

First Parish of Sudbury

Yule / Winter Solstice Ritual

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This Winter Solstice Ritual was created by Deborah Pope-Lance, Tom Yelton, Leslie Lowe, Judith Christianson and YON - Jan C. Hardenbergh in 1990.

OUTLINE:

We need a breakdown of responsibilities and tips for each role so that they don't need to search the whole script to find it out.

- [Preparation](#) - greeting (**Leslie**), group drumming (**Drummer**), group song: *We Come from the Mountain*(**Songstress**) explain level of participation (**Minister**)
- [Setting the Mood](#) - *The Holly and the Ivy* (**Songstress**), "The wheel turns ..." (**Priestess**)
- [Meditation](#) - guided meditation (**Guide**), *Holly King* verse, penny whistle (**Druid**)
- [Statement of Purpose](#) - "This is the time of the Solstice ..." (**Priestess**)
- [Casting the Circle](#) (**Priestess**)
- [Invoking the Powers](#)
 - "Spirit of the East ..." (**EAST**), etc. for (**SOUTH, WEST, NORTH**)
 - "Lady, goddess ... The ritual is begun!" (**Priestess**)
- [Main Ritual Part 1 - What must we lose to the night?](#)
 - *The Holly King* verses 1 and 2 (**Celia**, penny whistle **Druid**)
 - "Many wheels ...", explain talking stick, "The wheel is turning, what shall be lost to the night?" (**WEST**)
 - "X" (**NORTH**), chant "X is lost to the night ..." (**ALL**), stick passed, continue clockwise ...
 - quiet drumming (**Drummer**) ...
 - reads list (**NORTH**), then drumming stops (**Drummer**), stick burned (**NORTH**)
 - *The Holly King* verses 3 and 4 (**Celia**, penny whistle **Druid**)
- [Main Ritual Part 2 - What shall be born from the night?](#)
 - "We are awake ... what shall be born from the night?" (**EAST**)
 - "Y" (**SOUTH**), "Y is born to the night ..." (**ALL**), bowl passed, continue clockwise ...
 - quiet drumming (**Drummer**) ...
 - reads list (**NORTH**), extinguishes last candle (**NORTH**), then drumming stops (**Drummer**)
 - Golden sun ... (**NORTH**)
 - dramatic drumming (**Drummer**), "Light the waters! (**WEST**), ...earth! (**NORTH**), ...skies! (**EAST**), ...fires! (**SOUTH**)
 - light Yule log (**Druid, WEST, EAST**), light directions (**NORTH, SOUTH, EAST, WEST**)
 - drumming stops (**Drummer**), "The sun is returning ...WELCOME YULE" (**Priestess**), "WELCOME YULE" (**ALL**)
 - *Our Lady Greensleeves* (**Songstress**)
- [Dismissing the Powers](#)
 - "Lady and Lord ..." (**Priestess**)
 - "Spirit of the East ..." (**EAST**), "Blessed Be" (**ALL**), Etc. for (**SOUTH, WEST, NORTH**)
 - "We thank you for ..." (**NORTH, SOUTH, EAST, WEST**)
- [Opening the Circle](#) - "The circle is open ..." (**Priestess**) "Blessed Be" (**ALL**) Invitation to the Feast (**Muse**)
- Feasting, Socializing

PREPARATION

Set the chairs in a circle—one chair for each person— remove any extra chairs. The chairs at each of the four directions are occupied by the four direction leaders (NORTH, SOUTH, EAST, WEST). Behind each of these chairs is a tall Candlestick. In the center of the circle, on the floor, is the yule log with its 13 candles, surrounded by greenery. NORTH has a holly branch for the talking stick, pencil and paper for recording the things to be lost and born. SOUTH has a bowl of mixed nuts, in shell. A variety of makeshift percussion instruments are available to everyone.

Leslie

(Greets everyone. The goal is to move participants from the ordinary world into our magical world. This could involve a smudge stick (smoke concerns though) or equivalent. Also have everyone make themselves a foil head wreath (or have some already made?). Tell everyone that the ritual starts from this point on, no chit-chat, etc. And asks everyone to take a percussion instrument from the ritual box)

Drummer (Maria)

(Meanwhile as people are arriving ... Participatory Drumming—Circle gathers. Stop at 6:15?)

Songstress

(Celia leads everyone in the song "We come from the Mountain", Steve accompanies on guitar. Teach everyone the chorus to "Cornish Wassail") and teach/prepare everyone to shout "WELCOME YULE!"

Minister

(Explain what level and type of group participation is welcome during ritual. Explain the talking stick and the talking bowl, and how people can be silent if they choose -- just pass it on).

SETTING THE MOOD

Songstress

(song: "The Holly and the Ivy", Steve accompanies on guitar)

*The Holly and the Ivy, when they are both full grown,
of all the trees that are in the wood the Holly bears the crown.
Oh, the rising of the Sun and the running of the deer,
The turning of the winter season, sweet singing all may hear.*

*The Holly bears a berry as red as any blood,
And the ivy grows upon the rock, evergreen throughout the wood.*

*Oh, the rising of the Sun and the running of the deer,
The hand upon the harp string, sweet singing in the choir.*

*The Holly bears a flower as white as the lily's flower,
And the Goddess bears the Sun again, to bring us strength and power.*

*Oh, the rising of the Sun and the running of the deer,
The playing of the merry pipes, sweet singing in the shire.*

*The Holly bears a prickle as sharp as any thorn,
And the Goddess in her ivy gown greets the winter sun each morn.*

*Oh, the rising of the Sun and the running of the deer,
The playing of the merry organ, sweet singing in the choir.*

*The Holly ever bears a bark, bitter as any gall,
And the ivy weaves within our lives, like the Goddess in us all.*

*Oh, the rising of the Sun and the running of the deer,
The turning of the winter season, sweet singing all may hear.*

Priestess (Sheila)

The wheel turns. Winter, Spring, Summer, Autumn—birth, growth, fading, death—the Wheel turns, on and on. Ideas are born, projects are consummated, plans prove impractical and are dropped. We fall in love; we suffer loss; we consummate relationships; we give birth; we grow; we decay.

We are renewed, we are reborn even as we decay and die. We are not separate from each other, from the broader world around us; we are one with the Goddess, we are one with the God. As the season changes, we arouse the power from within, the power to heal, the power to change our society, the power to renew the earth.

MEDITATION

Guide

(long guided meditation)

Druid

(penny whistle segue: a verse from «The Holly King»)

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Priestess

This is the time of the Solstice, the longest night of the year. Now darkness triumphs; and yet, gives way and changes into light. The breath of nature is suspended. We watch for the coming of dawn, who is bringer of hope and the promise of summer. This is the stillness behind motion, when time itself stops; the center, which is also the circumference of all. We are awake in the night. We turn the Wheel to bring the light. We call the sun from the womb of night. Blessed be!

CASTING THE CIRCLE

Priestess

(Make sure all gathered have chairs and are comfortable. Indicate ALL RISE, then do a sweeping circle motion with arms and body saying:)

Let the circle be cast.

INVOKING THE POWERS

ALL

(Face the direction addressed. Light direction candle before speaking)

EAST

Spirit of the East, spirit of air, of morning and springtime: Be with us as the sun rises, in times of beginning, times of planting. Inspire us with the fresh breath of courage as we go forth into new adventures

SOUTH

Spirit of the South, spirit of fire, of noontime and summer: Be with us through the heat of the day and help us to be ever growing. Warm us with strength and energy for the work that awaits us.

WEST

Spirit of the West, spirit of water, of evening and autumn: Be with as the sun sets and help us to enjoy a rich harvest. Flow through us with a cooling, healing quietness and bring us peace.

NORTH

Spirit of the North, spirit of earth, of nighttime and winter: Be with us in the darkness, in the time of gestation. Ground us in the wisdom of the changing seasons as we celebrate the spiraling journey of our lives.

ALL

(face circle center)

Priestess

(Say the following or use your own words)

Lady, goddess of light and dark,

We thank you for blessings and abundance.

We ask you to join us in our circle.

Lord, god of light and dark,

We thank you for blessings and abundance.

We ask you to join us in our circle.

The circle has been cast.

We are between the worlds,

Beyond the bounds of time,

Where night and day,

Birth and death,

Joy and sorrow,

Meet as one.

The ritual is begun!

ALL

(sit down)

MAIN RITUAL PART I - What must we lose to the night?

Songstress (penny whistle)

(Sings: "The Holly King" verses 1 and 2., traditional)

Sing we of a mystery, now as long ago
 Blood red holly berries, blood upon the snow
 The Oak king shall rise, the waxing year to bring
 Therefore bid we farewell to the Holly king
 Now in deep midwinter all seems in a trance
 Comes the golden Oak King in his age-old dance
 Comes he to slay, yet honor he does bring
 To his fallen brother the darksome Holly King

(NOTE: Gaia (Gay-eh), or more properly Gaea (Jay-eh), born of the first of gods from Chaos, mother of Uranus, mother of the Titans (with Uranus, the starry sky), including Cronus. Cronus is the father of the Olympians. So, Gaea is the grandmother and great-grandmother of Zeus.)

WEST

Many wheels are turning this night, the Wheel of the seasons, the wheel of the earth of the sun, the many wheels of our lives. We mark another turn of our lives, we mark things to leave behind and name things to gather. We celebrate another turn of the earth about the sun, that which brings the rebirth of the Sun. A ceremony that we, as humans, have performed since time itself was named. A ceremony that will be celebrated as long as humans live on this world.

This year has brought the new millenium. The past millenium saw humans go from smart animals with basic tools and local subsistence to demigods with the power to split aDruids and refine genetic codes; from a small dominion of domestics to a confusing confluence of technologies and economies - bring a race between the global threats and promises. We have invoked the powers, the seasons, the elements to help us, to guide the global promises. Let us ask Geos, grandmother of Zeus, the global goddess to lead this race, to grow the noosphere (noo or noah, know'a) of global consciousness over our geosphere, growing promises and reducing threats, and baptizing the gaia hypothesis, the interdependent web forming one organism. Let us celebrate the health of the geosphere, as we celebrate her journey and the rebirth of the Sun.

In this ceremony, in this night, as the Wheel of the seasons turns, we have chance to set something aside, to leave it in this circle, to change it before the light returns.

Each of us may name what is to be lost to the night. We will all chant:
The wheel is turning,
What shall be lost to the night?

Then the person holding the talking stick can name one thing to be lost to the night.

Say this with me:
WEST/ALL
The wheel is turning,
What shall be lost to the night?

NORTH
Grief. *(for example) (record each thing as it is spoken)*

WEST
Say this with me:

WEST/ALL
Grief is lost to the night.
The wheel is turning,
What shall be lost to the night?
(Continue clockwise until we have gone around the circle, returned to NORTH) Recorder (NORTH) writes each item down. Conclude with:)

Drummer
(Quiet Meditative drumming for an appropriate period of time. About 30 seconds. Continue drumming ...)

NORTH
(Standing, reading items from the record)
Darkness and tears are set aside
When the sun comes up again!
Fear and Grief are set aside
When the sun comes up again!
(Continue, citing list in twos)
Let all these be lost to the night.

Drummer
(Stop drumming)

NORTH
(Put the holly stick into the fire in the fireplace. Make sure it catches fire)

Songstress (penny whistle)
(Sings: "The Holly King" verses 3 and 4)

In the bright midsummer the year's wheel turned around
Then shall be the Oak King's blood upon the ground
Ever it comes, once more the years waning
Then shall be victorious the Darksome Holly King
Sing we of the Mystery now as long ago
Blood red holly berries, blood upon the snow
The Oak king shall rise, the waxing year to bring
Therefore bid we farewell to the Holly king

MAIN RITUAL PART II - What shall be Born from the Night?

EAST

We are awake in the night!
We turn the Wheel, to bring the light!
We call the sun from the womb of night!
The wheel is turning,
What shall be born from the night?

SOUTH

(Bring out the bowl of mixed nuts. Take one nut. Hold it up for all to see. Says (for example):)
Understanding.

NORTH

(Record each item as it is spoken)

EAST

Say this with me:

EAST/ALL

Understanding is born from the night.

The wheel is turning,

What shall be born from the night?

(Continue clockwise until we have gone around the circle, returned to SOUTH) Recorder (NORTH) writes each item down.)

EAST, SOUTH, WEST

(After each direction takes his/her turn, he/she extinguishes their direction candle)

Drummer

(After bowl returns to SOUTH: Quiet Meditative drumming for about 30 seconds alone and then continues to drum as NORTH speaks:)

NORTH

(Standing, reading items from the record)

Hope and Joy are reborn

In the darkness of the night.

Understanding and Patience are reborn

In the darkness of the night.

(Continue, citing list in twos)

(Extinguish the North candle. Complete darkness. Pause for pre-agreed period)

Drummer

(stop drumming at complete darkness)

NORTH

(It will be dark so this must be memorized) Golden sun, Of hill and field.

Drummer

(Begin dramatic drumming...)

WEST

Light the waters.

NORTH

Light the earth.

EAST

Light the skies.

SOUTH

Light the fires.

Druid, WEST, and EAST

(light Yule log. NOTE: ordinary lighters work poorly for Yule log.)

EAST, WEST, NORTH, and SOUTH

(light their respective direction candles.)

Drummer

(stop drumming)

Priestess

The sun is returning

The light will come again!

In a new dawn, in a new day,

The sun is rising!

WELCOME YULE!

ALL

WELCOME YULE!

Songstress

(song: "Our Lady Greensleeves" Celia sings, Steve accompanies (guitar or mandolin). Fairly quick, with joy)

Midwinter moon is shining bright
The Yuletide log is burning.
The people gather 'round tonight
The Sabbat wheel is turning.
Joy! Mirth! The Sun's rebirth!
Now as of old we greet Thee.
Gladdening is the song we sing
Of praises to the Lady.
'Twas at the feast of bright Beltane
When we all were a-Maying,
Sweet minstrel Queen in Her gown of green
Spring roundelay was playing.
And though now roped in snow
Her wintry garb deceives, for
Bedipped with holly and mistletoe
She is still Our Lady Greensleeves.
So drink ye wassail everyone
Good Pagans all made merry
With wine as red as the reborn Sun,
As red as the holly-berry.
Dancing, come join the ring,
As Her Yuletide spell she weaves.
Fair Queen, the evergreen,
Sweet lovely Lady Greensleeves.

DISMISSING THE POWERS

Priestess

Lady and Lord, Goddess and God,
We thank you for your presence,
For your circle, For light and Love,
For night and change.
We ask for your blessing, As you depart.
Hail and farewell! Blessed Be.

EAST

Spirit of the East, Spirit of air, of morning and of springtime,
Thank you for blessing our circle.

ALL

Blessed Be.

SOUTH

Spirit of the South, Spirit of fire, of noontime and of summer,
Thank you for blessing our circle.

ALL

Blessed Be.

WEST

Spirit of the West, Spirit of water, of evening and of autumn,
Thank you for blessing our circle.

ALL

Blessed Be.

NORTH

Spirit of the North, Spirit of earth, of nighttime and of winter,
Thank you for blessing our circle.

ALL

Blessed Be.

NORTH, SOUTH, EAST, WEST

We thank you for joining our circle.
May there be peace between us,
Blessed Be.

OPENING THE CIRCLE

Priestess

The circle is open, but unbroken,
Merry meet, merry part, and merry meet again.
Blessed Be.

ALL

Blessed Be.

Muse

WE INVITE ALL OF YOU TO JOIN US IN FEASTING AND MERRY MAKING IN A FEW MINUTES AFTER
THE TABLE has BEEN PREPARED FOR YOU. The children will be joining us for the feast.