

The festival of light is a good time for figure-8 dances that express the turning of the year's cycles, and for invoking various versions of the Sun Goddess (Sul, Atthar, Aditi, Glory-of-Elves). It's a good time for positive energy, for making resolutions and vows that require inner strength. It's a good time to draw up rules to live by, or to review the Laws of the Goddess, pages 181-83. Symbols of aspiration may be placed on the altar, or passed around the circle for supportive comments.

Guided meditations for this season should emphasize courage, intellectual competence, heroine figures, female rulers, self-confidence, and a direct, effective approach to problems. Openness, reason, and willingness to engage in frank, free communication are desirable. Blockages caused by imaginary fears should be faced and exorcised. The themes of light and clarity may be developed by any ritual means that the group might prefer.

Lammas (August Eve)

Lammas means the Feast of Bread. It was a festival of the wheat harvest. Its older name, Lughnasad, meant the sacrifice of the god Lug, or Lud, whose name is still preserved in London (formerly Lugdunum) where the god's shrine stood on Ludgate Hill. Like other vegetation deities, Lug was killed (reaped) and buried (planted) so he could rise again from the dead as a new crop.

As for the Vernal Equinox, prepare the Antiphonal Chant:

- N: What is this night?
S: It is the night of Lammas.
E: What is the meaning of this night?
W: It is the feast of bread.
N: What do we honor on this night?
S: We honor the fruits of the Earth, our ongoing sustenance.

- E: After this feast of bread, what will we do?
 W: We will tend and store our harvest, preserving what is necessary to life.
 N: How do we recognize ourselves on this night?
 S: We knead the dough. We bake the good bread. We call upon the Mother who gives us our daily food.
 E: Who helps us?
 W: Our Goddess helps us.
 N: What is our Goddess?
 S: She is the benevolence of our mother planet, the rich gifts of her soil, the nourishment of our bodies.
 E: Who is our Goddess?
 W: She is the Virgin of Light, the Crone of Darkness, the Mother of Time.
 N: Where is our Goddess?
 S: She is in our hearts in all seasons of the turning year.
 E: Who is our Goddess?
 W: Behold, she is ourselves.

The Feast of Bread naturally features bread, preferably home-made from whole grain flour. If an oven is available, the group might bake bread on the spot and share fresh loaves around at the conclusion of the meeting.

The grain god Lug can be created as a dough figure, like the fairytale Gingerbread Man. The figure is passed around the circle and dismembered, as everyone eats a piece of him. This was one of the original forms of holy communion, when the flesh of grain gods like Osiris, Adonis, and Tammuz was ceremonially eaten by their worshipers, who thus became symbolically one with each other as they also internalized their deity. This very process was supposed to make communicants godlike (immortal), so they could obtain godlike eternal life. The same idea carried over into Christianity—the whole Christian “mystery” of salvation was based on it—but its origin was pagan.

Our foremothers regarded grain with considerable awe, seeing as a holy mystery the fact that it is both seed and edible fruit at the same time. Thus it was thought to contain all three aspects of the Goddess: Virgin (child of the earth; fruit), Mother (life-giving, fertile food spirit), and Crone (withered plant, gone to seed, ready for retirement to the underworld and later resurrection). Such unfathomable nature magic was much contemplated in tem-

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ples of Demeter, Ceres, Ops, Hera, and other Earth Mothers. One ear of grain "reaped in silence" was exhibited as the ultimate revelation in the famous Eleusinian Mysteries. Native Americans and the peoples of Mexico and Peru similarly worshiped the corn (maize) for much the same reasons. Therefore corn on the cob is appropriate for a Lammas ritual, as is any other grain plant.

Seeds of any kind can be used at Lammas to create pentacles, pictures, abstract designs for oracular interpretation, decorative items, or gifts. Seeds can be glued to squares or discs of cardboard to create pictures. Seeds can be strung on thread or wire, to become Lammas bracelets and necklaces. Seeds can be enclosed in small screw-top jars to become rattles. The whole circle can be enclosed in a circle of seeds, bread crumbs, or flour. Outdoors, the group might wind in single file through a woodland, laying down a trail of bread or seeds for the birds and other animals to find. At the same time, each person may pick up a special twig, stone, or leaf to bring back to the altar.

Lammas is also an appropriate time to make a corn dolly. Usually this is a poppet of corn husks shaped and tied together, dressed in a skirt, apron, and bonnet, and kept in a special place until the same time next year, when she is ceremonially buried along with the seed corn.

Gratitude for the harvest, feasting and general merriment have been dominant patterns in harvest festival the world over, from the remote times when human beings first began to practice agriculture.

The Autumnal Equinox (September 21)

The Autumnal Equinox is also a harvest festival and a preparation for the cooler, darker times ahead, when days are "drawing in," as the old saying goes.

As for the Vernal Equinox, prepare the Antiphonal Chant:

N: What is this night?

S: It is the night of the Autumnal Equinox.