

## Winter Solstice/Yule '15 with Treibh na Tíntean (elders' edition)

*[Begin inside. Ring bell.]*

THE REASON FOR THE SEASON – *[Folks go and smudge themselves at the little cauldron of frankincense, myrrh and mistletoe. Then **Jenna**]* The Winter Solstice signifies rebirth within darkness. Over the longest night, the Goddess gives birth to the Child of Light—the new Sun God. Long ago, people lit candles and fires to lure back the sun. Through the dark times, the earth sleeps—a wintry death shrouds the world; but, as the days grow longer, the Goddess will awaken the world around us.

In Celtic lore, Yule is when the Oak King triumphs over the Holly King bringing rebirth. The Yule season brings tidings of comfort, joy and new life; however, the Celts didn't celebrate Yule until the coming of the Saxons. "Cuidle" or "Yule" meant "Wheel"—an important symbol of the Goddess' cycle. Wreaths were used to represent Her endless turning, Her wheel of the year.

To the Celts and Druids, the yew tree (later the evergreen) was also important to the celebration. The Yule tree represents Her immortality. Other Pagans would bring a live tree into the home for the wood spirits. Bells were hung on the branches, along with treats for the spirits, and a five-pointed star (the pentagram) was placed on top. Celts and Druids also burned an oak Yule log in the fire to celebrate the newborn Sun<sup>ii</sup>.

THE RETURN OF THE LIGHT – *[Large unlit candle in the center, folks in a circle around it, as dark as we can make it.]*

**Scott:** *[Ring the bell]* To die and be reborn, the Wheel is turning. What must you lose to the night?<sup>iii</sup>

**[plant—Shae?]:** Regret.

**Scott:** Regret is lost to the night.... Saying it makes it real—so, with me, "Regret...."

**All:** Regret is lost to the night.

**Scott:** The Wheel is turning. What must you lose to the night?

*[Say things like "fear," "sadness," etc. Keep going until we are done "losing." Each time, all repeat, "\_\_\_\_\_ is lost to the night."]*

**Scott:** We who are Pagan know the value of the night; we know that not all growth takes place in the sunshine. But as the Wheel turns, we are awake in the night; we turn the Wheel to bring back the light. We are awake in the night; we turn the Wheel to bring the light. *[Shae starts the chant, let go on for a bit as Kate passes out candles. "We are awake in the night."]*

**Sandy:** *[Stop the chant.]* Remember the seed of light you took into the dark at Samhain? It is alive within the womb of darkness. The seed is awakening! *[Light center candle.]* Now, let's cast a circle by lighting these candles and making three wishes each: one for you ... one for another... and, one for the planet. Let the Crone begin.

*[Rita, Melissa and Kate are standing together. Rita comes to the center and lights her candle off the Fairy candle, makes her wishes, then returns to the circle and lights Melissa's candle and she makes her wishes, then to Kate.... Soon the whole circle will be lit! If it bogs down, have a couple of 'plants' sing chant v e r y quietly.]*

**Denise:** The circle is cast! Let's extend this circle of light outside to Covenant Woods by a freeform chant—like toning. Turn to the north and push the blessing out. *[Begin the chant—"om" or "ah," whatever! You call when you think we are finished.]*

PROCESSION TO WOODS *[Candles to light the procession!]*

### CALLING THE DIRECTIONS

**Richard:** *[Ring the bell.]* Our circle is already cast; let us invite the Watchtowers.

**North:** <sup>iv</sup>Spirits of North, Powers of Earth, with your gifts of sustenance and life, we hail you and invite you to join our circle. By the Earth that is Her body, send forth your strength and bless us with your presence! So mote it be.

**East:** Spirits of East, Powers of Air, with your gifts of light and clarity, we hail you and invite you to join our circle. By the Air that is Her breath, send forth your inspiration and bless us with your presence. So mote it be.

**South:** Spirits of South, Powers of Fire, with your gifts of passion and love, we hail you and invite you to join our circle. By the Fire that is Her spirit, send forth your flame and bless us with your presence. So mote it be.

**West:** Spirits of West, Powers of Water, with your gifts of depth and feeling, we hail you and invite you to join our circle. By the Water that is Her blood, send forth your healing and bless us with your presence. So mote it be.

**Spirit:** Power of Spirits of above and below, with your gift of centering and movement, we hail and invite you to join our circle. Under stone and bone, into the earth to await rebirth, we open our hearts to the return of the Light! So mote it be!

COVENANT – *[All]* As we gather here, in our sacred space, a circle is formed and we are connected in Spirit.

### INVOCATION *[Ring bell.]*

**East:** <sup>v</sup>Queen of Heaven, Mother of all, hear us as our voices call. Send Your fire back to Earth as we will the Sun's rebirth. Sacred fire kindled bright, lead us back into the light.

**West:** Boy Child of Promise, come to us out of the tomb, out of the womb. While our candles burn, let Your Light return!

**North:** The Winter Solstice is the time of people's rebirth from darkness.

**South:** The old sun dies and the Goddess rebirths the new sun with a new year.

**Spirit:** Motranacht celebrates the birth of all the nights of the year.

**North:** Persephone leaves Hecate in the underworld and is reborn to Demeter.

**East:** The Oak King defeats the Holly King in battle.

**South:** Yemaya creates the world anew again from her fertile womb.

**West:** Light comes from darkness, growth comes from barrenness.

**All Directions:** Spring comes from the depths of winter.

**All:** We are here to bring light to the world.

YULE LOG, BATTLE OF THE GOD – *[Set up the Yule log on an small altar near center of circle so that S, D, J and M,M,C end up standing between the altar and the Yule log.]*  
*[Ring bell.]*

**Sandy [w/ Denise & Jenna]:** We call for Rita, Melissa and Kate. *[Join hands.]* Close your eyes. Feel the circle that we have created, feel your tribe around you.... Open your eyes as the Maiden, Mother and Crone.

*[Maiden, Mother and Crone now go to the altar to light the Yule log. East hands the Maiden the black Goddess candle.]*

**Maiden:** Blessed be the Maiden, the young Goddess, wide-eyed and eager, innocent and fresh<sup>vi</sup> *[lights the white candle and then hands the Goddess candle to the Mother].*

**Mother:** Blessed be the Mother, loving and protective, proud and fertile *[Lights the red candle and then hands the Goddess candle to the Crone].*

**Crone:** Blessed be the Crone, powerful and wise, guardian of the great cauldron of death, life and rebirth *[Lights the black candle then hands the Goddess candle to East].*

*[Ring bell as they return to the circle.]*

**East:** In the hour of the witch, the night is dark and black as pitch.

**South:** The Wheel turns, the flame is lit.

**West:** The Goddess gathers seeds this day.

**North:** Who will bring the light?

**All:** God of the Light, return! Darkness will flee. Return, return!

*[Ring the bell.]*

**Scott [& Richard]:** *[in center of circle]* We call the Holly King and the Oak King. *[Join hands.]* Close your eyes. Feel the darkness around us, look to your center and see the energies of the God join in you.

**Holly King:** *[Steps forward.]* I am the Holly King—the Old God. I have watched over you and guarded you in the dark.

**Oak King:** *[Steps forward.]* I am the Oak King—the New God. I will watch over you as we move into the light.

*[Battle ensues! Who will win?]*

**Jenna:** Holly King is defeated; still, he leaves gifts for all as a symbol of his love and a promise of his return after he rests in the snow and ice. *[HK goes back into the circle, takes basket and hands out holly sprigs!]*

**All:** Hail the Holly King, Dark Lord of Solar Night!

**Sandy:** The Oak King is victorious! Greetings to the Lord of Light!

**All:** Hail the Oak King! Hail the turning of the Wheel! *[OK salutes & returns to circle.]*

*[Ring the bell.]*

*[Shae leads us in previous chant while Denise and Richard prepare communion!]*

COMMUNION –

**Richard:** *[Holds up bowl of salt.]* My body is salt. Taste the breath of death. *[Ring bell.]*

**Denise:** *[Holds up a stick of honey.]* We have been reborn. Taste the sweetness of life. *[Ring bell.] [Use two sets to go around serving salt, then honey.]*

THANKING THE DARKNESS **[Scott]** The darkness is still here. Hold your hand upon your chest--know that darkness will always be within. It is a darkness of rest; a darkness of promise; a darkness of gestation; a darkness of yet-to-be, of just-before. Do not rush it away so quickly. Take time.

THANKING THE DIRECTIONS

**North:** Spirits of North, Powers of Earth, thank you for your gifts of sustenance and for blessing our circle. By the Earth that is Her body, we give you leave. Go if you must, stay if you will. Blessed be.

**East:** Spirits of East, Powers of Air, thank you for your gifts of clarity and for blessing our circle. By the Air that is Her breath, we give you leave. Go if you must, stay if you will. Blessed be.

**South:** Spirits of South, Powers of Fire, thank you for your gifts of passion and for blessing our circle. By the Fire that is Her spirit, we give you leave. Go if you must, stay if you will. Blessed be.

**West:** Spirits of West, Powers of Water, thank you for your gifts of feeling and for blessing our circle. By the Water that is Her blood, we give you leave. Go if you must, stay if you will. Blessed be.

**Spirit:** Spirits of Above and Below, Powers of balance, thank you for your gifts of feeling and for blessing our circle. By the God and Goddess, we give you leave. Go if you must, stay if you will. Blessed be.

**All:** The circle is open, but unbroken. Merry meet and merry part, and merry meet again! <sup>vii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Gaelic for 'wheel'

<sup>ii</sup> D. J. Blackraven

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bos/bos023.htm>

<sup>iv</sup> [http://www.tryskelion.com/sab\\_02\\_yul\\_welcome%20yule.html](http://www.tryskelion.com/sab_02_yul_welcome%20yule.html)

<sup>v</sup> [http://www.wiccanway.com/Yule-Ritual-Guide-For-Covens\\_c\\_201.html](http://www.wiccanway.com/Yule-Ritual-Guide-For-Covens_c_201.html)

<sup>vi</sup> Sabbats: a witch's approach to living the old ways Edain Mccoy

<sup>vii</sup> Sources for this ritual include Starhawk and past Yule rituals, inspired by the efforts of your elders and goddess aspects; meditation compiled by Dave and barely adapted for this year by Foo.

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Lady Isadora poem:

Sing we of the Mystery

now as long ago.

Blood red holly berries,

blood upon the snow.

The Oak King shall rise

waxing year to bring...

Therefore bid we farewell

to the Holly King.