

Welcome to the Longest Day!

Here we are at Midsummer already. It seems like yesterday we were celebrating Imbolc and watching signs of the coming spring. Now we are in the throes of summer. In Florida, the temperature has been in the 90s for so long,



winter is a distant memory. I am glad we are now in the rainy season since the earth is so dry. I hope we get just enough rain to nourish the ground without flooding. This was the storm building over the Gulf of Mexico.

The female turkeys and the sandhill cranes have been walking around with their babies. This year, there is a large group of male turkeys. For the first few years we lived here, there were two or three males. Now, the group is over ten and they are becoming destructive.



We noticed a neighbor has a scarecrow in his yard make out of plastic pipes and aluminum pie pans. This is a picture of a mother with three babies

in the yard with the scarecrow.

Last week I had to rescue a baby turkey from the two dogs next door. The mother and baby were cutting through the fenced area when the dogs came outside. The mother flew to the nearest tree but the baby was not that fast. I heard horrible screeching and began yelling at the dog to drop it. Luck was with me and the dog dropped the bird. Once out of the dog's mouth, it quickly flew to the top of the fence and then up in the tree with its mother. That was too close for comfort for me.

The Goddess transitions moves from Maiden to Mother. We honor women between the ages of 21 to 35. For Dianics, the summer solstice is a time to recognize feminine fertility and creativity. We also honor the element of fire. We associate fire with inner strength and use it to cleanse negativity from our bodies and thoughts. At Beltane, we cleaned the temples and our bodies. At the Summer Solstice, we continue the cleansing and prepare for the first harvest.



I have been taking inventory of my life—deciding where I should direct my passion. I decided it is time to experiment. I have a list of things I want to try. Now I just have to take the next step and DO. The first one my list is to complete Advanced Service Dog

training with my dog Colt. I am attending a couple of Paint Nites. One is a moon goddess and the other is a portrait of Colt.



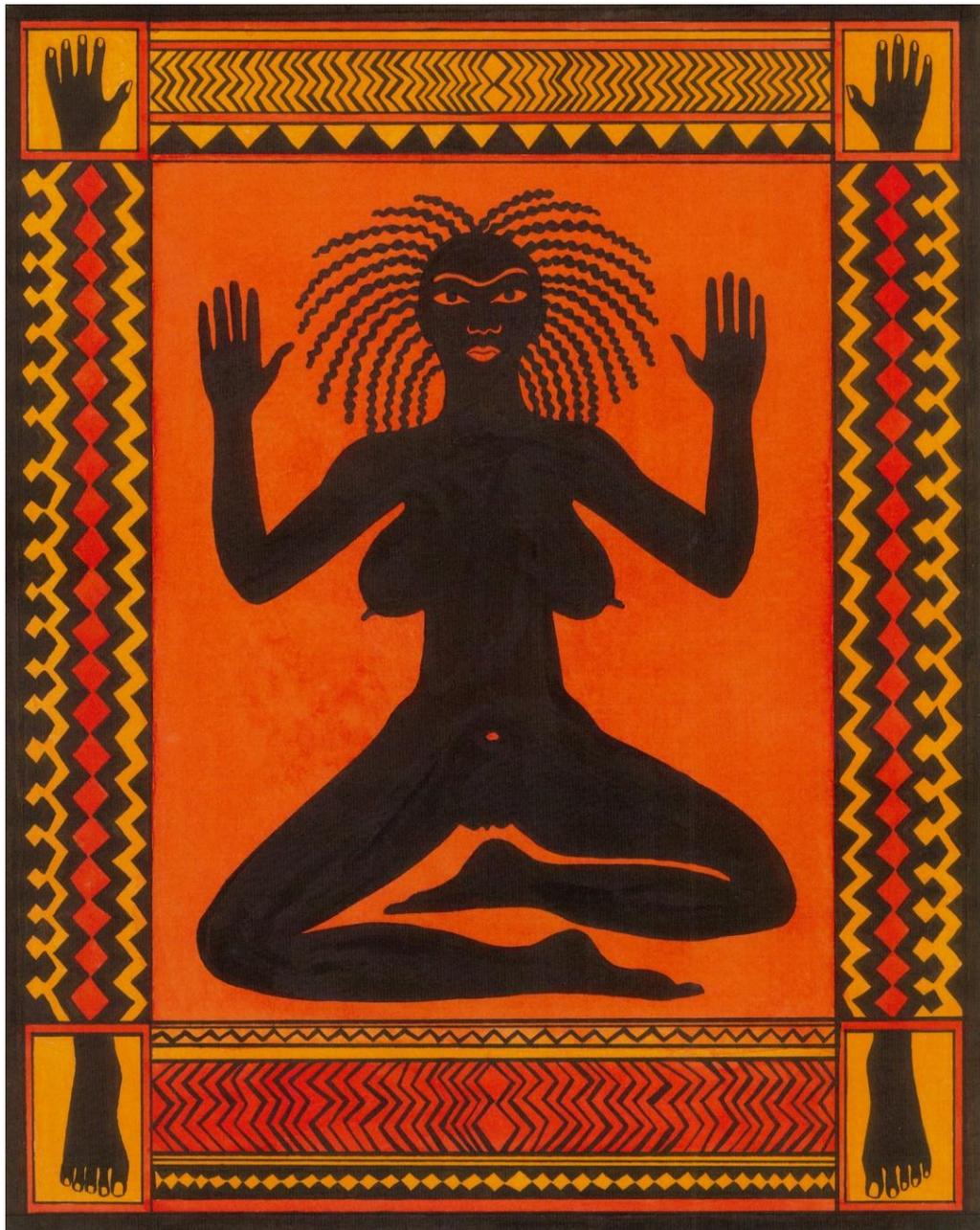
So, take some advice. Take time to find what fuels your fire then use it ignite your passion. Start or finish a project. Be creative! The sky is the limit.

Blessings on this Longest Day,
Dawn

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Artwork by Tamara Wyndham



Tamara Wyndham is a visual artist, primarily a painter. Raised in Los Angeles, Tamara has now lived in New York City for more than half her life. She has been awarded artist residencies at the Henry Street Settlement, the Kate Millett Art Colony, the Vermont Studio Center, the Mariz Ceramic Workshop in the Czech Republic, and Fundación Valparaíso in Spain. She has traveled widely through Mexico and Central America, all around Europe, and in Egypt, Turkey, and Morocco. Tamara was active in the feminist Goddess revival, and now is the Imperator for Aiwass Temple No. 8, Temple of Thelema, in New York City; and also the organizer of Babalon Salon New York City, a women's study group on magick and spirituality.

Ask Your Mama by Mama Donna Henes

Are you cyclically confused? In a ceremonial quandary? Completely clueless? Wonder no more.

*Ask Your Mama™

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Spirituality and Didn't Know Who to Ask™

by

©Mama Donna Henes, Urban Shaman

A Question of Ceremony with Children

Dear Mama Donna,

I am not a follower of the Goddess, but I was walking around in downtown Brooklyn with my six-year-old daughter, Beatrice, when she said to me, "Mommy, I don't believe in God. I believe in Mother Nature and the fairies in the woods. That's why I make circles with the rocks." Clearly she is on a spiritual path and I would like to support her, but I really don't have the background to show a six-year-old the path to the Goddess.

Ready and Willing, Brooklyn, NY

Dear Ready, Willing, *and* Able,

Ah, to have had a mom like you when I was six and building altars and shrines in nature! I am deeply impressed with your desire to help Beatrice pursue her own personal spiritual path, without coercion, indoctrination, judgment, or repression. Brava!

Children are natural ceremonialists. They are reverent, practical, organized, open, response-able, and utterly sincere. They are still linked with the infinite profound, and believe in the magical power of tranceformation. They are more than willing to suspend logic and take that crucial leap of faith. They believe.

My fairy goddess daughter and soul sister, Shameike, is my favorite ritual partner. Eleven now, she has spent summers and spring breaks with me ever since she was three. Over the past eight years, we have established quite a roster of rites for special occasions as well as for daily life.

Our most consistent and satisfying one has been "Doing Om" at bedtime. After we read stories or talk, we join our energy and chant together. I sit on her bed and we hold (all four) hands to

create a complete circle of the two of us. We close our eyes, center ourselves, breathe deeply, and chant "Om."

Every night it is different — sometimes our energy carries us longer, sometimes the chant is quite brief. Occasionally, a visiting friend will join our intimate circle. Once in a while, it gets silly and giggly, but more often, we tone until we feel relaxed and peaceful. She usually drifts off to sleep, while I feel revitalized for the rest of my night's chores.

This has become sacred to us, and we never miss. On her first day back in Exotic Brooklyn last summer after our months-long separation, she asked, "Can we Do Om for a really long time tonight?" This ritual binds us in an unbreakable embrace, which is at once physical and spiritual. It cements our connection as family, and honors the divine union of our eternal soul-selves. We are bound by our breath.

Once we attended a wonderful Passover seder with the extended clan of the Living Theater. At one point during the ceremony, someone started to intone Om. Soon, everybody lent their attention and voice. Shameike slipped her hand into mine and squeezed it in silent affirmation of the years of our shared understanding and experience of Doing Om.

The moon is another great way to link to the Goddess. In most cultures, the moon represents the divine female principle. Luna is the Lady in the Moon. She is the Queen of the Subconscious, the Emotions, the Spirit, and Maternity. She rules creativity and invites our admiration and interaction. Women have always claimed a special relationship with La Madama Madonna Moon.

Kids, too, have a special affinity to the moon and identify it as a friend and companion. Remember the feeling that the moon was following you wherever you went? The first thing Shameike always wants to know when I pick her up in the summer, is when the full moon will be. When she was little, she called it the "whole moon."

Keep track of the lunar cycles and do something really wonderful together to mark the full and new moons. Treat the new moon like a mini new year, a new beginning. Create an intention for the coming month. Make a resolution. Start a joint project. Plan to do something new. Make a wish on the first crescent.

Celebrate the full moon by walking, dancing, drumming, swimming, bathing, sleeping in its bright light. Turn off all your lights, raise the shades, and invite the moon light in. Make shadow puppets. Take a middle-of-the-night field trip to some beautiful place in nature. Get dressed up all in white and take family pictures. Don't forget to bring snacks!

You might want to say some version of grace at meals, acknowledging the bountiful Earth Goddess for all of the fruits and vegetables from Her belly. Set a beautiful table, light candles, and make pretty food in honor of simply being alive and loving each other. Decorate your house, her room, the windows, the yard, for every holiday and seasonal change.

Since she already seems to be drawn to altars and shrines, you can encourage her to make a very special one for her room where she can "make offerings" to her own vision of the Goddess of Nature. She will certainly have her own very distinct idea of what that might mean.

Take your cues from your daughter. She still remembers.

xx Mama Donna

Dear Mama Donna,

Can we get together and make a Goddess circle or a Mother Nature Circle or a water circle or an earth circle or an air circle or a fire circle?

Beatrice

Dear Beatrice,

Yes. It would be my honor to do a circle together with you. But you know you can also do a circle whenever you want to all by yourself. Or you can invite your mom or a friend if you feel like sharing. You can sit down with a bowl of water and a bowl of earth. You can ask your mom to help you light some incense to make fire and sweet smelling air.

Keep on making your stone circles. Stones come from the earth. They are like the bones of the body of Mother Earth. Circles are powerful magic. The moon is a circle. The earth is a circle. The year is a circle. People all over the world have made circles out of stone to use like a church or temple for their ceremonies to the Great Goddess.

Why not have your own circle ceremony inside of one of the circles of stones that you have built? You made the circle. You can make the ceremony, too. You can make it any way you want!

Also you can talk to the Goddess any time you want to. You can ask Her for help, or you can just tell Her how you feel about Her. Of course, if She does help you, I'm sure that you will remember your best manners and say "Thank you!"

Whenever you have a question, please write to me and I will answer you.

I send circles of fire, water, earth and sky to bless you.

xxMama Donna

*Are you cyclically confused? In a ceremonial quandary? Completely clueless? Wonder no more. Send your questions about seasons, cycles, celebrations, ceremonies and spirit to Mama Donna at: CityShaman@aol.com

Donna Henes is an internationally renowned urban shaman, ritual expert, award-winning author, popular speaker and workshop leader whose joyful celebrations of celestial events have introduced ancient traditional rituals and contemporary ceremonies to millions of people in more than 100 cities since 1972. She has published four books, a CD, an acclaimed Ezine and writes for The Huffington Post and UPI Religion and Spirituality Forum. Mama Donna, as she is affectionately called, maintains a ceremonial center, spirit shop, ritual practice and consultancy in Exotic Brooklyn, NY where she where she where she offers intuitive tarot readings and spiritual counseling and works with individuals, groups, institutions, municipalities and corporations to create meaningful ceremonies for every imaginable occasion.



www.DonnaHenes.net

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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donna_Henes

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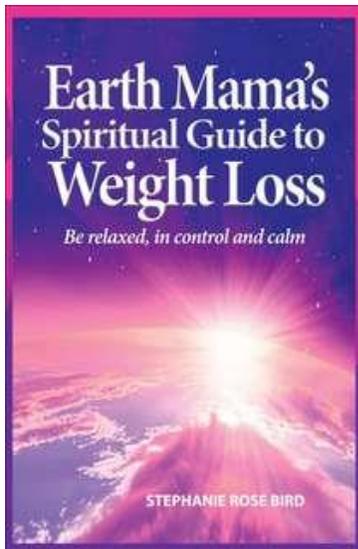
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Book Review: [Earth Mama's Spiritual Guide to Weight Loss](#) by Stephanie Rose Bird

Reviewed by Deanne Quarrie, D. Min.

I have to tell you – I am having so much fun with this book! First let me tell you this is NOT another diet book! This book is for those of us on an Earth Path who struggle with diets that don't work! It is filled with Goddess lore, rituals chants, affirmations and so many natural ways to support natural and healthy ways to nourish our bodies so that we reach our goals while at the same time – well – we have so much fun!!

When we seriously want to lose weight, going on a diet is not the answer. What does work – taking a look at how we nourish our bodies – what we put in it and examining if it supports a healthy, lean body or not. There are many books, Internet articles and other ways to inform ourselves about that. But what none of them do is give us wild, beautiful ways to support ourselves as we do what we know we must do to have healthy and happy bodies.

Earth Mama's Spiritual Guide to Weight Loss brings us help from many different pantheons, with crafts to make, things to do, and rituals that will bring us the power of those goddesses, being supported all the while with aromatherapy and flower essences.

So, if a healthy, happy body is where you are headed, bring your sensible weight-loss program and grab a copy of *Earth Mama's Spiritual Guide to Weight Loss: How Earth Rituals, Goddess Invocations, Incantations, Affirmations and Natural Remedies Enhance Any Weight-loss Plan*.

To read all about it from Stephanie herself go here...

[Earth Mama's Spiritual Guide to Weight Loss](#)

[Stephanie Rose Bird](#)

[To purchase a copy](#)

Bird, Stephanie Rose, *Earth Mama's Spiritual Guide to Weight* ISBN: 978-0-9955478-4-1, Green Magic Publishing, Somerset, England, 2017

Cardea by Deanne Quarrie

"Ovid says of Cardea, apparently quoting a religious formula: 'Her power is to open what is shut; to shut what is open.' ..."

Robert Graves, in the White Goddess



The Roman Goddess, Cardea, was keeper of the doors and had as Her principal protective emblem, a bough of Hawthorne. She looks both forward and backward in time. Benefactress of crafts people, she lives in a starry castle at the hinge of the universe behind the North Wind. She is the Keeper of the Four Winds.

She is honored at her festival, Beltane, and is also honored during the month of June - known as the "hinge of the year." Originally, Cardea was the hinge on which the year turned, that is, a goddess of the turning seasons. Swinging on a swing was part of a ritual to encourage the growth of crops. Ancient Roman farmers hung balls, masks and small images of human figures, called *oscilla*, on trees or in doorways to swing in the wind. Children would skip along, hand in hand, swinging

their arms, singing songs of summer. That hinge on which turns the year is the North Star, so she was the Keeper of the Four Winds. The word, cardinal, meaning "very important, is connected to her name as well as the Latin, "cerdo" meaning craftsman, as she is benefactress of all crafts people.

I feel your breath on my skin like the gentle wind blowing in my face as I open to you in the morning. I breathe your air, feeling it enter me, and it becomes our breath, sweet air – shared with all that is.

Dew-fresh, I am called to gaze upon your beauty. I touch your sweet petals; they unfold, soft as velvet to my touch and I am renewed by your awakening.

Words come to me in gentle currents on the air as I breathe. Words that inspire, words that lift, words coming from my heart and my soul, sharing myself with You.

Beautiful Cardea, Keeper of the Four Winds, you who lives behind the North Wind in the starry castle at the hinge of the universe, you who is Mistress of all Openings, I call to you! I invite you to share this magical space with us!

Blessed Be

Deanne Quarrie, D. Min. is a Priestess of the Goddess. She is the author of five books. She is the founder of the Apple Branch where she teaches courses in Feminist Dianic Witchcraft, Northern European Witchcraft and Druidism. She mentors those who wish to serve others in their communities. She is also an Adjunct Professor at Ocean Seminary College and is the founder of Global Goddess, a worldwide organization open to all women who honor some form of the divine feminine.

Deck Review Celtic Tree Oracle by Sharlyn Hidalgo

Review by Dawn Thomas

115 Pages with 25 cards

Publisher: Blue Angel Publishing

Divination



I have been studying the Ogham for more than fifteen years and love finding new resources. Recently, I came across this deck and thought it looked interesting. The laminated cards are 3-3/4 inches x 5-3/4 inches, which is a nice size to look at but a little difficult to shuffle. The back of the cards are green with a large Celtic knot in the center.

The deck uses the Beith-Luis-Fearn Ogham. The first fifteen cards represent the consonants and the next five represent the vowels. These 20 symbols represent the feda. The last five are the forfeda. Each card has a beautiful image. Some show the tree while others show the leaves or flowers.

In the book, the author includes a birth tree table so readers will be able to find the tree associated with their birthdate. The author also includes a few spreads for readings. Each card has a short story along with the meaning of the card in a reading.

I did a one-card reading and drew Beith, the birch tree. The meaning for this card is new beginnings. Since I am beginning a new project, the card accurately depicts what is happening in my life right now. This is a wonderful deck for anyone studying the Ogham or who follows a Celtic tradition.



Deck Review *Every Day Witch Tarot* by Deborah Blake

Review by Dawn Thomas

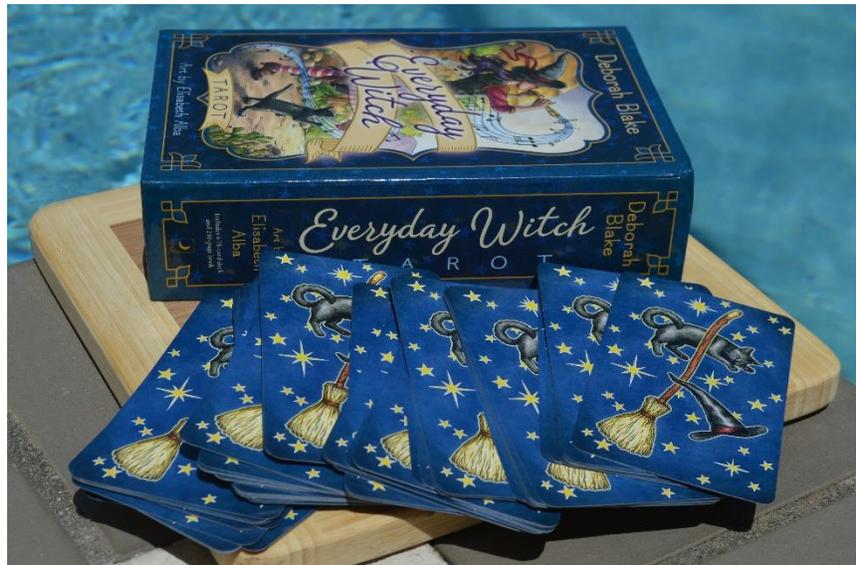
264 Pages

Publisher: Llewellyn
Publications

Divination

All I can say is WOW! I have always struggled with tarot cards but this deck is so different. It is very intuitive. According to the author, the deck uses symbolism from the

traditional Rider Waite deck. The artwork is beautiful. Most of the witches are wearing striped tights and pointy hats. There is a cat on each card and usually is mimicking the witch on the card.



The book and deck come in a hard box with a magnetic closure. The 78 cards are 2-3/4 inches by 4-3/4 inches. The book has colored pictures and places for notes. Ms. Blake describes the imagery on the card followed by the meaning if the card shows up in a reading.

I have been using the deck every day by either drawing one card or doing a three-card spread. This was my first three-card spread. My question was "Where should I focus my energy? The three cards I drew were:

10 of Swords (Past)
5 of Swords (Present)
Queen of Wands (Future)



The accuracy of each reading is astounding. I have been drawing a card a day to see what is in store for me. I cannot believe the connection I have with this deck. If you like witches, cats and/or divination, this would be a great deck to add to your collection.

From the Garden Heather by Dawn “Belladonna” Thomas (*Calluna spp*; *Erica spp. Vulgaris*)

Folk Names: Common Heather, Heath, Ling, Scottish Heather

Gender: Feminine

Planet: Venus

Element: Water

Deities: Isis, Venus, Cybele

Powers: Protection, Rain-Making, Luck

Here in Florida, we grow Mexican heather, which is very different from traditional heather.

Botanical:

Heather is a twisted and tangled plant, which grows in profusion on open moorland, hillsides, and heaths. Its thin stalks are tough and usually longer than they first appear due to the heather's horizontal growth. It bears small purple, red, and bluish flowers, which have a delicate aroma. Bees are attracted to the flowers for their pollen and make a wonderful honey from it.

Heather thrives in full sun and blooms through early autumn.

Folklore and History:

It has tough, twisting roots and stems, which are still used to make ropes, thatch for roofs, and sturdy brooms. It has become quite popular among craftspeople. Brooches and pins can be made from the hues of different types of heather.

Heather is Ur, the third vowel (U) in the Celtic alphabet, the Ogham. The letter is placed at the base or mound beneath the middle finger. Robert Graves believed it was sacred to Venus and Isis. He also considered the heather as a midsummer tree because of its red flowers and its association with passion and bees.



In some legends, Osiris is enclosed in a heather tree.

In another legend, Cybele imprisoned Attis in wood at this time of year.

In Tarot, the heather is associated with the Empress card.

At midsummer, the longest day of the year, the sun reaches the height of its power.

The name, Heather, is a popular one for girls in not only Scottish families, but throughout the world.



The word for heather in Irish and Scottish Gaelic is fraoch. This means "fierce" or "war-like," which again gives it a rather different character from the concept of something new. In the Irish legends, there is an important individual called Fraoch who can also be equated with Nechtain, Nuadhu, Conlai, and Neara. His wife was the goddess Boand, and his mother was the warrior-woman Aoife, who also equates with the great warrior queen Meadhbh of Connacht. His father was the Ulster hero, Cuchulain. All of these family connections give Fraoch a very fierce, warrior-based background. It is recorded in legend that he was killed by his father, and his body was laid in a great cairn. This cairn has been identified with the cave at Cruachan, part of Meadhbh's territory, where an Ogham inscription was found which reads,

"VRACCI MAQVI MEDVIA," which means "(the cave of) Fraoch the son of Meadhbh."

The Celts believe that creation is an ongoing process. Look at creation taking place all around you and become a conscious creator in this perpetual cycle. The Celtic tradition is unique in world mythologies in that it does not have a Creation Myth explaining how things came into being. Working with heather will deepen your connection.

The lesson of the heather is to contemplate your personal position in the scheme of things. Ask yourself if you are truly ready to take on the responsibility of destroyer and

creator. Remember, however, that whatever you do to others may come back to you three-fold. Think about the consequences of your actions, at all levels, and at all times.

With the appearance of the heather's flowers, to the Celts, announced the arrival of a season of rejoicing and self-indulgence. They drank an ale made from heather flowers. This brew of ancient legend was the staple drink of the highlands and islands of Scotland, where they drank it from cattle horns.

In midsummer, when heather hums with the sound of millions of bees, the White Goddess herself is often depicted as a queen bee, a femme fatale surrounded by a swarm of her male devotees. For this reason, heather is a symbol of woman as temptress, as a seducer and devourer of men, the love goddess who couples with the oak king, before he is consumed in the midsummer fires.

The bee itself is a Celtic symbol of wisdom, and was believed to be a way to communicate between this earthly reality, the world of the spirits, and communicating with the goddess.

Drinking heather ale at the midsummer celebrations promoted a festive atmosphere, breaking down inhibition, encouraging the muse of poetry, music, and song to join the company, and invoking the goddess of love. However, too much would cause people to lose their senses, passions were unbridled, and tempers flared.

Unchecked, heather is short-lived and unproductive but if burned yearly to the ground, it re-grows with fresh vigor. The lesson of the heather is that a necessary balance must exist between self-expression and self-control for both to be enjoyable and effective.

Magical uses:

Wearing an amulet of heather will bring a long physical life.

Heather is carried as a guard against rape and other violent crimes, or just to bring good luck. White heather is the best for this purpose.



To attract rain, burn heather with fern.

An incense made with heather has also been used to conjure spirits.

Holistic Uses:

As a medicinal plant heather is used mainly in the treatment of nervous complaints and cardiac palpitations, migraine, and problems associated with menstruation. A decoction made from the flowering tips is said to have antiseptic and diuretic qualities, and when added to the bath, it can help to tone up the muscles and soothe rheumatic pains. The Heather Bach Flower Remedy is useful for people have become so self-obsessed that they have no thoughts or time to give to others. It promotes generosity of spirit and a better awareness of other people's problems and needs.

Heather can also help ease the pain of migraine and menstruation.

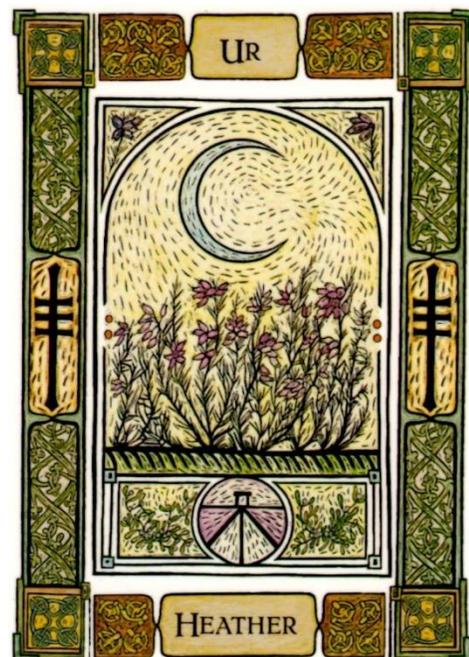
As a medicinal plant, its uses are mainly in the treatment of nervous complaints and cardiac palpitations. It is not always necessary to actually administer the plant, especially in cases of nervous disorders; as much benefit can be derived simply by walking over a heather clad moor in the sunshine, enjoying the beautiful sight and inhaling the delicate perfume of the flowers. This experience heightens the senses and spirits, bringing on a calming and soothing effect.

Divinatory Meanings:

This is the sign of romance and dreams. With Ur, there is a strong connection between the conscious self of the subject and the deep levels of his or her unconscious. The Ur is a gateway between of the need for passion and ecstasy in life.

When Ur turns up in a divinatory reading, the subject is usually being advised to find gateways to passion in life – or there may be such an opening coming in the future. The influences of imagination, intuition and dreams are very strong.

The main challenges of the Ur are the tendency to see projects and direction dissolve under futile attempts to realize them. There may be some betrayal by people close to



you. Do not be caught in the trap of merely dreaming. Act on your passions – but act wisely.

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Dawn "Belladonna" Thomas is a High Priestess and Elder of The Apple Branch, a Dianic Tradition. She is the editor and book reviewer for the Oracle and was the Treasurer for The Global Goddess, a non-profit organization. In 2014, she graduated from the University of Florida fulfilling a lifelong goal of completing her college education. She has been published in several magazines for her paper crafting designs. She is the owner of Belladonna's Garden and makes homemade soaps. She is an avid gardener and lives in Florida with her husband. Other book reviews can be found on her Blog:

<http://belladonnasbooks.com/>

Moon Schedule: Summer Solstice to Lammas

By Dawn "Belladonna" Thomas

(Times are Eastern Time)

New Moon – June 23rd 10:31 p.m.

2nd Quarter – June 30th 8:51 p.m.

Full "Blessing" Moon – July 9th 12:07 a.m.

4th Quarter – July 16th 3:26 p.m.

New Moon – July 23rd 5:46 a.m.

2nd Quarter – July 30th 11:23ap.m.

Moon Void of Course Schedule

June 21 st	12:26 a.m.	6:44 p.m.
June 23 rd	2:45 p.m.	6:07 p.m.
June 25 th	2:44 p.m.	6:06 p.m.
June 27 th	5:12 p.m.	8:41 p.m.
June 29 th	4:35 p.m.	June 30 th 3:02 a.m.
July 2 nd	9:16 a.m.	12:59 p.m.
July 4 th	9:34 p.m.	July 5 th 1:08 a.m.
July 7 th	10:12 a.m.	1:45 p.m.
July 9 th	10:22 p.m.	July 10 th 1:35 a.m.
July 12 th	8:40 a.m.	11:51 a.m.
July 14 th	1:00 p.m.	7:52 p.m.
July 16 th	10:19 p.m.	July 17 th 1:04 a.m.
July 19 th	2:11 a.m.	3:31 a.m.
July 21 st	1:41 a.m.	4:09 a.m.
July 23 rd	2:05 a.m.	4:34 a.m.
July 25 th	5:22 a.m.	6:32 a.m.
July 27 th	2:31 a.m.	11:37 a.m.

July 29 th	5:30 p.m.	8:23 p.m.
July 31 st	7:10 a.m.	August 1 st 8:01 a.m.

Planting Days

June: 21st, 24th, 25th

July: 3rd, 4th, 9th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 17th, 18th, 21st, 22nd, 30th, 31st

Harvesting Days

June: 22nd, 23rd

July: 10th, 11th, 15th, 16th, 19th, 20th

Pagan Every Day: Water Everywhere by Barbara Ardinger, PhD

July 12

In my imagination, I see the Cosmic Cook standing in Her kitchen at the beginning of time. She has decided to create an earth. The recipe is on the counter in front of Her *Take one cup each, earth, air, water, fire, and spirit. Mix well.* (This "mixing well" might look like the scene in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, where the character played by Richard Dreyfuss is building Devil's Tower in his mashed potatoes.)

Where does the Cook get the ingredients? That's a good question. (Reader, bear with me. This is not a comprehensive cosmogony. I can't account for the kitchen or the counter, and I don't know who the Cook is, though we can guess.) Earth comes from mountains, which are built by drifting tectonic plates and then worn down into big rocks, little rocks, and sand. Perhaps air swims in from outer space, which is why outer space is airless. Like the Qabalistic lightning bolt, fire shoots out from the divine spark of creativity, and spirit arises out of the process of mixing the other four elements.

The water arrives from interstellar space. But answer me this: Did someone plant a cup of water in the earth? Did that modest cup of new water arise in magical wells and fantastical geysers and fill the oceans and rivers?

Earth, air and fire are not everywhere, at least not so we can see them. But everywhere there is life, there is water. Water pulses through the planet in its underground rivers as blood pulses through our bodies in our veins. It's sometimes called the mother element, and it seems to me that spirit rides on water's shoulders to touch deserts and mountaintops ... and our dreams. Our Mother Water and Her Child, Spirit, bless and bathe the whole earth.

Pagan Every Day: Unintended Consequences of Damming Rivers by Barbara Ardinger, PhD

July 18

I love it when native-born southern Californians travel east of the Rockies and see rivers with water in them *all of the time*. It's that water in rivers "all the time" that can be troublesome. I have seen the Mississippi in flood. In spite of dams all along its length, it turns into an inland sea a thousand miles long. Flood control is useful and necessary.

Nevertheless, I wonder about the unintended consequences of building dams. In south-central Illinois, there used to be a beautiful little river whose water was clear and full of nice little fish that glided in the dappled shade of the trees along its banks. The river drained into the Mississippi. It occasionally flooded. So the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was called upon to fix it. The last time I saw it, the river looked like the Los Angeles River. It was a ditch with concrete banks. No trees. Probably no birds or fish, either.

The Aswan High Dam was begun in Egypt in 1960 by President Gamal Abdel Nasser to create a reservoir. The Nubians who lived in the area were relocated, and the Great Temple of Abu Simbel was broken down, moved, and rebuilt elsewhere. The dam was inaugurated by President Anwar Sadat in 1970. Now, according to news reports, the Nile, whose floods had nourished Egypt since time out of mind and ruled the Egyptian calendar from the age of the first kings, isn't flooding anymore. And the delta is silting up.

China is building the Three Gorges Dam, the largest dam in the world across the Yangtze River. The project is already over budget, and engineers have already had to relocate thousands of villages that were thousands of years old. What will be the unintended consequences of the construction of this dam?

Barbara Ardinger, Ph.D. (www.barbaraardinger.com), is the author of Pagan Every Day: Finding the Extraordinary in Our Ordinary Lives (RedWheel/Weiser, 2006), a unique daybook of daily meditations, stories, and activities. Her earlier books are Finding New Goddesses, Quicksilver Moon, Goddess Meditations, and Practicing the Presence of the Goddess. Her day job is freelance editing for people who don't want to embarrass themselves in print. Barbara lives in southern California. To purchase a signed copy of Finding New Goddesses, just send Barbara an email at bawriting@earthlink.net

The Priestess Unfolding by Mary Ann Copson

Earth Relationship Experience -Learning to Release To Earth



Women and The Land

“Before there was the Word, there was the land, and it was made and watched over by women. Stories from almost every culture around the world tell us that once upon a time it was so. For many native tribes throughout America, Grandmother Spider continually spins the world into being. For the Andean peoples of South America, Pachamama is the World Mother; she sustains all life on Earth. In Scotland and Ireland, the Cailleach – the Old Woman – made, shaped and protects the land and the wild things on it. In these and other Celtic nations, Danu gave birth to all the other gods and was mother to the people who followed...

Women are the creators of life, the bearers of the Cup of knowledge and wisdom, personifying the moral and spiritual authority of this fertile green and blue Earth. Do you remember those days? Me neither. Other indigenous cultures around the world may still

respect and revere the feminine, but we Western women lost control of our stories a long time ago...

If women remember that once upon a time we sang with the tongues of seals and flew with the wings of swans, that we forged our own paths through the dark forest while creating a community of its many inhabitants, then we will rise up rooted, like trees.” Blackie, Sharon. If Women Rose Rooted: A Journey to Authenticity and Belonging. September Publishing. Kindle Edition..

A Priestess will develop little or no true spiritual power without a deep love and relationship with The Land. A woman’s power and especially a Priestesse’s spiritual energy is a continuation of her relationship with The Land- Nature. Without the development of her close relationship with The Land she will become bankrupt and exhausted - devoid of her rootedness and energy to affect change in her world.

Woman and The Land continually birth and recycle creation. They are each two sides of the creative force. The Land is the portal to the spiritual mysteries unfolding in a Priestess. The spiritual focus of a Priestess is intricately tied to the rhythms and ebbs and flows of Earth and all of its creatures and consciousnesses. She must maintain a close and ongoing relationship with The Land.

A strong Grounding Practice links a Priestess to Earth and forms a seamless means of renewal, regeneration, and information for both Earth and the Priestess.

Releasing To Earth As Grounding

In order to receive the guidance of Earth you have to come to experience not only your own sensory intelligences – you have to also come to experience the intelligences of Earth. Some call this being centered or grounded.

Often times feeling “grounded” is a mental experience for us. We have the idea that we are solid with our “feet on the ground”.

However, the real sensory experience of our relationship with Earth takes us far beyond this conceptual idea of groundedness. We experience our relationship with Earth through our physical body and our mind notices this.

Earth is an Elemental Entity whose natural characteristics include being comfortable in the present here and now, feeling solid and balanced (i.e. in natural ebb and flow), being

always there – consistent, being naturally nurturing for an individual’s well-being as well as the well-being of all, embodying harmony so as to feel that you are OK- safe- where you are, doing what you are doing, when you are doing it, with whoever you are doing it. A grounded Priestess carries these same qualities.

This Learning To Release To Earth Grounding Experience can be done daily over a long time. You develop your conscious sensory awareness through witnessing how your physical body reacts and responds to the experience. In addition, any difficulty you might have in flowing this experience, you will come in touch with any unconscious ways you really feel about the relationship you have with Earth and have the opportunity to go deeper into Earth’s ways.

Give it time. The experience will grow you.

Learning to Release To Earth- The Practice



(I have adapted this exercise from Earth Relationship Chi-Kung by Gilles Marin. I can't say that it holds true to Chi-Kung principles but it gives you the experience of being held up by Earth and your shared natural senses.)

The purpose – to help you experience your natural sense of gravity and other Earth support senses as you let go of trying to hold your self up and learn to release to Earth to hold you up.

To begin – go to an attractive Natural Outside area. Gain permission to do this Learning To Release To Earth Experience. (At some times, if conditions don't permit being outside, then do your practice inside – perhaps in a room with House Plants. If you are doing the Learning To Release To Earth Practice inside do your best to recall a fulfilling outside experience and then begin the practice.)

Once you are in consensual agreement with a natural area stand with your feet on the ground. It is preferable that you are barefoot or have thin sole shoes on.

Get into a stance that you can comfortably maintain. If standing for any length of time presents problems for you (e.g. you don't feel strong enough, your energy is low, pain in the back, legs, etc.) then sit in a comfortable chair and put your bare feet flat on the ground.

Begin by imagining that you are Breathing through your Heart.

Let your Heart Breathing get deeper and deeper until it feels like you are simultaneously breathing through the soles of your feet. (If you find this difficult to do just maintain your focus on your Heart Breathing for now.)

When you feel that you have established easy, smooth flowing breathing - as you inhale – bring your attention to your feet sinking into Earth even as you are expanding your body outward in all directions with your breath.

As you exhale – push your feet further into the ground. You can imagine that you are leaving deeper and deeper footprints in the ground. Let Gravity hold you safely on Earth.

As you inhale and exhale, it can also be helpful to your attention, if you extend your arms downward by your sides and hold your hands palms facing the ground, fingers spread and pointing forward. Not in an attempt to hold yourself up but rather to direct your focus and energy downward to connect with Earth.

Notice that you might feel that this is unnatural. Many Western breathing techniques encourage you to feel your self rising up off Earth as you inhale bringing your attention to your head and upper body and putting the focus on the Sky above or the Heavens. This conditions you to feel as if you are floating on the inhale and staying off the ground as long as possible with the exhale.

Unfortunately, this only trains you to lose your connection to Earth.

By sinking on the inhale and pushing your feet further into the ground on the exhale you learn to let go of all your tensions in trying to hold yourself up on Earth and become conscious that Earth- and all of its supportive senses -is actually holding you up.

Soon you may begin to notice that as your feet sink into Earth on your inhale that Earth also pulls down on your diaphragm. Thus, your inhale is actually invited in by Earth's downward pull on your diaphragm.

Continue consciously and intentionally learning to release to Earth.

Start with doing this practice for 3-10 minutes. (Even less will be OK if you need to.) Extending the time as you go along.

Over time, you will naturally be able to relax your body more and more as you are sinking and pushing into Earth. You will begin to notice that on the exhale that you can relax more of your body weight into the ground and that it gets easier and more natural to release the tensions that you don't need to remain upright.

Also, over time as you are sinking and pushing into the ground you will begin to notice a kind of "push back" or resistance in the ground. This is Earth showing you how solidly it supports you. As you feel these different forms of support from Earth coming to you, breathe them deeply into your whole body and let that feeling of support come deep within you so that you can relax more of your body into it.

This Earth support is unconditional and you can release and relax fully into it. At some point, you may feel the entire weight of your body sink into Earth's unconditional support for you.

Along the way as you learn to release to Earth, you will also learn to release to your body – especially your feet. Your feet have many sensory modalities used to navigate

you through the world. Become friends with your feet and feel how happy they are to connect you with Earth. Your feet will relax and soften into the ground and simultaneously the ground will soften and receive your feet. Let that softness flow through your entire body.

Be accepting of any difficulty that you experience in doing this experience.

We have been trained out of this way and trained to disconnect from this Earth support. When we disconnect to this natural, unconditional Earth support we become uncomfortable and misaligned as we try to compensate for the missing Earth support. We weren't meant to nor designed to hold our selves upright by ourselves – and we suffer when we try to.

When we don't release to Earth to support us we become afraid and feel unsafe. We lose our relationship not only to Earth but also to other beings, things, and other people. When we are not able to relax into this natural Earth support, we soon lose our ability to release fully to ourselves and this negatively affects our own self-worth, our relationships, and our emotional world.

If we don't release to Earth we can't truly receive Nature through our sensory experiences. We then know Earth and all of its Medicines through our concepts, ideas, and beliefs and any experience we have of Nature is only a pale representation of Nature itself. In this state, we lose the full potential of Earth to heal.

As you work with this Learning To Release To Earth Experience, you will regain your conscious awareness and experience of the natural support from Earth. As you do, you will inhabit your own body more fully and feel more like your natural self. You will develop more ease and comfort in your life, in yourself, with others – and you will feel more at home on Earth.

As a woman and a Priestess, you will gain focus and centeredness, and grow deeply engaged with your spiritual unfolding and how you will bring these mysteries into your daily. You will also flow back to Earth's service, energy, and replenishment for the continual evolution of all of the Web of Life.

Variations

Lying Down

You can also do this practice lying down. Sinking your entire body on the inhale and pushing the back of you further into the ground on the exhale.

Releasing Trauma

If you are experiencing a disturbing or a traumatic emotional situation, you can adjust this Learning to Release to Earth Grounding practice to help aid the flow of qi - energy - in your body. Often times in stressful situation, your qi has become "stuck" in your head instead of flowing through your whole body where it belongs. Stomping your feet or letting your heels come down hard on the ground "sinks" your qi letting it drop down your body and be released thus allowing your brain and natural body functions to return themselves to normal.



Learning To Release To Earth Debriefing and Reflections



"When you experience sensations you experience Nature in action. A vital way to know more fully any sense or feelings is to put it into words. When you discover a natural feeling or sensation, write it down ... and discuss it. This is very important. It connects your educated rationality and language senses with your other natural senses. In time, this enables Nature to speak through your heart, thoughts, and voice." ~Michael Cohen

Write down your experience of doing the activity Learning to Release to Earth then answer the questions below.

Debriefing Questions

What does Learning to Release to Earth mean to you as a Priestess?

How do you feel, as a Priestess, having experienced Learning to Release to Earth?

Where any visions or inner journeys sparked by your Learning to Release to Earth Experience?

What is being revealed about yourself as a Priestess through your experience with Learning to Release to Earth?

Is there personal guidance for you in your Priestess Journey embedded within your experience with Learning to Release to Earth?

Does this Experience enhance your sense of self-worth as a Priestess? How? Why?

Your conscious awareness of your Sensory Intelligences and Nature ?

How might this Learning to Release to Earth. Experience be used to enhance your Priestess practice and life?

What other thoughts, feelings and experiences come to mind about your Sensory Communication with the Web of Life as a Priestess?

As a Priestess what are the three most important things you learned:

Your experience in nature shows you that you are a Priestess who gets good feelings when (please include at least three examples):

Summarize your experience with this activity. As a Priestess what have you learned:

On a head (thought) level?

On a heart (feeling) level?

On a hand (behavioral) level to do in the future?

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MaryAnn is a [Soul Medicine for Women](#) Psycho-Spiritual Counselor and Spiritual Mentor supporting women in the unfolding of their own creative force through. As a Shaman Witch Priestess Healer of the Sacred Wisdom Herbs and the Rites of the Shaman Priestess Mysteries, she also trains women as Shaman Priestesses in reclaiming Ancient Priestess Ways and Practices.

She is the Founder and Morgen of the [Evenstar Seminary and Mystery School for Women Shaman Priestesses](#) which focuses on nature centered therapy, Shamanic Healing, and contemporized Rites of Passage as well as deep Mystery School initiatory trainings on the path of reclaiming and living ancient Woman Shaman Priestess Traditions.

MaryAnn is also the creator of the year long [Wise Woman Wortcunner Journey and Training](#).

As a Shaman Witch Priestess, she has reclaimed ancient Priestess Sacred Feminine works and ways through her inner work with her Council of Nine - a remembering of the ancient Ninefold Sisterhood. She trained for 12 years in a traditional apprenticeship with a Cherokee mystic, and 3 years with Susun Weed in Shamanic and Wise Woman Herbalism and Goddess work.

She is an Ordained Clergy and Initiated Dianic Druid/Faerie Craft Guardian High Priestess and Bandrui of the Apple Branch, a magic initiatory tradition combining the work of Druidism and Witchcraft based on the Old Dianic and Faerie Faith Tradition with special connections to ancient female Druidism known as Bandrui. She is also an Ordained and Initiated Priestess of the Feminist Dianic Wicca Tradition.

Through the order of Ord Brighideachhe, she is a FlameKeeper of the Three Fold Fire of Brigid, and through her own inner work and training a Priestess of the Avalon Tradition. She holds the Shamaness Status of Gefn-Syr Volva Initiate in Pillar Seidr an Initiatory Path in Norse-based Shamanism for Women and was initiated into the Seneca Wolf Clan Teaching Lodge by Twylah Nitsch the Clan Grandmother becoming a StoneKeeper of the Wolf Clan Lodge. She is a Annym Billagh Ancient Healing with Trees practitioner, a holder of the 9 Munay-Ki Rites of the EarthKeeper Initiations, and a WombKeeper for the 13th Rite of the Womb.

For over 30 years was a Community Herbalist and worked in the Alternative Medicine Field as a Certified Clinical Nutritionist, herbalist, childbirth educator, lactation consultant, lay midwife, brain chemistry profiler, and a Health and Wellness Coach with a comprehensive functional medicine, health and wellness, and energy medicine background.

MaryAnn holds a BA in Child Development and Psychology; a MA in Human Development and Early Childhood Education; a MA in Counseling and Psychology and Organizational Development - and over 30 certifications including certification as an Eco-Art therapist. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. (ABD) in Applied Organic Psychology and doing course work for her Doctorate of Ministry in World Shamanism.

Summer Love by Molly Remer
(<http://brigidsgrove.etsy.com>)

*Too busy. Too buzzy.
Not enough time.
To do. To do. To do.
Scramble. Hurry.
Tight chest
Tight breath
Tight heart
WAIT!
Listen to Summer.
Languid. Warm. Sweaty. Hot.
Petals soften
Juice drips
Kissed by sunlight
Bathed with rain
Sweet stickiness.
Passion.
Summer is heavy.
Hot and ready.
Blooming and dripping.
Unfolding. Becoming. Ripening.
Sweet. Tangy. Biting.
Feel it in the air.
Greet it at sunset.
Throw your arms around it.
Dig in. Hang on. This is IT.
Taste it. Hold it. Enfold it. Be it.
Lick it. Know it. Be it. Embrace it.
This is your life.
This is **your life**.
Do you love it?*



Solitary Ritual – Summer Solstice by Dawn Thomas

Preparation and Altar Needs:

Cut flowers to create a circle

A Red candle to represent the Mother

Chalice with beverage of your choice

(Prior to the ritual, decide on the type of creative work that you want to do during the ritual.

Have the necessary items for the work you choose.)

Casting the Circle:

I call to the Element of the East, Ancient Spirit of Air. Cool me with your summer breezes. Please join me tonight. Hail and welcome!

I call to the Element of the South, Ancient Spirit of Fire. Warm me with the heat of the sun. Please join me tonight. Hail and welcome!

I call to the Element of the West, Ancient Spirit of Water. Cleanse me with your gentle rains and dew-filled mornings. Please join me tonight. Hail and welcome!

I call to the Element of the North, Ancient Spirit of Earth. Your fragrant flowers are blooming around me with a wonderful essence. Please join me tonight. Hail and welcome!

Gaia, Mother Earth, your great love and nurturing spirit sustains my life. I honor you and ask you to join me tonight. Hail and welcome!

The Work:

During this time of year, we are honoring the mother goddesses and the season of growth. We also reflect on what is manifesting in our lives. Spend a few moments thinking about this. What are you manifesting? How are you manifesting this? Are there things that you feel strongly about that would help you fuel this creative fire?

Light the red candle as a symbol of the creative fire inside you. Gaze into the flame and see these thoughts manifesting.

This is a time to be creative – To release creative forces. Make, build or create something in honor of the Mother Goddess. This can be something you make with your hands or something you write. It can also be something using your voice or a movement or dance.

Once you are finished, offer a blessing to the Mother Goddess and drink from your chalice. You may also choose to include blessings for women in your life or in your community.

Closing the Circle

Mother Earth, Gaia, I feel your loving arms around me. I honor you and thank you for joining me tonight. Hail and farewell.

Element of the North, Spirit of Earth, the scent of your fragrant flowers will remain with me. Thank you for joining me tonight. Hail and farewell.

Element of the West, Spirit of Water, I feel cleansed from your waters. Thank you for joining me tonight. Hail and farewell.

Element of the South, Spirit of Fire, from your creative fire I have begun to manifest things in my life. Thank you for joining me tonight. Hail and farewell.

Element of the East, Spirit of Air, the gentle breezes have cooled me. Thank you for joining me tonight. Hail and farewell.

The Circle is open but unbroken.

May the love of the Goddess be forever in my heart.

Blessed Be!

Credits

Dawn Thomas
Deanne Quarrie
Christine Hirsch