

On Sanctuary

Sanctuary is a way of being. It is a verb more than a noun, a context more than a place, a practice more than an ideal.

Sanctuary is an energetic field of welcome, acceptance, and love arising from the intentions and actions of all who enter. It is a space of possibility created in each moment by how we are being with ourselves and everyone else.

Sanctuary exists within a context of holy separation: outside of everyday life, yet interdependent with it.

Sanctuary thrives within a strong yet permeable container: held with generous intention, strengthened by traditions and agreements, and maintained through commitments to respect and tend its boundaries.

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Sanctuary is the manifestation of a collective commitment to the practice of radical hospitality. It arises from hearts overflowing with gratitude and the desire to pass on and amplify blessings received.

Sanctuary makes sense and can function only within the context of a gift economy. Sanctuary subverts capitalist scarcity by cultivating a culture of generous and abundant sharing. It calls forth willingness to give beyond what we receive, and to be happily indebted for gifts we can never repay.

Sanctuary is a communal spiritual practice and an ongoing magical working. It requires and inspires devotion, humility, discernment, improvisation, patience, and tenacity. It is potent medicine for suffering caused by modern delusions of separateness.

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Holding sanctuary takes dedicated effort across generations by people living and dead of diverse views, archetypes, and gifts. Sanctuary—as *temenos* in the sense of Harry Hay—requires and works to create a village that can sustain it.

Sanctuary is rooted in a mycelial web of kin / friend / loverships: relationships of mutual caring, respect, and trust. It is blessed and protected by all beings and spirits with whom it stands in such relation.

The capacity and well-being of sanctuary are determined by how we show up for these relationships.

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Sanctuary especially longs for and calls to and rains gifts on those who are dedicated to its service and devoted to its arts. It cannot exist without such lovers.

Sanctuary demands self-care. Tending sanctuary does not relieve the responsibility of caring for our own needs. Instead, it teaches that care for others requires care for ourselves.

Sanctuary is a boundary boot camp and a mystery school for community cauldron tenders.

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Sanctuary is hard work. Sanctuary demands sacrifice. Sanctuary puts us through initiatory ordeals that require us and our community to grow up.

Sanctuary has gates within gates: some wide and welcoming, some narrow and hard. Sometimes a seeker cannot enter or be held there, and those who keep the gates must turn them away, no matter how great the longing and need.

By its nature as a boundaried space, a sanctuary for everyone is no sanctuary.

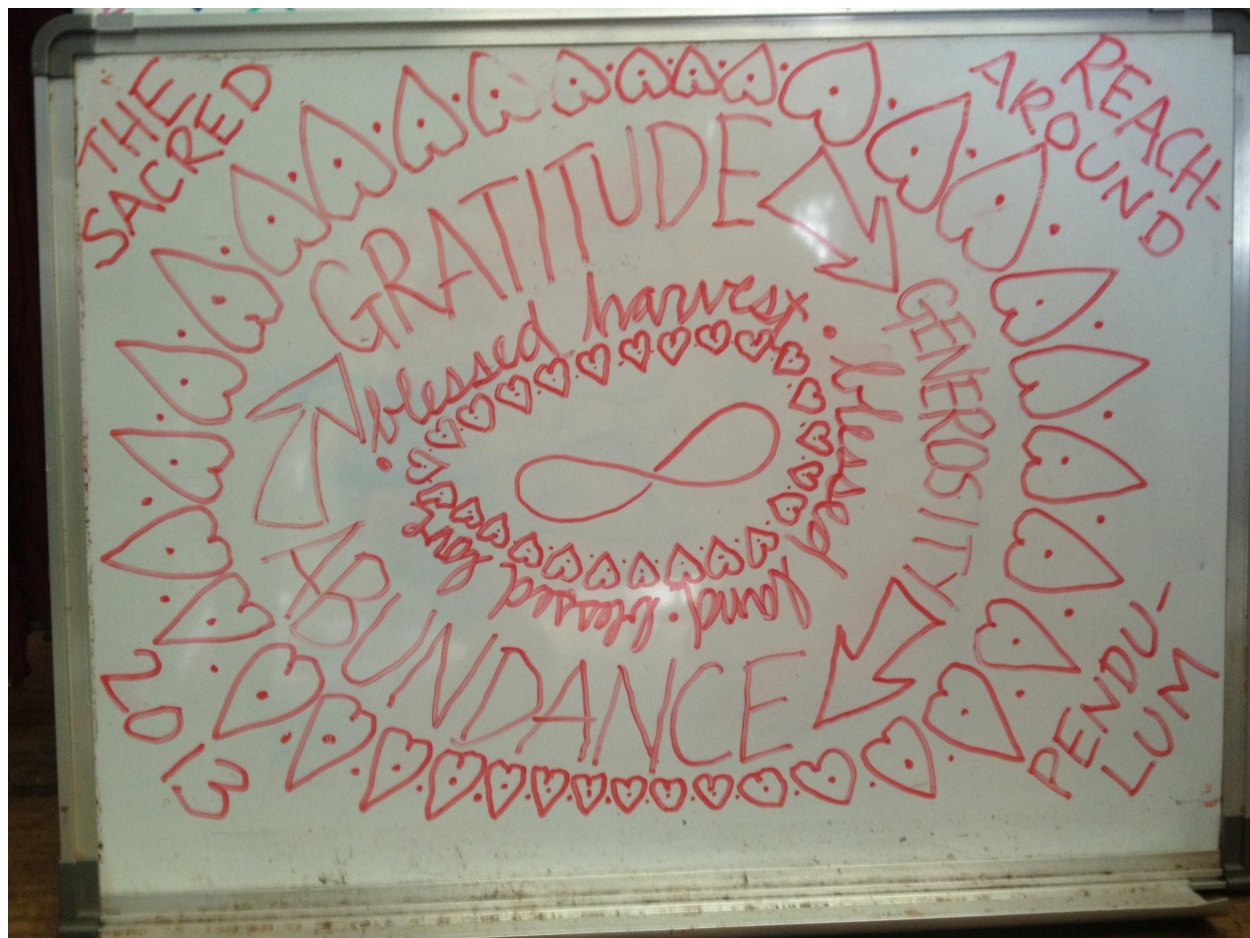
Sanctuary is always imperfect. Sanctuary always falls short. The shadow of sanctuary is as valuable to the education of the soul as its light.

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The initiation into sanctuary may take a moment or a lifetime. Yet once we come into its heart, and it comes into ours, we never really leave. We carry sanctuary with us wherever we go.

Sanctuary is a mirror. In its reflection, we see what we offer, we find what we bring, and we meet, at last, as we truly are.

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We are trying to do a hard thing. We're trying to be a community that is capable of holding and offering sanctuary.

Trying to live as a village, though our fires burn just a few times a year. Trying to come into right relation with land where few of us live and none of us was born. Trying to work out our trauma of abuse and oppression, and our settler karma, and our fucked-up dominant culture programming.

Trying to sustain connection and heartspace through these low-fidelity electronic channels. Trying to hold each other in empathy and loving-sharing-consensus when we can't see or touch or smell each other.

Trying to listen to and feed the ancestors without getting ridden by hungry ghosts.

Trying to be of service, to offer holy hospitality in a time of collapse, when so many of us struggle to meet basic needs. Trying to do abundance magic in a scarcity economy. Trying to tend a temple in

a culture whose temples are Walmart and Wall Street, with no recognized lineage of templekeepers, no formal training or initiation in this work.

We've inherited a share in this crazy-ass family business, this sanctuary, this church: this confusing tangle of gorgeous magic, useful tools, broken shards, and scar tissue.

It's hard. But we don't have to be hard.

If we hold ourselves and each other in kindness and mercy, that might help.

If we reject the consumerist imperative to keep shopping, to keep our options open, and instead step towards the fire and commit ourselves to this beloved, imperfect community—that might help.

If we recognize that what we're doing is absurd and preposterous in muggle terms—possible in fact only through a series of miracles sustained by the ongoing intervention of ancestors and other benevolent spirits—that might help.

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These reflections arise out of my experiences with Full Circle Temple, Nomenus Wolf Creek Sanctuary, the Dance for All People, Queer Magic, Ravenna Ravine, House Butter, and other event- and place-based sanctuaries I have helped tend.

I offer them with love and praise for all the sanctuarians, templekeepers, and gathering organizers.

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P.S. You're welcome to share an excerpt plus the link to this essay: <http://bit.ly/On-Sanctuary>
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