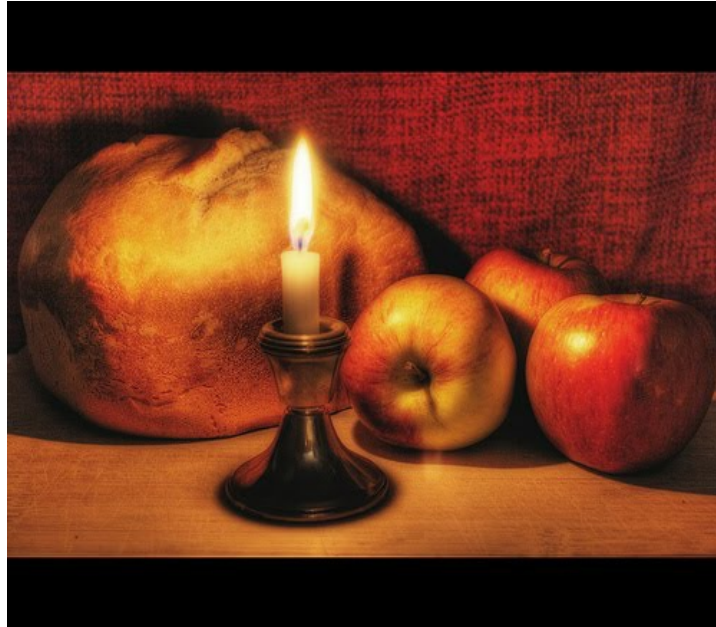


# *Women's Harvest Festival: A Ritual*

*by Diann L. Neu*



## **Call to Gather**

*Preparation: four candles, cider, bread, apples, honey*

Welcome to our Women's Harvest Festival. We celebrate and give thanks for a harvest that is often overlooked: the contributions of women. We honor the ancestors who have passed on to us over the generations their wisdom and insights, their memories of the past and present. We honor women who have gone before us and made the world a more livable place for us and for the next generations. We intertwine our stories with women of ancient traditions, women of recorded history, women who have been disappeared, and grandmothers and mothers.

The four candles on the table symbolize the four parts of this ceremony. We invite women from the North, South, East and West to join us in our harvest festival.

### **Bless the Bread and Cider**

Blessed are you, Source of Creation, Who brings forth bread and drink from the earth.

## **Gratitude to Women of Ancient Traditions**

### **Light a Candle**

We are grateful to the women of ancient traditions and ask them to be with us now.

### **Share the Apples and Honey**

Let us share apple and honey together; by this, we reclaim the apple as a positive symbol of women's history. We as women need to reach for knowledge, break taboos, and know that it is good. The honey symbolizes our hopes that our memories of the past will help sweeten the future. Take a piece of apple and dip it in the honey.

### **Bless the Daughters of the Great Mothers**

May the blessings of Gaia, Lilith and Eve, Sarah and Hagar give you strength for your journey.

**Song:** "You Can't Kill the Spirit..." (original words by Naomi Little Bear, additional lyrics by the Women of Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp)

You can't kill the spirit, She's like a mountain  
Old and strong, she lives on and on and on.

## **Gratitude to Women of Recorded History**

### **Light a Candle**

We invite women out of our recorded history, women from our own and other cultures, to intertwine their stories with ours during our harvest feast, and ask them to be with us now.

### **Bless the Source**

Praised is the source of the many fruits of the earth.

### **Song: "You Can't Kill the Spirit..."**

You can't kill the spirit, She's like a mountain  
Old and strong, she lives on and on and on.

## **Gratitude to Women Who Have Been Disappeared**

### **Light a Candle**

We remember the women and children who have been disappeared through war, violence, and the miswriting of history. We especially name and remember those who have been killed and disappeared by soldiers trained at the School of Americas where thousands gather in protest. We remember the Mirabal Sisters from the Dominican Republic. On November 25, 1960, Patria, Antonia, and Maria opposed the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo and were assassinated. We ask them to be with us now.

### **Bless the Souls**

Praised are the souls of the living and the dead.

### **Song: "You Can't Kill the Spirit..."**

You can't kill the spirit, She's like a mountain  
Old and strong, she lives on and on and on.

## **Gratitude to Grandmothers and Mothers**

### **Light a Candle**

We are grateful for the women who have guided us on our journey, and ask them to be with us now.

### **Bless the Women**

Praised are the mothers and grandmothers, great-grandmothers, aunts and elders who nourish and sustain future generations.

### **Song: "You Can't Kill the Spirit..."**

You can't kill the spirit, She's like a mountain  
Old and strong, she lives on and on and on.

## **Sending Forth**

By claiming what is ours from the past, we enable our daughters to create the future. Let us go forth, giving thanks for what has been and opening our selves to the power of gratitude for the future. Happy thanksgiving to all and to your families!

This ritual was used for WATER's monthly Women's Ritual group.

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