

Lughnassadh Ritual

1. Initiating the Rite

A) *Musical Signal* - At the designated time to begin ritual, the prayer bowl will be rung with nine revolutions.

B) *Procession* - Attendees will process to the entrance of the nemeton chanting continuously.

Chant: We Approach the Sacred Grove (Words & music by Sean Miller)

We approach the Sacred Grove
With hearts and minds and flesh and bone
Join us now in ways of old.
We have come home.

2. Purification

A bowl of water and a stick of incense will mark the entrance/boundary of the Nemeton. The presiding druid meets the Folk at the boundary with a stick of incense, halting the progression, and announces,

"This is Sacred space.

"All thoughts and words beyond this point should focus on the Sacred."

"Work, Finances, Household obligations have no place in the Nemeton

"Anger, Fear, Frustration have no place in the Nemeton

"Hatred, Spite, Infatuation have no place in the Nemeton

"Leave them, and all that would hinder our work, here among the profane."

The presiding druid takes up the dish of water and offers it to the first attendee who dips some water and anoints themselves (splash, touch to the forehead, wash hands, etc)

"May this wash away all Earthly cares"

(repeat) "May this wash away all Earthly cares"

The presiding druid waves the incense over the attendee and says:

"May the spirit rise within you."

The attendee is then allowed to proceed into the Nemeton and the presiding druid continues the same for each following person. Attendees will proceed into the nemeton and, still chanting, continue around the space until all have entered. When the last person enters the Nemeton, the presiding druid heads for the the front of the gathered and the last round of chanting will finish.

3. Honoring the Earth Mother

A) *Opening Prayer* - The Presiding druid opens with:

"We come to this place to venerate the Gods.

"May we be blessed by the Mighty Kindred, Highest Rulers of Realms

"As we give praise and offering in their honor on this the middle of Summer's heat."

"WE ARE HERE TO HONOR THE GODS!"

(all repeat) We are here to honor the gods!

B) *Earth Mother Prayer* -

O Earth Mother, our lives are nursed from your bounty.

You are the food that nourishes us, the wealth that enriches us, even the very ground we walk on.

O great mother Áine, all joy and prosperity comes from you, and it is you who sustains us.

For the love and bounty you bestow upon us every day, Earth Mother, we honor you now.

- Anthony Thompson, 2007

Chant: Earth Mother Chant (Author Unknown)

As One we join with Her, our Mother.

As One we sing to Her our song.

As One we touch Her

As One we heal her
Her heart beats with our own as One.

"EARTH MOTHER, ACCEPT OUR OFFERING!"
(all repeat) Earth Mother, accept our offering!

"And, it is the custom among our people, our folk and our grove, to bestow a kiss upon our Mother"

C) *Bardic Inspiration Prayer* -

"We call now upon all the Bards of old. We ask that we receive your inspiration to allow our words to flow with honeyed sweetness. May the fire of inspiration burn within us, not only for this sacred time, but whenever we call upon it."

4. Purpose and Precedent

As the attendees settle, the presiding druid gives a little background:

"As our ancestors once did, so we do today, and so our children will do in the future. The wheel of the years turns and, even as the days grow shorter, the temperatures climb higher. Traditionally, this was the time of the first harvest, when grains were brought in from the field. It was a time to come together to celebrate this harvest, but also to ratify contracts and to bind families through marriage. Weapons were set aside during the harvest, and only friendly competitions were to be had. Today, our fruits and grains come from the market, the seasons unreflected in even the price of our goods. Yet, fairs and carnivals abound at this time, hearkening us back to our agricultural roots.

"Now too, our children prepare to bid farewell to the lazy days of summer as another school year approaches. Parents look forward to the quiet in the house and on the streets, and we all anticipate the cooler days that are surely just a few more weeks away.

"Today we celebrate Lugh! Lugh Lamfada, Lugh Samildanach, Lugh Lonnbeimnech... by many names we know him. Lugh, son of Cian of the Tuatha De Danann and Ethniu of the Fomorians, foster son of Teiltiu of the Fir Bolg. He is a liminal god related to all of the major keepers of Ireland. August, Lugh's month, was named by Lugh as the time to commemorate the contribution to Ireland that his foster mother made. Games and competitions were to be held - even to this day in the form of the events at county and state fairs - in her honor. *So, let us join together as one folk to make our offerings in reverence and joy.*"

5. Recreating the Cosmos

A) *Fire, Well & Stone (tree)* - Offerings should be brought to each point of the Sacred Center as attendees chant. (silver to the well, oil to the fire, essential oil to the stone)

Chant: Portal Song (Words and music by Ian Corrigan)

CHORUS 2X

By Fire and by Water, between the Earth and Sky
We stand like the World-Tree rooted deep, crowned high.

Come we now to the Well, the eye and the mouth of Earth,
Come we now to the Well, and silver we bring,
Come we now to the Well, the waters of rebirth,
Come we now to the Well, together we sing:

CHORUS 2X

We will kindle a Fire, Bless all, and with harm to none,
We will kindle a Fire, and offering pour,
We will kindle a Fire, A light 'neath the Moon & Sun,
We will kindle a fire, our spirits will soar.

CHORUS 2X

Gather we at the Tree, the root & the crown of all,
Gather we at the Tree, Below & above,
Gather we at the Tree, Together we make our call,
Gather we at the Tree, In wisdom & love.

CHORUS 2X (last time with gusto)

B) *Grove Attunement* - A Two Powers Meditation to establish the Realms

(This is an open-eyed meditation which relies on visual cues as much as suggestive words to untie the minds present. This may be done by one, two or more speakers)

Breath deep. Now look around you with your mind wide open.

The nemeton is claimed. Breath. The folk are gathered together. Breath. The symbols of our service are consecrated. Breath.

(pause to allow everyone to settle...)

Look! (wave a hand toward the fire, tossing a snapper or two towards the circle stones)

The sacred fire is before you. Breath deeply of its warm smoky scent.

Focus. Watch the flames leap and dance. Feel the fire's heat and energy. It is never still: always reaching, dancing, leaping for the sun. It is beckoning to you, calling you in. Go ahead, join the fire. Dance with it. Slowly. Sensuously. Side to side, to and fro, twisting ever upwards towards the sun.

Faster now. Spinning. Leaping. Climbing on the backs of flames nearest you, reaching higher and higher. And faster still. Crackling. Popping. Swirling. Rising towards the sun.

You are a flame and the fire is within you, filling you with heat and light, and the energy of the sun, of the Cosmos, the Aether. Your whole body is filled with heat and energy, pulsing in shades of red, gold, and blue. Always reaching higher, you exhale a stream of smoke. It swirls into the sky, a silent messenger to the Gods. Reach with it. Dance, twirl and leap with it.

Hover a moment in this cloud. You are shining brightly, filled with the burning heat, the voracious yearning powers of Fire.

Now dive! (make a chopping motion towards the water, throw a snapper or two at its base)

The well is open to you. Dive deep. The water ripples, seeking the way out, searching for its own kind. Liquid tension, it climbs the sides of the well. It hunts the depths, seeking the way, the way out of containment. The water beckons to you, draws you downward. It must find the Way. Join the water. Follow it. Stream out with it, twinkling and singing on its way downward. Meander through the plains with it. It is sighing, questing. Rolling and tumbling, over rocks and stream-beds. This is the River of Life.

This is the River of Enlightenment, shimmering and sparkling here and there with wisdom. Rush with it over the falls, diving and tumbling, singing with it as you go, reflecting brightly in the sun.

You are a river and the water is within you, whispering, sighing and singing as you go, yours is the voice of wisdom. Shimmering with light and shadow, reflection and clarity, swirling and eddying in crystal shades of blue and green you go. Defying all containment, press onwards. Through canyons and valleys you run, vibrant and alive. Streaming, flowing, farther and faster, ever downward, ever westward until finally you burst upon the ocean!

Spreading outward, roaring and chanting, swaying with the waves, you flow ever westward. And now you lap upon those distant shores, the isles of the Dead, the Realm of the ancestors.

Emerge from this watery highway. You are rippling, sparkling, filled with the cool, inexorable, unstoppable powers of Water.

Within your body, the waters move, sizzling and roiling as they encounter the fire blazing through you. You are shimmering, vibrant, alive with the two powers merged. Your entire body is filled with bright energy, flowing through you from head to toe and back again, then spilling out to connect with your neighbors beside you. And now, the Nemeton is awash with light, crackling with the energy we each contain.

But look! (Gesture towards or spin to face the spear and squint as looking into the distance)

There is something, someone else among us. There! A spark, a light. Do you see it? It grows. There at the crossroads. Is that a hat, broad-rimmed and damp from the sea? Now, too, I think I see a coracle, a tiny skin covered boat drifting in our direction. Do you see it? Wait. There. Are those nine foam flecked waves washing towards us? Yes... but still so far away...

6. Opening the Gates

A) *Calling the gatekeeper* - The presiding druid invites Manannan closer, facing the spear and saying:

God of the sea, your truth in laughter rings
the sage's staff and triton held upraised
your clever guises humbled hearts of kings
and from the meek inspired resounding praise

resplendent crane of princely scarlet brow
together with your steeds accomplice make
life giving flesh of salmon and of sow
are gracious yours to give and ours to take

lend strength to me, great father of the sea
a wiser soul and kinder I shall be

--by Bard Oskan

An offering of oil shall be poured on the fire

"MANANNAN MAC LIR, BE WELCOME AMONG US!"
(all repeat) Manannan MacLir, be welcome among us!

B) *Opening the Gates* - The presiding druid indicates the gates each in turn, saying:

"Keen sighted, immortal Guide, we are here with you at the Crossroads
And we have gathered together all of the Powers of the Fires and the Waters that we are able.
Now, Lord of the Ways, won't you join your powers with ours?
Let us open *this* fiery Gate
And let us open *this* watery Gate
Then, let this [place spear in stand] stand as a signpost marking the Crossroads
of all Realms opened to our voices and to the spirits.

(all reach out to a gate with each hand, sending the combined, collected energies towards them)

"LET THE GATES BE OPEN!" (Throw hands outward)
(all repeat) Let the gates be open!

C) *Dealing with the Outdwellers* - The presiding druid turns to Manannan/spear and says:

"Lord of the Ways, we pray you stand at these opened gateways during our rite

“Keep watch, Manannan, that the Unwelcome, the Dangerous, the Inimical
Remain within their Realms and pass not through the Gates to disturb our working.”

7. Inviting the Three Kindreds

A) *Ancestors* - The presiding druid says:

"The children of the earth call out to the mighty dead. Hear us, our ancestors, our kindred."

Chant: Mothers & Fathers of Old (Words by Sable)

From far beyond this mortal plane
Mothers and fathers of old
We pray that you return again
Mothers and fathers of old
To share with us the mysteries
And secrets long untold
Of the ancient ways we seek to reclaim
Mothers and fathers of old

A speaker then addresses the Well-Gate with appropriate offerings, saying:

"To all those whose bones lie in this land,
whose hearts are tied to it, whose memory holds it;
Ancient tribes of this place, we offer you welcome.
To all of our grandmothers and grandfathers,
our own beloved dead, blood-kin and heart-kin;
Ancient tribes of our blood, we offer you welcome.
To all those elder wise ones who guide their people,
poets and seers, judges and magicians;
Wise women and men of ancient days, we offer you welcome.

So, O ancient ones, we call to you as our kin,
in the love of Gaia, the first mother, to meet us at the Crossroads.
Be welcome in our Nemeton as Guests amongst your children.

ANCESTORS, ACCEPT OUR SACRIFICE!
(All repeat) Ancestors, accept our sacrifice!

B) *Nature Spirits* - The presiding druid says:

"The children of the earth call out to the spirits of this land. Hear us, companions and teachers."

Chant: Fur and Feather (Words and music by Sable)

Fur & Feather & Scale & Skin
Different without but the same within
Many of body but one of soul
Through all creatures are the gods made whole

Then a speaker addresses the surroundings with appropriate offerings, saying:

"To all the spirits of the mountains and trees,
All you ancient and bearded fathers to subtle and spry children,
Spirits of the Land, we offer you welcome.
To all the spirits of rivers and streams,
to the cloud sisters and rain sisters, to fresh spring daughters;
Spirits of the waters, we offer you welcome.
To all the spirits of the creatures of the earth,
You beasts who walk or fly or crawl or swim
Spirits of the creatures, we offer you welcome.

So, O noble ones, we call to you as our allies,
in the joy of life upon the earth, to meet us at the Crossroads.

Be welcome in our Nemeton as Guests amongst your neighbors.

NATURE SPIRITS, ACCEPT OUR SACRIFICE!
(all repeat)Nature spirits, accept our sacrifice!

C) *Deities* - The presiding druid says:

"The children of earth call out to the shining ones. Hear us, eldest and brightest."

chant: Hail All the Gods (Words Paul Maurice, Gwynne Greene;
Music Paul Maurice, Sean Miller, and Gail Adams)

Hail all the Gods,
Hail all the Goddesses,
Hail all the Holy Ones,
We dwell together
(repeat 2x)

Hail all the Gods!
Hail all the Goddess!
Hail... all the Gods and Goddesses
Hail!

Then a speaker addresses the Fire-Gate with appropriate offerings, saying:

"To all the primordial ones, progenitors of all that is
Oldest of old, shapeless and faceless, powers of all.
Most ancient of gods, we offer you welcome.
To all the shining ones, first children of the mother,
wisest and mightiest, loving and comforting;
Gods and goddesses, we offer you welcome.
To the gods and goddesses of this place,
ancient and powerful, known to us or unknown;
Gods of this place, we offer you welcome.

So, O shining ones, we call to you as our elders,
in reverence and love, to meet us at the Crossroads.
Be welcome in our Nemeton as Guests amongst your children.

SHINING ONES, ACCEPT OUR SACRIFICE!
(all repeat)Shining Ones, accept our sacrifice!

8. Key Offerings

The presiding druid addresses first the gates, then the people and says:

"Welcome to the gods and goddesses, heroes and honored dead, and sidh, pooka and other creatures of nature! To all of you who have gathered at our Nemeton, we pray you join us in giving Honor to the patrons of this holy rite here in our sacred grove."

A) *Calling the deity of occasion* - the presiding druid begins with:

"We call to you now, mighty Lugh!"

Lugh, the Victorious,
We make our Grove under your shield,
O Lugh of the White Horse
And the Brilliant Blades.
You of the Perfect Form,
Child of Light and Shadow,
Slayer of Balor, purger of the unnatural, be in our midst.
Accept this ale in welcome
Lugh, Champion, King of All

(ale poured)

We make our working in the joy of the Samildanach
The Clever One, the Sure Hand
The Bard and the Smith.
May we be at peace
Under the hand of the Chieftain of Danu,
Taking joy in the protection
Of the master of all crafts at once
We offer this bread,
That the harvest may flourish
by the hand of the ploughman.
(bread offered)

By the Sacred Three of Glory,
and By the Spear and by the Raven
Hear now our call
Come, we pray, among your folk
O Lugh the Victorious
Our Light and our Guide
O Lugh the Victorious
Our Champion and Protector
O Lugh the Victorious
Our Savior and Healer
Accept this offering of fruit
And be present in your strength.
(fruit offered)

--Anthony Thompson, 2005

Light the lamp before Lugh's chair, saying
LUGH SAMILDANACH, BE WELCOME AMONG US!
Repeat: Lugh Samildanach, be welcome among us!

B) *Praise offerings*

The presiding druid lifts an offering from the table and holds it aloft, saying:
"Many-Skilled Lugh, behold! We bring gifts for you!
May you enjoy our praises, our offerings!"

The presiding druid then turns to those gathered, saying:
"May all who would give offerings to Lugh come forward!"

When all who are present have had a chance to place their offerings, the presiding druid will offer one last poem to the DotO:

Bright Hero of the Tuatha de Danann
Weilder of the Spear of Glorias
And Master of Many Arts.
Mighty Young Bull of the first harvest
Great Guardian of roads and travelers
Champion, Protector and King
Through your strength and courage we prosper.

9. Prayer of Sacrifice

A) *Prayer to Deity of the Occasion* - The presiding druid delivers the final offering saying:

"So, we have given our love and our wealth to Lugh, and to all of our kindred. Now, let our voices arise on the fire, let our voices sound in the well, let our words echo from here to the Realms beyond!"

"MIGHTY LUGH! ACCEPT OUR SACRIFICE!"
(all repeat) Mighty Lugh! Accept our Sacrifice!

B) *Opening the floor to other offerings* - Addressing the oil lamp, the presiding druid says:

"Lugh, we have given you our praise and our offerings and now we ask that you indulge us as we offer to those others who have joined us tonight. May you bless them as you bless us."

After a moment, the presiding druid addresses the attendees:

"Now that our guest of honor has received the lion's share of our bounty, if there are any other offerings to be made to the mighty ones assembled among us tonight, gods and goddesses, nature spirits and ancestors, you may take a moment to do so."

Wait to see if anyone would like to step forward, or address each attendee with the option.

10. Return communications

A) Experiencing the Deities through lore - When all who wish to have offered, the bard steps forward drawing inspiration from the DotO(s) to connect the People to the ritual through a story.

B) Receiving the Omen - When the story ends, the presiding druid says:

"Having prayed to the powers, let us now open to them, asking what blessings they offer us in return."

Chant: Speak to Me (Words by Phoenix)

Speak to me,
Speak to me Goddesses
Speak to me,
Speak to me all the Gods

Repeat until the omen has been drawn and the seer turns back to the assembled. "Goddesses" and "Gods" may be replaced by the name of any specific god, including the guest deities, the kindred or any other patron deities.

When the omen has been drawn, the Seer (or presiding druid) will address the attendees explaining the gifts given from the kindreds, and their interpretation of the kennings.

11. The Blessings

The presiding druid speaks:

"Breath deep. Now look around you with your mind wide open. The Nemeton is awash with light, each of us a glowing vessel of energies flowing between us and the gates to the other Realms. Amongst us here [gesture about the Nemeton] and just beyond the opened Gates [gesture to each in turn], you can also see the crowd of Honored Guests looking on with love. As we have given our sacrifices of songs, poems [, insert other things given] and praise to the Kindreds, now we will ask for them to deliver their blessings to us in return. We know that these blessings of [repeat omen items] will be magnified many times by their greatness.

(turn to the People) "Is it your will to receive the blessings of the kindreds?"

(all speak) It is!

"Will you accept the gifts given without recrimination, remorse or regret?"

(all speak) We will!

"Then ask of your own free will!"

(all speak) Give us the waters!

12. Hallowing the Blessing (this may require explanation during the pre-ritual briefing)

The presiding druid holds the drinking vessel out to the gates and begins softly chanting, "give us the waters." The folk

join the chant, slowly raising the pitch and speed. At the right moment, the presiding druid raises the vessel and announces:

"BEHOLD! THE WATERS OF LIFE!"
(all repeat) Behold! The waters of Life!

13. Affirmation of the Blessing

Still facing the gates, the presiding druid says:
"Lugh! Shining Ones! Nobles Ones! Ancient Ones!
We stand before you in Pride, Honor and Friendship
And accept these Blessings which you have given."

The presiding druid turns to the Folk and then pours out a share of the vessel saying:
"We give this first drink to those of the Folk and of the members of the grove
That couldn't be with us tonight through no fault of their own.
May these blessings give them strength and nourishment!"

As the vessel is passed around, all chant:

Chant: Share the Waters (words by Ian Corrigan)
Share the waters, raise the cup
Drink your fill of wisdom deep
Strength and joy now fill you up
As the elder ways we keep

14. Workings

Membership Commitments, donning the tabards

15. Thanking the Beings

The Presiding Druid addresses all those in attendance:
"And so, this rite draws to a close. Let us thank all those who accepted our invitation and hospitality tonight.

Each deity or kindred is called in reverse order from how they arrived. For consistency, the one who called may also send them off. If expediency is needed, the presiding druid may do all of the final offerings.

Lugh: "Lugh, Jack of All Trades, we thank you for walking among us tonight. As this rite is ending, we give you this gift in parting, given out of love and asking nothing in return."
(give final offering) MIGHTY LUGH, WE THANK YOU!
(all repeat) Mighty Lugh, we thank you.

Gods/goddesses: Shining Ones, eldest and brightest, we thank you for walking among us tonight. As this rite is ending, we give you this gift in parting, given out of love and asking nothing in return."
(give final offering) SHINING ONES, WE THANK YOU!
(all repeat) Shining ones, we thank you!

Nature spirits: Spirits of the Earth, fully manifest on this mortal plane, we thank you for your presence in the Nemeton tonight. We know that you remain among us always, felt though rarely seen. But, as this rite is ending, we give you this gift in parting, given out of love and asking nothing in return."
(give final offering) NATURE SPIRITS, WE THANK YOU!
(all repeat) Nature Spirits, we thank you!

Ancestors: Mighty Ancestors, Spirits of those gone before, we thank you for joining us here tonight. As this rite is ending, we give you this gift in parting, given out of love and asking nothing in return."
(give final offering) ANCESTORS, WE THANK YOU!
(all repeat) Ancestors, we thank you!

16. Closing the Gates

A) *Addressing the Gatekeeper* - The presiding druid turns to the gates and says:

"Manannan MacLir! Gatekeeper! You have stood with us at the Crossroads
Your powers combined with ours have kept these Gates open throughout this rite
You have kept us safe from those who would pass through the Gates to disrupt our rite
You have made it easier for the Kindred to find their way to our nemeton, to be our Guests
And, you have seen each of them safely back through the gates to their own Realms.

"For all of this and more, (place offering)
WE THANK YOU!
(repeat) We thank you!

B) *Closing the Gates*

"As our rite comes to an end,
This Signpost is no longer needed to guide travelers (remove spear from its place)
Now, Manannan, we have one last task for which we need your assistance.
Together, let us close *this* watery gate,
And let us close *this* fiery gate.

Reach out toward each gate, palms up to draw/catch the energies

"LET THE GATES BE CLOSED!
(pull hands across chest – or towards head with a loud clap)
(all repeat) Let the gates be closed!

C) *Thanking the Gatekeeper*

"Keen sighted, Immortal Guide, already you are less substantial than before, your shape and presence more an afterimage in our minds (squint at point between gates) Before you depart, though, please accept our gratitude for your aid tonight. Accept, too, this final gift, given out of love and asking nothing in return."

(give final offering) MANANNAN MAC LIR, WE THANK YOU!
(all repeat) Manannan MacLir, we thank you!

17. Thanking the Earth Mother

A) *Final meditation*

"So this rite comes to an end. The Kindred have returned to their Realms, the Gates are closed. Yet, within the Nemeton there remains a glow. Though greatly diminished by our efforts tonight, we are each still imbued with the Powers of Water and Fire and through them, connected to the Realms beyond. It is time, then, to return the remaining Powers to their place.

"Breathe deeply until your lungs are full. Now hold that breath and feel the Fire inside consume the air. As the breath in your lungs is used up, the Fire weakens, losing its hold on you. Exhale. Feel the smoke rush, then trickle from your lips. See it join the smoke from the fire before you, drifting upwards, ever upwards. The Fire has left, and you are separate now from it.

"And, as the Fire has left, you can feel now the Water within you condensing. The roiling, steaming energies are cooling, pooling. Shake out your arms. Feel the Water bead on your skin and roll downwards to the very tips of your fingers. As you shake, the Water drops from your fingertips, soaking into the earth, Seeking once again its Source. The Water has left, and you are separate now from it.

"But, look around you. The nemeton still glows, though barely so. You are forever changed. Touched by the Powers of Fire and Water, you carry a kernel of each deep within your core. This too is a gift, a parting Blessing of the Kindreds."

Allow a moment of silence.

B) *Thanking Earth Mother* - The presiding druid addresses the gathered and says:

"And so, finally, we thank our Host, our Great Mother. Let us never forget that she will always care for us so long

as we remember and care for her in return. So, one last time I say,

(Presiding druid)EARTH MOTHER, WE THANK YOU!

(all repeat)Earth Mother, we thank you!

18. Closing the Rite

A) Benediction

“Now let us go forth into the world as Kith, carrying with us the Blessings of the Kindreds and a spark of the energies of the Realms.

(Presiding druid)SO BE IT! THIS RITE IS ENDED!

(all repeat) So be it!

B) Recessional - Singing and hugs around before we gather for post ritual festivities.

Chant: Celtic Blessing (Author Unknown)

May the Road rise with you,

May the wind be always at your back

May the sun shine warm upon your face

May the rain fall softly on your fields

And, until we meet again,

May They hold you in the hollow of Their hands