

A Lughnassad Ritual

Written by Tehom for Our Lady of the Woods public Lughnassad sabbat, 1997.

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Purpose

This ritual celebrates the first harvest. The ritual honors one's self and focuses on past and future accomplishments. Using ribbons, the participants create a flag (if done in the way it is described here, you have something similar to a Tibetan prayer flag; however, the tying of ribbons to trees and at sacred sites is an ancient practice that has carried into present-day ritual) and, while raising power, burn a figure made of straw and weeds that represents Lugh. This ritual is best celebrated outdoors and requires some degree of preparation.

Altar and Circle Setup

The altar is decorated with local wildflowers and plants (in our area that included mostly sunflowers and tall sheaves of millet). The colors used are bright and bold: yellow, green, red, gold, and orange. In addition to the usual items and tools on the altar, bowls of barley and corn are included. A figure of Lugh is also on or nearby the altar. Homemade cornbread is used for the cakes; apple juice, a dark beer, or wine is used in the chalice. A gateway is constructed and decorated through which participants will enter and be asperged.

Place a cauldron large enough to hold the Lugh figure at the center of the circle or make a fire pit. Tie a length of twine across the center of the circle (like a clothesline, for hanging the ribbons). If you have a large group, you may want to tie two lengths to form a solar cross. Pillar candles of the appropriate colors are placed at each Quarter.

Preparing the Participants

Ribbons, cut in lengths of about 15 to 18 inches, should be prepared prior to the ritual. There is a list of possible colors and their magickal associations below.

Each person should have at least three ribbons before entering the circle. One white one (to represent a "first" harvest), one the color that corresponds to the element of their sun sign (yellow for air signs, red for fire, blue for water, and green for earth), and one for their "future" harvest (a color of their choice).

- White ribbon--this ribbon represents something you've already harvested and want to celebrate or commemorate.
- Sun sign ribbon--this represents you.
- Other ribbon(s)--these represent things you want to harvest in the future. Pick colors appropriate to your goals.

The Ritual

Entering the Circle

Two persons are stationed at the gateway to asperge people as they enter the circle. Music is playing during the asperging (John Barleycorn works well; live music is preferred). After each person is asperged, the Priestess and Priest invite them to hang up their sun sign ribbon only and take a place in the circle, still holding on to the white and other ribbons.

Attunement

With everyone in the circle, the Priest performs an attunement. Holding a sheaf of corn, he processes around the circle, stopping at each person and presenting them with the corn, saying words to the effect of *"Behold the mystery: that which is the harvest is also the seed!"*

Asperging and Casting the Circle

The Priest asperges the circle, saying
"I cleanse this space and all within it by the powers of earth and water."

The Priestess casts the circle, saying:
"I conjure this circle of power that it may be a sacred space outside of time, a space between the world of humanity and the realms of the Old Ones. May it protect all within it and serve as a container for the power we shall raise. I bless and consecrate this circle in the names of the Goddess and the God. So mote it be."

Calling the Quarters

Using images that reflect the element and the sabbat, the Quarter callers invoke the East, South, West, and North. For example, South may say something such as:
"All hail Guardians of the Watchtowers of the South, element of Fire! I call you to our harvest circle. Your warmth and light is with us now, as is your passion and determination. Warm us in this circle and fire our will as we enter the harvest season. Red lion of the southern desert, be here now!"

Invoking Lugh and Danu

"Lugh, generous, gentle God of grain and sun, I call you. Hear my voice and come to me. Many-skilled one, powerful one, lend us your deftness and art that each of us may reap a rich harvest. Know that we honor you at this your festival and thank you for your willing sacrifice. Your love for us moves you to this annual sacrifice so that we may live and thrive and shine. Blessed Lugh, we honor and welcome you."

"Danu, Great Mother of ancient people, Mother of Lugh, I call on you. Bring us your love and nourishment, your joy and creativity. Help us to give birth to our desires and to bring our dreams to fruition. Mother of all that lives and flourishes in this season, we honor and welcome you."

The Priestess briefly describes the purpose of the ritual and outlines the magickal working, reminding the group to be thankful and aware of the plenty of the season. The Priest says a few words about Lugh and his willingness to offer himself as a sacrifice to ensure our continued growth.

Each person in the circle is invited to place their ribbons on the flag, one by one, and share the stories of their first harvest and their future goals. The shared stories become the basis for the power raising that follows.

Sacrifice of Lugh and Power Raising

The Priestess lights the fire in the cauldron or the fire pit and the Priest takes up the figure of Lugh. Carrying Lugh, the Priest starts a slow dance, moving deosil around the fire, while all drum and chant. Those who wish to may fall into the dance behind Lugh. When it seems appropriate, the Priest plunges Lugh into the fire and the dance continues and builds in speed until the Priestess releases the cone and the energy is sent toward everyone's goals.

Chant for Power Raising:

*Hoof and horn, hoof and horn
all that dies shall be reborn.
Corn and grain, corn and grain
all that falls shall rise again.*

Cakes and Wine, Opening the Circle

Following the release of the cone, the Priest and Priestess bless the cakes and wine, offering thanks to Danu and Lugh for their bounty. Soft music plays in the background as everyone passes the cakes and wine and offers blessings.

Farewells are made to Danu, Lugh, and the Quarters, and the circle is opened. If your circle is in a private outdoor area, you may consider leaving the flag up until Samhain, so its energies can be carried on the winds and so your members can visit it to remind themselves of their promises.

(A list of supplies needed is on page 4)

Supplies Needed

Altar:

Round table for altar
Orange and gold altar cloths
Gold or beeswax tapers
One wooden bowl filled with barley
One wooden bowl filled with corn
Cornbread
Wine, juice, or beer
Two plates for cornbread (wooden would be nice)
Two gold chalices
Water/salt bowls
Sword
Incense and burner
Red votive candle

Circle:

Twine
Ribbons (see below)
Basket
Musical instruments or taped music
Chant cards
Cauldron
Alcohol and cotton balls
Matches
Four quarter candles (yellow, red, blue, green)
Lugh figure
Wildflowers, stalks of millet, grasses, etc.

Ribbon Colors for Magick:

Sun Signs:

Air (Gemini, Libra, Aquarius) - Yellow
Fire (Aries, Leo, Sagittarius) - Red
Water (Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces) - Medium blue
Earth (Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn) - Medium green

First Harvest:

White (no matter what the harvest)

Future Harvest:

Cleansing, beginning, purity - white
Binding, limitation - black
Friendship, love - pink
Material gain, wealth, nature connection - green
Compassion, understanding - light blue
Spiritual growth, psychic ability - purple
Health, vitality, healing - red
Intellectual pursuits - yellow, orange
Creativity, inspiration - yellow, red
Grounding - brown, dark red
Moon energy, goddess - silver
Sun energy, harvest, god - gold
Add other colors to your liking.