

Script for TnT's Sunday Service 12-12-10

CHIMES, WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE from "A C.B. Christmas"

OPENING WORDS (Sandy) The eight sacred seasonal festivals stretch back into antiquity, though not all eight were practiced simultaneously. For our remote ancestors, the year was divided into two because of the migration of the herds from summer to winter pastures. The Great Mother who nurtured all in her womb in life and death was wooed by the Holly King—Lord of Winter, then the Oak King—Lord of Summer who fought at the turning points of the seasons.

Later, as people settled and began to farm, the two Gods became one—the dying and resurrected vegetation god who was born at Yule and matured with the unfolding seasons, mating with the Goddess in the spring, then dying with the harvest to be reborn.

At Yule, the Oak King, ruler of the waxing sun half of the year, defeats the Holly King, ruler of the waning sun, and the Child of Promise is born again to bring ever increasing light and warmth into our lives—the pledge that spring and summer will be with us once more if we can wait out the barren months. The reborn God, son of the Goddess will grow into the Lord of the Greenwood, the great Horned One, the Sun King.

Yule is a time of immense peace and joy, when the sun's light is reborn during the greatest dark and cold. Now is the time when we internalize and synthesize the outward-directed activities of the summer months.

From *The Sacred Round* by Elen Hawk

***UNISON CHALICE LIGHTING** (Janet & Joe) We light this candle for the infant Solstice Sun. It is one small flame to pierce the darkness, a ray of hope, a symbol of the Light within us all, a light that can never be extinguished. This light will grow in glory—waxing strong, despite the cold to come. This light will dispel despair and resignation, giving us a glimpse of golden days ahead. Behold the light that can never die, reborn anew in the Solstice sky!

***HYMN** "Joy to the World" pagan style—see insert from Order of Service

***COVENANT**

Love is the doctrine of this church,
The quest of truth is its sacrament,
And service is its prayer.
To dwell together in peace,
To seek knowledge in freedom,
To serve humanity in fellowship,
To the end that all souls shall grow into harmony with the Divine,
Thus do we covenant with each other and with God.

***DOXOLOGY**

(Our children, youth and teachers are invited to leave for their classes.)

RESPONSIVE READING (Scott)

Solstice is the longest night. The Sun returns,

Born from the dark and nourishing womb of the Great Goddess.

The Lord of Death is the Lord of Rebirth,

And darkness now gives way to light as each day grows longer.

We remember that darkness is not empty, nor frightening.

It is the infinite potential out of which the light is born.

On Solstice, we rejoice, for the dreams we have found in the dreamtime now appear before us.

On Solstice, we kindle the light of hope, for light is returning and with it, new life.

From Phyllis Currott's Witchcrafting

SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

MEDITATION/SILENCE (Mike)

OFFERTORY Split the Plate with Guest at Your Table

READINGS (Janet & Denise)

The Inner Cauldron: Rebirth (Janet): We have arrived at last at the close of the year, a time of endings and new beginnings. At Winter Solstice the seed of light is tightly folded within the bud of darkness. From now on, as the days grow longer, the sun-seed slowly unfurls from this center, through the spring days of Imbolc and Beltain, to its full flowering at the Summer Solstice. At this point it will reach the outermost ring of the year's spiral and begin to contract slowly toward the center again. Perhaps this is the meaning of the spiral art carved by ancient people on the walls of Newgrange, aligned as it is to this most important time of year.

As we look toward the threshold of a new year, we become more aware of our journey as a spiral that circles around yet continually moves us onward to the next cycle of our soul's evolution. Amid all the busy Christmas preparations, it is important to take some time to tune into the deep, dark womb of the year's midnight, to feel and enjoy the quiet interval that comes when the curtain has gone down over the stage of this year's rich drama and the new play has not yet commenced.

from Kindling the Celtic Spirit by Mara Freeman

Celtic Christmas (Denise):

In the eighth century, the traditional twelve-day pagan festival was declared a sacred season by the Church, becoming the Twelve Days of Christmas, peaking at December 25, January 1, and January 6. The Church prohibited all work or public business during these 12 days, except for the labor of cooks, bakers, or other contributors to the delights of the holiday.

Twelve days of feasting, merrymaking, sporting contests, singing, dancing, and all sorts of joyous anarchy and "misrule" got under way on the magical threshold between the old year and the new. Some of the fun and games probably belonged originally to Samhain, the Celtic New Year but were later transferred to the Christian festival.

Released from work, all sorts of little bands toured the community offering entertainment in exchange for food and drink. Singers known as "waits" sang traditional carols unaccompanied or with harps, fiddles and pipes. Mummers and guisers came out in full force, dressed in colorful costumes that might include animal skins, masks and bells. Often the central theme of their plays was the death and subsequent resurrection of one of the characters, echoing the drama of the old year as it prepared to give way to the new.

In Ireland the holiday lasted from *Nollag Mor*, Big Christmas—December 25—to *Nollag Beag*—Little Christmas—on January 6. It was the most important festival of the year, a time to contemplate the special mystery of both human and divine love. People were more than usually devout and generous to others. It was commonly held that the gates of heaven were open at this time and that anybody who died during the Twelve Days went straight to paradise.

Preparations for the season began many weeks in advance when country people flocked to the Big Market, to "bring home the Christmas." They took butter, eggs, hens, geese, turkeys and vegetable to sell and returned home laden with meat, tea, tobacco, whiskey, wine and beer, dried fruit, spice, sugar for the Christmas puddings, toys and sweets for the children, new clothes, and household gear.

Everybody gave gifts, a custom that had its roots in ancient law. Shopkeepers gave Christmas boxes of fruitcakes and drinks to customers, sized according to the amount of business they did there during the year. Farming families gave bacon, hens, eggs and potatoes to friends and relatives in towns, while they in return received town supplies and coins for their children. Prosperous farmers gave generously to their poorer neighbors: fresh-killed meat for their dinner and sometimes a Christmas log to burn.

But the greatest gift was to have the whole family beneath one roof again. Sons and daughters who worked in distant towns left work early on Christmas Eve to be back in their old homes before nightfall. Those who lived across the sea made sure they were there in spirit. Many a poor family eagerly awaited the "American letter," not least because of the substantial sum of money almost certain to be wrapped up in it. And in return the woman of the house made sure she sent greeting cards containing all the year's news to "the people away," providing possibly their only link to home.

from *Kindling the Celtic Spirit* by

Mara Freeman

***HYMN** "What Child is This?" pagan style—see insert from Order of Service

SERMON "Darkness, Light and the People"

The People: Round and round the wheel is turning. At this time of Yule the sun stands still and the moon is close to earth. We have hung our homes with evergreens with hope that spring will come some day. The longest nights, the shortest days have come once again.

The wheel that holds the seasons of the year has turned to the darkest time. The weight of winter lies heavy on the land. Since the Summer Solstice, the year has waned—darkness has grown. We, the people, have had a time of balance—the time of equinox when light and dark were equal. But as the wheel turned, so darkness increased.

Until this point in the year, each day the sun appears to be losing ground against the dark. Without the sun there will be no crops, no warmth, no oxygen, no life. Life as we know it would perish quickly in a world without light. And yet, we also need darkness.

Darkness: Darkness...total...complete. I have come to you. At times you have welcomed me. When you have needed rest, you welcomed me. When you needed time for gestation, you welcomed me. When you needed to look inward—to be with yourself, you welcomed me. When you needed the mystery, you welcomed me.

At this time of the year, you know darkness. It is the season of life past, all is cold. The earth is sleeping. This is the hidden time. It is as though the world sleeps under a gray cloak. Everything is still and silent. Life has moved to the center, to its hidden darkness. Bulbs rest, roots sleep and trees go dormant. Yes, this is the darkness before the dawn. Yes, it is the rest just before new growth.

At times it seems that emptiness is all around. It requires faith to remember that each season has its purpose and its beauty—that the time of joy must be balanced with a time of mourning—that the time of harvest must be followed with a time when the fields lay fallow. It requires quiet to seek the wisdom of winter.

Light: But soon my time will come.

People: Who is there? Who speaks? Who calls us to awaken from this time of darkness? This time when the sun stands still?

Light: I am the light, I am rebirth, I am the sun and the stars and the moon. I am energy. I am flowering and bursting forth. I will be Spring.

People: We who gather here. We remember you.

Darkness: Blessed is the darkness—for there the seed is planted. There the seed sprouts and begins life.

Light: But soon the seed outgrows the dark. The seed must have light to flower, to give fruit, to be seen. I will wane no longer. The wheel has turned and light will increase. The sun will return. The earth will be warm again. But, Darkness, it is still your time.

Darkness: But as of the Solstice, your energy will increase. So be it.

Light: So be it.

People: How will we be warm while you gain strength?

Light: We will use the Yule log from last year's festivities. We will light a beseeching fire outside that it will give birth to the sun. And you—as people past—will keep the flame burning in your hearts, in your homes and in your love as the winter takes root. Keep this fire in your sacred ring burning until dawn when the Solstice sun shines once more upon us. Know that the light of the sun is once again returning, being reborn. When the wheel turns and we gather again for Imbolc, you will no longer need your evergreens and mistletoe to insure continuation of life. When we meet again bring the greens to be burned and the fire will help renew the light. Light will grow. Life will continue in you as it does in the evergreen.

Dark: But for now, darkness is still here. Hold your hand upon your chest—know that darkness will always be within—a darkness of rest, a darkness of promise, a darkness of gestation, a darkness of yet-to-be, a darkness of just-before. Do not rush me away so quickly. Take your time.

People: We are in the time of darkness. We are moving toward the time of balance. Light has been reborn in the womb of darkness. We thank the darkness for its wisdom even as we welcome the light. Now we celebrate Yule. Welcome Yule!

Darkness and Light: Welcome Yule!

***HYMN** “We Wish You a Merry Solstice”—see insert from Order of Service

***BENEDICTION** (TnT) The darkness is still here. Hold your hand upon your chest—know that darkness will always be within—a darkness of rest, a darkness of promise, a darkness of gestation, a darkness of yet-to-be, a darkness of just-before. Do not rush me away so quickly. Take your time.

***UNISON CHALICE EXTINGUISHING** (Joe) Carry the flame of peace and love until we meet again.

POSTLUDE from “A C.B. Christmas”

*Please stand in body or spirit.