

Autumn Equinox Ritual

1. Initiating the Rite

A) *Musical Signal* - At the designated time to begin ritual, a series of musical notes will be played (prayer bowl)

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 will meet the approaching folk at the entrance and say,

"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 will then take up the dish of water and incense and offer the dish to the first attendee, who dips some water and anoints themselves (splash, touch to the forehead, wash hands, etc)

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

The presiding druid then 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 in the same for each following person. Attendees will proceed into the nemeton and continue around the space until all have entered.

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 balance point between light & dark, summer & winter."

"WE ARE HERE TO HONOR THE GODS!"
(all repeat) We are here to honor the gods!

B) *Earth Mother Prayer* -

"O mother Gaia, of Gods and men the source,
endured with fertile, all-destroying force;
all-parent, bounding, whose prolific powers
produce a store of beautiful fruits and flowers.
All-various maid, the immortal world's strong base,
eternal, blessed, crowned with every grace;
from whose wide womb as from an endless root,
fruits many-formed, mature, and grateful shoot.
Deep-bosomed, blessed, pleased with grassy plains,
sweet to the smell, and with prolific rains.

All-flowery Daimon, centre of the world,
 around thy orb the beauteous stars are hurled
 with rapid whirl, eternal and divine,
 whose frames with matchless skill and wisdom shine.
 Come, blessed Goddess, listen to my prayer,
 and make increase of fruits thy constant care;
 with fertile seasons in thy train draw near,
 and with propitious mind thy suppliants hear."
 (Orphic Hymn 25 to Mother Earth)

Chant: Earth Mother Chant (Author Unknown)

[repeat 2x]

Earth Mother, we sing to your body,
 Earth Mother, we sing to your bones.
 Earth Mother, we honor your spirit,
 Earth Mother, we honor your stones.

"GREAT GAIA, ACCEPT OUR OFFERING!"
 (all repeat) Great Gaia, 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* -

"Daughters of Zeus, dire-sounding and divine,
 renown'd Pierian, sweetly speaking Nine;
 To those whose breasts your sacred furies fire
 much-form'd, the objects of supreme desire:
 Sources of blameless virtue to mankind,
 who form to excellence the youthful mind;
 Who nurse the soul, and give her to descry
 the paths of right with Reason's steady eye.
 Commanding queens who lead to sacred light
 the intellect refin'd from Error's night;
 And to mankind each holy rite disclose,
 for mystic knowledge from your nature flows.
 Kleio, and Erato, who charms the sight,
 with thee Euterpe minist'ring delight:
 Thaleia flourishing, Polyhymnia fam'd,
 Melpomene from skill in music nam'd:
 Terpsikhore, Ourania heav'nly bright,
 with thee who gav'st me to behold the light.
 Come, venerable, various, pow'rs divine,
 with fav'ring aspect on your mystics shine;
 Bring glorious, ardent, lovely, fam'd desire,
 and warm my bosom with your sacred fire.
 (Orphic Hymn 75 to The Muses)

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 the days continue to grow longer. The children are back in school and the harvest festival season is just about over. There's just a tiny drop in the temperature that might be the long awaited hint of autumn.

"We are here to pay homage to Demeter and Persephone, Mother and Daughter, Queens both. When Persephone disappeared from the field where she had been picking flowers, Demeter's grief was so great that she completely withdrew from the home of the gods, taking the bounty of the land with her and

leaving we mortals to starve without her life giving grains. When her daughter was finally returned to her from the land of the Dead, she had been contaminated and an agreement was reached to address the trick that had caused it. For two thirds of the year, Persephone would remain with her mother, but for the last third, she would return to her husband's side. And now, that departure is immanent.

"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)

Portal Song (Words and music by Ian Corrigan; 3rd stanza adapted by Beej)

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 Stone, the navel of the world,
Gather we at the Stone, center of all,
Gather we at the Stone, marked by the gods of old
Gather we at the Stone, together we call

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...)

Now, look! (wave a hand over the fire or toss something into the fire to cause a burst of sparkles)

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 or throw something into the water that causes a splash or causes the water the churn [dry ice?])

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 pillar 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 dust coated? Now, too, I think I see a short travel stained cloak. Do you see it? Wait. Is that a herald's staff I see projecting from the cloak? Ah! And road worn golden slippers! Yes... but still so far away...

6. Opening the Gates

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

"Hermes, draw near, and to my pray'r incline,
angel of Zeus, and Maia's son divine;
Studious of contests, ruler of mankind,
with heart almighty, and a prudent mind.
Celestial messenger, of various skill,
whose pow'rful arts could watchful Argus kill:

With winged feet, 'tis thine thro' air to course,
O friend of man, and prophet of discourse:
Great life-supporter, to rejoice is thine,
in arts gymnastic, and in fraud divine:
With pow'r endu'd all language to explain,
of care the loos'ner, and the source of gain.
Whose hand contains of blameless peace the rod,
Corucian, blessed, profitable God;
Of various speech, whose aid in works we find,
and in necessities to mortals kind:
Dire weapon of the tongue, which men revere,
be present, Hermes, and thy suppliant hear.
(Orphic Hymn 27 to Hermes)

An offering of cake or honey shall be placed out before the pillar

"SWIFT-FOOTED HERMES, BE WELCOME AMONG US!"
(all repeat) Hermes, 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, Celestial Interpreter,
Let all of us join our powers of Fire with yours to throw open this fiery Gate
And let all of us join our powers of Water with yours to throw open this watery Gate
Then, let this [place omphalos on pillar] 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 Hermes/omphalos and says:

"Lord of the Ways, we pray you stand at these opened gateways during our rite
"Keep watch, Hermes, 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 – The presiding druid says:

"Let us call in our Beloved Kindreds through song."

Kindreds Three (Words and music by Beej)

CHORUS

May you come down from the mountain
May you come across the sea
May you gather nearer to us
And be welcome, Kindreds three.

From the blood that flows within us
To the heart that beats the same
All the souls who've gone before us
Are the Kin from which we came!

So you Honor'd Ancient Wise Ones

Who have gone across the sea
Return to be among us
Ancestors welcomed be!

CHORUS

Hear the souls of trees and mountains
Dancing to the river's song
And the beasts who fill our world
Forces we rely upon

You great souls of green and wild things
Who we sense but rarely see
Draw nearer to our fire
Nature Spirits welcomed be!

CHORUS

They are oldest of the Powers
Who gave rise to all of life
Some we know and some we don't know
Still they watch us from on high

All you gods who live above us,
In the earth, and in the sea
We, your children, call out to you
Shining Ones welcomed be!

CHORUS

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

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

B) *Nature Spirits* – A speaker addresses the surroundings with appropriate offerings, saying:

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

C) *Deities* – A speaker addresses the Fire-Gate with appropriate offerings, saying:

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, honored dead and nymphs, dryads 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, Demeter, Persephone."

The calling may be done by one person, or each stanza may be done by an individual.

Come Glorious Goddess,

Come Mother of the Earth
Come Bringer of the Seasons
Share with us your wealth (make an offering)

We call to you Persephone, Goddess of dual nature.
We call to you Lady of Life, Lady of Death, hear us.
We call to you, Maiden of Spring, robbed from the sunlight and your mother's side.
We call to you Queen of the Underworld, wife of Hades, dweller in shadows. (make offering)

Come All-Nourishing Mother
Come Giver of Goodly Fruits
Come Bright Goddess most Revered
Let the furrows sprout their first shoots (make an offering)

Hear us, tender to the garden of shades, and eater of the deadly fruit.
Hear us, walker of the harsh path and the maker of difficult choices.
Hear us oh hardened one, whose heart was moved by Orpheus' song.
Hear us oh lovely one, whose eternal beauty Love herself coveted. (make offering)

Come Lady of the Golden Sword
Come Bringer of the Law
Come Patron of all the Greeks of Europe
Put aside your angry wrath. (make an offering)

Come to us oh bloom of youth, and beloved child.
Come to us oh wizened woman and treasured wife.
Come to us you who walks two paths and bears two mantles
Come to us you who is ever changing, goddess of acceptance. (make offering)

Demeter we call to thee,
Dark cloaked daughter of rich-haired Rhea,
Lovely crowned Queen most Holy
By many names we know ye (make an offering)

Join with us Persephone, creator of the cycle of seasons and turner of the wheel.
Join with us Persephone, guide through the shadows and greeter at our life's end.
Pause with us a moment, before your journey to return to your husband below.
Join with us Persephone, we invite you here and welcome you with open arms. (make offering)

Gift Giver, Fruit Bearer, Noble Goddess
Come into our Nemeton.
Our hearts we offer guileless
Come into our Nemeton (make an offering)

The speaker lights the Deity candle, saying:
"GOLDEN DEMETER, BE WELCOME!"

The speaker lights the Deity candle, saying:
"PERSEPHONE OF THE EARTH, BE WELCOME!"

(all repeat) Golden Demeter! Persephone of the Earth! Be welcome!

B) *Praise offerings*

The presiding druid lifts a handmade wreath from the table and holds it aloft, saying:
"Queen amongst Goddesses, this wreath is a gift for you.
Let us share in your sorrow, by sharing our own."

The presiding druid then moves clockwise to the first attendee and offers the wreath. While holding the wreath, you are asked to take a moment and tell a short story of a loss, or a departure – either of yourself or

of a loved one. This is commiseration and a chance to share the pain of separation from a loved one. Demeter knows this feeling as she will soon be seeing her daughter off to Hades' realm.

After the last person has taken a turn at telling a story, the presiding druid takes up the wreath again and says,

“Demeter, our sorrows commingle and become one, and so we each share the burden they bring. We do this out of love.”

The presiding druid then addresses the folk:

“So, then, now let us give our praise and offerings to the senior Queen Demeter and her daughter, Queen Persephone, that we may share in their bounty.”

“Demeter, Persephone, behold! We bring gifts for you!
May you enjoy our praises, our offerings!”

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

O Universal mother, Demeter fam'd august,
the source of wealth, and various nam'd:
Great nurse, all-bounteous, blessed and divine,
who joy'st in peace, to nourish corn is thine:
Goddess of seed, of fruits abundant, fair,
harvest and threshing, are thy constant care;
Who dwell'st in Eleusina's seats retir'd,
lovely, delightful queen, by all desir'd.
Nurse of all mortals, whose benignant mind,
first ploughing oxen to the yoke confin'd;
And gave to men, what nature's wants require,
with plenteous means of bliss which all desire.
In verdure flourishing in honor bright,
assessor of great Dionysos, bearing light:
Rejoicing in the reapers sickles, kind,
whose nature lucid, earthly, pure, we find.
Prolific, venerable, Nurse divinity,
thy daughter loving, holy Persephone:
A car with dragons yok'd, 'tis thine to guide,
and orgies singing round thy throne to ride:
Only-begotten, much-producing queen,
all flowers are thine and fruits of lovely green.
Bright Goddess, come, with Summer's rich increase
swelling and pregnant, leading smiling Peace;
Come, with fair Concord and imperial Health,
and join with these a needful store of wealth.
(Orphic Hymn 39 to Demeter Eleusina)

Daughter of Zeus, almighty and divine,
come, blessed queen, and to these rites incline:
Only-begotten, Plouton's honor'd wife,
O venerable Goddess, source of life:
'Tis thine in earth's profundities to dwell,
fast by the wide and dismal gates of hell:
Zeus' holy offspring, of a beauteous mien,
fatal Praxidike, with lovely locks, infernal queen:
Source of the Eumenides, whose blest frame proceeds
from Jove's [Zeus'] ineffable and secret seeds:
Mother of Bacchus [Eubouleos], Sonorous, divine,
and many-form'd, the parent of the vine:
The dancing Hours [Horai] attend thee, essence bright,
all-ruling virgin, bearing heav'nly light:
Illustrious, horned, of a bounteous mind,
alone desir'd by those of mortal kind.
O, vernal queen, whom grassy plains delight,
sweet to the smell, and pleasing to the sight:
Whose holy form in budding fruits we view,
Earth's vig'rous offspring of a various hue:
Espous'd in Autumn: life and death alone
to wretched mortals from thy power is known:
For thine the task according to thy will,
life to produce, and all that lives to kill.
Hear, blessed Goddess, send a rich increase
of various fruits from earth, with lovely Peace;
Send Health with gentle hand, and crown my life
with blest abundance, free from noisy strife;
Last in extreme old age the prey of Death,
dismiss we willing to the realms beneath,
To thy fair palace, and the blissful plains
where happy spirits dwell, and Plouton reigns.
(Orphic Hymn 28 to Persephone)

9. Prayer of Sacrifice

A) *Prayer to Deity of the Occasion* - The presiding druid turns to the holy well and drops the wreath into the waters saying:

"So, we have given our love and our wealth to Demeter, Persephone 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!

"BOUNTIFUL DEMETER! HOLY PERSEPHONE! ACCEPT OUR SACRIFICE!"
(all repeat) Bountiful Demeter! Holy Persephone! Accept our Sacrifice!

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

"Demeter, Persephone, 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 guests of honor have 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 or goddesses, nature spirits or 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 druids says:

"Bountiful Demeter! Fruitful Persephone! 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!"

The vessel is passed around to each person who may take a turn sharing of themselves (Joys & Sorrows) before receiving the blessing sip.

14. **Workings**

New Member Ceremony – The presiding druid explains the nature of the event by reading the Membership Commitment definition

A. Presentation of the Candidate – The presiding druid introduces the member candidate Brina na Briga.

B. Candidate Pledge – The candidate steps forward and makes a formal pledge of commitment

C. Grove Pledge – The presiding druid leads the folk in witnessing and acknowledging the pledge

D. Donning of the Green & Blue – The new member is presented with a grove tabard and reminded of the significance of its meaning.

E. Presentation and welcoming – The presiding druid presents the newest member(s) to the grove.

Huzzah!

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.

Demeter: "Demeter, Bringer of the Seasons, 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) DEMETER, WE THANK YOU!

(all repeat)Demeter, we thank you.

Persephone: "Persephone, Great Goddess of the Earth, 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) PERSEPHONE, WE THANK YOU!

(all repeat)Persephone, 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:

"Swift-footed Hermes! 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 bile/omphalos from its place)
Now, Hermes, we have one last task for which we need your assistance.
Together, let us withdraw our powers of Water, pulling closed this watery Gate,
And let us withdraw our powers of Fire, pulling closed 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) HERMES, WE THANK YOU!
(all repeat) Hermes, 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 you 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, Gaia, 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: Walk With Wisdom (Words & music by Sable)

Walk with wisdom from this hallowed place.

Walk not in sorrow, our roots shall e'er embrace.

May strength be your brother and honor be your friend,

And luck be your lover until we meet again.