

Winter Solstice Ritual

December 21, 2011

RITUAL SPACE PREPARATION

Circle

Create altar with green cloth on circular table in center of labyrinth. Place chalice candle in center. Music Director has bells (tolling is always haunting and distant).

PRELUDE MUSIC

Director

Minister and Guide bless congregants entering sanctuary.

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcomer

Welcome to the Winter Solstice Celebration sponsored by the Earth Centered Spirituality Circle at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Beaufort. Unitarian Universalism embodies religious freedom, drawing inspiration from many sources: the world's religions, our own experience, reason, intuition and faith. At its core, Unitarian Universalism emphasizes the worth and dignity of every person and the interconnection of all things. Ours is a living, dynamic religion, and we are encouraged to live our values, demonstrating compassion, respect, and justice as we work together to make a better place.

Our principles and the sources from which this living tradition are drawn may be found on the back of your bulletin. If you have not already done so, please silence your cell phones.

Tonight's order of service is in your bulletin, as well as information about upcoming events and future services. Our website is also a great resource, and you can find that address on the front page of the bulletin. Now, recite with me the Mission Statement of our Fellowship.

MISSION

Welcomer leads congregation in unison

Our mission is to create a joyful sanctuary for spiritual and intellectual growth, embracing all souls in a nurturing community from which we go forth as activists for social justice and as stewards of the natural world.

Now, let our ritual begin, the celebration of the Winter Solstice.

QUARTER CALLS

Minister, Guide and Quarters enter, identified by sashes, and sweep the circle three times round unfolding deosil.

Spirit of the East, *East*
You are the ruby-throated goddess of the Dawn.
You are the pearl-eyed Persephone of Spring.
We hear your distant air
Singing to us of our future, our unfolding.

Sing it!

We listen to your song.

We listen to your song. *All*

Spirit of the South, *South*
You are the incandescent goddess of the Day.
You are Amaterasu scorching the Summer sky.
We feel your rays of passion
Inspiring us to create, to grow.

Enlighten us!

We shimmer warm and bright.

We shimmer warm and bright. *All*

Spirit of the West,
You are the Autumn-eyed goddess of Twilight.
You are Isis, the Giver of Life.
We taste the waters of your womb,
Healing our hearts and our minds.

West

Enfold us!

We feel your peaceful love.

We feel your peaceful love.

All

Spirit of the North,
You are the obsidian goddess of Night.
You are Hestia, life in the living earth.
In the mighty cold of Winter, you are warm.
Among the splintered ice, you are whole.
Surrounded by raw regrets, you are at peace.
Alone, your feet planted wide,
You knit the dark into a blanket,
And there below, you tend the fire deep within, and persevere.
Hestia, in the warmth of your winter's night,

North

Embrace us!

We will carry on.

We will carry on.

All

Spirit of Life, you dwell here in the Center.
You are the raven goddess in the light of All Time.
You are Gaia, the mighty Mother of All Seasons.
We breathe the breath of your trees;
We absorb the warmth of your sun;
We taste the sweet honey of your rivers;
We wrap your earth around us,
And we are free!

Guide

Gaia, oh Gaia!
With all that is yours,
Surround us!
We stand proudly strong.
We stand proudly strong.

All

Here in the Center
Minister
In the heart of sacred space,
In the timeless moment of transformation,
New life grows from old,
New life grows within old,
New life grows beyond old.

Guide lights center candle

The fire is lit, the circle is cast, our Winter Solstice ritual is begun.
Blessed be!

SING WE NOW WITH HEARTS AS ONE

All

Tune of "Hark the Herald Angels sing"

Sing we now with hearts as one
Glory to the newborn Sun
Shining through the dark of night,
Celebrate the coming Light!
Through the winter's cold it burns
Life through death the Wheel now turns!
Candles and the lighted tree
Celebrate Life's mystery!
Sing we now with hearts as one
Glory to the newborn Sun!

Sing we now with all our might
Glory to the growing light!
Peaceful fields and forests wild
Welcome back the Winter Child!
Now the glowing fire starts!
Joyful hands and peaceful hearts!
Cheer the Yule log as it burns!
Once again the Sun returns!
Sing we now with all our might
Glory to the growing light!

DESCRIPTION OF RITUAL SPACE

Guide

Describes the meaning of the Winter Solstice. Since the harvest feasts, the days have grown shorter and the nights have grown darker until the sun stands still on the circle. The Solstice rituals originally ensured the sun would come back to the people. This night is the rebirth of the Sun. Describe the circle, how this shape provides focus, protection, and a way to interact outside of normal time and space. Explain that we are sending energy into the earth to help

MYSTERY OF THE LABYRINTH

Minister & Guide

Quarters lead congregants through labyrinth while Welcomer slowly recites mantras. Response by all to each line is: "The Light is Reborn"

In the greatest darkness
Out of winter's cold
From our deepest fears

Welcomer

When we most despair
When all seems lost
When the earth lies waste
When animals hide
When the leaves are gone
When the water freezes
When the ground is hard
Shadows are fleeing
Light is returning
Warmth will come again
Summer will be here once more
Plants will grow again
Animals will be seen once more
Green will come again
Life will continue

(I'll add more lines but Welcomer repeats as necessary until all willing congregants pass through labyrinth)

BELLS

Director

Softly, distantly, then triumphantly...

MUSIC SOLO

Father Yule

Ring Out, Wild Bells

A capella, entering suddenly, grandly, loudly as Father Yule.

After last verse, rising softly, distantly, hauntingly...

BELLS

Director

CLOSING THE RITUAL

Minister

Describe the closing of the circle and thank all present.

CLOSING SONG

All

Wassail Song

Tune: "The Wassail Song", English, 17th.cent.

Here we come a-wassailing among the leaves so green,
Here we come a-wand'ring so fair to be seen.
Love and joy come to you, and to you your wassail, too,
And we bless you, and send you a Happy New Year,
And we send you a Happy New Year.

We are not daily beggars that beg from door to door,
But we are neighbors' children whom you have seen before
Love and joy come to you, and to you your wassail, too,
And we bless you, and send you a Happy New Year,
And we send you a Happy New Year.

Good master and good mistress, as you sit beside the fire,
Pray think of us poor children who wander in the mire.
Love and joy come to you, and to you your wassail, too,
And we bless you, and send you a Happy New Year,
And we send you a Happy New Year

We bless the master of this house, likewise the mistress too;
And all the little children that round the table go.
Love and joy come to you, and to you your wassail, too,
And we bless you, and send you A Happy New Year,
And we send you a Happy New Year.

CIRCLE CLOSING

Spirit of Life, dwelling here in the Center.

Guide

Raven goddess in the light of All Time.

We thank you, Gaia,

For giving us all that is yours

We'll stand free and strong.

We'll stand free and strong.

All

Gathering quarter by quarter deosil...

Spirit of the East,

East

Ruby-throated goddess of the Dawn.

We thank you, Persephone,

For your distant unfolding air.

We will listen for your song.

We will listen for your song.

All

Spirit of the South,

South

Incandescent goddess of the Day.

We thank you, Amaterasu,

For your scorching passion

We will shimmer warm and bright.

We will shimmer warm and bright

All

Spirit of the West,

West

Autumn-eyed goddess of Twilight.

We thank you, Isis.

For healing our hearts & minds.

We'll share your peace and love.

We'll share your peace and love.

All

Spirit of the North,
The obsidian goddess of Night.
We thank you, Hestia,
For your close embrace within our special rite.

North

We will carry on.

We will carry on.

All

Quarters, Welcomer, Father Yule, Minister and Guide process around boundary to West then turn deosil to East.

The Circle is open but never broken.

Merry Meet.

Merry Part.

And Merry Meet Again.

Minister and Guide

Welcomer and Father Yule

Quarters

All

Immediately start playing...

POSTLUDE

Music

Deck the Halls

Piano with participation from all