

## **Leaving of the Ego**

Take a moment, and see your own personal ego. Take it, set it aside, outside our ritual space. Join us all in this space as equals.

## **Opening Meditation**

I invite everyone to close your eyes, and open your ears, your mind, and your spirit. Relax your body... stretch if you need to...and quiet your mind.

Now...breathe slowly and deeply. With each breath, allow all the cares of the mundane world to drift away. With each breath, allow yourself to feel more relaxed. With each breath, feel your thoughts settle and converge until your entire awareness is focused on the sensation of breathing...the feel of the air filling your lungs, the rise and fall of your chest, the sound of your breath as it leaves your body.

You are standing in a field, under the open sky. The sun has just set, and the sky has turned that special blue of twilight. The moon is up, a slender crescent, shining brightly, and the stars are beginning to appear, one by one, as the last light of day fades in the west.

The ground is covered with a light sprinkling of snow, and the air is cold, but now and then, a breeze, strangely warm, brushes against your cheek. The playful breeze caresses your face, lifts your hair and whispers softly in your ear. It carries the scent of warm, damp earth, of new green shoots, of clean, fresh rain. You follow the breeze, as it swirls and drifts, calling you forward.

You are approaching the edge of the woods. Tall trees, their branches bare and sparkling with frost, seem to greet you and beckon you in amongst them. As you walk beneath their sheltering boughs, you feel a deep throbbing beneath your feet, like a heartbeat. The rhythm draws you forward, and you begin to feel the energy of the earth pulsing through you. Your movements begin to match that beat, as you continue walking, until you are almost dancing.

Your friend the breeze has not forgotten you. The playful spirit returns, carrying the scent of wood smoke and fresh baked bread. As you breathe deeply, you can also smell the sweetness of mead and the clean scent of incense burning. You follow the breeze, as you find yourself upon a moonlit path. You continue to follow it, until you see the light of a fire in the distance. Now, the throbbing in the ground has changed into drumbeats, and you can hear a pipe being played and a wordless song being sung.

You emerge from the trees upon a clearing. In the center is a bright bonfire, around which a great celebration is taking place. There are many gathered here. Some appear to be human in form, but some wear fur, and some feathers. Small beings that seem to be made of light fly about the fire like multicolored sparks, laughing and singing.

A hand reaches out towards you, and you grasp it in your own. Suddenly, you are swung into the dance! Your feet move of their own accord, following the rhythm of the drums, the rhythms of the earth. The pipe is louder now, and the stars above you seem to dance and spiral in response to its music. The light of those stars seems to fill you, making you feel light as air and full of fire.

A loaf of bread is passed to you, and you break off a piece and pass it on. It melts on your tongue, and you know that no food has ever tasted this good. The cup makes its way to you, and you drink deep of the sweetest nectar you have ever partaken of. As you pass the cup along, you notice something odd about the fire.

As you have been dancing, you've hardly noticed it, save to appreciate its warmth. Now, you pause in the dance, to stare at the flames, only to see that the other dancers have done the same. The fire burns white-hot at its center, and a figure begins to emerge. You watch her as she steps out of the fire, her shapely form that of a woman made of flame.

She approaches you, the flames of her hair fanning out in all directions. She reaches out with a fiery hand and gently touches your cheek. The flame of her fingers does not burn, but leaves behind a warmth that no cold can take away. As she touches you, visions explode in your mind, filled with wonder and joy.

The fire-maiden travels round the circle, and when she is once again standing before you, she raises her arms, and drifts into the sky, dissolving into a shower of sparks that dance about, then fade into the night.

You suddenly feel tired, and sink to the ground, content to sleep beneath the stars, near the warmth of the fire. You awaken to realize that you are now alone, and the fire has been reduced to ash. As you get up, you see the sun rising beyond the trees. You stretch and move and prepare to face the coming day, filled with energy and purpose. The wind has turned cold, and you wrap your arms around yourself as you prepare to return home. Placing a hand to your cheek, you savor the warmth left by the goddess' touch.

Breathe slowly and deeply and allow the image of the forest to fade. Allow your consciousness to return to the present. Feel the floor beneath you, feel the presence of your brothers and sisters around you. Allow yourself to return to this place, this temple, the beginning of our journey and the end.

Breathe deeply and slowly, and when you are ready, open your eyes.

### **Honoring the Earth Mother**

We gather here today for the celebration of Imbolc. First though, we honor the Earth that we stand upon. Earth Mother, we call to you. You who surrounds and supports us. You who feeds and nourishes us. You who shelters and provides a home to live in. You are why we are here. Without you, we could not survive. Without you, we would not be. Today, we honor you, love you, and respect you. We all will work to make you healthy. Now, as a token of our appreciation, we give you these offerings. Earth Mother, accept our offerings!

### **Statement of Purpose**

Imbolc is a time of reflection and planting the seeds for the upcoming year. Today we celebrate Brighid as it is her day. She is often seen as representing the functions of the tamed fire. This can be the flame of the heart for her children, and the young of the Earth. This can be the fire of the forge where she uses it for creation. It can also be the fire of the spirit used in the healing arts. Today, we are here to honor Brighid. We also are here to ask her to look over us, heal us, and aid us in the coming year. This year we ask her to watch over, protect, and heal the people being persecuted and mistreated by our government, and to bring an end to it.

We are also here to celebrate the groundhog. That furry little marmot is said to be able to predict the coming of spring depending on whether or not it sees its shadow on the second of February. If it sees its shadow, we have 6 more weeks of winter, if it doesn't, we are due for an early spring. It is our tradition to make offerings to the groundhog to ask that the remainder of the winter be kind to us. The groundhog is close to the Earth Mother, and she has a bit of control over this.

## **Recreate the Sacred Center**

*officiant makes offerings during the appropriate sections of the text.*

As we gather here, in the center are our hallows, our sacred center, each with its role in the cosmos.

We start with focusing on the well, our connection to the underworlds This is our way to the Ancestors and all who are found in those realms. To the well, we offer silver. With this offering, we connect our well to all the wells in the world, and making our well `the` well.

We now focus on the fire, our connection the the upper-worlds. This is our way to the Deities and all who are found in those realms. To the fire, we offer incense. With this offering, we connect our fire to all the fires in the world, and making our fire `the` fire.

Finally, we focus on the tree, our pathway between all the worlds. This is our road to travel to the realms of the Deities and the Ancestors, and all beings found outside our realm. We join this tree with the well through the waters of the well. We join this tree with the fire through the smoke of the incense. As we join this tree to the well and fire, our tree becomes `the` tree and our path.

## **Outsiders**

Outsiders! You who stand against our purposes for this rite. You who only wish to cause mischief and harm. You who are beyond the light of our work. We ask you today to not disturb us as we do our work. We recognize you and your role in our lives. If you do not disturb us, we will make you this offering of beer when our rites are over.

## **Purification**

*Officiants will sprinkle the congregation with water and smudge with incense while the following is spoken*

Let us focus on our ritual purity. First, wash away all your cares and worries with the waters from the well. Then perfume yourself with the incense from the fire, tying us all together. As we wash and smudge, see our space become centered and focused. See us all here, gathered as one.

## **Call to the Ancestors**

*Officiant makes offerings of grains or alcohol when indicated.*

Ancestors! We call on all those who have come before us. We call to our relatives, those that have passed throughout the years. We call to our chosen family, the mentors and heroes who walked the path before us. We call to you and we offer to you. Come, join us at our fire! Ancestors, accept our offerings!

## **Call to the Land Spirits**

*Officiant makes offerings of grains when indicated.*

Land Spirits! To all the spirits of the lands around us. To all the animals we see each and every day, domesticated or wild. To all the plants that grow around us, cultivated or not. To all the unseen spirits who live amongst us. We call to you and we offer to you. Come, join us at our fire! Land Spirits, accept our offerings!

## **Call to the Deities**

*Officiant makes offerings of grains or alcohol when indicated.*

Deities! To all the gods and goddesses who we work with on a daily basis and who guide us in our lives. Matron and Patrons, those we work with directly. Those of this place, who we honor as we stand on your lands. Those that are unknown to us, yet watch over us all. We call to you and we offer to you. Come, join us at our fire! Deities, accept our offerings!

## **Call to the Honored Beings**

*Officiant makes offerings of grains or alcohol when indicated.*

## **Groundhog**

Oh mighty groundhog! We call on you today and make offerings to you today to ask that you help bring about a mild end of the winter. Our weather locally has been wild, with temperature swings from seasonable to absolutely arctic. We have received over a foot of snow and now still digging out. We ask you bring the cold we need, but ask that we have a seasonable end of the winter. We invite you to our fire, and ask you join us to celebrate today. Groundhog, Accept our offerings!

## **Brighid**

Lady Brighid! Daughter of the Dagda. You are the matron of the forge. You aid those that work the craft of smithing. You are the matron of the inspired arts, the poets and bards, old and new. You are the matron of the healers and all those that strive to aid the sick and ill. You are the embodiment of the tamed fire through all of these arts.

Brighid, you often come to us in a motherly and nurturing form. We ask that you watch over us as we all go through what will be a time of testing. We ask that you guide us in the forging of the tools we need to survive, and thrive. We ask that you watch over us, and love and nurture us so that we can accomplish what we desire.

We call on you today to watch over those that are being persecuted and mistreated by our government. The highest profile is currently in Minneapolis, but it is happening throughout the country with multiple people killed this year both on the streets and in custody. We ask that you watch over those in need. Protect them, heal them, and guide them to safety. Help bring about a change in actions and policy.

With all that we ask, we do call on you to honor you and remember you for all that you have done and all that you will do.

Lady Brighid! Come to the fire! Accept our offerings!

## **Offerings to Honored Beings**

If anyone has any offerings they wish to make to the honored beings, please come forth and do so now.

## **Shared Meal**

Behold this loaf of bread. With this loaf, we share a meal with Brighid, the Groundhog and the spirits. As we tear this loaf in half, one half goes to them and the other will be shared between ourselves.

*Food is passed around for all to eat*

### **Blessing of the Waters**

We have made our offerings to all of the spirits. We have honored Brigid and the Groundhog. We now call on them to aid us once more, and call to them to bless these waters. Fill them with the powers of their blessings in return for our offerings. Lady Brigid! Mighty Groundhog! Give us the waters! Behold the blessed waters!

*Waters are passed around for all to drink*

### **Thanking the Beings**

#### **Thanking the Honored Beings, Brigid**

Brigid! We have called on you to celebrate you and to ask for your aid and guidance. We have made offerings to you, and you have given blessings in return. For all we have asked of you and all you do for us, Brigid, we thank you.

#### **Thanking the Honored Beings, Groundhog**

Mighty Groundhog! We have called on you to bring about a seasonable end of the winter. We have made offerings to you and we pray that you return the favor. For all you will do for us, Groundhog, we thank you.

### **Thanking the Ancestors**

Ancestors! We have made offerings to you and you have returned the favor. For all you have done for us, Ancestors, we thank you.

### **Thanking the Land Spirits**

Land Spirits! We have made offerings to you and you have returned the favor. For all you have done for us, Land Spirits, we thank you.

### **Thanking the Deities**

Deities! We have made offerings to you and you have returned the favor. For all you have done for us, Deities, we thank you.

### **Acknowledging the Outsiders**

Outsiders! We asked you at the start of the rite that you leave us to work in peace. You have done so. We will honor our end of the bargain and pour you the beer we offered you earlier.

### **Thanking the Earth Mother**

Earth Mother! We have given to you, and we have honored you. You are the reason we are able to survive in this world. For all that you have done for us both today and throughout our days, Earth Mother, we thank you.

**Closing Meditation:**

Now, once again, I invite you to close your eyes, and open your ears, your mind, and your spirit.

Breathe slowly and deeply. Remember the breeze that guided you, your journey through the forest, the dance around the fire, the touch of the goddess. Feel that touch once again, warm against your cheek, filled with loving attention.

Feel the energy that we have raised together. Feel your connection to the earth, to the nature spirits, to our ancestors, to the deities, and to one another.

As you continue to breathe slowly and deeply, embrace those connections. Embrace the energy we have raised in our ritual and allow it to flow through you, restorative and cleansing, a warm glow lighting you from within. Savor that warmth, that soothing sense of wholeness and belonging.

Now, breathing deeply and slowly, release any excess energy, holding within you only that which is comfortable. Allow the rest to be grounded, returning to its source, leaving behind a sense of comfort, of peace, and of renewal.

Breathe deeply and slowly. Be aware once more of the world around you: the sounds, the scents, the sensations. Breathe slowly and deeply, and when you are ready, open your eyes.

And so the rite is finished, go now in wisdom and peace.