

OAK LEAVES

The Quarterly Journal of Ár nDraíocht Féin Spring 2019 ~ Issue No. 84



Courage

*Earth Mother,
Spirits of Inspiration,
Ancestors,
Nature Spirits,
Shining Ones,*

*Since I know what is right and can see what must be done,
Give me the strength to walk the path a head.
May courage motivate me!
So be it!*

Integrity

*Earth Mother,
Spirits of Inspiration,
Ancestors,
Nature Spirits,
Shining Ones,*

*Let me be true to my word,
Let my heart be open,
Let me live by the truth.
Let me know the Honour of Integrity,
May it make me whole!
So be it!*



Perseverance

*Earth Mother,
Spirits of Inspiration,
Ancestors,
Nature Spirits,
Shining Ones,*

*Let me not tire in my pursuits.
Let me put one foot in front of the other and continue.
Let me stay the course because it is the right practice to do so.
May I keep to the path before me!
So be it!*





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OAK LEAVES

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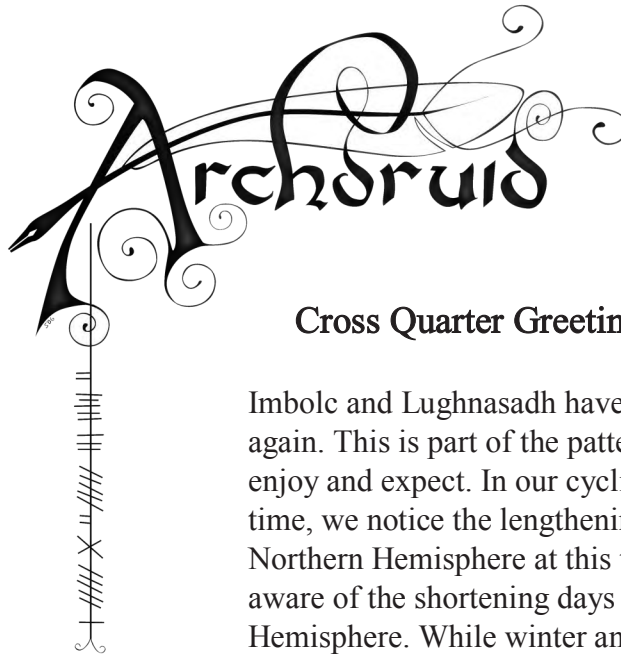
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by Rev. G. R. Grove

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Cross Quarter Greetings, Early 2019

Imbolc and Lughnasadh have returned once again. This is part of the pattern we have come to enjoy and expect. In our cyclical evaluation of time, we notice the lengthening days in the Northern Hemisphere at this time and we become aware of the shortening days in the Southern Hemisphere. While winter and summer sustain themselves, we know what is to come. Some will look forward to the coming changes with great joy, other will warily accept what is to come. It is the cyclical nature of things, and we have traveled this journey before.

As we renew our path upon this recurring trail, perhaps it is time to once again begin to establish or reestablish a devotional practice. As we light the proverbial fires on the hill of Practice, let us take our practice to the next step and move from seasonal observances to daily or weekly devotional observances.

Part of our hospitality is to establish or foster relationships with our allies, with our spirits, with our Kindreds. This is done at each of our High Days, but I believe that a daily or weekly refresher with offerings and devotion will go a long way





to building a better rapport with these beings in our lives.

It is not difficult to set up sacred spaces in our homes or in our offices. They may be set up to honour a God or Goddess, a Kindred, an ally, or even one of the virtues. There are Nine Virtues: wisdom, piety, vision, courage, integrity, perseverance, hospitality, moderation, and fertility. One could easily set up nine different places around the house or the office with a small reminder of the virtue. One could add a very small vessel to hold water next to each virtue shrine. Then, once every nine days, you could visit the appropriate virtue shrine and contemplate that virtue while making an offering of water into the vessel – or by lighting a candle, if that would be more to one's liking.

This type of devotion will accomplish several things. Firstly, it will help one to learn the nine virtues, with repetition occurring on a cycle of nine days. After three cycles, I would guess that one will have the virtues memorized for all of time. It is of course one thing to learn them; it is another to honor them. It is then another to live them, to the best of one's abilities. Is the notion of a devotional for a concept a strange thing? Must devotionals be focused on individual deities or entities with no other possibilities? I think not.

The virtues are varied and rich in concept. They extend from the cerebral concept of wisdom to the creative potential of fertility and all points in between. The virtues are aspects in ourselves that we should develop, that we should hone, that we should live. Hospitality stands apart as something that requires that we do something with another person or being, with someone else. By making an offering to the virtues every day, we keep them alive in our hearts and by making that effort, we focus on the virtue that we uphold, that we admire, that we try to give rise to in ourselves.

As we enter our 36th year, the virtues are still here to guide us. By devoting ourselves to learning them, to honouring them, and to living them, we establish a foundation which will help support not only our actions, but our relationships with our allies and the Kindreds. By establishing a devotional practice which encompasses the virtues, they become more than words on the page. They become the fires of practice which burn within us.

Blessings,
Rev. Jean (Drum) Pagano
Archdruid, ADF

Spring Issue of Oak Leaves

By Oak Leaves Editor-in-Chief Rev. G. R. Grove

As always, we look ahead. This spring issue is assembled on New Year's Eve, as the winter of 2018 dies. Outside my house now it is cold and snowing, but I know that when you read these words spring will be on its way.

into the distant past with a description of ancient sites he visited on the Orkney Islands of Great Britain. Judith O'Grady provides us with a timeless discussion of the virtues (also mentioned by our Archdruid, Rev. Jean Pagano, in his



Appropriately, most of our material in this issue looks to that new season. John Beckett gives us thoughts on what spring means to him. Jenne Micale offers a spring ritual for Aonghus Og and Caer Ibormeith, and Dale Frampton discusses ritual templates and gives us a Slavic example. And we have poetry on topics ranging from Imbolc to Beltane.

Not all of our material, however, is focused on spring. Rev. Kirk Thomas takes us on a journey

column). We have Part III of Nathan Large's allegorical story (to be concluded in the next issue). And Rev. Ian Corrigan, writing last autumn and across the wheel of the year, gives us some of his thoughts on Pagan funerals and death customs.

May the new season and the new year, wherever you are, be a good one!

Blessings,
Rev. G. R. Grove

Words From the Vice Archdruid

By Rev. Sean Harbaugh

This time of year always seems magical. The days are short, the temperature is cold, and the rest from a busy year is upon us. The winter is a time of reflection. It's a time to step back and think about how to build on the previous year's successes and learn from the challenges. The hope of the warming, longer days is upon us, as we can see ourselves emerge from the longest night. The hope that the cold days soon turn to warm spring days.

Our Druidry accessible and understandable.

As an organization, we can look back to the year and say that we held our leaders accountable for their actions. We cannot stand by and allow words and actions of our leaders to hurt others. While our policies have continued to be refined this year, there is room to improve. We must work to make ADF a safe place for all – especially those in marginalized communities. That



It's important for us to focus on doing the work during this cold, dark time. The stillness of the time allows us the opportunity to light our fires and create our sacred space. We can say our prayers to our gods, make our offerings, hear their message.

As an organization, we can look back at the challenges and successes of the previous year. We survived a stressful situation with the revelations about Isaac Bonewits. We learned that we are more than the vision of our founder. We learned that ADF today is the sum of its current membership. We are no longer working off of one man's vision, but rather, we are working off of the collective vision of the hundreds of members worldwide. These are people dedicated to doing the work and making

begins by listening with an open heart.

The brightening light upon the horizon is not only the sun rising from the cold winter sleep, but it is also a symbol of our continued evolution and growth as an organization. We can look to the sunrise with hope, excitement, and comfort. The sun purifies and it allows growth. Let's look to the east and offer our gratitude that we can see another beautiful sunrise together.

May the Kindreds Bless You this coming winter into spring!

Rev. Sean W Harbaugh
Vice Archdruid

The Promise of Spring

By John Beckett

When I was growing up in Tennessee I never understood why people made such a big deal about Spring. Yes, it's warmer, and yes, I looked forward to school being out. But really, Spring just meant it was time to start cutting grass again and whatever else my father thought up for me to do on the small farm he called a garden.

Then as an adult, a job change sent me to South Bend, Indiana. My house was 25 miles from Lake Michigan and lake effect snows. I started work in January. And as I was buying an overcoat and several heavy sweaters, all the locals were talking about what a mild winter it was.

And so, in my 33rd year, I finally understood the importance of Spring. I never thought I'd be so glad to see green again!

Now, imagine what Spring must have meant to our earliest ancestors. Living through a cold winter, depending on fires to keep warm, rationing out the dwindling stocks of food from last year's harvest, hoping it would last as long as it needed to last. Hoping that the very young and the very old wouldn't fall prey to disease. For people living in such an environment, the lengthening days, warming temperatures, and blossoming trees must have been a most welcome sight.

We don't know much about how our ancient ancestors – including our Druid namesakes – celebrated Spring. I like to think of it as both a thanksgiving for making it this far and a prayer for a good planting and growing season. For all its pleasures, Spring is not a season of abundance. It gets warmer and you plant and tend, but the harvest doesn't even begin till Summer.

Spring is a season of promise, and a season of faith. Not the kind of faith that asks us to believe

impossible things because some ancient text says they happened, but a faith that reminds us that Spring has always followed Winter, and so we are right to believe that Spring will follow Winter this time too.

This is the faith of our ancestors, the faith that says that if we plant the seeds, then we'll reap the crops, because that's what happened last year and the year before that and the year before that. It tells us that even if our previous crops were stricken by drought or blight, plant anyway. The faith and promise of Spring tell us not to despair, but to do the right things for the right reasons and good things will come, if not this year, then next year; and if not next year, then the year afterward.

For the promise of Spring also reminds us that if we don't plant, our harvest is certain to be nothing.

Many of us feel like we're stuck in the dead of Winter. Some of us are going through difficult



times in our personal lives. Whatever your political affiliation, I don't know anyone who's satisfied with the current state of affairs in the United States and in the world at large. And as Druids in the lineage of the RDNA who proudly proclaimed "Nature is good!" we are rightly concerned about climate change, loss of habitats and the resulting loss of species, and the pollution of the land, the sky, and the sea. *Game of Thrones* put the phrase "Winter is coming" into the mainstream culture, but many of us feel like Winter is here, and we wonder how long it will last.

If you feel like you're frozen in Winter, hang on. Take care of yourself and those closest to you. Keep shoveling the snow and breaking the ice. Tend your animals and sharpen your plows. The promise of Spring reminds us that Winter will not last forever.

Survive the Winter and then celebrate the Spring. But don't celebrate too long – Spring is the beginning of another cycle of growth, not its culmination.

Spring is a season of promise, but it's also a season of labor. Pagans have a tendency to



romanticize rural life, but vegetables and grains don't grow on their own. Spring brings a lot of work – plowing and planting and fertilizing and watering and weeding. And then some more weeding and more watering. And chasing off the birds and bugs and all the other creatures who think your crops would make a good meal for themselves.

Whatever you intend to plant this Spring – whether literally or metaphorically – you'll need to prepare the ground. You'll need to plant the seeds. And you'll need to tend the fields for as long as it takes. Corn takes 60 to 100 days from planting to harvest, potatoes take 70 to 120 days, and beans take about 50 days.

How long does justice take to grow? Compassion? Equality?

How long does it take to restore the habitat of an endangered or threatened species?

How long does it take to build a strong and vibrant Pagan church?

I don't have the answer to any of those questions, but I know it's a lot longer than 120 days. Still, the promise of Spring tells us that if we prepare the ground, plant the seeds, and tend the crops, sooner or later the harvest will come.

As this issue of *Oak Leaves* is published, we are still in Winter's grasp. But we are past the Solstice and the days are getting longer – Spring will be here soon. Let us celebrate the promise of Spring.

And then let us get to work.

John Beckett is a Druid in OBOD and has been a member of ADF since 2015. His blog Under the Ancient Oaks is part of the Patheos multifaith religious website. After a brief stay in Indiana, John moved to Georgia and then to Texas, where he's lived since 2001.

A Méan Earraigh (Spring Equinox) Ritual for Aonghus Og and Caer Iborneith

By Jenne Micale

While Méan Earraigh, or mid-spring, wasn't among the festivals celebrated by the Celts in antiquity, it has a firmly established and welcome place in our modern Western polytheist calendar. Here in northeastern North America, spring is starting to show signs of emergence. The ice on the river begins to crack, and water begins to flow freely. Crocuses may unfurl their violet petals above the snow, and perhaps the red flowers of the maple, in some warmer years. Or, we may get hit with a late blizzard; you never know!

In my own practice, I find it an opportune time to celebrate Aonghus Og, the Young Son of vitality, the green growth of spring, inspiration, and love, and his wife, the swan-maiden Caer Iborneith, whose name is connected to the red berries of the yew tree.

I think the tendency is to interpret Aonghus as some sort of Cupid – the winged youth who shoots arrows of love and is associated with frivolity, desire and a paradoxical innocence. And some of his imagery does play into that. He's associated with swans; four fly around his head, bringing joy. He plays a harp of gold.

But there are darker aspects, too. He's not depicted as a warrior, but does lend his sword to his foster-son, Diarmuid of the Love-Spot. He beheads Midhir's first wife Fuamnach – presumably with his sword – after she continues to harass her rival, Etain. He tells his father, the Dagda, how to slay the satirist Cridenbel through trickery, and later tricks Dad out of his sweet pad by using the subtlety of words. For all the singing birds and harp, he is associated with clever solutions, last-minute rescues (Diarmuid and Grainne), and transgression that favors the truth of the heart over custom. He's apparently no fan of arranged marriages.

In short, he's not the Victorian Cupid. He has similarities to the ancient Greek deity Eros: a winged youth in some images, but far older than most of the Gods and one of the ultimate powers in the Cosmos. I tend to see him as equal parts Eros and Hermes: the lover and the trickster. His is the primeval force that shatters the arbitrary chains of tradition – a bit like sex itself. Love may have swan wings and a harp, but he also carries a sword. And he's not blind; in fact, he's sharp-sighted and pretty darn smart.

Interestingly, he himself has one wife – Caer Iborneith, whom I mentioned above – who was first revealed to him in a dream. He finds her after a long search involving multiple deities and picks her out from a lake of 150 swans. He also asks her consent to the match, which she grants, provided that she is permitted to return to the lake. While the assumption is that Aonghus has other lovers (he is the father of Maga, and thus the forefather of a number of heroes), they don't appear in the lore that I could find at least



prominently. He's not a two-timer, like his brother Midhir. This story is somewhat reminiscent of the Greek Eros and Psyche, except that the roles are reversed: Eros pursues, and Psyche sets the terms of the agreement.

In a way, though, this is not contradictory. He's not just sex, but the "one choice" (an interpretation of his name) of the heart. You make that choice once, yes, but you make the same one every day – just as one day and one night are equal to all days and all nights in the riddle that wins him his *brugh*.

In that spirit, I offer the ritual below; I've worked with and on various pieces of it for the last eight years, and shared parts on my blog (Whitecatgrove.wordpress.com). As each grove and practitioner has their own customary ways of conducting rites, I will offer suggestions rather than liturgy for many parts. Feel free to make it your own.

*Initiate the rite with a **musical signal, procession- al, and purification** as suits your practice. I like using juniper smoke as a purification, although sprinkling with water also works well, especially*



considering that Aonghus Og is the son of the River Goddess, Boann.

Earth Mother

When I work in a Celtic context, I generally view the Earth Mother as Eriu. Banba, Fotla and Danu would be good alternatives.

Inspiration

As a devotee of Brighid and as the Bard of Protogrove of the Three Gorges, I always call a Bardic deity as a matter of course. Aonghus Og's sister or half-sister Brighid would be the obvious choice here.

Statement of purpose

We come to celebrate Méan Earraigh (*pronounced a bit like "mawn erric"*), the festival that comes when day and night hang in an elegant balance. It is the spring equinox, and the time when the ice melts in the river, bringing the mud and growth of spring. The robins have returned and the geese have flown north as the Earth Mother returns to life. Tonight, we honor Aonghus Og, the young god who flies on swan wings, lord of desire and waxing life. We also honor Caer Ibormeith, his wife, the Yew Berry, the woman who comes in dreams, shapeshifter, lady of magic. And on this day, we honor the power of love and desire to provide direction to our lives.

*Conduct the **Two Powers meditation and the recreation of the Cosmos with Well, Tree and Fire** in a way that suits your practice. **Open the Gates** with the help of Manannán mac Lir, who typically serves as Gatekeeper in many rites that draw on the Irish pantheon.*

*If you make **Outsider** offerings, the Fomhoire would be the image and name to use. Otherwise, invite and make offerings to the **Nature Spirits, Ancestors, and Gods and Goddesses** in a way that makes sense to your practice.*

To invite Aonghus Og, I typically use the following song:

Aonghus of the hidden birth
Aonghus of the flowering tree
Aonghus of the lovers doomed
to meet in the darkness secretly.

Aonghus of the rising sap
Aonghus of the green of May
Aonghus of the soaring swan
and the sound of sparrows at the break of day.

Aonghus of the land of dreams
Aonghus of the poet's art
Aonghus of the searching eye
and the trickster's promise that ensnares the
heart.

Aonghus of the honeyed wine
Aonghus of the fiery will
Aonghus of the secret sweet
that for nine months makes a single day stand
still.

Aonghus of the land of youth
Aonghus of the gentle friend
Aonghus with his unseen cloak
and the heat of the summer that never ends.

Aonghus of the flowering tree
Aonghus of the green of May
Aonghus of the lovers' dance
and the sound of sparrows at the break of day.

*To invite **Caer Iborneith**, I use the following
poem by Mary Oliver:*

Did you too see it, drifting, all night, on the black
river?
Did you see it in the morning, rising into the
silvery air -
An armful of white blossoms,
A perfect commotion of silk and linen as it
leaned
into the bondage of its wings; a snowbank, a
bank of lilies,
Biting the air with its black beak?
Did you hear it, fluting and whistling

A shrill dark music – like the rain pelting the
trees – like a waterfall
Knifing down the black ledges?
And did you see it, finally, just under the clouds -
A white cross streaming across the sky, its feet
Like black leaves, its wings like the stretching
light of the river?
And did you feel it, in your heart, how it per-
tained to everything?
And have you too finally figured out what beauty
is for?
And have you changed your life?

*Make **offerings and devotionals** to the Kindreds,
Aonghus Og, and Caer Iborneith. As the main
working of the rite, lead the following trance-
journey. When leading trance-journeys, it's
helpful to speak slowly, give adequate time for
visualization and have accompanying music. I
often will drum when leading journeys, but
ambient music in the background works well,
too.*

Follow the beat of the drum, deeper and deeper
into the Otherworld. Settle yourself under Bilé,
the World Tree, the Axis Mundi. It links all
worlds within and without. Settle in, and let
yourself see this tree; let your mind wander until
it focuses. How does it seem to you? Remember
this tree, for it is the first thing you will see when
you access the Otherworld.

The tree is the starting place on our journey
today, a journey to the heart of love, to the
Young Son and his desire. Breathe, in and out, in
and out. Standing beneath the tree, let your eyes
skim the landscape of the Otherworld. What do
you see? What sort of land lies before you? Is it
day or night? What season is it?

You see a swan, white and majestic, the bird of
beauty, love and desire. It inspires an up-swelling
of longing, a pull of the tide. The bird is every-
thing that is beautiful to you in the world – but
other, its own self, not under your control. It
takes flight into the sky of the Otherworld,
leaving you on the earth.

But you have your talisman – white feathers, a touch of the beauty that brings you power. As the drum beats, use your talisman to change shape. Breathe into this change. Arms to wings, hands to flight feathers, neck lengthening. As the drum beats, complete this change.

Take flight, spirit-flight: soar into the sky as a white bird, swan or dove or owl, or another of your choosing. Let your heart guide your flight, until you come to a lake mirroring the heavens – the pure blue of the upper world. See this lake, and land on the floor, resuming your shape.

The lake is filled with swans, as beautiful as the bird you followed – the bird you know is among them. And so Aonghus Og stood on the shore and his task was a difficult one: to decide which of the 150 birds gathered there was Caer Ibormeith, whose name means yew berry – the goddess who had come to him in a dream and drove him mad with heartache until he found her. But know this: each of those birds on the lake is love, someone or something with whom you may share your heart. There is no shortage of love objects there. But know also, each swan is a being in its own right, one who cannot be cajoled or controlled. Each will fly back to the lake once its time with you is through, because that is the nature of love.

And so. Pick one – beckon forth the swan. And as it touches its foot upon the shore, it turns into your desire – your dream, your yew-berry. What does your swan look like? What lessons does this being bring to you, what wisdom? As the drum beats, explore this.

The being changes back into a swan and returns to the lake. But you find you are not alone: Aonghus Og, the young son, has some wisdom to give you. How does he appear to you? Take a moment with him.

He bears a wand in his hand. At its touch, you are back at the foot of the Otherworldly Tree, the beginning of your journey. As my drum stills, ground yourself in the earth and return.

Ground yourself as you return to the ritual space.

I often find chanting helps ground participants, while increasing the energy of a rite. One chant that works very well for this particular ritual is by Deirdre Pulgram Arthen:

In the circle of earth and sky
My heart flies to yours
We gather, we remember
and the pattern endures.

*Other seasonal workings – seed-planting, blessing colored eggs with what we wish to draw into our lives – can be done now, depending on time and inclination. Otherwise, make the **Prayer of Sacrifice and Final Offering**, take the **omen** (I typically use ogham, but do what works for you), and **ask, hallow, and share the blessing** as is traditional for you. Afterward, thank Aonghus, Caer Ibormeith and the Kindreds in reverse order, and close the ritual.*

May you have the blessings of love and magic this springtime!

Works Cited and Additional Notes:

Oliver, Mary. "The Swan." Retrieved from Poet Seers, <http://www.poetseers.org/contemporary-poets/mary-oliver/mary-oliver-poems/the-swan/index.html>, on Nov. 24, 2018

You can hear the melody of the invocation to Aonghus Og at <https://soundcloud.com/kwannonmusic/song-of-the-young-son/>. It's also on my new album, *Talamh*, available at www.kwannon.net.

You can find the Deirdre Arthen chant and other chants from the Earthspirit community here: <http://www.earthspirit.com/outreach/pagan-chant-library>
You can listen to this particular chant here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qaG5yQp_II4

Jenne Micale is a writer, singer, priestess and musician whose endeavors include the ethereal wyrd music project Kwannon and, in former times, the wyrd folk band Belladonna Bouquet. She is currently Bard of the ADF Protogrove of the Three Gorges in Ithaca, New York. Listen to her music at www.kwannon.net and read her poetry and musings at whitecatgrove.wordpress.com.

A Wandering Druid in Prehistoric Orkney

By Rev. Kirk S. Thomas

The Orkney Islands, just north of Scotland, are famed for their Neolithic ruins and their Iron Age brochs, or stone fortified houses. There are few trees on the windswept islands, but the local limestone comes apart in slabs, quite easily, and can be found both in quarries and even on the edge of the sea. So this is what these prehistoric peoples used to build their houses.

The Orkneys consist of a number of islands, the main and largest one of which is called “The Mainland” (not to be confused with Scotland further south). Another island that has a lot of interesting ruins on it is Rousay Island.

In May of 2017, I was privileged to be able to go on an archeological tour of the islands with a small group of only eight people (the most that would fit in the archaeologist’s van). The tour was run by Orkney Archaeology Tours (www.orktours.co.uk) and was worth every penny. What follows is a brief description of a number of the sites along with a photo or two of each one.

The Broch of Gurness - This is an Iron Age site on the edge of the sea. Whereas in the south of Scotland and Britain people would build hill forts, here in the Orkneys they built brochs. This broch would have originally been free-standing, but as times must have become more peaceful, the owners allowed houses to be built in the moat/ditch and up against the walls, something that would have made the broch less secure from attack.

Inside the broch we could still see the fire pit as well as a hole in the floor that had steps leading down into the dark. What was this hole for? The steps are very steep and dark. At night, or if the entry were covered, it would be pitch dark inside. The steps are evenly spaced at the top, but further down they get very uneven, and at the end there

is a three-foot drop to the bottom. Imagine being a young person sent down there, alone, in the dark, feeling your way. This would have been a terrifying but also potentially an amazing spiritual experience.



Photo: Rev. Kirk Thomas

The Brough of Birsay. This may have been the seat of the original Norsemen who conquered the Orkneys from the Picts. Unlike the rest of Scotland, here there are no Pictish place names remaining, only Norse and English ones. This implies that the Pictish culture died out completely here after the conquest. The DNA of the local men is almost entirely Norwegian, while the DNA of the women is a mix of all sorts, including Pictish. Perhaps the Norse either killed all the Pictish men, or enslaved them, but in essence removed them from the gene pool.

When the Picts were here, they built a church. The Pagan Norsemen, however, couldn’t care less and used it for other purposes, and built their own long houses nearby. They also ignored the layout of the site and made it their own. It’s still possible to see old Pictish walls running off at angles to the later Norse ones.

Photo: Rev. Kirk Thomas



Access to the site is across a narrow isthmus that floods during part of the day when the tide is in. Unwary tourists often get caught on the wrong side when the tide comes in and have to be rescued. Of course, this also was a great defensive arrangement for anyone living at the site.

Taversoe Tuick Tomb on Rousay Island. This tomb is a stalled cairn, which means that it is a long room with vertical orthostats (upright flat stones) dividing the room into a series of stalls, often with benches in each stall, for holding the dead. Bones would be found on the benches and even under them. This tomb was also unusual in that it was originally built on two levels. This was not a later addition but included in the first design. When built, each level would have been accessed from outside, but currently visitors may descend a ladder from the upper to lower levels to get inside there. In the first photo we see the view inside the upper chamber taken from the entrance. Notice the hole in the floor where the paving stone broke, revealing the lower chamber below.

Photo: Rev. Kirk Thomas



The passage to the lower chamber is actually quite small and tight. It may look fairly large in the photo but it really wasn't. To get the bodies into the tombs required crawling along, sometimes on the belly, dragging the body behind you.

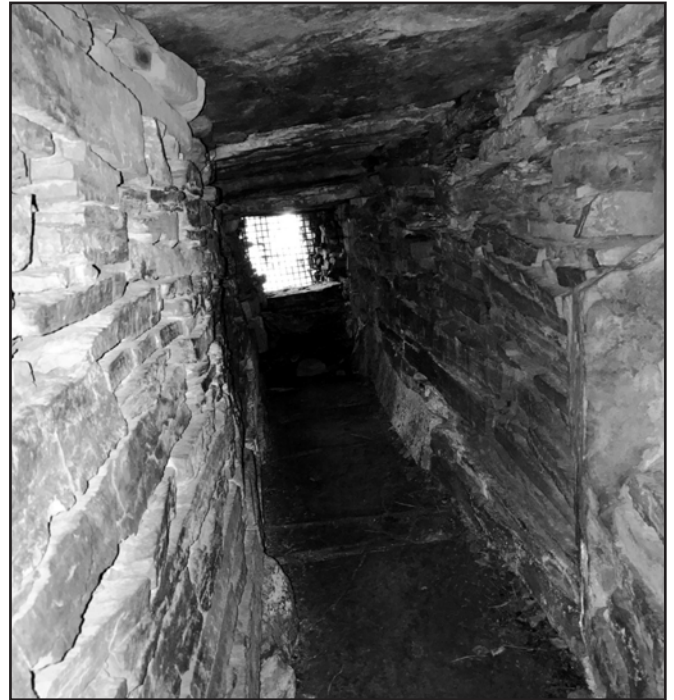


Photo: Rev. Kirk Thomas

Midhowe Broch on Rousay Island. This Iron Age broch was probably built upon the remains of earlier, perhaps Neolithic, buildings. We suspect this because the broch is falling down in some places while perfectly stable in others, and this is on top of solid stone bedrock. The bedrock slopes down to the sea, however, and this may account for the sliding. The Broch is also protected on one side by a natural ditch open to the sea.

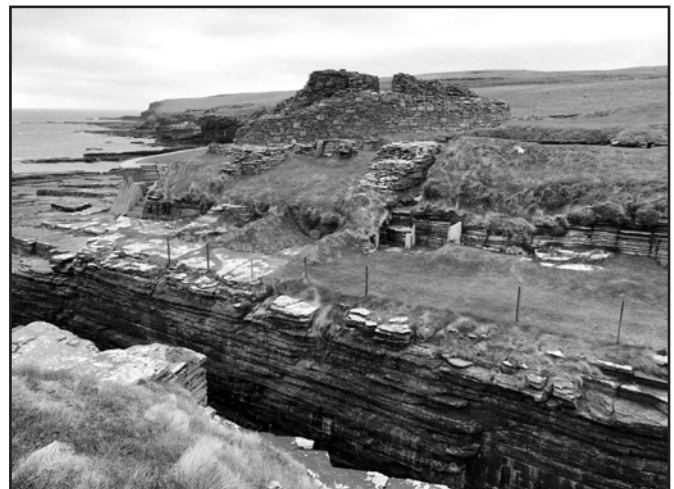


Photo: Rev. Kirk Thomas

Inside the broch they built the walls in a couple of ways. Those that needed to support the weight of upper stories were made the usual way, by piling flat stones on top of each other. But in places where they only needed dividing walls, they would use large, upright orthostats of flat rock. These make a very interesting-looking wall, in contrast to the other ones.

Photo: Rev. Kirk Thomas



Midhowe Tomb on Rousay Island. The Midhowe tomb is situated right next to the Midhowe Broch, though they are separated by a thousand years. The tomb is a stalled cairn, with a long room divided up into stalls. But this is also massively large, and in the 1930's a building was constructed around it to protect it from the elements. The tomb is viewed from above by the use of a catwalk suspended above the tomb.

Photo: Rev. Kirk Thomas



There were around 30 individuals found buried in this tomb. And the tomb was in use for about 600 years. But over that time there would have been far more people who had died and needed burying, so where are they? No trace of the rest of the population has been found. And then again, what made these 30 people so special that they would have had such a massive tomb built for them?



Photo: Rev. Kirk Thomas

One theory is that they were warriors who died in battle, and who were honored this way. But 40% of the people in the tomb were prepubescent children, and of the remaining folks, 40% were women. Warriors sound less likely here.

Around 50% of the bones show signs of disease or are malformed. There is evidence of rickets in the population as well, which would have caused fleshy deformities.

These people may have simply been different from everyone else. When small children see deformed people, they react in fear. And other traits can also bring on fear. I am reminded of the four causes for opera plots in the 19th century: murder, suicide, madness, and TB.

And when we look at more modern shamanistic cultures, the shaman had often suffered a psychic break, and was forced to live outside of the village, and was also seen to have magical and healing powers. They were outsiders in all ways.

Perhaps the people buried in these tombs were people that everyone else feared for some reason,

such as deformity or madness, and when they died (or were put to death – there is evidence of that) they were buried away so that their magic would be buried with them, keeping the populace safe? In pre-Roman Britain burials have been found where the dead person has been weighted down with heavy rocks, or buried face down. Perhaps that is a later example of the same impulse?

Of course, we don't know, actually, and probably never will.

Towards the end of the Neolithic period some great iconoclasm seems to have taken place. The tombs were desecrated, their tops removed, and in some cases they were repurposed. The Midhowe Tomb ended up having an Iron Age round house built on top of it, and the orthostats separating the tombs in one area were shortened. They apparently used the tomb as a cellar.

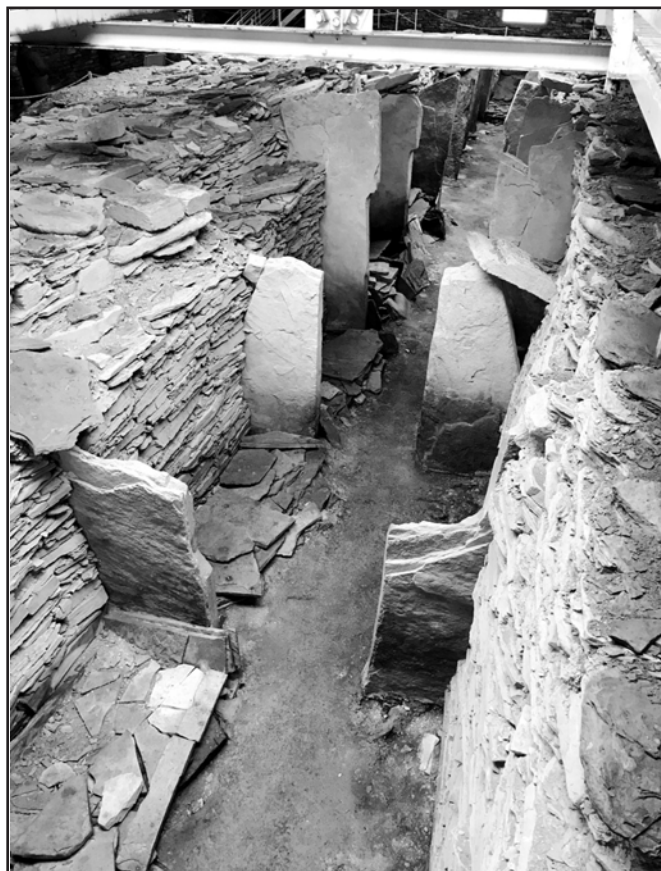


Photo: Rev. Kirk Thomas

Skara Brae. This famous site is a Neolithic village on the edge of the sea. The village was built in stone over a period of 500 years or so, with newer houses being built over older ones. In

time the houses were connected by covered passageways making the village almost like a single building. After it was abandoned near the end of the Neolithic it became covered in sand and the encroaching sea waves began eating away at it. Now there is a modern sea wall protecting it, but it needs to be extended as the sea is getting around it now.

The Dresser House is probably the best preserved in the ruin. In this house the builders dug out the place for the room and then lined it with stone, so the furnishings had to be installed in the room rather than in the walls. The dresser is opposite the entry door, and would have been visible across the fire. There are a couple of large rocks piled on each other between the dresser and the hearth and it is possible that the owner of the house may have sat there when people entered the house, being visible seated beyond the fire. Anyone entering the house would have had to bend over to enter due to the low doorway. Perhaps this is the origin of the practice of bowing to someone?

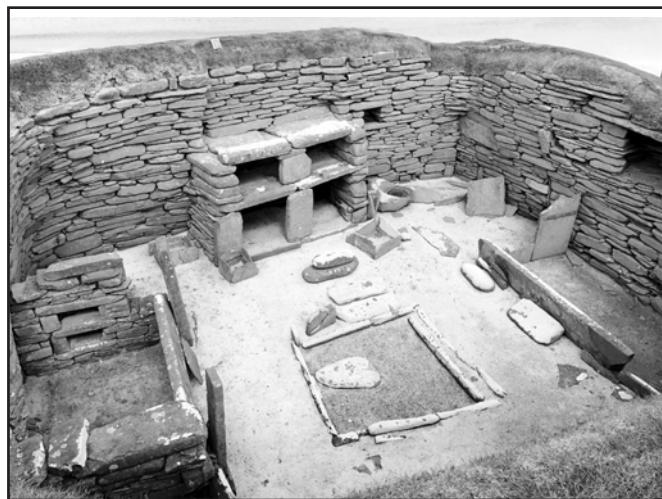


Photo: Rev. Kirk Thomas

In another house the beds were actually enclosed with low stones to mark them off from the rest of the room. And the house seems to have had additional rooms off to one side.

The houses were connected by narrow passages that often had shelves or storage areas built into the sides.

Photo: Rev. Kirk Thomas



It didn't seem all that impressive, but I suspect the construction works may have contributed to that. It was hard to get a good photo.

The Dwarfie Stane is the only Neolithic tomb carved out of a single piece of rock in the entire British Isles and Ireland. It is situated on the Isle of Hoy in the Orkneys, in a valley between two huge hills that leads from one side of the island to the other. It would have been a prominent monument in the Neolithic era.



Photo: Rev. Kirk Thomas

The Ring of Brodgar. This is a ring of standing stones near the Ness of Brodgar which is still being excavated. The ring is a Neolithic henge monument with a ditch and bank surrounding it. It stands on a strip of land between two lochs. Currently workmen are installing drains around the edge of the circle to cut down on mud when the tourists walk here in the rain. As a result, there are fences up around half of the Ring this year. When we saw this the heavens opened and we had horizontal rain.

Inside the tomb there is a carved bit of rock that looks like a pillow, where it is assumed the head of the interred bodies would be placed. I have to admit that this was the oddest of the tombs we saw. And it was extremely isolated; we had to walk quite a way from the road to reach it. This may be one reason why it is so well preserved.

Photo: Rev. Kirk Thomas

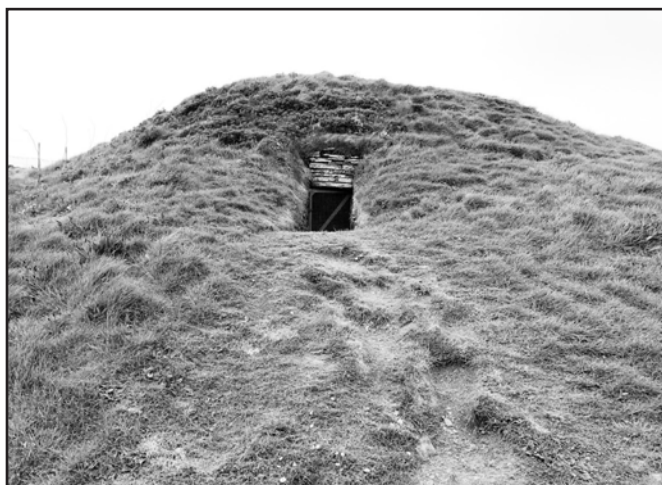


Photo: Rev. Kirk Thomas

Cuween Hill Chambered Tomb - This is a Neolithic tomb with three side chambers and it is under a mound, entered by a low tunnel. When it

was first found they got in through the roof (all too common, sadly) but we crawled in through the tunnel on our hands and knees.

Photo: Rev. Kirk Thomas



Inside it was big and tall enough for all six of us to stand up together inside (two of our number didn't want to brave the tunnel). The entries to the side chambers were small but not so small that we couldn't crawl in. And crawl in we did! The center chamber still had its original roof and I had to get inside and get a photo of it.

Photo: Rev. Kirk Thomas



The two side chambers are classic corbelled construction, though usually with a cap stone at the top. The entrances to these side chambers were quite small, and I had to crawl on my belly just to get my head and camera inside. These Neolithic folks must have been quite small, or else they enlisted children to take the bodies inside.



Photo: Rev. Kirk Thomas

As you can see from the photo, the entrance/exit was really quite small, and required crawling on hands and knees (and it got a bit low about halfway in).



Photo: Rev. Kirk Thomas

Rennibister Souterrain - This Iron Age souterrain was found under a farmer's yard when a farm machine he was towing fell into it by breaking open the roof. Souterrain is a word for an underground room or tunnel which is usually used for storage, but they can have other uses as well. Unlike most souterrains this one was found with many human skulls inside, each placed upside down on top of a jaw bone (and the skulls and jaw bones don't belong together). The souterrain is accessed through a small tunnel which ends under what was probably an Iron Age Round House.



Photo: Rev. Kirk Thomas

So, there are questions here. Were the skulls arranged as they were for ritual purposes, as a sort of Cult of the Dead? Were they simply placed that way by rambunctious children horsing around? If this was a storeroom, why wasn't it built under the Round House where the contents could be easily reached instead of down a long, small tunnel? Chances are that everyone in the area knew about its existence so it wouldn't have made much sense as a hiding place in time

of attack. So what is this place, really? We may never know for sure. But it was fun to go inside!

I just love these sorts of ruins. This year I visited Malta, which is also full of Neolithic ruins, which I truly loved, even if they are a very different sort of ruin. But I do have to say that I just LOVE this stuff! Happiness is a cold and damp Neolithic tomb!



Photo: Rev. Kirk Thomas

The Rev. Kirk Thomas is a Senior Priest and former Archdruid of ADF. He lives at a retreat center in Washington State where he has established a Druid Sanctuary with a Stone Circle and multiple shrines to the Gods and Spirits.



Photo: Rev. Kirk Thomas

Brigid O' the Mantles

By Rev. Ian Corrigan

(to 'the tune of "Brigid O'Malley"')

O Brigid of the Mantles, you make my heart easy
With a wondrous admiration I come to your
shrine.

My heart in exaltation, I call to you sweetly
That your healing and blessing, be on me and
mine.

The Winter is passing, though ice is still clinging
To bough and to hillside, but your hearth is warm
With clan and with kindred we come to you
singing

O Brigid of the Kindness to keep us from harm

The Fire of inspiration, that shines in the poet
Burns too in the forge and the Healer's kind hand
The wondrous transformation, of loving and
knowing

The gift of the Goddess in Sea, Sky and Land

O Brigid of the Mantles, you make my heart easy
With a wondrous admiration I come to your
shrine.

My heart in exaltation, I call to you sweetly
That your healing and blessing, be on me and
mine.

(you can hear Ian's youtube version: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dyZM01scCWY&fbclid=IwAR0wleKxtG-o-03JMIQHQaSIoL3A-Oe_FM9nsIXMqJIHegRW0DHNXjzvgYjM)



Flame-Keeping: A Sonnet for Brighid

By Rev. D. Rowen Grove

I light Her holy fire as night takes wing,
and pray, and fill the cup that is Her well
with water clear and cold; Her praises sing,
and singing so, within my thoughts I tell
how once, in Éiru's lands, I stood beside
Her very Well, and from there took the Flame
that lights my altar here at eventide,
and there I sang, and called upon Her Name;
within that place of wind and rain and light
poured offerings, and knelt there by the stone.
My song is done. Her flame burns through the
night;
and should you watch, and think I stand alone
I tell you, pilgrim, so that you may see:
the while I tend my flame, Her Flame tends me.



Photo: Rev. D Rowen Groves

Increase

By Rev. Jean "Drum" Pagano

The pale morning light
Comes up behind the trees
Earlier today,
Wraps itself around them
Gently,
Like a morning caress;
White and yellow make slight,
Dances on the edge of cold branches,
On point.
The wind notices,
Whispering,
"Je me souviens du printemps",
Just a hint,
Just a suggestions,
From another time,
Before.

The oak leaves,
Holdovers from the prior year,
Sing an old song,
Rustling in the dawn breezes,
Percussive;
Air and leaf,
Blended together in a hushed matin,
Praise to the sun and sky,
Barely lit, but coming alive;
The trees paint the palest blue,
Between branches,
Against the sky.
They remember,
Always,
The hymn of the Earth Mother,
Slowly stirring
In a late winter slumber.

The ice on the stream,
Thinner today than before,
Holding together,
Gently,
Earth and water,
Under the sky.
Faint light,

Shy in this time of year,
Glances off the ice and water,
A marriage of the season,
A passing phase,
Remembered,
As always,
From the time before,
The old season's story,
Retold again.
Fish sleep in tender silence,
Waiting,
Like the trees,
For the faintest of fires
To rekindle,
To bring the stirring of life
Once again.

The sun radiates its
Kaleidoscope light,
Gently,
Blue and
Faint and
Silent,
Movement over water
Signals increase,
Again.



Rekindling Bright Fire

By Neil Rhind

Before the Bright Fire, the waiting dark
Envelopes winter tales and last year's feasts
Leftovers we live on until that Spark
That lit our Darkness flares in spring's increase

And flaring, lights the hillside up in flame;
Now reveals the path to Summer, lit ahead
Echoes light back at our faces; shows them
changed
From what we were before the Winter, dark and
dead

Enveloped us and stopped last summer's selves
Sprung now anew, renewed, by new light found
To dance round this fire like Oberon's elves
Irrupted fresh from out their wintering mound
Visiting the Summer overground.

All Summer long we'll dance by that new light
Learning new tales to brighten winter nights.



After Beltane

By Neil Rhind

And having doused the old fires, raised the new
Spread the new flames outward from the hill
The bright bonfire from which these flames first
grew
Dies down in turn to embers, smoking, still.
Moments dimly glowing in the ash
When a young child and younger sun rolled down
the glen
And the question WHY DON'T WE LIVE LIKE
THIS? was asked.
And I touched beauty, then the touch was gone
again.
What to do now? When the cauld toon's hill's
cauld as its name,
And those embers trampled down to grey streaks,
dead
And flat? Just let the new fires heat our hames
And glowing embers light our hearts and heads.



Image: Wikipedia commons: Public domain.

About Ritual Templates

By Dale Frampton

When I first approached writing an ADF ritual, I found the prospect of working through the Core Order of Ritual (COoR) daunting. There were quite a few steps, each of which could be satisfied in a variety of ways. Reading other people's rituals did help with inspiration, but it also added to my uncertainty as it showed how differently each step could be performed. Leaning heavily upon other people's work, I wrote my first few rituals, which each favored a different hearth culture. The first was hearth culture agnostic, followed by Norse, Celtic, and Slavic. Each ritual took a fair amount of research and inspiration. The commitment I made to write rituals for my Protogrove's high-day rituals was both exhilarating and exhausting. When it was time to write my second Celtic ritual, I was short on time, and I cheated. Instead of writing the ritual from scratch, I used my first ritual as a template, and hence, my collection of ritual templates came into existence.

The ADF COoR is a framework for ADF rituals, but it isn't a template and isn't intended to ease the overhead of writing rituals. Its purpose is to describe what an ADF ritual is, and to those ends, it does a good job documenting the core concepts needed to write an ADF ritual. One of those core concepts is flexibility; it allows liturgists to create rituals that are strikingly different but are still hauntingly familiar. The flexibility does come with a cost, and that is overhead in writing rituals. A liturgist must consider each and every step, review a myriad of examples and decide which rituals they should borrow from, or how they would like to write their own part. It's possible that every ritual a person or group performs has a different Earth Mother, Gatekeeper, etc.. That decision is quite acceptable, but the effort needed to write new rituals increases. This is where ritual templates shine. They are more focused than the COoR framework and contain sections that are intended to be copied by rote.

Templates define not only the structure of a ritual but contain some fully completed ritual steps. This way a solitary practitioner, protogrove or grove can standardize their rituals with their own core symbology. Not only are liturgists free to standardize their ritual structure, but they should seriously consider doing so. I believe the commonality that templates provide helps to wear paths into the participants' psyches that let them enter a ritual mindset more easily.

When I look at the COoR, I see each of the ritual steps fitting into one of the following classifications:

1. **Personal or Group Templates:** These steps may be reused across all rituals, regardless of the hearth culture. I see them as being unique to a person or a group and creating something that is identifiably theirs. Being common, they allow participants to be more quickly drawn into the ritual experience. The steps that fall into this template group are Initiating and Closing the Rite, Purification, and Meditation. For an individual practice, these steps can easily be different than what is used in a group practice. Within a group practice, a template will help provide consistency and can codify important decisions. The Purification step, for example, might document that the grove always does purification audibly with a chime because one of the attendees is allergic to sage, or may be averse to having water sprinkled on them. By setting these steps as a group template, they don't have to be evaluated for every ritual and newer liturgists can more easily be brought in to write rituals.

2. **Hearth Culture Templates:** These ritual sections are specific to a given hearth culture, but in most cases can be reused across all rituals of that hearth culture. The Outsiders Offering, Honoring the Earth Mother, Re-Creating the Cosmos, Opening the Gates, Inviting the Three Kindred, and all the associated closing sections

fall within this category. Making these sections common allows a person or group to continue to build deeper relationships with specific Earth Mothers and Gatekeepers, along with conceptualizing the Outdwellers and the Kindreds in similar manners from one ritual to the next. There are a few cases where it might not be possible to reuse a hearth culture template in full, such as when the Gatekeeper or Earth Mother are also Deities of the Occasion (DotO) or they have a poor working relationship with the DotO.

3. Ritual Specific Steps: These are the steps that are unique to each ritual, and really form the heart of the ritual. They are the Statement of Purpose, Key Offerings, Prayer of Sacrifice, and any parts of the Calling for the Blessings and Thanking the Beings steps that are directly related to the DotO. Focusing time and attention into these steps helps to create a richer ritual with a more meaningful connection to the DotO.

4. Three Blessing Steps: I find these steps to be difficult to categorize. What form the Waters of Life takes has an impact upon what this section is like, and it also can change based on the DotO or even the personal preference of the person performing the step. I usually think of these as falling into the Personal or Group Templates, but can easily see a case where they could reasonably be assigned to any of the preceding classifications.

Breaking rituals down into this format has helped me to write consistent rituals for my protogrove, but also allows other group members to write rituals by just providing the unique Ritual Specific Steps. The use of templates lowers the entry point for members to be able to contribute to rituals. It allows them to take an active part in honoring Deities of the Occasion that are important to them, in ways that are meaningful to their practice.

Like all parts of a living, growing religion, templates, while useful, shouldn't be written in stone. They should be evaluated and updated from time to time. For instance, if a group that has traditionally used alcohol as the Waters of

Life moves to a new space that doesn't allow alcohol, then update the template. If a member wants to try something new for the Outsiders offering, they can experiment with that part, while not requiring changes to any of the other parts. If the experiment works well, then perhaps it becomes part of the template.

The concepts of templates expand upon the COoR in ways that allow individuals and groups to build their own traditions. By keeping consistent those things that don't need to change, we help wear paths into our psyche and create a familiar setting to our worshipers. We lower the entry cost for new liturgists who want to honor a DotO who hasn't been honored by the group before. By focusing only on those Ritual Specific Steps, we allow ourselves to use all of our creativity and time on writing rituals to honor the DotO, without being distracted by the other steps in the COoR framework that must be there to support the ritual.

Writing liturgy regularly has really helped me figure out what was important in my Druidry. Those things are:

- Find the right amount of consistency. It helps build traditions. Traditions don't detract from the vibrancy of any ritual; instead, they help to build depth.
- Focus on what is most important, which is usually the Deity of the Occasion. Honor them through your undivided inspiration in writing their part of the ritual.
- Don't be afraid to experiment. We each learn as we go along and even good ritual parts can use some gentle refinement over the years.

Slavic Hearth Culture Template Notes

The following is a Slavic hearth culture template. I hope that it helps spark people's imaginations, and provides a stepping stone for those who are interested in honoring a Slavic deity. Before getting into the template parts, I'm going to

discuss the inspiration and decisions that were made about a few of the ritual steps.

When my protogrove wrote our first Slavic ritual, we pulled heavily from Christine Jacocks' Slavic Spring Equinox Ritual. We used her Earth Mother invocation for a handful of years. As I built up a working relationship with Mati Syra Zemlya, whose name translates as Moist Mother Earth, I wrote my own poetry for her that reflected the changes she goes through throughout the seasons. The spring portion of that poem has become part of the Earth Mother invocation. While it uses the spring imagery of people emerging from their dwellings to become reacquainted with the Earth Mother, it is applicable for use throughout the year. Ritual introductions, such as the Earth Mother part, led me to imagine worshipers coming together for ritual and reacquainting themselves with her. The Slavic pagans didn't appear to personify Mati Syra Zemlya, and as such, this part could easily be tailored for each season, but such work can be done as future refinement, rather than a necessity (Dixon-Kennedy, 1998; Jacocks, n.d.).

Our Gatekeepers have always been the Zoryi. They are the daughters of the sun god and stand guard at the gates of the palace of the sun. In addition to being the gatekeepers for their father's palace, they also stand watch on a nameless monster chained up in the sky. There is some controversy surrounding them related to how Neil Gaiman presented them in his book "American Gods." On one of his book tours he stated that there were only two Zoryi in Slavic mythology, but it worked out better if there were three. So, he claimed, that like the pagan forbearers, he created a new goddess, Zorya Polnochnaya. However," The Encyclopedia of Russian & Slavic Myth and Legend" predates the "American Gods" book and indicates that there are some versions of Slavic mythology that mention a third, unnamed sister. It's my personal belief that there have been three Zoryi and that Mr. Gaiman was given the privilege of restoring a name to the third sister. Since some people may

have strong opinions regarding this subject, I'm providing two versions of the Gatekeeper step (lisesinger, 2011, 7:00; Dixon-Kennedy, 1998).

The inspiration for the Re-Creating the Cosmos step was drawn from the Slavic Triglav. It appears to be interpreted predominantly in one of two ways, either as a single deity or as a collection of three deities. In both cases, the Triglav is seen to rule over the three realms of the Heavens, the Earth, and the Underworld. Furthermore, those who interpreted the Triglav as a collection of deities have noted that there are a few different variations on which ones are represented. The following deities have been identified on various Triglav statues: Svarog, Perun, Dažbog, Veles, Stribog, and Svantevit.

This ritual part operates under the idea that the Triglav is a symbol representing three unique deities, and that the choice of deities was a local one. I have a relationship with Dažbog and Mati Syra Zemlya, and so they became two pieces of the Triglav. Since I haven't worked with any underworld Slavic deities in either my personal or public practice, I opted to add Veles, who is the archetypical Slavic underworld god, and who shows up on some of the historical Triglav. In this step, we replace the typical tree imagery with a pillar, one that represents the three aforementioned deities. Through this work, we take an ancient practice and find a modern place for it, one that seems at home in the ADF Re-Creating the Cosmos step. In our ritual, the Triglav is purely symbolic. We don't have an actual pillar with the likeness of those deities carved into it, but that might be a nice touch for individual or groups who primarily honor the Slavic deities (Wikipedia Contributors, 2018; Mihai, n.d; Kakasevski).

The template presented below is intended for people to incorporate into their own rituals to honor the Slavic deities. The offerings presented are based on those that I typically use, and readers should feel free to change them as they feel necessary.

To be completed by the liturgist.

Outdwellers

{Speaker}:

We speak to those kindred who would disrupt our work and worship.

We speak to the unquiet dead,

The scorned bannik,

The disrespected domovoi or kikimora,

To the angered leshiy,

And to all others who might otherwise sow mischief.

We offer you our hospitality, in the form of this offering. Take it, and leave us in peace.

{Speaker}: Place offering outside of the ritual space.

Purification

To be completed by the liturgist.

Meditation

To be completed by the liturgist. Typically a Two Powers style meditation used to encourage the worshipers to enter a state conducive to ritual.

Honoring the Earth Mother

{Assistant}: Distributes grain to participants, if a small enough group.

{Speaker}:

Mati Syra Zemlya, moist mother Earth, we ask that you join us for our ritual.

Deep within the forests of spring, we come to you,

Our bare feet lightly tread on your moist body, we come to you,

The leaves and pine needles are your blanket, we come to you,

On our knees, head to the ground, we come to you,

The rich smell of the earth, we have found you,

The plants and trees are your clothes, we have found you,

The pure fresh air we breathe, we have found you,

We are home again, with the moist mother earth.

Mati Syra Zemlya, accept our offering!

{All or Sacrificer}: If a small enough group, all participants put their grain into the offering bowl or the fire. Otherwise, the sacrificer does it.

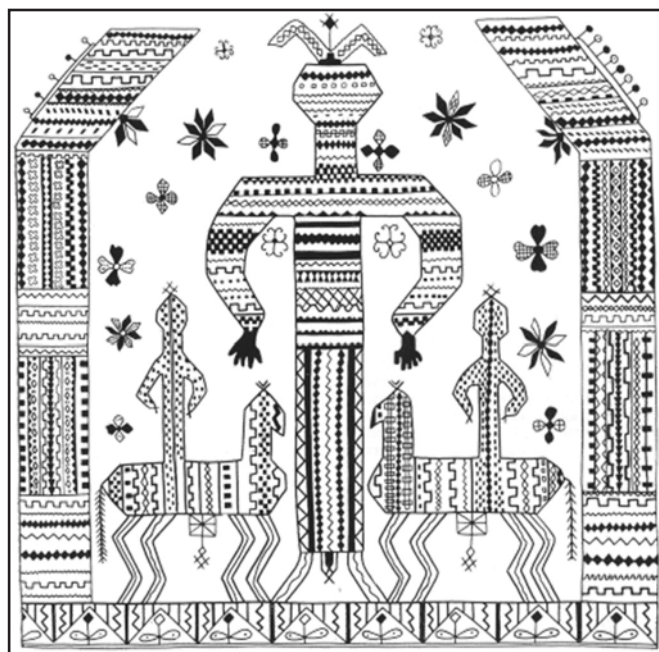


Image from Wikipedia commons

Statement of Purpose

To be completed by the liturgist based upon the purpose of the ritual and the Deity of the Occasion (DotO).

Re-Creating the Cosmos

[Speaker]: Places the incense in the fire and speaks.

With this incense, we sanctify this fire to become a link with the celestial realm; the realm of Dažbog and the other celestial deities. We awaken the memory within us of a time when we knew the birds flew in the heavens and alone knew of their mysteries.

[Speaker]: Sprinkles water on the tree and speaks.

With this water, we sanctify this tree to become a link with the natural realm; the realm of Mati Syra Zemlya and the other Earthbound deities. We awaken the memory within us of a time when we knew the gods dwelled beside us, and the folk worshiped them and lived in tune with the moist earth.

[Speaker]: Places the silver in the well and speaks.

With this silver, we sanctify this well to become a link with the underworld; the realm of Veles and the other underworld deities. We awaken the memory within us of a time when we knew the serpents visited the underworld in their dark



tunnels and alone knew the safe paths through them.

Here we remember and create our Triglav of Dazhbog, Mati Syra Zemlya, and Veles. As the Earth rests upon the foundations of the Underworld, so too does the Earth support the Heavens. Here we stand at the junction of all the realms.

Opening the Gates (Three Zoryi Version)

[Druid]:

I call to the Zoryi, the daughters of Dažbog, the sisters that watch the gate from which the sun leaves at dawn and enters at dusk.

Dobro požalovat (Welcome) Zorya Utrennaya, the morning star. We ask you who guards the palace gate at dawn; you who opens it to allow the sun to traverse the sky, accept this offering and make this fire a gate.

[Sacrificer]: Pours vodka into the offering bowl or the fire.

[Druid]:

Dobro požalovat (Welcome) Zorya Vechernyaya, the evening star. We ask you who guards the palace gate at dusk; you who closes it once the sun has left the sky, accept this offering and make this tree a gate.

[Sacrificer]: Places grain into the offering bowl or the fire.

[Druid]:

Dobro požalovat (Welcome) Zorya Polunochnaya, midnight star. We ask you who watches over the world in the dark of the night, accept this offering and make this well a gate.

[Sacrificer]: Places cut flowers into the offering bowl or the fire.

[Druid]:

Let the gates be opened!

[All]:

Let the gates be opened!

Opening the Gates (Two Zoryi Version)

[Druid]:

I call to the Zoryi, the daughters of Dažbog, the sisters that watch the gate from which the sun leaves at dawn and enters at dusk.

Dobro požalovat (Welcome) Zorya Utrennaya, the morning star. We ask you who guards the palace gate at dawn; you who opens it to allow the sun to traverse the sky, accept this offering and make this fire a gate.

[Sacrificer]: Pours vodka into the fire or into the offering bowl.

[Druid]:

Dobro požalovat (Welcome) Zorya Vechernyaya, the evening star. We ask you who guards the palace gate at dusk; you who closes it once the sun has left the sky, accept this offering and make this tree a gate.

[Sacrificer]: Places grain into the fire or into the offering bowl.

[Druid]:

Zoryi, as the light of your stars' glitters off the sacred wells throughout the world, make this well into a gate.

[Druid]:

Let the gates be opened!

[All]:

Let the gates be opened!

Inviting the Ancestors

{Speaker}: Call

Dobro požalovat predki, welcome Ancestors.

We make space at our fire for our mighty ancestors,

For our honored ancestors,

And for our beloved ancestors.

You who are of our blood and bone,

You who are of our spirit and heart,

You who have walked this world and left it before us.

Predki, accept this offering of bread and salt.

{Sacrificer}: Places offering next to the Well (after the ritual, place it outside for the animals, or treat it as you would other offerings).

{Speaker}: Call

We remember you.

{All}: Response

We honor you.

Repeat Call/Response for a total of 3 times

Inviting the Nature Spirits

{Speaker}:

Dobro požalovat Leshiy, welcome woodland spirits.

We make space at our fire for the spirits of this land,

Of its plants and trees,

Of its birds and beasts

And of its waters.

You who have dwelled in this land before man,

You who protect it,

You who nurture it.

Leshiy, accept our offering!

{Sacrificer}: Places offering next to the Tree (after the ritual, place it outside for the animals, or treat it as you would other offerings).

{Speaker}: Call

We remember you.

{All}: Response

We honor you.

Repeat Call/Response for a total of 3 times

Inviting the Shining Ones

{Speaker}:

Dobro požalovat Svarog, welcome Svarog, great grandfather god.

We make space at our fire for Svargog, and his children,

For the Slavic gods and goddesses in the heavens, on the Earth and in the underworld,

For the gods and goddesses of our people,

And for the gods and goddesses of this land.

Bogi i bogini, gods and goddesses, accept our offering!

{Sacrificer}: Pours the vodka or oil into the offering bowl or the fire.

{Speaker}: Call



We remember you.

{All}: Response

We honor you.

Repeat Call/Response for a total of 3 times

Key Offerings

To be completed by the liturgist. This is the main part of the ritual where most of the work is done to honor the DotO and to realize the purpose that was mentioned in the Statement of Purpose.

Prayer of Sacrifice

To be completed by the liturgist. One additional, typically the last, offering to be made to the DotO. It should accentuate the key offerings and also indicate that this is the end of the ritual phase where the worshipers are making offerings to the kindreds.

The Omen

To be completed by the liturgist. Typically this is based on what forms of divination the person doing this step is comfortable with. One may want to try a culturally specific practice, but it should be perfected ahead of time so that it goes smoothly and the worshipers are confident that the intentions of the kindred have been properly interpreted.

Calling for the Blessings/Hallowing the Blessings/Affirming the Blessings

To be completed by the liturgist. The nature of the waters of life may be based on group custom, or an alternate may be selected based on something more relevant to the DotO or purpose of the ritual.

Workings

To be completed by the liturgist. This optional step is where additional ritual work can be done. The workings may not be necessarily related to the DotO. Often times this step is not used.

Thanking the DotO

To be completed by the liturgist based on the DotO.

Thanking the Shining Ones

{Speaker}:

Svarog, and all the gods present, we thank you for sharing our fire, and may our relationship with you continue to deepen.

Thanking the Nature Spirits

{Speaker}:

Woodland spirits, we thank you for sharing our fire, and when next we meet, may you not lead us astray as we walk through your forests

Thanking the Ancestors

{Speaker}:

Ancestors, we thank you for sharing our fire, and may our actions in this world bring honor to you.

Closing the Gates

{Speaker}:

As our rite draws to a close, we again turn to the Zoryi to assist us in closing the gates.

{Speaker}: Moves to the tree

Let this gate return to a tree.

{Speaker}: Moves to the well

Let this gate return to a cauldron.

{Speaker}: Moves to the fire

Let this gate return to the fire.

Let the gates be closed!

{All}:

Let the gates be closed!

Thanking the Earth Mother

Mati Syra Zemlya, we thank you great mother earth for all that you provide to us. May you continue to keep us safe on our journeys, and sheltered in your embrace.

Closing the Rite

To be completed by the liturgist. Probably based on local custom, and ritual location (indoors or outside).

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Dale Frampton found his way to ADF Druidry in 2013 after searching through and practicing various modern pagan faiths for over 20 years. He is the founding member and Grove Organizer of The Protogrove of the Whispering Spirits, ADF, which serves the northeast Wisconsin area. While not intending to be eclectic, Dale has come to accept that his natural tendency is towards broader connections across multiple hearth cultures; this has helped him serve his local community in facilitating rituals for various hearth cultures.

Virtues Essay Part 2: The Virtual Rosary

By Judith O'Grady

As I wrote in the previous essay, I make a correspondence between the nine virtues and the Kindreds, allotting three virtues to each. Our grove, Lake of Oaks, works from an unchanging base liturgy with only the seasonal references and the Deities honored changing from holiday to holiday. In the “thanking” portion of the ritual we thank the Kindreds for being present and also for being role models by exemplifying the virtues.

We see the virtues as the stepping-stones by means of which we can work towards becoming our best selves and also as the referential by which we can determine Right Thought and Feeling and recognize Right Action. One potent tool for putting our head in the right, the transformative, place is meditation.

One of the grove members asked me to create a meditation on the virtues both linking them with the Kindreds and also including (and hopefully furthering) the three desirable states-of-being; a kind of rosary. In the physical it is a double-strung loop starting with a clasp (that hooks and unhooks so it can be straight or a circle--- most of the ones I have made are sized to wrap around the wrist twice) and three large stones/beads/buttons for the Kindreds separated by three smaller beads that are loose on their portion of cord so that they can be slid up or down as meditated on. In the poetics, I wrote a prose introduction for the unclasping and beginning and then a couplet for each virtue forming a sextet for the Kindred (ab/ab/ab). I was pleased with this, finding it satisfyingly allusive.

.....

Meditation On the Virtues

All things begin with thinking; our parents thought of us, Mother Earth thinks of the whole world, we think of who we are and what we will become.



Photo: Judith O'Grady

How can we learn Right Thought?

The Nature Spirits, the Ancestors, and the Shining Ones will help us.

After learning and thinking we must add our heart's input to our ideas.

How can we learn Right Feeling?

The Nature Spirits, the Ancestors, and the Shining Ones will help us.

After learning, thinking, and then endorsing good feelings, we can decide what is the best thing to do.

How can we learn Right Action?

The Nature Spirits, the Ancestors, and the Shining Ones will help us.

Nature Spirits are linked with Fertility, Integrity, and Perseverance:

Fertility:

All Nature grows, lush and diverse;
Each Spirit acts to replicate.

Integrity:

Every Right Action has its reverse;
We must be sure our Path is straight.

Perseverance:

Day after day, we plan and rehearse;
Finally we will meet our Fate.

Ancestors are linked with Hospitality, Moderation, and Piety:

Hospitality:

A dish of warmth, a cup of cold;
To share our best without constraint.

Moderation:

Knowing when to act, when to withhold;
With both Right Balance and restraint;

Piety:

And all the virtues to uphold;
Following the Old Ways; no complaint.

Shining Ones are linked with Vision, Courage, and Wisdom:

Vision:

Hold up to us the Seeing Glass;
Help us to see things as they ought.

Courage:

Let us bring Right Ends to pass;
Our actions showing what You've taught.

Wisdom:

Your teachings bring to us at last;
The perfect beauty of Right Thought.

.....

But the member it was written for did not like it at all. She saw both the prose and the poetics as wordy and unclear, and didn't like that the virtues were not named in the poetry. She also wanted to use the thanking poems from the ritual rather than the prose meditation.

So I re-wrote the meditation. Of course I like the thanking quatrains from the ritual as well and I felt that her point (that the ritual thanks were

already familiar and each activity helped the other with the work of memorization) was well taken. Mostly I tried to use the virtue as the rhymers (although I find perseverance one of the harder words there is) so the sextet becomes aa/bb/cc--- not so elegant but necessary.



Photo: Judith O'Grady

Rosary of the Nine Virtues

Big Bead 1:

Spirits of Nature, hear my thanks!
As the seasons turn You do what's right,
With Fertility, Integrity, and Perseverance.
Stay with me in Dark and Light.

Little Bead 1:

Lend me strength to dance and dance,
Nature Spirits, Perseverance!

Little Bead 2:

Play my part with Integrity,
When it comes to nitty-gritty.

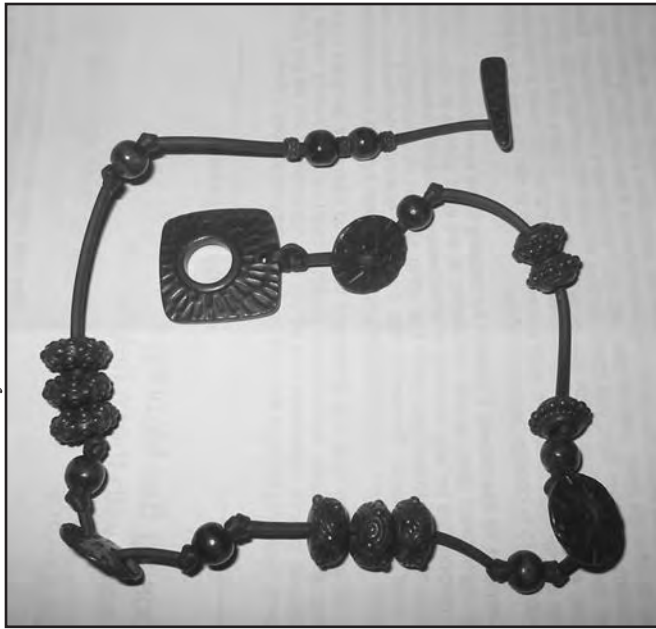
Little Bead 3:

Fertility, set me all aglow,
Nature teaches us to grow!

Big Bead 2:

Teach me Moderation, Piety, Hospitality,
Ancestors, those who came before.
Your lives created my reality,

Photo: Judith O'Grady



Thanks for staying by the door.
Little Bead 1:
Hospitality freely share,
Both filling cup and lightening care!

Little Bead 2:
Those of Heart and those of Kin,
Be models of Moderation.

Little Bead 3:
I will follow with Piety,
The Old Ways and make them dear to me.

Big Bead 3:
Thanks for Vision, Courage, and Wisdom,
Heroes and Gods, You are my Guides.
You show me what I can become;
Please stay with me and here abide.

Little Bead 1:
Send me Your all-seeing Visions,
Help me make the right decisions.

Little Bead 2:
Teach me how to act with Courage,
Let tales of You set me my gage.

Little Bead 3:
Lend me help in finding Wisdom
Let my life win Your benison.

Clasp

Bíodh sé amhlaidh! ("Bee-shay ow-way")

.....

She was satisfied with this version, and I made several strings for different friends and members.

In the first, the reference to Right Thought, Feeling, and Action is in the prose beginning and only alluded to in the poetry. In the second, the all-poetry, the desired outcome of right-acting is referenced but not explicated. Ideally, I thought, the desired outcome would be more explicit as well as having clear, named virtues in the body of the meditation.

I later went on to do just that in a different version.



Photo: Judith O'Grady

Judith O'Grady is the Senior Druid of Lake of Oaks Grove, ADF in Ottawa. Both her and the Grove's hearth culture is Irish, expanding to Northern Tier folklore and folk magic in general. Ungrassing lawns, planting trees, and communicating with the Land Spirits are other undertakings.

Notes On Pagan Funerals and Death-Customs

By Rev. Ian Corrigan

Along with Lia Fal my partner, I have been officiating at Pagan Rites of Passage for decades. Typically, the trend began with weddings, and we worked to develop Handfastings that one could present before family and co-workers. Baby-Blessings were really developed simultaneously with weddings, times being what they were.

In the past decade or so funeral rites have become more frequent. As functional clergy for a portion of our community we have found ourselves called upon to lead memorial and funeral rites. Some of these have been directly within our own kind of Pagan tradition (i.e. Neopagan Druidry, per A.D.F.), some within a general alternative-thought community, and some for grandma and the cousins.

Maturity precedes death. As the Pagan community, our movement, gains in solidity and wealth and depth, Pagan groups and clergy will inevitably be called upon to organize and lead funeral services. This presents us with various practical and logistical questions, as well as theological and ritual ones. Having by this time been involved in a number of memorials, I have developed a set of scripts (<https://intothemound.blogspot.com/2016/11/a-simple-funeral.html>) and invocations (<https://intothemound.blogspot.com/2016/06/a-throne-for-dead.html>) and may have some useful notes.

The Recent Dead in a Spirit-Based Paganism.

I write these notes from a mythic and spiritist perspective. I think that in order to think clearly about all this we must set aside any modern sense of materialism and cynicism about death and what comes after. We must operate from the assumption that some version of our consciousness survives and is aware in the time following



our biological cessation.

Of course, we cannot know with any certainty what occurs immediately after death. It seems, from review of various sources, that classical Pagans expected to be greeted and guided by *somebody* or something. Perhaps the Ancestors are the most likely kind of spirit to meet us, though various mythologies propose various psychopomps, guides, and challenges.

Ancient Pagan mysteries leave us with descriptions and a couple of actual maps of the proper road for the newly Dead to take into the deeps of the Otherworld. The newly dead person is instructed to take the right fork at the proper tree, to drink from one well but not another, etc. While most of us have not been initiated into such mysteries in our time, we can still hope for the arrival of guides to lead us properly through the early stages of our next adventure.

From the standpoint of Pagan funerary rites, I think we must assume that we will find reasons to stay near the places and people of our lives, and that we will be gratified by the attentions of the living. This leads me to categorically deny the modern cliché that “funerals are for the living”, implying that nothing the living do can matter to the Dead. Tradition teaches that it is precisely the actions of the living that help to give the Dead peace, blessing, and an open path toward our fate.

So, the funeral rites I have created have intended to open the hearts of the attendees to the beloved, to draw the spirit of the beloved to the place of gathering and give it good welcome. Tradition tells us that the love, tears, and offerings of the living are welcome to the Dead. It may be valuable for modern western people to consider the practice of public mourning

So, we begin with the assumption that the spirits of the recent Dead are accessible to here, can hear our words and know our deeds. We look to custom and tradition for guidance on what is best.

The Worship of the Dead

I might begin by reminding us of the Pagan liturgical definition of worship as ‘mutual acknowledgement of worth’. The spirits judge our offerings as worthy, and we receive worthy blessings in turn. In a fully-developed funeral I see us as creating this worship with the specific spirit of the deceased.

For me that has meant arranging an attractive picture of the dead as the ‘idol’ of the rite, making a specific invocation and invitation to the beloved to be present with the group, and making offerings of the deceased’s preferred food, drink, etc. In short, the beloved’s spirit is treated as the deity of this rite done to their honor.

Some funeral communities want a chance for many people to speak. One place where ‘parts’ can be assigned is in this making of offerings, and each can be an opportunity for a memory of the beloved. The placing of food and drink before the image will be an unusual moment for non-Pagan attendees and it is the Clergy’s work to provide a mental setting that allows understanding.

Following this phase is also a good moment for musical or poetic insertions of a kind favored by the beloved. This could include the eulogies and reminiscences. My director’s mind suggests pre-arranging and limiting the number of speakers, unless that sort of longer community engagement is specifically desired. The chance for a family to



Photo: Rev. G. R. Grove

commune together before the beloved’s images and offerings, perhaps sharing drink, could be a centerpiece for a longer work. Often the desire is to finish the ritual portion and retire to the pot-luck for further toasts and memories.

The Farewell

In what I see as the most directly theological bit of these notes, I have come to understand the magical work of funeral rites as the calling of the allies and guides of the beloved, and the commitment of the beloved’s spirit to their guidance.

Per the outline below these beings will have been invited to the funeral fire earlier in the rite. Now we create the moment both in the vision of the assembly and, we hope, in fact for the beloved, of the uniting of the spirit with their guides. One supposes that traditional cultures have traditional prayers and customs to accomplish this goal.

I can see this moment as a chance for the grieving to perceive their beloved as moving on in safety and blessing. For a fully-Pagan assembly one



could go all the way to guided visualization. The moment in a rite may be fraught with that grief, but I might hope that it would be a step in the road of solace as well.

An Outline

I was asked online for a synthetic outline of my notion of Pagan funerary rites. Here's one, based loosely in our Druidic Order of Ritual:

- The Hall is set with a shrine of the beloved where it can be seen by all. Pictures are arranged, and a space provided to receive plates, etc. for offerings. A Fire is prepared. This can be as simple as a candle or a full offering-fire for Druid High-Church rites, or any smaller size, perhaps even arranged directly before the image. A censer with capacity for lots of incense might also be provided.

Beginning

- The company is gathered and seated. The rite is proclaimed, and the company is greeted.
- A short discourse on the intention of the work, the nature of Death and the person of the beloved can open.
- The company is led in a short attunement, settling or moment of silence.

Blessing

- The space is blessed. This can be anything from a full ritual circle-casting or Sacred Center rite to the simple lighting of a single candle, establishing the place. The fire is lit or blessed, and asked to direct the spirit of the beloved to the work and welcome them. I like the turn of phrase that blesses the Fire as a 'Fire of Welcome' for the beloved and for all present.

Invocations

- The 'Constellation of the Worshipped' of the beloved is called. This can be expanded or contracted according to the religious setting of the rite. I approach this through the Three Kindreds of spirits, as Our Druidry says.
- Calling the Ancestors of the beloved is utterly proper, if the social setting of the rite makes it acceptable. The beloved may have affection for or dealings with the Landspirits – were they gardeners? Hikers? The gods should be the gods of the beloved's own home altars, if possible. Otherwise one can always call upon the guides and rulers of the Dead.
- The spirit of the beloved is specifically invited to the honor-seat of the rite. In Our Druidic Pagan rites, this includes making material offerings. These are best chosen as things loved by the Dead – food, drink, etc., but might always include flame or light, clear water, and incense.

Eulogies

- The Eulogies are given, perhaps with a musical or poetic performance.

Farewell Prayer

- A prayer of love and memory might be given to the beloved. What blessings would a spirit like theirs offer?
- The Allies, as invoked above, are given the final sacrifice and charged to take the beloved gently to their next adventure, rest, whatever. This can be carefully tuned by the clergy, to good effect.
- This is a good place for a further musical performance, or a longer Prayer For the Road (<https://intothemound.blogspot.com/2010/10/death-song.html>).

Ending

- The work is declared successful and the intent reviewed
- The beloved is given a final farewell
- Other beings who have been called are thanked and bid farewell. This can be done *en masse* in a single prayer.
- The rite is declared concluded.

To do this work well is to offer a real sacrament of solace and support both to the living and the Dead. If we are to regain what was lost in ancient Paganism there seems no doubt that the bond between the living and the Dead must be a part of the work. We must abandon materialism, which pretends that there is nobody left to talk to, just as we abandon doctrines that commit the spirit to some final judgement. Instead, I think, we can offer a vision of a future open and unknown, a road into fate that we will all travel in our time, yet which need not be traveled alone.



Photo: Rev. G. R. Grove

A Prayer for a Peaceful Death

O Holy Ones, we all will pass from flesh. In this hour many will lose their breath, and their spirit will depart. I ask for mercy for those who pass.

Let their body have comfort, relief as needed, that their hearts may be free in their transition. Let us prepare to cast off the shell of stone and soil, as the wind is stilled.

Let their mind be unfettered, freed from their circumstance as they will

A Funerary Prayer

To the spirits I pray.

To Those who love our mortal kind.

To our Kin among the Mighty Dead

To the Shining Gods, and all their forms and names.

I come to you in harmony, at a moment of need.

Behold, O Holy Ones, our kin ___n___

Who lived among us and now has died.

Whose fleshly life has ended

And who bears the blessing of their kin

Now at the end of the Earthly path

I call to you all, to hear the name ___n___

And come to their aid.

Let those who know (him) aid (him) now

Greet (him) and aid (him) in (his) next road.

If you be the elder family, then take (him) by the hand I pray

If you have been allies, among the spirits, then attend (his) going

If you have received offering from (his) altar,

You Shining Powers, those who knew (him) best

Then send your herald for (him) in this (his) hour.

O ___n___, behold your welcome!

Behold the faces of the Gods

Behold the wonder of the spirits

Behold the love of your good kin

Go you forward, ___n___ into your fate

And know that you go with the love and blessing of your folk!

In Wisdom, Love, and Power, so be it!

Rev. Ian Corrigan is a senior priest and Archdruid Emeritus of ADF.

The Guest of Honor

By Nathan Large

Introduction

“The Guest of Honor” was inspired by the idea of depicting ritual as a journey, a path walked by a visitor among the Worlds. In particular, this travel would be a Fool’s Journey from ignorance to wisdom. I used the Core Order of Ritual as the map. This concept transformed into an allegory for ritual as a structured event – a party – in which the participant is one guest among many invited. The resulting story is presented in serial form across four issues for reasons of space, but the section breaks neatly segment major sections of a Core Order Ritual, perhaps not surprisingly. I hope you can follow this journey across the year and enjoy the story not only for its core, but also its outward form.

Part III: Guests and Gifts

The gathering settled. Morton and Ed sat together and began a complicated discussion of some philosophical topic Kelly couldn’t follow. Vern busied himself with the snacks. Bree checked her cellphone, scrolling through messages.

Donna disappeared into the kitchen again and returned with fresh, hot rolls and pots of fruit preserves and butter. While the assembly fell upon these gifts, Kelly took the opportunity to ask the question on her mind: “Who’s this Guest of Honor you’re waiting for? Someone important? Famous?”

Bree ignored her. Vern did a reasonable impression of not hearing. Morton stiffened and looked at Ed, who shrugged.

Donna, at least, answered easily: “She’s important, yes. To all of us. To you... maybe? You *are* a little young, so she’s probably not famous like you’re thinking. But a person of significance, oh my, yes.”

“Someone who gets things done,” Bree added, having returned to the conversation.

“A Queen,” Morton offered.

Ed agreed, “One of the great ones.” He sounded serious.

Vern just shook his head and waved his fingers, warning Kelly away from the subject.

“Um, should I go? It sounds like you want to make a good impression...”

Donna sat her back down with a look. “You’re fine. Our guest will know to make accommodations for your...” she struggled for a word, “... unfamiliarity. And she knows how to behave in our house. It’s these others who have to be on best behavior with her. They have no excuse not to show respect.”

“And the good sense not to offend,” Morton appended.

Kelly was again fascinated by the drama. These people had serious history together. It *was* like a BBC show, without the accents.

Ed offered further encouragement: “Actually, it’s worth your while to meet her. You came in with a problem. She’s good with problems...”

Bree snickered, drawing a stern look from Donna.

“... *solving* problems,” Ed continued, “if you make it worth her while. Could clear up any lingering difficulties with your friends outside.”

Kelly squirmed, not wanting her personal trouble to intrude on an unexpectedly pleasant evening.

The door rattled with another knock. Everyone looked up.

“Ah, speak of the... dear lady,” Ed teased. Being the only one still standing, he again went to the door.

Kelly tried to imagine who they might be describing. A local businesswoman, she assumed, or maybe a politician?

The woman who followed Ed back to the front room was nothing like she’d imagined. Beautiful, sure. But not pretty like a celebrity. Scary beautiful, like a tiger or a jeweled knife. Long curls of black hair poured out of a loose bunch atop her head, to scatter down her shoulders, over

the suit coat of a charcoal blazer. The coat matched her long, formal skirt. Underneath its lapels, a crimson blouse parted just enough to show a tasteful touch of pale cleavage, highlighted with a golden pin in the shape of three horses intertwined. The colors and angles of her outfit echoed her face: blood-red lips, gold-brushed cheekbones, and grey eyes.

It took a moment for Kelly to realize she was staring. That was all right; everyone else was, too. The conversation stilled when the Guest arrived.

She accepted their attentions with amused grace. “Well met, family, friends... and new faces.” A gesture of her long red nails indicated Kelly. “Are you joining us tonight?”

Kelly felt herself blushing. “I... yes. I mean, I wasn’t expected, but they said it was all right.”

“And so it is.” The woman moved to the nearest open chair, right next to Kelly, and sat with silent grace.

“Tea?” asked Ed. Donna handed the new arrival a plate with a sliced roll and several pastries already arranged.

“Thank you,” the Guest said to the hostess. To Ed, she answered: “Anything stronger on hand?”

“How about brandy?” he offered. When she nodded, he looked around the room. “Anyone else?”

Morton raised a hand. Vern made a face and Donna shook her head in solidarity. Bree seemed to have missed the question.

Kelly was surprised when their host looked at her. “Uh, I’m... I guess? A little? If you’re not worried...”

Donna interrupted. “Just a dram, husband. As much as she could use the warmth, it wouldn’t do to have her getting in trouble, at home or on the way there.”

Ed groaned in exasperation but stepped away. Before the conversation resumed, he returned with a crystal decanter and four glasses. He officiously filled three, setting one before the lady, one before Morton, and one for himself.

The last, he splashed into and slid across to Kelly.

She sipped, covering her wince at the strong alcohol with a hum of genuine appreciation.

The beautiful woman took a hefty swallow, relishing the liquor, before turning back to Kelly. “Right. Let’s finish the formalities.”

Donna nodded. “Kelly, this is Bev, our guest of honor tonight. Bev, this is Kelly Madden. She came in to get out of the rain and we convinced her to stay for the party.”

“The rain?” Bev smiled slyly at Kelly, as if sharing a secret. “It is a bit stormy tonight. But the worst seems to be past.”

“Yeah,” Kelly agreed, the brandy loosening her stomach and mouth. “I was soaked. Just needed someplace to sit it out, but I couldn’t resist a fire and free food.”

The disturbingly beautiful woman fixed Kelly with a sharper eye. “And thick walls. Heavy windows. Good defensive position, isn’t it?”

Kelly froze with the glass halfway to her mouth. “Uh...”

Bev waved away her panic. “I talked to Lewis about your troubles. Don’t worry, I have no concerns... and you stopped short of lying to me.” She graced the rest of the room with a glare.

Vern sank down in his chair, sliding partway under the table. At a tap from Donna, he straightened back up.

Ed broke the tension with a glass-rattling laugh. “We just didn’t want to bother you. There’s no problem now. I expect her pursuers ran off after seeing Lewis.”

“Of course,” Bev answered with a smile. “Then let us proceed with the celebration.”

Bree looked up. “Yes! Present time!”

Everyone looked immediately happier. Kelly, though, tensed up. Presents? Was it someone’s birthday? Maybe Bev’s? For some reason, Kelly felt terrible about showing up without a gift.

She felt doubly awful when she saw what the others presented. They didn't say anything about a birthday or other occasion, but it was clear that Bev was being *honored*.

Bree presented Bev with a cast iron sculpture of a raven, so small it hid in her pocket. The shape struck Kelly as familiar: upright on a blocky base, its wings held tight to its body.

As Bree handed the gift across, she recited:

“Iron, I give to your command:
Bone of earth and fire in hand,
In shape of one with soaring wing.
Treasure with a hidden name:
Raven, stealing falcon's fame,
To bring a smile to those who think.”

Bev accepted the gift with pleased solemnity.

Next, Morton grandly displayed an ivory flute, carved with fine brown spirals. He played a few notes for demonstration, and the music curled like a chill draft through the cozy room. Bev smiled in delight.

Vern simply removed the crown of daisies from his head and offered it, standing and stretching across the table just enough to reach its recipient. Bev carefully accepted the gift and placed it on her own head, to Kelly's surprise. Instead of looking silly, the flowers shone like silver and gold.

Ed stepped out of the room during this exchange and returned from upstairs with another bottle of thick clear glass, which he handed to Bev. “This is from Mother and I.” The bottle swirled with a deep red liquid. “A little home-brewing this time. I expect it's to your taste.”

“Of course, it is. You know me well.” Bev accepted the bottle and settled it next to the other gifts on the table.

Kelly racked her mind. She only had a couple of dollars in her wallet. Cash seemed like a lousy gift anyway, even without the other treasures for comparison. Maybe she could make a toast? She racked her brain for something clever to say.

Bev didn't seem to notice the omission. She rose

and began to address the room: “Thank you all for your kind and thoughtful gifts. And as is our tradition, I have something for you in return.”

Embarrassment swirled in Kelly. It was joined by desire: a wish not to be left out. Without deeper thought, she realized she *did* have something of value. She reached into her pocket with an awkward twist and pulled out the paper bag, turning to offer it to Bev...

Her movements attracted attention. The gorgeous guest paused and looked toward Kelly, holding the damp brown thing, both of them surprised at her impulsive act.

Bev looked at the bag. Then she looked back at Kelly, eyebrows tenting. Then those black lines dropped, and her mouth curled into a wicked, thin slash.

Finally, she spoke. “I can't accept that. After all, it's not yours, is it?”

Kelly looked at her own hand as if betrayed. She pulled back the bag. “What? I mean, sorry, it's not much...”

Bev's smile vanished, and her piercing stare burst Kelly's defenses.

“Okay, yeah, it's not mine. But how did you know that?” the girl asked.

“I've learned to read people. Your behavior spoke loudly.”

Kelly flushed again, feeling undressed and afraid. Then, a thought crossed her scattered mind.

“Lewis! You talked to him! He talked to the gang!”

Bev smiled again. “I didn't say I didn't have *help*. But I'm right, no matter how. You shouldn't offer a gift you haven't earned.”

“Sorry... but what happened? Why didn't he come in to throw me out?”

Ed intruded on their public performance.

“Probably because he wanted to help. You're not the first guest to come here with troubles following. And we wouldn't kick you out for a mistake.”

“But they could have hurt him! Or knocked down

the door!”

To her surprise, Bev and Ed both laughed loudly and together. Even Donna smiled, and Bree shook her head in amusement.

“Not here, dear,” Donna said. “Not *this* house, and certainly not with Lewis at the door and Man on the road. You’re safe here, while the party lasts.”

“Unfortunately, all good things do end, and most of us have other places to go,” Bree reminded them. She faced Kelly. “You, I hope, have a home waiting for you? A mother?”

Kelly nodded. She wasn’t thrilled at the idea of facing her mother at home but found it difficult to complain with Bree staring her down. “Yeah.”

“True enough,” Bev agreed. “I can’t stay long, myself.”

Sensing the change in tone, Vern began piling scones onto a napkin, creating a makeshift to-go bag.

“I’ll get you a box,” Donna chided him. “And you *can* come visit whenever you like.”

“I know,” he whined, “but the food’s always better at parties.”

Bev looked at Kelly again. “Actually, there *is* something I’d like from you, if you want to be included in my gifts.”

Kelly became nervous. “Like... what?”

“Deal with your problem. When you leave here, don’t run. Don’t deceive. Face the consequences of your actions, either to accept punishment or defy it.”

“You mean... give it back?”

“Or don’t. But stand up to them. The only difference between a conqueror and a thief is courage... and perhaps, honesty. If you run, you have to keep running. If you lie, you have to keep lying.”

The conversation had to be one of the strangest Kelly ever experienced. But as the woman spoke, Kelly realized she was right. Kelly had wanted what was in the bag, but she didn’t want to admit her desire aloud. She didn’t fight for it or earn it.

She just took it and ran.

“Okay. I mean, I’ll do that. If I see them again.”

“Good enough. All right, you *all* have my blessing and my favor. Let’s drink on it.”

The assembly hoisted mugs of tea and glasses of brandy. Kelly followed suit with the remainder of her glass. They toasted Bev with cheers of praise and gratitude, which she accepted with regal grace.

Then the drinks were lowered, and Bev rose.

Kelly blinked. That was it? That was the gift? She felt disappointed, after all the trauma. She supposed her promise was worth about as much as a “favor”, though. Maybe this Bev person would remember her if they met again... maybe she was a judge, and Kelly would see her in court.

Morton and Bree also rose, and Bev shook hands with each, sharing a cheek kiss with Bree as well. Ed, though, she hugged warmly, to a look of disapproval from Donna. The big man shrugged and retreated upstairs.

Vern waved from the table and called, “Bye!” from around a mouthful of roll.

Kelly stood as well. “Good to meet you, Ms. ... um, Bev?” she said.

“Morgan,” the woman answered the unspoken question. “Publicly, you may call me Ms. Morgan. You may run into one of my sisters, as well. You’ll know them.” She picked up each of her gifts, slipping the sculpture and flute into her jacket pockets and holding the bottle, which glistened in the firelight. She still wore the daisy crown as if it were an intentional part of her ensemble.

Without another word of goodbye, their honored guest stepped away from the gathering, gliding into the hallway and opening the door with only a pause to collect her coat.

To be concluded in the next issue...

News and Announcements

Program & Path Completions

Alicia Yantosca
Dedicant Path
26 September, 2018

Elkie White
Dedicant Path
27 September, 2018

Nathan Large
Dedicant Path
18 October, 2018

Jessica Lami (Graywolf)
Dedicant Path
6 December, 2018

Jayson May (Jayson May)
Dedicant Path
9 December, 2018

~Congratulations to all~

Upcoming Events

Ghosti-con
28-31 March, 2019
Albany, NY 12206, USA

Trillium Spring Gathering
18-21 April, 2019
Cross Junction, VA 22625, USA

Wellspring Gathering
23-27 May, 2019
Tredara, Madison, OH, USA

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The Poets

Rev. Ian Corrigan. Ian has been a devotee of the folk music of the British Isles for most of his musical life. His work with ADF has included the creation of ritual songs and chants, and the preservation of vocal tradition. Brigid is the primary deity of his inspiration.

Rev. D. Rowen Grove. Rowen joined ADF in the spring of 2010, and completed her Dedicant Path work two years later. She became an ADF Initiate in 2015 and was ordained an ADF Priest in 2016. She is currently Senior Druid of Chokecherry Grove, ADF, in Denver, Colorado

Nathan Large. Nathan is a writer and storyteller, working primarily in speculative fiction with frequent mythological themes. After twenty years of storytelling across varieties of role-playing – and two years of live public practice – his fascination with the power of folk tales and myths, ancient and modern, continues to grow. He recently released the first two novels in his Empyrean Dreams sci-fi series with Laine Megan Lundquist; two more should follow this year. Nathan also creates as acting Secretary of the Games and Play SIG and Secretary of Whispering Lakes Grove, Erie, PA.

Jenne Micale. Jenne is a writer, singer, priestess and musician whose endeavors include the ethereal/wyrd folk project Kwannon and, in former times, the wyrd folk band Belladonna Bouquet. A former initiate of the Henge of Keltria, she won the 2009 DANAC Golden Oak Award for best Druidical essay, and has published articles and poetry in a variety of publications. She is currently Bard of the ADF Protogrove of the Three Gorges. Listen to her music at www.kwannon.net.

Rev. Jean “Drum” Pagano. Drum has been a member of ADF since 1984 (he was ADF’s eighth member). He is an ADF Senior Priest, an Initiate, and ADF’s current Archdruid. He enjoys working with his various altars, spending time in Nature, and studying and teaching the Ogham.

Dr Neil Rhind . Neil is a previous contributor to The Scottish Literary Review, The International Review of Scottish Studies, the International Journal of Scottish Literature, and Touchstone: The Journal of OBOD. His guide to modern Earth Religions, 'What Sort Of Pagan Does That?' is available from Amazon. He lives in Edinburgh, commits Ritually Significant things and is into the Fall (season), the Fall (band) and the Fall (existential state of damnation).



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Grove Organizing Committee	Chair: Rev. Nancy McAndrew	adf-goc-chair@adf.org
Prisoner Relations Committee	Chair: Rev. Kirk Thomas	adf-prison-ministry@adf.org

For information on **Regional Druids** please see the full listing at:

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Electronic submissions are preferred, sent as email attachments to the Oak Leaves submissions address: oak-leaves@adf.org. Written submissions should be sent in one of the following formats: MS Word (.doc/.docx), Rich Text Format (.rtf), or Text Format (.txt). Please include a brief ADF-related bio for all articles and essays. For more information on submissions, please see our web page at <https://www.adf.org/publications/periodicals/oak-leaves/submissions.html> or contact us at oak-leaves@adf.org.

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