



Samhain / All Souls Day of the Dead

Reflections November, 2015

Our theme was Transformation, so it was fitting that, due to rain, we had to transform our outdoor fire ceremony into an indoor celebration at the Pittsboro Dance a few days later! Appreciations go to all the dancers who arrived with such open hearts and enthusiasm. Thanks to Libby for arranging for the space and to our partner, Roger, for making the always wonderful ritual items. Gratitude to our musicians for their attunement to the theme: Hamid on haunting bouzouki, Raymond on delicately beautiful guitar, Farrunnissa on intense drums, Hayat on ethereal flute.

After opening the Directions outside with torch-lighting, we formed our circle indoors around an altar mandala made of flowers, fruits, and grains, a red candle for the blood of life and a white candle for death, joined within an infinity sign. Offerings of food and beauty are what attract the Ancestors.

This year we especially wanted to honor our Monarch butterflies, whose annual arrival in Mexico around November 1, is celebrated as the souls of the beloved Ancestors returning. Because of loss of habitat, milkweed plants, their only larval food, are scarce, and the migration is in grave danger (pun, yes). Participants compassionately took home seeds of three species of native milkweeds to plant. Here was our seed packaging process:



We began to dance, *All Hallows Eve when the veil is thin between the worlds. Cauldron of Cerridwen, womb of the Hag* The Hag is the Cailleach, the Dark One, the Old Woman of Winter who steals the light away from Brigid and won't release it till Imbolc. Picture this: on the Hill of the Hag (Slieve na Cailleach) in Ireland there are Neolithic passage tombs (3500BC). On Samhain the sunrise enters the passage of Cairn L and illuminates this carved stone in the chamber.



Slieve na Cailleach, Cairn L, Samhain Sunrise

We danced the lively spiritual *Death come a-knockin' on my Mama's door sayin' come on Mama, ain't you ready to go? Well, my Mama bent down, buckled up her shoes, and she move on down by the Jordan stream, and then she shout, Halleluia, done done my duty, got on my travelin' shoes*

Wanting to make a descent into the dark, through the thin veil between the worlds, preparing ourselves to meet the returning souls, we danced the Sufi mantra *Mutu Qabla Anta Mutu*, which means "Die before you die," led beautifully by Hayat.

The transformation of butterflies is the quintessential embodiment of the truth that birth, death, and rebirth are a continuous cycle of transformation. Descending deeper, we danced the zikr-like *Dissolving, Rebirthing, Hu, Say Hu, Allah Hu*.

Then we sat for a meditative soul journey, becoming the egg, the larva, the caterpillar completely dissolving in the cocoon, and emerged as beautiful butterflies chanting the Soulwork chant: *Everything lost is found again in a new form, in a new way. Everything hurt is healed again in a new time, in a new day.... Change us, touch us, touch us, change us ... joyously welcoming our returning souls and those of our Ancestors. A candle lighting ceremony followed for loved ones who have passed.*

Our last dance was the spirited, *It's the blood of the Ancients that runs through our veins, and the forms pass, but the circle of Life remains.* In closing, we added fruits and nuts and flowers to the offerings bundle, which we gathered up and distributed outdoors in gratitude to the Earth for this last harvest, to the Ancestors for joining with us, and to the spirits and fellow creatures of this land.

SpiritandNature seasonal celebrations are inspired by Celtic myth and legend, and they share consciousness of the continuity of Earth and Spirit with worldwide indigenous/animist cultures. In them we aspire to bring to the community an opportunity to share our loving relationship with spirit and nature through live music, crafts, circle dances, song, story, ritual, and ceremony which honors both the ecology of this our Sacred Place and the presence of Spirit at these potent times. We welcome partners and participants in this adventure!



Thanks to Daniel Foor for teaching us these *despacho* practices

Samhain and Day of the Dead are especially powerful times to honor Ancestors and beloved souls who have passed, but we benefit Life when we honor an ongoing, loving relationship with the Ancestors of our blood and of our sacred land.

With Love To All in This One Circle of Being,
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Mark your calendar!

The 2016 SpiritandNature Cross-quarter Celebrations are:

Imbolc

Saturday, January 30, 4-8:30 pm, at the Church of Reconciliation in Chapel Hill.

Bealtane

Saturday, April 30

Lughnasa (Lunasa)

Wednesday, August 3, 7-9pm, at the Pittsboro Senior Center.

Samhain

Sunday, October 30