

Burial Rite

Prior to the service, the grave is dug and the earth placed on a mat next to the grave. A procession is formed to repair to the grave, led by Priest/esses with a censor, broom, bell and standard (if desired.) Following them will be the High Priest/ess(es), pall bearers with the body, four persons with shovels, and then all other participants. On arriving at the grave, all form concentric circles. The Priest/esses with the censor and standard will circle the grave once, while the Priest/ess sweeps all footprints from the perimeter of the grave. The HP/s says:

Before the first human ever took a step, there was Earth.

Ring ten bells.

All invoke:

**First in our prayers, before all other Gods,
we call on Earth, Primeval Prophetess.
Earth sends up life giving fruits,
so praise we Earth, the Mother.
Yea, summon Earth, Who brings all things to birth,
Who rears and takes again into Her Womb.
Earth! Mother! Hear us!**

The HP/s says:

**If any time be sacred, it is Now.
If any place be holy, it is this place.**

**Look around you. Look near and far, and you see life.
In all seasons and weather, the Earth burgeons with life,
 some times in vibrant color and scent, motion and sound,
 in others, quiet with the smell of expectant decay,
 all of it from and of the Earth.
We so easily see life when it is swift and loud,
 but we must look deeply to see that most life is silent and slow,
 slow as the Earth, She Whose Pulse is measured in ages.**

The HP/s or officer says:

**How then can we call *N's* return to The Living Earth "death?"
How can we see his/her embrace
 by the Mother of all things as the end?
"Changed, not dead," says Nature's book.**

The HP/s or officer says:

**And this change happens, regardless of our beliefs or doubts,
 for in all things, the Earth accepts.**

The HP/s or officer says:

**Regardless of age or beauty,
perfection or failure,**

All respond:

The Earth accepts.

The HP/s or officer says:

**Regardless of preparedness,
purity or uncleanness,**

All respond:

The Earth accepts.

The HP/s or officer says:

**Regardless of peace or turmoil,
blessing or curse, good or evil,**

All respond:

The Earth accepts.

The HP/s or officer says:

**The Earth accepts all things and all people.
She takes them within, makes them one with Her.
Thus we gather, not because the Earth demands it,
but for our love of *N* and our devotion to the Earth.
We gather to do a kindness, and give Them honor.**

As the body is brought to the grave, the HP/s or officer says:

**Out of the darkling Earth you came,
and back to Her Mysteries you return.
Earth! O Earth! Mate of God and Mother of *N*,
Receive him/her and hold him/her close.**

As the body is lowered into the grave, all say:

**Take *N* to Your Breast, Great and Holiest of Mothers,
this your child:
Body of Your Body, Soul of Your Soul.
Tenderly receive him/her O Mother.
As in the Eye of Nature s/he has moved,
so in the Body of Nature let him/her lie.
To Earth we yield him/her up.**

The grave is now filled, as all chant softly:

**Sink down, sink down, sink deeper and more deep,
Into eternal and primordial sleep.
Sink down, be still, forget and draw apart,
Into the inner Earth's most secret heart.**

When the grave is filled, the HP/s or officer says:

**Here, on this height of pasture,
where the wheeling Sky and turning Earth convolute and grind:
Here, at the universe's core,
Here, on infinities blind shore, *N* has been buried.
Here, the Earth, bereft, again receives into Her Womb, Her child.**

All respond:

**Let the Womb cohere.
Let the flesh of Her child become Her Flesh.
Let the life of Her child
to the hidden wells of life drain downward.
Let him/her live in the Womb of Earth.
In the swelling seed of every plant, let him/her live.
Let him/her distil on rising planes.
Let him/her be blown along the sky.
Let him/her rise with the stars at their birth.**

The HP/s or officer says:

**Back to the Womb of the Mother you have gone.
Into Her Arms to wait and dream that you may serve,
and do the work of Gods in that vast place.
Awake – asleep – remade to serve –
You stretch your arms and lie – intense – expectant -
'til Her moment comes.
Then seeds leap forth. The mighty hills rise up.
And Gods and tiny things like us proclaim their joy.**

The HP/s or officer says:

**Gestation, generation, and duration –
the cycle of all that lives upon the Earth –
plants, beasts and mortals – must follow that of Heaven.
The rhythm of our lives is that of ripening and dying of the seasons,
our sowing and reaping in the holy fields, our love and
giving birth, then growing old
and sinking into sleep in the maternal Earth,
Mother of Corn, the wrinkled darkness.**

All respond:

So we, ruled by those laws, see their fulfillment.

The HP/s says:

**Walk softly. All the Earth is Holy Ground.
Let each step be as a prayer.
For our beloved *N* is now also part of Her.**

All invoke:

**Great Mother, live on in such an immortality as we,
Thy Children, Borne of Thy Body
and nursed at those wild, faithful breasts,
can give – of generous thoughts
and honorable words and deeds.
Live on, O Brave and True, in us, whose life is Thine.
Earth! Mother! Hear us!**

Pause for a period of silence.

Ring three bells.

The HP/s says:

**Happy are we who have seen these rites,
Ere we go beneath the Earth.
We know of life's consummation.
We know of its ultimate source.
It is finished. So mote it be.**

All respond:

So mote it be.

All depart. A Priest/ess censes the grave and a Priest/ess sweeps the earth free of footprints.