

Celebrating the Summer Solstice

Based on a sermon by Kelly LoGiudice

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Sermon

This year, summer solstice is June 21 marking the longest day of the year. At this time, our sun, that giver of heat and light, is at its most powerful in the northern hemisphere, and the earth is fertile with the bounty of growing life. As we watch our gardens blossom, bees buzzing about, birds sweetly singing, we celebrate summer's warmth and the sparkle of life. Every agricultural society shows signs of marking this high point of summer in some way.

Our Unitarian Universalist 7th principle joins us with the rhythms of nature, encouraging us to celebrate the summer solstice. We "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."

Among the Six Sources of our living tradition, two directly inform our focus today:

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
- Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Today we are going to share two rituals, a fire ceremony and a stone ceremony, that will help to attune us to the gifts of this time of year.

Fire Ceremony

Summer solstice, when the sun is at its strongest, is also the time when daylight begins to shorten and we start the slow decline into darkness of winter again. While calendar describes 21 June as the official start of summer, the summer solstice has usually been called Midsummer and focuses on this cycle of life. In the mythic language of European culture, Midsummer means the death of the Sun God or Oak King, so the Holly King may reign for the next six months. Large bonfires were lit for Fire Ceremonies or large wheels of fire were rolled downhill into water to illustrate the quenching of the sun's power. Some wheels of fire are rolled to this day. Later in the year at winter solstice, the Sun God or Oak King is reborn again, completing the cycle of life and marking the end of winter's power and the return of light and hope.

Today we are going to hold our own Fire Ceremony inviting in fire's cleansing power. It is a good time of year to clean out the cobwebs, get rid of things we no longer need and stories and thoughts that hold us back. In order to move forward, it is helpful to make room for new ideas by letting go of the old.

Let's take a few moments to think of those patterns or habits in our life that hold us back from reaching our goals; those patterns or habits that we no longer want in our lives. Today let the death of the Sun God represent an end to these habits thus making room for a more positive path. As you think of what you would like to release, I invite you to come up and light a candle in silence, letting the fire burn away the old making room for the new. Take a few deep slow breathes

to sweep out your cobwebs.

These fires have burned away the old.

Stone Meditation

We have now released what holds us back and are ready to create intentions for moving forward.

Now we will pass out stones to everyone. As you choose a stone begin to think of what you would like to bring into your life today. We will let these stones hold all our wishes and intentions for this season helping to create an amazing summer ahead for all of us.

Let us take a moment to look around and notice our connections with each other. Look around at these people who hold us in their hearts during difficult times, who celebrate our joys and who support our own personal spiritual journeys. Let us realize how blessed with abundance we truly are. Reflect on how ideas are planted and nurtured in this fertile field of community.

Hold your stone in your hands. Sit comfortably, and I invite you to close your eyes. Let's invoke wonderful summer time energy. Think of the brilliant sun's light shining down and illuminating you and your stone, warming you and your spirit.

As this powerful light shines down, think of all the wishes you have for this summer. Visualize your summer playing out in front of you. Maybe you are swimming in the ocean or visiting with family and friends. Maybe you are resting in a backyard hammock. Whatever you wish for, take a few moments now and think clearly about all that you want to create for your summer.

What are your hopes for yourself, for your families, for this community, and for the world?

Let the light of Father Sun shine on our hopes and let those hopes be held in the warmth of these stones. When you are ready you may open your eyes.

These stones now hold all the wishes we have for this summer. I encourage you to place these stones in your home or garden or in the community garden here.

Throughout the summer Father Sun will shed light on our intentions while Mother earth will embrace and hold our wishes helping them manifest for a beautiful summer.

Mother Earth, bring the fire and passion of Father Sun into our beings so that like Him we may shine and be loved by you. Lend us earth and water, air and fire. Fill us with these elements, these powers of creation, that we may tend them because they are your garden, and that we may be happy and at one with you. So mote it be.