

A NOTE ABOUT THESE RITUALS:

The links on the Community Celebration page will bring you to a PDF, which is actually my planning document from the ritual. It's not always exactly what happened in the ritual, as we always leave room for spirit to flow and alter the plan. The welcoming, or beginning portion, is a copy of my personal notes I wrote before the ritual. I am quite against the use of scripts in ritual space – I encourage everyone (me included) to have some ideas about what they want to say but then let spirit flow. It will make for a better ritual.

There is an aspect of “ritual theater” to many of these rituals. That being said, I try really hard to get all the participants involved in meaningful ways. I always try to incorporate a lot of movement, singing, interacting, etc. Play on your community strengths – if you have a lot of kids coming, recruit a couple parents to have specific activities for youngsters during the ritual, that keep them involved in ways that are doable for them. If you have amazing musicians, incorporate more music into your celebrations. Brilliant artists can do set design or props. We often create special roles for honored elders, to showcase their wisdom and giftings.

Setting and Space:

We are lucky enough to have 10 acres of woods, including a meadow with a permanent Maypole and covered structure, as well as 2 fire pits. We, as a community, choose to do most of our community celebrations outdoors, rain or shine. Sometimes we have a rain plan. We are also lucky enough to have a communal house on our land, which is also our Temple. Not everyone has an indoor space where they can hold 50 people, so make your own plans accordingly.

In the past, we have rented local Community Centers for rituals and held quite a few in public parks or on public beaches. Most of the rituals as scripted here are just fine to do in public, but you know your greater community (and what is acceptable in your public park) better than I!

Size and Scale:

Most of these celebrations are planned for a big group – like 20 to 50 people. Especially for Beltane and Spring Equinox, they will work better if you have a big group. Some of them, like the Samhain and Imbolc celebrations, will work better for smaller groups.

Keep in mind it's difficult to have a deep sharing circle with 40 people. And it's difficult to dance a maypole with 26 ribbons if you only have 20 people. It's up to you as organizer to make sure you have enough, but not too many people.

Invitations:

Some of these rituals call for the participants to bring things or do some pre-planning homework before the ritual. For those celebrations, it is wise to send out details a week or two before.

Sometimes we want RSVPs, so invitees don't get details like start times or address until they RSVP. Some celebrations have minimum participant requirements; some have max participant numbers. Tracking RSVP's is the best way to figure those out.

Assigning Roles:

In the ritual scripts, I have replaced the names of people who were assigned roles with XXX. I have mostly left my own name intact, so you can see which roles the ritual organizers performed, and which were "farmed out". Sometimes we will call for volunteers at the ritual, sometimes the roles are pre-assigned to people we know will do a good job. Make sure your volunteers have an outline of the ritual, so they know what is happening right before their part. It will make the ritual flow more smoothly if people don't need to be cued. Make sure the humans assigned to roles know approximately how much time they have to do their part, and you as organizer should be prepared to gently cue them to "wrap it up" if they go way over time or off track.

Clock Time and Scripts:

We always try to start the ritual at the posted start time. On the ritual details email, we let people know the Gather Time and Ritual Start Time. Encourage people to get there early and take advantage of the 30 minutes or so between gather and start time. Humans naturally want to chit chat and get to know each other better, so give them some time to do that.

During planning, I usually do a detailed breakdown of how long each segment will take, or how much time we are allotting. This allows you to come up with a projected end time, as well as trim some portions if you are ending up with a 7 hour ritual.

It's a good rule of thumb to leave ending times open. We never really know how long things will take – sometimes, the ritual will take on a life of its own and go off in unplanned directions. Since we seldom cast "formal circles" in these community celebrations, it's OK for people to leave at certain points if they need to.

As ritual organizer, it's your job to read the energy of the room and direct things accordingly.

I encourage you to take clock time and script with a grain of salt. Sometimes, you chuck it all out the window and go with what the energy in the room is telling you to do. Sometimes it's like herding cats to corral the energy back into following the ritual plan.

Some of the ritual plans are kind of open ended – we don't always plan the end of the ritual but rather leave it to the organizers to read the energy of the group and feel out what is needed. Sometimes we ask people for input about how they are feeling and what kind of ending would best serve them.

On Deity and Traditions and Accessibility:

I see these rituals as Community Celebrations. I want to make them accessible to as many participants from my wider community as possible. To that end, I usually choose to not invoke any particular named deity. That makes it possible for people who practice many traditions to be able to attend. You are the best judge of what your community comfort levels are. We are comfortable in our community recognizing the “animate force of the universe” as Her – the Great Mother – The Divine – Mother Earth, so we will sometimes call on Her and work with her energy in our rituals.

We have basic agreement about some things, like directional elemental correspondences, embodied grounding exercises, land acknowledgements. This allows us to incorporate some things into our rituals without detailed explanations.