

RUNNING HEAD: Lammas Circle

Lammas Circle

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Council and Reconciliation

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## Lammas Circle

This year I drew the Lammas ritual, which honors the beginning of the harvest in the more northern latitudes, although harvest is in full swing here in SC. I researched a number of sites and books, most of which dealt with Lugh, a dying vegetation god, the harvest festivals and games of Lughnasa, and other harvest festivals. I decided that since my circle was to be an open one, to which non-member women would be invited, I decided to keep the mood light. I chose the image of the apple, a symbol of immortality and of sexuality in its associations with the feminist Goddess culture. Merlin Stone (1978) says in her introduction to *When God was a Woman* that it was the Biblical story of Eve that brought her to her research into the Divine Feminine (pp.5-6). Many traditional pagan groups see the pentacle of spirit in the five-seeded core of the apple. Ancient traditions link the apple to immortality: According to Walker (1983), Hera's apples made the ambrosia for the Greek pantheon, Idunna's apples made the *Aesir* immortal, and King Arthur was taken to Avalon, the Apple-land to prepare for his return (p. 49). Hel's apples allowed one to move through the underworld and live, (Walker, 1988, p. 480). The Trojan War was started by a golden apple thrown by Eris into a festival to which she was not invited (Monaghan, 1997, p. 116), and the heroine Atalanta was caught by her suitor's throwing golden apples at her feet (Monaghan, p.58 ). Rom maidens throw an apple to their intended suitor as a means of engagement, and Rom couples share an apple as an aphrodisiac on their wedding night (Walker, 1983, p. 49). Gunnloed, a Norse giantess known as the mother of poets, brewed the mead of sagacity and poetry, including apples in her recipe (Telesco, 1998, January 17). And Eve, the mother of all living, chose her apple to satisfy her thirst for knowledge (Walker, p. 48). Knowledge, sexuality, and immortality made excellent themes for looking at our personal harvests as we turn to the inner journey of the wheel of the year.

To set the stage, I baked an apple cobbler from SAMS so that my house smelled good, and I played a drumming CD as soft background music. For my altar, I made a wreath of silk fall leaves in red and orange around a red candle, and put three real apples to represent the triple goddess, and a dozen small plastic apples among the leaves. I set the air conditioner to make the house as cool as would be comfortable with up to a dozen women in my living room when it was in the high 90s outside. I had half an hour before they were to arrive to clear my mind and center myself.

I have been growing away from my circle sisters for some time, and being at Pacifica has cast that change of direction into sharp contrast. I decided to give each of them a letter that would express my gratitude for what they have taught me in the four years I have been a member, but that would state clearly that I was separating from them. I wrote each of them a personal note at the bottom honoring them for the qualities I saw in them. I did not know how this revelation would play out, and I was concerned about making a scene with non-members present.

As it turned out, the only ones who came were the first two couples that started the group—no visitors. We ate first while waiting for another member who did not show up. Then, full of squash casserole, onion salsa, and apple pie, we started the ritual, which is attached below.

I cast the circle with my athame. We each anointed another with a drop of Joy oil. The ritual went well, as it follows a pattern that this group has used for many years. After we did the meditation, I spoke for a minute or two about the apple, immortality, and knowledge. (It just occurred to me that we had the five seeds of the apple—the two couples and me! Wish I had thought to comment on that!) After our meditation, no one wanted to share what she had experienced, but that may have been because I did not actually hand the Talking Apple to a

member to get the round started. We closed the circle by standing to release the quarters and to say our ritual merry meet.

Then I asked them to pick a couple of plastic apples from the wreath as reminders of their harvest, and I passed out the letters of separation. Each of them thanked me for the note and hugged me. My teacher, whom I thought might be upset, said that she was proud of me for making my decision. I said that I did not want to lose them as friends, and that I did not know where my new path was leading me, but I knew I was doing the right thing for me.

I think there was a sense of relief all the way around. For one thing, I was the only member who was single, so my perspective on things is somewhat different, and the core group is lesbian, where I and one other member are straight. I know that this has been an issue historically with this group.

My evaluation of the circle is that it was very successful in that it accomplished my goal of separation on good terms without overt conflict, and with no apparent ill will. (Of course, these are Southern women—it's hard telling what they said as they went home!) I felt good that I upheld my obligation to priestess a circle this year. While the meditation was not deeply moving or heavy, I thought it appropriate.

I know now that I can join or leave a group as my needs require rather than waiting to be asked to leave (which happened with a former writing group) or feeling that I will be alone if I am not in a group. This is very important to me to know that I can follow my heart and fulfill my own needs in the way that feels best to me.

## Lammas Ritual 2006

### Circle Cast in Silence

#### Calling the Directions

*(each direction read by a different circle member—a group tradition)*

South: Sisters of the Sun, Come to us with your steamy passion and your brilliant light. Come to us, powers of the South.

West: Mothers of the Waters, come to us with your gentle touch and your unending persistence. Come to us, powers of the West.

North: Grandmothers of the Earth, Come to us with your pregnant plants and your shining stones. Come to us, powers of the North.

East: Daughters of the Air, Come to us like a fresh breeze as we tend our fires, your laughter bringing us a second wind. Come to us, Powers of the East.

Center: Inner Self of the Center Above and Below, Come to us as our steady axis between the mundane world and the Universe. Come to us Powers of the Center.

### Lammas Antiphonal Chant

*(same member reads same direction)*

South: What is this night?

West: This is Lammas, the Festival of First Fruits

North: What is the meaning of this night?

East: We now receive the first fruits of our harvest that we planted at Imbolc.

South: What is the element that rules this night?

West: Water is the element, the Juice of the Apple that is Sunlight and Earth.

North: What is the element that wanes?

East: Fire is the element that wanes yet has not yet released us from her power.

South: How do recognize ourselves on this night?

West: We work preparing for the harvest that is to come.

North: Who helps us?

East: Our Goddess helps us.

South: Who is our Goddess?

West: She is Hera, whose apples provided ambrosia.

North: She is Hel, whose apples permit life in the underworld.

East: She is Iduna, whose apples provided immortality.

South: She is Gunnloed, who brews the apple mead of sagacity.

West: She is the wise woman, she who enjoys the fruits of her labors.

North: Who Is our Goddess?

ALL: BEHOLD: SHE IS OURSELVES!

### **Talking Apple**

First round:           Where I am today

Second Round:        What harvest is beginning to come to me.

### **Meditation**

Breathe deeply three times...  
Standing at the edge of the sea...  
Boarding the boat to Avalon...  
Facing and parting the mists...  
Listening to the silence...  
Arriving to be greeted by the Priestess...  
Going to the temple...  
Choosing an Apple and a Knife...  
Peeling the Apple...  
Casting the Peel over the shoulder...  
Reading the Peel ...  
Cutting the Apple in half crosswise...  
Using the Seeds as compass, move to a niche in the Temple...  
Listening for the information about what the Peel wrote...  
Eating the apple...  
Thanking the Priestess...  
Getting back on the boat to return through the mist....  
Coming back to the present....

### **Sharing with the Talking Apple**

### **Closing**

To all our dear goddesses, we know you are busy just as we are. We thank and bless you for all you have brought to us, our lives, our food, our homes, our loved ones, and this opportunity to share together. Go if you must, stay if you will. Blessed BE.

Merry Meet, Merry Part, Merry Meet again.

### **Delivery of Letter of Separation**

### References

Monaghan, P. (1997) *The new book of goddesses and heroines*. St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn.

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