# http://ts4.mm.bing.net/th?id=H.4710540556764831&pid=1.7&w=135&h=141&c=7&rs=1A Yule Rite

Yule celebrates the longest night of the year. Liturgically, it is also the celebration of the rebirth of the Sun God. After this night, the days get longer and give us the hope of spring. Yule features the semi-annual battle between the Oak and Holly Kings. After the Holly King is defeated in combat, the power over the season transfers to the Oak King, and the days get longer until the summer solstice when the two kings fight again. Unlike Samhain, Yule is a festive holiday and one for merrymaking. Aspects of Yule have worked their way into many Christian Christmas customs – such as decorating an evergreen tree, adorning one’s home with holly, and hanging mistletoe over door frames. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery!

Proper colors for Yule are white, green, and red. Like Ostara, Litha, and Mabon, Yule is considered a “lesser” Sabbat. While the other three lesser Sabbats omit the lengthier Gathering Call, Yule is a sufficiently festive holiday that it seems to merit the extra pomp and circumstance.

## Preparing Sacred Space

For an outdoor ritual, it is preferable to have a large central fire burning. This bonfire serves both practical and religious purposes. As for any Pagan ritual, it is preferable to hold the rite outdoors when logistically possible and the space should not be defiled. As December is cold and dark in many places in North America, the fire will provide both heat and light to the gathered Covenors. Ritually, offerings to the gods are burned in the fire prior to the reading of the Omen. An altar bedecked with seasonal trimmings should be in place, as well as cakes and ale. A ring of lit torches should denote the area in which the ritual shall take place (even though this is not technically a magic circle). Representations of the Air, Fire, Water, and Earth should be placed in the cardinal directions within the worship area. The Fire can be a ceramic bowl containing an array of lit candles, the Water can be represented by a bowl of water, and the Earth can be represented by a potted plant, and Air can be represented by a bowl of smoldering incense. These items should be placed on pedestals so as to be at least waist-high.

For an indoor ritual, the torches are not used (for safety reasons) but instead the entirety of the room shall be considered sacred space. Likewise, a large indoor bonfire is replaced with a large offering bowl (offerings to the gods shall be burned reverently outdoors at an appropriate time and place after the ritual). The configuration of the altar and the representation of the Air, Fire, Water, and Earth will remain unchanged.

During the Gathering Call, it is desirable that someone conduct rhythmic drumming. Participants should dress appropriately for cold weather if the ritual is to be performed outdoors.

The Celebrant will need a complete set of rune stones for the reading of the Omen. If the Celebrant is unfamiliar with runes, another divination method may be used, such as Tarot or tea leaves.

## Special Materials Needed

**Altar:** A black candle for the Ancestors call

**Oak and Holly Kings:** A crown of holly, a crown of flowers, and two wooden swords.

**Magical Working:** A divination tool (such as runes or tarot)

## Altar Blessing

The altar should have a lit incense stick (or incense cone) on the East direction, a lit red tea light to the South, a small bowl of water to the West (or shot glass of water), and a small bowl of salt (or shot glass of salt) in the direction of North. The ritual response is “so mote it be”.

### Air

The Celebrant takes his/her Athame and waves it through the incense smoke three times.

“Spirit of Air, please hear our call

Empower this altar for the use of us all

Blow aside all negative power

Let us have peace for this ritual hour

Spirit of Air, we give thanks to thee

This altar is cleansed

So mote it be.”

### Fire

The Celebrant takes his/her Athame and waves it through the flame of the small red candle three times.

“Spirit of Fire, please hear our plea

Endow this altar with renewed energy

Burn away all negative power

Inspire us for this ritual hour

Spirit of Fire, we give thanks to thee

The Altar is cleansed

So mote it be.”

### Water

The Celebrant takes his her Athame and stirs the water in the bowl three times.

“Spirit of Water, we call unto thee

Imbue this altar with renewed purity

Wash away all negative power

Grant us insight for this ritual hour

Spirit of Water, we give thanks to thee

This altar is cleansed

So mote it be.”

### Earth

The Celebrant takes his/her Athame and stirs the salt in the bowl three times.

“Spirit of Earth, we call upon thee

Imbue this altar with renewed stability

Ground out from this place all negative power

Grant us wisdom for this ritual hour.

Spirit of Earth, we give thanks to thee

The altar is cleansed

So mote it be.

### Blessing the Chalice and Athame

The Celebrant sprinkles three pinches of salt into the small bowl of water, saying, “For the mind, for the body, and for the spirit.” The Celebrant then stirs the saltwater with his/her Athame.

If there are two Celebrants, the Priestess holds the chalice and the Priest holds the Athame. The Priest dips the blade of the Athame into the Chalice as the Celebrants say the following:

Priest: “As the Athame is to the God…

Priestess: “So the Chalice is to the Goddess…”

Both: “And together, they are one.”

Both: “Blessed be!”

Covenors: “Blessed be!”

### Sealing the Altar

The Celebrant taps the four sides of the altar with the hilt of his/her Athame, starting in the East. The ritual response is “So mote it be!”

In the moonlit glow of this Yultide night

May this altar serve only workings right

By my word and by my will

This altar is sealed against all powers ill

So mote it be!

## Casting the Circle

If a Priest and Priestess are present, the Priestess shall cast the first and third iteration while the Priest shall cast the second iteration. If there is only one celebrant, that person shall cast all three iterations. The circle casting shall start at the east and be drawn clockwise. The circle shall begin with the invoking of a protective Pentacle. The first circle iteration will use a wand of incense, the second shall use a bowl of salt, and the third shall use a personal wand or fire wand. While the circles are being cast, the Priest/Priestess shall issue a Gathering Call.

### First Iteration

**Priestess:**

"Come shapers, come craftsmen, come molders of clay

Come artists, come singers, come teachers of the way

Come warriors, come hearth-keepers, come healers

Come wise ones, come mystics, come fortune-dealers."

**Covenors**:

"We come to the Circle, we answer the call!"

### Second Iteration

**Priest:**

"We are shapers of dreams, crafters of song

We are teachers of lore, righters of wrong

We are seekers of truth, affirmers of life

We are guardians of peace, soothers of strife."

**Coverers**:

"We come to the Circle, we answer the call!"

### Third Iteration

**Priestess:**

We remember the fire, the well, and the tree

We remember the call that all must be free

We remember the Lady, and the Lord of the Sun,

We remember the charge to love all and harm none

**Covenors**: "We come to the Circle, we answer the call!"

**Priest and Priestess:** "The Circle is cast!"

**Covenors**: "So mote it be!"

## Calling the Quarters

The deities and elemental spirits are called in sequence, starting in the east. The appropriate candle is lit after each call.

### Air /East

Spirit of Air, we call unto thee

Grant us your breath of diversity

The clouds of winter swirl in the sky

Black and grey, proud and high

Frosty gales pass over the lands

Chilling our faces and feet and hands

Be with us this evening as we honor way of old

Your power over the sky is a wonder to behold

Hail and welcome!

### Fire/South

Spirit of Fire, we call unto thee

Grant us your passion and creativity

We thank thee for warmth against winter’s might

And for granting us vision throughout the dark night

The flaming hearths give light and cheer

And banish the darkness, cold, and fear

Be with us this evening as we honor ways of old

Your presence is welcome against winter’s cold

Hail and welcome!

### Water/West

Spirit of Water, we call unto thee

Grant us keen wisdom and new clarity

White drifting snow will replenish your might

It harbors great beauty and peace in our sight

Icicles glitter in the setting sun

The longest night has now begun

Be with us this evening as we honor ways of old

Your frost and your ice are wonders to behold

Hail and welcome!

### Earth/North

Spirit of the Earth, we call unto thee

Grant us your grounding and stability

Evergreens stand proud in the cold winter night

Covered in snow, a breathtaking sight

And stark, leafless trees sleep quietly in peace

Waiting for the sunlight’s gradual increase

Be with us this evening as we honor ways of old

Your roots carry memories and power untold

Hail and welcome!

#### God

Lugh, god of light, we call unto thee

Grant our frozen fields new fertility

Though the ground is now hardened by winter’s deep chill

The sun shall return, to the fields we shall till

Grant us your blessings at the start of the year

May our fields be robust, may we plan without fear

Be with us this evening as we honor the ways of old

Bring life to our lands, as your legend foretold

Hail and welcome!

#### Goddess

Brigit, goddess of fire and song, we call unto thee

Grant us the your blessing abundantly

Though austerity reigns in the solstice night

Your gift of music can reverse our plight

Grant those who have little a reason to hope

Grant those without warmth the means which to cope

Be with us this evening as we honor ways of old

Bring gifts to the needy, a blessing threefold

Hail and welcome!

### Ancestors

Beloved Ancestors, we call unto thee

Grant us insight for what your blessings shall be

We honor your deeds from long in the past

We thank you for courage and blessings that last

We build our future upon what has gone before

Your deeds and your words are remembered in lore

Be with us this evening as we honor the ways of old

Your presence is felt from beyond the Veil’s fold

Hail and welcome!

## A Winter Storytelling: The Tale of the Queens of Winter and Summer

For this section, there Celebrant will have chosen ahead of time three Covenors to fulfill the role of Queen of Winter, Queen of Summer, and Narrator. The required props are blunt swords, staves, or wands. The Queen of Winter should be wearing a crown of holly while the Queen of Summer should have a crown of flowers or acorns.

**Narrator:** Since the beginning of the world, the forces of summer and winter battle twice each year for supremacy over the land. The Oak King, the lord of spring and summer, presides over light and warmth. While the Oak King rules, the land is fertile, the days are long, and the winds are clement. The Holly King, lord of autumn and winter, has the power of darkness and cold. His winds are brisk and bracing. However, these are modern times and the Kings decided that it was time for more gender equality on the battlefield. And therefore, at this day of power when the Wheel of the Year turns forward, it is the Queen of Winter facing her challenger, the Queen of Summer

**Queen of Winter:** I am the Queen of Winter. Behold my works with wonder and awe. The days are short and the sun does not scorch. Snow falls from the sky – softly, beautifully. The trees are coated with ice and look like jewels in the dawn’s light. And the night sky – behold the myriad stars and the moon’s pale glow. There is no haze of summer to obscure this beauty. There are no buzzing insects to distract from the silent perfection that is winter’s might. All is as it should be. Ad so I declare: May winter last forever!

**Queen of Summer:** My dear sister-in-law, it is time for your reign to end. Yes, the night sky is full of wonder. Yes, the snow drifts and leafless trees are pretty. And surely the respite from stinging insects and endlessly cawing birds is welcome -- for a time. But that time is now coming to an end. The sun must return to its full radiant power. The grey sky must yield to blue. The ground must awaken by Spring’s soft caress. The insects—buzzing and annoying as they may be – must return so that we might enjoy the flowers of spring, the fruit trees that gift us with apples, pears, and citrus. And the crops must soon be planted, lest the cycle of life come to an end. I thank you for your gift of winter, sister-in-law, but Spring and Summer must now come!

**Queen of Winter:** Sister-in-law, if you seek to rule the land, then you must take it from me by force. Let us be joined in battle.

**Queen of Summer:** If a battle is what you seek, then a battle is what you shall find. Spring must arrive, and so I will do as I must. Let us battle!

*The two queens begin mock battle. At first, they are evenly matched, but the Queen of Winter briefly appears to be winning.*

**Narrator:** And so they fought, sister against sister, queen against queen. The fate of the seasons hangs in the balance!.

**Queen of Winter**: See! I hold the power of ice, frosty gales, and endless night. Look upon the Queen of Winter as your conqueror. Yield to me, and I will spare you!

**Queen of Summer:** Never! I must bring back the power of the sun. I will not yield!

*The Queen of Summer falls to the ground but then rolls away from an incoming blow and regains her stance. Now she appears to have renewed purpose and determination.*

**Narrator:** Will winter last forever? Or will the Queen of Summer be victorious?

The Queen of Summer’s combat prowess increases and the Queen of Winter starts slowly retreating under the Summers relentless blows.

**Queen of Winter:** No! Winter must continue!

**Queen of Summer:** There must be balance, my sister!

The Queen of Winter is now obviously running out of energy. Under the barrage of blows, she drops to one knee, and then collapses to a heap on the floor. The Queen of Summer stops swinging her weapon and holds her sword/staff at the ready position, aimed at the fallen Queen.

**Queen of Winter:** I yield. My powers fade and I am defeated. But I ask of you, sister-in-law: spare me.

The Queen of Summer extends a hand to the Queen of Winter and helps her rise to her feet.

**Queen of Summer:** Of course I shall spare you, dear sister. You are need just as much as I am. The land must have balance between light and dark, warm and cold, waking and sleeping. Take your leave now, with my thanks and blessings. We shall meet again at midsummer.

*The Queen of Winter bows respectfully to the Queen of summer and exits.*

**Queen of Summer:** Let the light return and push back the darkness. Let the days grow longer and shorten the nights. May the freezing gales end and warm breezes return. May the sleet and snow yield to soft spring rain. May the trees awaken and the flowers bloom. May life return to the land. So mote it be!

**Narrator:** And so the balance of power shifts from darkness to light. From now until midsummer, the days shall increase and the skies will brighten. All is as it should be. Blessed be.

## The Offering of Gifts

Each Covenor may offer a gift to the gods. It can be a material item, such as flowers, herbs, or other appropriate mementos. The offering can also be a brief poem or a short dance. It can be the playing of a tune on a musical instrument. Material items are offered reverently to the bonfire (in an outdoor ritual) or placed in the offering bowl (for an indoor ritual).

## Magical Working

**Celebrant:** “As it was before, it shall be now: A gift for a gift. We beseech the gods to grant us an omen for the year to come.”

The Celebrant draws three rune stones and then interprets the meaning. Alternatively, the Celebrant may use his/her preferred divination method.

## Cakes & Ale

If there is only one Celebrant, that person blesses both the cakes and ale. If there is both a Priest and Priestess, the Priest blesses the cakes and the Priestess blesses the ale.

Ale

The Priestess lifts up the bottle (or carafe, pitcher, or flask) and declares:

“From the moon’s glow to the Earth below

To roots from which the vines doth grow

From vine to grape, from grape to wine

We thank you for this gift so fine

Blessed be.”

Cakes

The Priest lifts up the tray of cakes reverently and declares:

“From the sun’s light to the Earth below

From planted seeds, the stalks doth grow

From stalks to grain, from grain to bread

This gift from you shall keep us fed

Blessed be.”

The Priest and Priestess ritually unite the Athame and Chalice

Priest (holding the Athame above the Chalice): “As the Athame is to the God.”

Priestess (holding the Chalice): “So the Chalice is to the Goddess.”

Both in unison (dipping the point of the Athame into the Chalice): “And together, they are one. So mote it be.”

The Priestess dispenses the ale to each of the Covenors in sequence.

Priestess: “Drink from the cup of wisdom. May you never thirst.”

Covenor: “Blessed be” or “Thou art Goddess”.

The Priest dispenses the cakes to each of the Covenors in sequence.

Priest: “Eat of the bread of life. May you never hunger.”

Covenor: “Blessed be” or “Thou art God”.

## Releasing the Quarters

The elemental spirits and deities are released in the opposite order in which they were called. At each dismissal, the relevant candle is snuffed.

### Ancestors

Spirit of the Ancestors, we thank you this night

You gave us the courage to do what is right

Return to the realms that lie past the Veil

You’ve taught us that wisdom and courage prevail

Thank you for the guidance and knowledge from the past

Your form the foundation for our culture to last

Return to your realms in peace, you must

In perfect love and perfect trust

Hail and farewell!

#### Goddess

Blessed Bridget, we thank you this night

We have hope for abundance, for austerity you smite

Go with our thanks as you return through the Veil

The darkness is passing, and new light will prevail

At the end of the winter, the snow shall abate

And in the hope of new bounties, we all celebrate

Stay if you wish, go if you must

In perfect love and perfect trust

Hail and farewell!

#### God

Blessed Lugh, we thank you this night

We have hope for the planting at the return of the light

Go with our thanks as you return through the Veil

Midwinter is passing, the light shall prevail

At the end of the winter, the ice will then melt

The fields will grow green, your blessings will be felt

Stay if you wish, go if you must

In perfect love and perfect trust

Hail and farewell!

### Earth/North

Spirit of Earth, we thank you this night

You gave us your grounding, you gave us your might

Return to the realms of spirit and wood

Go with our thanks and our wishes for good

And thanks for the evergreens that stand proudly at night

Defying the darkness and winter’s dread might

Stay if you wish, go if you must

In perfect love and perfect trust

Hail and farewell!

### Water/West

Spirit of Water, we thank you this night

You gave us your vision, you gave us insight

Return to the realms of spirit and ocean

Go with our thanks, go with our devotion

And thanks for the snow that brightens the night

Crystalline beauty, a wonderful sight.

Stay if you wish, go if you must

In perfect love and perfect trust

Hail and farewell!

### Fire/South

Spirit of Fire, we thank you this night

You gave us your warmth, you gave us your light

Return to the realm of spirit and flame

Go with our thanks, go with our acclaim

And thanks for the hearth, so brave and bold

It banishes darkness, it repels winter’s cold

Stay if you wish, go if you must

In perfect love and perfect trust

Hail and farewell!

### Air/East

Spirit of Air, we thank you this night

You gave us inspiration in the darkest night

Return to your realms of spirit and sky

Go with good wished and a fond goodbye

Thank you for the winds that blow through the night

Whistling through trees with freezing might

Stay if you wish, go if you must

In perfect love and perfect trust

Hail and Farewell!

## Releasing the Circle

The Priestess walks the perimeter of the circle, counterclockwise, with Athame in hand and declares:

“At the close of this ritual hour

We call to this blade the Circle’s power

We shant forget, not ever in haste

Lest the power summoned go to waste

The Circle is lifted and seen no more

This room (area | field | clearing) is now as it was before

So mote it be!”

The Handmaiden declares:

“May all beings attracted to our light return to your realms in peace, harming none.”

The Priest declares:

“May the gods watch over us and keep us well

May the coming year have many blessings to tell

May the return of the light fill us with cheer

May we be always thankful throughout the new year

May we, to others, a guiding light be

A blessing, a help, a guardian to see.”

**Celebrants:** “This rite has ended.”

**Celebrants and Covenors:** “Merry meet, merry part, and merry meet again. Huzzah!”