

The Sources of Our Faith

Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature

Chalice Lighting

Sharing of Joys and Sorrows

Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support.

Shared Reading:

The living tradition we share draws from many sources:

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
- Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion and the transforming power of love;
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;

- Humanist teaching which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit.
- Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Group Business

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Imbolc/Candlemass Ritual:

Response:

"I light this (describe the important symbol in the candle, if there is one) candle for (name of person). May (one or more of the lights n. has described) be blessed. "

or

"I light this (describe) candle for (name of person). May (one of the "lights" mentioned) grow with the growing light.

Chant: "The Earth, the water, the fire, the air return, return, return, return." (repeat)

Closing Words

This we know. All things are connected like the blood
which unites one family.
All things are connected.
Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons and
daughters of the earth.
We did not weave the web of life; we are merely a
strand in it.
Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves.
attrib. Chief Noah Sleath

Lady of the season's laughter in the Summer's warmth
be near
When the winter follows after, teach our spirits not to
fear.
Hold us in your steady mercy, Lady of the turning
year.

Sister of the evening starlight, in the falling shadows
stay
Here among us, till the far light of tomorrow's
dawning day
Hold us in your steady mercy, Lady of the turning day.

Mother of the generations, in whose love all life is
worth
Everlasting celebration, bring our labors safe to birth.
Hold us in your steady mercy, Lady of the turning
earth.

Goddess of all time's progression, stand with us when
we engage
Hearts and hands to end oppression, writing history's
fairer page.
Hold us in your steady mercy, Lady of the turning age.
Kendyl Gibbons (#51 in the hymnal)

Covenant Groups

Earth Centered Religion



Leaders Guide: Earth Centered Religion

This week the sharing time will be short, because you will need to reserve about 20 minutes for a ceremony. Earth-based religions are primarily ritual-based. It's not enough to talk about it, we need to do it! This ceremony will be a blessing of candles, and everyone is supposed to bring one. You might bring an extra candle in case someone forgets. You will also need a short candle to use as a lighter candle.

One of the readings is a hymn which is familiar to most UU's. If your group likes to sing, you could sing it instead of reading it.

Check in, enjoy some silence, and do the readings (UU 6 Sources, and two readings on back of bulletin). You may want to assign the last two readings.

Remind folks that we'll be dealing with the candles and the lights in our lives during the ritual. Invite sharing about the experience of being out of doors on Feb. 2, about other pagan rituals they might have participated in (Pubelo Dances, perhaps), or about their experience of finding the sacred in nature, or their feelings or beliefs about Mother Earth, the Mother Goddess, or the Earth.

Now, do your group's business. One piece of business you might want to discuss is having your last meeting (in about 6 weeks) at someone's home over a potluck dinner. If your group wants to do this and needs to change your regular meeting date, now is the time to plan. Also mention the potluck March 19th for all groups at 5:00.

The ritual is as follows. Clear the space around your chalice, so that each person can put their candle around the chalice. (But don't do it yet)

Say this:

We've been talking about Earth Centered religion; now we're going to experience it. One by one, each person will put their candle around the chalice and tell the group briefly what the candle means to them and what the sources of light are in their lives right now. Then, their partner will get up light the candle from the chalice and give an impromptu blessing based on what has been shared, using the formula that's in your bulletin: "I light this (describe the important symbol in the candle, if there is one) candle for (name). May (one or more of the lights n. has described) be blessed." For instance, if Jane has brought a brown candle to symbolize the earth, and speaks of how inspired she is feeling because her biology research is bearing fruit, the person to her left might say, "I light this earth colored candle for Jane. May the new work which is lighting her life right now blossom with the Spring." So...the important thing is to listen carefully to your partner, and offer a blessing for the light in their life.

Let your group pair up. If there is an odd number, you be someone's partner. If not, join a pair you think will do this pretty well. Invite pairs to take a couple of minutes to tell each other about their candles and their sources of light. Then call for quiet and get everyone focused on the chalice.

Invite a volunteer to begin, saying briefly what their candle means to them, and what lights they see in their life right now. Then hand the small candle to their partner and invite the partner to transfer the flame from the chalice to the candle and speak their blessing. You might have to coach some people through this, but be patient. You will probably find that people are quite moved by the experience of being blessed by another person.

When all the candles are lit, add your own if you haven't already gone.

Begin the chant and chant while watching the candles for a few minutes. Then blow your candle out and invite others to do the same.

Join hands. Settle in.

Read the following words *"The circle opens, but is unbroken. May the light of the Goddess go in your hearts. Merry meet and Merry part, and merry meet again. Blessed be.*

Homework: Earth Centered Religions

(This is the conclusion of an article by Margo Adler (of All Things Considered fame) which speaks of her life-long pagan longings and practices. Check out the whole article at : <http://www.uua.org/WRLD/1196feature1.html>)

She ends: I guess I chose UUism because I need to live in balance. I can do all those wonderful, earth-centered spiritual things: sing under the stars, drum for hours, create moving ceremonies for the changes of seasons or the passage of time in the lives of men and women. But I also need to be a worldly, down-to-earth person in a complicated world--someone who believes oppression is real, that tragedies happen, that chaos happens, that not everything is for a purpose. Unitarian Universalism gives me a place to be at home with some of my closest friends: my doubts. Of course, there are many rationalists within the earth-centered community, but somehow I feel more centered in this denomination. And I think, in turn, the Pagan community has brought to UUism the joy of ceremony, and a lot of creative and artistic ability that will leave the denomination with a richer liturgy and a bit more juice and mystery. –Margo Adler (NPR Reporter)

“(Earth Centered worship) is a fundamental departure from religious preoccupation with abstraction. It is not a distant, mysterious God to whom we make appeal or even the cold vagaries of Progress, Evolution, creativity or History. The gods and goddesses --or if you prefer, the most precious and profound--are accessible to us in the taste of honey and the touch of stone.

And this in turn is why we love the earth, honor the human body, and bless the stars. Religion is not just a matter of Things Unseen. For us the Holy is not hidden but shows its face in the blush of the world's exuberance. –The Rev. William Schulz

Homework:

1. The Earth-centered holiday of Imbolc, the Christian holiday of Candlemass, and the secular holiday of Groundhog's day all occur on Thursday, February 2, the halfway point between the winter solstice and the spring equinox. Spend at least 15 minutes out of doors on that day, appreciating whatever the weather brings. Notice the signs of Spring, the growing light, the longer day.
2. In this time of growing light, consider what is bringing light to your life at the moment. Perhaps it is a child, an author whose books are opening a new area for you, your spiritual practice, or the glow of accomplishment. What are your “beacons of hope?” What “lights your way in the darkness?”
3. Find or buy a candle and bring it to the group meeting...one that you don't mind lighting, and preferably one that has meaning to you.