

**Devotion, Week of February 4, 2024**  
**Rev. Jeanne Simpson**

We traversed across the Great Barrier Reef this past week – the only animal-made feature you can see from the moon. It covers 133,000 square miles and depends upon coral, a living reef of polyps, for its health. It is almost beyond description in terms of its biodiversity. As we traveled west across the top of Australia, we also learned about the indigenous people of this country – the oldest still existing civilization on earth – 65,000 years. Indigenous people here identify themselves in terms of place, not personal characteristics. They came from the Earth Mother, and their location on “her” defines who they are. They don’t speak of “I,” they speak of “we.” Their names reflect where they are from, and when they introduce themselves, they always recite a legacy of their origin back to original land areas.

These indigenous people are story tellers, and they often speak of “dreamtime.” In the Dreamtime of most regions, a spirit creates the earth then tells the humans to treat the animals and the earth in a way which is respectful to land. This creator is eternal. I am often struck by the similarity of our Judeo-Christian creation stories and those of earlier cultures. There seems to be a universal trust in a creator who intends for humans to live in harmony with the land and the rest of the “good creation.” This common story is based upon the belief that we are not only creations of an omniscient entity, but that this creator always gives us other animals and plants so that we live well. As Genesis says, when God finished creation, God declared it to be “good,” and then rested.

I hope your week allows you to appreciate God’s creation and to celebrate Sabbath rest.

*Jeanne*