

Fall Equinox Blessings Ritual

Intention: At this Fall Equinox, we come together in community to celebrate abundance and deep gratitude for the many gifts we have received. We recognize what a blessing our community is - we celebrate that by performing a ritual of blessing ourselves and each other.

"When a blessing is invoked, it changes the atmosphere. Some of the plentitude flows into our hearts from the invisible neighborhood of loving kindness. In the light and reverence of blessing, the person or situation becomes illuminated in a completely new way. In a dead wall a new window opens, in dense darkness a path starts to glimmer..."

- ~ from John O'Donahue's book, To Bless the Space Between Us:

Arrival:

Organizers will offer all ritualists a smudge blessing with fall harvested herbs as they arrive. Each participant is given a bundle as they arrive and sit down. It contains

- A small stone
- A sprig of rosemary and cedar, tied together with yellow string
- A tea light candle
- A small jar of water which is comprised of a bit of water from each of the 14 rivers of the Olympic Peninsula, a small bit of water from the Salish Sea, a small bit of water from the holy well at Sacred Groves.

Opening – XXX will teach the song Winds of the West by Ayla Nereo and all will sing <https://open.spotify.com/track/1Mn0fnBcisTYtJudeRvldx?si=0e59b0c2aa5e44b7>

Welcome: XXX – these are notes from the preparation of the ritual

Together, let's peek into the profound magical realm of blessing. We sit with the mystery of what a blessing might be and share wisdom with each other about blessing. We strengthen our ability to receive blessings in a powerful way and have an opportunity to practice giving and receiving blessings with each other! We hope to spark a magical dialogue and inquiry that will continue to enrich our community and all our lives.

At this time of harvest and fall equinox, we are steeped in gratitude and blessings of abundance, we encourage you to ponder the question of what might be possible in your life by cultivating the art of giving and receiving blessings?

Land Blessing: XXX leads, a blessing of the Healing Ground

Container creation: XXX leads

We are creating a space where we let go of X and call in Y

This begins to call us into heart space and starlight consciousness

Today we co-create a space where we can

- let go of judgements about blessings and our ability to do them well
- Invoke the heart space optimal for giving and receiving blessings

All of us are invited to call out, popcorn style, any judgements to let go of and any intentions you want to welcome into this ritual
The container is complete, let the magic begin

Directions and Self Blessing: Sandra leads

Intro about how difficult it can be to do self-blessings, some ideas for incorporating them into your life.

This is a combination honoring of the elements, and each person doing a self blessing for themselves using the elements as a framework.

Self Blessing with the Elements: (this starts in the south because you need the flame to light the herbs in the east – progresses fire to water to earth to air.) Each person was invited to open the bundle they had been given on arrival

Fire – light the tea light and invoking fire, offer yourself a blessing with the powers of fire

Water – open the jar of water, Sandra gives brief explanation of where the water is from, and invoking water, offer yourself a blessing with the powers of water

Earth – take the small stone and invoking earth, offer yourself a blessing with the power of earth

Air – take the small bundle of dried herbs, light it from your candle and invoking air, offer yourself a blessing with the powers of air

Transition to Wisdom Sharing:

Now, we invite you all to stand up. Begin walking around the space, in no particular direction, with no particular destination. Just walking around, looking into the eyes of those you pass. What we ask you to do now is self-select, ending up in small groups of three.

(when all are in groups of three, invite them to sit down)

The prompt: Now, share between the three of you anything that is on your heart about blessings. Take a minute or two for each person. (time this, maybe 3 - 6 minutes, giving a half way mark, making sure people are making time for each person to speak)

Now we all move into a circle again

Sharing Wisdom about the art of Blessing: XXX

This is a wisdom sharing circle to share ways to give and receive blessings

Have written prompts up on a poster on the wall (the prompts we used are attached at the end of this ritual plan)

XXX begins with some thoughts about the art of giving and receiving blessings

He then calls for wisdom from the group, things they have learned, wisdom they have about giving and receiving blessings

Giving and Receiving Blessings:

Now we will break into small groups or dyads to practice giving and receiving blessings.

XXX Introduces the prompts. Reminds people we have already been doing blessings since the moment we all arrived. The smudging, the gift you were given, the land blessing, the self blessing, the blessing of the elements, the blessing of sharing our wisdom. Another kind of blessing is an interpersonal spoken blessing. Let's look at the list of prompts up on the wall. Speak about them for a moment. And now, we are going to practice giving and receiving blessings – I will demonstrate first.

He picks a person from the group and gives them a blessing, using one of the prompts on the wall, or not. They receive the blessing.

5 minute bio break, please stay in essential silence

Begin singing Winds of the West to call everyone back into circle

V Invites people to form 2 lines of equal numbers – designates one side as the “givers” the other side as the “receivers”

Everyone pairs off with the person across from them

This first round is a ONE MINUTE warm up blessing – givers give a one minute blessing, the receivers receive.

DO IT!!!

Now come back into 2 lines, if you were a “giver”, get in this line. You are now the receivers. If you were a “receiver” be in this line, you are now the givers. Pair off again, with a different partner this time. This is another one minute blessing – the new group of givers give a one minute blessing, the new group of receivers receive.

DO IT!!!

Now we are going to set up free form blessing rounds. This is how it works: in a moment, if you just received a blessing, come here into the center, on this round rug, which is now called “the blessing pool”. The Givers will stay seated where you are.

Everyone in the blessing pool will then walk over to a person of their choice. From this point on, there is no assigned giver/receiver, no rules and no time limit.

When you get done with a blessing, you are invited to come into the blessing pool and pair off again with a new person who is in the blessing pool. You are invited to try offering blessings with people you know well AND people you don't know well at all.

(let this go on for quite some time, until the energy is starting to wane – maybe 30 or 40 minutes? You may have to help people get the hang of this)

end this with a song – May the Long Time Sun

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gexkiDmQa9I>

transition into dinner

Now we invite everyone to another kind of blessing – food. We will take a short break to get everything set up for the potluck, then reconvene in 5-10 minutes.

(all get their potluck items set up, get plates and such)

Reconvene around the potluck table

sing Oh Mother God as meal blessing song

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVr8VdnGiNg>

Oh Mother God, Flowing through our hearts
We give thanks
For the bread of our lives, For our hands in the earth
And the fruit of your womb
Oh mother god, Blessed be
Oh mother god, Blessed be

Oh Mother God, Thank you for this day
For the love, That you wash over me
And this joy in my heart, I will share with the world
Oh mother god, Blessed be
Oh mother god, Blessed be

XXX does a blessing of the food

Everyone is invited to get their food, sit down, spend a minute with the food, receiving its blessings and offering gratitude for the harvest. This is fall equinox, the harvest festival, after all.

With this meal, we will take a little extra time to bless the food and receive the blessing of the food with all our senses. Eating food is such a profound act of simultaneously giving and receiving blessing.

(This potluck dinner is a continuation of our ritual theme of blessing. For this harvest time feast, we encourage everyone to bring and prepare food to share that is fresh, beautiful, in season, locally grown, prepared with attention, gratitude, love and your own hands as much as possible.)

XXX will end the dinner by standing up and taking down the container

All are invited to transition into Community Dance and Movement.

There will be a 1 hour play list, with the theme of Blessing

We continue the appreciation and blessing of our own bodies, and our community, through movement and non-verbal means.

Sacred Groves Equinox Blessing Ritual - Guidance & Wisdom

(THESE WERE GIVEN OUT AS A HANDOUT TO EVERYONE WHO CAME TO THE RITUAL, PORTIONS OF THEM WERE MADE INTO POSTERS WHICH WERE ON THE WALL OF THE TEMPLE SPACE DURING THE RITUAL)

Suggestions for Giving Blessings:

- Ask for consent before giving a blessing: “Can I give you a blessing?”
- Let each blessing be a unique creation.
- **Share something that you have never shared before.**
- **Be as specific, descriptive and detailed as you can.**
- Release all shoulds and judgements. Release perfectionism.
- The blessing doesn’t have to be a “big deal”. Blessings are ordinary miracles.
- **“It is impossible to bless and to judge at the same time”**
- Spirit of Namaste: “the divine in me, sees the divine in you”.
- Confess any awkwardness, fear or judgements that might be in the way.
- Take responsibility for what’s happening for you and share that. If you are feeling scared or uncomfortable, acknowledge it.
- Avoid unsolicited advice, implicit criticism or projections.
- If you accidentally project onto the other person, apologize and take total responsibility.
- If your blessing falls flat, feel free to ask for a “do over”. Go easy on yourself. This is play! This is a practice. Fail a lot! We learn mainly by our “mistakes”.
- Be truthful, be real, be loving, be humble, be yourself.

Examples of Simple, Beautiful Forms for Giving a Blessing:

- May you...(smudge-style blessing)
- One thing I appreciate/admire/love about you is...
- When you did/said this...it had this impact on me...
- A gift I see in you is...
- Something about you I will never forget is...
- A way that you have made a difference in my life is...
- Something I see in you that you may not see ...
- Something I have never shared with you that I want to share is ...

- Something I want to acknowledge is ...
- A way of being in you that inspires me is...
- For me, you will always be a teacher of....
- If in doubt, ask the receiver what might be helpful to them.

Suggestions for Receiving Blessings:

- A deeply received blessing is itself a gift
- A blessing can't be given unless it is received
- Breathe, take some moments to let the blessing land
- Hold the blessing in silence for some time, bring your presence to it
- Let the blessing impact your body
- See if you can feel it enter and work in your body
- Make sound, move your body, see if you can help it enter
- Let your body shudder
- If you are struggling to receive a blessing, acknowledge that struggle and work with that struggle.

Examples of Simple, Beautiful Forms for Receiving a Blessing:

- <<Breathe it in, pause, allow silence/presence, feel, savor, move your body, make sound, shudder>>
- Thank you!
- May it be so! So be it!
- Yes! I can find it! I receive it!
- I can find that in me / This too is a part of me
- Wow! That feels so good (or fabulous or uncomfortable or hard or wonderful or...)
- I love this possibility! I love the way you are creating me here!
- I'm struggling. I'm feeling resistance to receiving this because...
- When I hear you share this, I feel
- What happens in my body when I hear this is...

What are the goals of a blessing? (some guesses)

- A felt sense of connection/bonding, mutual uplift, and a sense of belonging
- Feeling seen, heard, known and honored.
- Causes the other to be ***touched, moved and inspired***.
- Creates a possibility for the person that maybe didn't exist before.
- Making a difference in someone's life.
- The ultimate goal of blessing is ecstatic union?

Things to Avoid When Giving a Blessing:

- Clichéd, obvious, generic, tired, lifeless, flaccid blessings. If this happens and both parties can feel it, no big deal, acknowledge that and feel free to ask for a "do over".
- Avoid unsolicited advice/criticism/insults disguised as a blessing (aka projecting your unmet wishes/needs onto another person). If you accidentally do this, receive this strong medicine, own it completely and quickly withdraw the projection, take full and complete responsibility for it). Shadow may show up here. Welcome it in.
- Projecting your unmet wishes/needs onto another person (if you accidentally do this, quickly withdraw the projection and take full and complete responsibility for it)

Things to Avoid When Receiving a Blessing:

- Rejecting a blessing reactively. Usually, the sign of a trigger activated by rejected aspects of the self. If you get triggered, breathe and give it time and space and let the blessing work its strange medicine. How might this blessing be true for you? Find the 1% that might be true. You could say, "thank you, this one is really hard/painful for me to be with. I'm working with it but it may take me some time." You could say, "I can find it in me, yes. And it is really painful to be with. It's good medicine. Thank you."