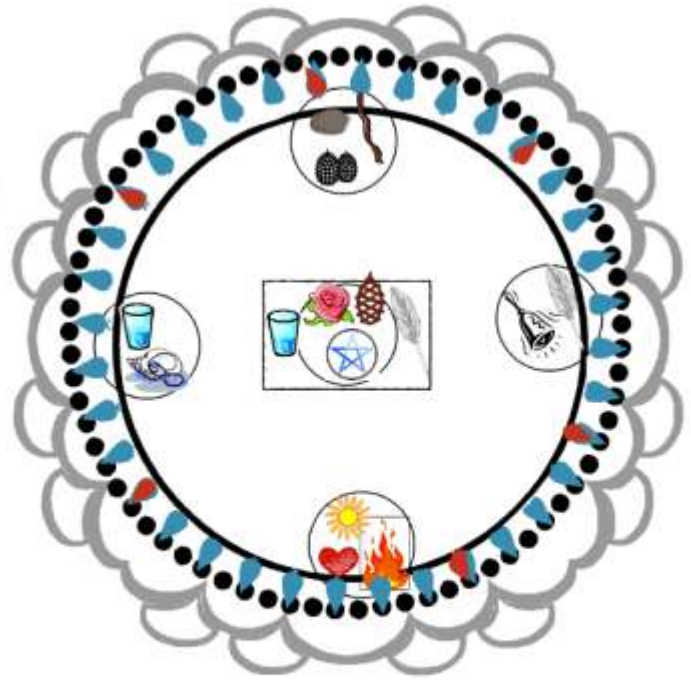


AN OVERVIEW OF A WICCAN ALTAR BEHIND BARS AND A LITTLE BIT ABOUT CASTING A CIRCLE



Supported by volunteers, Mother Earth Ministries' mission is to provide accurate information about Wicca (and some other Neo-Pagan/Heathen religions) to interested inmates and prison staff, and to help Pagan/Heathen inmates study and practice their faiths.

Although we cannot be involved in lawsuits, we can answer questions about the conventional practice of Wicca, and we can help Pagan/Heathen inmates adapt conventional practice to comply with prison restrictions and regulations.

Our book, *Enchantment Encumbered*, is a Book of Shadows for Wiccan inmates, and is available for \$20 (payable by check or money order, or with stamps) from Mother Earth Ministries at the address below; the price includes postage.

For more information, visit our website (see below), e-mail us at Scribe@MotherEarthMinistries.org, or write to us at the address below. A self-addressed, stamped return envelope isn't required, but is much appreciated.

All around the Circle illustrated above, Fire looks like this: adapted from CASTING A CIRCLE in *An Introduction to Wicca*, an MEM brochure:

Salt and Water like this:

and Air looks like this:

In that Circle, North is at the top, South is at the bottom, East is to the right, and West is to the left. The altar is in the middle – and the altar can be either round or rectangular.

At each Quarter, you only need one symbol of the Element that belongs there, but you can use more symbols if you want to.

The pentagram on the altar represents all four physical Elements, along with the fifth Element, Spirit.

Witches create sacred space to worship in every time we work or celebrate. We start by drawing (casting) a Circle around the space we're using. We cast it first with Fire. See a ring of blue flame, like a gas burner on low, burning around the outline of your Circle. (Outside, we use an athame, a ritual blade (pronounced uh-thah-may); inside, use a wand or your index finger. Say something like, "I cast this Circle with Fire to represent my love for the Goddess and God, and to make this place sacred for my worship."

Then cast again with Salt (representing Earth) and Water together, to cleanse the Circle. Say something like, "I cleanse this Circle of all negativity." Then cast once more with incense (or breath) for Air, to "charge" the Circle with the task of holding the energy you raise till you are ready to release it.

Next, "call the Quarters." Start at North or East, and go to your right. We always move to the right in Circle because that's the way the Sun moves; we call that direction of movement *deosil* (usually pronounced day-o-sill). Invite the Guardians of each Direction to witness your Circle and to bring to your work Their special qualities.

East: clarity (from academic understanding to seeing relationships right) and new beginnings.

South: activity, courage, social passion (for a cause)

West: emotion (love, grief, jealousy; death, birth, comfort, empathy ...)

North: strength of all sorts, from bulging muscles to infinite patience

Use a feather or a bell to represent Air (East), a red stone, a picture of a heart, a picture of flame, or a picture of the Sun for Fire (South), a paper cup or a shell for Water (West) and a small crystal, a stone, a twig, or a pinecone for Earth (North).

Now your Circle is prepared and you can invoke the Gods. The Great Mother and the Horned God have many names. If you don't know or favor any, use Their oldest names:

Oh, Great Mother, Eternal Source, You who are grave and womb, be with me now in my Circle and bless my work. Hail and welcome!

Mighty Horned God, Hunter and Hunted, like us, you die and are reborn! Be with me now in my Circle and bless my work. Hail and welcome!

You can represent the Goddess on your altar with ... a shell, a flower, or a drawing that symbolizes Her to you. (It doesn't matter how well you can draw.) You can represent the God with ... a leaf, a pinecone, or another drawing. What matters is that what symbolizes Them on the altar is meaningful to you.

When you've done your magic on a Moon or celebrated the Sabbat, you are ready for "Cakes and Ale." We call the ritual meal Cakes and Ale even when we're using something else, like crackers and water. Outside, we consecrate with an athame (the ritual blade). Without one, use your hands. Cup your hands over the "ale." Project your vitality into the liquid, and visualize it glowing with light. Sip, thinking or saying that you will never thirst. Then, hold your hand over the "cakes" and project your energy into them. Say, aloud or silently, "Blesséd are these cakes, that give us life from death." Say or think that you will never hunger, and take a bite. Leave a sip and a bite for the God/dess.

When you are done, close your Circle. First, thank the Great Mother and the Horned God for Their presence, protection and empowerment. Bid them "hail and farewell" or say "go in peace, and blesséd be." Then go to each Direction in turn and thank the Guardians for their presence. Bid them a respectful "hail and farewell," or say, "go in peace and blesséd be."

Finally, walk around the Circle one more time. Remember that blue fire you drew the Circle with? Draw it back into yourself. Do not leave it to dissipate on its own. As you do this, say "the Circle is open, but unbroken: merry meet, merry part, and merry meet again."



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