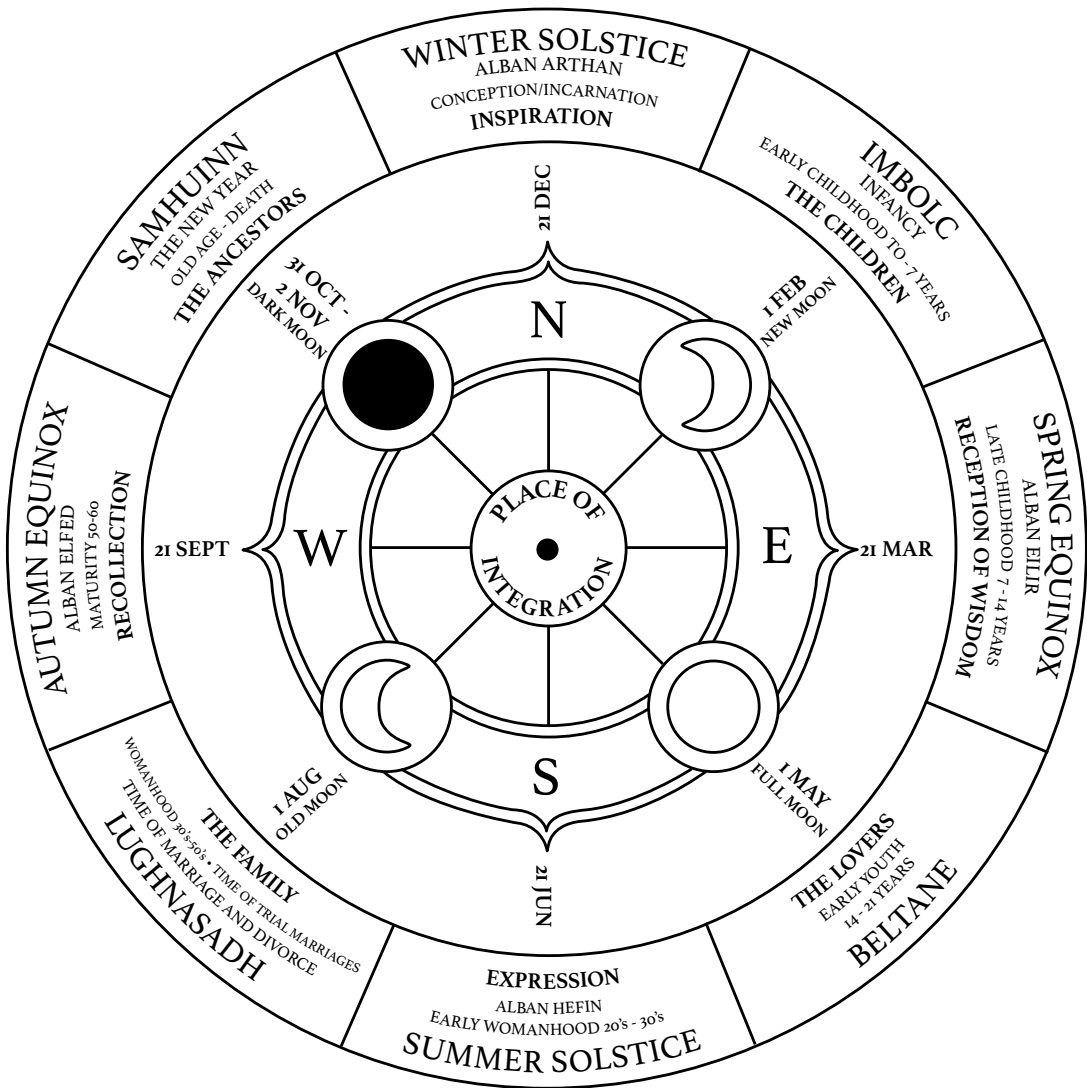


THE BOOK OF RITUAL



THE ORDER OF BARDS OVATES & DRUIDS





Cover illustration by Will Worthington

With many thanks to all those who have contributed to this book, the ceremonies, and to the commentaries on them.

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE EIGHT SEASONAL DRUID CEREMONIES



Much in the Order is given by symbolic ceremonies, not words. At Alban Eilir you have seen the fire of spring burning in the censer; at Alban Elfed you have seen the wheat as symbol of the ripening of all things into good, presented by the Young One, the Mabon of the Order. Early in February, we showed the first ploughing and the washing of the earth-mother's face; in May came the full spring flowers at Beltane... So we pass, in alternate Albans and Fire Festivals, through the year's arches, in the rhythm marked out, giving you something of the old and the permanent, that is living and therefore also new.

- Nuinn

At the heart of Druid spiritual practice lies the celebration of eight special times of the year: the solstices and equinoxes, and the four 'Cross-Quarter' day ceremonies - which have often been called the Celtic Fire Festivals. As you follow the Bardic course over the coming year, try to celebrate these eight special times too. If you are lucky enough to be able to attend an Order gathering you may experience a ceremony performed by many members - often in wonderful settings: You might experience a Beltane ceremony on a beach on the Scottish island of Iona, jumping over bonfires of driftwood; or you might celebrate the Summer Solstice atop Glastonbury Tor or in the sacred circle of Stonehenge; or you may be at a camp when we celebrate Lughnasadh or Samhuinn. Even if you cannot attend a big gathering, you might be able to join with others locally to experience a group ceremony. Have a look at the group list and see if there is a grove or seed-group near you, and if there isn't one, consider whether you'd like to start one. (For information on how to do this, see *Guidelines for OBOD Seed Groups & Groves* on the Order's website here: <https://hearth.druidry.org/seed-groups-groves>).

When should you celebrate the festivals?

The solstices and equinoxes are astronomical events that occur at specific times during the year, and individuals and groups tend to celebrate either on the day or on the nearest convenient day. The cross-quarter festivals are different - they derive from the pastoral calendar, and while traditionally

associated with certain dates, their influence can be felt, and they can be celebrated within a much broader range of dates. Some like to celebrate them on the nearest full-moon, or for Imbolc on the nearest new moon or first quarter, Beltane the nearest full moon, Lughnasadh the nearest third quarter, and Samhain on a waning crescent moon or dark moon. Others like to calculate the date that lies at the exact mid-point between the solar festivals either side, to celebrate the cross-quarters then. Alternatively you can combine practical considerations as to when to hold your celebration with your intuitive sense as to when is the right time. Although your location may not make this possible, some members celebrate at the time the local landscape is responding to the season, celebrating Imbolc when the first snowdrops appear, Beltane when the hedgerows are dripping with May, Lughnasadh when the farmers start harvesting, Samhain when Autumn decidedly shifts towards Winter.



In addition to this Book of Ritual, during your Bardic training you will receive eight separate booklets, one for each of the festivals. In these you will find information about the festivals and both solo and group ceremonies, and if you look on the Order's website you can find more information about the festivals and other ceremonies. The main thing to remember is that it is the spirit of each of these eight special times, their key themes, that are important,

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not the details or the exact wording of the rituals. **Some people like very little ritual, others love colourful and complex ritual. For some, their celebration will be primarily contemplative, others will want to engage to a far greater degree with ritual objects and actions. Some people feel they can open up to the moment more fully if their rituals are scripted so they can let go of working out what to do next, others prefer less scripted rituals.**

The ceremonies given in the booklets draw their inspiration from the original Druid ceremonies of the Order. In the form that they have been handed down to us, they were probably written down fairly recently: during the Chieftainship of George Watson-MacGregor Reid for the Summer Solstice and Equinox ceremonies, and during the Chieftainship of Nuinn for the Winter Solstice, Imbolc, Beltane and Lughnasadh ceremonies. The Samhuinn ceremony might well have the oldest provenance, it having been adapted by Nuinn from a Breton Druid ceremony.

These original ceremonies clearly draw their inspiration, and much of their content, from the writings of the Druid Revival period, which in turn are often inspired by earlier works. Nevertheless their style is particular to another time: they are highly formal, and over recent years we have found that - unaltered - they sometimes feel anachronistic and attuned to the spirit of an earlier age. For this reason, and because they are hard to adapt to individual or even small group use, we have created new ceremonies that still carry the spirit and intent of the old ones - but in a way that we have found over the years, through the experiences of many groups and individuals around the world, is more in tune with the Spirit of the Times. Since we hope that the wording of the rituals is inspired by the Awen, and originates as much as possible from beyond the individual personalities who wrote them, we do not allocate authorship to any of the ceremonies. We acknowledge, however, the significant contribution to the ceremony wording of the following members in recent times, bearing in mind there may well be others whose contributions are unknown: Vera Chapman, Cairisthea Worthington, Nicholas and Laura Spicer, and Susan Henssler, with additional contributions from Philip Carr-Gomm, Akkadia

Ford, Matt McCabe and Julie Britton. The alternative ceremonies have been developed by Cerri Lee and the Anderida Grove over a twenty-year period of holding group rituals by the Long Man of Wilmington, Sussex. The rituals given in the Appendix here were developed by Susan Henssler, with adaptations from 'The Book of Awakening Osiris' by Normandi Ellis (Glastonbury Tor and Stonehenge), and Pamela Meekings-Stewart and the Grove of the Summer Stars in Wellington New Zealand (Aotearoa).

'Ritual is Poetry in the world of Acts'

- Nuinn

Some readers will be used to ritual or will have no problem in starting to use ritual to celebrate the seasons. But many people find that they have mixed feelings about performing or participating in a ceremony. They have experienced so much empty ritual in their lives that to perform a ritual can seem like mere outward play - or they may be embarrassed by, or unused to, expressing themselves in a sacred way.

Sometimes ritual can seem the opposite of empty and superficial - it can seem fraught with danger - the province of the 'occult' in which unknown forces are evoked.

Bearing in mind the feelings and ideas we sometimes have about ritual, it is important that we understand its value and purpose when used in the Bardic and Druid work. Our understanding of ritual is that it fulfils the following functions, when performed with the right intent:

1. It helps us to change consciousness, and in particular it creates the conditions in which we can contact sources of insight, wisdom and strength.
2. It helps us to become aware of the sacred nature of the time and space we are in, and gives us the opportunity to acknowledge, celebrate and fully enjoy this time.
3. It creates a time and a space which becomes 'special' and from which can radiate beneficent forces, including healing energies which affect ourselves and others.
4. It creates a way for us to express the deeper inter-

connectedness between us all, and between other realms, beings and forces. This can occur whether we are practising ritual alone, with others in a group, or at the same time as others in different parts of the world. During a ritual, our sacred circle becomes a microcosm of the Universe.

Sometimes we tell ourselves that we do not have time for ritual. Although many of the rituals given in the Bardic Grade merit at least an hour of time including preparation, a good deal of them can be performed in a much shorter space of time. Some of the ceremonies may only take twenty minutes or so and can still give beneficial results.

If you feel strongly that you do not wish to perform any rituals, try simply visualising them in your mind's eye as you read them. Often this can be an effective way of working, although it is always better to include the body as well as the mind in this work.

Nuinn once said (in inner guidance) that 'ritual is poetry in the world of acts'. The rituals of the Order are simple and are designed to be enacted with a spirit of reverence and right intention. When they are performed in this way they become highly effective tools for changing consciousness, contacting inner resources, and for generating healing and beneficent energies.

You might already be experienced in ritual - perhaps through your practice of Wicca or in other ways. Here, in Druid ritual, you will find many similarities, but also some differences, and you might like to approach the practice of these eight ceremonies with a fresh mind - a 'Beginner's Mind' as it is known in Zen. Later in the course there is a Supplementary Gwers that deals with the connexions between Druidry, Wicca, Paganism, and Shamanism - but rather than becoming overly concerned with these to begin with, we suggest you leave these issues aside and simply experience how this way of working feels. Later you might want to build in to your practice of Druid ceremonial, other elements that you have found effective, and often nowadays one can find seasonal ceremonies being celebrated that draw elements from Druid, Wiccan and other approaches. But to be able to do this well, rather than in a random way, it is important first to have a grounding in the basic practice of Druid ceremonial. As with many arts, the trick is to learn first the basic skills. Then, once these are almost second nature,

you can start to adapt and add to the ceremonies in creative ways.

Each of the components of Druid ceremonial has a purpose and meaning. Put very simply, each ceremony has a beginning, middle and end: the Opening, the Rite, and the Closing. The Opening and Closing are the same in each ceremony, and their structure, purpose and meaning are discussed in the next section of this booklet. The middle section of each ceremony, the Rite, is relevant to the particular festival, and to discover the meaning and purpose of these, see the introductory notes to each ceremony.

Most of the group ceremonies are written to be worked outdoors, sometimes with a central fire. If you're working indoors, or for whatever reason can't have a fire, we're including brief alternative directions for working with a central candle or fire-bowl instead, but you should improvise as you see fit.

In the section 'Living the Wheel' we've prepared some suggestions for things you can do to acknowledge and attune to the energy of the festivals, even if you're not able to celebrate with a ceremony. Also sometimes included in this section are suggestions for how you might like to include children in your celebrations. Each of the festivals can present a wonderful opportunity for bringing the family together in a spirit of celebration, and a few changes or additions can easily be made to help children feel an integral part of the festivities. For further ideas on how to celebrate the festivals with your children, see *Once Around the Sun* by Ellen Evert Hopman (Destiny Books 2022) and *The Children's Forest* by Dawn Casey, Anna Richardson & Helen d'Ascoli (Hawthorn Press 2019).

The Albans - solstices and equinoxes - mark astronomical events that occur at a precise moment, so it's magically helpful to have your ceremony as near to the exact time as possible (an ephemeris can tell you the hour and minute!) But for most groups it works out in practice to be the nearest convenient day. The Cross-Quarter ceremonies - the Celtic Fire Festivals - refer to a particular time of year related to the season or the agricultural calendar, rather than a single discrete event. So their timing can be much looser, and the season can be celebrated in various ways over days or weeks. Some people will do a solo

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ceremony on the actual day, and share a ceremony with their Grove or seed group at another time, for instance.

The traditional names of the Cross-Quarter festivals come from Gaelic, and their spellings can vary: Oimelc and Imbolc, Beltane and Bealtinne, Samhain and Samhuinn for example. The names of the Albans come from Welsh Druidry: until recently, we used the names handed down to us: Alban Arthuan, Eiler, Heruin and Elued, with the teaching being that Alban means 'Light', and each festival name means 'The Light of...'. So we have Alban Arthuan - the Light of Arthur; Alban Eiler - the Light of the Earth; Alban Heruin - the Light of the Shore; and Alban Elued - the Light of the Water.

The term 'Alban' derives from the Welsh 'corner, angle, quarter'. Within OBOD, the term has been used to mean 'light', even though it doesn't carry that meaning in the Welsh language. Research also shows that the spellings as originally used are incorrect, and they should be: Alban Arthan - The Light of the Bear; Alban Eilir - the Light of Regeneration/Spring; Alban Hefin - the Light of Summer; Alban Elfed - the Light of Autumn. Some members may prefer the former, looser translations, which are certainly more evocative.

Druidry is now practiced all over the world, and the ceremonies can work well in whatever country you are living in - though members often find that they do need to adapt them to suit their location. If you are in the Southern Hemisphere, we suggest you reverse the dates of the ceremonies: since it makes no sense to celebrate mid-winter in mid-summer, for example. You might also want to reverse the attributes and ritual acts for North and South, since the North - in the Southern Hemisphere - is the place of light and warmth, and to the South lies Antarctica - the place of cold and darkness. There is no need to do this for East and West, since the sun still rises in the East and sets in the West. We also suggest you cast the circle and move around it sunwise, but sunwise in the Southern hemisphere is anti-clockwise not clockwise. You may want to change some of the symbolism and imagery too, to reflect your local flora and fauna. An excellent book for those living in the Southern hemisphere is *Celebrating the Southern Seasons* by Juliet Batten (Tandem Press). Although written for Aotearoa,

New Zealand, if you are living in any of the southern hemisphere countries, you will find it well worth studying. You might also find it helpful to browse the Order's Australasian and Oceanian website druidryaustralia.org or to read their journal *Serpentstar*, which often includes sample ritual texts. Note that if you choose to reverse North and South, all references in the rituals to NW should be translated as SW, NE as SE, and vice versa. The Appendix gives a sample ritual for New Zealand, as well as the text for the Order's Alban Hefin rituals at Glastonbury and Stonehenge, to give you an idea of how the basic forms can be amended to take account of different locations or larger numbers of participants.

In the festival booklets that accompany this *Book of Ritual*, the first essay that introduces each festival was written by Nuinn and Philip Carr-Gomm (Philip introducing or editing and adding to Nuinn's material) and the second essay that follows was written especially for the Order by Mara Freeman.

As well as being spiritual, mystical or magical celebrations, it is important to remember that these festivals are also artistic and social events. They create an opportunity and an atmosphere in which participants can play music, recite their poetry, dance, and sing. Some groups have even used ceremonies as events in which participants create artwork: a Dutch grove, for example, had two large pieces of paper at each end of the room. At a certain point in an Equinox ceremony participants painted on either the 'Light' or the 'Dark' side of the circle. Although the Eisteddfod section of the ceremony can sometimes occur in the central section of a ritual, it is often best if it occurs in conjunction with the feasting once the ritual is over. Dance, however, is an ideal activity to incorporate into the ceremony itself, and the Dances of Universal Peace movement has created dances for each of the festivals, which work well with groups: see *Celtic Blessings - A Celebration of the Pagan and Christian Celtic Traditions*, from nickomoandrasullah.com.

When celebrating the festivals remember they are designed to help you let go for a while the demands of your busy everyday life - to open instead to the magic and mystery of the moment - to the power of a particular time at a particular place. They are designed to help you enjoy and celebrate the Here

and Now. These rituals are living - they are not meant to be set scripts cast in stone. Don't worry too much about the form of the ceremonies - open instead to their spirit - their intention, their feeling, their energy.

Here is one member's contribution on this subject to the Order's Online forum:

... Our 'observances', celebrations and rituals, do not conform to a doctrine but are adapting to suit the time and circumstances. Druids welcome and try to respect people irrespective of their religious belief. Many are drawn to druidry because they have become disillusioned with conventional approaches to spirituality, and do not wish to exchange one set of rules and rituals for another. As druids we walk in the footsteps of our ancestors, but our destination is the future. If others wish to join us they are welcome. Each of us contributes their own special gift to the journey, we embrace scientists as warmly as mystics, so anyone out there worried that they're not 'spiritual' enough and reels in horror from being regarded as any form of priest, don't worry you are not alone.

When you receive The Bardic Companion read the section on ritual there - this will help you to work more effectively in ritual. In addition, gradually, during the coming months of working with the Gwersi, you will be taught the basics of Druid ritual - such as how to cast a circle, and how to bless it with water and fire. Until you reach these points in your study, just follow the instructions given in the rituals, and focus particularly on the instructions in the

following section.

Whether you choose to celebrate on your own or with others, out in nature, indoors or online, with a great deal of preparation or completely spontaneously, may every festival bring you great joy and inspiration!

🌿 Suggested reading

If you would like to learn more about the ceremonies and festival times, you will find the following books helpful. They are all available from the Order's store at Druidry.org: *Druid Mysteries* by Philip Carr-Gomm,

Time for Magic by Jamie Reid, Stephen Ellcock & Philip Carr-Gomm, *The Wheel of the Year* by Rebecca Beattie, *Sacred Actions: Living the Wheel of the Year through Earth-Centered Sustainable Practices* by Dana O'Driscoll, *The Magical Year* by Danu Forest, *The Earth's Cycle of Celebration* by Glennie Kindred, *Kindling the Celtic Spirit* by Mara Freeman.

For an extensive scholarly study of the historical background to the festivals, see *Stations of the Sun* by Ronald Hutton, and for using the Wheel of the Year to develop your writing skills, see *The Ritual of Writing* by Andrew Anderson.

For celebrating the festivals with children, see: *Once Around the Sun: Stories, Crafts, and Recipes to Celebrate the Sacred Earth Year* by Ellen Evert Hopman, *The Children's Forest: Stories and songs, wild food, crafts and celebrations* by Dawn Casey, Anna Richardson and Helen d'Ascoli.



OPENING & CLOSING THE CEREMONIES



The Opening and Closing provide a basic ritual structure that is easy to learn and to use on one's own or in groups of any size. There is a version for solo practitioners and a version for groups, though each are worth studying whichever way you will be working.

The Group opening and closing is written for six speaking parts. But the number of parts can be expanded or reduced. The six parts are: Druid 1 (in the East) and Druid 2 (in the West), and the Quarters: East, West, North and South. These 6 parts can be reduced to 5 or 4 easily - Druid 1 can be enacted by East and Druid 2 by West. (You do not need to have entered the Druid Grade to enact these parts). There is also a part written for a Herald, who begins and ends the ceremony and serves as a link between sacred and mundane time.

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In a small group, a Quarter can do this. In addition, the ceremonies involve the consecrating of the circle with Fire and Water - these can all be done by separate individuals or, again, if necessary, by the appropriate quarters - West for Water, and South for Fire. Other roles can similarly be divided among the available participants. Of course, there may be participants without speaking roles, and these ceremonies are designed to give everyone the opportunity to participate in one way or another. Some ceremonies require that certain figures enter the circle from outside it at a designated moment - if you're doing this with a very small group, and have to double up on this role, just step outside, pause, then re-enter.

A note on gender: anyone can enact any role in a ceremony, and this includes the roles of 'gods' and 'goddesses', 'sun-kings' and 'flower queens' etc. These roles, and those of the Quarters and the Druids, need not be gender-linked, though conceptually they do embody the basic polarities of directive/receptive, sun/moon, wand/chalice, yang/yin, etc. Everyone has reflections of these figures, these gods and archetypes, within themselves, and one of the benefits of ceremony is that it allows us to touch and explore these otherwise unacknowledged aspects of our world and our selves.

Presented here is the simple basic form for opening and closing the ceremonies, in order to provide a sound foundation that is easy to learn and that everyone can share. However, it is just that - a form - and you should feel free to adapt it, expand, elaborate, change or embellish it to suit yourselves, your region and your circumstances. Over the years, many different OBOD groups have created their own variations, and we're including in this booklet the texts of two of the biggest Order ceremonies, the Summer Solstice ceremonies at Glastonbury Tor and at Stonehenge, so you can see some of the ways in which the basic rituals can be expanded and adapted. Also, Alban Arthan from a Southern Hemisphere celebration.

The Opening consists of several distinct parts, each of which serves a specific function:

✿ Entering

The ceremony really begins when everyone is gathered outside the circle and is ready to enter it. Quiet should be observed as each participant enters the circle individually, with the others waiting while each one enters from the West, circles around to the East, and makes whatever silent salutation they choose, before taking their place in the circle. If there are many participants this can take for ever - and is not recommended! Sometimes the group is simply too large for people to enter singly - and the ceremony just has to start when everyone is assembled in the circle. Some groups arrange to smudge each participant as they enter the circle. Aside from the problematic issue of this activity being appropriated from Native American tradition, the process can significantly delay the start of the ritual.

We enter from the West, traditionally, because that is the Quarter of the most receptive energies, and in a sense, we are coming to ritual to be nourished, as well as to celebrate and express ourselves. Also, obviously, it is the Quarter that faces East. We salute East, traditionally, because as it is the Quarter of the rising sun, it has long been a symbol of Realisation and of Enlightenment. Traditionally, participants raise one palm in salutation to the East, but some raise both palms, or simply bow gently in acknowledgement. However you need not make any particular 'salute' if you're not comfortable with it, and can simply circle sunwise to your place. East and Druid 1 should enter last so that they are not standing there being saluted! If because of the terrain of your space or the layout of your room it's not possible to enter from the West, just enter where you can, then circle sunwise to the West, pause, and enter the sacred space from there. Traditionally, participants do not salute all of the directions on entering, nor do all participants turn to face each direction when Peace is called to the Quarters, or the Quarters are opened.

🌿 The Herald's Welcome

Herald: *"By the power of star and stone,
By the power of the land within and without,
By all that is Fair and Free,
We welcome you to this rite of...
In the grove/seed group/family/etc. of..."*

This forms a link between the outer, social world, and the inner, sacred world of the ceremony about to take place. Also, if there are guests at the ceremony, it serves to welcome them all.

🌿 Gathering ~ Coming Together ~ Uniting

DRUID 1: *"We have come from East and West, North and South to be here together today."*
(All join hands)

DRUID 2: *"Let us take three breaths...
Together with the Earth beneath us...
Together with the Sea around us...
Together with the Sky above us..."*

NORTH: *"With the blessings of Earth, Sea and Sky may our ceremony begin!"*
(All release hands)

Participants need to ground themselves and connect with each other, to recognise their shared presence and to take the first step into the ritual. So holding hands at the beginning is important, and reminds us that the real reason we're here is not just to "get our lines right" but to share magic with our family, our community ... and with the moment. We share 3 breaths: with the traditional Celtic elements of Earth, Sea and Sky - to bless, ground and energeise us for the coming ceremony.

🌿 The Call to Spirit

DRUID 1: (Saluting East and facing outwards) *"O Spirit/Great Spirit/God(s)/Goddess(es)"*
(Choose a term you feel comfortable with) *"We greet you and honour you, and ask for your blessings on this our ceremony!"* (Face inwards) *"O Spirit of this place, O Spirit of this circle, we ask for your blessings, your guidance, your inspiration on this our ceremony."*

Here each group, and each individual, needs to find whatever form of expression they prefer. The intention of this moment in the ceremony is to make a call to whatever you feel as a source of blessing, and to ask that blessing on your ceremony. Included with this Call to Spirit in general is a Call to the spirit of the particular place where you actually are, whether it is a grand old sacred site like Stonehenge, or your own front room. Every place has a 'spirit' in this sense, its own unique 'energy signature', and you need not personify this energy to experience it. The 'feeling' of a place will respond and change as you work in it. Further, a Call is made to the spirit of the circle - that is, the particular individuals gathered at this moment, as well as the 'group spirit' of your Grove or seed group, which will evolve over time, as you do.

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☸ Peace to the Quarters

DRUID 2: *"Let us begin by giving peace to the quarters, for without peace can no work be."*

(Moving to salute each direction in turn, crossing the centre of the circle, then returning to place in the West)

"May there be Peace in the North.

May there be Peace in the South.

May there be Peace in the West.

May there be Peace in the East."

ALL: *"May there be peace throughout the whole world."*

Druids have traditionally been peacemakers, and at every level, both personal and global, we know that where there is conflict it is hard to achieve anything of real benefit: 'Without peace can no work be.' When we give peace to the quarters in ceremony, we also focus on inner peace, and let our minds move one step closer to stillness. As the words are spoken, imagine peace flowing out to the Quarter - picture it as it flows through your neighbours' homes and gardens, out across roads and forests, across towns and cities, all the way around the globe. You'll note that in giving peace to the 4 quarters, the circle is crossed twice - on the North-South axis, and the East-West. (If there's a fire or a candle in the centre, just skirt round it). The purpose of this "crossing the circle" is to mark the central point, the here and now of the ritual - X marks the spot! Try drawing the route of the Peacegiver out on a piece of paper and see the shape that is made.

☸ The Druids' Prayer

DRUID 1: *"Let us join in this prayer that unites all Druids:"*

ALL: *"Grant, O Spirit/Great Spirit/God(s)/Goddess(es), thy protection,
and in protection, strength,
and in strength, understanding,
and in understanding, knowledge,
and in knowledge, the knowledge of justice,
and in the knowledge of justice, the love of it,
and in the love of it, the love of all existences,
and in the love of all existences,
the love of Spirit/Great Spirit/God(s)/Goddess(es) and all goodness."*

The Prayer may be placed at different points in the Opening, or omitted altogether. It serves to unite the participants, and draws our attention to a series of qualities that we, as druids, wish to cultivate in ourselves. Again, it's up to each individual to find the form of address that they feel comfortable with, and it's common, when a group gathers in ceremony, to hear participants using different terms at the beginning of the prayer. Uniformity is not a virtue in Druidry! It is worth taking some time to meditate on this prayer, to try to understand how each quality is derived from the preceding and gives rise to the next, so that when you say it in a ritual, it is not mere words. See if you can feel each quality unfolding within you as you name it. The prayer is also known as the 'Gorsedd Prayer' and is used in the Welsh National Eisteddfod. It has been variously attributed to Iolo Morganwg, and to the early Welsh bard Talhearn.

☸ Awens

ALL: 3 AWENS

Awen is pronounced ah-oo-en, and each of the three syllables is held for the same duration. The opening Awens are chanted in unison, as opposed to the 'cascading' Awens of the closing, which overlap each other

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to provide a continuous chant - like a round, participants stagger their initial Awens. In addition, Awen-chanting may be introduced at any point in a ceremony. Feel free to vary the pitch of your chanting - a major chord provides a lovely set of three notes, for example, and it can be quite magical when some people float a single Awen an octave higher than the rest while others provide a deep drone underneath. In order to set the pitch, it's wise to designate one person to start the chant, and to keep to the pitch, everyone needs to remember to listen to the others even as they are chanting themselves. It's worthwhile to practice chanting on your own and whenever you meet in your group, trying to relax your voice and let the sound resonate and flow. As you chant, try imagining inspiration (remember, Awen means flowing spirit: inspiration) flowing in and out of you with your breath. When sounding the cascading Awens, nine seems to be about the right number to chant, but let Spirit and the group energy guide you, rather than distracting your attention by counting.

☿ Casting the Circle

DRUID 1: *"Let all disturbing thoughts be laid aside."* (Casts circle sunwise, while Druid 2 speaks:)

DRUID 2: *"The circle of our horizon of our lives and lands, of time and of the year, of seasons and of goodness, of birth and of growing, of dying and of rebirth..."*

The circle can either be cast with a wand, staff, sword or forefinger, or in the following way (particularly if children are present):

EAST: *"Let us mark out this circle with symbols of the season."*

(Children/adults sprinkle seeds, flowers, petals or leaves in circle sunwise around participants while Druid 2 speaks as above).

This act designates the sacred space that provides the 'container' for the ritual. The circle is cast by INTENTION, and is placed wherever the person casting it visualises it, so it does not matter whether they walk around the inside or the outside of the participants - indeed, in a very large gathering, or where the terrain is rough, the circle can be made as the caster simply stands in the centre and turns around. Normally participants do not leave a circle once it is cast, but if you have to leave the circle before the end of a ceremony, open a gateway for yourself in your imagination and with a gesture. Step through it, and close it behind you.

☿ The Consecration of the Circle

DRUID 1: *"Now let us consecrate this circle with Water and with Fire."*

WEST or WATER BEARER: *"May our circle be purified and blessed with the Element of Water."*
(Moves sunwise with water.)

SOUTH or FIRE BEARER: *"May our circle be purified and blessed with the Element of Fire."*
(Moves sunwise with candle/incense.)

Traditionally done with Fire (incense - you can buy or make a mixture appropriate to the ceremony - or a candle, a flaming brand, a pair of fire breathers - even a lighter, in a pinch!) and with Water (the usual way is to carry a bowl or cup of water in which to dip your fingertips, then flick outward, evenly around the circle. It is up to you how high you aim the spray!) If you like, or wish to create more roles, you can also consecrate with Air (bells, feathers, silk banners or, in one memorable instance, giggles). Consecrating with Earth is more unusual, because in some sense, we ARE Earth; it is Earth that is being consecrated. Nevertheless it can

OPENING & CLOSING THE CEREMONIES

also be very beautiful and effective to consecrate with Earth by sprinkling salt, ash, sand or soil. Notice that the consecrations by Water and Fire are followed by Druid 2 saying: *"We gather as equals, in our physical form here upon the earth. Each presence is a blessing, and with every breath we take, we breathe light and life into this circle"* which brings in the awareness of Earth and Air.

These Elemental consecrations can be done by the Quarters themselves, in a small group, or by separate individuals who start and end their sunwise circumambulations in the appropriate quarter. The consecrations can be done silently, or you may speak about what you are doing as you move around the circle. For example, while consecrating with water, you might softly iterate all the forms of water, saying: *"Blessings of water, blessings of rain, blessings of rivers, blessings of tears, blessings of dew, blessings of deep lakes, blessings of the waves, blessings of..."* etc.

🌿 Opening the Quarters

DRUID 2: *"Let the four directions be honoured, that power and radiance might enter our circle for the good of all beings."*

EAST: (Turning and facing outwards) *"With the blessing of the hawk of dawn soaring in the clear pure air, we call upon the powers of the East."*

SOUTH: (Turning and facing outwards) *"With the blessing of the great stag in the heat of the chase, and the inner fire of the sun, we call upon the powers of the South."*

WEST: (Turning and facing outwards) *"With the blessing of the salmon of wisdom who dwells within the sacred waters of the pool, we call upon the powers of the West."*

NORTH: (Turning and facing outwards) *"With the blessing of the great bear of the starry heavens and the deep and fruitful earth, we call upon the powers of the North."* (All four now turn inward.)

ALL: *"May the harmony of our circle be complete."*

The Opening and the Closing of the Quarters can be as simple or as elaborate as you like. Note that we have shown a form in which the Quarters are opened sunwise around the circle starting with East, as it is the Quarter of beginnings. The Closing of the Quarters unwinds anti-sunwise finishing with East. But you don't have to do it this way! You can open the Quarters in opposite pairs, and/or so that the last Quarter opened represents the current season, or in other ways. (Note that in the Glastonbury Tor ceremony, the last Quarter opened is South, for high summer in the Northern Hemisphere.) It's usually a good idea to close precisely opposite to the way you've opened.

Each of the animals given in this form of Opening are deeply related to Druid tradition, and you will learn about their significance as you study the course, and read Celtic mythology. *The Druid Animal Oracle* also gives much information about them. But don't feel you need to keep to the animals given here, particularly if you live in a country where different

animals feel more appropriate. Look at the Southern Hemisphere Alban Arthan ceremony given in this booklet, and notice how they have been changed to suit the different location.

As you open each quarter, don't simply say the words - use your powers of imagination to see, feel or sense the animal. So, as you do this in the East, see the clear blue sky above and ahead of you and feel the blessing of the dawn and of the hawk, and sense power flowing into the circle from this direction.

In the South see warm southern lands before you in the noon-day sun - then sense the blessing of the stag and feel power flowing into the circle from this direction. In the West see the sun setting over the sea or a lake - then sense the blessing of the salmon, and feel power flowing into the circle from this direction. In the North gaze into a clear night sky - then see the stars shining in the darkness; sense the blessings of the bear, and the Great Bear, and feel power flowing

into the circle from this direction.

As you become more and more familiar with the Quarters and the Elements, through ritual and meditation, and your work in the Bardic Grade, you may well find your own ways of opening and closing the Quarters that expresses the meaning they have for you. The basic formula given here is easy to use and can be expanded spontaneously in the moment. For example, the calling of the Eastern Quarter can be elaborated to include all sorts of associated symbols and attributes particular to your region and cosmology: *'Spirits of the East, of the hawk and the wren, the dragonfly and the moth, we invite you to enter our circle and our minds, to inspire and enlighten us! Quarter of the rising sun, of the bright sword of dawn, and of the Element of Air we call to you! Etc ...'* Use whatever images or terms best express your own experience of the Quarter and Element. Naturally, these will vary in different parts of the world. Use your own words, but also feel free to use music or movement. In some really big ceremonies, such as ones we have had at Druid camps, the Calling of the Quarters can involve singers, musicians, drummers,

dancers, white horses and four-man dragons in Wellies.

The Closing of the ceremony can be seen as an affirmation of the shared experience of the ceremony, and an unwinding of the structures that have been set up by the Opening, that have served to contain the ceremony. Again, the forms can be as simple or as elaborate as you like. In the original Order ceremonies, the Closing Prayer was adapted from an Egyptian one: 'May the blessing of the Uncreated One, of the Created Word and of the Spirit that is the Inspirer be always with us/me.' You may choose to use this, or the simpler ones given in the ceremony booklets, such as: 'May the blessings of the Goddess/God/Spirit/Great Spirit be always with us/me,' or 'This ceremony is closed in the Apparent World. May its inspiration continue within our beings.'

At the end of the ceremony, exit the circle sunwise, saluting the East. This ensures that everyone makes at least one circuit around the circle - which would not occur if all exited anti-sunwise.



THE SEASONAL CEREMONIES

The Opening and Closing provide a basic formula that can be used around any ceremony - what you put in the middle is up to you! You and your group can use these eight ceremonies exactly as given, or adapt them to suit your needs. Most groups find it useful to work through at least one cycle of the year with the ceremonies we provide; that gives a good grounding in what these seasonal rituals are all about. Once they've been experienced and understood, you can allow your creativity to find your own unique approach. In a way, the ideal is for a group to become familiar enough with the underlying structure and intent of the ceremonies - and with each other - to be able to extemporise the whole ceremony.

The ceremonies have various roles in addition to Druids 1 and 2 and the Quarters, the Herald and the Elemental consecrators who appear in every Opening. Remember that these roles can be shared

out among any number of people, from as few as four. They also require a variety of props, and we've given suggestions for alternatives - if, for example, you don't happen to have a scythe handy, or live in a part of the world that doesn't have snowdrops.

Several of the ceremonies have poems or recitations appropriate to the occasion, in some cases to be read by one person, in others, by all, with each person taking a single line in turn. You can use the ones we've given, or find your own. Or better yet, write your own! Finally, a note about moving within the ritual space: try to always move sunwise around the circle: if some participants move sunwise and others anti-sunwise it looks clumsy and collisions can occur! Once you have moved sunwise part-way around the circle, continue right the way around to return to your place - rather than doubling back to get to your place quicker.



APPENDIX



ALBAN HEFIN CEREMONY ON GLASTONBURY TOR

Dord is sounded three times to signal beginning of the ceremony.
Herald: *"Greetings and Welcome to all!"*

"By the Power of star and stone, by the beauty of tree and flower, by the light of the sun and moon, I bid you welcome to this ceremony of Alban Hefin of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids."

Druid 1: *"O Great Spirit, O Spirit of this most sacred place, we ask for your blessings on this our Solstice ceremony."*

Druid 2: *"At this time of greatest light, all who gather here are welcome. Between Heaven and Earth we stand together, one people. May the heart of love light our path."*

Druid 3: *"At the height of the sun's strength, may the light of awareness shine above us and below us, before us and behind us, to our right and to our left: all around us, and within us."*

Druid 4: *"We are gathered in this high place of light, in the eye of the sun, to celebrate the Summer Solstice!"*

Druid 1: *"Let us begin by giving peace to the quarters, for without peace can no work be."*

Druid of the South: (Turning outwards) *"May there be peace in the South!"*

Druid of the West: (Turning outwards) *"May there be peace in the West!"*

Druid of the North: (Turning outwards) *"May there be peace in the North!"*

Druid of the East: (Turning outwards): *"May there be peace in the East!"*

All: *"May there be peace throughout the whole world!"*

Druid 1: *"This is sacred time. This is sacred space. Let us abide together within this circle of light."* (Casts circle)

Druid 4: *"Let the circle be consecrated with Fire."* FireBearer circumambulates with incense.

Druid 2: *"Let the circle be consecrated with Water."* WaterBearer circumambulates with chalice.

Druid 1: *"Let the circle be consecrated with Air."* AirBearer circumambulates with bells.

Druid 3: *"Let the four directions be honoured that power and radiance might enter our circle for the good of all beings."*

Bard of the East: (Turn to face outwards) *"We salute the Hawk of Dawn soaring in the clear pure air, and we call upon the Powers of the East."*

APPENDIX (Alban Hefin ceremony on Glastonbury Tor)

Druid of the East: (Turn to face outwards and open gate) *"Let the Breath of Life open this Eastern Gate and inspire us with the Element of Air."*

Ovate of the East: (Addresses all) *"Behold, the Gateway of the East is open. It is the springtime of the year. The sun is rising from the abodes of night, new life shows forth in every form on Earth. Our minds are cleansed with truth, the bright sword of dawn sings in the clear sky."*

Bard of the West: (Turn to face outward) *"We salute the Salmon of Wisdom, who dwells within the sacred waters of the pool, and we call upon the Powers of the West."*

Druid of the West: (Turns to face outward and opens gate) *"Let the Heart of Love open this Western Gate and instil us with the Element of Water."*

Ovate of the West: (Addresses all) *"Behold, the Gateway of the West is open. It is the autumn of the year. The sun descends from the heights of day; all things of earth are ripening and gathering in. Our hearts are filled with love; the chalice flows with bright blessings."*

Bard of the North: (Turn to face outward) *"We salute the Great Bear of the starry heavens, and the deep and fruitful earth, and we call upon the Powers of the North."*

Druid of the North: (Turns outward and opens gate) *"Let the Hand of Law open this Northern Gate and imbue us with the Element of Earth."*

Ovate of the North: (Addresses all) *"Behold, the Gate of the North is open. It is the winter of the year. The sun sleeps through the midnight of darkness; all the life of Earth is at rest. Our actions turn inward to contemplation, the peace of the fallow time is upon us."*

Bard of the South: (Turn to face outward) *"We salute the Great Stag in the heat of the chase, and the inner fire of the sun, and we call upon the Powers of the South."*

Druid of the South: (Turns to face outward and opens gate) *"Let the Eye of Light open this Southern Gate and inflame us with the Element of Fire."*

Ovate of the South: (Addresses all) *"Behold the Gate of the South is open. It is the summer of the year. The sun stands at the peak of day, all the life of Earth is in its flowering. Our spirits are filled with ardent purpose, to celebrate the glory of Life, of Light, of Love. The time of joy is here."*

All the Bards and Druids turn inwards again.

Druid 3: *"Now the sun stands in his glory overhead. We are children in the light of day. Let us recite the Druids' prayer."*

All: *"Grant, O Spirit/God/Goddess, thy protection,
And in protection, strength,
And in strength, understanding,
And in understanding, knowledge,
And in knowledge, the knowledge of justice,
And in the knowledge of justice, the love of it,
And in the love of it, the love of all existences,
And in the love of all existences, the love of Spirit/God/dess and all Goodness."*

Druid 1: *"We stand at the mid-point of the year, the turning time. We stand in Alban Hefin, the Light of the Shore. All things in nature move through a centre of balance in their ceaseless, spiral dance of evolution. It is the time when*

APPENDIX (Alban Hefin ceremony on Glastonbury Tor)

the tide of life and of light is at its zenith - the point where it pauses in stillness - before it begins its long ebb towards darkness."

Herald: *"We have come to this holy hill, riding high on a tide of joy and celebration. We have come to greet the sun; we come to honour the Light of Life. Let the speakers step forward."*

(The five speakers each take a step or two towards the centre.)

Speaker 1: *"The Sun is Goddess and God; she has ten thousand names."*

Speaker 2: *"She is Wakahiru-Me, Dia-Greine, Sulis; he is Daksha, he is Apollo, he is Bladud."*

Speaker 3: *"She is Marisha-Ten, Saule, Solnitse; he is Dhatar, Punchau, Taime."*

Speaker 4: *"He is Baal, Mihr, Ekhi, Istannu. He is Radogast, he is Savitar. He is Horus, he is Ra."*

Speaker 5: *"She is Arinna, she is Shapash, she is Sunna. He is Tawa, Cuatha, Belenos, Uwashil."*

Speaker 1: *The Sun is the Child of Heaven, a golden drop of flesh descending through open air, bright star in the dark house of space, heir to the ages, word edging into world. She is falling into life, she rises, turns, grows. He is calling us to life, he speaks, he sings, he plays. The sun is a man walking the world, as much with the earth as the skin of a snake. He grows a long beard and sits on the mountain, knowing its secrets. He is with us, the spirit, the gold, the god, the ebb of life, watcher over the world. She is within us, the heat, the bone, the yearning, the mystery. We rise like swallows and fly up the ladder of heaven. We sit in his hand. He buries us in the blue egg of the world. We are pressed into the soil and rise. We grow in her. The world changes, and gods and men. We are becoming ourselves, here between earth and sun."*

Speaker 2: *"The sun is the lover, the earth is the beloved. Now the people in their houses stir, yawning, turning, stretching. Shot through with light, they glow and quiver. Stones of sunlight pile up in heaven. Emerald is truth when the gods draw near. Blessed are we by the sun. The earth is glad. Cows chew the cud of light. We breathe the perfume of a golden flower. Old men and women rise, burst from their houses, arms lifted, dancing, crying, singing. Dawn is a harp, playing the song of day. We spin and sing in the house of the sun, She is Queen; she blazes at the edge of morning. She rises from the flood. Drawing up water, she quenches the thirst of her people. They drink and enter the river. He is King; he sucks the breast of heaven, golden haired, flesh on fire, lord of desire. Always burning, returning, always constant and new."*

Speaker 3: *"The sun is the Mind of Light. This day I am awakened. Stabbed by the light of knowledge I rise, I am called from my house. The sun crests the hill and the hawk, according to a higher will, whirls and circumscribes day. My feet are in the earth, yet my heart leaps. I open, am pierced by light. A cry escapes my lips. I know not what I say; it is the language of soul beneath skin, the song of birds in the ancient groves. I climb the hill to greet the day. Beautiful is the golden seed from which the corn arises; beautiful the turning of the wheel. My body is the unfolding of time and purpose. I shine as bronze as a mirror. My head lifts like the sun. Passion and power quiver on the land, casting long shadows."*

Speaker 4: *"The sun is the Heart of Love. Drink the cup of heaven. Let grace roll down your head like water. Drink in earth; take in the things of the world. The barley grows straight in rows; the young shoots unfurl according to a higher purpose. Truth rides visibly through the world. Have you not seen it? The sun shimmers with the power of gold. We are breathless in the golden air. Drink in the light and praise the cup of forever that spills out the threads of eternity."*

Speaker 5: *"The Sun is the Power of Life. It is her breath we breathe, her love that endures, her power that moves the world. The Sun rides the wheel of Change. It is his blood that flows in us; we are the quivering of his arrows, the stirring of his hands. We are his spirit moving in matter. May the eye of the sun pierce us with the grace of his will."*

APPENDIX (Alban Hefin ceremony on Glastonbury Tor)

We are held in god's hands. Like the ocean, we whirl and remain the same. We are bound by law and held by the truth of change, that all seasons return, and that which was once and is no more shall come again. Sing then, rejoice and surrender yourself to her will. See how the seed falls from the tree and is buried. Die at once and live again. You shall grow like the Oak, rooted in matter, bound for boundless sky. You shall be blown by wind. You shall see the storm and sing its praises. You shall lie in the fields and kiss the earth. Raise your arms. You shall see the beauty and power of the gods and change forever!"

The five speakers return to their places.

Druid 2: *"May the ancient wisdom of our Druid heritage, that deep source of eternal truth, held within our Land and our people, be fired by the inner light of the sun, whose power on this day we celebrate. Let us together, untied by the bonds of love and true fellowship, radiate peace and harmony into the world, sending healing to this earth, our home, our Mother, for the sake of our children and all life."*

Druid 1: *"We come with gifts from the four Quarters of this sacred earth, from the three grades of our Order, and from the two who stand as Lord and Lady of the Land."*

Herald: *"Let the Giftbearers of the four quarters bring forth their gifts to the One that is All and they shall from that source receive gifts in turn."*

Giftbearer of the East: (Approaches centre, bearing Rose) *"I am come from the East. My gift is this single perfect rose, to represent the trust that brings clarity to our minds."*

Giftbearer of the South: (Approaches centre, bearing candle lantern) *"I am come from the South. My gift is the burning candle flame, to represent the dedication that fires our spirits."*

Giftbearer of the West: (Approaches centre, bearing a cup of wine) *"I am come from the West. My gift is this wine, to represent the devotion that sustains our hearts."*

Giftbearer of the North: (Approaches centre, bearing a loaf of bread) *"I am come from the North. My gift is this bread, to represent the commitment that grounds our actions."*

(Each places their gift in the centre, they join hands and are silent for a moment, facing inward.)

Giftbearer of the East: (Turning to face outward) *"From the centre, the One that is All, I claim the Gift of Inspiration, and carry it to the world."* (Steps halfway back to circumference). *"May the sacred gift of Inspiration flow out to the World from this place and time. Let each life be touched by its blessing, for the good of all."*

Giftbearer of the South: (Turning to face outward) *"From the centre, the One that is All, I claim the Gift of Desire, and carry it to the world."* (Steps halfway back to circumference). *"May the sacred gift of Desire flow out to the World from this place and time. Let each life be touched by its blessing, for the good of all."*

Giftbearer of the West: (Turning to face outward) *"From the centre, the One that is All, I claim the Gift of Intuition, and carry it to the world."* (Steps halfway back to the circumference). *"May the sacred gift of Intuition flow out to the World from this place and time. Let each life be touched by its blessing, for the good of all."*

Giftbearer of the North: (Turning to face outward) *"From the centre, the One that is All, I claim the Gift of Manifestation, and carry it to the World."* (Steps halfway back to the circumference). *"May the sacred gift of Manifestation flow out to the world from this place and time. Let each life be touched by its blessing, for the good of all."*

(Each then returns to their place.)

Herald: *"Now let the representatives of the three Grades of our Order come forward to give and receive their gifts."*

APPENDIX (Alban Hefin ceremony on Glastonbury Tor)

Giftbearer of the Bards: (Steps to the centre) *"From the Bards of this assembly, and of the Order, I bring the Gift of the Future, the Call of the Mabon..."*

Giftbearer of the Ovates: (Steps to the centre) *"From the Ovates of the assembly, and of the Order, I bring the Gift of the past, the Crane Bag of the Ancestors. Within the Crane Bag are..."*

Giftbearer of the Druids: (Steps to the centre) *"From the Druids of this assembly, and of the Order, I bring the Gift of this moment..."*

(They join hands and are silent for a moment, facing inward.)

Giftbearer of the Bards: (Turns outward, moves halfway back to circumference) *"From the centre, the One that is All, to the Bards of the World: the flowering of the Arts."*

Giftbearer of the Ovates: (Turns outward, moves halfway back to circumference) *"From the centre, the One that is All, to the Ovates of the World: the healing of all the Land."*

Giftbearer of the Druids: (Turns outward, moves halfway back to circumference) *"From the centre, the One that is All, to the Druids of the World: the harmony of all beings."*

All three then return to their places.

Herald: *"Let the Lord and the Lady come forward."*

The Lord and the Lady step forward and stand together to the east of the centre. The Lord is wearing a sword and is crowned with oak leaves. The Lady bears a bowl of apples, and is crowned with flowers.

Lord: (Unsheathes sword, kneels before Lady, offers sword) *"O Lady of this Land, all-encompassing Sovereignty, to you I offer my service as steward, now and forever, to love, honour and cherish your beauties and your powers, your gifts and your graces, and every marvellous permutation of your infinite forms."*

Lady: (Places her hand on the sword) *"O Lord of this Land, King amongst men, I thank you for your good stewardship, your protection and your care. Rise, stand before me, and let your sword be ever ready to serve its proper task."* (Lord rises and sheaths sword.)

Lady: (Offers apple from the bowl) *"Receive from me the fruits of this Land, to reward you for the strength of your heart, and to nourish you in your labours."* (Gives him apple.) *"Receive also my love and my blessings."* (Kisses him)

They return to their places.

Druid 2: *"On this day of light and radiance we have gathered together in peace and in joy, united in this circle of light, and united as Children of the Earth. Let light flow forth from this place to every radiant, hoping heart."*

Druid 3: *"May the lands of Earth, her lakes, rivers and seas, her mountains and her caves; her deserts and her forests, be protected. Let all beings of Earth: the mineral and the plants, the animal, the human and the elemental realms, be protected. Let every form of life be free to follow its chosen path."*

Druid 4: *"May the power of the one Life light us on our path. May the love of the one Light sustain all who seek to serve. May the sun that is the source of all Life bless us and inspire us, open our hearts and minds to the reality that we are one People, of one Land, linked by a love that flows freely from heart to heart, mind to mind, soul to soul, throughout all Creation."*

APPENDIX (Alban Hefin ceremony on Glastonbury Tor)

Druid 1: *"It is the hour of recall. As the radiance of this bright ceremony fades from manifestation, let it remain as a light in your hearts. May your memories hold what your eye and your ear have gained."*

All: *"We swear by peace and love to stand,
Heart to heart, and hand in hand,
Mark O Spirit, and hear us now,
Confirming this our sacred vow."*

Repeat three times, followed by 9 cascading Awens.

Druid 4: *"Let the Spirits of the four directions be thanked for their blessings."*

Bard of the North: (Turn to face outwards) *"In the name of the Great Bear of the starry heavens and of the Element of Earth, we thank the Powers of the North."*

Druid of the North: (Turn to face outward, closing gate) *"The Hand of Law closes this Northern Gate."*

Ovate of the North: (Addresses all) *"Behold, the Gate of the North is closed. Let the blessings of Earth flow within our lives."*

Bard of the West: (Turn to face outward) *"In the name of the Salmon of Wisdom and of the Element of Water, we thank the Powers of the West."*

Druid of the West: (Turn to face outward, closing gate) *"The Heart of Love closes this Western Gate."*

Ovate of the West: (Addresses all) *"Behold, the Gateway of the West is closed. Let the blessings of Water flow within our lives."*

Bard of the South: (Turn to face outward) *"In the name of the Great Stag and of the Element Fire, we thank the Powers of the South."*

Druid of the South: (Turn to face outward, closing Gate) *"The Eye of Light closes this Southern Gate."*

Ovate of the South: (Addresses all) *"Behold, the Gate of the South is closed. Let the blessings of Fire flow within our lives."*

Bard of the East: (Turn to face outward) *"In the name of the Hawk of Dawn, and of the Element of Air, we thank the Powers of the East."*

Druid of the East: (Turn to face outward, closing Gate) *"The Breath of Life closes this Eastern Gate."*

Ovate of the East: (Addresses all) *"Behold, the Gate of the East is closed. Let the blessings of Air flow within our lives."*

All Bards and Druids turn inward again.

All: *"May the harmony of our lands be complete."*

Druid 1: (Uncasts circle) *"I now declare that the festival of Alban Hefin is closed in the apparent world and in this circle. May its inspiration continue within our beings."*



ALBAN HEFIN CEREMONY AT STONEHENGE

Participants: East, West, North, South, North-East, North-West, South-East, South-West, Visionary of the East, Visionary of the North, Visionary of the South, Visionary of the West, Vox Populi, Exponent, Ecstatic 1, Ecstatic 2, Sun Worshipper, Oak bearer, Sword bearer, Grove Mother.

Dord is sounded three times from centre.

EAST: (Saluting East) *"O Great Spirit, we ask for your blessings on this our ceremony of Alban Hefin."* (Pause)
"O Spirit of these Stones, O Spirit of this Circle, we ask for your blessings, guidance, protection and inspiration on this our ceremony."

EAST: *"We stand here in the Eye of the Sun,
Between past and future we possess the perfect moment
The earth below us, the sky above us, and the stones around us
May each bear witness to our Great Work this day."*

ALL: *"Awen, Awen, Awen."*

NORTH-WEST: *"Let us begin by giving peace to the quarters, for without peace can no work be."*

WEST: (Moving to salute each direction in turn) *"May there be Peace in the North. May there be Peace in the South. May there be Peace in the West. May there be Peace in the East."*

ALL: *"May there be peace throughout the whole world."*

NORTH-EAST: *"Since it is known that there is peace, we may begin our work, trusting in the clear vision that comes from inner harmony and grace, and in our own Gods of Truth. This sacred place reflects truth from many mirrors."*

EAST: (Casts circle saying;) *"As this circle is cast, the allure of the apparent world subsides, and we find our true selves, liberated, breath-taking and potent within the light of this Sacred Druid Grove, Stonehenge."*

SOUTH-EAST: *"Now strengthen and bless this circle with purifying water and consecrating flame."* (Circle is purified and consecrated with fire and water.)

SOUTH-WEST: *"We stand at the crux and yet we are the circuit. We are the confluence of the inner and the outer. We are the dream of our Ancestors and the lodestar of our Descendants. Let us now fill this Grove with Power and Love, Freedom and Life."*

EAST: (Turning to face East in salute) *"May the breath of life open this Eastern gate"* (Gestures to open gate.)
"Spirits of the East and of the element of Air, we ask you to enter our circle and charge us with your powers."

VISIONARY OF THE EAST: (Still facing circle) *"May our will to serve others be as sharp, firm and straight as the blade of the sword. May the air be clear and pure to our sight, and may we help to breathe joy into others."*

SOUTH: (Turning to face South in salute) *"May the eye of light open this Southern gate."*
(Gestures to open gate) *"Spirits of the South and of the element of Fire, we ask you to enter our circle and charge us with your powers."*

APPENDIX (Alban Hefin ceremony at Stonehenge)

VISIONARY OF THE SOUTH: (Still facing circle) *"May we raise the blazing spear of magic as we hail the fire of vision within us all. May we light our minds from our own inner fire and cast our thoughts blazing towards heaven and earth."*

WEST: (Turning to face West in salute) *"May the heart of love open this Western gate."* (Gestures to open gate) *"Spirits of the West and of the element of Water, we ask you to enter our circle and charge us with your powers."*

VISIONARY OF THE WEST: (Still facing circle) *"May we drink deeply from the Cup of Life and may we not halt in the work of love. The calm waters of the pool lie before us and we recognise their power."*

NORTH: (Turning to face North in salute) *"May the hand of law open this Northern gate."* (Gestures to open gate.) *"Spirits of the North and of the element of Earth, we ask you to enter our circle and charge us with your powers."*

VISIONARY OF THE NORTH: (Still facing circle) *"With one foot on the Stone of Destiny may we range our Universe. May we always recognise that we are born of the green earth and of the starry heavens, and that each part of us is sacred."*

(The officers face into the circle again.)

NORTH-EAST: *"Let each of us unite the breath of will, the fire of magic, the waters of love, and the wisdom of the ages within our hearts."*

SOUTH-WEST: *"May the harmony of our lands and our hearts be complete."*

EAST: *"I proclaim the festival of Alban Hefin, at this the first solstice of the new millennium."*

SOUTH: *"The greatest of all the feasts of fire, beloved of the Faerie folk."*

WEST: *"The time of triumph of the green of the land."*

NORTH: *"I proclaim the time of highest light."*

(Vox Populi and Exponent step forward.)

VOX POPULI: *"Many of us feel incredibly drawn to this sacred place, often without conscious thought on our part. This Alban Hefin let us use this ritual as a foundation, as we build anew the Alban gate, and find for ourselves the meaning of our strong connection to this place."*

EXPONENT: *"Here at Stonehenge, we are at latitude 51 degrees North and this is the only place, bar one, where the summer solstice sunrise (points in direction) and winter solstice sunset (points in direction) align exactly, whilst the winter solstice sunrise (points in direction) also aligns with the summer solstice sunset (points in direction) to produce a totally symmetrical image. In all other latitudes the angles of the sunrises and sunsets are not symmetrical, the exception is 55 degrees north (roughly following Hadrian's Wall)."*

VOX POPULI: *"In other words, in this very circle the shadow of the sun bisects both the wheel of the year and this circle in space perfectly at sunrise and again at sunset at both solstices and equinoxes."*

EAST: *"Our challenge as druids is to discover the many levels of meaning to standing, together, in this mysterious circle at this magical time. As we share nine cascading awens, let us visualise this circuit of the sun (pointing out the arc): starting below us at midnight, rising at dawn, crossing the vast dome of the sky, setting in the evening, and completing its arc beneath us once again."*

ALL: 9 cascading Awens

APPENDIX (Alban Hefin ceremony at Stonehenge)

NORTH: (Leads meditation in the silence that follows.)

"We are within an awesome Temple, at the centre of a mysterious universe, let the silence enfold you and take a moment to feel the power of this place... the power of the stones around you... the track of the sun above you... the pulse of the earth beneath you..." (Pause.)

WEST: *"May the power of this moment inspire you, here at the balance point of summer and winter, of day and of night, of black and of white where all are equal."*

EAST: *"And the centre of this circuit is the centre of these stones... Let those come to the centre who would take the magic of this place for themselves..."*

All who wish now approach the centre (several at a time) to claim protection / inspiration / reaffirm vows etc., while the circle maintains a continuous cascading Awen.

When all who wish to have taken their turn, the Ecstatics step forward.

ECSTATIC 1: *"The eye of the great gods."*

ECSTATIC 2: *"The eye of the gods of glory."*

ECSTATIC 1: *"The eye of the queen of hosts."*

ECSTATIC 2: *"The eye of the king of the living."*

ECSTATIC 1: *"Light pouring upon us, at each time and season."*

ECSTATIC 2: *"Light pouring upon us, gently and generously."*

ECSTATIC 1: *"Glory to thee, thou glorious sun!"*

ECSTATIC 2: *"Glory to thee, thou sun, face of the gods of Life!"*

SUN WORSHIPPER: *"May our reawakened vision know the true beauty and passion that is life."*

OAK BEARER: *"At this crown of the year, at the centre of this ancient land, I hail the King of the Trees."* (Uplifts Oak Crown.) *"I praise the glory of the Oak, the lover of the lightning, the giver of shade at burning noon. At this time of your greatest strength I unite your life with this circle, so marking the zenith of the year."* (Lowers crown to waist height at centre of circle.)

SWORD BEARER: *"At this time of highest light, (uplifting sword) I raise this blade that was born in fire as a bridge between heaven and earth. Slicing through time and space to the heart of truth. May the spirits of the forge and the wildwood be one."* (Sword bearer takes Oak crown onto blade, lowers them both to ground and then into Air.)

GROVE MOTHER: *"May the power of the one life sustain all true seekers. May the love of the one light pervade all who seek to serve. May our souls be united thereby."*

All hold hands and recite the uniting prayer, (*"We swear..."*) three times, followed by 9 Cascading Awens.

EAST: *"It is the hour of recall. As the radiance of this ceremony comes to an end let it remain as a light in your hearts. May your memories hold what the eye and ear have gained."*

NORTH-EAST: *"Let the spirits of the four directions be thanked."*

APPENDIX (Alban Hefin ceremony at Stonehenge)

NORTH: (Turning to face North in salute) *"We thank you Spirits of the North and of the element of Earth for your presence, we bid you withdraw from our circle in peace."* (Gestures to close gate.) *"The hand of law closes this Northern gate, may the blessings of earth flow through our lives."*

WEST: (Turning to face West in salute) *"We thank you Spirits of the West and of the element of Water for your presence, we bid you withdraw from our circle in peace."* (Gestures to close gate.) *"The heart of love closes this western gate. May the blessings of water flow through our lives."*

SOUTH: (Turning to face South in salute) *"We thank you Spirits of the South and of the element of Fire for your presence, we bid you withdraw from our circle in peace."* (Gestures to close gate.) *"The eye of light closes this southern gate. May the blessings of fire flow through our lives."*

EAST: (Turning to face East in salute) *"We thank you Spirits of the East and of the element of Air for your presence, we bid you withdraw from our circle in peace."* (Gestures to close gate) *"The breath of life closes this Eastern gate. May the blessings of air flow through our lives."*

WEST: *"May the harmony of our lands be complete."* (All turn into the centre again.)

EAST: *"We have stood united with the source of all, with the word and the world of all existences, and with Spirit the inspirer. Let this blessing be always with us."* (Uncasts circle.)
"I declare this ceremony of Alban Hefin at Stonehenge is closed in the apparent world. May its inspiration continue within our beings."

(Exit sunwise, EAST first, WEST second, all saluting the East as they pass.)



ALBAN ARTHAN

Aotearoa (New Zealand) Version

South, East, West and North outside room. South enters, lights candles and addresses assembled company:

✿ Introduction

SOUTH: *"By the power of star and stone,
By the power of the land within and without,
By all that is Fair and Free,
We welcome you to this rite of the Winter Solstice
in the Grove of the Summer Stars."*

✿ Opening

East, West and North enter

WEST: *"We - all of us - come together from East and West, North and South to be here today - now, together. We stand strong here."*

EAST: *"O Goddess, O Spirits of the Land, and of the People, and of this special place, we greet you and honour you, as we come together in this circle to celebrate this time of the Winter Solstice: Alban Arthan in the Druid tradition, Hikumutu in the Maori tradition."*

SOUTH: *"Let us mark out this circle - our sacred space - with symbols of the season."* (Children sprinkle seeds, and leaves in circle sunwise around participants while EAST says:)

EAST: *"The circle of our horizon - of our lives and lands, of time and of the year, of seasons goodness, of birth and of growing, of dying and of rebirth..."*

WEST: *"And now, within this circle we stand. Within this small circle that by magic has become the larger circle of our world, let us fill this realm with the power and the energy and the beauty of our love."* All hold hands and chant nine Cascading Awens.

NORTH: *"And may there be peace in every quarter:"*

Harp music as:

SOUTH: (Turning to face outwards and raising right palm) *"May there be peace in the South."*

NORTH: (As above) *"May there be peace in the North."*

EAST: (As above) *"May there be peace in the East."* (All four then turn inwards.)

All: *"May there be peace throughout the whole world."*

NORTH: *"May our realm be blessed by the power of sun and moon!"* (One person takes candle around circle sunwise, while another sprinkles water around circle, counter-sunwise)

SOUTH: *"May our lands be blessed by Matariki - Little Eyes - the stars of the Pleiades, and by Puanga - the bright star Rigel, and by Takurua, the dog-star Sirius."*

WEST: *"And may the four directions be honoured that power and radiance might enter our circle for the good of all beings."*

NORTH: (Turning to face outwards and raising right palm) *"With the blessings of the great Pohutakawa tree that stands in the North, and the inner fire of the sun, we call upon the powers of the North."*

WEST: (As above) *"With the blessing of the salmon of wisdom who dwells within the sacred waters of the pool, we call upon the powers of the West."*

SOUTH: (As above) *"With the blessings of the vast realm of Antarctica, and of the starry heavens and the deep and fruitful earth, we call upon the powers of the South."*

EAST: (As above) *"With the blessing of the hawk of dawn soaring in the clear pure air, we call upon the powers of the East."*

(Pause, all then turn inwards.)

SOUTH: *"May the harmony of our circle and of our lands be complete."*

☸ The Working

WEST: *"We are met here in darkness on the longest night of the year to celebrate the birth of new light, the Sun Child, the Mabon in the Druid tradition. We come together to honour a great mystery - and to celebrate the beauty of light reborn."*

EAST: *"The sun which has warmed and lighted us through the Wheel of the Year seems to stand still for several days. This is a time of living darkness."*

SOUTH: *"We may feel this darkness permeating many areas of our lives, through fear, doubt, or loneliness. And yet in the still darkness, we become aware that the inner sun will rise again in our hearts, through the symbol of the birth of the Young One, the Mabon, who has been called Mithras, Christ, Arthur, Taliesin - those born at the time of greatest darkness."*

NORTH: *"Let the Sun shine upon Earth, that the Sun of Light may be reborn."*

WEST: *"Let the Sun reflect in Waters, that their blessings be redoubled."*

EAST: *"Let the Sun shimmer in Air, that breath may bring new life."*

SOUTH: *"Let the Sun fire our minds, warm our hearts and light our spirit."*

NORTH: *"Let us witness the birth of the Youngest One, the Mabon, who from the womb of the Great Mother is born in silence and weakness as the smallest of lights."*

WEST: *"But first there must be darkness."*

EAST: *"Let the darkness of the longest night be felt."* (All candles are extinguished). *"Only out of darkness does light arise."* (Darkness for 5 or so minutes). With Meditation:

We allow ourselves to sink into the depths of the earth, deep into the darkness, where the crystals shine like stars in the night sky, where we let go of all our fears and anxieties, all our ill health and worries, resting in the warm dark earth that feeds and holds and nourishes us. Then we become aware of one tiny light in the darkness, in the centre of our being, the centre of the Universe, the galaxy. The light begins to shine.

APPENDIX (Alban Arthan - Aotearoa (New Zealand) Version)

SOUTH: (Lights central candle and says): *"I proclaim the rebirth of the sun in the Mabon of the year."*

EAST: *"I proclaim the creation of all things, the revolution of all that is past towards a new good."*

WEST: *"The child is born that grows into the great Og."*

NORTH: *"Twelve labours shall this child perform, and in the cradle their strength is already as the strength of seven."*

WEST: *"Behold the halcyon bird sits many-coloured upon her floating nest. For fourteen days the seas run calm and she hatches her egg."*

SOUTH: *"Sul, the mate and mother of Og, is as a ship in the sky awaiting him. She carries him upon his first pale voyage."*

MABON: (Picking up central candle) *"I come to this place as a child of future generations. My gift is the gentle flame of hope that each new life brings into this world. I, and those who follow me, ask that those of you who gave us life protect this sacred flame. You who are the earthly guardians of wisdom, unite together in peace and harmony to protect this planet, our home."*

MABON & ASSISTANT: *"This we ask for the children of the world."*

EAST: *"The great Yule of life is relit. Let all your lights be lit."*

Mabon walks around the circle lighting each candle from his/her own flame. Harp plays.

NORTH: *"See how from the one source of all Life, Light and Love, our own tiny flames have been kindled. Feel the strength of those flames united. Within our daily lives, let us unite our thoughts and our actions with all those who work for peace in this world - with all those who work to build a safer environment for the generations to come."*
Pause.

SOUTH: *"Here in Aotearoa, at this time of hikumutu, or te maruaroa o te hotoke, the time of the changing of the sun - takanga o te ra - the sun is returning to land, to dwell with the Summer Maid. The Sun God Ra begins his journey back to his Summer Wife, Hine-raumati. He has spent half the year with his Winter Wife, Hine-takurua, far out in the ocean. Now he returns to land, to Summer Woman once again, and we will soon feel his warmth on our backs and faces."*

EAST: *"In celebration of this time, let there be Eisteddfod!"*

🌿 Eisteddfod

✠ Closing

EAST: *"It is the hour of recall. As the fire dies down* (here, if there is a fire, extinguish a brand; or extinguish candles, or let the lights be somewhat dimmed) *let it be relit in your hearts. May your memories hold what the eye and ear have gained."*

(All hold hands in the circle. Pause for attunement, then East leads, all saying: *"We swear by peace and love to stand, heart to heart etc."* three times. Then 3 Awens are chanted.)

SOUTH: *"Let the spirits of the Four Directions be thanked for their blessings."*

EAST: *"In the name of the hawk of dawn and of the element air, we thank the powers of the East."*

SOUTH: *"In the name of the icy realm of Antarctica, and of the element of earth, we thank the powers of the South."*

WEST: *"In the name of the salmon of wisdom and the element of water we thank the powers of the West."*

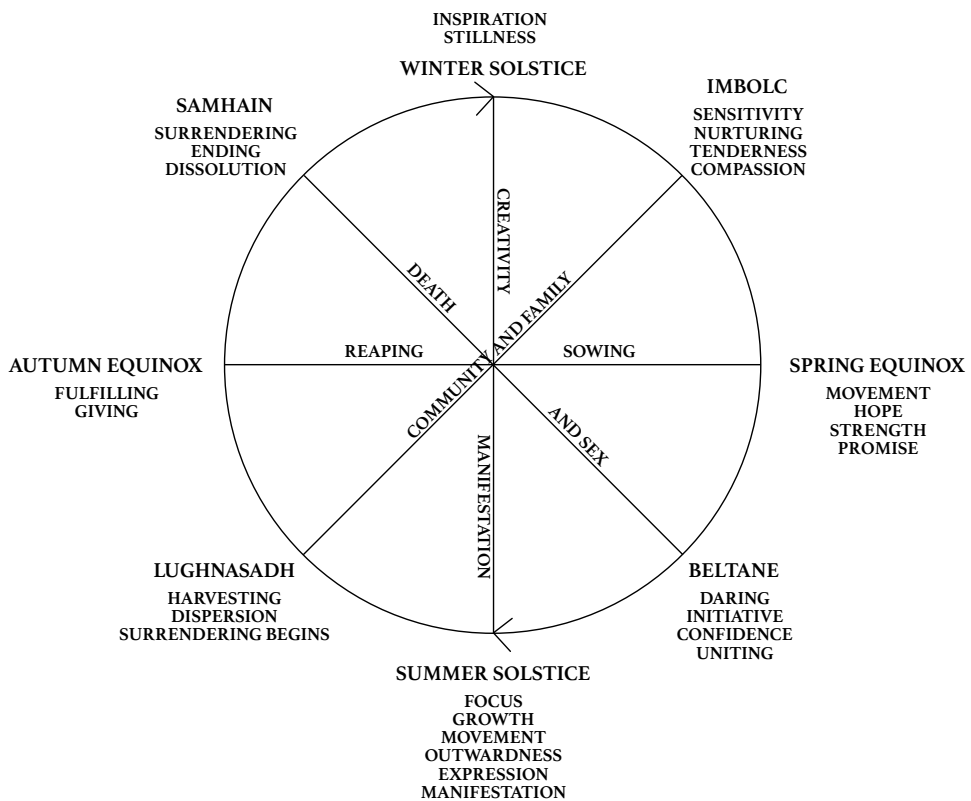
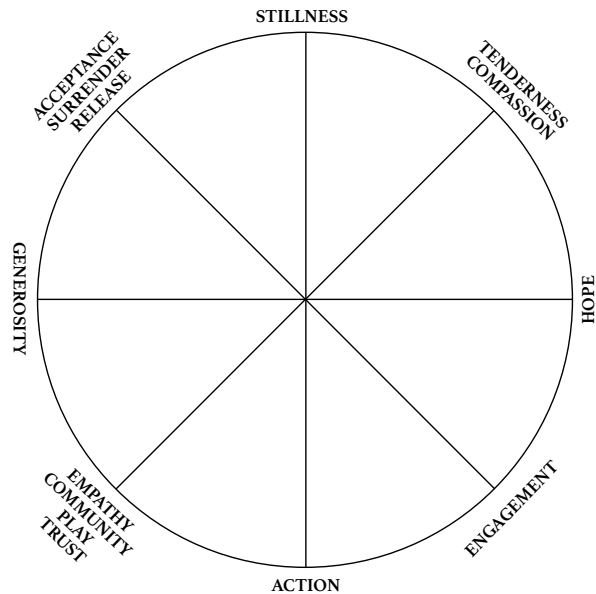
NORTH: *"In the name of the great Pohutakawa tree and of the element of fire, we thank the powers of the North."*

(Pause. Then the four face into the circle again.)

WEST: *"May the harmony of our circle and of our lands be complete."*

EAST: *"I now declare that this Festival of the Winter Solstice in the Grove of the Summer Stars is closed in the apparent world and in this Circle. May its inspiration continue within our beings."*

QUALITIES, IDEAS & DYNAMICS RELATED TO THE FESTIVALS





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