

UU Church West EarthSpirit Imbolc Ritual – Life is Stirring, Hope is Waking!

January 31, 2021 – 10 a.m. – www.facebook.com/uuchurchwest

HELLO FRIENDS!

We hope you'll join us at 10 am for our Imbolc Ritual (<http://facebook.com/uuchurchwest>.) This "Imbolc Ritual Kit" has ideas and items you'll need to join the EarthSpirit Team for stories, dance, and songs to honor and enjoy this midwinter holiday.

Welcome to Imbolc

For those of us who live in cold climates, late January and the month of February are a time of faith – our faith in the power of life, in the cycles of nature, faith in our ability to endure and enjoy the cold and snow – these are tested now! Although the sun reversed its course at the Winter Solstice six weeks ago, darkness still rules in the northern hemisphere and the Spring Equinox – when light and dark will balance, is still seven weeks away. For some of us, the winter feels too cold and too long. We yearn for light and warmth. And this year, we have the ongoing pandemic to reckon with – which can make for a time of loneliness or stress or failure that seems endless.

Yet we have faith that the light will wax stronger each day, for it always has in each of our years on earth. And we have faith in the greening spring to come, faith in the silent seeds that begin to stir beneath the cold ground at this time, poised for awakening. That's what Imbolc is all about – it's a time to acknowledge the returning powers of the sun and to "stir the seeds" in our lives – whether they are literal seeds we'd like to plant in our gardens come Spring, seeds of intention for new beginnings in our lives, or seeds of connection between ourselves and others in our UUCW community!



This Imbolc Ritual Kit holds a few things you'll need to celebrate Imbolc at UU Church West on Sunday, January 31. You may also wish to honor this earth-based holiday at home on February 1 or 2nd. **Included here are:**

1. A "Seed Pod" to be opened during the 1/31 service
2. A "Stirring the Seeds of Connection" snowdrop postcard, pre-stamped and addressed to someone from UUCW. We invite you to add a greeting and sign your name) and drop it into the mail right away! **There are suggested Imbolc messages under "Postcards: Stirring the Seeds of Connection" below.**
3. **Tips to Foster Gratitude** Gratitude can help us grow in strength and resilience in hard times, and its part of our Imbolc rituals today.
4. **Brigit's Cross** A lavender slip of paper with this symbol of the Goddess Brigit (who is honored at Imbolc). We'll use it during one of the service rituals.

Postcards: Stirring the Seeds of Connection

Because the long cold winter and the ongoing pandemic can cause us to feel disconnected from our community, we've enclosed a snowdrop postcard for you to send to a fellow UUCW member or friend. These postcards are just a little "spark" of warmth, a quick way to "stir the seeds of connection" between and among people in our beloved congregation.

Please add one of the messages below (or one of your own), sign your name(s), and pop the postcard into the mail today!

Imbolc Postcard Messages

- a. As the seeds begin to stir in the earth, may your life be filled with hope.
- b. The light is growing; seeds are stirring; Spring is coming!
- c. Sending warm wishes to you.
- d. May your feet be planted on the good earth, and may the sun warm your heart.
- e. Sending good wishes for new beginnings.

Tips to Foster Gratitude

The practice of gratitude helps us see life in more positive ways; it's a spiritual and life practice that helps build resilience and strength that can sustain us through hard times. But sometimes this practice doesn't come naturally...

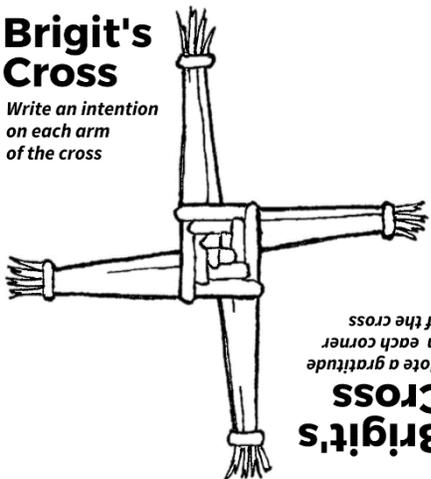
Below are easy tips to foster gratitude – **but the most important tip of all is to notice your resistance to practicing gratitude.** Sometimes being grateful makes us feel vulnerable or sad. Sometimes noting “a gratitude” is quickly followed by a flood of negative thoughts -- all the things we are unhappy about. You don't have to push the sad, vulnerable or negative thoughts away. Simply notice them, allow them to be, and continue your chosen gratitude practice.

Gratitude Tips:

- **Keep a “gratitude journal” or list,** even in your phone. Find a simple way to note big and little joys of your daily life.
- Consider making **a practice of sharing the day's “high point”** with a spouse, roommate, or child – or make a pact with a friend to email, call or text each other with these.
- **Write down “three good things.”** Identify three things that have gone well for you and let yourself really feel the warmth of these events or accomplishments.
- **Write thank-you notes** to others – mail, email, facebook or text.
- **Try “mental subtraction.”** Imagine what your life would be like if some positive event had not occurred. Accept into your heart the feelings of gratitude for that positive event!

Brigit's Cross

Write an intention on each arm of the cross



Note a gratitude in each corner of the cross
Brigit's Cross

OPTIONAL THINGS YOU MIGHT WANT TO GATHER FOR THE IMBOLC RITUAL

- A. A nice cloth for your dinner table** or coffee table.
- B. Symbols of the four elements** air, fire, water & earth & a chalice with a candle or electric tea light. These can be placed on your table.
- Air:** Hand fan, feather, or pinwheel
 - Fire:** Candle or electric tea light
 - Water:** Small bowl of water or ice cubes
 - Earth:** Stones or dirt
 - Center:** Flaming Chalice

A Reading for Imbolc from “Lab Girl” by Hope Jahren (pictured right)



A seed knows how to wait. Most seeds wait for several years before starting to grow; a cherry seed can wait for a hundred years with no problem. What exactly each seed is waiting for is known only to that seed. Some unique trigger-combination of temperature-moisture-light and many other things is required to convince a seed to jump off the deep end and take its chance—to take its one and only chance to grow.

ABOUT UUCW EARTHSPIRIT SERVICES

Earth-centered religious holidays 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 held ceremonies to honor the cycles of the sun and the moon and the seasons of the year. At UUCW, we are part of a revival of these new-old spiritual traditions that help us express caring for our beautiful planet earth.



**Unitarian
Universalist
Church West**

13001 W North Ave – Brookfield, WI 53005

262-782-3535

uucw@uucw.org