

Celebrating the Circle

Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
www.celebratethecircle.org

Spring 2005

Volume 14, Issue 2

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Celebrating our Young Adults - Ostara 2005

Ursa Madre

The question arose at this ritual as to why I chose to recognize the passage of our young men at this point in the wheel. Frankly, the question surprised me – when else, aligned with the wheel of the year, would you hold a ritual of passage for a young person, male or female, that is transitioning from childhood to adulthood?



Imbolc, enters puberty and experiences first love in its innocence at Ostara, and moves to courtship and fertility at Beltane. In ancient cultures, early spring was when the young men and young women would be segregated and trained in the gender-specific skills of their culture by the elders of the tribe or community. This practice was common across cultures –

In the myth of the Wheel of the Year, Aboriginal, Native American, and the Child is a newborn at Yule, grows in strength and stature to childhood at

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An Open Letter to the CTC Community: A Mother's Perspective

Dearest Community -

I have been attending CTC rituals and learning circles for almost 5 years now – rituals that have been moving, fun, intense or just a good gathering of friends. But this was one of the first times that I have been so affected by a ritual as to feel a connection with the CTC community on a tribal level, realizing how far we have come lately as an extended spiritual family.

The Spring Equinox ritual a few weeks ago, was a representation of an Aboriginal coming of age ceremony. My 15-year-old son, Chris, was asked weeks in advance if he would be an “initiate” and step into the center of the circle when asked to participate in the ceremony. He agreed, hesitantly, not quite knowing what to expect. What we both received was so much more than we could have ever imagined.

Chris' 15th birthday had come and gone in early February with the usual amount of teenage birthday noise – mostly centering on how he was going to get a driver's license soon. And although I was aware of his growing up (his height had passed mine late last summer), it never hit me that he was transitioning from child to teen-adult. But when we arrived at the ritual and listened to the teaching of the Aboriginal culture - how the male soon to be adults were taken away for a month by the Shaman to be taught how to be members of the tribe - a rush of tears brought home the realization that my son was becoming a man, instead of a child.

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CTC Schedule of Learning Circles and Rituals

Celebrate the Circle

CTC is an on-going interest group of the Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship. CTC holds regular learning circles on Sundays, from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. in Room 7 of the Care Building. Rituals are held for the eight sabbats, gather at 5 p.m., ritual at 5:30 p.m. For more information on events, visit the website at www.celebratethecircle.org

CTC is a chapter of the Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans (CUUPS). For more information on CUUPS, visit the website at www.cuups.org.

Celebrating the Circle is a quarterly publication of the CTC interest group. While it provides information on the activities of CTC, it also serves as a forum for members to express their views. Opinions expressed do not necessarily represent those of the CTC, its Steering Committee, CUUPS, or ERUUF and its administration.

Forward your articles, letters, rants, dates, poetry, artwork and responses to the editor, Amy Brann, at info@celebratethecircle.org.
Deadline for the Summer issue is Monday, June 20, 2005.

May 8 - God Against the Gods

Dick Merritt will give a book report on Johnathan Kirsch book, "God Against the Gods." The book tells of the final struggle between monotheism and polytheism in the ancient world and illuminates the ancient roots of today's most bloody conflicts as well as the cherished idea of religious liberty. Facilitated by Dick.

May 15 - Tarot Explorations: Minor Suites IX

We continue our studies with the Six through Ten of Pentacles. Pentacles represent the material and financial aspects of your world. We will discuss the attributes of the Six through Ten and share our stories of the Tarot. Please bring your Tarot decks and stories to share! Facilitated by Lance.

May 22 - Cakes & Ale: Ritual Food & Drink

What ritual would a cinnamon apple bread go best with? When would it be best to share strawberry wine? We'll explore what fruits, spices, grains, and more have relationships with the eight Sabbats. There will also be a tasting of cakes & ale fare. Please bring favorite recipes or a bit of cake to share. Facilitated by Amy.



May 29 - Meeting the Goddess

Facilitated by Cynthia.

June 5 - Creating Personal Sabbat Altars: Litha and Lammas

Decorating for the holidays is second nature in most households and many office buildings. Altars are natural extensions of that practice in our pagan tradition. Altars that change with the wheel of the year can be quietly incorporated into mundane settings - or celebrated flamboyantly in our private spaces. Bring your own ideas and altar objects with you to this circle for discussion and sharing of ideas for Litha and Lammas altars. Facilitated by Tamia.

June 12 - Administrivia

Let your voice be heard! What subjects would you like CTC to delve into? What do you desire to teach? The place to share what you want to see taught, what you want to teach, and how the circle is celebrated.

June 19 - Litha

Come join us as we celebrate summer vacation and let our inner children out to play. We'll explore the elemental aspects of childhood and rediscover the pleasures of play. Remember: just because you grow up doesn't mean you have to be old! Meet in the CARE Building, Commons Room. Facilitated by Jag, Eliza & Rachel.

June 26 - Pagan Movie Day: "The Red Violin"

The movie "The Red Violin" is structured around a Tarot reading. Come enjoy the film and afterwards we will discuss of how the cards relate to the storyline. Facilitated by Amy.

July 3 - Tarot Explorations: Minor Suites X Court 1.

Facilitated by Lance.

July 10 - Dream Time Pleasures

In this workshop we will create a herbal delights to relax and enhance your dream time. We will look at dream pillows to assist your journey into the land of dreams and the many different herbal mixtures that can aid us. Little-to-no sewing skills required. Facilitated by Becky.

July 17 - Drumming for Rituals

Facilitated by Lance.

July 24 - Pagan Music

Looking for new pagan music? Found a great pagan group you want to share with others? Bring your favorite pagan cds and tapes as we share and discuss our favorite pagan-themed music, mood music for ritual/meditation, etc. Facilitated by Jag.

July 31 - Lughnassadh

Lughnasadh will be a celebration of the Egyptian Epagomenal Days. These festival days celebrated the transition from the old year to the new year, as well the birthdays of Osiris (July 28), Horus (July 29), Set (July 30), Isis (July 31), and Nephthys (August 1). Meet in the CARE Building, Rooms 4&5. Facilitated by Amy.

CTC's schedule of Learning Circles and rituals is subject to change. For the most accurate & up-to-date schedule, please visit www.celebratethecircle.org for CTC's Calendar of Events ●●

The Poet's Calendar - April

I open wide the portals of the Spring
 To welcome the procession of the flowers,
 With their gay banners, and the birds that sing
 Their song of songs from their aerial towers.
 I soften with my sunshine and my showers
 The heart of earth; with thoughts of love I glide
 Into the hearts of men; and with the Hours
 Upon the Bull with wreathed horns I ride.

- Author Unknown

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The ritual was simple and beautifully put together. Chris stepped to the center of the circle when called, nervous that he would be the only one there, and was immediately joined by two beautiful young women of the community, one on each side. I remember thinking how perfect was the balance of that picture of him flanked by the two lovely women! The “initiates” were painted with colored face paint (to represent the ceremonial scarring done in

the original ceremony). I had the honor and privilege of placing the first mark on the initiates to signify the mother’s blessing that they were ready to continue on the path to adulthood.

Afterwards, knots were tied in colored ropes to signify the teaching of the lessons of adulthood. Each direction caller tied a knot for the lessons of friendship and responsibility. In addition, the other members of our tribe tied-in lessons that were meaningful to them. I was so touched by the comments made, many I recognized by dear friends born out of person growth and learning experiences. One by a friend, “Responsibility also means being able to ask for help when you need it,” a lesson hard learned in recent months as she had to ask for help. Others, by people that have watched Chris grow over the past few years as he has participated in increasing responsibility in CTC rituals and learning circles, given from their own individual perspective.

Chris’ father, my husband, was not able to attend (he was working), but several members of our tribe - Lance, Dick, Tim - were willing to step into the role and provide the male leadership of elder kin. One lesson, in particular, tickled and touched me because it sounded so parental, “Friends who try to talk you into doing something that is illegal, or doesn’t feel right to you, are NOT your friends!” I was so touched by this because each of these men have always watched out for Chris and helped to guide him spiritually.

Occasionally, something happens that really changes your perspective – about yourself, your child, your community. CTC’s Spring Equinox ritual did just that for me and I want to publicly thank the people that put the time and energy into sharing this special event with us – Tamia, Dick, the direction callers. It touched me that a need in our community was identified and the tribe came together to provide the ceremony and opportunity for growth and recognition. I feel honored to be a part of the CTC community and I would like to encourage all of us – as tribe, spiritual kin and friends – to continue to create these sacred opportunities to support and honor each other. Thank you again – I love each and every one of you!!

With the deepest love and gratitude,
 Becky



The initiates show off their “ritual scarification” after the Corroborre.

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Imbolc Reflections

Lance Brown

Late on the evening of February 6th I posted the following to my Live Journal: *I stood in circle with my Goddess tonight and it was good. A year ended and a new one beginning. We shall see what it brings. Brigid's Blessings be upon you all.*

Earlier that evening, members and guests of CTC gathered in the Commons Room at the Eno River UU Fellowship to celebrate Imbolc where Becky Starr and I led a ritual honoring this time of new beginnings in traditional Celebrate The Circle fashion. Abby, Chris, Jag, and Steph called the directions during the ritual.

As the ritual started, we all gathered to create sacred space. Unfortunately, the Gods had other ideas! Becky had lit some incense at the very beginning of the ritual and just as I was finishing the circle casting, it set off the smoke alarm in the building! People say I teleported about 6 feet sideways when it happened! Twenty minutes and a few phone calls later we had learned how to turn off the alarms, calmed ourselves down, and started again.

Imbolc is a time of new beginnings. In northern Europe, the ewes are heavy with new milk and are starting to drop their lambs. Today, for many pagan traditions, it's the time of welcoming new members into their circles and/or of con-

ferring new degrees. CTC honors this by offering the opportunity to accept a Challenge of the Goddess. Several people spoke of past and/or new Challenges, including a first-time participant.

Imbolc is also Brigid's day. Becky embodied Brigid for us, bringing Her Love and energy into the circle. She witnessed the Challenges of the participants, granted boons to those who asked, and blessed our tools and craft items for the coming year.

We shared cakes and ale, thanks Brigid for her presence, released the directions and circle, and then feasted on the wonderful food everyone had brought to share. Some of the offering included an excellent lamb stew from Lance and Amy, Irish soda bread and Shirley Corriher's Raspberries in Mascarpone Cream from Abby, Dick brought chili, Cynthia made a scrumptious pie, and rosemary bread and cookies from Steph. Everyone ate well!

Imbolc is the most important Sabbat of the year for me. Brigid is my Patroness and I keep Her flame and Her ways. A year ended, a new one began, and I am once again honored to have shared Imbolc and Brigid with my CTC family. As I write this, it is now mid-April and the new year has been most auspicious so far! Brigid's Blessing be upon you all! ☉☾

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evident in the literature surrounding these cultures – be it dreamtime tales of Aboriginal Australia or modern writings such as *Mists of Avalon*.

Whether hunter-gatherer or agriculturally oriented, the survival of the individual and of the community depended on the training of the older children in the skills, roles, and rituals of the tribe. Spring was an ideal time for this training: in hunting communities, the rainy and cold seasons were over and the animal herds were becoming active again.

In agricultural traditions, spring afforded the conditions for working the soil and planning and planting the crops. Passing on this knowledge at the beginning of the season would ensure extra hands at the height of activity – summer harvest and fall hunting, thereby increasing the chance of abundant stores of food for the next dark cycle.

Then again, perhaps the question was not pointed so much at the time of year, as to why I chose to emphasize the ritual for young men. Quite simply, because a

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Spring is the time of year for new beginnings and renewal. These flowers, from a CTC member's garden, invoke the innocence and optimism of this season. Pictured above: hyacinths; left: violas.
Photographer: Steph Taylor

Statement of Financial Position

As of March 31, 2005

Starting Balance:	\$501.76
Income:	\$438.30
Expense:	\$121.65
Ending Balance	\$818.41

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young man of our community is currently in his transition and had not been through a rite of passage. The young woman of the same age had been through her Maidenening ritual a couple of years ago. Now it is this young man's turn. He has stepped up to leadership roles within the community, advancing from taking quarter calls in ritual to leading workshops and taking staff positions at festivals. In his everyday life, he has faced the skills of driving a car and navigating the maze of high school. He is a remarkable young man that I am very honored to share sacred space with and I have a great respect and admiration for his family.

I authored the ritual of Corroborre five years ago for CTC as an introduction to the Aboriginal Dreamtime theology. It has been incorporated into the coming of age rituals by the Unitarian Universalists at SUUSI by UUA Young Adults director Michael Tino. And now the wheel has turned full circle – I brought it back to its origin to honor our own young adults in general, and one young man in particular. Part of the magick of our community is in witnessing our individual and collective rites of passage. It was my cherished privilege that this young man and his family allowed me to play a small part in honoring his rite.

Namaste. ☯

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Eno River UU Fellowship
4907 Garrett Road
Durham NC 27707

The
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Here

Beltane ~ “I Sing the Body Electric” Sunday, May 1, 2005, at 5 PM Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

Beltane is the time for celebrating the waxing year, the renewal of nature. It is the time of flowering. It is High Spring. It is a celebration of the fertility of the Earth.

One hundred fifty years ago this year, Walt Whitman published the first edition of his collection of poems, *Leaves of Grass*. Of that work, “I Sing the Body Electric” is an unabashed paean to the human body.

*I sing the body electric,
The armies of those I love engirth me and I engirth
them,
They will not let me off till I go with them, respond
to them,
And disconcert them, and charge them full with the
charge of the soul.*

For Beltane 2000, CTC adapted Whitman’s words to use in ritual. We are doing so again in this

anniversary year. We will dance the Maypole, the Shaft of Life. We will have a cauldron to jump since a balefire is not appropriate on the ERUUF campus. We will have a grand time.

Sunday, May 1st at 5:00 PM we will gather at the CARE building. The ritual will be followed by a pot luck feast. Bring food and drink to share. Drums and festive garb are welcome. You might enhance your experience of the ritual by reading “I Sing the Body Electric” from Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* prior to the ritual.

If you have questions, contact Dick Merritt at dickmerritt@mindspring.com or (919) 644-6310.

