learning how to live well without needing everything to be settled.

As always, you're welcome to pause here, return later, or skip ahead.
The journey belongs to you.

VII. LIVING WITHOUT RESOLUTION

✧ **Orientation**
The spiral does not close. It keeps making space. Many spiritual stories promise closure.

They suggest that with enough faith, insight, or effort, wounds will heal neatly, questions will be answered, and peace will arrive fully formed.

For those who have lived through spiritual harm, this promise often feels false - or cruel.

Healing is rarely tidy.
Trust is rarely complete.
Meaning is rarely final.

This section invites you into a different wisdom: learning to live well without needing everything to be settled.

✧ **Reflection**
Faithfulness to the Unfinished
For many survivors, uncertainty can feel threatening.

After living in systems that claimed absolute truth, ambiguity may feel like failure. Not knowing what you believe, where you belong, or what comes next can awaken anxiety and self-doubt.

Yet certainty is not the same as safety.
Often, rigid answers were part of what caused harm - used to silence complexity, override conscience, and protect power. Learning to live without resolution is not weakness. It is maturity.

It means trusting that a meaningful life does not require complete understanding.

You may never know why certain things happened.
You may never feel fully at peace with parts of your past.
You may always carry some unanswered questions.

And still - you can live with depth, tenderness, and integrity.

Living without resolution means allowing your spiritual life to be provisional, evolving, responsive. It means giving yourself permission to change your mind, to outgrow language, to revise beliefs, to dwell in mystery.
Like tides, trees, and time itself, your life continues to grow by returning and opening - again and again.
For some, this will look like a renewed, gentler faith.
For others, it will look like a spacious agnosticism, or a reverent silence.
For others, it will look like meaning found in relationships, justice, creativity, and care.

None of these paths is superior.

What matters is that your life is honest.

The Sacred, if it is present, does not demand final answers.
It meets you in questions, in becoming, in the long work of learning how to love without guarantees.

*****A Note for Two Spirit Readers
This reflection is written from a queer perspective shaped by Christian faith and Christian harm.

If your experience of uncertainty is shaped by histories of displacement, broken treaties, cultural suppression, or interrupted spiritual transmission, living without resolution may carry both grief and

resilience. You are invited to honour the ways your communities have lived with mystery, endurance, and hope across generations.

✧ **Words for the Journey**
For Trusting an Open Path
I release the need
to have everything explained.

I release the pressure
to arrive somewhere final.

I allow my life
to be a question,
a practice,
a becoming.

I trust what is unfolding
even when I cannot name it.

I walk with humility,
with curiosity,
with courage.

Let this be enough.

✧ **Blessing**
For Those Who Walk Without Maps
May you feel held
even when you are unsure.

May you trust your way
without needing guarantees.

May mystery be a companion,
not a threat.

May you be gentle with yourself
in seasons of not knowing.
May your life remain open
to surprise, repair, and joy.

You do not need to arrive
to be whole.

✧ **Embodied Practice:** Walking the Open Path
Take a slow walk.

Notice:

- your steps
- your breath
- what appears along the way

Do not plan the route.

Let the path unfold.

Remind yourself:
I am allowed to walk without maps.

✧ **Music Companion** (Optional)

Theme: Mystery, Openness
Some people find that spacious, open-ended music supports reflection on uncertainty and becoming.

You are invited to explore this only if it feels helpful.
Silence is also a gift.

Let your own needs guide you.

For Stillness
Music that feels expansive and settled - like looking out across water or sky:

- Instrumental piano works by **Alexandra Stréliski**
  Gentle luminosity without sentimentality.
- Ambient soundscapes by **Loscil**
  Wide, textural compositions that feel like distance and breath.
- Instrumental organ works by **Sarah Davachi**
  Sustained tones that support quiet reflection and integration.

For Movement
Movement here may not be dance. It may be walking. It may be living. It may be stepping forward without flourish.

- Instrumental electronic works by **Caribou**
  Subtle rhythmic pieces
- Instrumental tracks by **Kaytranada**
  Smooth, understated grooves
- Instrumental compositions by **Ouri**
  Layered textures that feel intuitive and forward-moving.

✧ **A Simple Ritual**

A Ritual of Walking the Open Path
You may wish to try this when you feel ready - now, later, or not at all.

If possible, go for a short walk - outdoors if you can, indoors if needed.

Choose a pace that feels unhurried.

Let your arms move naturally.
Let your breath find its rhythm.

As you walk, notice:

- the feeling of your feet meeting the ground
- the movement of air on your skin
- sounds around you
- light and shadow
- the changing view as you move

You do not need to go anywhere in particular.
Let the path unfold.

If it feels helpful, you may silently say with your steps:
"With this step, I am here.
With this step, I am becoming.
With this step, I am enough."

If thoughts arise, let them come and go.

Return your attention gently to your body and surroundings.

When you are ready, pause.
Take one slow breath.

Notice that you have arrived - not at an answer, but at this moment.

You may quietly remind yourself:
"I am allowed to walk without maps.
I am learning as I go."

When you are ready, return to your day.
Let this be enough.

✧ Journal Prompts

(Choose one - or none)

- Where am I learning to live with unanswered questions?
- What has uncertainty taught me about myself?
- What feels trustworthy in my life, even without certainty?
- How do I practice hope without demanding outcomes?

Respond in whatever way feels true for you.

✧ Closing Pause

Take a slow breath.
Notice that, in this moment, you are alive, breathing, and enough.

Rest in knowing: I am allowed to live an unfinished life.

***Next Section**
CLOSING BLESSING: Still Sacred
When you're ready, we'll gather what has been named and held throughout these pages into a final blessing - one that sends you forward without urgency or demand.

As always, you're welcome to pause here, return later, or rest in what has already been given.
This is the journey you have chosen.

CLOSING BLESSING
Still Sacred
May you go gently.

Not because you are fragile,
but because your life is precious.

May you trust the wisdom
that has grown in you
through grief, questioning, and survival.

May what you have learned
about boundaries, truth, and love
continue to protect you.

May your body be a place of belonging.
May your breath remind you
that you are still here.

May wonder return to you
in ordinary moments -
in light through leaves,
in laughter,
in quiet mornings,
in shared meals.

May you find companions
who honour your story
without trying to edit it.

May you release any voice
that says you must be finished
in order to be worthy.
You are allowed to be becoming.

May the Sacred -
however you name it,
or refuse to name it -

meet you without demand.

May it bless your questions,
your courage,
your tenderness,
your fire.

And when you forget
what is true of you,
may something small and kind
bring you back to yourself.

You are not late.
You are not lacking.
You are not alone.

You are still sacred.

Go in peace,
in freedom,
and in trust
of your own unfolding.

A FINAL WORD

If you have reached this page, know this:

You have already done something courageous.

You have listened to yourself.
You have honoured your story.
You have taken your own healing seriously.

This resource is not meant to be completed, mastered, or left behind. You may return to these pages, carry parts of them with you, or set them aside for a season. All of this is faithful to your journey.

There is no timetable for becoming whole. There is no correct way to heal. There is no finish line you are failing to reach.

You are allowed to live slowly.
You are allowed to change.
You are allowed to begin again.

If these words have been helpful, may they continue to serve you. If they have not, may you find what does.

You do not walk alone - even when the path feels solitary.

And you remain, always, still sacred.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karen Low (she/her) is a semi-retired minister in The United Church of Canada and currently serves as Volunteer Associate Minister at First-St. Andrew's United Church in London, Ontario.

Over more than thirty years in ministry, Karen has served in pastoral charges across Ontario, participated in denominational leadership and committee work, and offered chaplaincy at Western University. Throughout her vocation, she has been deeply committed to social justice, trauma-informed pastoral care, and the full affirmation of Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ communities.

Karen is currently completing training in Spiritual Direction and accompaniment, reflecting her ongoing desire to listen deeply and walk alongside others with humility and care. She brings this same posture to her writing, seeing it as another form of presence and pastoral companionship.

Outside of ministry and creative work, Karen finds joy in cycling, rowing, beach-walking, and time in nature. She and her wife, Annie, are restoring their 125-year-old home, where they are happily accompanied by an enthusiastic Australian Cobberdog and two opinionated cats.

Karen is grateful to be part of the Re-Affirm Project and to work alongside a gifted and generous team committed to justice, healing, and hope. She considers Still Sacred an offering of gratitude to all who have trusted her with their stories and taught her, again and again, how to listen.

RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

Trauma-Informed Care, Community, and Further Reading

Healing from spiritual harm is not something anyone is meant to do in isolation. While this resource may offer companionship and language, many people also benefit from additional forms of support.

The following resources are offered as possibilities - not requirements. You are invited to explore only what feels safe and relevant to you. If accessing support feels overwhelming, take this list slowly and selectively.

✧ **Trauma-Informed Counselling & Spiritual Care**

If you choose to seek professional support, you may wish to look for practitioners who are familiar with spiritual trauma, religious harm, and Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ experiences.
Helpful search terms may include:

- Religious trauma
- Spiritual abuse recovery
- Trauma-informed therapy
- Queer-affirming counselling
- Two Spirit-affirming mental health

When possible, you are entitled to ask potential providers about their experience with spiritual trauma and LGBTQIA+ or Two Spirit clients.

Trust your instincts. You deserve to feel safe, respected, and believed.

✧ LGBTQIA+ and Two Spirit Community Supports

Many people find healing through connection with others who share similar experiences.

You may find support through:

- Local LGBTQIA+ or Two Spirit community centres
- Peer support groups
- Affirming faith or spirituality circles (if desired)
- Online communities focused on spiritual trauma recovery

Community does not need to be religious to be meaningful. Belonging can take many forms.

✧ Crisis and Emotional Support

If you are experiencing overwhelming distress, isolation, or thoughts of harming yourself, reaching out for immediate support can be an act of courage and care.

In Canada: Call or Text 9-8-8

Hope for Wellness (Indigenous Support Line): 1-855-242-3310
Seeking help is not a failure of faith or strength.
It is an expression of your worth.

✧ Further Reading: Spiritual Trauma & Healing

Some readers may find comfort and clarity in the work of others who have explored similar journeys. The following themes and authors may be of interest:

On Spiritual and Religious Trauma

- Leaving the Fold - Marlene Winell
- When Religion Hurts You - Laura E. Anderson
- The Great Sex Rescue - Sheila Gregoire et al. (on harmful theology and embodiment)

On Queer and Two Spirit Spirituality

- Radical Love - Patrick Cheng
- Two Spirit People - Sue-Ellen Jacobs et al.
- Works by Qwo-Li Driskill and Kai Cheng Thom

On Healing, Grief, and Integration

- The Body Keeps the Score - Bessel van der Kolk
- When Things Fall Apart - Pema Chödrön
- The Wild Edge of Sorrow - Francis Weller

You are encouraged to approach all reading with discernment. Not every book will resonate - and that is okay.

✧ Creative and Embodied Healing Practices

Some people find healing through non-verbal or creative pathways, including:

- Art, journaling, and poetry

- Movement, yoga, or walking practices
- Nature-based reflection
- Music and storytelling
- Ceremony and cultural practices (where appropriate)

These are not supplements to "real" healing.
They ***are*** real healing.

✧ A Closing Word About Support

You are allowed to seek help.
You are allowed to need others.
You are allowed to walk with companions.
And you are also allowed to rest.

There is no single right way to heal. There is only your way.



Still Sacred is a gentle companion for Two Spirit and LGBTQIA+ people who have been wounded in the name of God.

For many, faith once felt like home - and later became a place of harm, silencing, or exclusion.
What remains is often not a loss of longing, but a loss of trust:
in language, in authority, in "God-talk" itself.

This resource does not ask you to return to religion.
It does not demand belief, forgiveness, or resolution.

Instead, it offers reflections, words for the journey, blessings, embodied practices, rituals, and journal prompts designed to support healing at your own pace.
Grounded in trauma-informed care and shaped by pastoral wisdom,
Still Sacred honours the truth that recovery is rarely linear
and that spiritual life can be reclaimed in many forms.

With tenderness and clarity, this book invites you to:
- **name what harmed you**
- **release what never belonged to you**
- **listen for what still lives**
- **reclaim belovedness**
- **walk gently without needing certainty**

Like shells, rivers, and seasons, healing grows by returning and widening.

Whether you are seeking quiet reconnection, spacious spirituality, or simply permission to rest,
Still Sacred meets you where you are - and reminds you:

You are still sacred