



Reflections, February 1st

Happy Imbolc, Candlemas, Day of the Sacred Feminine!



Imbolc, the Festival of Brigid, is the time when the energies of Spring are first stirring. The very earliest flowers have begun to bloom, and the birds have started their morning songs. Traditionally this is a time for purifying and preparing the land and ourselves for the emergence from hibernation of new life. Our symbolic pilgrimage gives us the opportunity to call back the sun, call forth the earth spirits with joyful noise, and make offerings of birdseed and milk in gratitude.

Crafts: Together we made Brigid's Crosses and woven Brigid's Belts (*Crios Bhríde*), to later use in ceremony. Elizabeth led us in making *Brideog*, little Brigid dolls, which were a delight.

At the Elements Altars we bless ourselves and all of life. Here is the wonderful Water Altar that Nancy made. The card reads: *Water honoring: Bless and purify with sacred water of New Hope Creek, washing away muddiness and refreshing your emotions. You may imbue these gold and silver colored pebbles with your prayers for our watersheds. Drop them into these pools and they will find their way back to New Hope Creek.*



After Katja read us her lovely poem *The Greening Time*, accompanied by Mark on guitar, we presented our beautiful ethnic *Brideog* to each other, while Mark led us in dancing *May I take peaceful steps upon the earth ... I bow to you, a flower ...*, representing the tradition of rural folks carrying a Brigid doll-image from house to house, bringing Brigid's blessings of the arrival of Spring.



Slide-Stories: In light of the incredible Women's Marches, we invoked ancient images and stories of the Celtic Divine Feminine, Maiden, Mother, and Crone, celebrating the power in each of us to constantly shapeshift between young passion and old wisdom, and to inspire a re-envisioning of the sacred feminine. In light of the ecological crises we face, we saw images of the Sacred Landscape, extending from 3,000 BC to the present, in hopes of renewing our vision of the land as the body of the Mother. We hope the Divine Masculine will arise to love and protect her.

Recognizing that we need to feel safe, so that the unique creative response that each of us has to contribute can emerge, we learned a *Caim*, a Celtic-Christian body prayer to call upon the energies of the Sacred Three to encompass and enfold us. Then the *Crios Bhríde* was made to

encircle each of us in a ceremony of blessing and protection. We danced *Round and round we go, we hold each other's hands; weave our lives in a circle; our love is strong; the dance goes on.*

This was followed by a Candle Blessing Ceremony to call back the light of the sun and to hold us all in one circle of light, while Farrunnissa led us in chanting *In Brigid's light of New Beginnings we are well, we are blessed to Marilyn's beautiful harp playing.*



Finally, we sat around the flaming sunwheel sharing our creativity through poems, stories, and songs. When the candles burned down we discovered in the swirling pattern of melted wax that we had co-created a colorful mandala!



Thanks to the nearly fifty celebrants and folks who helped me offer to the community this, our

sixth annual, Imbolc Celebration: Our musicians and leaders, Mark, Farrunnissa, Katja, Marilyn, and Hamid. Hayat who helped us set up the room. Nancy, Farrunnissa, and Marilyn who set up the Elements Altars. Melissa our smudger, Salima our greeter, Vanessa our potluck angel, Albert our fire tender, and Elizabeth our craftsperson extraordinaire. Gin and so many other people helped throughout, especially during the cleanup! I hope you know you were greatly appreciated! Finally, special thanks to the wonderful High Strung Celtic Jam musicians who played for us during the feasting.



Wishing you the beauty, hope, and joy of the natural world in Springtime!

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Mark your calendar!

The next 2017 **SpiritandNature** Cross-Quarter Celebrations are:

Bealtane

Saturday, April 29

Lughnasa (Lunasa)

Saturday, July 29

Samhain

Saturday, October 28

SpiritandNature seasonal celebrations are inspired by Celtic myth and legend. 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!

I offer you this prayer by Caitlin Matthews:

Brigid of the mantle, encompass us,
Lady of the lambs, protect us.
Beneath your mantle, gather us
And restore us to memory,
Mother of our mothers, foremother strong.

Guide our hand in yours.
Remind us how to kindle the hearth,
To keep it bright, to preserve the flame:
Your hands are ours,
Our hands within yours,
To kindle the light both day and night.

The mantle of Brigid about us,
The memory of Brigid within us,
The protection of Brigid
Keeping us from harm, from ignorance,
From heartlessness,
This day and night, from dawn
Till dark, from dark till dawn.