



Galaxies Evening Service 28 March 2010

Service by Pete Cowley
& Fergus Collinson



Welcome:

Welcome to our gathering this afternoon.

Our theme is : **Autumn Equinox: Death and Rebirth.**
Reflection on the slow death of summer with the nights drawing in and sunrise becoming later. The realisation of the fact that summer is leaving us encourages us to soak up as much of its warmth as possible before it is gone.

Call to togetherness and sharing:

Leader: We are all part of the rhythm of life.
As we gather together to share of ourselves
and our journey, may peace and love be with us.
All: May we be makers of the peace and givers of
unbounded love.

Passing the Peace:

Leader: Now that we are reminded that God the free Spirit shares itself with us, we can share our peace and love with one another.

Let us feel the power of the earth that holds us together.

Let us celebrate our gifts in song and dance.

Let us all rejoice in our power and our beauty.

All: We open our hearts to the miracle of birth and the mystery of God's love in all Creation. We carry in us the divine spark. The gift of love, which we share tonight, deepens us as people, deepens us as sisters and brothers.

Each person shares hugs, or whatever you are comfortable with, with those around them.

Notices



Fergus' friend Nicola enjoying the lessening warmth of the Autumn sun



Reflection

The Autumn Equinox is also known as: Alban Elfed, Fall Equinox, Autumnal Equinox, Cornucopia, Feast of Avelon, Festival of Dionysus, Harvest Home, Harvest Tide, Mabon, Night of the Hunter, Second Harvest Festival, Wine Harvest, Witch's Thanksgiving, and the first day of autumn.

The word "*equinox*" was derived from Latin roots for Equal and night and it refers, of course, to the time that occurs twice a year when the nighttime is equal to the daytime.

There is often a sense of calm around autumn equinox as the fine weather lingers on with seductive steadiness, making winter seem far distant. Yet shadows are beginning to lengthen and sunbeams slant ever lower. In our case summer and autumn have been quite variable with unexpected cold weather, storms and showers interspersed with warm sunny periods.

At autumn equinox, light and dark come one more into balance. It is time to give thanks and make offerings, to acknowledge the power of seeds to carry life during their time of gestation over the dark months. This is the moment of time to tune into the mystery of the changeover, knowing that what appears to be dying is really part of the movement forward into renewal and rebirth. This is the moment to hold faith that the darkness will bring forth new life at the spring equinox.

CHRISTIANITY: The Christian Church replaced earlier Pagan solstices and equinox celebrations during Medieval times, with Christianized observances. Replacing the autumn equinox is Michaelmas, the feast of the Archangel Michael, on SEP-29. "His feast was celebrated with a traditional well-fattened goose which had fed well on the stubble of the fields after the harvest. In many places, there was also a tradition of special large loaves of bread made only for that day. By Michaelmas the harvest had to be completed and the new cycle of farming would begin. It was a time for beginning new leases, rendering accounts and paying the annual dues."

DRUIDS: At this time of the year, the ancient Celts conducted a mock sacrifice of a large wicker-work figure which represented the vegetation spirit. This might have been the origin of Julius Caesar's comment in his Gallic Wars that the Druids performed human sacrifices. Although he never witnessed a human sacrifice and never met anyone who had, this story has been accepted and repeated often enough to be accepted as truth. The Celtic mock sacrifice has been reborn in the Burning Man Project, a yearly fall festival celebrated for one week in Black Rock Desert in Nevada. The movie "The Wicker Man" was based on the Celtic tradition; to say more would ruin the film if you are seeing it for the first time.

NEOPAGANISM: This is a group of religions which have attempted re-creations of ancient Pagan religions. Of these, Wicca is the most popular; it is loosely based on ancient Celtic beliefs, symbols and practices, with the addition of some more recent Masonic and ceremonial magic rituals.

Monotheistic religions, like Judaism, Christianity and Islam, tend to view time as linear. It started with creation; the world as we know it will end at some time in the future. Aboriginal and Neopagan religions see time as circular and repetitive, with lunar (monthly) and solar

(yearly) cycles. Their "...rituals guarantee the continuity of nature's cycles, which traditional human societies depend on for their sustenance."

Wiccans recognize eight seasonal days of celebration. Four are minor sabbats and occur at the two solstices and the two equinoxes. The other are major sabbats which happen approximately halfway between an equinox and solstice. Wiccans may celebrate Mabon on the evening before, or at sunrise on the morning of the equinox, or at the exact time of fall equinox.

Mabon is the second and main Wiccan harvest festival.

- Selena Fox of Circle Sanctuary comments: "The Goddess manifests in Her Bountiful Mother aspects. The God emerges as the Corn King and Harvest Lord. Colors are Orange, Dark Red, Yellow, Indigo, and Brown. It is the festival of thanksgiving."
- Lee Wavedancer of Witch on the Go.com comments that the Wiccan God "has sacrificed the last of Himself to provide us with a final harvest of food before the winter begins. Celebrants gather to mark the turning of the wheel and to give thanks for the ultimate sacrifice of The God, recognizing that He will be reborn at Yule. This holiday has been called 'The Witches' Thanksgiving' and is a time for feasting together with family and friends."
- The author of the Pagan Family Circle writes: "While in the past, most all were farmers, this harvest festival traditionally applies to the harvest of foods, yet in this day and age, the 'harvest' may also apply to the 'seeds of dreams and wishes' that were planted many months earlier. Now is the time to see if they have come true. Whether they have come true or not ... a ritual to thank the growing energies of the God and the fertility of the Goddess should be preformed at this time. Lay upon your altar a sampling of your 'harvest' use it freely in your ritual. (Note: even if your 'harvest' came up empty, IE: your dreams were not fulfilled, the God and Goddess should still be thanked for the effort put forth in your name)"

Here, in the Southern Hemisphere, Autumn occurs around Easter and the parallels of Jesus dying on the cross and then the resurrection of his spirit within his followers is very clear. What parallels can you draw from our theme with your own life or your own observations?

Time for discussion!

Walking to the Fall Equinox

by Rafael Jesús González

One morning the bedroom
fills with rainbows --
the light slants golden
& fall has come.

For one brief moment
day & night dance in balance
& the time is come
for the pressing of the grapes.



Lady Autumn (by Deirdre Akins)

Lady Autumn, Queen of the Harvest,
I have seen You in the setting Sun
with Your long auburn tresses
blowing in the cool air that surrounds You.
Your crown of golden leaves is jewelled
with amber, amethyst, and rubies.
Your long, flowing purple robe stretches across the
horizon.
In Your hands You hold the ripened fruits. Ox of Circle
Sanctuary comments: "The Goddess manifests in Her
Bountiful Mother aspects. The God emerges as the Corn
King and Harvest Lord. Colours are Orange, Dark Red,
Yellow, Indigo, and Brown. It is the festival of
thanksgiving."



Blessings

"Dear Mother, we gather in ancient rite for renewal of spirit.

Let there be sensitivity and belief of the spiritual reality behind what we refer to as
"Nature and Humanity.

Let us share a sincere love of Earth Herself
and a desire to communicate with all of Her children.

Let there be a belief in, and love for, the individual lives of this planet."

Author Unknown

Blessings for Humanity - Blessings for the Earth
Blessings for the sacrificed and those that mourn
May the Wisdom of the Ages clear the vision of those blinded
May Love be sown and respect be propagated
May understanding and compassion flow as the waters of our Mother Earth
May the winds take our prayers and our wills drive the change
May we find strength within
May we learn and may we grow
Blessed Be
~ Tara