

Dear CUUF Members,

This week, we officially begin our new monthly theme, thresholds. This week our focus for our theme is on the door; entrances and exits. However this week we have an additional focus on the pagan festival of Beltane. Coincidentally, we have yet another holiday to learn about and celebrate in our own way. After covering the Abrahamic Holidays last month, it only seems fair to give paganism its rightful place in our celebrations and education. While it becomes more beautiful outside, nature centric beliefs are all the more poignant, and an appreciation of nature comes naturally to our children.

There is a lot of material below, especially if you choose to go through with the House Cleansing Ritual, so it is entirely possible to extend your lessons, ritual, and crafts throughout the week instead of just reserving it for Sunday.

Enjoy! And for what you can, enjoy this spring weather and the spring flowers that come with it.

Wonder Box

Wonder Box prop: a Singing the Living Tradition Hymnbook

What's in the Wonder Box? It's a hymnbook! (If we don't have the hymnbook, we can substitute this with a printout of the hymn listed below, or simply a music sheet.

This month's theme is threshold. What does threshold mean? A threshold is a door.

Today we explore the ways that people create and call on thresholds to protect and shelter themselves.

The very first hymn when you open the hymn book, #1, is "May Nothing Evil Cross this Door!"

We Unitarian Universalists signify the opening of the hymnbook as one way to make a door of shelter as we sing the hymn. [Read all of the words in the hymn if we have it, or access to it]

In Wiccan belief, there are several ways to cast a protective circle. Imagine a circle enclosing you. Set a small mirror which reflects away from you. Turn sideways to the source of aggression.

Draw a circle with chalk or salt.

There is a custom of hang a horseshoe over a threshold for luck and protection.

When we think of thresholds, we imagine a strong, sheltering door which keeps the rain and wind out, and protects us from bad things that might befall us.

In early May, there is a Wiccan celebration called Beltane, which is part of the Wheel of the Year. It celebrates the Spring and of growing things. It celebrates the threshold into summer.

Cleansing Your Home Ritual

Note: This ritual is quite alot, if you do not have all the materials, or do not wish to go through with all of its instructions, it is completely fine to cater it and make it your own. This Ritual is enough to take up a full class, however I will also provide some materials below in case you'd like to proceed differently.

The whole ritual can found here:

<https://www.ceisiwrserith.com/paganfamily/chapter3.htm>

Meditation/Mantra:

We bless this house by air
the breaths of song
of talking with friends,
the slow breaths of meditation and prayer
and the quiet breaths of sleep.
By air be clean
Be fresh
Be pure.

We bless this house by fire
the fire that will warm it
the fire that will cook our food
the fire that burns within us
the fire of life and love.
By fire be clean
Be fresh
Be pure.

We bless this house by water
All that we will drink
All that we will cook with
All that we will clean ourselves with
The very blood that runs through our veins
By water be clean
Be fresh
Be pure.

We bless this house by earth
from which it springs,
on which it rests
We are creatures of earth
Living upon it
Living from it
Living within it
By earth be clean
Be fresh
Be pure.

We bless this house by spirit
by active and passive we bless it
The spirit that sustains us
wrapping around us
keeping us safe in its arms
By spirit be clean
Be fresh
Be pure.

Story: The Green Man

Once upon a time, there lived a rich and vain young squire. Servants prepared his favorite foods each day. His every wish was granted.

One of the young man's favorite things to do was to ride through the woods that were part of his kingdom, hunting small animals for sport. He thought that the woods and all its creatures belonged to him and he could do as he pleased with them.

The people in the village had a different idea about the woods. The woods provided a home to all the creatures that lived there: chipmunks, birds, squirrels, rabbits, deer, and wild pigs. They told their children a story about a Green Man who lived in the woods and cared for all of the small creatures. They said he even watched out for children in the woods. The villagers faithfully left out food on winter nights for the Green Man to eat.

One autumn day, the squire decided to go on a hunt. He called to all of his servants to saddle up the horses and get on their riding clothes: they were going into his woods.

They rode into the woods, trampling nests and dens as they went, sending dogs out ahead to chase small animals out of their homes so they could be easily hunted. After a time, the squire became separated from the rest of the hunting party. He was looking for them when he came to a pond — a beautiful, clear, cool pond.

"How clever of me to have a pond in my woods to refresh myself!" he said.

The young man began to remove all of his fine clothing — his shoes, his hat, his jacket, his shirt, his pants, and his socks. He laid his clothes neatly folded by the edge of the pond and jumped into the cool water. He swam back and forth, enjoying himself immensely.

While he was swimming and splashing away, a hand reached out from behind a tree and took his clothing and led his horse away. When the squire got out of the water, he discovered that he had nothing left to wear save a piece of rope. He took the rope and fastened some leaves to it to make a cover up. When his hunting party came looking for him, he was embarrassed to be seen dressed in nothing but leaves. So he hid.

At night, the squire went looking for some shelter and he stumbled into a cave. He didn't sleep much that night. It was dark, and he was frightened, and he kept hearing animal noises all night.

In the morning, when the daylight came, he saw that he was not alone in the cave. There was a goat there, and a chicken, and a gourd for holding water. Someone had been living in that cave! He found some grass for the goat and feed for the chicken. He discovered some grain that he could eat as well.

Over time, the squire settled in to life in the cave. He fashioned a whole garment out of leaves. He ate eggs from the hen and drank milk from the goat. He covered his hand with mud to prevent stings and reached into a beehive for honey to eat. He became acquainted with all the small woodland creatures, and he cared for them, helping them over swollen streams when heavy rains fell, making sure they had food and water, and sheltering them in the cave on the chilly nights.

One day he came upon two small children trapped by a wild pig threatening to bite. When he had chased the pig off, they looked at him. There he was, covered head to toe with leaves and mud, with a wild-looking beard and hair. "Are you the Green Man?" they asked.

"I guess I am," said the man, who no longer looked anything like a squire.

When winter came, the Green Man was happy to go into the village at night and to take the food that the villagers left out for him, sharing it with all his animal friends. A year passed peacefully, until one warm day when a hunting party came into the woods. The Green Man hid behind a tree to watch. A rich young man, a squire perhaps, became separated from his hunting group and decided to take a swim in the clear, cool pond. He took off his clothes, folded them, and left them under a tree. The Green Man reached out a hand and took the clothes and the horse, leaving behind his garment of leaves and a coil of rope. He used a sharp stick to trim his hair and beard, and rode into town, back to his parents' castle.

Story Source: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/welcome/session10/green-man>

Theme Connection: The Green Man/Squire learns about the forest as a place of shelter. The forest becomes a Door of Shelter for learning.

Activities:

Make your own **Beltane Maypole**

<http://www.pookapages.com/Beltane%20Issue%202015.pdf>

Go outside and find a twig. Tie 6-8 ribbons on the end, each ribbon 30 - 40" long. Use this to bless the trees, the flowers, the birds and teach other (gently!) and cast a protective charm to create a sheltering threshold.

Ankle Bells and Wrist Ribbons

<http://www.pookapages.com/Beltane%20Issue%202015.pdf>

Use hair scrunchies and tie jingle bells onto it with ribbons to make ankle bells. Tie ribbons onto scrunchies to make wrist decorations.

Flowers for Beltane

Beltane is the festival of Flora. Make a flower crown to wear.

Making a Flower Crown:

With Dandelions and folded stems: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVsA_LcuHOQ

With Daisies and a cut stem: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=13&v=r8hu4fBdrCo&feature=emb_logo

Make a Flower Basket

Hang it on a threshold window or door.

How to make a Flower Basket:

<https://www.marthastewart.com/919356/good-thing-cone-flowers-may-day>

Sunshine

Take your Beltane elements outside and find thresholds in Nature. A threshold might be a root to jump over, a gate, a door, a window. Invite the children to twirl around and near them with their Beltane decor to create a sheltering threshold to keep the bad out and the good in. Another outdoor Beltane tradition is a bonfire. Create a pretend bonfire with twigs and some red cellophane for a pretend flame (or just pretend). Invite the children to jump over it.

Service

Hang flower baskets on your outside doors and maybe even make one for your neighbors.