

An Earthseed Ritual on the Elements for a Small Gathering



John Halstead created the majority of this ritual drawing on texts from Earthseed's ["Book of the Living"](#). It also draws on the Five Elements motif that is common to Neo-Pagan ritual. I've expanded the ritual using some more of the texts from Earthseed's ["Book of the Living"](#) and have made some other adaptations to John's [original ritual](#).

As John originally said, adaptation is at the heart of Earthseed, so please adapt this ritual to suit your needs. For example, you may choose other elements to represent change, or choose other texts from the "Book of the Living" to correspond to each element. - Tony Schlisser, Shaper & Adapter

INTRODUCTION

This ritual is specifically for a small Gathering of three to fifteen or so Shapers. Some parts are designed to be read in Unison, and some by one or more Callers.

PREPARATION

A place to gather should be selected and all necessary items should be brought to it. The Gathering space can be indoors or out, but should be quiet, private, and conducive to ritual. Accommodations for varying levels of physical ability should be made as well (such as seating for those who cannot stand for long periods).

Gather together a piece of clay, a bowl and a cup of water, a cauldron or other fireproof bowl (with Epsom salts and alcohol or a candle in it), enough scraps of paper and writing utensils for the group, matches or a lighter, and a table or other stable horizontal surface to act as a Focus. The Focus should be at the center of the Gathering space and the other items placed on it.

Other natural items appropriate to the season or location --- flowers/plants, rocks, seeds, etc. --- may be placed on the Focus as well. A bound copy (handwritten or published) of Earthseed's "[Book of the Living](#)" would be appropriate as well. Other options for the Gathering space would include ambient soundtracks of nature (forest, sea, rain, etc.) playing softly. The table/Focus can have a cloth of a color appropriate to the season or reason for the Gathering. If the space is dark, enough lighting should be provided for folks to be able to read. Enough copies of the liturgy should be provided as well so that folks will be able to participate.

GATHER

Caller

Invite everyone to gather into a circle around the Focus. Offer words of welcome, acknowledge new people.

Pass a rock or some other object from the Focus around the circle (“talking object”) and have each person in turn introduce themselves and speak to whatever is on their mind at this time.

Pass paper and writing utensils around so that folks (including the Caller(s)) can write down something important to them.

Option: Use a lit smudge or incense stick as the object but make sure no one has allergies that it will aggravate. This also could be done in conjunction with the other options or to replace the first one.

Option: Pass around a bottle of anointing oil and have each person anoint the next in line with a symbol of their choice. Again, make sure no one has allergies that it will aggravate. This also could be done in conjunction with the other options or to replace the first one.

After the object has gone all the way around, stand in the circle and begin the liturgy.

OPENING

Caller

*Once or twice
each week
A Gathering of Earthseed
is a good and necessary thing.*

Unison

*It vents emotion, then
quiets the mind.
It focuses attention,
strengthens purpose, and
unifies people.*

Caller

Look at each other, silently acknowledging one another and meditate for a moment on the connections, hopes, dreams, fears, lives, and changes that have brought each to this place at this time.

Caller (the same or another)

All that We touch

Unison

We Change.

Caller

All that We Change

Unison

*Changes Us.
The only lasting truth
Is Change.*

Caller

*God
Is Change.*

Meditate on Change.

THE ELEMENTS

Caller

Approach the Focus and hold up the clay, the cup of water, and the candle in turn, setting them before you on the Focus. Recite the following:

Create no images of God.

Unison

*Accept the images
that God has provided.
They are everywhere,
in everything.*

Caller

God is Change—

Unison

*Seed to tree,
tree to forest;
Rain to river,
river to sea;
Grubs to bees,
bees to swarm.*

Caller

From one, many;

Unison

from many, one;

*Forever uniting, growing, dissolving—
forever Changing.*

Caller

*The universe
is God's self-portrait.*

Meditate on the idea of God as Nature to the World.

EARTH/CLAY

Caller

Take up the clay and mold it in your hands. If desireable, pass it around the circle, in part or whole. Recite the following:

God is Power—

Unison

*Infinite,
Irresistible,
Inexorable,
Indifferent.*

Caller

And yet, God is Pliable—

Unison

*Trickster,
Teacher,
Chaos,
Clay.*

God exists to be shaped.

Caller

God is Change.

Meditate for a while on the kind of change that is slow and yet inexorable, change that happens over years, over lifetimes, like the slowly churning earth.

AIR/WIND

Caller

*Put down the clay and turn your attention to the air around you, the air that you breathe.
We do not worship God.*

Unison

*We perceive and attend God.
We learn from God.*

Caller

With forethought and work,

Unison

*We shape God.
In the end, We yield to God.
We adapt and endure,
For We are Earthseed*

Caller

And God is Change.

Meditate for a while on the kind of change which is caused by agents which are invisible to us, change that blows through our lives like the wind.

WATER

Caller

Take up the cup of water and pour it into the bowl and back again.
Recite the following:

*Chaos
Is God's most dangerous face—*

Unison

Amorphous, roiling, hungry.

Caller

*Shape Chaos—
Shape God.*

Unison

*Act.
Alter the speed
Or the direction of Change.
Vary the scope of Change.
Recombine the seeds of Change.
Transmute the impact of Change.
Seize Change.
Use it.*

Caller

Adapt and grow.

Put down the cup.

Meditate for a while on the kind of change that is rapid and hard to hold, that slips through our fingers like water and flows through our lives like a rushing river.

FIRE

Caller

Light the cauldron with the matches or lighter or a candle on the Focus. Pass your hand over the flame and feel the bite of the flame.

Read out loud what you have written on your paper.

Burn your paper in the fire. Recite the following:

*A victim of God may,
Through learning and adaption,
Become a partner of God,*

Unison

*A victim of God may,
Through forethought and planning,
Become a shaper of God.*

Caller

*Or a victim of God may,
Through shortsightedness and fear,
Remain God's victim,
God's plaything,
God's prey.*

Proceed around the circle, holding the cauldron and letting each person repeat your actions, feeling the touch of the fire, reading aloud what they have written, and then burning the paper. Guide folks through the process as needed. As this is going on, people can either wait in silence if there only a few or chant if there are several people.

God is Change, Change is God

Become a Partner with God

Become a Shaper of God

Caller

Once you have completed going around the circle, recite:

Meditate for a while on the kind of change that consumes as it transforms, the kind of change that is painful, and yet necessary.

Extinguish the flame.

LIFE

Caller

Turn your attention to your body.

*I have lived before.
I will live again.*

Unison

*I will be silk,
Stone,
Mind,
Star.*

Caller

*I will be scattered,
Gathered,
Molded,
Probed.
I will live
And I will serve life.*

Unison

*I will shape God
And God will shape me
Again,
Always again,
Forevermore.*

Caller

Meditate for a while on the changing nature of your life and Life it self.

CLOSING

Caller

*As wind,
As water,
As fire,
As life,*

Unison

*God
Is both creative and destructive,
Demanding and yielding,
Sculptor and clay.
God is Infinite Potential:
God is Change.*

Allow a period of silence of a few minutes after the last words are spoken. Folks may open the circle by hugging, singing a song, or by simply walking away.

POST RITUAL

After ritual, it is suggested folks share a potluck meal or snacks and have a time to socialize and build community. This is also the time for announcements about upcoming Gatherings, making plans, attending to Gathering/Community business.

Discussion about Earthseed is also appropriate at this time. It is suggested that some form of Circle Keeping/Salon Keeping/Council/World Cafe structure be used for any discussions/sharings. See any of the following for guidelines on this:

- *Circle Keepers Handbook*
drive.google.com/file/d/0B6kxdm2KCg9mbVh6LU9CSkNEb0U/view
- *Open Space Technology*
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_Space_Technology
- *Salon-Keepers Companion* www.citizenshandbook.org/salon-keepers_companion.pdf
- *Study Circles, Salons & Discussion Groups*
www.citizenshandbook.org/2_15_discussion_group.shtml
- *Visioning EWisdom Circles*
sage-ing.org/wp-content/uploads/wisdom-circles.pdf

Focus is on elders, but many of the principles apply.

- *WISDOM CIRCLES: Evoking the Wisdom of the Group*
heartlandcircle.blogs.com/aoc_book/2011/04/wisdom.html
- *The World Cafe Hosting Tool Kit*
www.theworldcafe.com/tools-store/hosting-tool-kit/