

Samhain Rite
Sassafras Grove, ADF, Pittsburgh PA
Friends Meeting House
Saturday, November 4, 2006; 7:00 pm

BEGINNING THE RITE & ESTABLISHING THE GROUPMIND

Clear-cut Beginning (Consecration of Time)

1. The Nine Knells –**Emerald (with Sacred Dingers)**
2. Opening Prayer: *We have come to honor the blessed ones.*

The Consecration of Space and of Participants

Procession: (“Come We Now as a People,” UP TEMPO!)

Purification of the Participants Sea (wash hands), Land (put hands on Earrach’s labyrinth rock), Sky (incense)--**Blessers On Site**

Warding of the Site / Acknowledgment of the Outsiders—**Earrach**

A peace-token of water is taken to the threshold of the Nemeton and poured across as a sign to the Forces of Opposition that we do not proceed in denial of their presence; we wish simply to be left alone. We are here, and they are there. This is not to be construed as an offering.

4. Bardic patron- **Orpheus– Emerald**

Emerald

Gentle Orpheus. . .

*Poet of the Mysteries, Beloved son of Kalliope
The power of your song could move stone, calm the rushing rivers
And coax the trees to dance
Even the beasts of the wood harkened to your lyre.*

*Father of songs, Companion of the Argonauts,
The glory of your voice silenced even the Sirens’ song
And its power could drive the lively Nymphs to weep
For love you traveled to Hades dark realm
To claim your lost bride you wooed even Death
And melted the heart of Persephone Queen*

Gracious bard, priest and mystic beyond compare

*Smile on your initiates, grant us a measure of your power
Infuse our speech with honeyed phrases
Grace our voices with shimmering tones
For us who live a life sweetened by your legacy.
Orpheus, Accept our Offering!*

5. Earth Mother – **Earrach**

Earrach

*Divine earth, mother of men and of the blessed gods,
you nourish all, you give all, you bring all to fruition, and you destroy all.
When the season is fair you are heavy with fruit and growing blossoms;
and, o multiform maiden, you are the seat of the immortal cosmos,
and in the pains of labor you bring forth fruit of all kinds.
Eternal, reverend, deep-bosomed, and blessed,
you delight in the sweet breath of grass, o goddess bedecked with flowers.
yours is the joy of the rain, and round you the intricate realm of the stars
revolves in endless and awesome flow.
But, o blessed goddess, may you multiply the gladsome fruits
and, together with the beautiful seasons, grant us favor.
Earth Mother, accept our offering!*

All touch or kiss the ground.

(Song: “Earth Mother, We Honor Your Body. . .”)

6. Acknowledging Hestia - **Deana**

Deana

*Queen Hestia, daughter of mighty Kronos,
Mistress of ever burning and peerless fire, you dwell in the house’s center.
May you hallow the initiates of this rite.
You are the home of the blessed gods, and men’s mighty buttress,
Eternal, many-shaped, beloved, and grass-yellow.
Smile, O blessed one, and kindly accept this offering,
Wafting upon us prosperity and gentle-handed health.
For worshipping at a common hearth, we become one tribe, one people, one Grove.
Hestia, accept our offering!*

7. Remembering Brigid (As Matron of Our Grove)– **Dave**

Dave

*I light this candle in honor of Brighid
The Matron of Sassafras Grove
Through the years you have been midwife
To many changes and new beginnings within our grove.
You foster our hope through good times and hard,
Through challenge and victories
You are the source of all our work
The voice in our song
The strength of our arm
The hand that heals discord
The inspiration of all we create
Lady of the Hearth Fire
Lady of the Sacred Wells
Lady of our grove
Remember us as we remember you*

8. Centering, Grounding, Merging –**Diane**

Diane

The world is made of three parts:

The Waters Below

The Fires Above

And the tree which grows strong and tall connecting the worlds of fire and water.

Let us now connect with the Well, the Fire and the Tree. I ask you now to close your eyes and stand with your feet shoulder width apart, and take several deep breaths with me. In and out. In and out. And once more, in and out. With our eyes closed, imagine our roots extending from our feet and stretching down through the floor, into the Earth beneath us and extending down, down, through the rich soil, through the rock, deeper and deeper until your roots reach the cool, dark waters below. Feel your roots descend into the magnetic waters and become filled with the power of creation. Draw the water up through your roots and into your body, the trunk of your tree – feeling the water fill you with creative essence. You are brimming with potential and possibility. Notice that your roots have intertwined, interconnected with those around you.

Now I ask you to repeat after me (3x)

Feel the Ebb

Feel the Flow

Filled with the power of the waters below.

We now remember the Fires above. The blazing, illuminating celestial Fires. That animating spark of creation. Lift your arms to the ceiling and imagine your arms to be branches – bursting through the ceiling and continuing to stretch upward – further and further until your branches become bathed in the heat and light of the Fires above. Allow this heat to penetrate your branches and feel its warmth move downward through your branches into the trunk of your tree.

See the light shimmer and reflect in the waters below, charging them with the power of the celestial fire. You are filled with the primal power of will and manifestation. Notice our branches, much the same as our roots, have become intertwined and connected.

Now I ask you to repeat after me (3x)

Feel the Heat

Feel the Might

Pulse with the power of the fire's light

Sacred tree, like you, we now stand at the center of the world, filled with the powers of the waters below and the fires above.

The well, the fire, the sacred tree: Flow and Flame and Grow in Me!

(Song: "We are one....")

9. Declaration of Intention & Historical Precedent –**Earrach**

Earrach

Do you wish to live forever? Coming to terms with our own mortality is a lifelong process and a stern challenge for many of us. The universal desire to escape death seems to inform the spiritual systems of many world religions, particularly the Judeo-Christian and Islamic view that has for so long so strongly shaped the mind of Western Culture.

As Americans we are encouraged by many factors, traditional and contemporary to continually push the concept of Death, and of our own personal mortality, back beyond the realm of the ordinary and the real and to keep it there, safely shrouded in banal imagery full of harp-playing angels and cloudscapes leading to those Pearly Gates (or the equally absurd fires of damnation). As Neopagans, whether you follow ways Hellenic, Celtic, Norse, Roman, whatever, it is left up to you to decide what lays beyond death. As every dawn rises you again have the opportunity to reconsider and revise; no dogma commands you here. Only one true imperative calls us to heal our relationship with the Inevitable: the very fact that we are alive. To live in denial of death is to rob ourselves of life's full value. At the very least, all we can ask of life beyond our own death is to be remembered. This is the desire for immortality at its most existential core. To in some way be written into the Great Book of Memory. What legacy will you have left behind? Genetic? Cultural? Spiritual? If you could be remembered by the generations which survive you, what is it that you would ask the Lord and Lady of the Afterworld regarding your entry in the Great Book? How would you want to be remembered?

RECREATING THE COSMOS & PRELIMINARY POWER RAISING

Creating the Vertical Axis

1. Evoking the Spirits of Fire and of Water

a. The Sacred Fire:--**Earrach**

- i. Lighting, evoking and venerating the Sacred Fire: As sacrificer lights the sacred fire:

Earrach

*Primal Fire, ascend to us with the dawn, and rule the sky.
Glory of the Sun, with burning luster Illumine even the silver Goddess Selene.
Aethereal Fire, radiant heat that inspires life,
Light Bearer, Power of Stars,
Who causes the blooming of the iris and the rose,
showing kindness to the grain,
Hear our prayer of supplication,
And be thou ever innocent, serene, and gentle to our Land.*

- ii. Salutation of the Fire: Gesture to the Sacred Fire

Earrach

*Behold: The Sacred Fire! (all repeat)
Sacred Fire: Burn within us! (all repeat)*

b. The Waters of Life—**Sarina**

- i. Decanting & Descriptive Invocation of the Waters : As sacrificer makes offering to the well and fills the Grail

Sarina

*I call Flowing Ocean from whom first arose both Gods and mortals,
Incorruptible, whose waves surround and encircle mighty Earth,
You are the Father of Earth's pure bubbling fountains,
every river and the spreading sea.
Hear us, Mighty Father
whose waters purify the Divine Powers,
Earth's limit, Fountain of polarity,
whose wide-spreading waves ever roll,
Approach gently, and be forever kind to Your mystics.*

- ii. Salutation of the Waters: Gesture to the Sacred Waters, exclaiming
Behold: The Waters of Life ! .. (all repeat)
Sacred Waters, flow within us ! (all repeat)

2. Acknowledging the Axis Mudi and The Sacred Center—**Emerald**

Emerald

I place this stone as the Omphalos, the naval of the world, the sacred center of all the Cosmos. (Pour libation over stone). Like the sacred stone at Delphi, let this stone be the place where Zeus's eagles did meet to find the center of the world. Let this stone mark the grave of the Pythian serpent, slain by Delian Apollon. Through this sacred center, let the World Tree grow, reaching through the sky to embrace the Sacred Fires above, and plunging deep within the earth to touch the Sacred Waters below.

Sacred Tree, Grow within us! (all repeat)

The Well, The Fire, The Sacred Tree. Flow and Flame and Grow in me!

Opening the Ways – **Emerald & Taren**

1. Calling the Gatekeeper: Hermes - **Taren**

Taren

(holding the staff of Hermes)

*You dwell in the compelling road of no return,
And you guide the souls of mortals to the nether gloom.
Hear me, Hermes, messenger of Zeus, son of Maia;
Almighty is your heart, o lord of the deceased and judge of contests.
You frequent the sacred house of Persephone as guide throughout the earth of ill-fated souls
Which you bring to their haven when their time has come,
Charming them with your sacred wand and giving them sleep
From which you rouse them again. To you indeed
Persephone gave the office, throughout wide tartaros,
To lead the way for the eternal souls of men.*

*Hermes Psychopompos, be our guide this night.
Help us to walk between the worlds, to traverse the realms, to open the gates.
Great Hermes, be with us here! (all repeat)
Great Hermes, accept our offering! (all repeat)*

Song: “We invoke Hermes, opener of every gate”

2. Opening the gate - **Emerald**

Emerald

Fix the image of Lord Hermes fast in your mind. As a citizen of the Western World, his image is seeded deep within your consciousness. Remember. . . the winged sandals. . .the short cloak. . . the wide-brimmed hat. . . the curling hair. . . the golden wand. He may appear to you as a beardless youth or as a man in his prime—the gods wear many faces as it please them. But more than any physical quality, there is one sense of him that seems to define him—a sense of movement. He seems as if he will take-off at any moment, and as the herald of Zeus, the god of travel, and the guide of souls, he is a god in motion. Light on his feet, quick and agile, he is a quintessential guide. And tonight, he is our guide. Being in his presence makes you feel the same, light and quick and ready to move as if your feet too bear wings. You know that with Hermes as our guide, we can move between the worlds, traverse the realms, and open the gates. And with his image firmly in our minds and this knowledge firmly in our hearts, we follow him.

Crouch down and place your hands firmly on the floor. With Hermes as our guide, feel the gate to the Underworld open beneath you. Perhaps it may feel to you as the opening of a door, the swinging of a gate, the dissolving of a barrier, the lifting of a fog, or some similar sensation. (pause)

Now stand upright and hold you hands out in front of you. With Hermes as our guide, feel the gate to the hidden realms open before you. (pause)

Now standing on your tippie toes, stretch you hands up toward the ceiling above you. And again, with Hermes as our guide, feel the gate to the Celestial realm open above you. (pause)

*With Hermes as our guide, we have opened the gates.
From below, from around, from above, the Mighty Kindreds draw near.
Let us call them to our fire, even as we hope to visit theirs this night as well.
Children of Earth, the gates are open!*

All repeat: *The gates are open!*

Filling Out The Cosmic Picture: The Kindred Invocation Triad

We remember and invite in the Dwellers of the Three Worlds.

Sacrificer makes offering to each Kindred during the invocation.

1. Nature Spirits – **Alaric**

Alaric

"Nature spirits! Worldly Spirits! Spirits of place!

We beg your attention and presence here!

You: Who swim in the waters!

You: Who creep upon the land!

You: Who fly in the skies! Be with us here!

You: Who dwell with one foot in this world!

You: Of the Fauns, Nymphs, Dryads, and Sylphs

You: Of those who dwell under-the-hill! Be with us here!

You: Of mountain, plain or valley!

You: Of bubbling spring or flowing river!

You: Genius Locii; spirits of place! Be with us here!"

Nature Spirits, All Hail and Welcome!

(Song: "Fur and feather...")

2. Ancestors—**Lassair**

Lassair

Hearken to our call, You who are our Ancestors!

Ancestors of Blood, of Spirit, and of this Place.

As you are Ours, so we are Yours.

Descended from Your Blood, Descended from Your Spirit,

Descended from Your Explorations that brought us to new lands.

We reach out to you, across the boundary.

Hear us, and be welcome among us!

Join with us this night.

We greet you, and give you Honor!

Accept these offerings of corn meal, barley and silver.

Ancestors All Hail and Welcome!

(Song: "From far beyond this mortal plane...")

3. Shining Ones—**Sarina**

Sarina

Friend, use it to good fortune.

Learn now, Mousaios, a rite mystic and most holy,

A prayer which surely excels all others.

Kind Zeus and Gaia, heavenly and pure flames of the Sun,

sacred light of the Moon, and all the Stars;

Poseidon, too, dark-maned holder of the earth,

*Pure Persephone and Demeter of the splendid fruit,
 Artemis, the arrow-pouring maiden, and you kindly Phoebus,
 Who dwell on the sacred ground of Delphi. And Dionysos,
 The dancer whose honors among the blessed gods are the highest.
 Strong-spirited Ares, holy and mighty Hephaistos,
 And the goddess foam-born to whose lot fell sublime gifts,
 And you, divinity excellent, who are king of the Underworld.
 I call upon Hebe, and Eileithyia, and the noble ardor of Heracles,
 The great blessings of justice and piety, The glorious nymphs and Pan the
 greatest,
 And upon Hera, buxom wife of Aegis-bearing Zeus.
 I also call upon lovely Mnemosyne and the holy Muses,
 All nine, as well as upon the Graces, the Seasons, the Year,
 Fair-tressed Leto, divine and revered Dione,
 The armed Kouretes, the Korybantes, the Kabeiroi,
 Great Saviors, Zeus's ageless scions,
 The Indaian gods, and upon Hermes, messenger and herald
 Of those in heaven; upon Themis, too, diviner of men I call and upon Night,
 oldest of all, and Light-bringing Day;
 Then upon Faith, Dike, blameless Thesmodoteira,
 Rhea, Kronos, dark-veiled Tethys,
 The great Ocean together with his daughters,
 The might preeminent of Atlas and Aion,
 Chronos the ever-flowing, the splendid water of the Styx,
 All these gentle gods, and also Pronoia,
 And the holy Daimon as well as the one baneful to mortals;
 Then upon divinities dwelling in heaven, air, water,
 On earth, under the earth, and in the fiery element.
 Ino, Leukothe, Palaimon giver of bliss,
 Sweet speaking Nike, queenly Adresteia,
 The great king Asklepios who grants soothing,
 The battle-stirring maiden Pallas, all the Winds, Thunder and the parts of the
 four –pillared Cosmos.
 And I invoke the Mother of the immortals, Attis and Men,
 And the goddess Ouranie, immortal and holy Adonis,
 Beginning and End too, which to all is most important,
 And all the gods and goddesses of those here assembled
 And ask them to come in a spirit of joyous mercy
 To this holy rite and libation of reverence.*

Sarina

Deities, All Hail and Welcome!

(Song: “Hail all the gods, hail all the goddesses...”)

III. TOP TIER: INVOCATION TO HADES & PERSEPHONE, PRAISE OFFERINGS AND OMEN

A. Invocation to Hades: **Earrach** and the Congregation

All

*Subterranean is your dwelling place, o strong-spirited one,
a meadow in Tartaros, thick-shaded and dark.
Chthonic Zeus, sceptered one, kindly accept this sacrifice,*

(Pause, Earrach makes offering of flowers)

All

*Plouton, holder of the keys to the whole earth,
you give the wealth of the year's fruits to mankind,
and to your lot fell the third portion, earth, queen of all,
seat of the gods, mighty lap for mortals.*

(Pause, Earrach makes offering of harvest foods)

All

*You took pure Demeter's daughter as your bride
in the district of Eleusis, where the gates to Hades are.
Your throne rests on a tenebrous realm,
the distant, untiring, windless and impassive Hades,
and on dark Acheron that encompasses the roots of the earth.
All-receiver, with death at your command, you are master of mortals;
you alone were born to judge deeds obscure and conspicuous;*

(Pause, Earrach pours libation)

All

*Holiest and illustrious ruler of all, frenzied god,
you delight in the worshiper's respect and reverence.
Come with favour and joy to the initiates. Hades, we call to you!*

Invocation to Persephone: **Sarina** and Congregation

All

*Persephone, blessed daughter of great Zeus, offspring
of Demeter, come and accept this gracious sacrifice.*

(Pause, Sarina makes offering of flowers)

All

*Much honored spouse of Plouton, discreet and life-giving,
you command the gates of Hades in the bowels of the earth,
lovely-tressed Praxidike, pure bloom of Deo,
mother of the furies, queen of the nether world.*

(Pause, Sarina pours libation)

All

*Radiant and luminous playmate of the Seasons,
august, almighty, maiden rich in fruits,
brilliant and horned, beloved of mortals.
You alone are life and death to toiling mortals,
Hearken, o blessed goddess, and send forth the earth's fruits.*

(Pause, Sarina makes offering of harvest foods)

All

*You who blossom in peace, in soft-handed health,
and in a life of plenty that ferries old age in comfort
to your realm, o queen, and to that of mighty Plouton.
Persephone, we call to you!*

Individual Praise Offerings

1. Recorded Music Begins (*Goddess* by Troika). Participants file past hallows and make physical offerings. They offer either the things they brought or make libation. Offerings are done silently.
2. After each person makes their offering, they go and line up at the door stage right of the hallows. Taren, carrying the staff of Hermes, will go down the line and blindfold each person.

Conclusionary sacrifice— Once the last offering has been made, **Deana** will open the door and pour the contents of the libation bowl onto the Earth for our Cthonic (underworld) Primary Deities.

Deana

Hades and Persephone, accept our sacrifice!

Deana

Hades & Persephone,

Gods and Goddesses,

Holy Ancestors,

Spirits of this place:

If anything that we have done here has offended you,

If anything we have done here has been incomplete,

If anything we have done here has not been in the proper manner,

Accept this final offering in recompense.

(Make piacular offering)

E. Taking of the Omen (Greek Deity Oracle Cards)—**Emerald**

Once the final offerings are made, the music will stop. As all wait in darkness and silence, Emerald will take the omen to see if our offerings have been accepted. If not, more offerings can be made. Once the omen is good, the music will begin again, and we will continue the rite.

The Omen:

From: Eileithyia, Goddess of Childbirth

We have come from a place of giving birth to new beginnings. Eileithyia is often shown with her arms raised to bring the child forth; it seems to me that she has smiled upon us as we have begun a new phase of Sassafras Grove this past fall. But we remember that it is through our labor that we give birth to new things.

Through: Dionysos, God of Indestructable Life

We are very much alive, enjoying life and reveling in the very fact that we are alive RIGHT NOW. As a Grove, we are in a very vibrant phase of our development, reveling in the lushness and depths of the gifts each of us brings to this work right now.

*To: Heracles, Human who through his labors, became a god
What better omen for a rite about how we want to be remembered? Our actions in this life do matter, and through our work, we too can achieve immortality. We will be remembered.*

The omen is good! So be it!

IV. RECEIVING AND USING THE RETURNED BLESSINGS/POWER

Calling Down the Blessings

A.

Emerald

Children of Earth, our offerings have been accepted by the King and Queen of the Dead. Great Hades and Persephone, we ask now for the blessing of coming before your excellence. Hermes Psychopompos, leader of souls—guide us to the gate. Let our journey begin.

B. Journey to Face the King and Queen of the Dead

1. Guide #1 will lead the first person outside. After a short trip around the porch, they will end up in front of Earrach and Sarina as Hades and Persephone. Taren as Hermes will take charge of them and remove their blindfold.
2. As they encounter Hades and Persephone, they will state **in one phrase or less** how they wish to be remembered after they have come to the Underworld to stay. This will also be written on a scroll that they will place in the fire before the royal couple. For those who do not wish to speak aloud, the scroll will suffice.
3. Persephone will hold a small vessel filled with pomegranate seeds. She will bestow one upon each person, saying

Sarina (as Persephone)

Eat this seed only if you choose to accept your own mortality.

4. Afterward, Hermes will direct them toward the entrance to the ritual space with the stern warning:

Taren (as Hermes)

Now go, and don't look back!

C. Visiting the Oracle

1. Guide # 2 will be standing just inside the ritual space. They will direct each person to approach the Oracle (Emerald) who will be concealed in the stairwell in the back of the room.
2. Guide # 3 will direct each person to approach the Oracle one at a time.

3. Emerald as the Oracle will draw a card for each person and give a brief statement of meaning.

Emerald

Meditate on [insert God/ess] as you enjoy the feast of the living.

D. Sacred Feast

A sacred feast of seasonal foods and drink will be set up at the back of the room.

Guide # 4 will direct. After leaving the Oracle, each person will eat and continue to meditate on their experience and their oracle. Music will play throughout. When all are finished, Sarina, Earrach, Taren, Emerald and Guides will join in the feast.

- E. Work yet undone: Remembering Lurch (friend of the Grove who had passed away recently)

- F. Final Blessing: Preparing to close down the rite - **Earrach**

V. UNWINDING AND ENDING THE CEREMONY

.Thanksgivings to Entities Invited (in reverse order of arrival:)

1. Hades and Persephone—**Earrach & Sarina**
2. The Triad of the Kindred—Deities, Ancestors, Nature Spirits – **Sarina, Lassair, Alaric**
3. Bardic Patron-- Orpheus – **Emerald**

B Thanking the Gatekeeper (Hermes) and Closing the Threshold—**Emerald & Taren**

1. Emerald leads everyone in a similar exercise as before to close the gates.
2. Farewell to Hermes

Taren

*Hermes, messenger of the Gods;
With your guidance, we have walked the paths between the worlds,
To stand before the Lord of the Dead in the nether gloom.
Great Hermes, Attend now again to your sacred duties
And accept our thanks for your guidance.
Great Hermes, Hail!*

C. Affirmation of Past/Future Continuity and Success—**Earrach**

Earach

As it has been done in the past...

As we have done it now...

and as it likewise will be done in the future...

we have again forged a link in the sacred chain of Tradition...

LONG LIVE THE TRADITION !

All

LONG LIVE THE TRADITION!

D. Draining Off the Excess Power - The Restoration of the Ordinary--**Earrach**

E. Clear-cut Ending: De-consecration of Time and Space

1. Final Benediction –**Earrach**
2. Announcement of End –**Earrach**
3. Musical Signal
 - a. The Nine Knells—**Emerald (with Sacred Dingers)**
 - b. Recessional-song: (“Walk with Wisdom” UP TEMPO!)

Credits

This rite was conceived and planned by Sarina, Emerald, and Earrach of Pittsburgh. Specific credits are below.

I.B.4. Prayer to Orpheus: Diane Lynn "Emerald" Vaughn

I.B.5. Orphic Hymn #26 to Earth: Apostolos N. Athanassakis, trans.

I.B.6. Orphic Hymn #84 to Hestia: Apostolos N. Athanassakis, trans. (Common hearth phrasing by Ceisier Serith)

I.B.7. Brighid Prayer: Maria Stoy

I.B.8. Ground/Center/Merge: Diane Dahm, based on Combination Grounding/Centering and Recreation of the Cosmos by Emerald.

I.B.9. Declaration of Intention & Historical Precedent: Earrach of Pittsburgh

II.A.1.a.i. Orphic Hymn #5 to Fire: Virginia Stewart Avalon, trans.

II.A.1.a.ii. Orphic Hymn #83 to Ocean: Virginia Stewart Avalon, trans.

II.A.2 Invocation to the Omphalos and the Sacred Tree: Diane Lynn "Emerald" Vaughn

II.B.1. Orphic Hymn #57 to Cthonic Hermes, Apostolos N. Athanassakis, trans. (altered slightly by Emerald)

II.B.2. Hermes Gateway Opening: Diane Lynn "Emerald" Vaughn

II.C.1 Nature Spirits Invocation: Earrach of Pittsburgh (Greeked-up on the fly by Alaric)

II.C.2. Ancestor Invocation: Lassair

II.C.3. Deities Invocation: "Orpheus to Mousaios." Apostolos N. Athanassakis, trans.

III.A. Orphic Hymn #18 to Hades: Apostolos N. Athanassakis, trans. (adapted by Emerald)

III.B. Orphic Hymn #29 to Persephone: Apostolos N. Athanassakis, trans. (adapted by Emerald)

III.D. Piacular Offering: Jenni Hunt after Ceisier Serith

IV.B.3. Charge of Persephone: Sarina

V.B.2. Farewell to Hermes: Taren Martin