**A Litha Rite**

Litha celebrates the summer solstice, when the power of the sun is at its maximum and the power of the Earth to sustain life is at its peak. From this day until Yule, the days will become shorter, whereupon the cycle of light and dark begins again. Litha is a time to celebrate light, life, warmth, fertility, and abundant energy.  . Litha also features the semi-annual battle between the Oak and Holly Kings (a metaphor for the transition from day’s increase to the gradual return of the longer nights). Litha, like Mabon and Yule, are considered “lesser” Sabbats.

## Preparing Sacred Space

For an outdoor ritual, the Celebrant shall plant four bamboo poles into the ground, oriented at the appropriate compass direction to form a circle nine to eighteen feet in radius (this can be expanded for larger gatherings). The poles should be adorned with streamers or pennants of appropriate color (yellow/east, red/south, blue/west, and green/north). The Celebrant shall cleanse the area with sage smoke and sweep away miscellaneous debris and litter as needed.  A small rod of incense should be lit near each of the four poles. The altar cloth should have patterns of red, orange, and yellow. Likewise, the altar cloth could display a sun symbol.

For an indoor ritual, the sacred space can be delineated by four large pillar candles of appropriate color. The floor/carpet should be clean. The Celebrant may ritually sweep the floor with a broom.

Covenors are encouraged to wear bright colors. Likewise, Covenors should do a ritual bath prior to attending the service.  Additionally, Covenors that are assigned quarter calls should be given a few minutes to read/rehearse the relevant text.

## Special Materials Needed

* Magical Working: Enough citrines for each participant to receive one. These are yellow stones that cost about a dollar each.
* Oak and Holly King Storytelling: Two wooden swords (or similar non-edged weapons, as actual bloodshed is not the goal); crown of holly (for the Holly King); crown of flowers (for the Oak King).

## Casting the Circle

The Celebrant may use a wand or Athame as the ritual tool for delineating the boundary of sacred space. The Celebrant shall walk the perimeter of the circle three times, clockwise, starting from the east. The first pass uses incense (can be an incense stick or a censer). The second pass utilizes a bowl of salt or finger chimes (if the latter is used, ring the chimes three times at each of the four directional points). The third pass uses a wand or Athame. At the conclusion, the Celebrant draws an invoking pentacle in the air.

**Celebrant**:   "I cast this circle with power and love

From Earth below to Sky above

With shining Sun and glittering Sea

God and Goddess, blessed be

The circle is cast!"

**Celebrant and Covenors:** “So mote it be!”

## Calling the Quarters

Elemental spirits and deities are called in sequence, starting with the east. The calls proceed in a clockwise fashion. The appropriate candle is lit after each call.

### Air/East

Guardian of the East, Spirit of Air

In love and thanks we invite you here

Hot winds blast across the bright blue sky

Blowing leaves and blossoms far and high

Clouds race by, so tall and white

Billowing, majestically in our sight

Guardian of the East, we give thanks to thee

Spirit of Air, blessed be

Hail and Welcome!

### Fire/South

Guardian of the South, Spirit of Fire

In love and thanks we invite you here

Brazier, candle, and campfire flame

Its cheerful brightness we acclaim

We lift our torches to the limitless sky

Into the night the sparks shall fly

Guardian of the South, we give thanks to thee

Spirit of Fire, blessed be

Hail and Welcome!

### Water/West

Guardian of the West, Spirit of Water

In love and thanks we invite you here

Summer storms loom proud and high

And bring relief to a land parched dry

From sky to ground, to streams and sea

The flow of life is carried by thee.

Guardian of the West, we give thanks to thee

Spirit of Water, blessed be

Hail and Welcome!

### Earth/North

Guardian of the North, Spirit of Earth

In love and thanks we invite you here

The Earth is green with vines and tree

The spirit of life is flowing free

Corn and grains grow from the lands

Carefully tended by loving hands

Guardian of the North, we give thanks to thee

Spirit of Earth, blessed be

Hail and welcome!

### God

Father Sky, God of the Sun

In love and thanks we invite you here

The sun has reached its greatest power

Streaming light on tree and flower

Warmth and heat, light and love

Your radiance shines down from above

Father Sky, we give thanks to thee

God of the Sun, blessed be

Hail and Welcome!

### Goddess

Mother Earth, Giver of Life

In love and thanks we invite you here

We give you thanks for life and love

From seas below to peaks above

In tree and flower, corn and grains

Your blessings flow, you power reigns

Mother Earth, we give thanks to thee

Giver of Life, Blessed be

Hail and Welcome!

## Guided Meditation

Place your body in a comfortable position, with your feet touching the floor and your spine straight. Close your eyes. Take three deep, slow breaths. Breathe in… breathe out… breathe in… breathe out…

We are leaving this place. Your awareness travels somewhere else entirely. You arrive in the middle of a desert plain. The dunes are dozens of feet high and sand drifts in the wind making a soft, rasping sound. Thin, translucent clouds spread out across the sky. They are high and thin, and they do not obscure the sun’s vast power. The sun is at its maximum potency. It shines down with a brilliant light and intense heat. The air shimmers in the dry, hot desert. Brittle shrubs and ancient cacti stand against the wind and sand.

You had expected to be uncomfortable, but you are not. In this place, you are fully acclimated to the ecology. The sun does not burn you; it empowers you. The heat does not wither you; it enlivens you. Draw energy from the sun and wind, for both are potent forces – limitless and eternal. Your senses expand and you realize that the desert is not sterile at all, merely different. Here, in the land of sun and heat, all manner of life abides – insects, reptiles, rodents, birds, grasses, cacti. They thrive here – just as you are thriving here.

You walk across the hot sands towards a patch of green in the distance. Birds of prey circle overhead, waiting for a hapless rodent to let down its guard. The sand blows in your face and you shield your eyes. The wave of abrasion passes and you find yourself at the edge of a clear pool. All around you, the desert stretches to the horizon in all directions, but here there is water and trees and an intensity of life not found on the dunes. The sunlight shimmers on the water’s surface. The lake is deep and transparent to the bottom. Colorful fish swim about. Birds peck about the edge of the lake and drink of the clear water. You follow suit. The life-giving water is pure and life-giving. It cools your face and rinses away the dirt and grit.

Here, in this place, is the intersection of powerful forces – sun and wind, water and earth, heat and coolness. You feel the forces within your own body come into balance as well.

You take a final drink of water before leaving this place. You walk away from the oasis, with satisfaction and gratitude. The wind kicks up again and you close your eyes against the sand. You feel yourself leaving this place of sun and wind and sand. Remember the power of this place. Use it for directing your will.

Breathe in… Breathe out… Breathe in… Breathe out… Breathe in… Breathe out…

When you are ready, open your eyes.

## The Oak and Holly Kings

For this storytelling, there will be parts for the Narrator, the Oak King, and the Holly King. The two Kings can wield wooden staves or prop swords. The Holly King is dressed in green and black and wears a crown of holly and bells (something reflective of Yule/Winter) and the Oak King wears a crown of flowers and oak leaves and dressed in the colors of spring.

**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. The fields are harvested under his watch and then stand barren. Twice each year, at the winter and summer solstices, the Kings meet in battle to determine whose power shall prevail for the next six months.

**Oak King:** I am the lord of summer. See my works and rejoice! The night is all but banished, and the sun’s power is supreme. The air is hot; the winds whip across the lands and blow dust devils in the midday heat. Buzzards and falcons alike fly on warm thermals, empowered by the sun. The flowers bloom, the insects buzz, and the trees are lush and green. All is as it should be. May summer last forever!

**Holly King:** No, my brother! It is time for your reign to end. Yes, the long days are wonderful, but night must return. The dark starry sky of winter is just as beautiful as the midday sun in summer. The green grasses and flowers are a wonder to behold, but so are pristine white snow drifts, glittering icicles, and ice-covered lakes. And while your crops are tall and proud, and your orchards are heavy with fruit, the time of the harvests will soon begin. Your reign must end. Autumn must come!

**Oak King:** My brother, if you seek to rule the land, then you must take it from me by force. Let us be joined in battle!

**Holly King:** Yes, my brother. Autumn must arrive, and so I will do as I must. Let us battle!

*The two kings begin mock battle. At first, they are evenly matched, but the Oak King briefly appears to be winning.*

**Narrator:** And so they fought, brother-against-brother, as they have done so since the land first formed.

**Oak King**: See! I hold the power of the sun, the power of summer. Yield to me, and I will spare you!

**Holly King:** Never! I must bring back the power of the night, the power of winter. I will not yield!

*The Holly King falls to the ground but then rolls away from a sword blow and regains his stance. Now he appears to have renewed purpose and determination.*

**Narrator:** Will summer last forever? Or will the Holly King be victorious?

The Holly King’s combat prowess increases and the Oak King starts slowly retreating under the Holly King’s relentless blows.

**Oak King:** No! Summer must continue!

**Holly King:** There must be balance, my brother!

The Oak King is now obviously running out of energy. Under the barrage of blows, he drops to one knee, and then collapses to a heap on the floor. The Holly King stops swinging his weapon and holds his sword/staff at the ready position, aimed at the fallen Oak King.

**Oak King:** I yield. I am defeated. But I ask of you, my brother, that you spare me.

The Holly King extends a hand to the Oak King and raises him to his feet.

**Holly King:** Of course I shall spare you, my brother. 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 rest now. And we shall meet again at midwinter.

*The Oak King bows respectfully to the Holly King and exits.*

**Holly King:** Let the night return. Let the days grow shorter. May life force return beneath the earth and rest. So mote it be!

**Narrator:** And so the balance of power shifts from light to darkness. From now until midwinter, the days shall shorten and the sun shall diminish in power. All is as it should be. Blessed be.

## Magical Working

The magical working involves empowering citrines with positive energy. The Celebrant(s) and Covenors each receive a citrine stone. Each person spends a brief period visualizes his/her stone being charged with positive energy or a positive blessing. After an appropriate period, the stone is passed clockwise to the next Covenor. This progression repeats until each Covenor has had a chance to empower every stone and that the each Covenor has his/her original stone returned.

The Celebrant then seals the spell:

**Celebrant:** “With these words, the spell shall seal / Thought and Will to make it real / So mote it be!”

**Covenors:** “So mote it be!”

## Cakes and Ale

*If there are two Celebrants (Priest and Priestess), the Priest shall distribute the bread/cakes and the Priestess shall distribute the cup of wine/ale/juice.*

Priest or Priestess: “The celebration of bread and wine is not unique to Wicca. Many religions in many cultures have venerated the bounty of grain and vine. Bread and wine sustain the body and bring us together as a community. In the Wiccan tradition, these gifts also bring us in communion with the God and Goddess. And so we bring you these gifts so that we may be united with one another in spirit.”

**Priestess**: “With the cup, we are one.”

**Covenor**: “Blessed be”

**Priest**: “We are one people, we share one bread.”

**Covenor** “Blessed be.”

## Releasing the Quarters

The elemental spirits and deities are released in the opposite order in which they were called. The relevant altar candle shall be extinguished following each dismissal.

### Goddess

Mother Earth, Giver of Life

We give you thanks for coming here

In our minds and hearts you dwell

In sea and river, forest and dell

Rocks and trees, and mountain range

Your spirit brings growth and life and change

Mother Earth, we give thanks to thee

Giver of Life, blessed be

Hail and Farewell!

### God

Father Sky, God of the Sun

We give you thanks for coming here

We feel your power shining bright

The radiant fullness of summer’s might

And now year has turned midway

We soon shall see a shorter day

Father Sky, we give thanks to thee

God of the Sun, blessed be

Hail and Farewell!

### Earth/North

Guardian of the North, Spirit of Earth

We give you thanks for coming here

Return to the mountains, return to the plains

To forest green and amber grains

Gourd and root, tuber and tree

The crops are growing bountifully

Guardian of the North, we give thanks to thee

Spirit of Earth, blessed be

Hail and Farewell!

### Water/West

Guardian of the West, Spirit of Water

We give you thanks for coming here

Return to the lakes, return to the streams

Where the water is clear and life still teems

Return to the seas and oceans deep

Where deeper secrets are yours to keep

Guardian of the West, we give thanks to thee

Spirit of Water, blessed be

Hail and farewell!

### Fire/South

Guardian of the South, Spirit of Fire

We give you thanks for coming here

Return to the Litha fires so bright

That gives us vision throughout the night

And to the candles and torches bold

A cheerful light for us to behold

Guardian of the South, we give thanks to thee

Spirit of Fire, blessed be

Hail and Farewell!

### East/Air

Guardian of the East, Spirit of Air

We give you thanks for coming here

Return to the clouds, return to the sky

Where insects buzz and eagles fly

We thank you for the cooling breeze

That blows across the plains and trees

Guardian of the East, we give thanks to thee

Spirit of Air, blessed be

Hail and Farewell!

## Releasing the Circle

The Celebrant discharges the circle using his/her wand or Athame, starting from the east, and walking counter-clockwise (widdershins) around the perimeter of the circle.

**Priest**: “May all spirits attracted to our light return to your realms in peace, harming none.”

**Priestess**: “The Circle, now open, remains unbroken. Merry meet, merry part, and merry meet again!”

**Celebrants and Covenors**: “Huzzah!”