

## Burning Bowl Service

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### The Returning Light

*Fire has long been a source of warmth and light for humanity, as well as purification and cleansing. Fire reminds us of the transforming power of the Divine Mystery.*

*Life can inspire—and cleanse—us unexpectedly. During these “fiery” times, Spirit invites us to light a candle and surrender the outcome, trusting that “this or something better” will come.*

*This service is traditionally performed near the Winter Solstice or New Year, but could be done at any time to foster renewal. Feel free to adapt it for your needs.*

### Preparation

Gather the following materials: a large (fireproof) ceramic or metal “cauldron,” writing paper, straw; a large “Spirit” candle, small tea candles for each participant, and a sand tray. Optional: small lights or luminaria.

Move chairs to the room’s perimeter to create a central altar space. Place in the center the large cauldron, Spirit candle, a basket with the tea candles, and the sand tray. If desired, dim overhead lights and place luminaria around the room.

### The Service

As people enter, hand them slips of paper. Open the service with prayer and light the Spirit candle. Thank everyone for coming.

Speak about fire as a symbol of transformation [*the following are suggestions*]:

- ❖ Fire gives light and warmth (e.g. the Sun, candles, wood stove).
- ❖ Fire purifies and cleanses (e.g. burning leaves, clearing stubble from a field for planting).
- ❖ Fire transforms (e.g. cooking food, firing clay).
- ❖ Fire destroys and creates (e.g. lighting starts fires that renew the forest; volcanoes create new land).

Reflect with gratitude on these gifts of fire.

Then ask everyone to consider one (or more) of the following questions and write down on the slips of paper:

- ❖ What needs to be released?
- ❖ What good things are completed and may be released to allow space for the new?
- ❖ What do they desire to bring into their lives? Invite them to release that also—“this or something better.”

Explain that each participant will light a candle to symbolize the returning Light. Invite everyone, as they are ready, to walk to the center to drop their paper in the cauldron, and light a small candle and place it in the sand tray.

After everyone has finished, close with prayer. Invite them outside for lighting the cauldron, and to take a tea candle home.

### Burning the Papers

Stuff straw into the cauldron (to provide fuel for burning) with the papers. Take the cauldron outside and burn the papers and straw.

### Variations

- Give participants a word to carry with them for the New Year. In the center, add a bowl of “Angel Cards” (single words of spiritual qualities). During the service, participants drop their paper in the cauldron, light a candle, draw and speak their word, and then place their candle in the sand tray.
- The spiral is another symbol of transformation. Outline a spiral path into the center and out again with pine boughs.
- For an interfaith service, share images and uses of fire from various faith traditions.
- Take down and burn the ribbons that were hung outside during an earlier *Prayer Ribbon Service* (see separate activity sheet).

*If you have questions or want more information on how to conduct this service, please contact us at [unityearthcare@yahoo.com](mailto:unityearthcare@yahoo.com).*