

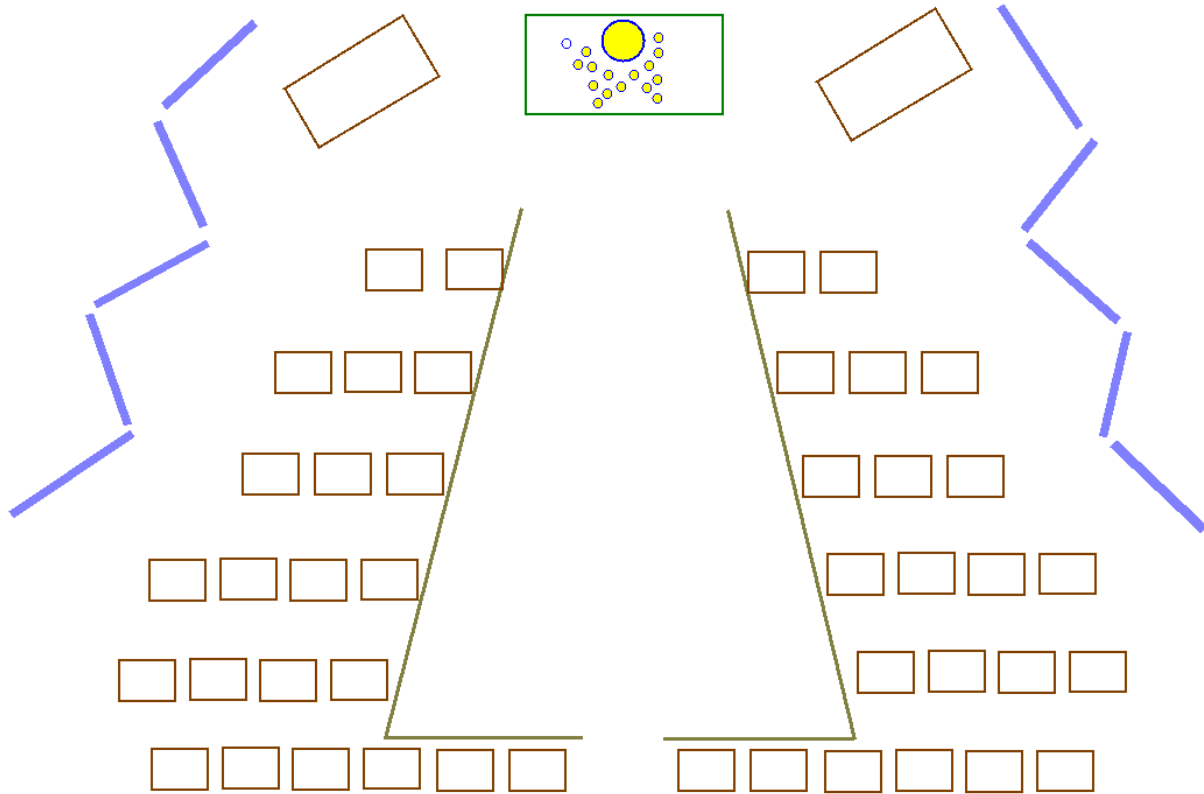
Advent of the Winter Solstice Ritual

December 12, 2010

RITUAL SPACE PREPARATION

All

Set altar with black table cloth in center against mirrored wall, surrounded by candles of various sizes and bundles of reeds instead of shells. Bring bell and two candle snuffers, one on either side of the altar. Set chalice up high surrounded by candles, decorated with holly all about. Set chairs up in a triangle:



PRELUDE MUSIC

The Longest Night

Music Director

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

ASIC Host

On this wonderful morning, may goodwill flow to all of you
From all of us in the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Beaufort.

Unitarian Universalism offers a living tradition
Which affirms, supports and respects
The inherent worth and dignity of each and every person.
We strive with good sense and open hearts to work together,
Making our community and the world... a better place.

If you are new to our fellowship, you've honored us with your presence.
Please take this time to tell us your name and where you're from. [*Invite.*]
On this cold wintry morning, you are warmly welcomed here.

The service today differs from most
As we anticipate the oldest of the sacred days, the Winter Solstice.
Our minister will conduct the ceremony.
Our ASIC Guide will add his Pagan interpretation to our experience.

Two of our customs remain the same this morning.
The offering will take place in the usual manner.
For those who are new, give us only your smiles. You are our guests.
During the Joys & Sorrows, instead of the shells, you will pick up a small
bundle of reeds to take back with you after sharing your delight or concern.
Finally, at the close of the service, remain seated until you hear the chime.

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

DESCRIPTION OF RITUAL SPACE

ASIC Guide

Describe the arrangement, how this provides focus, protection, and a way to interact outside of normal time and space. The triangles remind us of the Christmas tree. The flaming chalice unites members in worship and symbolizes the spirit of our work.

OPENING PRAYER

Minister

Come we now out of the darkness of our unknowing
and the dusk of our dreaming;

Come we now from far places.

Come we now into the twilight of our awakening
and the reflection of our gathering.

Come we now all together.

We bring, unilluminated, our dark caves of doubting;

We seek, unbedazzled, the clear light of understanding.

May the sparks of our joining kindle our resolve,
brighten our spirits, reflect our love,

and unshadow our days.

Come we now; enter the dawning.

Source: 1997 UUMA Worship Materials Collection

OUR MISSION

(Unison reading)

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.

BLESS THIS SPACE

Minister

We purify, cleanse, and bless this space

With this joyous song of Yuletide grace.

Let us sing #235 "Deck the Halls with Boughs of Holly":

ALL SING

Deck the halls with boughs of holly,
Tis the season to be jolly,
Don we now our gay apparel,
Troll the ancient Yule tide carol,

See the blazing Yule before us,
Strike the harp and join the chorus.
Follow me in merry measure,
While I tell of Yule tide treasure,

Fast away the old year passes,
Hail the new, ye lads and lasses,
Sing we joyous, all together,
Heedless of the wind and weather,

THE DIMMING OF LIGHT

Minister

In planning for this Winter Solstice service, we asked acolytes this morning to help us move through the service by dimming each of the candles until only the chalice remains burning by the end of the service. So when they get up to put out a candle at different times during our service please don't be worried by their movement, as they are doing what we have asked.

Acolytes, you may begin now with extinguishing some of the flames.

Acolytes alternate back and forth throughout the service, unobtrusively snuffing a few candles at a time, in a smooth gradual pace, until only the chalice remains burning by the end of the service.



All of these many flickering candles
Represent the sun's winter light,
Slowly they grow dimmer
Until the longest night.

STORY FOR ALL AGES

RE Leader

For our inner selves we can remember that however dark things may seem the sun always comes back, even from the longest darkest night.

I ask our children to come forward.

(While we're singing, Acolytes extinguish more flames.)

ALL SING

O Tannebaum (see insert)

O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
Your branches green delight us.
They are green when summer days are bright;
They are green when winter snow is white.
O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
Your branches green delight us!

O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
You give us so much pleasure!
How oft at Christmas tide the sight,
O green fir tree, gives us delight!
O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
You give us so much pleasure!

O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree
Forever true your color.
Your boughs so green in summertime
Stay bravely green in wintertime.
O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree
Forever true your color.

CONNECTIONS

Minister

(We're all familiar with the calendar. We follow the rituals of banks and schools and government, by paying our bills, studying for tests and paying our taxes. Sometime these important days coincide and when they do, in our haste to rush and satisfy them all we lose not only the sense of time but the importance of time. If we look to the environment around us, we see and feel and hear a different clock. When we listen to the earth, we hear not December, January, Fourth of July. Instead we see patterns of life that communicate to us a seemingly endless cycle of life and death. In the marshes around the sea islands, this cycle is critical to not only the wildlife, but our comfort and our way of living. Look around any edge of the island and you will see the cord grass. These grasses support an abundance of living things, converting the sun's energy into food and structure, and as they die, they feed the shrimp and shellfish harvested in our oceans. We unconsciously connect with this cycle every time we leave and return to the islands, seeing the colors of the reeds glistening green in the summertime, and turning brown as the bundles collect and drift out to sea. Just as we recognize this connection of life to the seasons, we can understand on a higher level our own community's and our own individual connection to the earth.)



.....water, the golden sunsets, the crisp fresh air, the starlit nights. Check your calendar, the earth and all its glory is waiting for you.

(Acolytes extinguish more flames.)

JOYS AND SORROWS

To symbolize our joys and sorrows this morning, we have for you small bundles of reeds from the marsh that found its way next to the shore. I invite you to come forward, share your name and briefly tell us a joy or sorrow that you hold deeply within you, remembering this is not a time for announcements or political opinions. Instead, it's a time where we as a religious community can practice beloved community with each other and for each other. You may take one bundle of reeds from this table back to your seat as a reminder of your sharing it with us today.

May the reeds in these bundles
Give us occasion
To connect with the Divine
Each in our own way
To strengthen our bonds
Of support for each other
And to re-kindle our resolve
To bring about well-being, peace and harmony.
Blessed be.

OFFERTORY

The Holly and the Ivy

Music Director

For all who are willing and able, we will now give and receive our offering.
If you are a guest, we ask that you allow the baskets to pass.

(Acolytes extinguish more flames.)

We join our hearts and minds together in a time of meditation or prayer; spoken, silent, sung, and shared. It is a precious time, and all precious times want preparation, so I invite you to settle yourself in a straight posture, both feet grounded on the floor, to take a deep breath, hold it until you notice your need to breathe out, and relax. I invite you to close your eyes, for vision is the single most energy intensive activity of our brains.

Just focus on yourselves, and where we are right now, at this moment. The days are growing shorter, the nights are lasting longer. These days are special because we feel time slowing down.

Eventually, in all the hustle and bustle, there will come a moment when silence surrounds you. Even nature joins in on your solitude. Everyone and everything feels the cold. And we know, there are times of darkness that we behold within each of us.

When the air is cold and still, it seems our thoughts focus like sharp points of light. We can reach further into our minds with purity, and search for the long forgotten. In this time of darkness, seek through your memories for a special time.

Most of us kindle a favorite Christmas or Kwanzaa memory. Others may hold special a remembrance from Yule or Hanukah. It could be the toy you asked Santa Claus and it was there one special morning. It could be the time you worked all night putting a bicycle together and yet in your weariness, remember the satisfaction you felt seeing your child riding with glee, wobbling away on training wheels. It could be the awakening kiss you shared under mistletoe that awakened nature's warmth within you.

Think back and find that time. Feel the spark of that moment and the broadness of your smile. Let the goodness of that experience fill your soul now. Feel how that little fire, been burning inside of you all these years, positively shaped your face and form that others see. In your mind, cup your hands around memory's delicate flame. As the nights grow long, and time slows down, let your flame shine on the people and the land around you and see the rhythm of light and dark and love.

Now it is time for you to slowly come back into our community, each one of us holding a spark of that happy moment. Spread your light this winter solstice and retell the story of light's rebirth.

MUSIC

Deep Peace, Bill Douglas, Celtic Twilight, Volume 1

Deep peace of the running waves to you.
Deep peace of the flowing air to you.
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you.
Deep peace of the shining stars to you.

(While music plays, Acolytes extinguish all flames except the chalice.)

CLOSING THE RITUAL

ASIC Guide

As we close our ritual, please remain seated in silence until you hear the sound of the chime.

Spirit of winter rest, help us to enjoy your peace in this quiet place.
Remind us to pause during this season.
Grant us awareness; keep our gratitude fresh each day.
May the songs in our heart be blessings and insights to us and to others
and may compassion always shine forth from the depths of our hearts.

CLOSING WORDS

Call & Response

Congregation

(Minister holds the chalice of light in front of her.)

When the night is dark, and the sun barely glows,
The cycle of life still ebbs and flows.
Through the shortest days, ever so dark,
Within our hearts will remain this spark.

(Minister processes out with the chalice held up high in front of her.)

POSTLUDE

Wassail

Music Director