

# **BETWEEN THE WORLDS: A WICCAN-CHRISTIAN LITURGY**

by

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# Introduction

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The Random House dictionary defines liturgy as:

1. a form of public worship; ritual
2. a collection of formularies for public worship
3. a particular arrangement of services
4. a particular form or type of the Eucharistic service
5. the service of the Eucharist, especially this service (Divine Liturgy) in the Eastern Church.<sup>1</sup>

What's interesting about these definitions of liturgy is that they do not restrict the word to any one religion. The first three definitions speak only of form, content, and arrangement in public ritual. I would also argue that liturgy, extrapolating from these basic definitions, is the set of basic ritual and traditions for a given religion. For example, the Anglican Book of Common Prayer reflects centuries of tradition in its pages. The BCP features content from the beginning of the Protestant movement. It also contains rituals that have changed over time. It is a mutable document that can be changed when the Anglican Communion decides on a need for change.

Liturgies are not new to Wicca. Since Wicca's beginnings, it is traditional to keep a Book of Shadows (or liturgy) and pass it down from teacher to student. Sometimes there is

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<sup>1</sup> "Dictionary.com," accessed August 8, 2013, <http://dictionary.reference.com/cite.html?qh=liturgy&ia=luna>.

a main Book of Shadows from a particular tradition that is copied by the student by hand.

In other traditions the Book of Shadows of the coven leader is dictated to the student. In still others, the tradition is purely oral: nothing, or very little, of the liturgy is written down, or the student must create their own Book of Shadows for their own use. Initially, all these Books were kept secret within the tradition or coven; in the last 30-plus years, authors have published the rituals from Books of Shadows of several traditions and lineages. The first publishers were met with controversy in the Wiccan community. Janet and Stewart Farrar (the elders of my own tradition) received a lot of negativity for publishing the Alexandrian liturgy and theology; however, they believed that it was the right time for the information to come "into the light." As they have mentioned in several interviews and in a book, witchcraft is an evolving religion and making the traditions public spurs that evolution on.

Many other authors have contributed to bringing witchcraft rituals into the public sphere over the years; it would take a whole book to list them all. The commonality among them, however, is that many authors would shy away from calling their texts liturgies since the word "liturgy," even though it does have a non-religious definition, carries Christian connotations.

Herein lies one difficulty of creating a Wiccan-Christian liturgy: the idea that Wicca and Christianity, as religions, are completely incompatible. While I concede that certain denominations of both Christianity *and* Wicca cannot work together because of extreme ideological differences, there are nonetheless denominations and theologies of Christianity

that can, and do, work within a witchcraft framework. In my opinion, the problem is not really one of theology: it is one of history.

Christianity has a rocky history (at best), but this does not mean that its basic teachings should be dismissed out of hand, as other Pagan scholars suggest<sup>2</sup>. Pagan traditions that use Greek and Roman deities have the same problem: the cultures that these deities come from are violent and have their own history of abuse; such abuse is even written into their mythology (the Greco-Roman deities were not exactly written as paragons of virtue). Wicca is not, as some Pagans tend to see it, the historical and polar opposite of Christianity. Wicca's history, and thus the history of most modern witchcraft in the Western world, stems from Judeo-Christian mysticism that was preserved by groups such as The Order of the Golden Dawn and the Freemasons. To be fair, many offshoots of Wicca have evolved into traditions that look much different from Gerald Gardner's original work, but the basic ritual elements are still recognizable. Many of these groups, particularly Women's Circles of the Z. Budapest Dianic lineage, claim that there is absolutely no connection to Christianity whatsoever. This is historically inaccurate. In studying rituals used as the basis of Wicca, it is clear that both Christian and Jewish mysticism were the foundation of the rituals. Gardner took the complicated rituals of the Golden Dawn, which were based in Judeo-Christian mysticism, and simplified them. Gardner also added Celtic lore for deity instead of the Egyptian and Christian deity-forms.<sup>3</sup> The ritual history that

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<sup>2</sup> "Why You Can't Worship Jesus Christ and Be Pagan," *Patheos.com*, accessed August 8, 2013, <http://www.patheos.com/pagan/why-you-cant-worship-jesus-christ-and-be-pagan-03-20-2013.html>. Sam Webster is an alumnus of Star King School for the Ministry.

<sup>3</sup> See Attachment A: A Brief History of Modern Witchcraft

Gardner used makes it seem, to me, that Wicca is perfectly compatible with Christian mysticism; indeed, it has likely *preserved* Christian mysticism.

Another way to approach the combination of Wicca and Christianity is through the lens of metafaith. Metafaith<sup>4</sup> is a concept that applies mathematical logic to belief and religion. The underlying foundation of metafaith is the idea that all axioms, or beliefs, are true, and that truth is always dependent on our point of view.<sup>5</sup> In short, this allows for interfaith interaction without members of a particular religion (or people of no religion) losing their sense of identity, or negating another person's beliefs.<sup>6</sup> A seeker not only has permission to learn about more than one religious path at a time, but they also have the permission to go and experience different religious practices, and, if they wish, permission to believe in more than one faith path, or more than one truth, at a time.<sup>7</sup> In most of the more progressive Christian denominations this is not actively *discouraged* (particularly if the other religious practice one is going to see is another Abrahamic faith or some flavor of Buddhism), but multi-faith practice is not actively *encouraged*, either. However, viewing another spiritual practice, or even practicing some parts of another practice in addition to one's own, does not negate an individual's spiritual beliefs. In fact, it may even strengthen them.

It is important to note that the while the metafaith model allows for exploration, it also allows for people to believe that Yahweh *is* the one true God and that Jesus is their Lord and Savior. In my own reflections on what it means to be a Wiccan-Christian, the

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<sup>4</sup> Sarah Thompson, *Metafaith*, First (Cupertino, CA: Circle of Cerridwen Press, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Thompson, p 1-9

<sup>6</sup> Thompson, p 29-32

<sup>7</sup> Thompson, p 33-34

metafaith model allowed me to accept that there are some aspects of witchcraft that do not overlap with Christianity (particularly in other denominations), and that some beliefs in Christianity did not overlap with Wicca. This is particularly important for clergy to remember because, while using this material may be interesting to the priest, it may not be of interest to the rest of the community. Acknowledging the diversity of the people being served and respecting their beliefs is a major step in healing for those who have had negative and violent religious experiences (or what some people call church burn). It also helps to ensure that more wounding does not take place.

I think, most importantly, this liturgy is a starting point for inter-religious communication and education. I hope that this liturgy builds a bridge between Christianity and Wicca in order to heal the rift between them. Many Christians do not have an understanding of Wicca; they fear it as demonic or "of the Devil." Conversely, many Wiccans (and Pagans in general) have understandable anger toward, and fear of, Christianity particularly because of Christian sects that resist dialogue and preach hatred. While both traditions have their own extremists (such as the Westboro Baptist Church and Z Budapest's Dianic tradition), many people of faith sit in the middle and want to have the discussions to create understanding. I hope that this liturgy can be one of the tools to create that understanding.

### **Word Forms and Pronoun Usage**

Words with spiritual associations attached to them in context, by Wiccan convention, are capitalized. This includes sacraments, elements, deity names, and pronouns

associated with a particular deity. For example, when referring to Jesus in context, the pronouns He-Him-His are capitalized since they refer directly to Jesus. Unless a specific deity is mentioned, deity is referred to as “God/dess” and it is up to the priest and the persons whom they serve to decide what is appropriate in any specific ritual.

In all other cases where pronouns are needed, they-them are used as gender-neutral pronouns. When performing rituals for individuals, it is best for the priest to ask which pronouns the person or persons prefer. This is particularly important for people who are transgender, genderqueer, or gender variant in any way.

I use “priest” to refer to clergy of either gender, and use it interchangeably with “minister.” While some traditions believe that a priest is not the same as a minister, I would argue that the job description is the same. Clergy are also referred to with gender-neutral pronouns.

## **Organization of The Liturgy**

In studying the types of rituals that make up a Christian liturgy, it became apparent to me that the rituals fall into particular elemental associations. It seems fitting, from both lenses, to organize this liturgy by classical element: Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and Spirit. Most people will recognize these elements, and most Wiccans will be familiar with at least some of the associations that I give to them. However, the associations that I use are more power- and gender-neutral than the traditional assignments. The associations used were created by Sarah Thompson of the Circle of Cerridwen (which is the Wiccan coven I founded with

her in 2009) and are derived from the poem "The Sword."<sup>8</sup> For this liturgy, the rituals fall into the following elemental categories, which are explained in more detail in their respective sections:

*Earth:* The cardinal direction of Earth is the North. It is associated with the practicalities of life. The rituals in this section include practical rituals of the human life cycle: birth, coming of age, menstruation, gender transition, marriage, crowning, endings, beginnings, and death.

*Air:* The cardinal direction of Air is the East. It is associated with craft and intellect. The rituals in this section include personal practice and study: magick, studying the Bible, prayer, meditation, daily devotional reading, and other personal practices.

*Fire:* The cardinal direction of Fire is the South. It is associated with community work, leadership, and evangelism. This includes ritual and work done for the benefit of others: ministry, social justice work, advocacy, preaching, prophecy, spirit work, healing, and other service and leadership activities.

*Water:* The cardinal direction of Water is the West. It is associated with dedication and purification. The rituals in this section include heart-centered dedications to the spiritual path: baptism, ordination into formal ministerial standing, and other rituals of purification and initiation.

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<sup>8</sup> See [http://cerridwen.st4r.org/wiki/index.php/Frequently\\_Asked\\_Questions](http://cerridwen.st4r.org/wiki/index.php/Frequently_Asked_Questions) about The Sword and the directional associations.



*Spirit*: The direction of Spirit is the Center; it is the intersection of all elements.

While Spirit is associated with many things (which I discuss later), here it refers primarily to Mystery and the community that creates and supports Mystery. The main ritual that pulls everything together here is the Eucharist. It is a combined mystery that not only confirms the intention of the community, but requires the thought, dedication, work, and spirit to bring the mystery of Earthly elements into something that inspires community cohesiveness.

The ritual scripts and outlines in this liturgy are suggestions: they are not set in stone. Witchcraft tends to be mutable, and this liturgy reflects that mutability. While many of the words and forms are familiar to both Christians and Wiccans, the idea that they must be used in a specific way is not. For some, particular words must be present for Baptism and the Eucharist to be "real." For others, this is not the case. Under the metafaith model, all rituals *are* "real" and, as long as the intent is there, all rituals can have similar impact. Another reason to view this liturgy as *suggestive* rather than as *prescriptive* is that the rituals should avoid stagnation. Religions can, and should, evolve through time. Tradition is good and helps to create stability, but clinging to traditions with no room for change can kill the mystery of ritual, creating boredom and a sense of obligation instead of full spiritual participation.

## The Liturgical Year

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The Liturgical Year for both Wiccans and Christians is usually very busy. The Wiccan Wheel of the Year is divided into eight holidays: Yule, Imbolg, Ostara, Beltane, Litha, Lammas, Mabon, and Samhain. Christianity has many feasts and holy days, with Christmas and Easter being the most important. The holidays I describe here are the most well known of both, and with possibilities of how the holidays can fit with each other. However, it is up to the Wiccan-Christian group to decide which holidays are to be celebrated by the group.

### **Winter Holidays: Yule (around December 21) and Christmas (December 25)**

Yule, or Winter Solstice, and Christmas have a linked history. One theory of the calendar position of Christmas is that it coincides with the polytheistic solstice rituals of the ancient world.<sup>9</sup> Both holidays also have lore that focuses the practitioners on rebirth and new life. Christmas is the birth of Jesus or abstractly, the light of faith (as in John 1:9).<sup>10</sup> Yule is the rebirth of the Sun, the Sun being thought of as the physical sun (the days getting longer), or as the birth of the young God (in most Wiccan lore this is the male consort God of the Goddess who is born, lives, and dies throughout the Wheel of the Year). Both Wiccans and Christians share many of the current trappings of the season, such as the tree, candles, holly, and sacred birth, and the more secular trappings of Santa Claus, stockings, and presents.

The Christian Advent<sup>11</sup> season, however, is one part of the Christmas season that can be adapted by Wiccans. The name “advent” is an Anglicization of the Latin word

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<sup>9</sup> Paul F Bradshaw, *Early Christian Worship : a Basic Introduction to Ideas and Practice* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1996), 86–87.

<sup>10</sup> “The Holy Bible, New International Version,” *BibleGateway.com*, n.d., <http://www.biblegateway.com>.

<sup>11</sup> For this liturgy, I refer specifically to the western church calendar for both Advent and Easter. Eastern churches have different customs and groups are encouraged to study both eastern and African church customs in addition to western.

*adventus* meaning “coming”.<sup>12</sup> Advent occurs on the four Sundays prior to Christmas, and each of its Sundays has a focus in relation to waiting for the birth of Jesus: hope, preparation, joy, and love. Advent is used a time of reflection on the coming of Jesus, and what Jesus represents to the individual. It is also a time of self-reflection and preparation during the busy holiday season. The meditative practices found in Advent can work well for both Yule and Christmas.

**Spring Holidays: Lent (40 days before Easter), Imbolg (February 2), Ostara (around March 21), Easter (the Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox),<sup>13</sup> and Beltane (May 1)**

The spring holidays in the Wiccan calendar are typically about new growth and procreative heterosexual sex. Older Wiccan lore, especially Gardner’s and Sander’s rituals, were quite hetero-normative.<sup>14</sup> These original hetero-normative rituals are often uncomfortable for those who are differently gendered, and many groups have now changed the focus of the spring holidays to reflect this. Many pagans do not observe the first spring holiday, Imbolg, because it is just after all the major Winter holidays and some people are still recovering from the busy-ness of the Christmas/Yule season. This holiday typically does not carry sexual connotations; it is a storytelling and music holiday in honor of

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<sup>12</sup> “Advent,” *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*, August 2, 2013, <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Advent&oldid=557642895>.

<sup>13</sup> Episcopal Church in Scotland, *The Book of Common Prayer* ([S.l.]: Pacific Pub., 2010), 5. It is also important to note that the Eastern churches calculate the time of Easter based on the Julian calendar. In this liturgy I am assuming a western reckoning of Easter, however that does not mean that the Eastern calendar cannot be used is a group so desired.

<sup>14</sup> See: Janet Farrar et al., *A Witches’ Bible : the Compleat Witches’ Handbook* (London: Robert Hale, 1984). This book was written in the late 70s, and the core of the rituals and imagery are very hetero-normative. Janet and Stewart Farrar eventually began the process of becoming more gender inclusive in the 80s. In an email conversation I had with Janet Farrar (who is one of my Wiccan tradition’s elders), she mentioned that when they abandoned the hetero-normative ritual structure, they came under a lot of fire for it (later 80s). While many British Traditional Witchcraft traditions (Gardnerian and Alexandrian lines) still use the hetero-normative rituals, there are many traditions that have (or are starting to) de-gendered, or mutli-gendered their rituals.

Brigit.<sup>15</sup> Beltane is the most well known holiday of the Spring and it has been the hardest to adapt for gender fluidity because of the original lore about the sexual union of God and Goddess. An interpretation I use is that Beltane celebrates *eros* (within *any* kind of interpersonal relationship) and the creative principle.<sup>16</sup> Celebration of Beltane is ultimately up to the consensus of the group, as is the interpretation.

The spring holiday of Ostara (or Spring Equinox) is historically the closest holiday to Easter, and shares some of the same themes of new life and rebirth. The new life brought forth at the Equinox signals the real awakening of the Earth from the “death” of Winter. Some Wiccans, for simplicity’s sake in explaining the holiday to non-Wiccans, will say that Ostara is the same as Easter, or that Easter is the co-opting of another pagan ritual. I do not believe that this is the case. While there are shared themes, Easter is – especially in the context of Holy Week – wholly its own experience.

However, the practical ritual connotations of Ostara do match the Lenten season. Lent symbolizes of the 40-day fast of Jesus in the wilderness, and it was used in early Christianity as a period for new converts to do penance for their sins before being admitted into the Christian community.<sup>17</sup> In modern times, most people give up something that they like, or a bad habit, in order to prepare for Easter. In many Wiccan Ostara rituals, there is a symbolic planting of a seed or blessing of actual seeds before they are planted. In my coven, we decorate hardboiled eggs with symbols and words of what we would like to bring into

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. See the Farrar’s section on the holidays for a more complete explanation of Imbolg.

<sup>16</sup> The “creative principle” here refers to the witchcraft lore about the creation of the Universe. The story tells of the Goddess looking into the curved blackness of space and seeing Herself. She falls in love with Herself, makes love to Herself, and in the ecstasy that follows, the Universe is created. In other words, it is the ecstasy that drives creation of any kind. A nice version of this myth can be found in: Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance: a Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess* ([San Francisco]: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999), 41–42.

<sup>17</sup> Bradshaw, *Early Christian Worship*, 89–90.

our lives; we then ritually charge<sup>18</sup> the eggs and eat them.<sup>19</sup> Since Ostara usually happens around the middle of the Lenten season, a Wiccan-Christian who observes a Lenten fast could bolster their work with an Ostara ritual of this type.

Easter itself is a complicated holiday. Its violent imagery can be triggering for people who have survived traumatic events. Others may not believe in the salvific or sacrificial aspects of the Easter narrative. Some, like myself, view Easter as a holiday to reflect on the suffering of the world and our role in it. The death and rebirth imagery is close to the imagery of Samhain: death is the entrance into the next world, and while we can understand and peek into death from this side, we cannot fully know what it is all about. Jesus, in this context, conquers the fear of death by showing us that there is life after death and God/dess will not abandon us. It is also important to note that many Christians view the Crucifixion in what is seen as a “traditional” way: Jesus died for our sins, and his blood washes away the sins of everyone in the world.<sup>20</sup>

From a metafaith lens, all of these interpretations are correct. I recommend that the group decide the way Easter and Holy Week are celebrated, and that the group even consider *not* doing their own rituals and instead attend an outside church that has services that reflect their interpretation of what Easter means to them. Allowing for the idea that people can find ways to get their needs met outside of the group can help keep the group

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<sup>18</sup> Ritually charging an object, in this case the egg means that the object is prayed and/or chanted over in ritual space.

<sup>19</sup> We have also written things we would like to give up or change on small pieces of paper and then burned them along with the egg ritual, but this is not always done. I believe that this practice would also be beneficial at the start of the Lenten fast.

<sup>20</sup> Another way for a Wiccan (or other magickal practitioners) to think about the Crucifixion is to consider it a blood sacrifice that Jesus did to either bolster the spiritual spread of His message of love, or for the redemption of the human race. This deals with more esoteric understandings of the nature of magick. While this might interest those who have more esoteric leanings, the discussion of this type of magick is outside the scope of this liturgy.

from being divided theologically. This does not mean that a group should not do their own Easter celebration if they so choose, but it can help a group meet their needs if a consensus on how to celebrate Easter cannot be reached.

### **Autumn Holidays: Mabon (around September 21) and Samhain (October 31)**

Autumn harvest festivals are common in many cultures; the traditional autumn holidays reflect this focus. Wicca follows the British harvest festival cycle, starting with Lammas in August and concluding with Samhain<sup>21</sup>. The most significant holidays are Mabon (Autumnal Equinox) and Samhain. These two holidays fill the time between Easter and Advent quite neatly and complete the Wiccan Christian liturgical year.

Mabon is celebrated on the Autumnal Equinox and is sometimes also called Witches' Thanksgiving. It is a major feast day where there is a meal to give thanks for family, friends, and community. The dinner is blessed, and offerings of food are given to the Earth. This meal can be seen as similar to what Paul Bradshaw writes about in *Early Christian Worship* as the early "agape or fellowship meal."<sup>22</sup> This early practice was separate from the actual Eucharistic ritual and, according to Bradshaw, it was short-lived, possibly because of what Paul chides the Corinthians for in 1 Corinthians.<sup>23,24</sup> While Paul sternly tells people to eat at home before coming to worship, the idea of a community meal was something practiced even by Jesus. In my own practice, I bake a special loaf of bread that we all break and take some of before the meal. While this does not necessarily need to be an actual Eucharist, it

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<sup>21</sup> Samhain is derived ultimately from the Old Irish Goidelic language. It is pronounced "sow-when."

<sup>22</sup> Bradshaw, *Early Christian Worship*, 41-42.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>24</sup> "The Holy Bible, New International Version." 1 Cor 11:17-22

can include the Eucharist if the group so desires. (I discuss more about the Eucharist in the Rituals of Spirit section.)

As Easter is a wholly Christian holiday, Samhain is a wholly Wiccan holiday with roots in ancient Celtic lore. Samhain is the time when Wiccans celebrate and talk with the Beloved Dead and the Ancestors. To a certain degree, it is also a communal wake and funeral for those who have died during the year.<sup>25</sup> While Christianity does have times where Death as a concept is talked about (with Easter being the most prominent holiday for that), it does not have a specific holiday for communal mourning, and communion with those who have gone before. Other religions, including Judaism, do have times for remembering the Beloved Dead, but it seems that Christianity has left aside collective mourning behind. Other traditions and cultures, such as Lucumi and Yoruba, both African traditions, practice similar holidays at the same time of year<sup>26</sup>, as well as the Mexican Day of the Dead

In my experience, Samhain has been very moving to all who have come to the rituals I have given. The most common meditation we use during Samhain is the “Isle of Apples” where the participant is guided to the underworld over an underground ocean and led to an island where they may commune with those who have gone before. Even for people who do not believe in talking with the dead, the act of publically talking about loved ones who have died is extremely cathartic. It continues with a potluck or feast afterward (or before,

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<sup>25</sup> Samhain is the end and the beginning of the Wiccan liturgical year. The liturgical year is thought of as a wheel that technically has no real beginning or end.

<sup>26</sup> According to a Lucumi/Yoruba priest I asked, November 17 is the feast day for St. Lazarus and the specific day to honor the dead, but also that these traditions are Ancestor traditions that honor the dead every day, not just on a specific feast day. While many Wiccans also practice in this way, the biggest “show” of Ancestor worship is on Samhain.

depending on scheduling needs), where participants can also talk about their loved ones.

Being able to mourn in community is something that, particularly in the West, is not regularly practiced offered; Samhain provides an opportunity to do just that.



# Rituals of Earth

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As mentioned earlier, the rituals in this section deal with the practical rituals of life. These are the rituals that deal with the passage of a person through the stages of life: birth, adulthood, old age, and death. But these rituals also deal with major life decisions and the trials of the physical world. Most of these rituals can transcend Wiccan or Christian elements, since many of them have secular conventions, or are highly personalized rituals that will be unique for the person (or persons) that the ritual is being performed for. This allows for a great deal of flexibility in what content is included.

A note about music and chanting: I will not typically suggest any particular music for rituals, as it is typically something that can be decided by clergy or ritual participants. There will be some places where I will suggest that some music or chant be used, but mostly that is because it would be a point where music can be effectively used to maintain sacred space.

## Birth

The birth of a baby is a momentous event. The acknowledgement of the child by a person's spiritual community is important to most parents,<sup>27</sup> as is the choosing of God/dess parents who are meant to be people who are to be part of the child's life, particularly spiritually. The ritual for the blessing of the baby can be varied, depending on the wishes of

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<sup>27</sup> I will use parents for simplicity, but this also means any legal guardian such as grandparents, adoptive parents, aunts, uncles, or other legally recognized guardian.

the parents. It can also be used as a naming ceremony. Whether it is an actual Baptism is also up to the parents.<sup>28</sup>

The circle is opened in the usual way<sup>29</sup>, with God/dess, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and any other deities being called in to assist with the blessing. The infant is presented to each element in turn:

**Priest:** [Name], I present you to the powers of Air that you might receive wisdom.

[Name], I present you to the powers of Fire that you may find your passions in life.

[Name], I present you to the powers of Water that you may be true to yourself and your emotions.

[Name], I present you to the powers of Earth that you may know the greater Mysteries.

The infant is then brought to the center to be presented to and blessed by the deities. Clergy alone can do this, or other members of the community can bless the child in the name of a particular deity. An anointing may be done here, as well, if the parents wish it. Any readings may be read or music may also be played after the blessing.

The godparent(s) may just be acknowledged at this time, or they can take some sort of vow that is agreed on between the parents and the godparent(s). This is dependent on the role that the parents want the godparent(s) to play in the child's life. One example can be the following:

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<sup>28</sup> I do not present infant baptism here as I consider Baptism an initiation into a spiritual path, which, I believe, should be chosen freely by the person in question. As an infant cannot decide for itself whether or not they wish to become a Wiccan-Christian, the Baptismal sacrament is reserved for older children and adults. However, I do leave the option for infant Baptism open here, as it might be important for some parents either because they wish it, or to maintain family harmony with relatives who would not necessarily understand the Wiccan elements of the ritual.

<sup>29</sup> See Appendix B.

**Priest:** Do you, as the godparent(s), promise to be a friend to [Name], and mentor [Name] in spiritual matters until they are old enough to choose the spiritual path they wish to pursue?

**Godparent(s):** I (we) do.

The godparent(s) can also light candles to symbolically represent being the light of knowledge for the child. Then the circle is closed in the usual way.

### Coming of Age Rituals

Coming of age rituals for teenagers and young adults vary widely by culture and tradition. Both Wicca and Christianity are difficult to reconcile in terms of what exactly it means to come “of age” in their respective traditions. Christianity has Confirmation, which, according to the Book of Common Prayer, can either be a renewal of infant Baptismal vows, or an examination of the child’s (or adult’s) knowledge of doctrine.<sup>30</sup> Wicca, on the other hand, have very little in the way of coming of age rituals for children, as many Wiccan groups refused to admit anyone under the age of eighteen in order to protect themselves from accusations of Satanism or child abuse. However, as Wicca and its offshoot traditions have grown and aged, more and more children are growing up in Pagan households and parents are looking to create rituals for them. Women-only witchcraft circles that have blood (menstrual) mysteries as part of their primary doctrine, have celebrated menarche of cis-gendered girls in their circles for many years.<sup>31</sup> However, other rituals for boys, girls, and gender variant children are few and far between.

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<sup>30</sup> Episcopal Church in Scotland, *The Book of Common Prayer*, 116–117.

<sup>31</sup> Z. Budapest’s Dianic witchcraft tradition is one example.

One possibility is to have a coming of age in community ritual, where the teenager or young adult has full voting rights in community. This is not to say that children have no say in the group until they have this ritual, but the ritual can mark a time when the community commits to vest the child with responsibility and informs the child that they are free to choose whether to stay in the group or leave to explore other religions. It is also the time where they can choose whether they wish to be Baptized or not. Another possibility, which I have seen at churches such as City of Refuge UCC, is that when young adults come of legal age (18) or become parents, the adults of the community publically acknowledge and bless them as such, and then pledge to be mentors to them as they come into their adult lives. Regardless of which type of rituals that the community decides to do, there should be rituals that include all genders and the teenager or young adult should be involved in the planning so that it has the most meaning for them.

### **Rituals for Transgendered Adults**

There are many traditions (including some Pagan traditions) that do not have rituals for transgendered or other-gendered persons. Some transgender persons may not wish to mark their transition at all, others may wish to have a ritual or rituals to mark different stages of transition, or their name change. Being able to have these rituals in a loving spiritual community can be extremely healing for a transgender person, and knowing that they have community support to be who they are can literally be life saving. It is extremely important for those in the community to know that these services can be created for them, but it is also extremely important for the transgendered person to have control over the content and scope of the ritual. Some may want only friends to be around, some may just want a small, private blessing with clergy, and some may want a huge

celebration with a party. In all cases, it is up to the transgendered person to decide what they would like to do.

For transgender or variant gendered children and young adults, it is up to the parents and child to decide if they wish to do anything ritually in community for the child's transition. Again, as with adults, it should be up to the child or young adult and their parents to decide.

### Marriage Rituals

A multitude of books describe marriage rituals, and all of them can describe the types of basic marriage formats in great detail so I do not have a written ritual here. Wiccans tend to do handfastings,<sup>32</sup> which typically are the basic marriage ceremony with extra elements such as using a cord to tie the couple's hands together or jumping over a broom. There are also many books on how to create handfastings, which also describe the ceremonies in great detail. With some exceptions, the differences are mostly cosmetic. Obtaining a marriage license is dependent on the laws of city, state, and country, and clergy should consult with local authorities on what is required, depending on the level of legal recognition requested by those who are becoming married.

One major exception is that many Wiccan groups perform handfastings for polyamorous groups. Polyamory is consensual non-monogamy in which all of the members of the group (mostly triads and quartets in the context of handfastings) have consented to be in this type of relationship. This type of relationship usually comes with similar types of drama that same-gender-loving relationships do in terms of family misunderstandings and

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<sup>32</sup> "Handfasting (Neopaganism)," *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*, August 7, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Handfasting\\_\(Neopaganism\)&oldid=565889875](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Handfasting_(Neopaganism)&oldid=565889875).

negativity. As with any monogamous couple, clergy should meet with the group, get to know their relationship structure and needs, and form the ritual accordingly. Polyamorous marriages, like polygamy, are not legally recognized, although two of the group may decide to become legally married for their various reasons.

One other exception is that in a handfasting, and particularly among polyamorous groups, the persons getting married may decide to end the declaration of marriage with “For as long as the love shall last,” instead of “until death do us part.” For some, stating it this way breaks the “one true love” paradigm that is prevalent in western (especially American) society. For others, this is a more pragmatic way to describe the relationship, and can allow for a more amicable dissolution of the marriage. The group or couple may also opt to have a handfasting for a certain length of time, and then have a legal marriage ceremony after that length of time has passed. Again, this is for persons involved to decide, with the help of clergy if they choose.

### **Divorce or Relationship Ending Rituals**

While there are many rituals for marriage, there are rarely rituals for the ending of relationships. I have found that those who create a ritual of separation of some sort are usually able to cope with the change a bit easier than if they do nothing to mark the change at all. This also includes relationships other than marriage. These rituals can be highly personal, and clergy should work closely with the person or persons involved to create a ritual that it is healing and empowering, not vindictive.

## **Croning Rituals**

Croning, or becoming an Elder, is also not celebrated in Western society as much as it should be. In Women's Spirituality circles (the traditions of which are primarily cis-gendered), becoming a Crone is usually marked when a cis-gendered woman has reached menopause. In other traditions, it is marked when a person reaches about 50 (or older). It is up to the person to decide how their ritual is to be performed, or, if there are a group of Elders in the community who wish to create a ritual for this purpose, they can decide what this ritual is to be.

## **Dying, Death, and Funeral Rites**

Death is always a complicated time for families and friends of the deceased. It is made especially difficult when there are family, legal, or religious issues that get in the way of the grieving process. Death crosses all boundaries, and if a funeral or memorial service can be had where all of the deceased's family and friends can grieve together, it can be very healing. This is not always the case, particularly for those who are estranged from their families of origin.<sup>33</sup> If the person who has passed was able to create a will that spells out their wishes clearly, it can go a long way to help family and friends cope after their passing, and help those who are doing the funerary arrangements better fulfill their wishes.

Funerals, wakes, memorial services, and deathbed rituals should always be done with the dying person's wishes in mind. Clergy should see to it that these rituals are kept peaceful and respectful, even if it necessitates assigning one or more people to stand as guardians of the ritual space. While appointing guardians for a ritual may sound strange to

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<sup>33</sup> This can be especially true in the LGBTQI community, and for people who have left extremely strict religious families/denominations.

some people, from my experience, having people to watch over the participants can actually be a comfort to those who are grieving. Being and having a healing and compassionate presence can keep things as calm as possible.

The other aspect to keep in mind about death rituals is that, unlike what the funeral industry tells consumers, there are no legal requirements to be embalmed (with some exceptions<sup>34</sup>), nor does a cremation have to be done in a crematorium. In fact, with the proper permits from the fire department, family and friends can perform the cremation themselves if they wish.<sup>35</sup> While a good funeral home can be an asset to family and friends, it is not required by law to use their services if the dying person does not wish it.

As mentioned earlier, Samhain is also a time to mourn those who have passed in the previous year, and to be able to share that grief in community. Over the years, I have seen that Samhain is especially important for those who lose family or friends that they are not able to see before they pass, or for some reason, attend the funeral or memorial service. It has also been healing for those who have lost beloved pets. Samhain rituals vary by tradition, but the collective mourning aspect of the rituals is always the same. There are many excellent books on death and dying rituals that are too numerous to mention here, but can offer excellent advice to both clergy and laity.

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<sup>34</sup> "Embalming: What You Should Know.," *Funeral Consumers Alliance*, accessed August 10, 2013, <http://www.funerals.org/frequently-asked-questions/48-what-you-should-know-about-embalming>.

<sup>35</sup> See: Starhawk and Reclaiming Collective (San Francisco, Calif.), *The Pagan Book of Living and Dying: Practical Rituals, Prayers, Blessings, and Meditations on Crossing Over*, 1st ed (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997). P173-187 for an excellent description of how to do a cremation ritual without going through a funeral home.



# Rituals of Air

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Air is the element of the mind, specifically dealing with the intellect and practice. While some of these practices are not necessarily rituals as most people would think, they are practices that can help one get through their day, or a difficult time, or can be done just as a way of giving thanks. Some of what will be described here can be done with groups; however, much of it is more about one's personal practice.

## Prayer

Prayer is a complicated subject, mostly because prayer comes in so many forms. There are the little prayers everyday that one says to find the right parking place, or that the next business meeting will not be as boring as the last one. There are the silent prayers that are said when one is ill or dying, or the prayers of thanks when a loved one avoids getting hurt or in trouble. There are the formal prayers that are said in worship, such as the Our Father, or saying the rosary. There is intercessory prayer where the prayer giver brings down the Holy Spirit to intercede for another person. Some people may think that the examples I have given are not really a prayer, but I believe that any appeal to deity is a prayer.

I would also argue that prayer is always a magickal act: one is asking the Universe (or God/dess) to intercede on your behalf, or on behalf of someone else. Magick<sup>36</sup>, from the occult point of view, is any act that moves energy or spirit in a particular way for a particular outcome. Prayer, as a regular practice, can have a calming, grounding effect. If you are ill, or are having other difficulties, knowing that others are praying for you can get

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<sup>36</sup> I use this spelling of magick to distinguish the occult spiritual magick from stage "magic".

you through that time knowing you have community support. Regardless of what a person thinks prayer is, prayer is a powerful tool.<sup>37</sup>

## **Meditation**

Meditation, like prayer, takes on many forms. Many people mistakenly think that meditation is complicated to learn and that one needs to go learn how to do it properly from a guru or some other type of teacher. However, meditation can be simply sitting quietly in a room for five minutes. Prayer can accompany it, or one can do a meditative prayer practice such as using prayer beads. Learning a formal meditative practice such as Zen Buddhist meditation can be beneficial for some people, but it may not work for everyone's personal practice. Some people even do repetitive crafts such as crochet or knitting as a form of meditation.

Guided meditation is a useful tool if someone needs to do personal spiritual work around a particular subject. It is a form of self-hypnosis, and there are many recorded and written guided meditations for this purpose. In Wiccan circles, guided meditation is also used as a way to contact Spirits or Deity, as well as for the purpose of doing magick. Guided meditation done for magickal purposes is best done with others, as it can be physically and emotionally draining to the point where community support is necessary.

## **Bible Study**

Bible study serves two functions: first, as an academic exercise to know what the Bible says and to learn its history. Second, to find the parts of the Bible that speak to one's

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<sup>37</sup> There have been a few scientific studies done on prayer and it's effects. While the scientific results are inconclusive, many people consider prayer, particularly intercessory prayer, a powerful healing tool. See: "Studies on Intercessory Prayer," *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*, July 28, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Studies\\_on\\_intercessory\\_prayer&oldid=565095687](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Studies_on_intercessory_prayer&oldid=565095687).

soul. To be clear, I am writing this from a progressive view of the Bible: that the Bible is not the *literal* Word of God, but an inspired book written by men of a certain era. This does not mean, however, that the Bible should be dismissed or deemed unimportant. Nor should someone's belief that *it is* the Word of God be dismissed as a false belief (and under metafaith it is allowed to exist as such). In some ways, one can think of it as a "Book of Shadows" (or maybe a badly edited Wiki<sup>38</sup>) from a time where most history was oral and very few people could actually read. The focus of history in the ancient world at the time of Jesus was more on the person and their actions rather than what we think of as history in the modern era.<sup>39</sup>

Despite its history, the words of the Bible can be very powerful and inspiring, particularly when practiced as a form of meditation, such as in Lectio Divina.<sup>40</sup> It is also useful to study what is written with others in order to heal from parts of the Bible that are used as a means of oppression. No matter your view on what the words are, the Bible is worthy of study because there is much of the Bible that has great beauty and can inspire.

### **Altar Building**

There are many cultures and traditions that encourage the building of altars. Wiccans tend to have lots of tools that necessitate having an altar to store them all. Altars can serve many other functions, however. An altar can be a focal point for meditation. It can be where one has statuary for, and makes offerings to, particular deities. It can be very elaborate, or as simple as a candle and a Cross on top of a desk. In the Samhain season, one

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<sup>38</sup> My wife, Sarah Thompson, gets the credit for the idea of the Bible as a Wiki.

<sup>39</sup> "Christ In Context: 'Zealot' Explores The Life Of Jesus : NPR," *NPR.org*, accessed August 11, 2013, <http://www.npr.org/2013/07/15/198040928/christ-in-context-zealot-explores-the-life-of-jesus>.

<sup>40</sup> "How to Practice Lectio Divina," accessed August 11, 2013, <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Catholic/2000/08/How-To-Practice-Lectio-Divina.aspx>.

can put pictures of their ancestors on an altar to honor them. While having an altar is not a requirement, and sometimes not practical because of space limitations, it can be a nice way to have a visible reminder of the sacred.

### **Magickal Workings**

We have already discussed particular types of magickal workings in previous sections. There are other types of workings such as making talismans, herb lore, and other magickal arts that are too numerous to cover here. I would also argue that these types of magickal workings are outside the scope of regular worship, While some could be used as a daily practice, some may not overlap with Christian spirituality. This, however, is up to the individual to decide. There are many books and websites that talk about magick, and, especially for some of the darker aspects of magick, I recommend that a person find a reputable teacher. It is important to note that while these practices are accepted as part of what a Wiccan-Christian could practice, it is not a requirement for a person to learn them in order to be a Wiccan-Christian.

### **Vows, Monasticism, and other forms of Religious Life**

Sometimes, a person may feel called to a more religious way of life than just going to church once a week, or that they wish to live in religious community. Some others may want to live as a religious hermit, or join some sort of order. Still others may not be able to give up their current life, but would still like to live in such a way that provides a monastic feel. If one feels called to join an order, they should research to find which one is appropriate. There are no specific Wiccan monasteries, but there are groups, such as the Radical Faeries, who have sanctuaries where one can live a monastic life in community.

Each order or group has their own rules for membership, and it is up to the individual to decide if their call is strong enough for them to undergo this radical change.

It is also possible to do monastic type practices in the short term through taking vows of silence, or celibacy, or any other type of vow. The season of Lent can be considered a monastic period because of its fasting aspects. Sometimes a deity might even request a period of time to do a particular practice or give up a certain thing in one's life. These vows are also not to be entered into lightly as they, too, can be a radical change, even if they are not so radical as putting oneself outside of modern life. In both cases, discussing one's call with trusted friends or mentors, asking for prayer, and help from the community can be highly beneficial. Ultimately, however, the final choice is up to each person and should be respected.

# Rituals of Fire

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The rituals of Fire are the public spiritual workings that are done in the name of Ministry. While both Wicca and Protestant Christianity have an idea of the “Priesthood of all Believers”, public ministry is very much dependent on a person’s abilities and sense of call. Not everyone aspires to, or should, do public ministry. Neither should anyone be belittled for only being able to do small acts of ministry, or for not wanting to do any public ministry at all.

For those who wish to do public ministry, the work can be difficult and rewarding. What is listed in this section does not entirely encompass all of what ministry is, but are some of the major types of public ministry done. For some aspects of ministry, there are equivalents in both Wicca and Christianity that have different names. I will define these as appropriate.

Some sort of outward work is necessary for any community to avoid becoming isolated from the rest of the world. There are many Wiccan groups who fall into this category. This isolation, I believe, can contribute to the misunderstanding and fear around occult practices by others.

## Preaching

In the west, preaching is primarily a Christian phenomenon. Most Wiccan circles do not use preaching. Some may have conversations in circle about the working, but there are typically no formalized speeches. Sometimes in public Wiccan rituals there is a short poem or chant performed, but preaching is generally not done. To some degree, this can be

attributed to some groups wanting to distance themselves as much as possible from the trappings of Christianity. However, I think that it is a tool that can be effectively used in a Wiccan-Christian setting because a well-done sermon can make people think, raise Spirit, inspire, and teach. There are many resources for preaching (including classes) and it is up to the community to decide on the form that will work best for their group.

### **Working with Spirit and Prophecy**

Spirit working can be complicated, particularly because some people do not believe that this type of working is real. Or, if they do believe it is real, the Spirits are not creatures that mortals need to work with, or the Holy Spirit is some trick of the mind. Some denominations of Christianity have a passive idea of the connection to Spirit, while some denominations have very public displays of Spirit work. Wicca does vary from tradition to tradition, but basically, Wicca is closest to Pentecostal worship than any of the other western Christian traditions.

Here, however, is where vocabulary becomes an issue. In Wicca (and most other pagan traditions), being “filled with the Holy Spirit” is called possession or invocation, as in; the Spirit, in order for that Spirit to talk to other people or do some other action, possesses you and takes over your body. This is regardless of who or what the Spirit in question is. In Christian worship, it is usually the Holy Spirit. In Wicca, it can be any Spirit (deity, angel, ancestor, etc.) that one is working with. Possession, in the Christian sense, is what Wiccans would specifically call “Demon Possession,” or possibly the sign that a curse is affecting someone. Interestingly, the interventions can be quite similar: prayer, calling of another

(usually bigger) Spirit to intervene, holy water, salt, rituals of protection, and laying on of hands.

The other aspect of this work that is similar is prophecy, or oracle work, as it can be called in Wicca. This typically happens in conjunction with Spirit possession, but it can also happen as part of preaching or other Spirit work. Prophecy deals with talking about the future with information from Spirit, Spirit talking through a person, or being moved by Spirit to create or do something. However one enters this state, it can be very powerful for those who receive the messages. It is very important for the people who practice this type of Spirit work to have self care practices, both spiritual and physical, that helps to ground them and ensure that they are safe when they do it, as this work can be very difficult and draining in it's more extreme forms. It should be noted that it is up to the priest on whether they share the information or not, and to recognize that not all information obtained in this way can be helpful for someone to hear.

## Healing

There are many ways of healing in any spiritual practice, and several have been mentioned previously in conjunction with other aspects of this liturgy. Prayer, laying on of hands, energy work, and other forms of healing work can heal on all levels: spiritual, emotional, and physical. Other healing methods, such as acupuncture, also combine medicine and spirit work. There are many books and websites dedicated to this type of healing, so I will not go into great detail here. I will suggest that these methods be used in addition to regular medical care, and that people get advice from reputable practitioners.



### **Social Justice, Advocacy, and Mission Work**

Social justice, advocacy, and mission work, done in order to help others and not proselytize, can be extremely rewarding. Sometimes it can even take a person around the world. There are many groups and organizations that do this type of work. Individuals, or the whole community, can decide to take on a project or service. There should be discernment about what type of work the individual or community would like to do, and would be able to do, keeping in mind any limitations or time constraints.

# Rituals of Water

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Water is the source of emotion and spiritual wisdom. While some of these rituals could fall into other elemental sections, I have grouped these here because they are rituals of personal spiritual dedication. They are rituals that require for someone to decide, of their own free will, to do as a publically witnessed profession of faith and dedication.

I also consider these initiations. In Wicca, a person, after some discernment and training, will undergo a formal initiation. Some traditions even have multiple initiations (sometimes called Degrees<sup>41</sup>) corresponding to different levels of spiritual work and skill. Early Christianity shared a similar type of initiatory practice in the sacrament of Baptism, which was even more formalized than it is today.<sup>42</sup> While I do not think it is necessary for a Wiccan-Christian group to have a formal degree system, I do think that returning the practice of Baptism to being an initiatory mystery allows for a person to deepen their faith and connection to God/dess and Jesus. The other important part about these rituals is that they are optional: a person does not need to be Baptized in order to receive the Eucharist, nor does one have to be a member of the community to attend worship, nor must anyone believe in a particular way to undergo these rites. These are rituals that are between the person and deity, with help and witness from clergy and community.

## Community Membership

As mentioned in the Earth section, community membership can be part of a coming of age ritual for children, but it can also be a personal dedication to work within the

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<sup>41</sup> "Library - Cerridwen," *Circle of Cerridwen Wiki*, sec. Initiation, accessed August 14, 2013, <http://cerridwen.st4r.org/wiki/index.php/Library>.

<sup>42</sup> Bradshaw, *Early Christian Worship*, 2-3.

community and be supportive of it. Whether this is formalized or not is up to the community. One of the simplest is the Altar Call, where the presiding clergy calls to anyone who is not a member to come and become a member in front of the church. This is, in fact, what City of Refuge UCC (and many evangelical protestant churches) do. The person is then given information about the church community and gives their information to the clergy to be added to any communications. While simple in execution, it allows the community to welcome them publically, offer any help and prayers, and see to it that they are given the information they need. What is important, however, is to also have some way for people who would not like to do this in a public fashion to be able to get the same information. Stating that clergy are available after the service to talk to anyone who would like to know more can be a way of doing this.

## Baptism

There is no doubt that Baptism, especially when done by choice as an adult, is a very powerful ritual. So much so, that the early Christian community used it as the initiation into the early *ekklesia*, or church.<sup>43</sup> And, according to Paul Bradshaw, author of *Early Christian Worship*, it even came with a period of instruction in what Christianity is.<sup>44</sup> Historically, it is the only real ritual that is known as initiation into the early church, and it is not known whether there was any other ritual after that.<sup>45</sup> It is more than just a ritual to profess faith; it is a ritual that connects a person to the spirit of the church, or, what we call in the occult world, the egregore of the tradition. An egregore is not just the lineage of a tradition, but also it's spirit, it's traditions, and the memory of the spirits of those who have believed in

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 5–6.

that tradition through time. In one sense, Christianity's egregore could be the *koinonia*: the shared spirit of community that has existed since Jesus came to Earth.<sup>46</sup> It could also be considered the Gift of the Holy Spirit: it is the spirit that "bestows upon all baptized persons the anointing and the promise of the Holy Spirit, marks them with a seal, and implants in their hearts the first installment of their inheritance as sons and daughters of God."<sup>47</sup> Fundamentally, it is the end of a person's old life, and the beginning of the new life that, if they so choose, follows the teachings of Jesus Christ.<sup>48</sup>

In the Wiccan tradition that I come from, this type of dedication is similar to the Second Degree ritual.<sup>49</sup> All initiations have a death and rebirth theme to them, and this one is no exception. But instead of an immersion in water, the connection to the egregore is done through the laying on of hands (which can also be included in some Baptisms). In both initiations, the person getting initiated takes a vow that they are willing to be connected to this spirit, and that they recognize the responsibilities to themselves and to others once they have the connection. Primarily to use their new lives and knowledge for the good of others and for their own personal growth.<sup>50</sup> It is also a very public way of saying "I am following this path now!" It can also be metaphorical rebirth as a new self: in Wicca, a Second Degree candidate takes on a new witch name. A person being Baptized may also take on a new name to go with their new spiritual selves. This can be exceptionally

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<sup>46</sup> "Koinonia," *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*, July 25, 2013, <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Koinonia&oldid=565677057>.

<sup>47</sup> *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper no. 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), 2.

<sup>48</sup> Episcopal Church in Scotland, *The Book of Common Prayer*, 111-113.

<sup>49</sup> "2nd Degree Initiation - Cerridwen," accessed August 16, 2013, [http://cerridwen.st4r.org/wiki/index.php/2nd\\_Degree\\_Initiation](http://cerridwen.st4r.org/wiki/index.php/2nd_Degree_Initiation).

<sup>50</sup> *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, 3-4.

powerful for transgendered persons, especially if they had been Baptized earlier in life under their former name.

The one aspect of Baptism that is the most important, and the aspect that could be healing for Wiccans wanting to reconnect with Christianity, is that the act of Baptism connects the one being Baptized to the human life of Jesus.<sup>51</sup> In Romans 6, Paul stresses that if one knows what it is like for Jesus to have died, one will also know some of what it felt like when Jesus was resurrected.<sup>52</sup> The person has lived their life to the moment of Baptism, then symbolically dies in the immersion in or pouring of water, and is reborn in when coming out of the water. Jesus and the Holy Spirit are experienced on a visceral level.

A Wiccan-Christian Baptism can start out with a regular circle casting (as in Appendix B), and the calling in of Jesus, God/dess, and the Holy Spirit. The person being Baptized could, by Christian tradition, wear white as a symbol of the purification aspect of the Baptismal ritual. If there is a pool (or lake, or river, or stream), the person wades into the water with the priest. Other members of the community, if the person wishes, can help with the actual immersion. Alternatively, water can be poured over the head three times.<sup>53</sup> The logistics of how the physical Baptism is performed depends on when and where it is done. The community should also be aware of all state and local laws when doing the Baptism in a public place.

At this point, the ritual proper becomes a matter of a set of decisions by the person getting Baptized. What does this Baptism mean to them? How do they see their connection

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 2. And "The Holy Bible, New International Version," n. Romans 6:3-5.

<sup>52</sup> "The Holy Bible, New International Version," n. Romans 6:5-11.

<sup>53</sup> Bradshaw, *Early Christian Worship*, 8.

to Christ in the ritual? What words does the person want clergy to use in performing the Baptism? The ultimate answers to these questions are up to the person wishing to be Baptized,<sup>54</sup> but they can also be questions for the community to answer. Does the community want particular words of institution (the words that confirm the Baptism) for their group? When and where do they want to do Baptisms? What does Baptism mean in respect to being a part of a larger community? From a metafaith standpoint, the individual and the community must decide this. There are many interpretations of what Baptism is and is not, and while the common denominators are the connection to Jesus Christ and to the community of believers (present and past), what that means to both the individual and the community is a true Mystery of Spirit and should be treated as such.

### Ordination

In essence, Ordination is a vow to Spirit to do the Fire work of Ministry. While it is up to the community to decide what kind of work and education they expect from ordained clergy, the vow itself is a decision between God/dess and the priest seeking Ordination. It is also a vow you make to your community that you are willing to be a teacher and a priest: someone that they can call on to help them get through difficult times, to find spiritual meaning, and to help celebrate the major joys of life. Each religion, and their various denominations and traditions, treat ordination differently. For the Wiccan-Christian, it can be difficult. There are no laws (in most states in the US, outside of the US may vary) that give any legal standing to who is ordained or not. However, it is recommended that clergy educate themselves, and check with local laws about clerical responsibilities in regards to

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<sup>54</sup>The answers to these types of questions are what I would also expect from a Second Degree candidate in my Wiccan coven. Even if they understand what Second Degree is about, there needs to be thought about *why* they wish to go through it, no matter how much the rest of the coven thinks that they deserve it. Ultimately, it comes around again to Free Will.

abuse and neglect reporting. There are many examples of Ordination rituals, although, the ritual itself can be tailored to the person being Ordained.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>See: Episcopal Church in Scotland, *The Book of Common Prayer*, 197–207. And: “Library - Cerridwen.” - 3rd Degree Initiation for examples of Ordination rituals.

# Rituals of Spirit

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Spirit is the center. Spirit is the combination of all the Elements. It is also the combination of all the people, Spirits, and deities that make up a community. The community is the heart of any spiritual tradition and is only as strong as the people that shape and nurture it. What I have learned between my church experiences and my Wiccan coven experiences is that no one can exist without the support of a community to validate the spiritual experiences one is going through. In the previous sections, it should be noted that much of the ritual aspect of the liturgy is not written out in script form. This is because how the rituals are performed, the music and language that is used, the place, and the timing are all up to the collective will of the community.

Over the centuries, there have been many ways that groups of people have dealt with living in the greater human community. Some became exclusive, or tried to eliminate that which is not desirable according to a particular set of beliefs. There are some traditions that have codified ways of living in community (such as Buddhism and Benedictine monasteries), and some that try to resist any types of rules at all (such as Discordian, or Chaos magicians). All communities, however, create rituals and traditions that help keep the community cohesive, and give a framework of how to deal life outside of it.



One ritual that brings Wicca and Christianity together is that of the sacred meal: Cakes and Wine<sup>56</sup> in Wicca, and the Eucharist in Christianity. They are both familiar to each other, yet distinctly different. Cakes and Wine is used in Wicca partly as a way to nourish the coveners after a working, as an offering to the Spirits, and a way to show love and care for each other.<sup>57</sup> It also is a way to remember and honor the fact that the food and drink we consume come from the Earth, and is a sacrifice of the life of the plants and animals that were used to make the meal.<sup>58</sup> In other groups, an entire meal can be made and blessed in honor of a particular deity. The meal is then shared in order to connect with that particular deity, or to receive that deity's blessing.

The Eucharist is not dissimilar from these practices. In some ways it is reminiscent of the temple experiences (Jewish or otherwise) that the members of the early Christian church were already familiar with.<sup>59</sup> While we have seen previously that the ancient Christians shared an actual meal within the community, the Eucharist eventually became a special, and specific, tradition in Christian worship to memorialize the last meal, and last days, of Jesus Christ (also called *anamnesis*).<sup>60</sup> But, it is much more than just a memorial meal to remember Jesus. It is also a magickal act.

Identifying the Eucharist as a magickal act will be controversial for some people. There is no question that the Eucharist is a special sacred meal to honor Jesus Christ, but

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<sup>56</sup> I use "wine" here and in talking about the Eucharist, but it can be substituted for juice or other libation if those in recovery are present.

<sup>57</sup> Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance*, 184.

<sup>58</sup> One of the more common ways in my coven that we bless the food and drink is to say: "Blessed be the fruit of the field. Blessed be the fruit of the vine." Although, this can get very creative (and quite silly) depending on the food and drink used. Also, we generally do not use alcoholic beverages in order to respect those who are in recovery.

<sup>59</sup> Allen Cabaniss, "Liturgy-Making Factors in Primitive Christianity," *The Journal of Religion* 23, no. 1 (January 1943): 43.

<sup>60</sup> *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, 11.

the act of blessing the bread and wine and giving it the properties of either the body of Christ or the properties of a meal blessed by Jesus through the hands of the priest is an act of evocation. Evocation, in it's most simple definition, means to "call forth" or, in the occult sense, to call a spirit forth into an object.<sup>61</sup> In this case, the Spirit of Jesus Christ is called into the bread and wine as His Body and Blood, or as a meal blessed by Jesus. It is then shared among the community as a way to take in the essence and blessings of Jesus Christ in order to be changed spiritually. Whether one sees this in a redemptive way, or salvific, or as transubstantiation, the intent of the ritual is the same: we are to be changed for the better by taking in the whole of Jesus' presence and His teachings, and the love and intent of the God/dess and Holy Spirit behind it all. From an occult perspective, this is more than just bringing in Spirit for the blessing;<sup>62</sup> it is a transformation of the self through the ritual of bread and wine. While it can include prayers for protection,<sup>63</sup> and for other aspects of belief, the main magickal act is the transformation of the self through taking in the essence of Christ.

As James F. White states in his essay "A Protestant Worship Manifesto" there is a "need to recover the Eucharist as the chief Sunday service."<sup>64</sup> He is right that that needs to be restored, but there is also a need to recover an understanding of the magickal intent of the ritual itself. What does the priest presiding intend with the evocation of Jesus into the bread and wine, and what does the individual believe is happening to the elements and to themselves when they accept communion? Also, how will this manifest through the

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<sup>61</sup> "The Definition of Evoke," *Dictionary.com*, accessed August 17, 2013, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/evoke>.

<sup>62</sup> Or epiclesis.

<sup>63</sup> William R. Crockett, *Eucharist, Symbol of Transformation* (New York: Pueblo Pub. Co, 1989), 54–55.

<sup>64</sup> "A Protestant Worship Manifesto," 6, accessed August 17, 2013, <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1278>.

individual into the greater world? These are questions that are at once very personal and very important, and can only be answered by individuals, or collectively in community.

An important aspect of the Eucharist that also needs to be thought about is the fact that people come into spiritual space with the bodies they live in. In other words, you may have people who, due to the way food is viewed in the West, are afraid of the bread and wine. There will be people who are in recovery, or are children of addicts, for whom wine can be an emotional trigger. There will be people who have suffered abuse, or have been raped. There will be people with disabilities, both visible and invisible.<sup>65</sup> This needs to be taken into consideration where the Eucharist is concerned: how can everyone be included in communion when they are broken?

One way that I have used to accomplish this is to offer an alternative in addition to the bread and wine. In some rituals that I have performed I have created anointing oil that was blessed at the same time, with the same intent, as the bread and juice (there were people in recovery present). Before the blessing, I explained to those present that they could have bread and juice, get anointed, or do both. This proved to be very powerful for many people. Partly because they had the ability to choose what made them feel the most comfortable, but also that the priests giving the ritual took the time to think about the people they are serving in the totality of their existence.

The rituals of Spirit acknowledge the whole of the community. This takes a lot of work on the part of individuals and it takes time for people to come to understand how to

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<sup>65</sup> Andrea Bieler and Luise Schottroff, *The Eucharist: Bodies, Bread, & Resurrection* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 133-134.

live, work, and grow together. It is also important to be welcoming and sincerely wanting people to come experience the Wiccan Christian rituals. Do the people in the community smile and say "Hello"? Do they talk to newcomers as if they are talking to the people who have been there for years? Are people of all identities (sexual, gender, theological, age, etc.) welcome to come and experience what the community has to offer and become members if they wish to? Are people who decide to leave in order to walk another spiritual path treated with respect and given a blessing from the community? Can the community cope with all the normal aspects of "family" life: anger, sadness, loss, grief, disease, joy, accomplishment, and change? What rituals define the community? The answers to these questions brings the people together in such a way that they feel supported in their individual spiritual growth.

## Afterword

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This liturgy has several purposes for several audiences: first, this liturgy is for Wiccans in general: it provides Wiccans with Christian leanings a framework for embracing Christian ritual elements with no condemnation from either religion; there are very few books or online resources for those who are called to pursue this syncretic spiritual path.<sup>66</sup> Second, this liturgy is for Christians in general: it can open up alternative understandings of their own religion. Third, this liturgy is for Christian clergy: it provides pastors, priests, and ministers alternate versions of the sacraments for congregations that wish to embrace such an alternative liturgy.

There are some specific doctrines of both religions that I have chosen not to interpret here. This was on purpose. Metafaith, as described earlier, allows for each person to hold their own beliefs as true, and that all persons' beliefs can exist at the same time. There are many issues of doctrine that are up to individuals to decide for themselves what to believe. I think this is especially true of the concepts of sin and salvation. Wiccans will have very different interpretations on these concepts, especially if they have different views than what mainstream Christianity holds or they have had significant negative experiences with particular doctrines.

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<sup>66</sup> One of the only published books I've found that is explicitly Wiccan-Christian is: Nancy Chandler Pittman, *Christian Wicca: The Trinitarian Tradition* ([Bloomington, In.]: 1stBooks, 2003). This book uses older, more gendered forms of Wicca and classical imagery in its Christian elements. There are other books that explore the intersection between Paganism and Christianity, but are not liturgies.

Ultimately, I hope that this liturgy helps people to know that, while there are differences between Wicca and Christianity, there is enough commonality to show that we are all seeking the same thing: to know God/dess to the best of our abilities and to be good, compassionate people.

And if you would know God be not  
therefore a solver of riddles.

Rather, look about you and you shall  
see Him playing with your children.

And look into space; you shall see Him  
walking in the cloud, outstretching His arms  
in the lightning and descending in the rain.

You shall see Him smiling in the  
flowers, then rising and waving His hands in  
trees.

-- Kahlil Gibran from "The Prophet"<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet* (Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Publishing, 2011).

# Appendices

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## Appendix A

### Open Source Alexandrian Witchcraft: A Brief History and Reflection.

Originally Written September 26, 2011

The umbrella of paganism, is a very large one, encompassing many different faith traditions and several versions of each tradition. The same can be said of the multitude of traditions that are considered Wiccan. What follows is brief history of the tradition that I was initiated in, and a description of and the reasons why my partner and I decided to modify this tradition. This is certainly not an overview of all British Traditional Witchcraft, nor do I claim speak for all traditions that come from Alexandrian roots. Even in the pagan community, my views are considered odd, especially in regards to interfaith workings, and in some British Traditional Witchcraft circles, I would be considered a heretic.

In the 1960s Alex Sanders began teaching and initiating people into his offshoot of Gardnerian Wicca (Farrar 3-9). It was more eclectic than Gardner's version, using occult practices from many different traditions and brought witchcraft more into the public sphere. Sanders claimed that being public about witchcraft "clears away the fog of misunderstanding, and at least the tip of the iceberg should be plainly and accurately visible to all and sundry if they want to see it." (Farrar 6) His initiates, Janet and Stewart Farrar, took this idea even further by publishing fairly thorough books about witchcraft (*The Witches' Way* and *Eight Sabbats for Witches*, which are now in a compilation called *The Witches' Bible*). The influence of Gardner and Sanders in the neo-pagan movement is still prevalent today, though the groups that came after have evolved into many varied traditions and organizations.

When I began examining the Alexandrian tradition, specifically as Sanders originally practiced it, I found two major problems. First, is the idea that gender determines what magic is possible, or what role one has in a coven (which includes the fact that witches of Sander's time refused to initiate queer people). Considering that the early witchcraft rituals were based on Celtic fertility lore, this isn't surprising. The spring rituals, in particular, revolved around sexual intercourse, and since homosexuality was, especially in Gardner's time, largely condemned by society and other religious communities, witchcraft was seen as impossible for those who were different. Attitudes around this have changed considerably, starting in the 1980s when the Farrars dared to initiate a gay couple into their coven. They still had ideas about polarity in magical workings (specifically cisgendered male/female pairings), but in time realized that their queer

coven members had a better handle on their own internal masculine and feminine energies (out of necessity) than their straight coveners.<sup>68</sup>

The coven I was first initiated into in 1998 was run by a gay man who had adapted many of the Alexandrian rituals to accommodate queer people, and he did not follow the traditional ideas of energetic polarity (i.e. working in cisgendered male/female pairs). He was heavily influenced by his Native American heritage and by "The Spiral Dance" by pagan author Starhawk, both of which he used to create a more open form of the tradition. Unfortunately, his work was incomplete, as some of the ritual and lore he used remained hetero-centric, and, from what I remember, he had no interest in changing the tradition further.

Second was the tradition of secrecy that most Wiccans who are initiated into covens still cling to. According to lore, it was during the "Burning Times," referring to the Witch Hunts of the Middle Ages through approximately the mid 1800s, that it was necessary for covens to keep their practices secret in order to survive (Starhawk 30-31). Many pagans will claim this as truth, even though current research does not support it. Covens will insist that they have specific secrets for their particular tradition that have been passed down from coven to coven, and, while this may be true, most, if not all of these "secrets" can now be found on the internet using a simple Google search. Even in the first coven I was in, my coven leader insisted that our rituals and traditions were to be kept secret, yet all of what was practiced could be found on the internet and in books.

When I left my original coven at the end of 2003 (under negative circumstances), I dropped out of the pagan community for several years, thinking that I probably wouldn't work in the framework of a coven again. However, in 2009, I had gotten to a place emotionally and spiritually where I felt the call, and the need, to begin practicing witchcraft again. In the spring of 2010, my partner and I began the groundwork for what we call Open Source Alexandrian Witchcraft, based on the open source software model. Some of this was a response to the two problems noted above, but it was also a response to what both of us felt was wrong with some of the other witchcraft traditions and practitioners we had experience with. The idea was to create a tradition that not only was radically inclusive, but also completely open and transparent about its rituals and practices. This not only clears the fog, as Sanders put it, but it also opens up all of what we do for public consumption and scrutiny. Unlike most other Wicca-based traditions, we refuse to be insular and ignore the rest of the world that we live in. We are also not afraid to take responsibility for the work we do. This doesn't mean we do not hold our practices sacred, and we do maintain privacy, as deep spiritual workings can be very personal, but the tools and rituals we use are made public.

Our founding principles sum up a great deal of how my tradition is currently practiced (from our website, <http://cerridwen.st4r.org>):

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<sup>68</sup> The history of the Farrars and gay coven members was related to me in an email from Janet Farrar on March 28, 2011.



- Our [degree structure](#) is based on Sanders' original version as reported in Farrar, *What Witches Do*, and Farrar & Farrar, *A Witches Bible*, with some clarifications and modernization.
- It is a fundamental founding principle of our line that magickal polarity is *unrelated to gender*. Our rituals are not gender specific, nor are separate roles ascribed to a High Priest or High Priestess. People of any and all genders, and none, are welcome.
- We regard sexual preference as entirely irrelevant to one's ability to practice magick.
- We have no secrets. All of our rituals, where practical, are published for the benefit of all, regardless of their initiatory degree or lack thereof. We have no oath bound material.
- We honor all gods, and no gods. There are no gods that are specific to our line, nor do we preclude working with gods, spirits, angels or daemons from any other tradition.
- We do not, and shall never, charge for [teaching or initiation](#).
- We have no founding myths. The material stands on its own merits, and requires no invented justification or falsified lineage.
- We practice open-source syncretism. Though we have utmost respect for others' privacy and for the integrity of all systems of magick and religion, we operate on the principle that, *if a technique is openly described, it works, and it serves our purpose, we reserve the right to use it and, if we so choose, to teach it.*
- We do not use a prescribed Book of Shadows. All rituals are our rituals. All gods are our gods.

For me, the opening up of my tradition and its radical inclusion feed into my vocation, which has two parts: working with the dying and interfaith work.<sup>69</sup> Both of these require openness and honesty in order for me to be fully effective. In my work with the dying, it will be the honesty about myself that will allow me to be true to those I help, whether I end up ministering to them or not. But being honest about my faith gives those that I am caring for the choice of working with me or finding another minister that will suit their needs. In interfaith dialog, being open about my practices and answering questions helps to lessen the fear associated with Wiccan and occult practices, allowing dialog to happen.

The other part of what my tradition gives me is a supportive community where I am allowed to explore my spirituality and fulfill my vocation. It also challenges me, since I am one of the founders of our particular tradition and coven, which brings many responsibilities with it. I am also free to

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<sup>69</sup> My vocation has changed quite a bit since this was written, although these two aspects of my vocation are still a large part of my calling.

explore my own path, work with any deities that I wish to work with, and get feedback on the work that I am doing. Even though our member's work with divinity in many diverse ways, we are committed to supporting each other, and that, I think, is the most important aspect of any spiritual community.

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## Appendix B

### Sample Wiccan Circle Opening and Closing Format

The following is a modified ritual script based on the script used by the Circle of Cerridwen (Which can be found here, with more detail about circle casting: [http://cerridwen.st4r.org/wiki/index.php/Casting\\_The\\_Circle](http://cerridwen.st4r.org/wiki/index.php/Casting_The_Circle)). However, it is a basic ritual container, and like all other rituals in this liturgy, open to change. In practice, depending on the person or persons who decide to open the circle, the opening can look wildly different each time the group comes together. I fully expect that in the practice of a Wiccan-Christian group, this opening and closing script will become quite different over time.

“Deosil” is clockwise and “widdershins” is counter-clockwise. Typically, by Wiccan tradition, movement in the circle is deosil unless otherwise noted. This does not necessarily have to be strictly adhered to, and can vary depending on the space used and allotted time.

#### **Banishing**

*(Using broom, staff, or wand, circle once widdershins around the circle saying:)*

All negativity will leave this magickal space!

*(Stop in the North) Be gone, or you will be cast out to the mighty darkness!*

*(Stop in the West) Be gone, or you will be drowned in the watery abyss!*

*(Stop in the South) Be gone, or you will be consumed by the flames!*

*(Stop in the East) Be gone, or you will be tossed by the whirlwinds!*

*(Sometimes this can be completed by shouting, “Be gone!” or you can go right into casting of the circle, or, if using a staff, you can pound it three times in the center of the circle. It’s up to you how you want to end it. Whatever feels right to you. It is also rather fitting, to use a broom/besom to sweep while doing the banishing. Besoms are traditional, but we have seen regular store brooms used with great effect.)*

#### **Casting**

*(Move deosil from this point on. Pick up athame (ritual knife), which should be on the North altar, and circle, starting in the East saying:)*

I conjure thee, o Circle of Art, to be our temple between the worlds, wherefore shall we bless and consecrate thee, So Mote It Be!

*Response: So Mote It Be!*

*(Move to the center, and point athame upwards:)* As above us,

*(point athame to the floor)* So below us

*(Bring athame to heart)* As within,

*(open arms wide)* So without!

*(Move deosil back to the East and sing:)*

Soaring Eagle on the wind

from your lair new visions bring

lift our voices as we sing

enter us powers of the East

*(perform invoking pentacle while singing the last line of each verse)*

Mighty Lion of the sun

burn our hearts and will as one

flaming strength and passion

enter us powers of the South

Ancient Serpent of the deep

in your waters lets us weep

wave your mystery here to sleep

enter us powers of the West

Dark Bull of the Mother Earth

Winter's cave that gives us birth

feed our knowledge of your worth

enter us powers of the North

*(Move to center of circle and kneel, then sing:)*

Hear us! Spirit!

*(Circle back to the east. Pick up the incense and say:)*

By the powers of Air, I/We scent this magickal space.

*(Carry the incense completely around the circle and return it to its place in the East, then move to the South.)*

By the powers of Fire, I/We warm it.

*(Light all the candles in the room, using the lit candle, starting with the candle/altar in the South, returning the candle to the South. The original candle should be used to light any other candles needed for working, since it is representing the power of Fire. If there is a center candle, or cauldron in use, light that as well. Then, move to the West.)*

By the powers of Water, I/we cleanse.

*(Take up the bowl of water and sprinkle water as you go around the circle and return to the West. Then move to the North.)*

By the powers of Earth, we purify.

*(Take up the bowl of salt and sprinkle salt around the circle. If people are naked, and the salt is chunky enough to cause discomfort, then just sprinkle it in each direction as you pass it.)*

### **Calling of the Gods/Goddesses and other Spirits**

Call respective deities as appropriate, or that is necessary for the particular working you wish to do. This is done from the center of the circle. For a Wiccan-Christian ritual, this would usually be Jesus, although calling on Jehovah/Yahweh or the Holy Spirit can also be done.

### **Working**

Whatever working or rituals (such as a Baptism, croning, marriage, etc.) that need to be done are done at this point

### **Eucharist**

The blessing of the bread and wine (or juice), and the sharing of it should be done at this point. It is up to the group to decide how the blessing is to be given, although a free-form blessing from the heart is generally thought of to be the most powerful.

### **Closing**

*(From the center:)*

We thank [Jesus, Jehovah/Yahweh, Holy Spirit, and any other deities called] for their<sup>70</sup> presence here. Go in peace, and blessed be!

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<sup>70</sup> As mentioned earlier, He/She may be used here as appropriate.

*Response:* Blessed be!

*(Pick up the athame from the altar and move to the East, widdershins, and say:)*

We thank the powers of the East (*or Air*) for their presence here tonight. Go in peace, and blessed be!

*Response:* Blessed be!

*(Make the banishing pentacle while you are saying, "Go in peace, and blessed be!" Repeat for North, West, and South.) (Return to the center.)* The circle is open, but it is never broken. For we Merry Meet, Merry Part, and Merry Meet Again. Go in peace, and blessed be!

*(At this point, everyone gives blessings, usually hugs, and says Blessed Be! To each other, and the circle is now closed.)*

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