

Thank you for registering for Labyrinth Network Northwest's Quarterly Event

Fall Ceremony Workshop

Sat. Oct. 11, 2008

2 – 6 pm

St Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, 11265 Cabot St. Beaverton, OR 97005

This workshop is designed in two parts. The first is an opportunity to experience a ceremony purely as a participant, without having to take notes or otherwise engage on the mental level.

The second part will provide instruction on designing your own meaningful ceremony/ritual with examples of themes, archetypal systems and ideas for bringing groups together for transformation. There will be small group, large group and personal time incorporated into the workshop. Below are several paragraphs we'd like to ask you to read in preparation for the experiential part of the workshop.

Every ceremony includes a period of **preparation** in which intention and focus are honed and distilled. In the course of life when we are brought to a point of transition we naturally seek those tools that facilitate our transformation. Ceremony and ritual help us bridge the distance between the aspect of self we are releasing and the new one that we are embracing.

The focus of our ceremony this time is fall or autumn. Of course you will be bringing to this workshop the raw material of the particular place in which you find yourself at the moment. However, as we've become more disconnected from the natural rhythms of the season in modern life we can miss the archetypal transformations that the round of seasons naturally offers. It can be very grounding to observe our life circumstances within the context of the season and to that end we are asking each of you to **spend 3 periods of time walking out in nature before you attend the workshop.**

Find a place where you can walk comfortably, without concern for your safety, where you are among plants and trees, on the beach, in the desert, a city park, anywhere that you feel connected to the natural world. As you walk allow yourself to begin focusing on your breath, evening out your inhalation and exhalation. Perhaps you can begin walking 4 steps inhaling and 4 steps exhaling. Allow this to grow longer and smoother as you proceed. Try this for about 5-10 minutes. Any thoughts can be released with an intention to return to your breathing pattern.

Once you're comfortable with this, consider what the most pressing issues of your life are at the present moment. There are many concerns related to the "autumn" of our lives, as well as the autumn season. As the natural world heads towards autumn it releases what is ripe, or over-ripe, begins the long turn inward in which life force is gathered for the passage through the winter. That which is worth preserving is solidified into seed, the source of new life. There is a winnowing process. The useful is separated from what is now un-needed. Death is anticipated, along with the cold and dark. There is an integration of the newly grown plants into the tapestry of the landscape as roots grow deep and intertwined. Essence is distilled into the essential parts of each plant.

Ask nature to present you with a gift that either mirrors or gives information about where you find yourself in life at this moment and then continue your walk with an open heart and eye, watchful for any way that nature joins you in the place you currently occupy. **Gather 12 similar pieces of whatever nature presents.** Allow yourself the full 3 walks to gather these items. If you are gifted with a pine cone then gather 11 more, or a particular **seed pod, stone, stick, flower or leaf**, then gather 11 more. Allow yourself to be open to communication with your natural surroundings. Listen and be willing to receive. The meaning of the gift will become clear at some point, perhaps before, during or even after the ceremony. Let yourself trust in the part of you that joins with the rhythm of the natural world.

Bring these 12 items to the Ceremony Workshop on Oct. 11th. Together we will create a mandala with them. Mandala is the Sanskrit word for “circle”. Mandalas are used in many religious and spiritual traditions worldwide, including Hindu, Tibetan Buddhist, Native American and even modern psychology. It’s a concrete symbol for our connection to our deepest center, the present moment, a picture of the contents of our spiritual or psychological selves. Their role in healing the crises of transition is well known and it is in this capacity that we’ll be using the mandala in our workshop.

In this instance it will be a circular creation using the 12 elements that we bring from nature. Each person will have an opportunity to place those elements within this “picture” that we create together and share any meaning or insight that you gathered as you recognized the gift that nature gave to you.

Arriving at the Workshop Space in St. Bartholomew’s Parish Hall

Every ceremony begins with an experience of **separation**. This process of letting go, leaving behind and entering into the ceremonial space is designed to separate us from our ordinary reality. Ordinary reality is dominated by the mind. Non-ordinary reality is characterized by aligning yourself with the Divine, opening yourself to receive guidance, solace or sustenance from beyond your mind-centered small self.

When we cross the threshold into sacred space this separating and opening process begins. In the same way that we become silent upon entering our place of worship in order to begin our alignment with Spirit, we are asking each of you to enter the Parish Hall at St. Bartholomew’s in silence. Let this silence be a source of comfort, a permission to relax into an inner space that is nourishing and calm.

Simply find the place you feel most comfortable sitting in the circle, arrange your belongings quietly and then turn your attention to “holding space” for the ceremony. Holding space is a reference to the way that each of our personal thoughts and movements contribute to the overall “energy” of a space. When we can calm and quiet our inner chatter and turn our attention to the expansive nature of the Mystery we are adding to the energetic field that makes ceremony so powerful. As each of us turns our attention to deep silence and an awake readiness, we create a unified field that facilitates transformation.

There will be a registration area where you can gather yourself before entering the workshop space, speak to the greeters, visit the restroom, make your name tag and any other necessary preparations before you begin.