

# UU Church West EarthSpirit Samhain: Honoring the Ancestors with Deep Listening and Love – October 25, 2020

**HELLO FRIENDS!** *We hope you'll join us at 10 am for our Facebook Live Samhain service* (<http://facebook.com/uuchurchwest>.)

This “Samhain Ritual Kit” has instructions for “setting the table” for your ancestors to create a setting you can use during the service (but you can create your Ancestors Altar at any time).

**Please send a photo of your Ancestors Altar to Rev. Suzelle by Oct. 22: [rev.lynch@uucw.org](mailto:rev.lynch@uucw.org)**  
**We would love to share images of your altars during the service!** *A picture of Rev. Suzelle's altar/table-setting for her mom and dad is below.*

## ABOUT EARTHSPIRIT SAMHAIN

**Earth-centered religious traditions like Samhain are both ancient and new.** Hundreds of years ago, when most people grew and harvested their own food and we did not have cars or factories or smart phones, every family depended on nature and on the cycles of the sun and the moon and the seasons of the year. People respected the natural world – and held ceremonies as a way to live in harmony with the earth and all the forces of nature. At UUCW, we are part of a revival of these new-old spiritual traditions that help us express caring for our beautiful planet earth.

## HOW TO SET UP YOUR ANCESTOR ALTAR

For your EarthSpirit Samhain Ancestor Altar-Table you will need:

- 1. A small table or shelf** to create your altar upon.
- 2. The lovely placemat on the back of these instructions.** Designed by UUCW member Michelle Guthrie, this placemat is also a coloring page! You can make it as colorful or plain as you'd like.
- 3. Plate, silverware, napkin, and a glass.** Use beautiful dishes if you have them – your ancestors will be delighted!
- 4. Optional:** Tablecloth

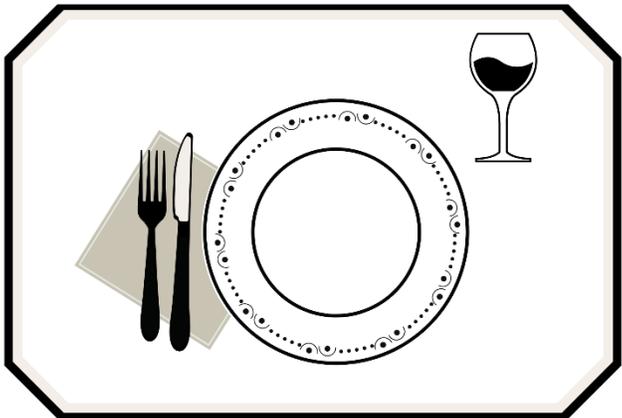
- 5. “Feast Paper” strips** – We have included two with your Samhain kit. If you have more people in your household, simply cut the strips in half, or use other paper.
- 6. Marker, pen or pencil** (to write on “Feast Paper” strip)
- 7. Oracle Card** – Do not open the Oracle Card envelope until we ask you to during the Samhain service! The Oracle card allows your ancestors to guide you when you ask them a question. The same card can have different meanings for each family member.
- 8. Optional** – Flowers or food items for your ancestors can be added – but save room on the plate for your Feast Papers!
- 9. Optional** – A photo of your ancestor(s)
- 10. Optional** - You may wish to assemble symbols of the four elements (of air, fire, water & earth) & a chalice with a candle or electric tea light.
  - a. Air:** Hand fan, bubbles to blow, feather, or pinwheel
  - b. Fire:** Candle or electric tea light
  - c. Water:** Small bowl of water
  - d. Earth:** Stones or dirt
  - e. Center:** Chalice



**Introduction** -- Samhain (pronounced *sow-en* and also known as Hallowe'en) is a celebration of the final fall harvest, and is the ancient Celtic New Year. Long ago, in the days of our great-great-great-grandmothers, people divided the year in two halves – a dark half for rest and contemplation, and a light half for growth and activity. At Samhain, we are moving from the time of brightness and action into the darker, more restful half of the year.

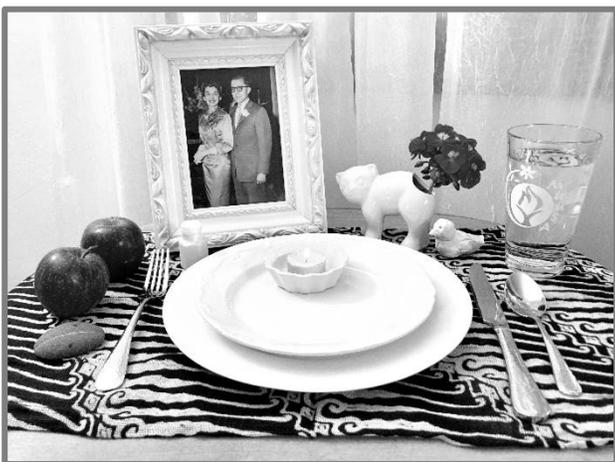
Also at Samhain, it was said that the “veil between the worlds” grew thin, and that ancestor spirits could come into the land of the living and visit, bringing wisdom and advice. Food was set out for them, and extra places set at the table!

**Samhain is not the only celebration to honor ancestors.** Our friends with Mexican heritage may celebrate Dia de Los Muertos (Day of the Dead) at this time of year with ofrendas (ancestor altars). Veneration of ancestors is common in Confucian-based cultures in Asia, and is also present in West and Southeast African cultures, including the African diaspora. Sometimes ancestors are seen as messengers between humans and god (including in some Christian sects), and in other cultures, the purpose of ancestor veneration is not to ask for



favors but to do one's filial duty. And some believe that providing for their ancestors is key – and their practices include offerings of food and other items.

**As You Set Your Ancestor Table** – Set the table with a feeling of caring, reverence and invitation to your ancestors – they are very special guests!



**Rev. Suzelle's Ancestor Altar Table 2020**

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[rev.lynch@uucw.org](mailto:rev.lynch@uucw.org) We would love to share images of your altars during the service!

## Invitation to the Ancestors: A Meditation

Most Ancient Ancestors –  
 you who began in the savannahs of Africa 200,000 years ago; you whose DNA is in our very bones...

We call to you - back through the vast reaches of time!

Back through recorded history,  
 Back before the Romans fought and fell: before City, Republic, and Empire

Back before the fertile lands between the Euphrates and the Tigris were cultivated and cultures rich and vast sprang up.

Back before the taming of the wild horses,  
 Before the land bridge to the Americas was crossed,  
 Before all these things -- we call to you....

We call to you, o ancestors, and we invite you to breathe with us this day as we inhale and exhale the same air you once breathed;

We ask you to be with us in the realization that our bodies are made from the same star stuff that your bodies were made of ...

and we thank you for your gifts and for your survival. We thank you for minds bright and shining, words clever, hands working just as our hands work today.

Ancestor spirits -- the days are growing colder and the nights longer; as the leaves fall from the trees, the crops go brown, and the land goes dormant - we prepare to enter the dark time. Will you walk with us until the sun returns?

Will you help us take care of our families and our communities?

Will you remind us of our intentions and our promises?

O Ancestors - we thank you for your presence, and your guidance this day. We promise to bring our hearts and hands into service to help those who need us as winter's dark and cold draw in -- we promise to take up your vision and your values to help shape a world that is more peaceful, fair, equitable and free for all people, for all beings.

Shalom, Amen, Ase and Blessed Be.

