THE REALMS OF SPIRIT

Only our spirits
can enter
the realms
of the sacred.

No mind,
no intellect,
no literacy.

They
may bring us
to the gateway,
but not within.

WORDS GET IN THE WAY

Every thing
is greater
than any label or name.

Some languages
don't even have "things".

Connect directly,
know wholely,
feel deeply.

Our truly rampant diseases is a disease of the spirit.

It arises from greed,

lack of self-esteem or mutual respect,

not being of value to our community,

or absence of deep purpose to our lives.

We can feel
the power
where
primal forces
of nature
come together
in intense
and memorable
relationships.

This same power
can be brought
into the places
of our
everyday lives.

Thirty years ago,
I chose
to leave
the city,

to live
where nature
speaks
with power -

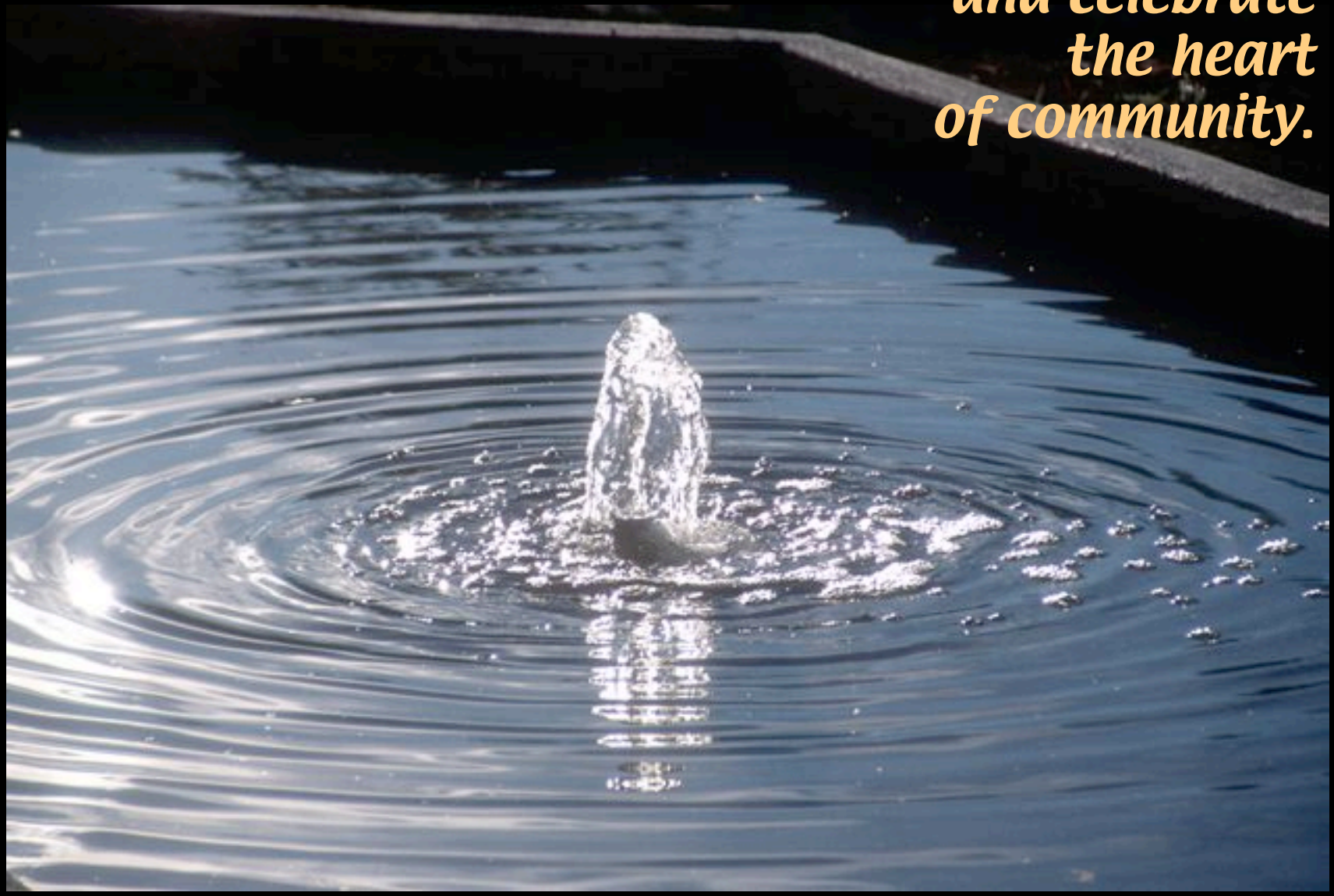
to try to learn
how to put soul
back into
our culture
and
architecture.

Here, nature truly speaks with power.

Money,
"culture"
and
"success"
are small prices

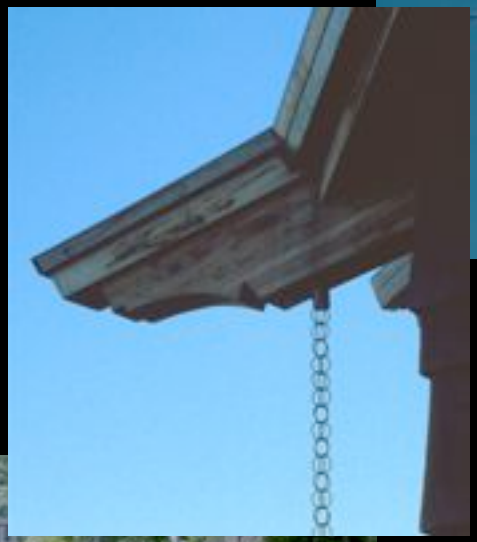
for a place
with all
that money
can't buy.

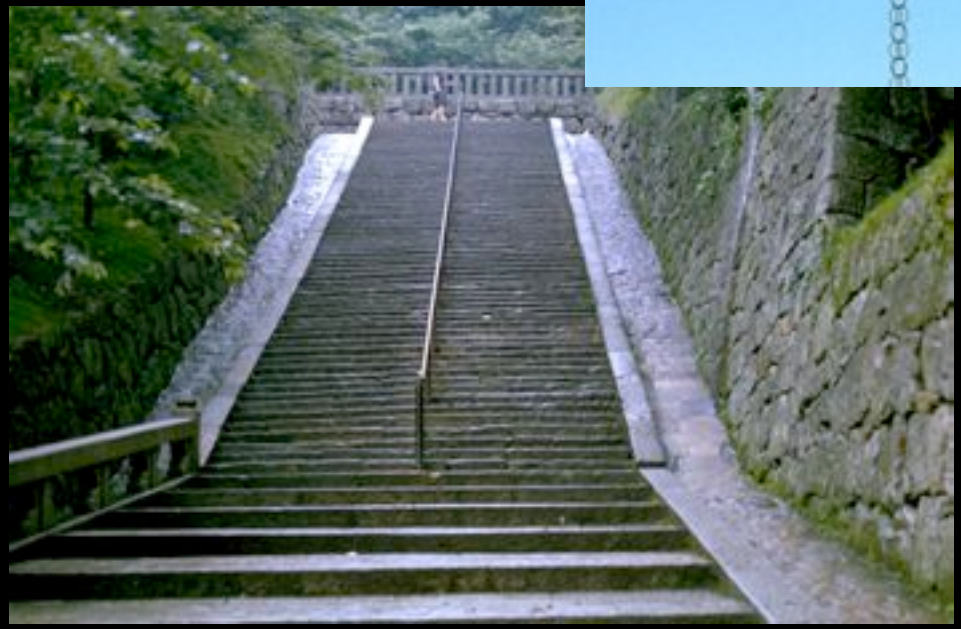
It has taught me to find
and celebrate
the heart
of community.



Celebrate . . .
water -

don't put it
in a pipe!





Have you ever walked down
a waterfall?

VALUES ARE DIFFERENT IN A SACRED WORLD

Austerity is not doing without.

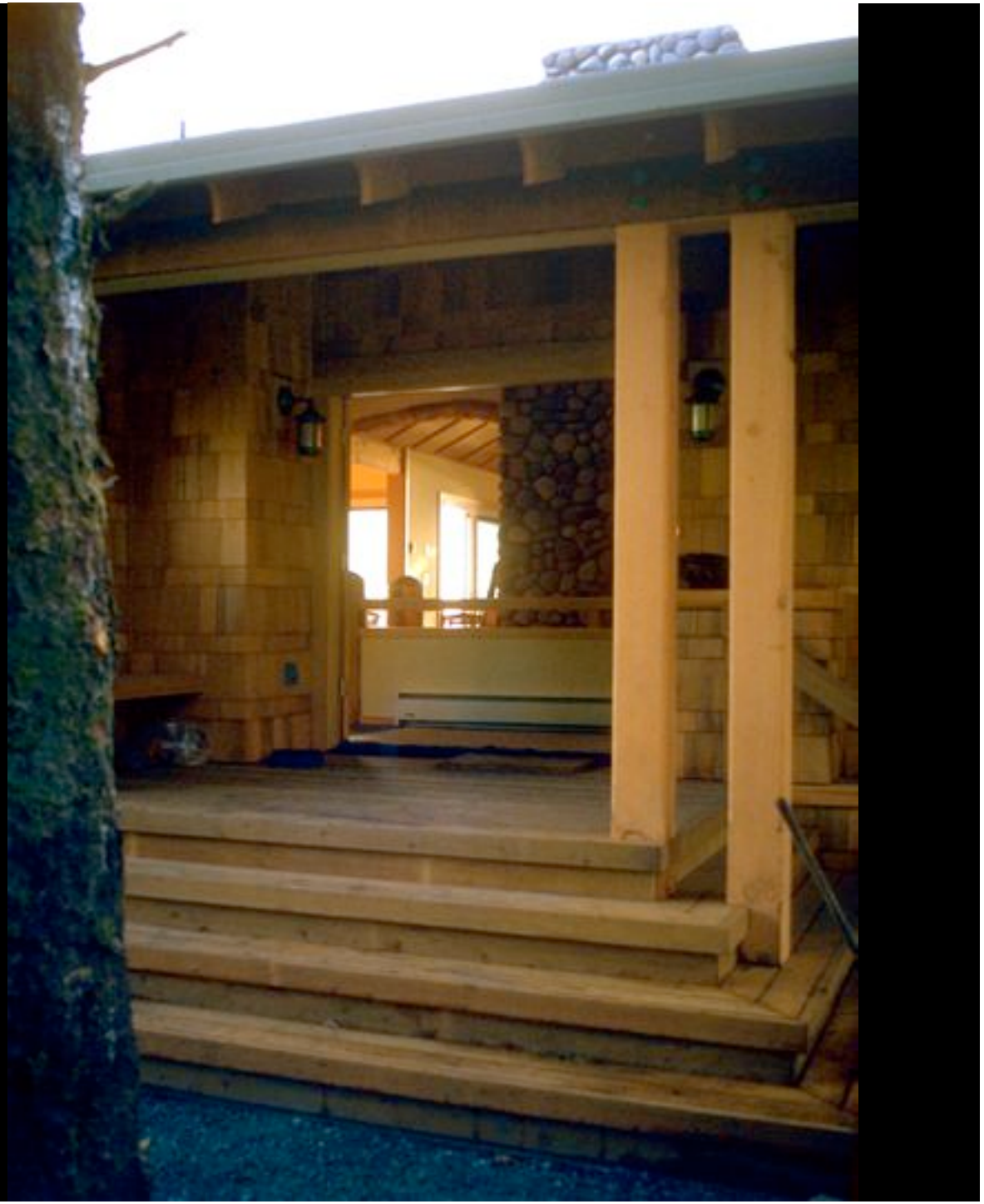
It is getting rid of things in the way of what we REALLY want.

Affluence doesn't separate what is wise and what is merely possible.

Don't use your mind . . . let nature suggest.
. . . . What IS a "wild" flower?

Welcome radiates from places with a soul -

offering sanctuary, respite, and nurture.



In kneeling to enter a teahouse,
a samurai left his back exposed,
requiring humility and trust.

Before entering Saihoji, you walk
around two sides of the garden,
letting the city empty from your heart.

Nestle into the ecology of a place.
It holds the wisdom of ages.

HONOR OTHER LIVES

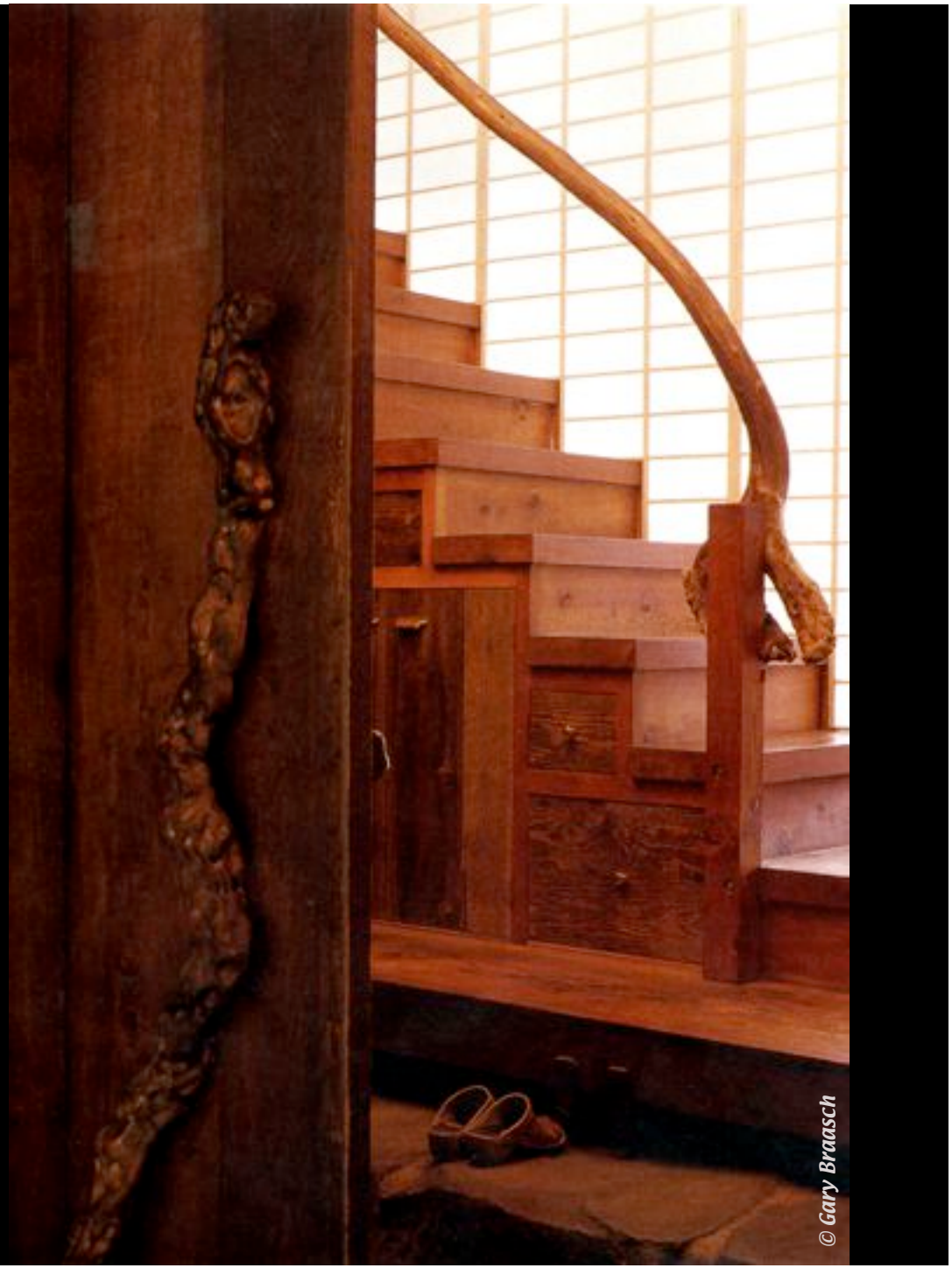
The contortions of an old tree,
like the wrinkles
of an elder,

tell the adventures
and struggles
of their lives.

There lies power
worth sharing -

honoring the souls
given up
into making

our buildings
and our lives.



GARDENS OF THE SPIRIT

Our souls
need homes
as much as our bodies.

Homes for spirits
don't need walls
or roofs.

Any right action
does
multiple things.

Here a
shoji wall
keeps heat downstairs,
provides privacy,
brings lighting
into the entry,
and acts
as a guard rail
for the stairs.

It also gives spirit!

Remember to open . . .

How else can hummingbirds land on your finger?

Floor living allows luxury and flexibility in small spaces.

A kitchen for $100.

SILENCE

The invisible joy
of the silence
of the absence
of motors
of refrigerators
and dishwashers,
and furnaces,
and washing machines,
and televisions!

An
outside-vented
cool-box.

MIRRORS

distort.

They focus attention
on outer appearance
rather than
inner nature,

diminishing
our self-esteem
every rumpled morning.

Even small things
change the energy
of a place
and our lives.

Windows placed for floor-living,
beds where height is unneeded
. . . create generosity of space.

CONNECTION

Connection

Connection

With the circling of the
sun and moon.

With the rhythms of the
day and season.

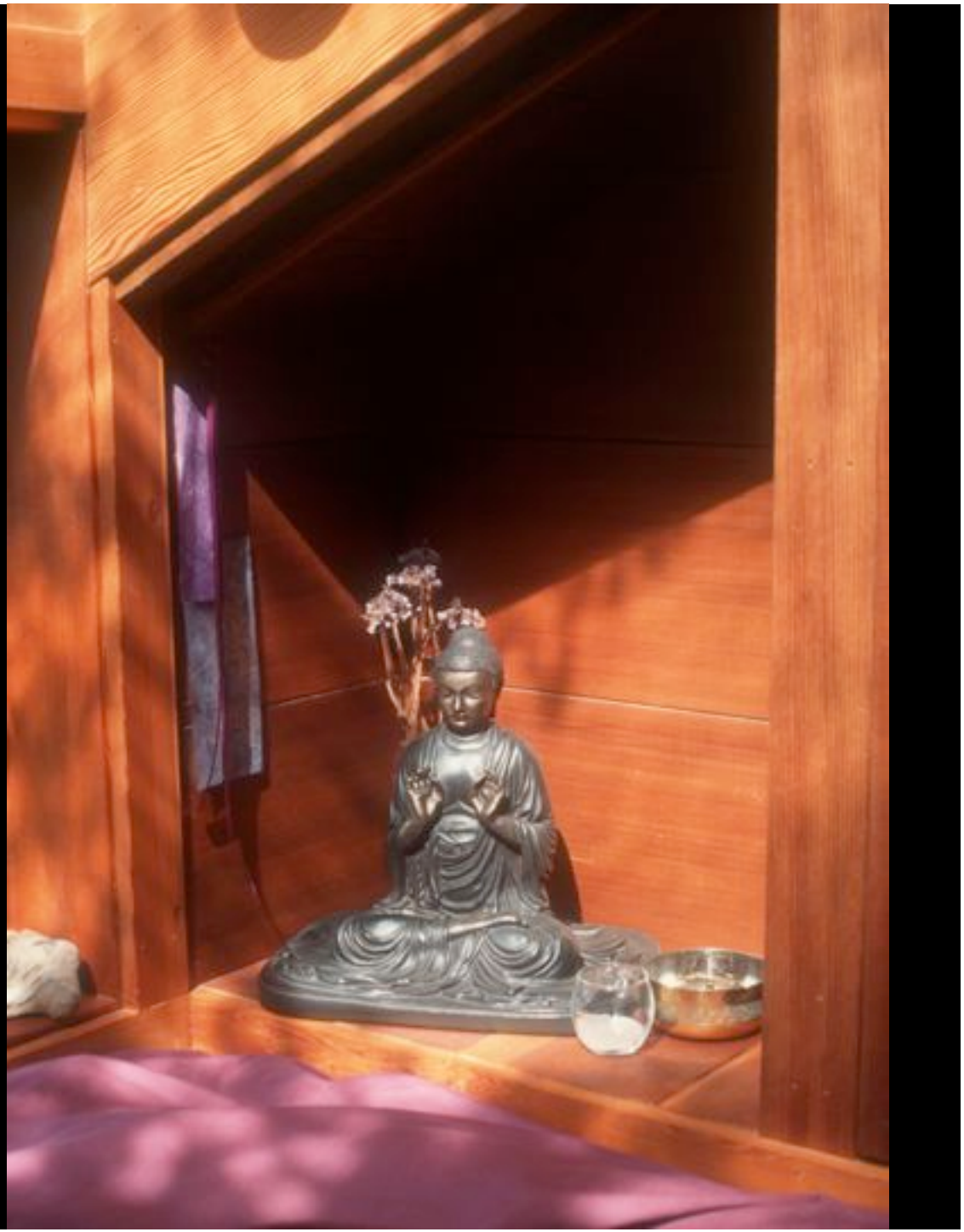
With the darkness
which shows us
the stars.

Without it,
we feel emptiness.

What we know
intimately,
we come to love.

What we love,
we hold inviolate.

Sacredness
is the central basis
of
meaningful lives
and
enduring societies.



SIMPLICITY

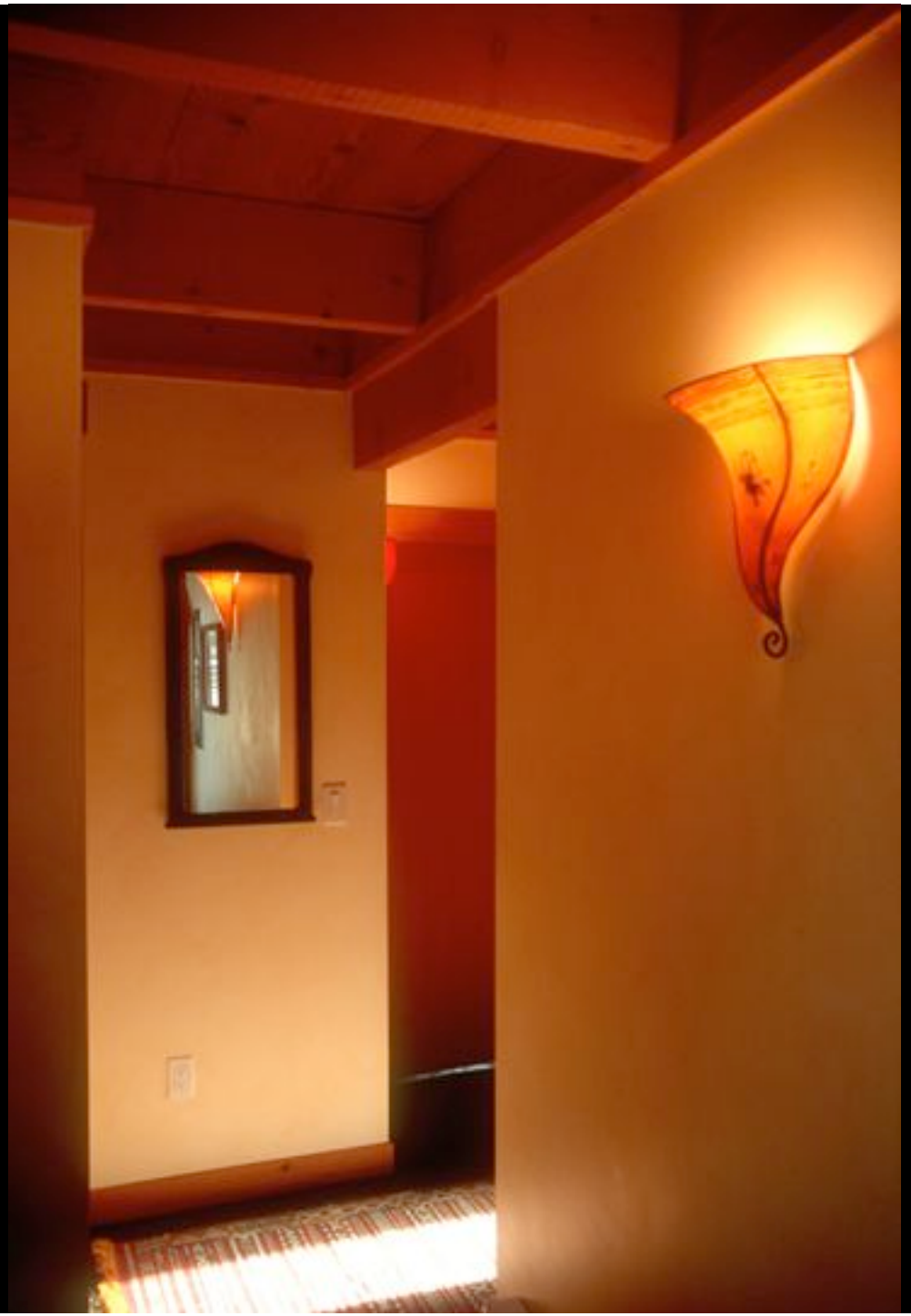
Earthen floors,
clay plasters,
reused lumber.

Things made by hand
with love.

Things
GIVEN, not sold.

Things lasting
beyond their “owners”.

The joy
of enoughness.



Recycled pipe.

Scraps of metal.

Old bottles.

Used lumber.

Joy.

Passion.

Creativity.

What a dance, together!

Overflowing skill, love for what we work with.
These are what endure and are sustained.
Let us be transformed by the souls of all we touch.

Design is different in a sacred world.

Place, not space -
our world extends beyond
the spatial realm.

Relations, not structure -
connection
is primary.

Meaning, not aesthetics -
inner aspects
are central.

Love, not dazzle.

Truth is the heart
of design.

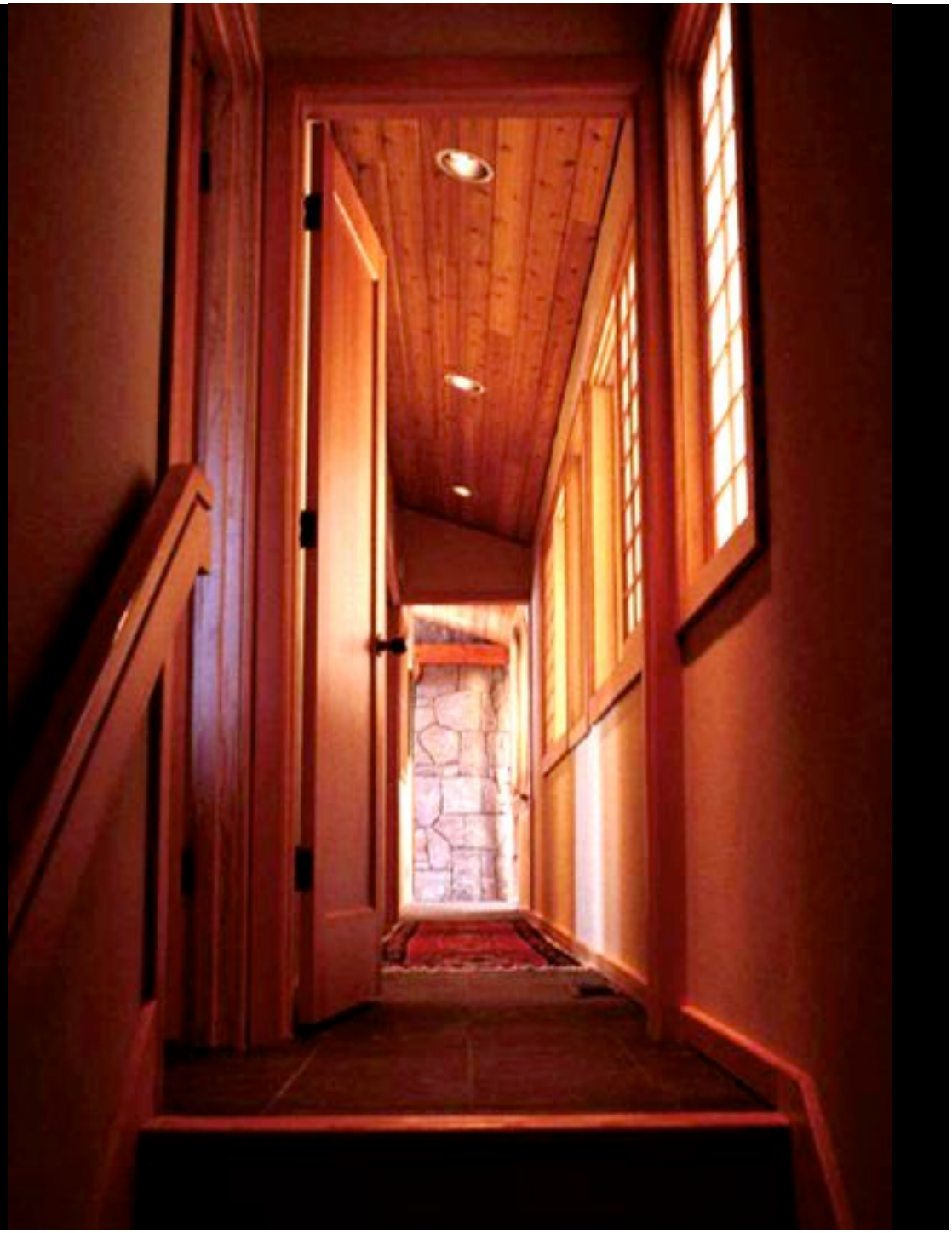
SKILL

The outer product
of places
made with skill
shows what can be achieved.

The inner product
expands competence,
gives joy, self-esteem,
ability to give.

Copies have no vigor.

Power
lies in new creation.



INVISIBLE SERVANTS

True gifts
of a place
don't call attention
to their presence.

What shouts,
leave out.

The gift is important,
not the giver.

EDGES

Where different intentions
meet,
in-between worlds
are formed.

In such realms -

doorways,
window seats,
porches,
and verandahs -

lie the delicious worlds
of inside, outside,
and in-between.

Bank of Astoria

Manzanita OR

Fallen trees here often become "nurse-logs".
In 200 years, their "children" stand in rows in the forest, dancing on tip-toe.

Community banks,

at least,

CAN have a soul.

A.I.A. National Sustainable Design Award, 2001
"Top 10 Green Buildings" award, 2002.

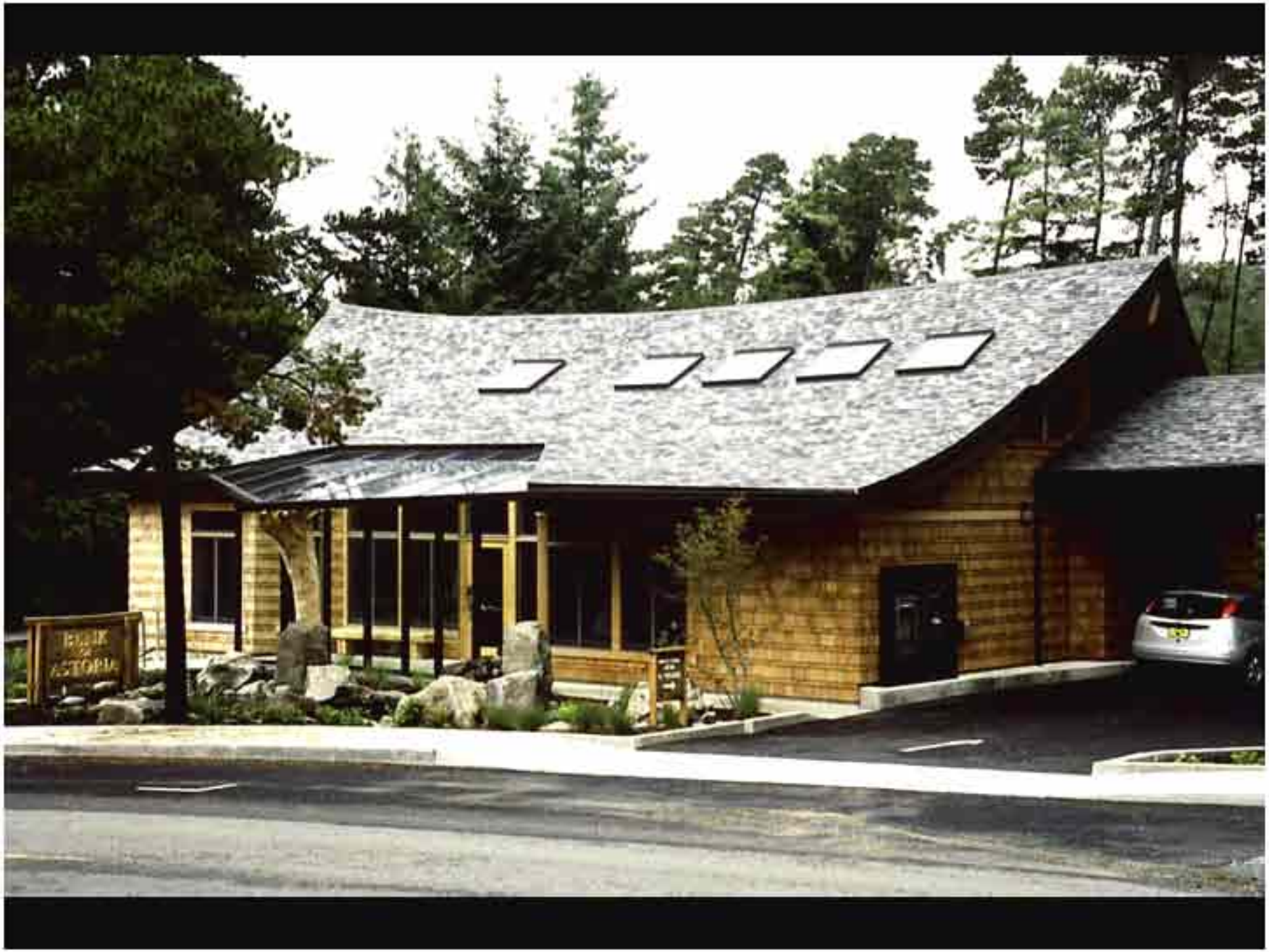
RIGHT FIT

When all
are fully in touch -

in life or in art -

there is
seamless connection -

a
magical wholeness
from
disparate parts.



The RITUALS of building . . . are vital.

There are different kinds of efficiency,

and differences between
efficiency and effectiveness.

ALIVENESS

Leaf shadows
dance in sunlight
on the floor.

Sun-rippled water
reflects on the ceiling.

Sounds
of water and birds
through
open windows.

The richness and joy
of life dancing
with life
can fill our places.

CELEBRATE

RAIN!

All action arises
from stillness.

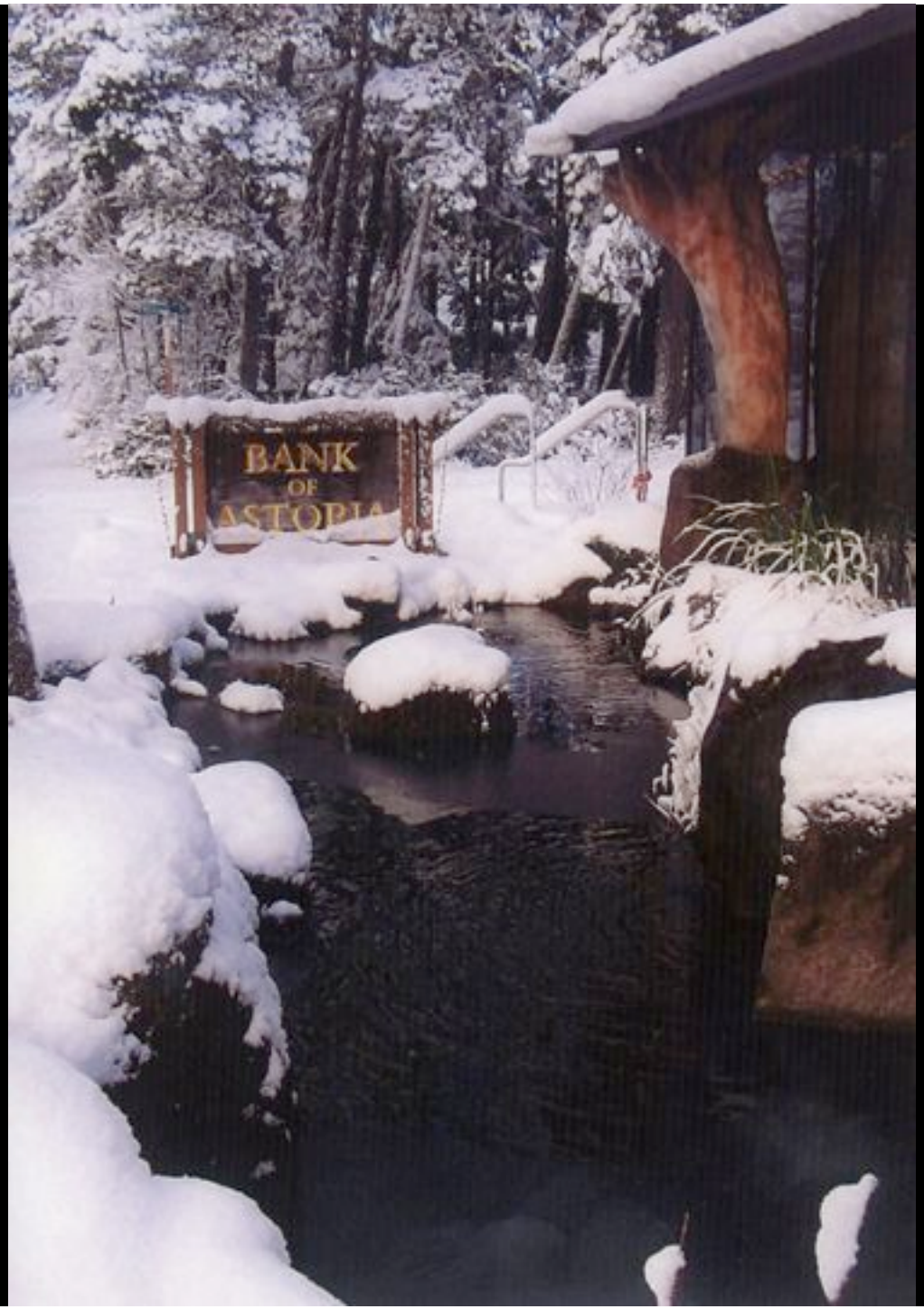
All sound
from silence.

Interval
is a place
of transformation.

Within all things
lie invisible seeds.

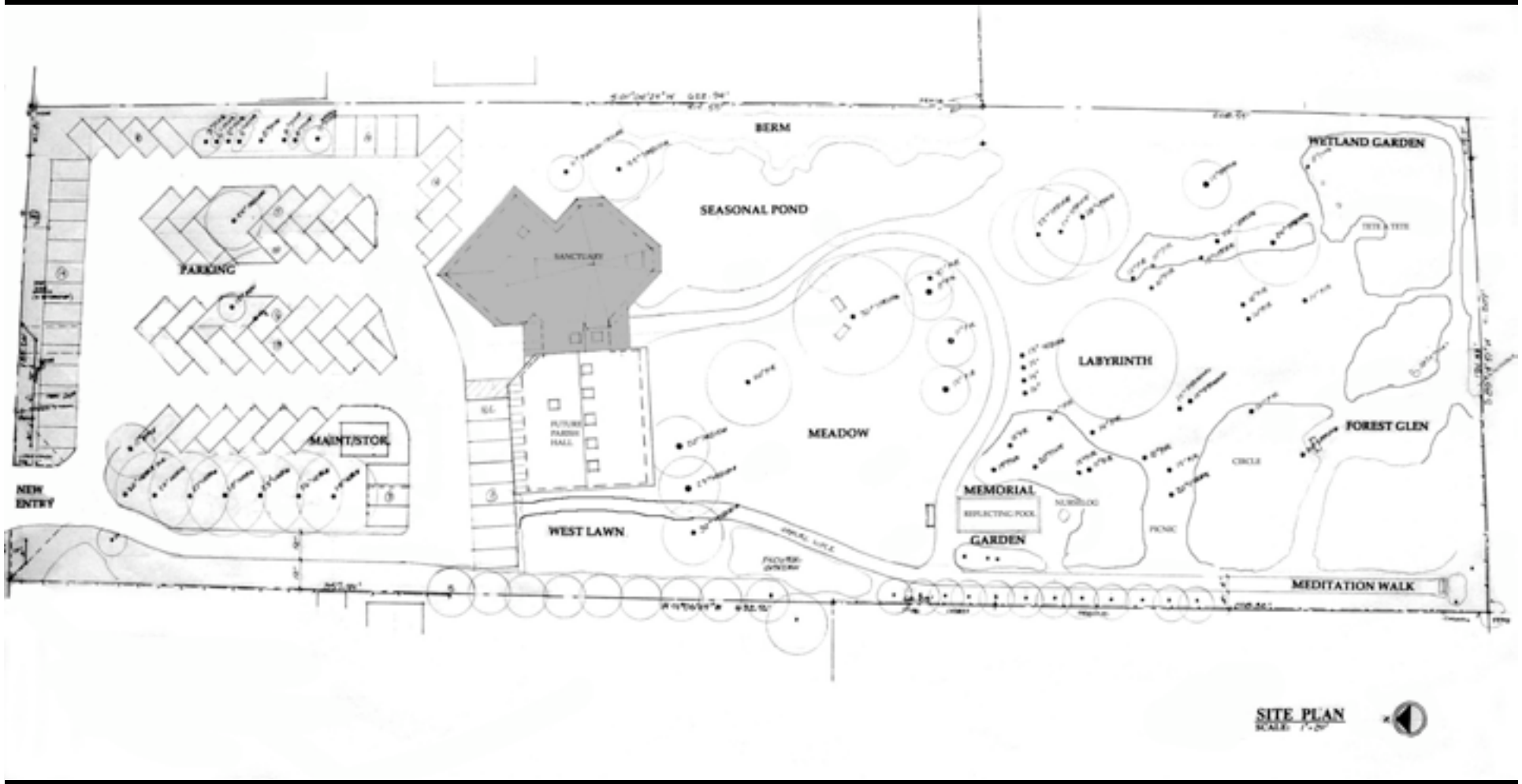
Potential unfolds
as opportunity arises.

A building
more
magical
in the worst
weather
is truly
in harmony
with
its world.

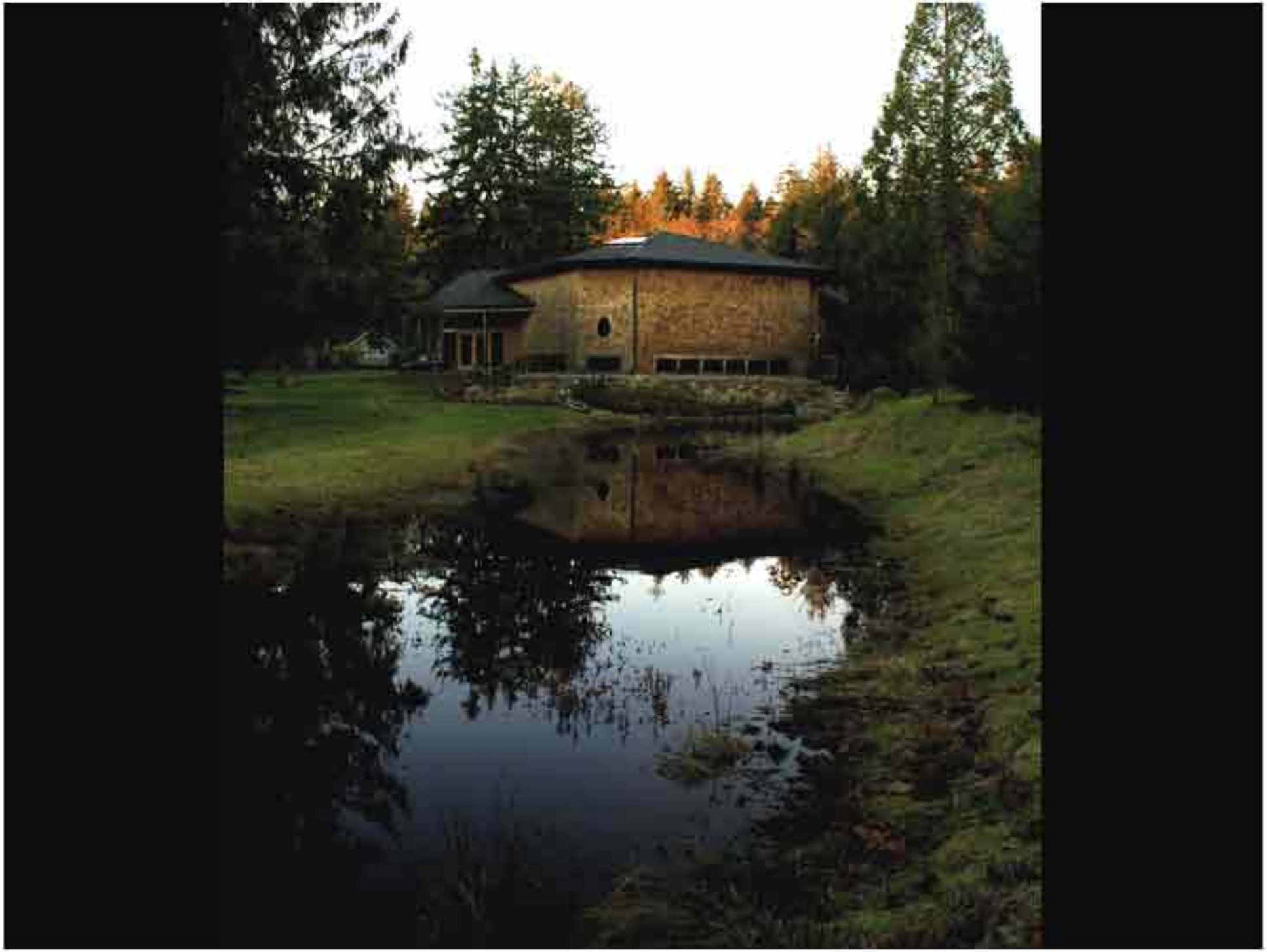


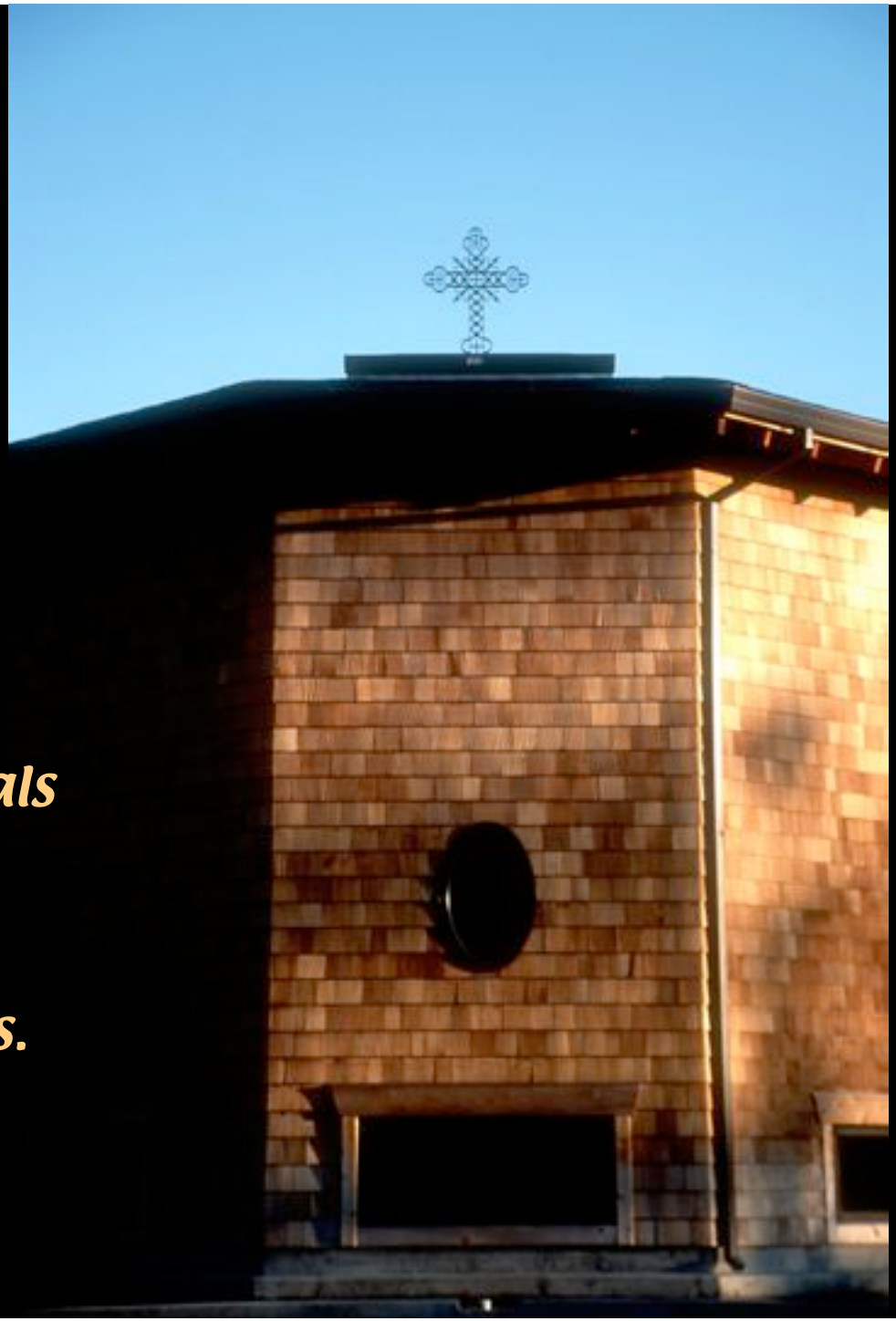
St. Catherine's Episcopal Church
Manzanita OR

Competing with greed is not the answer.

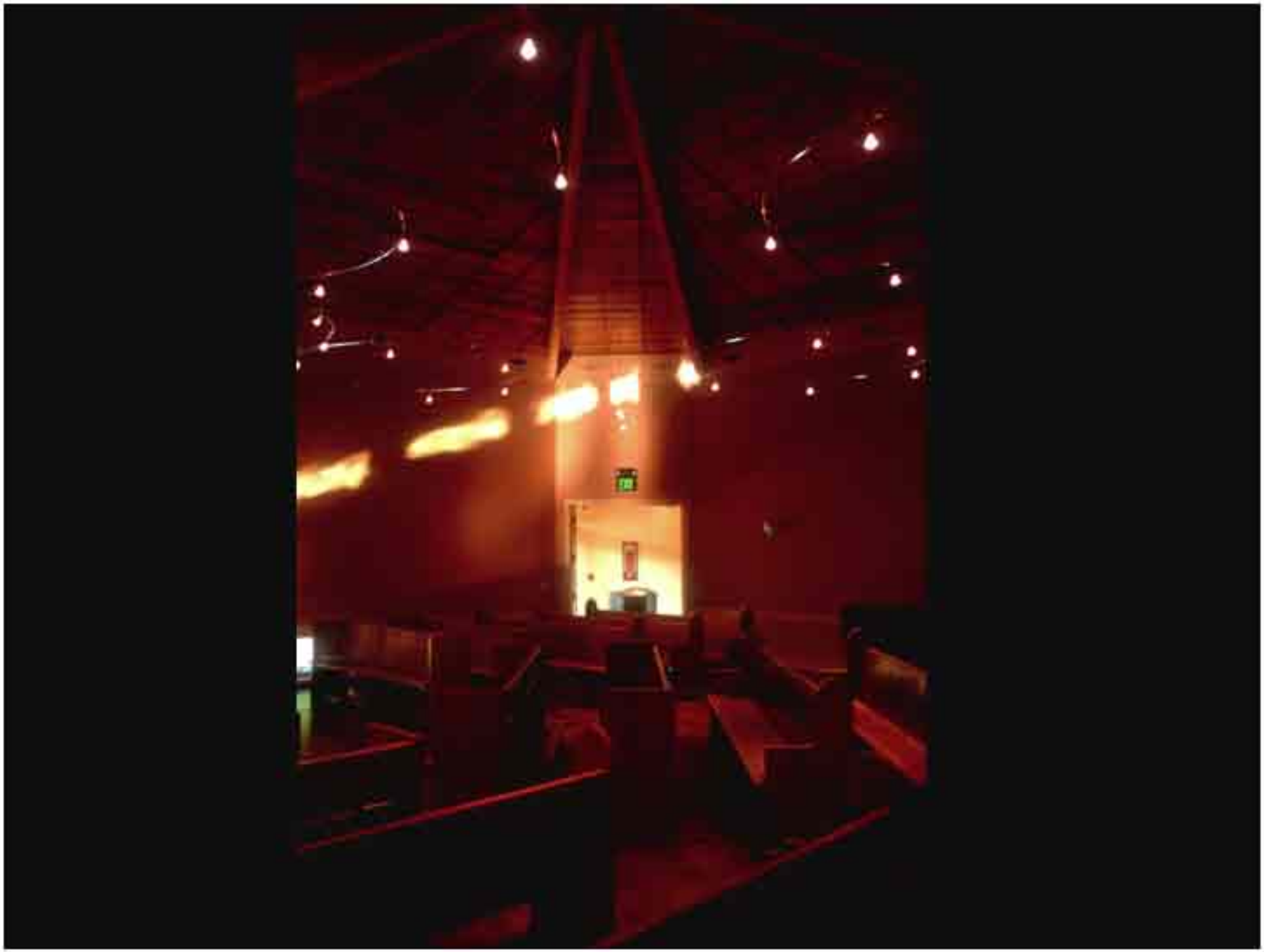


Sacred space as a garden,
a place of retreat and connection,
not an expression of ego, size, and power.





Local materials honor our ecological communities.



GATEWAY TO SACRED SPACE

An energized font -
a single
4000-pound
crystal
of
columnar basalt -

gateway
to the
sanctuary

and to the
sacred garden.

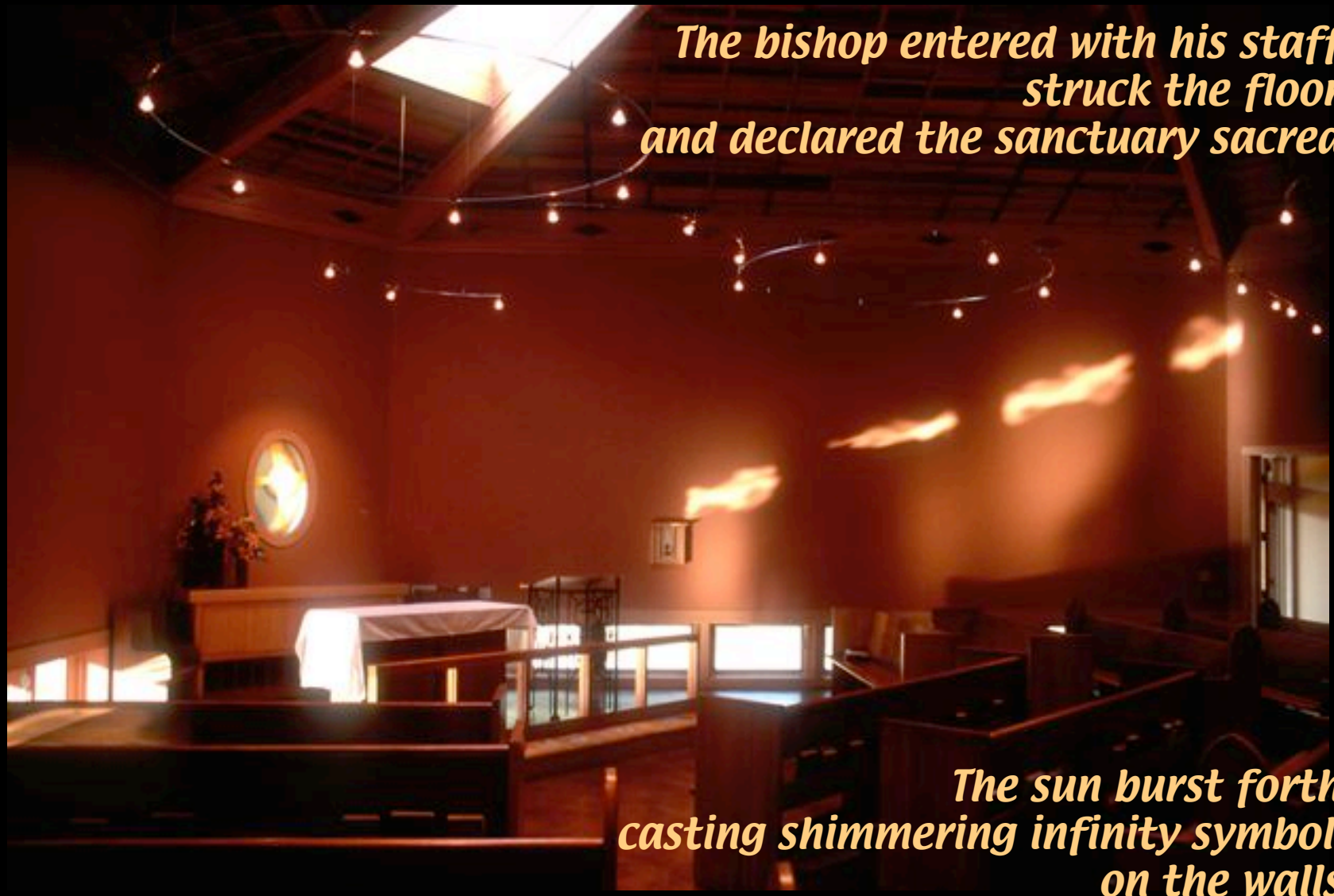
Deep power upwells within every place.

CO-CREATION

I was baffled when the spirit guides said,
"NO . . . no windows to the garden."

What they wanted was total and single focus
. . . on the garden when in the garden
. . . in the sanctuary when in the sanctuary.

It was overcast when the sanctuary was consecrated.



The bishop entered with his staff,
struck the floor,
and declared the sanctuary sacred.

The sun burst forth,
casting shimmering infinity symbols
on the walls.

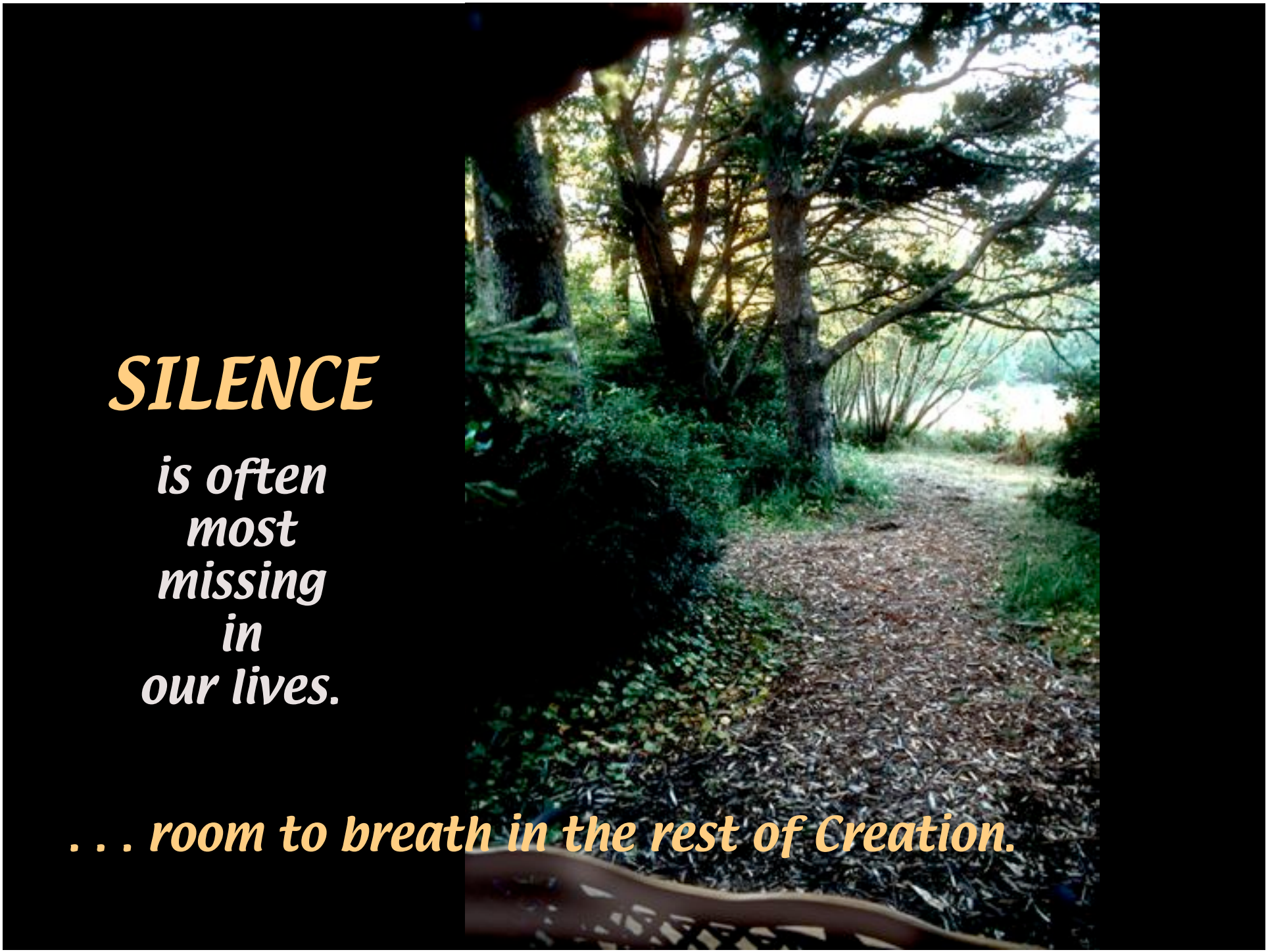
We all gasped!

Symbolic dimensions of a space may have more power if integral and almost invisible.

Remember to share . . .

. . .even with a bear!

Give space for other life.


SILENCE
is often
most
missing
in
our lives.
. . . room to breath in the rest of Creation.

DEATH . . .

is the
compost
out of which
richer life
arises.

That metaphor,

in a
memorial garden,

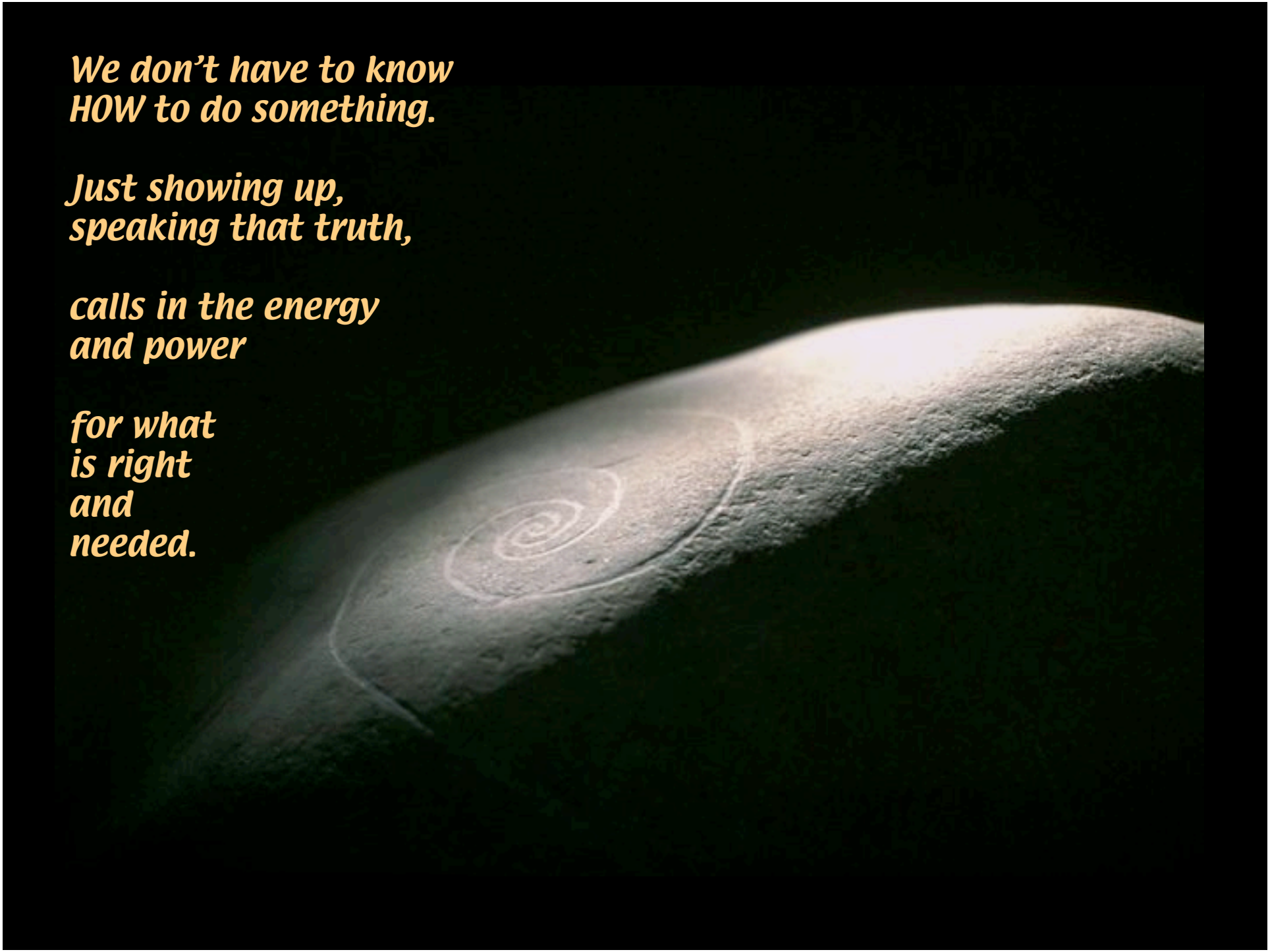
transforms
our
attitudes
towards
death

. . . and life.

Names,
and lives,
of those crossed
over -

seen through
reflections of
water, trees,
and sky -

remind us
of rebirth
and oneness
of all life.


We don't have to know
HOW to do something.
Just showing up,
speaking that truth,
calls in the energy
and power
for what
is right
and
needed.

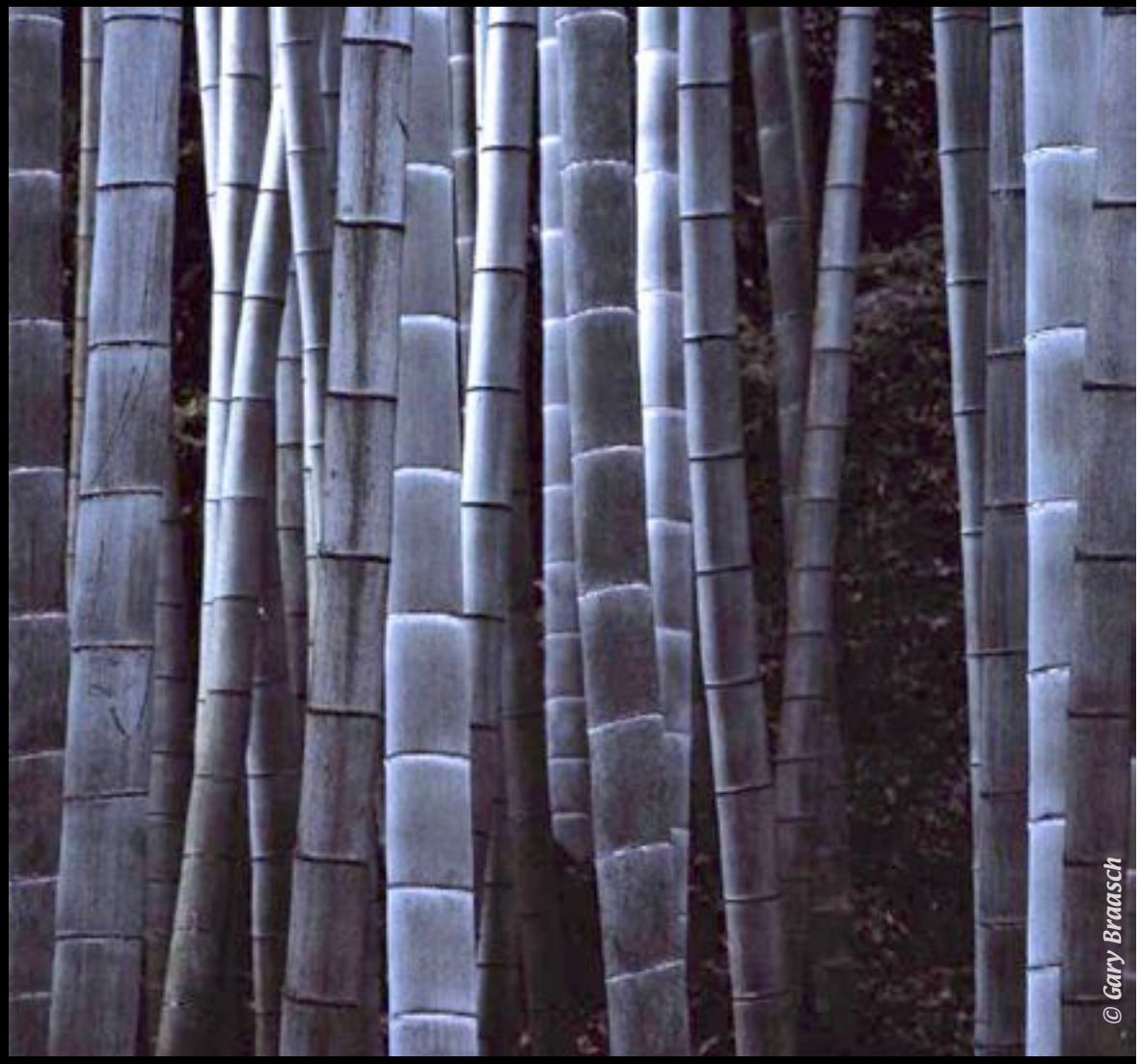
FORM

Form is a left-over
from
the creative dance
of energy and intention.

Pay attention
to that dance,
not the confetti
on the floor
when it is done.

It's not important
what a thing "looks like".

What brought it into being?
What changed in the process?
What portent does its making
hold for the future?



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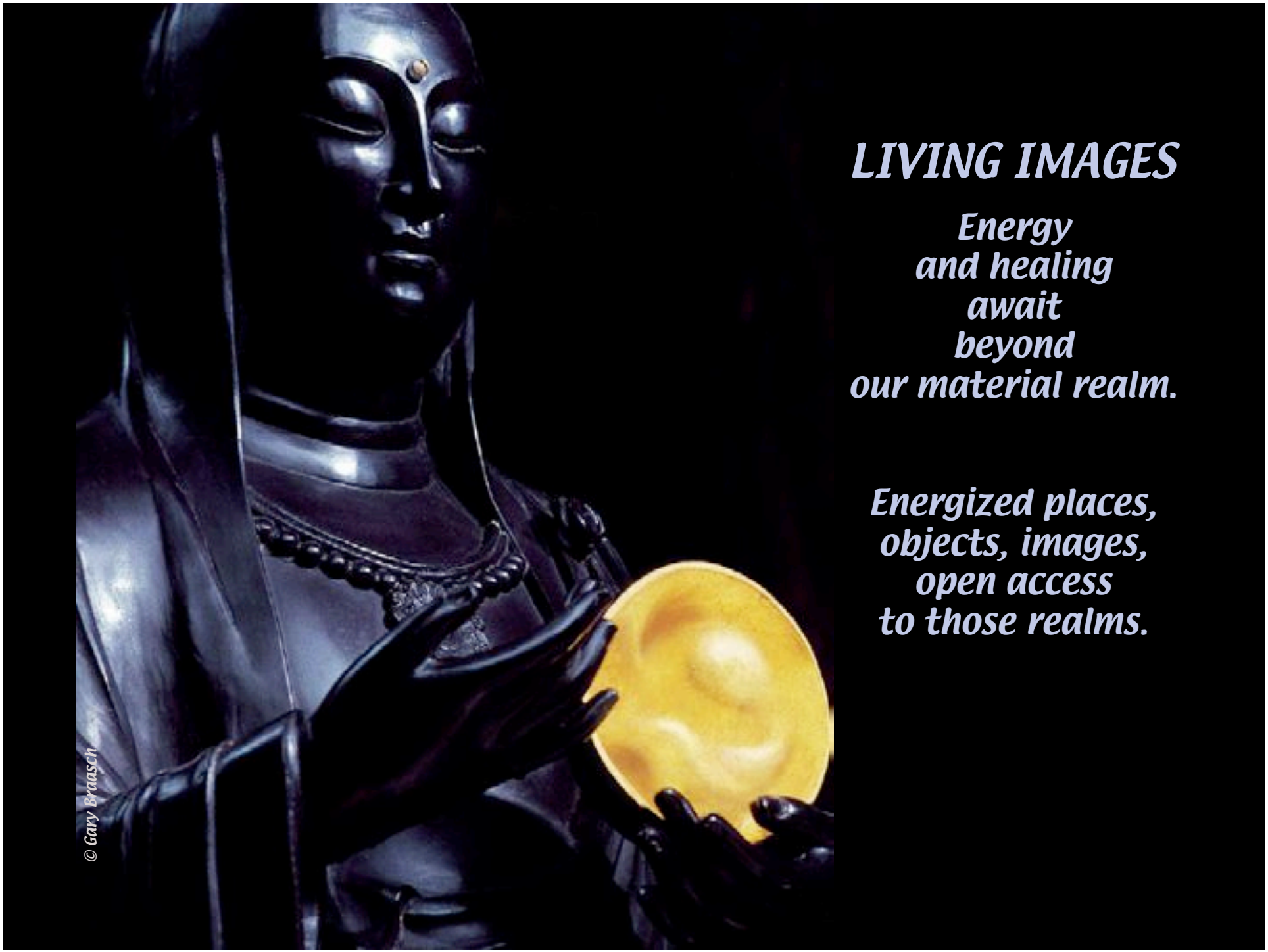
SACRED WORK

Deep skill
remains invisible
until we grasp
the profundity
of the tasks
attempted.

Its product
is
understated
beauty.



LIVING IMAGES

Energy
and healing
await
beyond
our material realm.

Energized places,
objects, images,
open access
to those realms.

CONNECTING WITH OTHERS

In the energy realms,
we hear
the truth and falsehood
in ourselves and others,

true intentions and needs.

We find
more profound meaning
and richer experience.

Fullness
returns
to
our lives.

SACRED ART

bridges
finite and infinite -

connecting us
to the realms of spirit.

It reveals
the source of Creation.

The soul

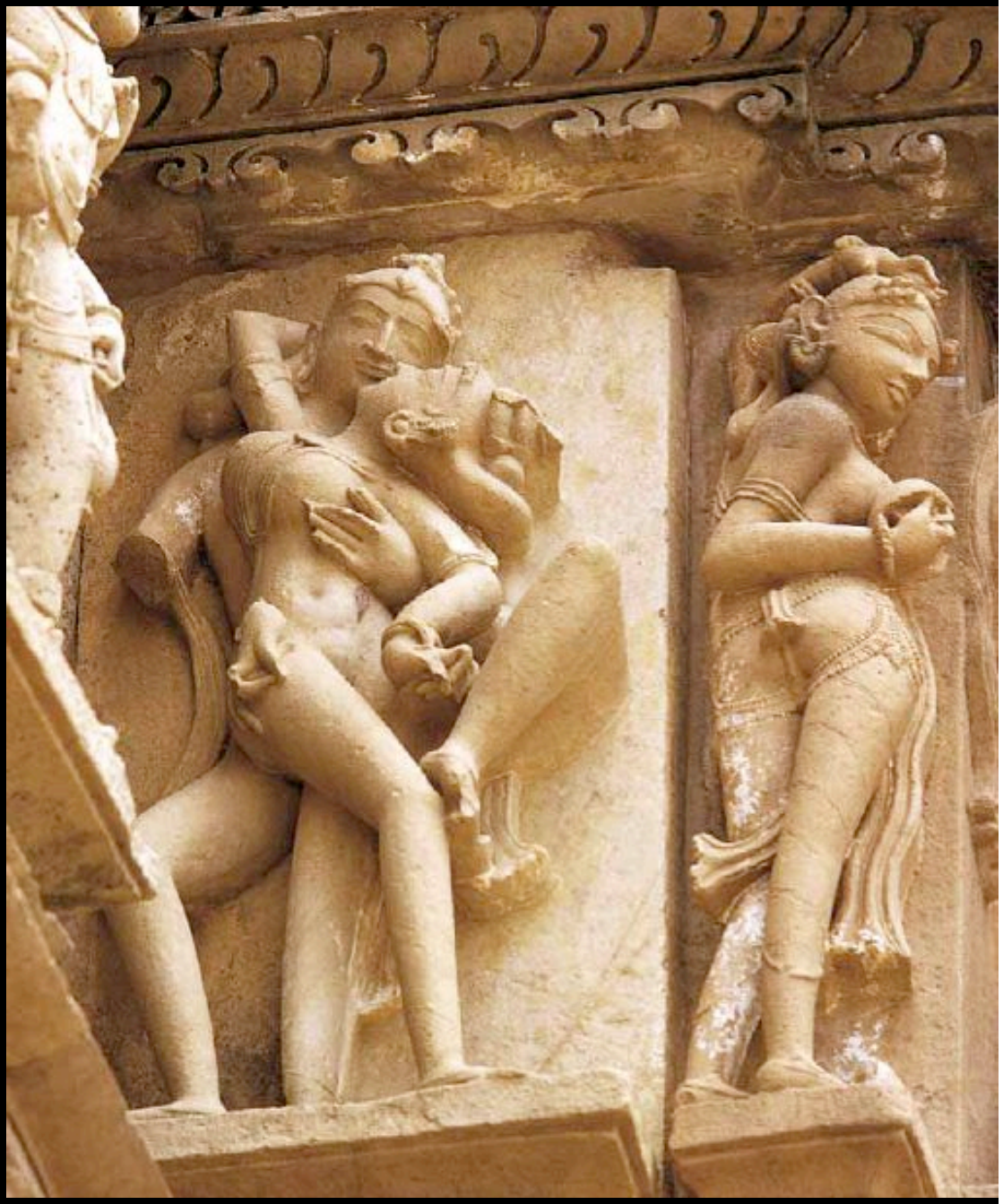
immanent
within all
that exists.

PASSION

Ecstasy
is a natural state,
when open
to the
wonder
of creation.

All acts
of
pleasure and joy
touch truth,
gratitude, and love.

Life-force energy
rides emotion,
bringing us
into oneness
with the source
of life.



PART OF SOMETHING GREATER

Focused
on ourselves,

our places deny
the unity of all.

Connection with
the greater truths
of otherness

has more import
than minutiae
of our lives.

PILGRIMAGE

Tourism
takes from a place.

Pilgrimage
brings
a gift -

of valuing, honoring,
and loving.

It leaves behind
our reverence.

This enriches
the energy of a place -

and
what it
can give us.

remember . . .

Extravagance

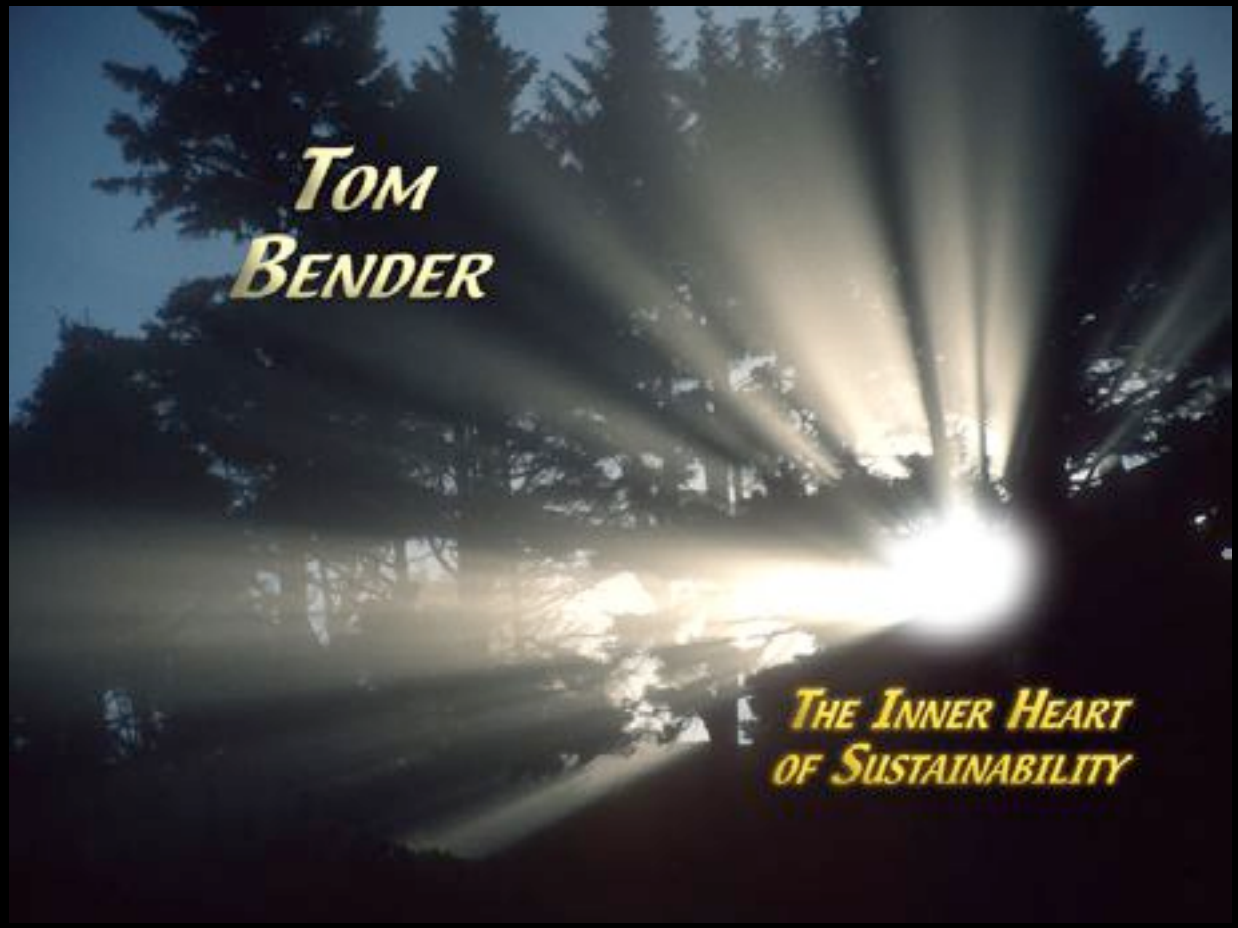
is the economics of nature

© Gary Braasch

This is the world
our culture
and architecture
are
shifting into.

Your welcome
awaits . . .

come within!



www.tombender.org tbender@nehalemtel.net