



## Winter Solstice Celebration 19th December 2007



Father Christmas riding a Yule Goat.

The winter solstice makes the beginning of the astrological period of Capricorn

Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone. Even as the strings of the lute are alone though they all quiver with the same music.

*Kahlil Gibran*

## **Personal Meditation**

### **Making the Circle**

Friends! Let us be mindful here of the presence of God.

Since we have neither bread, nor wine, nor altar, we will raise ourselves beyond these symbols, up to the pure majesty of the real itself. We, your people will make the whole earth our altar and we will climb up in spirit to the high places, bearing with us the hopes and labours of our mother, the earth.

There is communion with God, and a communion with earth, and there is a communion with God through earth.

*Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*

### **Why Are We Here**

We are here to celebrate the Winter Solstice; that point in the seasonal cycle when the sun reaches its maximum negative declination. The actual moment of the solstice will be at 8 minutes past six in the morning of next Saturday the 22nd. In celebrating the solstice we are continuing a long tradition. The wikipedia entry for the Winter Solstice lists over thirty living and ancient celebrations linked to the winter solstice from around the whole world.

Let us ponder what this means for a moment. To be part of an on-going celebration of the passing of time that has been going on for thousands of years.

### **A Celebration of the Directions**

*(turn and face outwards)*

Hear me, four quarters of the world – a relative I am! Give me the eyes to see and the strength to walk the soft earth, a relative to all that is!

*Black Elk*

### **Say Together**

All our relations!

*Turn to face the named direction*

We look to the East, place of beginnings and of hope  
– and give our thanks.

We look to the South, place of warmth and connectedness  
– and give our thanks.

ALL: We ask for the presence of the spirit of Earth to be with us here. To reveal to us all that we need to see, for our own highest good and for the highest good of all.

LEAD: We call upon the spirit of evolution, the miraculous force that inspires rocks and dust to weave themselves into biology. You have stood by us for millions and millions of years— do not forsake us now. Empower us and awaken in us pure and dazzling creativity. You that can turn scales into feathers, seawater into blood, caterpillars into butterflies, awaken in us the powers that we need to survive and evolve into more aeons of our solar journey.

ALL: Awaken in us a sense of who we truly are: tiny ephemeral blossoms on the Tree of Life. Make the purposes and destiny of that tree our own purpose and destiny.

LEADER Fill each of us with love for our true Self, which includes all of the creatures and plants and landscapes of the world. Fill us with a powerful urge for the wellbeing and continual unfolding of this self.

May we speak in all human councils on behalf of the animals and plants and landscapes of the Earth.

May we all awaken to our true and only nature— none other than the nature of Gaia, this living planet Earth.

ALL: We call upon the power which sustains the planets in their orbits, that wheels our Milky Way in its 200-million-year spiral, to imbue our personalities and our relationships with harmony, endurance and joy. Fill us with a sense of immense time so that our brief, flickering lives may truly reflect the work of vast ages past and also the millions of years of evolution whose potential lies in our trembling hands...

ALL: O stars, lend us your burning passion.

LEADER: O silence, give weight to our voice.

We ask for the presence of the spirit of Earth.

*John Seed*

Great spirit, let us know peace

For as long as the moon shall rise, for as long as the rivers shall flow,

For as long as the sun shall shine, for as long as the grass shall grow

Let us know peace.

*Cheyenne prayer*

The air is precious to us, for all things share the same breath - the beast, the tree, the humans: we all share the same breath. If we sell you our land, you must remember that the air is precious to us, that the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports. The wind that gave our grandfather his first breath also receives his last sigh. And the wind must also give our children the spirit of life. And if we sell you our land, you must keep it sacred, as a place where all people can go to taste the wind that is sweetened by the meadow's flowers.

One thing we know, which the white people may one day discover - our God is the same God. You may think now that you own God as you wish to own our land; but you cannot. This earth is precious to God, and to harm the earth is to heap contempt on its Creator.

Even if the tribes of my people vanish from this earth, and our memory is only the shadow of a cloud moving across the prairie, these shores and forests will still hold the spirits of my people. For they love this earth as the newborn loves its mother's heartbeat. So if we sell you our land, love it as we've loved it. Care for it as we've cared for it. Hold in your mind the memory of the land as it is when you take it. And with all your strength, with all your mind, with all your heart, preserve it for your children, and love it as God loves us all.

### **Making the Pentangle**

Weaving the elements of earth, air, fire, water and spirit into a coherent whole. [see:<http://www.greenspirit.org.uk/resources/PentagramRitual.pdf>]

### **Chant**

Air I am,  
Fire I am,  
Water and Spirit  
and Earth I am.

### **Responsive Reading**

ALL: We ask for the presence of the spirit of Earth and pray that the breath of life continues to caress this planet home.

LEAD: May we grow into true understanding— a deep understanding that inspires us to protect the tree on which we bloom, and the water, soil and atmosphere without which we have no existence.

May we turn inwards and stumble upon our true roots in the intertwining biology of this exquisite planet. May nourishment and power pulse through these roots, and fierce determination to continue the billion-year dance.

We look to the West, place of the heart and of intuition  
– and give our thanks.

We look to the North, place of being and of wisdom  
– and give our thanks.

We look down to the earth, place of life and human compassion  
– and give our thanks.

We look up to the sky, place of clean air and freedom  
– and give our thanks.

### **A Poem**

I swear the earth shall surely be complete to him or her who shall be complete,  
The earth remains jagged and broken only to him or her who remains jagged and broken.

I swear there is no greatness or power that does not emulate those of the earth

There can be no theory of any account that unless it corroborate the theory of the earth,

No politics, song, religion, behaviour, or what not, is of account, unless it compare with the amplitude of the earth,

Unless it face the exactness, vitality, impartiality, rectitude of the earth.

All merges toward the presentation of the unspoken meanings of the earth,

Toward those who sing the songs of the body and of the truths of the earth,

*Walt Whitman*

### **Poems**

Eagle Prayer

To pray you open your whole self

To sky, to earth, to sun, to moon

To one whole voice that is you.

And know there is more

That you can't see, can't hear,

Can't know except in moments

Steadily growing, and in languages

That aren't always sound but other

Circles of motion.

Like eagle that Sunday morning

Over Salt River. Circled in blue sky

In wind, swept our hearts clean

With sacred wings.

We see you, see ourselves and know

That we must take the utmost care

And kindness in all things.

Breathe in, knowing we are made of  
 All this, and breathe, knowing  
 We are truly blessed because we  
 Were born, and die soon within a  
 True circle of motion,  
 Like eagle rounding out the morning  
 Inside us.  
 We pray that it will be done  
 In beauty.  
 In beauty.

*Joy Harjo*

#### Full Circle

The idea of God is born from the hearts and minds of earthlings.  
 The hearts and minds of earthlings are born from the bodies of earthlings.  
 The bodies of earthlings are born from the ancestors of earthlings.  
 The ancestors of earthlings are born from the web of life.  
 The web of life is born from the unfolding of the earth.  
 The unfolding of the earth is born from the death of a star.  
 The death of a star is born from an ever emerging universe.  
 An ever emerging universe is born from the heart and mind of God who is  
 the ground of all being and becoming.  
 God who is the ground of all being and becoming gives birth to an ever  
 emerging universe.  
 An ever emerging universe gives birth to the death of a star.  
 The death of a star gives birth to an unfolding earth.  
 An unfolding earth gives birth to the web of life.  
 The web of life gives birth to the ancestors of earthlings.  
 The ancestors of earthlings give birth to the bodies of earthlings.  
 The bodies of earthlings give birth to the hearts and minds of earthlings.  
 The hearts and minds of earthlings give birth to the idea of God who is  
 pure love.

*Erna Colebrook*

#### Chant

Lady spin you circle bright  
 Weave your web of dark and light  
 Earth, Air, Fire and Water  
 Bind us as one

#### Story

*The words of Chief Seattle as reported by Ted Perry*

The Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land.  
 We will consider your offer. For we know that if we do not sell, the white  
 people may come with guns and take our land.

How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is  
 strange to us.

If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how  
 can you buy them?

Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine-needle,  
 every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing, and  
 humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. We  
 are part of the earth and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our  
 sisters; the deer, the horse, the great eagle, these are our brothers. The  
 rocky crests, the juices in the meadows - all belong to the same family.

So, when the Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy  
 our land, he asks much of us. We will consider your offer to buy our land.  
 But it will not be easy. For this land is sacred to us.

This shining water that moves in the streams and rivers is not just water  
 but the holy blood of our ancestors. If we sell you land, you must  
 remember that it is sacred, and you must teach your children that it is  
 sacred and that each reflection in the clear water of the lakes tells of  
 events and memories in the life of my people. The water's murmur is the  
 voice of my father's father.

The rivers are our brothers; they quench our thirst. The rivers carry our  
 canoes, and feed our children. If we sell you our land, you must  
 remember, and teach your children, that the rivers are our brothers, and  
 yours, and you must henceforth give the rivers the kindness you would  
 give any brother.

We know that the white people do not understand our ways. One portion  
 of land is the same to them as the next, for they are strangers who come  
 in the night and take from the land whatever they need. The earth is not  
 their mother but their enemy, and when they have conquered it, they move  
 on. They treat mother earth, and brother sky, as things to be bought,  
 plundered, sold like bright beads. Their appetite will devour the earth and  
 leave behind only a desert.

What is there to life if we cannot hear the lonely cry of the whippoorwill or  
 the arguments of the frogs around a pond at night? We prefer the soft  
 sound of the wind darting over the face of a pond, and the smell of the  
 wind itself cleansed by a midday rain, or scented with pine.