

Seasons of Luna

Circle Etiquette

by Veronica Appolonia
with a special "Thank You" to Heidi.

Introduction

Seasons of Luna is an open Wiccan circle that comes together each month to celebrate the Full Moons and Her seasonal correspondences. We are a women only group and welcome our transgendered sisters who identify and live as women. We enjoy meeting new people and welcome all who are respectful of our beliefs and are willing to participate fully in our rituals. Wicca is not a spectator sport! We do not hold ritual skyclad and although we are women only, we are not Dianic in our practice.

The following guidelines, while useful in any Pagan circle, are particular to Seasons of Luna. We hope that you find these guidelines helpful in deciding whether or not we're the group for you. We also hope that you will be respectful of the expectations and boundaries we have for our members. Knowing what to expect and where the boundaries of behavior are can make for a more comfortable experience for everyone.

We hope you find this little book informative and useful. Blessed Be!

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1. YOUR COMFORT

If something is bothering you, it is your responsibility to speak up. Not to imply that all of your issues will be resolved to your satisfaction, but we are certainly open to discussion and compromise as long as your needs don't compromise the integrity of the Circle or our Traditions. We can be very flexible on some things such as which direction we start in but not about cutting your way out of the Circle if you need to leave. We can be very flexible about whether or not the "cakes" are gluten free or the "ale" is carbonated but not about having no "cakes and ale" for the ritual.

In general, the doors are open for arrivals at 7PM and we begin ritual at 7:30PM. That gives you plenty of time to use the bathroom and get something to drink before we begin ritual. Please take care of these and any other needs you may have before we start in order minimize any interruptions to the Ritual.

If someone's behavior is bothering you, wait until after the ritual is over and speak to the Priestess/Facilitator in private. Make sure you use "I" statements (see addendum) and what your needs (see addendum) are when relating the issue. Everyone has different ideas of what is sacred but remember that mirth is just as important as reverence.

2. CELL PHONES

Please turn off you cell phone before the Ritual begins.

3. HONORING TIME

Participant Responsibility:

It would be nice if we could run on "Pagan Time" but, alas, we live in a world that runs on clocks so please be respectful of time. Show up on time or you may find the door locked. For the safety of the group, we don't admit people after we have started the ritual. We also make an effort to keep the ritual as brief as possible and may limit the time each person has to share when we get to that point.

The Ritual is a balance of action and reflection. When items are passed around the Circle or we're taking turns approaching the Altar, take one and pass it to the next person or move quickly to the Altar for whatever you've been instructed to do. You will have time to reflect on the item/symbol during the ritual. Keep in mind that if you linger, it lengthens the amount of time others are waiting and lessens the amount of time they will have for reflection.

Priestess/Facilitator Responsibility:

It's important to honor everyone's time commitment so the Priestess/Facilitator is responsible for making sure the ritual doesn't go on too long. Raised energy can fizzle out if people are starting to get antsy and looking at their watches. That may mean adjusting the ritual if things are running long or if more people show up than were expected. She may also need to gently encourage or guide people if things are moving too slowly. Some people may come from a distance to join us or have to get up early in the morning. It's important to honor the commitment they made to showing up by ending at a reasonable time.

4. RITUAL OBJECTS & ALTAR ITEMS

Many Pagans wear special clothing or jewelry that has been consecrated and imbued with their particular energy. Please, always ask before touching anything that belongs to another person. The answer may be "no" and please accept that answer graciously. They're not being unfriendly; they're trying to maintain the integrity of the energy around the object.

The same is true of altar items. Many of them have been consecrated and it is considered bad manners to pick them up no matter how pretty they are. Ours is an open circle so many people handle our ritual objects but unless you are expressly directed by the Priestess/Facilitator to touch something, don't! Ask permission. The answer may be "yes" but if not, accept it graciously.

Can I Put Things On The Altar?:

Sometimes people like to put personal items on the altar to absorb the energy of the ritual so they can carry it home with them. Always check with the Priestess/Facilitator first. It's generally not a problem with our group but, if the item is too large, there may not be room on the altar. It's always a good policy to ask first whatever the question or request is. If someone has received permission to add their item to the altar, they are the only one who may touch it or give another permission to touch it. Not even the Priestess/Facilitator can give permission to touch another person's sacred object, even if it is on the altar.

5. THE PRIESTESS/FACILITATOR IS IN CHARGE!

While a circle is egalitarian, there needs to be someone to organize, to inform and to delegate so that everyone knows what's going on and what their part is. We gather

together for a specific purpose and a Priestess/Facilitator makes sure everyone is included in that purpose.

We are a Circle where we think learning is fun and everyone should have an opportunity to stretch themselves. Veronica Appolonia is usually acting as Priestess/Facilitator but others are encouraged to give it a try if they would like to spread their wings. We ask for the same respect and support for any who are willing to step into the Priestess/Facilitator role.

Participant Responsibility:

The Priestess/Facilitator has put a lot of effort into creating the ritual so please don't second guess her. She's also fallible and can forget things so a gentle, respectful, and supportive reminder can be very welcome. Gentle, respectful, and supportive is the key. She also has the last word so she may ignore your reminder. Make sure any help is an offer and not a takeover.

Priestess/Facilitator Responsibility:

The Priestess is responsible for making sure the ritual runs smoothly and that all the participants are included. Her responsibilities include greeting everyone and making them feel welcome, delegating tasks to others such as calling directions, sweeping, etc., monitoring the energy of the group and being aware of what's happening around her, letting people know what the focus of the ritual is and what their parts in it are, demonstrating, usually by going first, how something is to be done, taking any tasks that others don't want to do, bringing everything needed for the ritual or making sure that someone is bringing it, and communicating clearly. It's also her responsibility to not ask others to do something she may be uncomfortable with and to make sure that everyone is as comfortable as possible with what the ritual entails.

For example, if you don't like to sing, don't ask others to do it unless you can delegate that task to someone who does. Some people don't feel confident about their voices and it can tarnish their experience if there's a possibility they might be heard. Conversely, if you're an amazing dancer, not everyone may enjoy it as much as you do. Make sure the steps are simple and there's room to move. Because we are an open group it's not always possible to know everyone's capabilities but if you can't know for sure that everyone is *able* to do something, assume that there's at least one who can't and adjust your plans accordingly. As Priestess/Facilitator, your responsibility is that *everyone* has a meaningful experience, not just you.

1. CUTTING OUT OF THE CIRCLE

The Circle has been cast and the Quarters called and we're deep in the middle of Ritual when you suddenly realize you need to use the bathroom and it can't wait! What do you do?

Make sure it really can't wait. If the Ritual is almost over, hold it if you can. If not, then wait until a lull, get the Priestess/Facilitator's attention and let them know that you have to leave. You can then either cut your own door in the Circle or have the Priestess/Facilitator or someone else do it. Close it behind you and repeat the process when you get back.

What is Cutting Out of the Circle?

The process of Casting a Circle and Calling the Quarters or Directions is the act of removing us from the mundane world, creating sacred space, and building a temple in a place between the worlds. The Circle is considered to be an energetic container for the energies we generate during Ritual and a barrier against any energies or entities that might not have our best interests at heart. Cutting a door and closing it after us maintains the integrity of this magickal barrier. The act of acknowledging it keeps you focused on the fact that we're doing something and it takes the focus and energy of everyone in the circle to make it happen.

How to Do It:

So, you have to leave the Circle. Using your index and middle finger, stand at the boundary of the Circle and trace a door in the air beginning at the floor, up and over and down to the floor on the other side. Step through and close the door the same way. When you come back, repeat the process. Simple!

2. TALKING CIRCLE

We spend some time talking and sharing our experiences in the Circle at a point we call "Needs & Successes". A Talking Circle is an opportunity to share your story in safety. The first rule of a Talking Circle is that what is said in Circle, stays in Circle. The second rule is you don't have to share if you don't want to. Just say "pass". You don't have to explain or make an excuse.

Please be aware of any time limits the Priestess/Facilitator has placed on sharing. If you're told you need to keep it to one minute, keep it to one minute.

Listener Responsibility:

The speaker has your full attention, actively listening without judgement or

commenting. Please see “How to be Helpful” below. Whatever you may think of the speaker’s subject matter, it’s real for them and it’s not our place to judge.

Speaker Responsibility:

When it’s your turn to speak, use “I” statements (see addendum) and keep your focus on your personal experiences. Do not comment on other people’s sharing. One exception would be stating that one person’s share reminded you of something in your life, such as: “When you talked about living in England, it reminded me of my trip there and how much I enjoyed it.” Neutral. Stay away from anything that sounds like advice or criticism: “When you talked about a problem with your coworker, it reminded me of how I handled a problem at work” (can sound like advice), or “here’s how I would have handled it.” (can sound like criticism).

How to be Helpful:

If someone shares something you feel you can help with, wait until the Ritual is over, approach them privately and ask if they would be willing or want to hear your thoughts. If the answer is “no”, accept it graciously and move on. If the answer is “yes”, make sure your advice is nonjudgmental, non- critical and don’t push. They don’t have to accept your advice as valid for their lives. Only they know what they’re going through.

3. AFTER RITUAL POTLUCK/SNACKS

We like to spend some time after the Ritual sharing food and socializing. The food helps to ground us and we love getting an opportunity to get to know each other better. Depending on the time we have and the location, we will either have a full potluck or just snacks and finger foods. We encourage you to stay and chat.

To not put too much of a burden on whoever is hosting us, be prepared to take home anything you brought with you. Don’t leave it to them to find a container or a place in their fridge for something they may not want. If we find ourselves in a space other than a private home, it will be even more important to not leave anything behind.

Unless your food is finger food that is actually eaten with fingers, you may need to bring utensils with which to serve it and eat it or make sure that there will be some available. If you bring something that needs to be cut up into individual portions, bring something to cut it with or precut it at home.

Because some foods are problematic for some people such as allergens like peanuts, it’s a good idea to have an ingredients list on any homemade foods. Most packaged foods

already list the ingredients so if you pour something into a bowl, make sure the packaging is available for people to check.

Thank you for your interest in Seasons of Luna. I hope this list has been helpful. There's no way to cover everything that might possibly come up in a Ritual or every question that someone may have so it may be updated from time to time. But if we keep in mind to be respectful, patient, willing to listen and willing to talk, we should be able to deal with anything that comes up. Blessed Be!



Addendum:

If you are familiar with Non-Violent Communication by Marshall Rosenberg, you are familiar with the terms “I statement”, “observations”, and “needs”.

“I statement” refers to speaking in the first person and talking about personal experience. We encourage you to stay away from saying “you” when talking and sharing in Circle. It can be triggering for people if they feel they’re being made the subject of a sharing or attention is being focused on them.

If there is a conflict within the group or discomfort with someone, it’s helpful to use actual observations of what happened that caused the discomfort. “You upset me when you acted up in Circle” is not an observation. You need to be specific about what the “act up” was. It’s too vague. “When you turned to the other person and started a conversation while I was sharing, it made me feel that I wasn’t in a safe place to share” is specific about what happened and how it made you feel.

“Needs” is a very tricky concept. “I need you to shut up” is not a real need and if stated that way is sure to escalate the situation. In the case of the above example, the need was to feel safe to share. Having the other person shut up might have made you feel safer but the *need* was to feel safe.

Non-Violent Communication is an effective way to deal with conflicts within a group. Of course, there are always those who seem to enjoy conflict or need conflict to give them permission to do what they really wanted to do but were afraid to admit and there’s not much one can do with someone who doesn’t really want to connect, but NVC can be very helpful. Check it out if you haven’t already. If you have other conflict resolution protocols, please share them.

Full Moon Ritual Outline

GROUND

SWEEP

DELINEATE THE CIRCLE, HAND TO HAND

CHANT: There is no time but now

CAST THE CIRCLE WITH ATHAME'

CALL THE QUARTERS

DRAW DOWN THE MOON

LEAD IN TO WORK

WORK IS COMPLETED

NEEDS AND SUCCESSES: (talking circle)

CAKES & ALE

RELEASE THE DIRECTIONS

UNWIND THE CIRCLE:

CLOSING SONG:

CAST THE CIRCLE:

*I carve this circle once around,
All within by magic bound,
A sacred space,
A healing place,
Safe from harm by Spirit's grace.
So mote it be*

UNWIND THE CIRCLE:

*"We part this circle on a moon-wise path
And gather up the boundaries cast
All who came here, thanks to thee
Go in peace and blessed be!"*

Examples of Quarter Calls & Releases:

Guardians of the **East**, Spirits of Air
Where the dawn breeze awakens inspiration
I ask that you move gently through our circle blowing away the fog of confusion and doubt and bringing the clarity of morning light to our thoughts. Help us to listen and be heard.
Hail and welcome

Guardians of the **East**, Spirits of Air
Thank you for your wisdom and participation in our circle this night.
I release you with gratitude. Return to your realms in peace.
Hail and farewell

Guardians of the **South**, Spirits of Fire
Place of high Summer and the furnace of transformation.
Shine gently on all gathered here in our circle and enliven our passion. Light our path that we might know the way.
Hail and welcome

Guardians of the **South**, Spirits of Fire
Thank you for your wisdom and participation in our circle this night.
I release you with gratitude. Return to your realms in peace.
Hail and farewell

Guardians of the **West**, Spirits of Water
Place of the introspection, of sunset, and where the ocean dances with the Moon.
Hold us gently in calm waters and keep us on an even keel as we explore those things that can bring strong feeling. Cleanse us of all that no longer serves us.
Hail and welcome

Guardians of the **West**, Spirits of Water
Thank you for your wisdom and participation in our circle this night.
I release you with gratitude. Return to your realms in peace.
Hail and farewell

Guardians of the **North**, Spirits of Earth
Place of stone and bone, ancient wisdom, and the place to which we return to the Mother's loving embrace when our time here is done.
Let your gentle hold ground us and give us roots so that we may soar higher in our tasks tonight.
Nurture the seeds of our magick and help us grow.
Hail and welcome
So mote it be.

Guardians of the **North**, Spirits of Earth
Thank you for your wisdom and participation in our circle this night.
I release you with gratitude. Return to your realms in peace.
Hail and Farewell
So mote it be

Great Mother **Goddess**, Lady of the Moon, and Her Consort, **Lord** of the Sun, King of Sacrifice, grace our ritual with Your presence here tonight.
Hail and Welcome.

Great Mother **Goddess**, Lady of the Moon, and Her Consort, **Lord** of the Sun, King of Sacrifice, thank You for blessing our ritual with Your presence.
Hail and Farewell.