

## ***The Welcome***

Be still  
Be attentive to the divine presence

God of beginnings and endings  
as the seasons turn towards Spring

**We come to you**

as new shoots of life emerge  
**We welcome your life-giving Spirit**

as mortals made in your image  
**We welcome each other**

## ***Welcoming the God of the circle of the seasons***

(as the leaders read each prayer the people face that direction)

God of the North and the cold winds  
**We call to you to be the fire in our hearts**

God of the west and sun setting  
**We call to you as we greet the returning light**

God of the South and the warm breeze  
**We call to you to be the embrace between us**

God of the East and sun rising  
**We call to you to bring us life renewed**

**Christ Jesus**  
**Be the life within us**  
**Be the love between us**  
**Be the light that guides us**  
**This day**  
**And for eternity**

## ***Burning the Christmas branches***

(during which 'in praise of Christmas' adapted is played and sung)

## ***Signs of Spring***

Now the green blade rises from the buried grain,  
Wheat that in the dark earth many days has lain;  
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:  
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green

In the grave they laid him, love by people slain,  
Thinking that he'd never wake to life again,  
Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:  
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.

Forth he came at Easter, like the risen grain,  
He that for three dark days in the grave had lain;  
quick from the dead my risen Lord is seen:  
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.

When our hearts are wintry, grieving or in pain,  
By your touch you call us back to life again;  
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:  
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.

## ***Wassailing the orchard***

God of the seasons, of seed sowing and harvest reaping  
Of blossom and bud and fruit and leaf fall,  
We thank for the gifts of creation and ask you to bless them this year.  
(*the trees are blessed whilst 'Jesus Christ the Apple Tree' is sung*)

## ***Reading from Luke 2***

### ***Lighting Candles***

When candles are lighted on Candlemas Day  
the dark is behind us, and Spring's on the way.  
Refrain: A glory dawns in every dark place,  
the light of Christ, the fullness of grace.

The kings have departed, the shepherds have gone,  
the child and his parents are left on their own. Refrain

They go to the temple, obeying the law,  
and offer two pigeons, the gift of the poor. Refrain

But Anna and Simeon recognize there  
the Christ-child who came at the turn of the year. Refrain

The old who have suffered and waited so long  
see hope for the world as they welcome the young. Refrain

They gaze at God's wonderful answer to prayer,  
the joy of the Jews and the Gentiles' desire. Refrain

The light is increasing and spring's in the air.  
Look back with thanksgiving! Look forward with awe! Refrain

They see before Mary a heart-piercing grief,  
but trust is complete at the end of their life. Refrain

For Mary will follow, with tears in her eyes,  
her Saviour and Son to the foot of the cross. Refrain

Great Spirit of Yahweh, with courage inspire  
your everyday saints who face up to despair. Refrain

They pass through temptation, through failure, through death.  
When darkness descends, they plod onward in faith. Refrain

Like Anna, like Simeon, may they have trust,  
the eyes to see Jesus, and peace at the last. Refrain

The candles invite us to praise and to pray  
when Christmas greets Easter on Candlemas Day. Refrain

***Departing and travelling further***

God of the South and the light of Summer

**Bless us now with your warmth**

God of the West as the sunsets upon us

**Bless us now through the dark hours until the dawn breaks**

God of the North and the season of passing winter

**Bless us now with the presence of Christ with us**

God of the East and the suns rising

**Bless us now with the fruitfulness of spring-life**

***Closing Blessing a prayer of St Brigid***

I should like a great lake of ale for the King of Kings.

I should like a table of the choicest food for the family of heaven.

Let the ale be made from the fruits of faith, and the food be forgiving love

I should welcome the poor to my feast, for they are God's children

I should welcome the sick to my feast, for they are God's joy

Let the poor sit with Jesus at the highest place, and the sick dance with the angels

God bless the poor God bless the sick and bless our human race

God bless our food God bless our drink all homes our God embrace.

As Winter Gives Way to Spring  
An outdoor celebration  
For Brigid-tide  
and Candlemas