

CRONING CEREMONY AND CELEBRATION, April 30, 2023, 1-2:30pm
Fellowship Hall, Unitarian Universalist Community Church, Augusta, ME
ORDER OF SERVICE -- Draft

Please join us for celebration of the Crone phase of our lives.

*Goddess/Earth Circle participants, being croned, and their guests, all ages and genders are welcome. The service is projected for about an hour and a half. We are meeting in the Fellowship Hall, with hybrid capability (Connections will be published.)

*Finger foods may be brought to be shared.

*You are welcome to bring items for the sharing table: Pictures and artifacts of various ages of the woman's life – particularly Crones – a cauldron!

*Crones are invited to bring or send a greeting, blessing or words of wisdom for the new crones. These can be read at the gathering or given to the new crone.

*We invite **Readers** for various parts, as noted on this Order of Service. Please let Helen know parts you would be interested in reading. The full Script follows this Order of Service.

Bring rain sticks, rattles, drums and other percussion items for informal playing between parts of the celebration.

Three Breaths: Crossing the Threshold	Reader
Call the Directions, Casting the Circle	Reader
Invitation/Intention/Purpose – Phases of Our Lives	
Maiden (Reader)	Mother/Nurturer (Reader)
Crone (Reader)	Sage (Reader)

Giving and Sharing Wisdom

1. A crone welcomes the woman being croned.

2. The celebrant herself shares the meaning of being recognized as a crone

3. *Crones, Please share wisdom of what croning or being a crone means to you.*

You are welcome to bring greetings to the new crone, or a reading or a blessing Put these in the cauldron.

Symbols of the Crone/Gift Bag	Reader/Crones
Blessing	Reader
Responses from New Crones	New Crones
Imagine a Woman	Shared Reading
Closing Words and Ritual	Reader

CRONING CEREMONY AND CELEBRATION April 30, 2023, 1-2:30PM
Fellowship Hall/Hybrid

CELEBRATION

Altar/Table

- *Pictures and artifacts of various ages of the woman's life.
- *Either rainbow candles or a white and a black candle
- *A cauldron! (Symbol of the Crone)

For the crone:

Gift bag/A special gift for the Crone/Elder: (see separate section).
Symbol of the croning, such as crown, etc.

MUSIC can be used throughout the celebration. Suggestions:

- *Drumming, rain sticks, rattles and other instruments for informal playing between parts of the service.
- *Suggestions:
- *Songs from the earth-based traditions

THREE BREATHS: Crossing the Threshold

READER

Gather in the Vestibule where the First and Second breathes are read.

Third breath is for stepping over the threshold into another space and time.

As you inhale the *first breath*, be aware of what you are *leaving behind*.

As you exhale, let go of that which would hold you from *moving forward*.

As you inhale the *second breath*, feel the *anticipation* of something new.

As you exhale, feel the *assurance* of what is before you.

As you inhale the third breath, *step over the threshold* into the space and time that is new.

As you exhale, let your spirit embrace the *adventure* that is ahead of you.

Please enter and find seats for yourselves.

CALL THE DIRECTIONS

READER

We may we face the direction being called and respond in unison after each direction.

East: Hail to the **spirits of the East, the spirits of Air**. East is the direction of the Mind, the Will. It is the direction of beginnings and traditionally associated with the Maiden, but we Crones also have new beginnings in our lives: new jobs, new loves, new challenges and accomplishments. Our wills are strong, and our minds are filled with knowledge and wisdom from a lifetime of experiences.

ALL: In the name of Crone, we call the East and invite its spirits to join us.

South: Hail to the **spirits of the South, the spirits of Fire**. South is the direction of creativity, of passion, of transformation. It is traditionally associated with the Mother, those in the summer of life. But we Crones, although our child-bearing days may be over, or though we may not have had children, *nevertheless are overflowing with* creativity and passion, and transformation is one of our special gifts.

ALL: In the name of Crone, we call the South and invite its spirits to join us.

West: Hail to the **spirits of the West, the spirits of Water**. West is the direction of the emotions and is traditionally associated with the autumn of life. We Crones have learned perspective but our lives are still full of emotion: righteous anger against the injustices of the world, love for our families and friends, sadness for the precious things that have passed out of our lives. We understand and live from our own wisdom.

ALL: In the name of Crone, we call the West and invite its spirits to join us.

North: Hail to the **spirits of the North, the spirits of Earth**. This is a direction of solidity, of groundedness, of Winter with its introspection, of Death moving toward rebirth. We mourn the death of loved ones and contemplate our own approaching ends.

ALL In the name of Crone, we call the North and invite its spirits to join us.

Center: Spirit of the Center, of Ourselves. Hail to the energies of our pasts, our present, and our futures. We Crones are aware of being Women of Wisdom. We look to all directions, we give things that contribute to our wholeness, and bless the universe with our presence. We light the candle to represent our wisdom through the ages and forevermore. Blessed Be.

(Joanna Fink, Unitarian Church, Lincoln, NE, adapted)

CASTING THE CIRCLE

READER

Casting of the circle is an act of setting this time and space apart as sacred. At the end of the ceremony, we will use our usual closing words and open the circle as we return to our lives.

Touch hands with those next to you, putting hands together palm to palm

“From you I receive; to you I give.

Hand over hand, the circle we cast.”

Feel the energy of the circle enter through your left hand and pass out through your right hand.

Feel the sky energy enter through your head, and the earth energy through your feet.

Feel your heart expand as you open to the spirit within.

As the energy builds around and through you, feel the flow intensify around the circle, becoming stronger binding us together for the time of this meeting.

Pause for a moment to feel the energy.

You are invited to speak aloud the names of ancestors, goddesses or other beings whose presence you wish to call into the circle.

Pause for calling out names.

The circle is cast. We are between the worlds – the worlds of our lives as we came in and the world of our lives when we leave; the world of light and the world of dark, the physical world and the energy beyond the physical. What we do here between the worlds affects all worlds.

We welcome you all and thank you for being with us in spirit and inspiration.”

INVITATION/INTENTION/PURPOSE – Phases of Our Lives **READER**

We gather together to celebrate those who are entering the Wise Age, whose proper title is from now on among women “Crone” or Women of Wisdom. To set this in context, we note the characteristics of each of the phases.

Phase One: *The Maiden*: (developing)

READER

This phase begins with the first menstrual cycle. The Maiden is a young woman, pure of heart, full of love and curiosity, experimenting with life, trying new things and having new experiences. She carries the seeds of potential: anything is possible and all possibilities are within her. She does not limit herself by the needs or beliefs of others. She is in love with the mystery of life. She is whole unto herself and finds complete meaning within herself.

Phase Two: *The Mother/Nurturer*: (actualizing)

READER

The Mother/Nurturer is filled with strong nurturing energy, care, self-expression and patience. Her selfless devotion and love are unconditional. A path of some kind must be chosen and her responsibility and commitment to it established. In her choosing, lies the creative responsibility for her life, such as children and creative endeavors.

Phase Three: *The Crone*: (acknowledging or awakening)

READER

In 2021 we reviewed the phases of the Goddess and of our lives. The traditional tri-phase goddess (Maiden, Mother, Crone) seemed to warrant an additional phase, considering the lengthening lifespans. The questions were: Where is the additional phase to be placed? By what name will it be known? How will it be described?

The Crone has been the time of celebration throughout the years. This is when the focus in life shifts from the exterior world of conventions to the freedom of being the ruler of inner realms. For the awakened woman holds the keys to sovereignty as ruler of her own life – a critical change. So we kept the Crone as the third phase and added another phase that we are calling Sage.

The Crone phase generally commences around fifty years of age with the chance to be introspective. This is a time for women to work through reclaiming themselves after decades of care to others. This is a powerful transition for women. We often see drastic lifestyle changes and bold steps taken to return to their true selves and recall who they really are deep down. At this passage in life the focus will shift from the exterior world of conventions to the freedom of being the ruler of your own inner realms. (We will come back to celebrate the Crone.)

Phase Four: *The Sage*: (surrendering)

READER

The Sage has foresight, offers guidance to help another, and at the same time let other choose the path towards destiny. She has a wide perspective, gained from years of experience. This includes awareness of her own thoughts and feelings and self-understanding. She can be completely honest because she is centered in her power. She holds the wisdom, teaches and shares stories. In this phase, we recognize the life and death that is present all around the Universe.

GIVING AND SHARING OF WISDOM

1. A crone welcomes the woman being croned.
2. The celebrant shares the meaning of being recognized as a crone.
3. Crones can share wisdom of what croning or being a crone has meant to them.

Read the statements and put them into the caldron (will be gathered and added to the script of the service.)

CRONE/GIFT BAG

Some of the items in the bag might be those listed here, or other items selected when the bag was being prepared. There will be a note explaining the significance of each item, either as a listing or attached to or wrapped with the item.

The Candle represents the light of wisdom. Use your wisdom to lighten the lives of all those for whom you love and care; and with them remember and celebrate all that is good in life.

Crown The circle of the crown is a symbol of the sun and of the earth and the universe. A circle for love that never ends, a circle for arms that embrace. A symbol of friendship, for friendship breaks down all boundaries and has by its very nature to be a circular flow of giving and receiving.

Salt As a woman of experience, you are the salt of the earth. Enrich and preserve all the rich flavor of life.

Sand Dollar has the design of five tears on it's top. Inside are corresponding five parts of shell shaped like doves for hope. Tears and hope are the balance of life.

Sea Glass is worn and smoothed by the waters of life. Our experiences expand our understanding that there are many ways of doing things, not just our own way. As the sea glass has come to us from unknown travels, so our wisdom comes from far and near.

Three Pebbles or stones represent your life. One represents your past; one the present; and the other the future. It does not matter which is which, for we are all interconnected. Time is both her-story and potential happening, in this one moment – always in the now.

Owl Throughout folklore, owls are associated with wisdom of the soul (rather than intellectual wisdom). Owls are often seen as mysterious, mostly because many owls are nocturnal and live within the darkness, which includes magic, mystery, and ancient knowledge. Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom and strategy, had a companion Owl on her shoulder, which revealed unseen truths to her. Owl had the ability to light up Athena's blind side, enabling her to speak the whole truth, as opposed to only a half truth.

BLESSING

READER

And so today, among the people gathered here, you have entered a new stage on your journey through life. Now you can look forward to new ways, to the untapped energy within you that you have yet to discover, the undiscovered opportunities, joys and challenges.

May you receive wisdom and courage to take hold of the rest of your life and live it to the full. Fulfill your dormant ambitions, discover new talents and find the time and space to enjoy your life.

Above you are the stars

Below you are the stones

As time does pass, remember...

Like a star should your wisdom be constant.

Like a stone should your wisdom be firm

Be understanding,

Be wise.

Have patience.

Feel free in giving advice and guidance

for your years of experience have crowned you as a wise woman.

Have no fear, and let not the ways or words of the unenlightened give you unease.

For your spirit of wisdom and love will see you through the years ahead

Now go forward into the days of your future

and may they be good and long upon the earth

May your presence among us bring gladness and beauty.

May your life be a blessing to all those she encounters.

May you travel your path with heart,

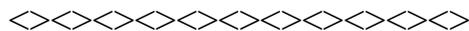
and rejoicing, reach the end of your soul's desire.

All present here offer to you, our blessings for your future happiness. We offer to you our love and support as we too remember and celebrate with you the friendship, love and wisdom on which the world is founded

So be it.

Let us congratulate you, crowned crone and wise woman.

From Rev Lesley Edwards MA BTh, Choice Ceremonies, website, adapted



Unison: We are women! We are **women**. We are **WOMEN OF WISDOM**

RESPONSES

Response from new Crone:

I am the beauty of the dark moon and the dark earth beneath your feet. I am repose in the evening of your life. I am the skin and bones of your existence. I am she who is weathered by time, aged to perfection. I am midwife to the dying, promise of transition and rebirth in the cycle of life and death and life again. All acts of birthing and dying are my rituals.

"I am the darkness you fear and welcome. I am the freedom to express your essence. I am the courage to cast aside the opinions of others as you live life according to your own plan, in tune with your own truth. I am the wisdom that can guide the world. I am the energy of the old, the knowledge of when to end, of when to cut the cord. I was with you at your birthing and I will be with you to ease the transition of your dying into the world beyond."

IMAGINE A WOMAN by Patricia Lynn Reilly (Cakes: Threshold, p.74) **Share reading around the room.**

Imagine a woman who believes it is right and good she is woman,
A woman who honors her experience and tells her stories,
One who refuses to carry the sins of others within her body and life.

Imagine a woman who believes she is good,
A woman who trusts and respects herself, who listens to her needs and desires,
And meets them with tenderness and grace.

Imagine a woman who has acknowledged the past's influence on the present,
A woman who has walked through her past
Who has healed into the present.

Imagine a woman who authors her own life,
A woman who exerts, initiates, and moves on her own behalf,
Who refuses to surrender except to her truest self
And to her wisest voice.

Imagine a woman who finds (the Divine) in herself,
A woman who imagines the Divine in her image and likeness,
Who designs her own spirituality and allows it to inform her life.

Imagine a woman in love with her own body,
A woman who believes her body is enough, just as it is,
Who celebrates her body, its rhythms and cycles
As an exquisite resource.

Imagine a woman who honors the face of (the Divine) in her changing face,
A woman who celebrates the accumulation of her years and her wisdom,
Who refuses to use precious energy
Disguising the changes in her body and life.

Imagine a woman who values the women in her life,
A woman who sits in circles of women,
Who is reminded of the truth about herself when she forgets.

CLOSING WORDS

READER

We live our wisdom every day, at all ages. Consider the women who you would call wise. Do not compare yourself with them; you are wise within yourself. Know that you are, indeed, counted in their number. Come, share your wisdom as you live. Acknowledge wisdom as part of your being. Wisdom shared is wisdom growing, enriching all who you touch –including yourself.

CLOSING RITUAL

READER

As we extinguish our candle(s), we release the energy of the directions and open the circle. We return to the world changed by our time together.

To the spirits that have joined us, we thank you for your presence in our circle.
Go if you must, stay if you will.

Tis with great love and gratitude we bid you farewell.

The person who lit a candle extinguishes it, in sequence. And/or turn to each direction briefly.

The circle is open, but not broken.

Response:

By the earth that is her body, And the air that is her breath,
By the fire of her bright spirit, And the waters of her living womb,
May the peace of the goddess be ever in your heart.
Merry meet, merry part, And merry meet again. Blessed be.