

Celebrating the Spring Equinox

- Judith L. Hirst, March 27, 2006

One of the themes of our community of spiritual friends is "celebration". My husband, Roger, and I have had the pleasure of hosting many evenings of meditations and pot luck dinners in celebration of our light work. As one of our action items for 2006, we decided that we would like to host two equinox celebrations. We settled on the Spring and the Fall Equinox.

As early as January, I started researching celebration rites and rituals for spring, Ostara, and Equinox. The Llewellyn publications: *Wicca* by Scott Cunningham, *Ostara: Customs, Spells & Rituals For The Rites Of Spring* by Edain McCoy; and *Maiden, Mother, Crone* by D. J. Conway, are great resources for providing information about traditional Wicca and Goddess celebrations. We settled on a program that used some of the traditions and some of the knowledge that I have of the Goddess.

The Invitation

We sent out emails to our friends announcing our intention to hold a Spring Equinox celebration at the end of January. We followed this up with a reminder towards the end of February, and then two weeks before the celebration, we sent out a simple invitation. I have provided our invitation as a template for others to use.

Come celebrate with us!

*Next Sunday, Judy and I, will be celebrating the **Vernal Equinox** at our home in Deer Run. Our channel guides provided divine instructions, and we expect to have a host of angels, fairies, gnomes, elves, and light beings surrounding us.*

Part of the ceremony will be outside, so we ordered appropriate weather. Expect to be in sweaters, yet come appropriately dressed. We will be using a fire pit in the back yard along with our fireplace in the house.

As part of the celebration of the in-coming feminine energies of the spring, come prepared to ask for a blessing from the Earth. Be ready, also, to give something up in your life to make room for new growth.

To honor the coming abundance of the spring, we are asking that you make an offering of food or money, which we will drop off at The Mustard Seed Street Ministry.

Explanatory Note: As the Goddess works in threes, we sent out three invitations or announcements of our intentions. Although we do not have a "ticket" price for our events, we do ask for offerings to offset costs or for offerings for specific entities. We believe that this action ensures "the good of all concerned". The specific date, time, and place were simply listed under the body of the invitation.

The Ceremony

We planned the ceremony for about two and a half hours, beginning at 7:00pm. We encouraged people to come early so that everyone could receive a smudging to clear them and prepare them for the ceremony. (As it turns out, the ceremony takes exactly two and half hours with eighteen people.) In preparation for the ceremony, we had an abundant

wood supply beside our fireplace and by the fire pit outside. Since we still had some snow in our backyard, Roger shoveled a circle (and nicely created a circle for the celebration) in the snow and piled the excess snow in the center, placing the fire pit on the little snow bank both to raise it up and to protect our lawn. We purchased lavender to give to the group to use as an offering. And, we planned a celebratory meal of light breads with egg base, crackers, dips, cheeses and veggies.

Roger began the ceremony with an explanation of the reason to celebrate, and with a discussion around equinox emphasizing the theme of equality, particularly around the aspects of the God and the Goddess, and the equal sharing of male and female energies. Each participant introduced themselves, and each participant received a sheet with the chants we would be saying in the circle.

SPRING EQUINOX WELCOME

This is the time of the year that the GODDESS chases the GOD from the Earth in the Northern Hemisphere, and sends him to the south. The young God is reborn in spring and Father Winter is replaced by Mother Spring.

We have invited you to night to honor the changing of the season, the spring Equinox. The time of sleeping is passing to the time of waking. It is a time of change. We are honoring with our ritual, the passing of the season, an occasion recognized by all cultures from the beginning of time. The cycle continues.

The spring equinox is the time of Mother God. In many cultures, variations of her name revolves around Ostara or Estre, and in the west, we call this time Easter.

This is a time when the Goddess/the mother assumes the caretaking of the Earth and cleans it with her spring rains and winds, and blesses the land so it will grow with abundance.

Tonight, we will acknowledge creation.

We have a fire burning in the center of the circle. The fire is the tool of the Goddess for she first brought it to Earth in many of the ancient stories. We therefore would like to ask our friend (name your friend) to be our Fire Keeper.

Before we go any further, we'd like to do introductions and we will pass around the talking stick.

Some instructions for how the evening will unfold:

- 1. We have lavender for your traditional offering to the Goddess, so please take one on you way around the fire.*
- 2. The Speaker will lead us out around the fire, clock wise and open the circle.*
- 3. The Caretaker of the Devas will invoke the nature spirits.*
- 4. The Speaker will lead you in the clearing chant, and then invoke the Goddess. This is a two part chant, and we all join in the second part.*
- 5. Each of us may then ask for the three blessings and we will pass around the talking stick.*

Everyone then dressed in winter clothes and went outside to stand around the fire. The Priestess or Speaker asked for the blessing of the circle by standing and facing north, and making a specific request to the Goddess. The group then walks clockwise around the fire to signify the turning of a cycle, winter to spring. As the individuals pass the vase of lavender, each person takes what they need for their offering which is used when they ask

for the triple blessing. The Caretaker of the Devas then invoked the Fairies, Devas, and other Elementals to join the celebration and protect the space. The Speaker then leads the group in the chants.

CLEARING EVENING CHANT (Adapted From Wicca by Scott Cunningham)

*Hail fair moon, Goddess,
Ruler of the night
Guard me and this circle
Until the Light*

*Banish all entities not here
For our good and grace
Send them away for ever
Protect this clearing, yard, and space.*

OSTARA EQUINOX INVOCATION (Adapted From Wicca by Scott Cunningham)

Speaker:

*O great Goddess,
You have freed yourself from the icy prison of winter.
Now is the greening, when the fragrance of flowers drifts on the breeze.
The God stretches and rises, eager in his youth
And bursting with the promise of spring and summer.*

(During the next part, connect with the earth energies - the plants, trees, the very life around you.)

All:

*I walk the earth in friend ship, not in dominance.
Mother Goddess and Father God,
Instill in me through nature and this circle
A warmth for all living things.
Teach me to revere the earth and all its treasures.
May I never forget.
This is my will. So mote it be.*

The Three Blessings

When the chants are complete, the group then begins the triple blessing process. The steps are called "ASKING THE THREE BLESSINGS":

1. Ask for something you need, want, desire with specific time reference and specific instructions or intent.
2. Ask for the release of something you are ready to release.
3. Ask for a blessing for the good of a group or for all concerned.

As an example, the individual may ask for the first blessing to be for a new job with a certain company, using all of the current skills, with x percent more money, to begin on a certain date, with no harm to any. The blessing may start with "I ask for the grace of the blessing by the Goddess or by a specific Goddess (or God, for they are equal). The release blessing may be to release the current position, with peace and harmony, with harm to none, by a certain date. And finally, the group blessing may be a blessing for the group of

all executives and managers in all businesses to do their jobs with love and integrity instead of power, for the good of all employees and harm to none. The blessing should finish with either "And so it is" or "So mote it be". The individual throws their lavender into the fire at the completion of their blessing.

The blessings reflect that the Goddess always works in threes and that asking for a blessing for oneself needs to be balanced with a blessing for many. The blessing also reflects that one must release to allow room for something to enter. The blessing is fairly specific so that the Goddess understands the blessing. The Goddess is not human and therefore does not think like a human. If the blessing is "to make the world a better place for all mankind" which is a lovely goal, then the Goddess may interpret this blessing by sending a plague to wipe out most of mankind, eliminating much of the environmental abuse of the planet and bringing the population of earth to a reasonable number, thereby making the world a better place for all mankind.

After the last person has spoken, the Speaker gives thanks for the blessings of the circle, gives thanks to the Goddess, and releases the circle. Individuals may throw more lavender onto the fire as a binding of the events. The group may share a moment by the fire before retiring to the house for refreshments.

The Power of the Celebration

The evening was chilly but calm when we all went out to the fire. As we chanted and called on the Goddess and the God, a breeze came up in our yard, and our chimes rang during the ceremony. Members of the group said they could feel the power that attended the circle. At times, the power almost felt like a hum.

Individuals asked for blessings that focused on their specific needs or for specific needs of family and friends. One of the ladies asked for a chance to be a Yoga Class Instructor so that she could use her Yoga skills and share with others. She called us several days later and said that within twenty-four hours she was asked whether she would become a substitute instructor for a Yoga instructor who had some class time conflicts. One gentleman asked for a healing of his family and the healing process started about two days later when the grandmother had a massive stroke, and the family had to travel together to the funeral. I travel almost every week in my job and I asked for a chance to stay at home more often. I have had these last two weeks at home, and may possibly have a third week at home before I need to return to the client site. We are waiting for calls from other participants, to hear their stories about how the celebration is changing their lives.
