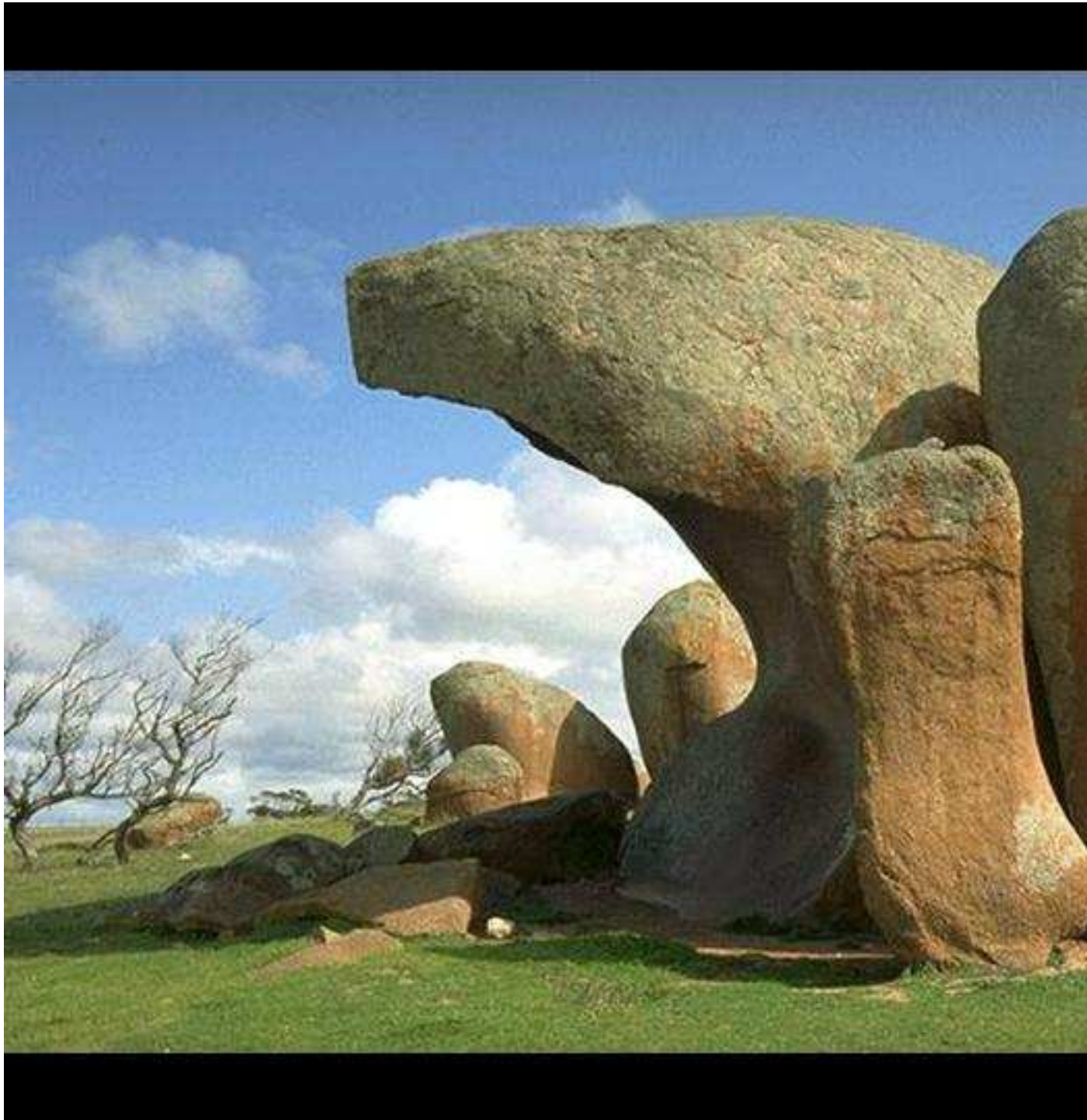


# ***Remembering Country***

***A Ritual around a Rock***



## ***Introduction***

Remembering country in this liturgy involves celebrating our spiritual connections with country. The ritual is celebrated around a large rock which becomes the symbol for a range of meanings. The symbol brings together mysteries from both the Christian and Aboriginal cultures of Australia.

## ***Gathering and Invocation***

*As we enter we circulate around the rock at the centre of the worshipping community and reflect on what that rock might mean as we begin our worship.*

Leader            In the name of the Creator who is present country.  
                         In the name of Christ who heals country.  
                         In the name of the Spirit who animates country.

**People            Country is calling!**  
**Welcome to Country!**

## **Opening Song**

**Welcome to Country            *Norman Habel 2012***  
***Melody: Morning has Broken***

Welcome to country! Country is calling,  
Calling from scrub and watering hole:  
Sense now the sacred spirit of country,  
Stirring the silence deep in your soul.

Country is calling. Know in your spirit,  
Land is alive and blessed you at birth.  
Celebrate now the song of your mother:  
You are a precious child born of Earth.

Country is crying, crying in anguish!  
Landscapes and lizards feeling the pain.  
Forests destroyed and rivers polluted,  
When will you care for country again?

Country is calling, stirring your dreaming,  
Songs that our primal ancestors sang.  
Spinning through time and all of creation,  
Dreaming returns with God's boomerang.

Welcome to country! Christ at the centre  
Calling for healing, blood on his hand:  
Reconciled true each brother and sister,  
Come now and heal our mother, the land.

### ***A Rock – Planet Earth***

L. We worship in a sanctuary called Earth, a rock from outer space.

**P A sanctuary filled with the vibrant presence of the Creator.**

L. The glory, the fire-filled presence of God, once filled the tabernacle.

**P Now that same presence fills Earth, the sanctuary in which we worship.**

L We worship on a rock, a sanctuary called Earth,

**P A sanctuary filled with the cosmic presence of Christ,**

L The risen Lord, who is now the cosmic Christ,

**P Who fills and reconciles all creation.**

L We worship on a rock, a sanctuary called Earth,

**P A sanctuary filled with the Spirit,**

L The life-giving breath of God,

**P The Spirit that fills and renews all creation.**

L Country is calling, inviting us to sense and celebrate God's Presence in this rock, this planet. We pause now in silence before this rock and become aware, in the stillness, of Presence in our presence as we echo the words in Isaiah:

**P Holy. Holy. Holy. Lord God of hosts.**

**The whole Earth is filled with your presence.**

### **Blessing**

May the Presence deep in this rock  
Stir the silence deep in our souls  
Until we celebrate in stillness  
The mystery of this moment.

Listen. Listen to the silence  
Sense the stillness!  
Be aware of Presence right here in country.  
*(A time of silence follows)*

## ***A Rock – Birth Cave***

L There is a cave in a rock in North Queensland, similar to many caves in sacred Aboriginal sites. The cave is a birth cave. Aboriginal women come to this cave to prepare for birth, to give birth and to bury their afterbirth in country. On the walls of that cave are bold images of women giving birth. Behind them is the image of the Creator Spirit.

P **We respect and affirm this Aboriginal memory of country.**

L We recognize this rock as a spiritual place for its people.

P **We recognize our Creator present in this cave.**

L The cave in that rock is also a symbol of the womb of Mother Earth. We too are born of Earth, Earth beings.

P **As we remember country we remember the words of the Psalmist:**

**My frame was not hidden from you  
when I was being made in secret,  
intricately woven in the depths of Earth.**

L Country is calling, urging us to affirm our nature as Earth beings, to acknowledge all Earth beings as kin and to nurture our Earth mother.

P **We remember too the commission of our Creator to Adam, the first Earth being, to serve and preserve country.**

### **Confession**

*(We pause now, consider the rock before us and share some past traditions or experiences that have made it difficult for us view **Earth as mother** and affirm our identity as Earth beings).*

### **Blessing**

L May the sacred cave in this rock  
Make us aware as Earth beings  
That we are born of Mother Earth  
And we are called to nurture her.

## ***A Rock – Uluru***

- L Uluru is a sacred centre of country, the navel of our land.
- R Uluru is a majestic rock, a wonder of country.**
- L Uluru is a rock that celebrates the worth of all creation
- R Uluru is a mystery, a symbol of the spiritual deep in our land.**
- L This rock also reminds us of the custodians of country.
- R Who cared for this rock and all of this land.**
- L Country is calling.
- R The rock too is calling.
- L Will you also be custodians of the sacred in country?  
Will you be reconciled true with the first custodians of country?

### **Response**

*(The worshipping community pauses, reflects on the rock, the call of country and the spiritual symbol of Uluru. Individual worshippers may wish to respond silently or openly to this call of country. **What does Uluru now mean to you?**)*

- Blessing**            L            May the mystery and majesty of Uluru  
   Waken our consciousness to the calling of country  
   To be partners with those custodians  
   Who have long tended the sacred in this land of ours.

## ***A Rock – Mengler's Hill***

- L Mengler's Hill is a rock overlooking the rich Barossa Valley. Recalling Moses on Mt Nebo, early settlers stood on that rock and viewed what was for them The Promised Land. From that rock they could see a fertile valley. Engraved on that rock are the words from Joshua: 'The Lord has given us this land.'
- L Behold the valley from this rock.
- P A valley alive with native fauna and flora**
- L A valley made alive with the breath of God,
- P As the Psalmist acclaimed long ago:**  
**You send forth your spirit, they are created;**  
**And you renew the face of the ground.**
- L A valley ready for vineyards galore
- P Ignoring the peoples who lived there before**
- L As if they were Canaanites, nothing more
- P Now country is calling, calling for sure.**
- L Yes, country is calling us to celebrate the life pulsing through the veins of valley

**P**     **And calling us to remember the Promised Land  
is country to the custodians we name this day:**

## **Recognition**

*(The worshipping community pauses again, reflects on the rock and the call of country. They may now **name custodians** whose care of country has been ignored or forgotten. We honor past custodians and hear the call of country for us to follow suit.)*

**Blessing**           L     May the spirit that animates country  
                                  Stir our hearts and consciences  
                                  To both celebrate the gift of life in this land  
                                  And past custodians who cared for country.

## **A Rock - Maralinga**

*(Maralinga is that part of country in Central Australia where the British, with the approval of the Australian authorities, conducted atomic tests 'to keep the country free.' The response in this litany is the voice of those who suffered at Maralinga.)*

L     Were you there?

**R     Yes, I was there.**

L     Were you at Maralinga?

**R     Maralinga was my mother.**

L     Did you see the black atomic cloud?

**R     I saw the black cloud of death.**

L     Did you sense the desecration of the landscape?

**R     I felt my country crushed and killed.**

L     Did you see the broken face the hills?

**R     I saw radioactive rock.**

L     Did you hear country cry?

**R     Country cried and still cries.**

L     What did country cry?

**R     Why, white man? Why?**

**Blessing**

L     May the calling of country for justice  
Move us to be like the prophets of old,  
Speak boldly on behalf of country  
And oppose the desecration of our land.

***A Rock – Outback***

I am a rock, a rock from the outback,  
A rock to remember.

I am a rock, a rock of your country  
A rock from the Dreaming  
A gift from the spirit dwelling below,  
A rock linked to ancestors  
From times then and now  
When God was in tune  
With country, custodians and me.

I am a rock, a rock from the outback,  
A rock who knows wisdom.  
I know all the ants that live in my space,  
I know the echidnas who stare at my face,  
I know the strong rains, the sun and the wind,  
That lift fragments of me  
To make the rich soil that all you will cycle  
To live and to be.

I am a rock  
And you are connected to country and me.  
Be wise and remember,  
Remember country in me.

**Blessing**

L     May the wisdom of this rock  
Reach deep into our souls  
And keep us connected with country  
To the spirit in rock and sand and soil





## *Closing Song*

### Rainbow Covenant Hymn

**Tune: Morning Has Broken**

**Norman Habel, 2010**

Red is the fire of God's holy presence  
Filling with life the planet we share;  
Here is our vow to hold the Earth sacred,  
Tend it with love and covenant care.

Orange the clay that makes us all mortal  
Filled with God's breath since humans were born..  
Given a mission: treat Earth as partner!  
Now we affirm that calling once more.

Yellow, like gold, means all things are precious,  
Each with a right to sing and be free;  
This is our pledge to hold all that's living,  
Valued as part of Earth's majesty.

Green pulses flow through veins of creation,  
Till humans clear great forests in seed;  
This is our promise: keep all things growing,  
We will reverse our violent greed.

Blue is the song felt deep in the ocean,  
Blues are the groaning deep in the sand.  
Now with our souls we promise to listen,  
Publicly giving a voice to the land.

Indigo sounds a signal for danger:  
Refugees facing drought and despair;  
Here we respond as climates are changing,  
We will take steps, find ways to prepare.

Violet announces Christ in our cosmos,  
Holding our Earth in all of its pain.  
Christ now invites us: join in my mission!  
Cov'nant with me to heal Earth again.