

Thornhaven Protogrove ADF Beltane Ritual “Fire of Life, Fire of Sacrifice, Fire of Protection” 2009

Set Up:

The lower circle is set up with the well (filled with water from the River) and fire already lit. Another fire pit is empty, with assorted materials for a fire at the ready, including a wicker man, not yet filled. All of the standard offerings are already at the altar. Once the Grove is set up, some of the priesthood waits there for the folk to come. One will sprinkle folk as they walk into the grove.

Four people are chosen as representatives of the group. These will be the chief fire-makers. Everyone will be instructed to bring their offering to the Grove.

Preamble is given regarding the ritual components, what to expect, etc...

Welcome and opening remarks:

“Welcome all to our Beltane rite. Like its counterpart, Samhain, Beltane heralds the beginning of a new cycle in the wheel of the Year. Spring has thoroughly arrived, and with it comes the promises of summer- the bounty, the get-togethers, lazy days and sultry nights. But, like Samhain, Beltane is also a crossroads, and the path we choose at Beltane is dictated by the circumstances we encounter at this time. If we are in times of plenty, Beltane is a celebration of life, focussing on the aspects of sex, fertility and merriment-themes which extend on into the summer. In times of plenty, we can procreate without worrying about new mouths to feed; we can play, relax, and enjoy the sports of art and leisure.

If, however, we are in lean times, the rite becomes instead a plea for protection and blessing, with sacrifices often given in exchange. The summer in a lean year then hinges on the hard work of surviving, and getting back to a more comfortable point. Fertility still plays a part, but the emphasis is placed on agriculture and fertility of the land, rather than human or creative fertility.

As everyone knows, this year, we are experiencing a global economic downturn. Many members of the Grove, and their families have been personally touched by this downturn and have suffered financial hardship over the winter months; and we are told that these lean times will continue for the foreseeable future. This downturn was foretold to us during our Samhain omen reading, at which point we received clarification that we could weather these hard times by turning to one another. So today, we come together as a community or tribe, and make a substantial offering, as a means of attaining protection and blessing for our tribe in these dire days.

Bell is rung three times, as a signal to proceed.

Procession to ritual site, people carrying various offerings, to the song "Come to the land"

As people proceed into the space, they are sprinkled with holy water.

Earth Mother

"We return to the land

To our mother, source of nourishment

Bringer of blossom and grain

And all that we love.

Danu, to you we offer first sacrifice. *(Offering of grain)*

Earth mother, we honour You!"

Offering to the Outdwellers:

Priest moves to the north section of the space:

"Outdwellers! Those who work against us in our rite! Bother us not, nor come any closer! We offer you a sacrifice in exchange for your obedience. Leave us in peace and trouble us not!
(offering of copper coins is given)

Re-centering using "This Is Our Song"

Stating Purpose and Historical precedent:

"Beltane is the time to light fires. Above us, the fire of the sky shines down upon us, re-awakening us from the torpor of winter. Below us, the fire of the earth kindles the sprouting and budding of new life, and we feel the buzzing of it all around us. The fire within us stirs our blood and our loins, makes us restless and eager to move, to play, to get going with things. The fire we build today is a reflection of this- like for like, a form of magic known as sympathetic magic.

The Beltane fire is a magical fire, and it serves many purposes. In building and lighting the fire, it draws the tribe together, and connects us to our ancestral past. In making offerings to the fire, it becomes sacred, and is transformed into a fire of blessing and protection. This kind of fire is known as a "needfire". At Beltane, our ancestors would build them on the tops of hills, and drive cattle between them to incur health and fertility upon the cattle. People would also pass around the fire for a similar blessing.

We come to this Beltane rite with offerings of sacrifice, hoping to secure the safety and protection of ourselves, our family, our tribe and our land during these difficult times.

We come to light the needfire, as our ancestors did, and make a grand sacrifice befitting the seriousness of our plight. In so doing, we create positive magic that will make us immune to the negative forces around us, and ensure plenty in a time of drought.

We will offer our noble sacrifice today to the Dagda. The Dagda, God of Protection, God of the Crops. He who can take life, but also restore it. The Dagda, the Good God, who bears the cauldron of plenty, so that none who drink or eat from it will ever know want. The Dagda, full of life and lust and power. To him, we will give offering.

Together we will build the fire. Together we will light it. Together we will feed it with our sacrifice. And in return, the Dagda will give us blessings, and protection, and the promise of new life.

The blessings will be born on the boughs of the Hawthorne, the May Tree, which blooms at this time of year, and is known as the tree of protection.”

Recreating the Cosmos

“But first, let us recreate the cosmos, the centre of the universe, from which point we can perform our magic”

“At the centre of the universe, there is a primeval fire. This is the fire of life, of light, of inspiration and transformation. It is the fire our ancestors depended on to survive, and the hearth fire we continue to gather around, to sing, and play and dance. It is the fire that ignites our creativity and courses through our veins when we are inspired. It warms us, kindles our passions, strengthens our will and in adversity, can transform us. Behold, the sacred fire!

Sacred Fire, flame within us.” (*Oil is poured on the fire*)

People: **“Sacred fire, flame within us.”**

“At the centre of the universe sits a sacred well, and the waters of life are contained within. These are the primordial waters of creation, from which all life comes. It is the womb of the mother, a vessel of untapped potential and the unshaped powers that lie deep below us and within us. It is the water that nourishes us, and cleanses us, and flows through our veins with vitality and strength. Behold, the sacred waters!

Sacred waters, flow within us!” (*Silver is offered to the cauldron*)

People: **“Sacred waters, flow within us!”**

“In the centre of the universe stands the Sacred Tree, and we nestle our spirits in its roots and branches. This is the world tree, which stretches above and below, connecting the worlds together. It is the steed of the shaman, the source of wisdom, the watcher, the teacher of the lessons found in stillness and time. We take haven under its leaves and gain strength from its roots. Behold, the Sacred Tree!

Sacred Tree, grow within us!” (*Water from the cauldron is ladled onto the tree*)

People: **“Sacred Tree, grow within us!”**

“With Holy Flame, with Sacred Waters, this Grove is claimed and hallowed.

With the World Tree stretched above us and below us, this Grove is claimed and Hallowed.

With the Spirits of the People shining bright and strong, this Grove is claimed and Hallowed. “

Opening the Gates

“We stand at the border

Between the realms

And call to Manaanan mac Llyr:

Open the gates to the other worlds

Let there be a passageway

A clear and shining path to magic

Plowed between the waves.”

Priest stamps with staff 3 times) “We knock three times to make our wishes known:

Let the fire open as a gate

Let the well open as a gate

Let the bile open as a gate

Gatekeeper, Manaanan, we honour you!” (*Oil is offered to fire*)

Calling the Kindred

“In this space, we are never alone. And so to the Shining Ones we give honour and praise.”

Nature Spirits

“Hallowed are the dwellers of the land
Spirits of green and bark, feather and fur
Makers and keepers of the natural order
Beauty we find in your presence
Wondrous beings of this hidden world
We honour you!” (*offering of seeds is given to the ground*)

“Hallowed are the ancestors
Beloved dead, elders and heroes
Watchers and whisperers of the secrets of life
Wisdom we find in your presence.
Guardian spirits of the other world
We honour you!” (*Offering of whiskey is given to the fire*)

“Hallowed are the Shining Ones
Immortal Gods and Goddesses all
Creators and masters of the universal mysteries
Grace we find in your presence.
Matrons and Patrons of our hearts
We honour you!” (*Offering of oil is given to the fire*)

Call to Main Diety- The Dagda

“We call upon the Dagda-

Come to us this day!

Magnificent One, god of Good, god of Plenty

You carry the powers of life and death in equal measure.

Red Man of All Knowledge

There are no limits to your wisdom or your passions.

In your presence, we share in your bounty

And thrive under your protection.

Blessings you bring us, and truly we are blessed.

We honour you with our noble sacrifice-

A sacrifice befitting the dire times in which we live!”

Lighting of the Needfire/Offerings made:

Everyone will place their offering in the wicker-man structure, which will already be secured to the fire pit for safety reasons. The four chosen fire-makers/representatives of the Tribe are instructed to begin building the fire. This will require actual building of the fire by striking steel on flint. Others will play drums.

A bowl of hawthorn sprigs will be carried three times around the fire, and then given to each participant to place above their doors for protection.

Hallowing of the Waters:

“Behold the waters of life! This is the outpouring of Blessings from the Mighty Ones, from the Cauldron of the Dagda, the never-ending source! Drink we now the draught of the Gods. Drink in Wisdom, Vitality and Strength, so that we may live our best lives.

BEHOLD THE WATERS OF LIFE!”

The cup is passed in the usual way.

Final Blessing:

“The waters of Blessing flow in us, filling us to the brim with the magic of the Shining Ones. We are satiated, and renewed at the beginning of this new cycle. We move forward with the turning of the wheel, strengthened by our past, and bolstered into our future with the gift of divine protection that has been given to us today.”

The Omen:

“We have been blessed and given offerings in return. Now, Let the wyrd of the mighty ones be revealed to us, so we may know they are well-pleased.”

Omen is taken.

“Hear now the nature of the blessing the Gods see fit to bestow upon us.” Omen is read.

Goodbyes:

“We have called out to the Shining Ones and been answered with glorious resounding

We have given our offerings and been blessed in return.

Great and wonderful is this world and the creators who made it!

With each call we make to the Shining Ones, and each offering we give

They heed our calls more, and our connections become stronger.

Even though the rite is ending, we leave this place wiser,

And carry the blessings and beauty, with us always.”

“Dagda, We thank you for your blessings. Although we depart, you remain in our hearts.”

“Shining Ones, Mighty Gods all, we thank you!

Honoured Dead, Ancestors of blood and land, we thank you!

Spirits of the Land, we thank you!

Manaanan, Gatekeeper, we thank you!

Danu, Earth Goddess, Mother of us all, we thank you!”

“Now by the keeper of the Gates and by our magic, we end what we began.

Let the fire be flame,

Let the well be water,

Let all be as it was before.

Let the Gates be closed!”

Closing “This grove was founded in January 2007, at which time a commitment was made: to celebrate together every high day, and other occasions; to worship the land and the spirits that reside here, the ancestors and our Gods. Today, as on every feast day, we now restate our oath. We have done as our ancestors have done, and as our children will do, and the Kindred have answered. Let us go now as children of the Earth. Peace be on us and blessings too.

This ritual is ended. So be it!”