

Fire liturgy

1. Welcome and Greeting: Leader:

I welcome you all here to celebrate together,
remembering that we stand on Kaurua Land. Let us
greet the people next to us. (pause)
Now let us say together:

All: We are gathered together to be mindful of the riches of creation and
our inter-dependence with it and with each other.

May our time together in sharing this ritual bring us renewal in our
daily lives.

Song: Fire of Love.

May the energy of love keep us warm
when we're fearful,
when we're tired.

May we turn towards our source and shine! (repeat)

May reliance upon love keep us safe
when we're broken,
when we're ill.

May we find the fire inside us and sing! (repeat)

2. Intentions and Hopes:

Leader - May the earth, home to us and to the myriad of living and
non-living creation, inspire us with wonder. May it
lead us into the mysteries of Sophia, the wise and
playful Creator, who is reflected in her creation. We
pray that her wisdom may teach us to value her
creatures and to live in right relationship with all of
them, and with each other. May her playfulness lead
us to joy.

All: May the earth inspire us with wonder.
(percussion music - rainstick, clapping, drums, maraccas)

Leader - At this time we seek to enter more fully into Sophia's life
through contemplation of the particular gift of Wisdom's energy. Together
with Hildegard of Bingen, we join in celebration of the fiery energy of
God,
flaming in the beauty of the land
shining in the waters,
burning in the sun,
and quickening all things
by unseen, all sustaining life.

All: We join in celebration of the fiery energy of God. (percussion)

Leader - Our planet revolves around a great fiery sphere that gifts us
with energy. Beyond us, countless galaxies flicker and wheel, showing
forth the passion of their Creator.
Fire, sign of sacred energy
we salute you!

All: Fire, sign of sacred energy, we salute you! (percussion)

Your flame flickers atop a thousand columns of wax
lighting the cool dark of churches,

shimmering in shrines and temples.
We know you in all times and places,
in every dawn, in stars and sliding comets,
the Burning Bush and fiery ghats
breath of dancing dragons and
ancient Olympic torch;
in Pentecostal tongues of fire
and the inspired passion of artists and lovers.
We salute the spirit, alive and dancing.
All: We salute the spirit, alive and dancing! (percussion)

3. Purification- All:

Loving energy of God,
we know the darkness
of being depleted,
of having nothing.
We know the blankness
of a sapped will,
of lack of interest,
of failed energy.

We acknowledge that we misuse energy:
in bursts of anger, spurts of malice,
misguided work for our own glory,
in greed that denies the rights of others
and destroys the life of earth.

We know that we often lose our way
in searching for our inner strength,
that vital link with you.

In our weakness, grant us
the love and nurture that we need
for the spark that ignites imagination,
for a mind alight, an adrenaline rush
full of ideas and passion and joy-
free, in us, energy for justice now..

Cleansing Ritual: (All participants invited to write on a piece of paper a word or two signifying elements in our lives that block our energy. Then to come forward and burn it in the lighted brazier.)

4. Story Telling (Reader):

In the beginning, earth was a swirling fiery mass of gas and molten rock and metal. Our white-hot sun burnt with dangerous violence, unleashing huge energies. Nothing could live in our solar system, and yet the raw materials were, through unleashed chaos, being shaped for future life.

Chaos ran its course, earth's surface cooled, gases condensed into precious rain that fell for millions of years. New shapes of energy emerged as bolts of lightning split the clouds and chemical bonds between elements formed and re-formed.

Then a milder sun shone on vast warm oceans, and living cells appeared. They drank in the sun's dependable energy and began the incredible journey which allowed a myriad of life-forms of amazing diversity to make their home on earth in relation to each other. Living and non-living creatures formed a sustainable whole. Sometimes one life-form dominated, sometimes another, but the on-going pattern of energy never failed.

It is only recently that Sophia's creative energy has appeared in new forms, as abilities evolved in new directions amongst her creatures. Intelligence, creativity and compassion were incarnated, especially in human beings, bringing hopes for a kindlier world, where the suffering of all might be less.

And yet, the violence of chaos still attends the growth of new possibilities on earth. We are failing to appreciate the order which keeps our world safe; we fail to see our own arrogance. We have shaken the vital balance between order and energy which sustains and nurtures life.

If humans recognise that we depend upon all other creatures for our life, if we acknowledge our true place as simply one amongst the myriad of earth creatures, we can maintain this priceless balance, and continue to be fed by its energy. The choice is ours.

All: Yes, the choice is ours.

We will act to maintain this priceless balance. Sophia, guide us.

Leader: For a few moments, consider the action you will take to maintain the balance (pause).

Energy Song:

Burning sun and rushing waters,
molten depths of earth:
endless energy.

Vital order forms and quickens:
purpose shapes the raw
endless energy.

Precious planet, diverse creatures-
life depends upon
endless energy.

5. Praise and Supplication: Reader:

We gaze at the night sky
seeing the continuing explosion of the cosmos,
watching worlds born of fire
as they die and are renewed.
In our living world we stand and gaze in awe.

All: In our living world we stand and gaze in awe.

Reader:

We wake to a new day,
as light blesses plains and sea and hills,
colours shining again in trees, flowers and all creatures,
love warming earth's community.
We wake to shining beauty and gaze in wonder.

All: We wake to shining beauty and gaze in wonder.

Reader:

As the seasons cycle onward in our lives
we ask for your warmth in winter,
your returning energy after weakness,
your light to guide us home.
Dear Sophia, we follow your light to our home.

All: Dear Sophia, we follow your light to our home.

Guided Meditation: Please sit comfortably, with you feet flat on the floor. Take off your shoes if you wish, and close your eyes.

In the darkness behind your closed eyelids, imagine a single candle flame. It burns gently, quietly. Notice the colours: the light blueness at its base, tapering up to yellow. Notice how it has no certain edges, but merges gradually into the air surrounding it. But it is not lost in the air; it is a definite flame, rounded, shining, changing but always itself, always a flame.

Now imagine this flame as your spirit, as an expression of your life, of who you are. This flame always burns in you; it is the energy, the soul of who you are. But it changes, with seasons of your life, sometimes adapting, sometimes just holding on, sometimes celebrating, but always there, always you.

Watch it as it flares up tall, dancing, flickering in the breezes that dance around it, playing with the air currents, weaving a pattern, sinuous, enjoying its life and all that surrounds it.

Remember a time when your flame danced like this. Listen to the music that plays with it, bask in the air, celebrate the movement that calls it into life. Spend some time remembering. It may have been yesterday, it may have been some time ago; it may have been when you were a child. Watch yourself as you live with this dancing flame giving you life.

Now watch your flame bend under the force of a stronger wind that blows it about. It looks as if the wind attacks, almost, beating at the flame, wanting to snuff it out. It feels like a threat, as if the candle might go out under its force. But notice that instead it bends, bows and waves about; it will not go out.

Remember times when you have felt such wind, have felt bent down, as if your energy has gone, deserted you, lost in the wildness of the wind. Sometimes it is hard to believe that the flame goes on, still, but it does. And when the wind softens, the flame leaps upward, even more alive than before. The wind that beats at our face, forcing us back as we try to go forward, strangely reminds us of our life and makes it burn more brightly.

Now watch it as the flame sparks like stars in the sky, delicate and winking. You can see its beauty because of the darkness surrounding it. There are many stars in the blackness of night, some sitting apart from others, some joining with others to form patterns, some gathered into huge sweeps of silver whiteness - single stars, but part of a larger life.

Think now of the star-life in your night-time, still there in daylight, but seen only in the darkness. Just as we look at the night sky, sometimes we need to watch patiently until we see the moments of brightness, especially when we are surrounded with the lights of city and street and cars. Perhaps you need to move away from all that, into the stillness of country or desert or sea to watch quietly for your star to show its face. It will not be rushed, but it will be there, a fiery, powerful source of energy, there from as long ago as we know. But we must be patient with ourselves, with the night-time, to see it in its beauty.

Now watch as the flame burns low and dull, smaller, almost depleted. Perhaps you even have to look closely to see if it is still there. But it is; it shines still, it is energy and life still, but low and quiet. This is a season too. This is still the flame of our life.

Think of a time when your flame of life was so low. Maybe you have been sick or sad or life has seemed to abandon you. You may need to look closely

now and wait on the gentle breeze to coax the flame into its fullness. Perhaps you need to move it, to find the air currents that will bring it life; perhaps you need to fan it gently. But remember, you will need to treat it with care and love; you cannot try hard; instead, you must tend it, slowly, quietly, responding to its quiet movement.

Or does it flame tall and fierce, full of power? Upward, blazing, searching! Watch the energy as it flames. How do you feel about this flame? Are you afraid of its power? Are you afraid of being burnt? Are you afraid of burning others? Or do you feel excitement, potential, the life you have been looking for?

Think of this time of blazing in your life. Maybe it is the fire of anger, or of passion, or of desire. Notice the energy asking for your response. What will you do? Is it time to go with this fierce energy, to gather its power and life? Is it time to give thanks for the glory of its life? Is it time to listen to its voice, to hear all it has to give you, and then wisely to direct its energy?

Watch your flame quietly.

What does it need right now?

What is the flame like in you at the moment?

Now slowly return to the room around you. Feel your weight on the chair. Wriggle your fingers and toes. Become aware of yourself in this room. In your own time, as you are ready, open your eyes.

6. Transformation and Thanksgiving:

Reader: Let us say together:

All: Sophia God, friend of creation, ground of reality, wellspring of wisdom, we praise you for the life-giving gift of energy. Strengthen our efforts to work with you in cherishing, respecting and sharing your gift.

Ritual: Leader: For a few moments, consider the energy within you and how you may cherish and use it. (pause, while 4 candles are passed from the 4 directions between each person present. Then:) **Leader:** Let us say together:

All: We give thanks for the gift of fire.

Speaker 1: We are thankful that our ancestors learnt to make fire: a spark from the striking of stones, the rubbing of stick on bark kindles dry grass and twigs to flame: life-giving, warming, cleansing, for cooking, heating, healing. This uniquely human ability has allowed us to explore many creative pathways: pottery and metals, glass, and engines of all kinds. .

All: We give thanks. (4 people shaking maraccas)

Speaker 2: We are thankful that in this land the indigenous people knew how to make and keep fire, a burning coal carried from place to place for land clearing, seed-releasing, creating new habitats. We are thankful that we may learn from them how to live better with this land.

All: We give thanks. (maraccas)

Speaker 1: We are thankful for the comfort of sitting at a cosy fireside, the simple pleasure of gazing into flames, of watching wood transformed as it burns to coals and ash. We are thankful for the beauty of fire's colour and form and scent, the mystery and challenge of it for children learning to hold a burning stick or dance around a bonfire.

All: We give thanks. (maraccas)

Speaker 2: We are thankful for our imaginative spirits, which draw on these living images of fire to enlarge our understanding of divine energies beyond our comprehension. We may see the dancing spirit of Creation reflected in our own hearths, our own campfires and in children's delight.

All: We give thanks. (maraccas)

Song: Day by Day.

Alone, each one, day by day,
careful, constant, loving:
we tend the flame.

All together, day by day,
careful, constant, loving:
we tend the flame.

Stronger, weaker, day by day,
each one and together,
we tend the flame.

7. Blessing:

Speaker 1:

Sophia/God, bless us with the constancy of your energy
through all the fiery aspects of your love:
varying in colours and shapes,
bursting forth in light and warmth,
drawing down to glowing depth,
celebrating with us through change.

Speaker 2

Bless us as, like fire, you arise
in unexpected places
dancing with our joys,
diminished by our misdeeds:
constant fire at the heart of life.

All:

Bless us, Sophia/God, with the warmth
of loving relationships
with all of your creation,
with all we touch,
and with you.

Sophia Liturgy Group May, 2005

We invite you to use this liturgy and adapt it, if you wish, to your own circumstances. Please acknowledge that you received it from **Sophia Women's Spirituality Centre**, Adelaide, South Australia.

To perform it in this form it would be good to have a Leader, a Reader for the Story Telling, a Reader for Praise and Supplication, a Guided Meditation Leader, and 2 Speakers each for Thanksgiving and Blessing as well as percussion instruments and players.