

Winter Solstice Celebration 2004

Team: Lee Ann, Ruth, Weezie and special guest, Carol

Date: Saturday, December 18.....4:30-7:30

Room set-up: Lee Ann's big round mirror will be placed on the floor in the center of the room. This will serve as the alter; upon which each person's candle will be placed. Paper and coloring things will be placed around this mirror so that it may be accessed easily. We will place rugs and each persons sit things and blankets and bells in a circle around this alter. A candelabra will hang from the beams and many candles will be placed around the room.

Upon arrival: We will greet each woman as they arrive at Lee Ann's front door. Lee Ann will instruct each woman to put her pot-luck item in the kitchen or dining area, coats and other belongings to coat closet, the rest of us will take their blanket, sit thing, candle and bells or chimes and take them back to the celebration room and set them up in the circle. (we shall have already placed our own seating in the directional corner that we are responsible to bless) When all the women have arrived WZ, Ruth and Carol will take their places and Lee Ann will send the women in pairs to through the curtains to begin the celebration They will be instructed to maintain a reverent, reflective silence once they have passed through the curtains at the back door of the main house and that they will find written instructions to follow from then on, until they are invited to speak.

In between the back door and the door to the gathering room, will sit a table with the Transformation Tarot deck spread face up. Written instructions will direct them to think about the questions they were asked to consider before arriving tonight and to select a card that will serve as a guide to their journeys and meditations this night. (WZ will write up the instructions noting that they may choose their card either by looking at cards and being visually drawn to specific symbols, or may close their eyes and be guided by the Goddess and the Spirits of this Solstice Eve, but either way not to linger or ponder too long, to trust that their choice will serve their highest good tonight). The instructions will then

direct them to the door of the gathering place, and when they have been anointed and invited to enter by the gate keepers (Carol and Ruth), reflect for a few moments on the card they have selected as their helper and then, to cover themselves completely with their blankets, creating a cave or womb, which will serve as their dark, private, cozy and supportive place of contemplation for the gift they are about to give themselves.

At the door to the circle room: Ruth and Carol will anoint each (WZ will provide a special anointing oil of Frankincense, Myrrh, and evergreen essential oils) and give each a blessing:

Yule is the season when the wisdom of past experience begins to glimmer. Tonight, let the experiences yielded over the harvest season of times gone past begin to be reborn in you as wisdom--new light, to guide you further down the path you have chosen.


Then bid them enter. WZ will get anointed first and assist those who need help to find their space inside, Lee Ann will follow the last woman out of the main house, then Ruth and Carol will anoint one another and join the circle.

When all are gathered: We shall call in the blessings of the directions.

Lee Ann Awaken, Guardians of the East!
On this winter night, come into our Circle.
Bring on the wind, the fragrances of the season,
pine, cedar and juniper.

Carol Awaken, Guardians of the South!
Honor us with your presence.
Let the warmth of the Yule log fill our hearts.
Warm our mind, body and spirit with your love.

WZ Awaken, Guardians of the West!
Welcome into our Circle.
Bless us with your sacred water,
Be they snowflakes or icicles.

 Ruth Awaken, Guardians of the North!
Enter our magic winter Circle.
Call in all of Nature's creatures
to celebrate the renewal of the earth.

All of us Awaken, Guardians of Center!
Rejoice with us on this sacred night
while we celebrate the returning sun
as the days begin to lengthen.

After we have invited in the directions, Lee Ann will lead us in a song:

Song: Return Again

Return again, return again,

Return to the land of your soul.

 Return again, return again,

Return to the land of your soul.

Return to what you are, return to who you you are,

Return to where you are, born and reborn again.

Return again, return again,

Return to the land of your soul.

Return again, return again,

Return to the land of your soul.

 Then WZ will begin reading the guided meditation.

Solstice Meditation

Close your eyes, relax, and breathe deeply. Let your breathing become slow, deep, easy. Relax and continue breathing deeply and gently as...We enter the time of the greatest dark.

It is the dark of the longest night.

...the dark of the cold universe between the stars and planets.

...the dark of the sea,

...the dark of the womb.

Wrap this darkness gently about you like a comfortable blanket.

Float gently now in its depths.

(Pause)

Grow here, nourished by an invisible cord that connects you to the Source of all life.

Floating gently in the dark...

Softly rocking in the dark...

Song: Deep Down (sung softly three times by Lee Ann, Ruth, Carol and WZ)

Deep down in the belly of the night

Dream deep winter dreams

And lie safe in your grandmother's arms

Still as a seed, still as a seed.

(Longer Pause)

And though it is dark, we realize that what surrounds us is not empty, but -- like the womb -- full of life. Take a moment now to sense the swirling, nurturing energy of the dark.

(Pause)

And now, as the energy increases, it gives birth to the smallest spark imaginable, the spark of new life.

See that spark now as it glows, watch that spark now, watch it as it grows. Glowing brighter and brighter, it grows into a flame. And as you look at this flame, its light fills you with warmth, with love. And as you feel increased love and warmth within you, the visible intensity of the flame slowly diminishes and as it does, in its place, slowly becoming visible, is the outline of a present. This gift becomes more solid, until you can see its form clearly and see that it is wrapped in a glistening filament of light.

This gift has your name on it, inscribed in the glistening material. Still from some distance, you see your name now, on this gift. Even if you are near-sighted you have no trouble making out the letters, for you now have perfect vision.

Is your name written in a special color? Is the inscription special in any other way?

Approach your wrapped present now more closely. What shape is it? How big is it? What color is its wrapping?

Pick it up: is it light? heavy?

And now you unwrap your gift. How easy or difficult is it to unwrap?
You finish opening it now and you receive your gift.
What is it?

(Pause)

Look at it carefully. Experience it fully.

Accept it. Accept your gift with joy. Feel your heart warm with the love with which this gift is given to you.

And now, from your heart, send out gratitude for this gift, send out thanks for this gift to the Goddess, to Our Great Mother, to the Universe: to the Goddess who is the Universe -- both the dark and the light. Send out your thanks for this gift.

(Pause)

Ruth will lead us in a song:

Song: *The Giveaway Song*

Let us take what we have been given,

Let us take what we have been given,

Let us take what we have been given,

Let us take it and give it away.

verses

Let us bless what we have been given.

Let us hold what we have been given.

Let us love what we have been given.

Let us take what we have been given.

Now, if you wish, find a place to keep this gift, a place to put this gift, so you can keep it with you during our ritual now and, if you wish, take it with you when you leave the circle.

And now, bringing your special gift with you, be fully present in our circle.

While continuing to hold the silence, move and stretch your body. Open your eyes and come back to this place and time.

You may now remove the blankets that have sheltered and comforted you and as we begin to put the darkness of winter behind us, let us look toward the increasing of the light and the promise of renewal it holds for us. Please continue to remain silent a while longer, with a deep reverence for this changing of darkness to light.

Lee Ann: Now as you emerge from your dark retreat, you will see the image of Santa Lucia, the Swedish traditional symbol of hope, for the returning light and re-birth. Her head is lit by a wreath of candles. May she serve to remind you that you are a source of light and love, which you carry into the world. She brings nourishment for the body and spirit. Now let us silently join our lights and spirits, as we share the gifts of cardamom bread and wassail that Santa Lucia has brought.

Santa Lucia (Carol) will enter in a cloud of light head to toe leading us in song:

"Santa Lucia,
thy light is glowing,
through darkest winter night,
comfort bestowing!
Dreams float on wings bedight.
Comes then the morning light ,
Santa Lucia, Santa Lucia.

Through silent winter gloom
Thy song comes winging,
To waken earth anew
Glad carols bringing
Come, thou, O Queen of Light,
Wearing thy crown so bright
Santa Lucia, Santa, Lucia

Santa Lucia,
Christmas foretelling,
Fill hearts with hope and cheer,
Dark fears dispelling.
Bring to the world again
Peace, and good will to men.
Santa Lucia, Santa Lucia.

After the song, Carol will begin the bell ringing encouraging all to join in with their own bells and chimes, WZ will light the center candelabra then her own candle on the mirror while Ruth and Lee Ann light their own candles (we shall give lighters to the group and indicate that their candles should be lit as well) and other candles outside the circle, gradually bringing light into our space and Carol will pass around her special cardamom bread. (Pitchers and cups will be at each of our corners to fill and pass around the hot wassail the Ruth will have made). Carol will encourage them to silently reflect on gratitude for this abundance while they nourish themselves with these gifts.

After the candles are lit: Ruth will invite all of us to take about 10 or 15 minutes to journal their experience in on the sheets of paper around the alter. Encouraging them (in her own words) to write, draw, color or in any way that is most meaningful to them, because this is their gift to themselves. Remind them that this is still silent time.

Then Lee Ann will invite each of us to break our silence and (in her own words) invite us to share what ever we choose to share, and listen with all our hearts to what is shared, because this will be the gift we exchange with each other.

When each of us has shared and listened, WZ will invite us (in her own words) to extend our giving beyond ourselves, and beyond our small gathering into the community of which we are all connected, and explain the gift of financial support

we will offer in anonymity, to a person selected from those we have nominated and explain how we envision this working. Then we will draw a name. We may decide to keep the recipient anonymous from ourselves if we choose. After this selection she will invite us out to the fire pit for the closing circle, noting that there are slips of paper and pencils available on the way out the side doors to write down things we may want to symbolically burn in our yule fire.

Lee Ann will then say some closing words around the circle, lead us in other solstice singing and our closing song and invite us in to feast and make merry.

Misc. notes and reminders.....

...Things we will need to bring:

....candelabra-wz

....other kinds of candle holders-wz and Lee Ann and ruth's candle holder chimes folding chairs-wz has at least 7 , ruth has 7 and lee ann has 4...(these are being brought out for the eating part, as I recall....so maybe some will still sit on their own sit things as well?)

rugs to cozy up the floor-carol and wz and ???

instruction signs-wz

anointing oils-wz

candle lighters-wz

paper, pens, coloring things-Lee Ann

yule log-Lee Ann

evergreens and other décor-Lee Ann and ??? probably could use a lot

thermos containers-wz (2) and Ruth (2)

paper cups and little paper plates for cardamom bread-wz

plates for dinner-lee ann

silverware for dinner-wz

extra bells and chimes-Lee Ann

transformation tarot cards-wz (I shall also bring the book that explains each card so that those who may be interested can look up their card's reading at dinner)

what else????