

ASIC Imbolc Ritual

February 3, 2013

RITUAL SPACE PREPARATION

Circle

Create altar with green cloth on circular table at front of building.

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Minister

Welcome to the Imbolc Celebration sponsored by the Ancient Sea Island Continuum, the Earth-Centered Spiritual Affinity Circle of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Beaufort. The Ancient Sea Island Continuum is a liberal Earth-centered spiritual affinity group within the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Beaufort (UUFB). Our services are open to anyone on the Sea Islands or the Low Country especially to those who identify with the precepts of classical or contemporary Paganism. We celebrate the sacred circle of life and provide guidance on how to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

In addition to providing Sabbats and Esbats, ASIC will begin an educational circle series called, *A Year and A Day*, which will survey a range of Pagan beliefs, principles, celebrations, and history throughout the Wheel of the Year. The classes will be held on the Sunday morning before the Ides of each month, culminating in a personal self-dedication ceremony (if desired). If you are interested, or know someone who is, please contact the ASIC Guide.

Tonight's ritual has already begun with a preparation of sacred space. Soon we will invite the four elements, Air, Fire, Water, and Earth, to watch over our celebration. We will invite Mother Nature to combine with your energies to become the Fifth Element, the Spirit of Life. Let us start with a short understanding of what Imbolc means.

FESTIVAL BACKGROUND

Guide

Today is Imbolc, the day of midwinter. The cold has begun to fade away, and the days grow longer. This is a time in which the earth is quickening, like the womb of Brighid, who we acknowledge as the name of the Great Mother this day, birthing the fire after the darkness.

Imbolc is an astronomical midpoint, halfway between the winter solstice and spring equinox. Adopted by Wiccans and neo-pagans, Imbolc is one of the four principal festivals of the Celtic calendar, celebrated either at the beginning of February or at the first local signs of Spring.

Most contemporary Pagans celebrate Imbolc on February 1 or 2. As the midpoint between the winter solstice and spring equinox, Imbolc really falls later in the week. In this year, today is that midpoint and our circle's celebration of Imbolc is appropriately timed.

The date of Imbolc is thought to have been significant in Ireland since the Neolithic period, and the alignment of some Megalithic monuments, showing inner chambers aligned with the rising sun on this date substantiates this. The name Imbolc (pronounced IM-MOLK) derives from the Old Irish word for "in the belly" to the pregnancy of ewes. A medieval glossary confirms the word "ewe's milk". The earliest Irish literature confirms the existence of this holiday in pre-Christian times.

Many traditions exist with Imbolc, but foremost are the association of the festival with a distinctly feminine deity or saint named Brighid, a celebration of power of fire for light and purification, an increased capability for introspection and insight into the future by scrying into a reflection, and weather divination. In fact, the old tradition of watching

to see if serpents or badgers came from their winter dens on this day is considered a forerunner to the North American celebration of Groundhog Day.

Now we will finish the creation of our sacred space.

QUARTER CALLS

In the old days, people gathered for public worship inside wooden henges, and later stone henges. The size of the circle indicated how many people lived in that village. Today, we will resurrect that practice. To welcome the Guardians of the elements, we will gather in the center, and collectively turn and cast our voices as one to the quarters of our circle. During the quarter calls, focus on the positive energies in your life, and banish negative feelings from your soul. For instance, as the Guardian of each element is called, imagine a positive moment in your life when you were in direct contact with corresponding element being welcomed.

As our circle turns from North to East to South to West, imagine a protective bubble growing around us. For this ritual to have meaning, we must extend ourselves spiritually, a state that may make some feel vulnerable. But in this state of mind, we will be able to gain the clarity to truly look inward, free of outside influences. So now... come to the center of our Imbolc circle, clear your minds... of worries... of doubts... of superstitions... of religious beliefs. Let your concentration focus on.... you and everything positive about your life.

Goddess turns to Casting Altar, starting with East and continues clockwise lighting candles with hails to the respective Guardians of that element/direction.

North/Earth:

Hail, Guardian of the North, I call upon thee.
Changeless power of nurtured discipline,
You provide stability with endless endurance
Solid, firm, and steadfast
We honor and invite you to join us here tonight.
And ask of you to watch over and protect us
Share in our light and strengthen of our circle,
May it be so and Blessed Be

East/Air:

Hail, Guardian of the East winds, I call upon thee.
Power over Air, bringer of creativity, Intuition, and clarity
You scatter the seeds of plants and ideas across the land;
You bring the moisture of the storms to the shore;
We honor and invite you to join us here tonight.
And ask of you to watch over and protect us
Share in our light and strengthen of our circle,
May it be so and Blessed Be

South/Fire:

Hail, Guardian of the South sun. I call upon thee.
Fires of love, feeling, and fortitude
Fueling the passions driving us with courage, strength, and conviction
We honor and invite you to join us here tonight.
And ask of you to watch over and protect us
Share in our light and strengthen of our circle,
May it be so and Blessed Be

West/Water:

Hail, Guardian of the West. I call upon thee.
Waters of healing intervention,
Soothing us with your gentle calm and reviving our spirits
You are the life force surging through our veins
We honor and invite you to join us here tonight.
And ask of you to watch over and protect us
Share in our light and strengthen of our circle,
May it be so and Blessed Be

GODDESS INVOCATION

One of the most familiar chants in the modern revival of the Old Religion is a simple, rhythmic chant, trance-like with good drumming "We all come from the Goddess". Suitable for singing as a round, we'll chant for a couple of minutes with the assistance of background music to invite and acknowledge the presence of the Goddess in our midst.

GODDESS SONG

We All Come From The Goddess

Goddess faces altar and says:

Dearest goddess, in whom we live and move,
be present now within this sacred place.
Mother of mystery who rules the seas
and the tides of emotion within women and men,
may the flow of thy being be present within us,
guiding us to truth and love and light.
Mother of earth, goddess of the green and fertile land,
show to us your divine vision and grant us thy wisdom.

Goddess then turns to face her altar, lights the Brigid candle and says:

Bless these candles,

let their flames live within us
and let their light guide us during our journeys.

Goddess moves to scrying bowl filling it with water and says:

Bless this water, may it replenish our spirits
and hold within it a special blessing for each of us,
manifested within our positive reflections.

Goddess drinks the water, sets cup down and moves to her altar picks up one of the gifts and says:

Bless these gifts,
may the love and compassion shown to them come full circle
with treasured rewards of endless beauty within them
and within ourselves.

Goddess sets gift down and sits in chair next to altar. Background music plays.

IMBOLC CRAFTS

Minister

The cross has long been a symbol of Brighid, the Irish goddess who presides over hearth and home. In the Christian period, Imbolc was adopted as St Brigid's Day. A Brighid's cross consists of rushes woven into a shape with a square in the middle and four arms protruding from each corner. They were often hung over doors, windows and stables to welcome Brighid and protect the buildings from fire and lightning. The crosses were generally left there until the next Imbolc.

In some legends, the girl who became St. Bridget wove the first of these crosses as she explained Christianity to her father, a Pictish chieftain. In other stories, the cross is not a cross at all, but a wheel of fire, which explains why it's a bit off-center in appearance. In parts of Ireland,

Brighid is known as a goddess of the crossroads, and this symbol represents the place where two worlds meet, and the year is at a crossroads between light and dark.

On Imbolc Eve, Brighid was said to visit virtuous households and bless the inhabitants as they slept. As Brighid represented the light half of the year, and the power that will bring people from the dark season of winter into spring, her presence was very important at this time of year. Often, some of the food and drink would be set aside for Brighid. Before going to bed, items of clothing or strips of cloth would be left outside for Brighid to bless. Ashes from the fire would be raked smooth and, in the morning, they would look for some kind of mark on the ashes as a sign that Brighid had visited. The clothes or strips of cloth would be brought inside, and believed to now have powers of healing and protection.

In Ireland and Scotland, girls and young women would make a doll-like figure of Brighid, called a Biddy, made from rushes or reeds. It would be clad in bits of cloth, shells and/or flowers. Here is a photo of the morning after last year's Imbolc celebration showing the bed Amanda made for the Goddess. Today, people still make Brighid's crosses and Biddys or visit holy wells dedicated to the Goddess and to St Brighid on Imbolc.

Now let us use the power of our intent and the sacred space we have created to embrace the magick of Brighid.

MAGICK

Minister

Today is Imbolc, the day of midwinter.
The cold has begun to fade away, and the days grow longer.
This is a time in which the earth is quickening,
like the womb of Goddess Brighid,
birthing the fire after the darkness.

Bright Blessings at midwinter to all.
Brighid has returned with the sacred flame,
watching over hearth and home.
This is a time of rebirth and fertility,
and as the earth grows full of life,
may you find abundance on your own path.

Goddess stands and says:

Come, pass through the veil
and allow the warmth of my hearth to embrace you.
Allow the light of my flame to guide you.
Allow the love of my blessing to protect you.
And allow the water from my springs to replenish your spirit.

*Minister directs each person from North to South to approach the veil
and pass through it one at a time. Once through veil, Minister will direct
them to look into their reflection and envision the attribute they desire
to be create within themselves (i.e., compassion, unconditional love,
focus, enthusiasm, energy.... etc.).*

*After finishing their personal reflection, Minister hands them a cup and
instructs them to fill their cup with the water from which they reflected
envisioning the water to be the attribute they reflected upon and as
they drink it, it shall manifest within them as a special blessing from the
Goddess.*

After drinking, Minister directs them to light a candle at the altar envisioning the light from this flame within them, guiding them, and fueling the growth of this attribute manifesting within them.

After lighting the candle, the Goddess presents them with a gift, and an embrace leaving them with these words of inspiration and hope:

May your hearth be warm and your home filled with love. This is a gift of new life. Bury it in the dark, nurture it, and I shall help it find the light as your love and compassion helps it grow.

CLOSING WORDS

Goddess

That which is in the past is in the past
The veil of darkness has been lifted
Soon to bask in the warmth of the light
New life beckons and we shall heed its call
Full of compassion, wisdom, and courage.

FIRECHANT

Minister

Let us seal this night's magick with a purifying chant: Rise With the Fire

PARTING WORDS

Guide

While our services are always free, the use of these facilities and materials for the services do incur costs. There is an offering basket in the foyer, if you enjoyed this service and support our goals, please leave a monetary donation. If writing out a check, write it out to UUFB. There are also materials on the tables in the foyer if you are interested in performing a couple of easy Imbolc rites of your own at home.

OPENING OF CIRCLE

Guide

Goddess blows out candle on casting altar as each is hailed farewell.