A Wiccan Funeral Ritual

by Maphis (Samuel Wagar)

The person to be buried should be buried wrapped in a cloth. Her body should decompose as quickly as possible to nourish other life. It may not be legally possible to be buried like this and so burial of ashes from a cremation would be preferable to a hermetically sealed casket.

People should be encouraged to make their wills long before death specifying the style of their burial. It is extremely important for people whose families do not approve of their religious choice that they specify in detail these matters and appoint a Wiccan or a lawyer, not a non-Wiccan family member, as executor of the will. There are three parts to the ritual - parts one and three preferably to be performed in a hall and publicly, part two at the graveside. Only the closest friends, coven-mates and family should be at the graveside.

This ritual is for cases when the dead person was not comforted and assisted at the moment of death. Even under the best circumstances the spirit will sometimes remain partly tied to the corpse, in a state of greater or lesser awareness and confusion and pain, for a period of time unless assisted to journey on. And so the dead person is a primary guest at the funeral, because she may very well need to be there. In addition, the members of her family and coven and her friends can assist her in journeying on - and themselves in grieving - by acknowledging her and blessing her.

**THE FUNERAL RITUAL**

**Part 1:**

The Priestess and Priest, dressed in green and black respectively, shall conduct the ceremony. Their assistants, dressed in red and black, shall assist, act as ushers.

The ritual space will be prepared as follows: cleared of furniture, with a candle at each of the cardinal directions and two flanking the main altar. The corpse should be laid out at the main altar. Sweep and Cast the Circle as usual. (As the mourners wait at the edge to the ritual space, the Priestess shall sweep out the Circle widdershins (counter-clockwise) while concentrating and grounding. She shall replace the broom by the main altar, pick up the sword and cast the Circle widdershins while saying:

**Priestess**

This is a place which is not a place

in a time which is not a time

halfway between the worlds of the Gods

and of mortals.

*Bring people into the Circle as usual. (The Priestess takes the Priest by the hands and pulls him into the Circle. They turn in a half-turn widdershins as he comes in and then he pulls in the next person and so on until everyone is in the Circle, after which she takes up the sword and closes off the doorway left in the Circle through which people had entered.)*

*Call the directions widdershins, beginning with West. The assistants should do this and the directions should have been assigned ahead of time.*

**West:**

As the sun sets

So our friend has left us

The water of our tears like the salt water of the sea, and

like the water of our mothers' womb, blesses this Circle.

**South:**

As life is a day

So our friend has passed into the night

The fire of our life, the memories and courage, the

strength given to us by our friend blesses this Circle.

**East**:

As all that falls shall rise again

So our friend will be reborn

The air we breath, this treasure of our life, the

compassionate caring we give each other blesses this Circle.

**North:**

As the Earth forms us

So our friend shall return to the earth

Our Mother feeds us, and clothes us.

She gives us everything and in the end she takes our bodies back.

And earth blesses this Circle.

*Drawing Down The Moon and Sun*

*The Priestess and Priest recognize the presence of the Gods in the Circle and specifically heighten their own awareness of the presence of the divine, acting from the divine part of themselves through the ritual.*

**PRIEST:**

You are the Goddess, as are all women.

You give birth.

You feed the children from your own body.

And You take them back for a new birth.

World without end, eternal creation.

**PRIESTESS:**

And you are the God, as are all men.

You are born.

You live and You die, only to be born again.

All-Father, All-Destroyer, ruler of the land of the dead.

**TOGETHER:**

Birth and death.

Over and over and over.

*The Priestess turns and addresses the corpse*:

You are dead. None should ever die alone. I am here to help you with your death.

There is only love, the greatest Mystery. I reach behind my fear. I open my heart and my eyes in the light of this love.

Our lives are formed of many others and we form other lives in turn. And when we are here with you after you die we honor your life.

There is only love. The love of the Goddess gives birth to the universe. The love of our parents gives birth to us. The love of our friends and family sustains our life. Kindness, love, and pleasure - we are formed from these and we form each other. When we die we leave them behind us.

You have left your family. You have left sex, and even gender. You cannot be a woman or a man and enter the other world. You have left behind your body. None who have bodies can pass into the other world.

The Goddess is taking you back now, the Great Mother. Her womb is the Earth that will recieve your body, your body is a seed now, a seed of other lives.

In a sacred space we have gathered to honour you and to give you some things to take on the journey with you.

**PRIEST** - *addresses the Circle:*

Please come up now if you can and speak to your dead. Tell her/him whatever you need to. Help in the journey into death.

*Addresses the corpse:*

I will remember you at Samhain and bless you then.

*The Circle will chant, quietly while everyone who wishes to comes to the main altar and talks to the dead person:*

We all come from the Goddess

and to Her we shall return

like a drop of rain

falling to the ocean

We all come from the Horned One

and through Him we are reborn

corn and grain, corn and grain

all that falls shall rise again.

When everyone who wishes to has talked the Priestess will say:

**Priestess**

Journey on now, sister. We will follow when we can. May you be born again at the same time and in the same place as those you knew and loved in this life. May you know them again and love them again.

*And now the body will be ceremoniously wrapped and the Circle ended. The Directions will be dismissed as the body is being wrapped with the following:*

**East** - The sun will rise again.

**South** - Life continues

**West** - Love is all that we can be sure of.

**North -** Only the mother is eternal.

*A pillar candle shall be lit after the body is wrapped and left to burn while the crowd files out of the Circle.*

*The ushers will direct people to food and drink and quiet conversation to continue while the Priestess, Priest and the dead person's coven-mates and closest people proceed to the grave with the body.*

*When they have finished their private part of the ritual they will rejoin everyone else for a reception at which stories of noteable things done by the dead person and prayers are offered up.*

**Part Two:**

The grave has been dug and prepared. A Circle will be cast around the grave and the directions called as follows:

**East:**

We welcome the spirits of the ancestors and the honoured dead not yet reborn.

**South:**

We welcome our heroes and inspiration.

**West:**

We welcome the Ancestors to incarnate in our children and grandchildren and in our families.

**North:**

We welcome our deaths and our lives.

*The body is gently lowered into the grave.*

Priestess and Priest bless food and drink:

It is not we that bless this food and drink

But it which blesses us.

In its nature it nourishes our bodies

and in sharing food and drink

we create community.

Each person takes a drink and pours some into the grave, eats something and places part in the grave. When all have finished the grave is filled in.

The directions are dismissed quietly with informal thanks. The mourners head back to the reception.

A glass of wine and some cakes are left behind at the grave side.

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