***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***

**All hail to the days that merit more praise**

**Than all the rest of the year**

**And welcome the nights that double delights**

**As well for the poor as the peer!**

**Good fortune attend each merry man's friend**

**That doth but the best that he may**

**Forgetting old wrongs with carols and songs**

**To drive the cold winter away.**

**Tis ill for a mind to anger inclined**

**To think of small injuries now**

**If wrath be to seek, do not lend her your cheek**

**Nor let her inhabit thy brow**

**Cross out of thy books malevolent looks**

**Both beauty and youth's decay**

**And wholly consort with mirth and sport**

**To drive the cold winter away.**

**This time of the year is spent in good cheer**

**And neighbours together do meet**

**To sit by the fire, with friendly desire**

**Each other in love to greet**

**Old grudges forgot are put in the pot**

**All sorrows aside they lay**

**The old and the young doth carol this song**

**To drive the cold winter away.**

**When Candlemas-tide comes in like a bride,**

**The ewes are soon ready to part,**

**And small birds do sing, to welcome the spring,**

**Though winter may yet grip our heart,**

**Still snowdrops abound upon the hard ground,**

**And Brigid draws near us to say,**

**“Though winds may be chill, be sure that spring will**

**Soon drive the cold winter away.”**

***Reflection for Brigid-tide***

***Lighting Candles***

(Chant)

**Within our darkest night, you kindle a flame that never dies away**

***Candlemas Carol (tune As the Green Blade Rises)***

**Down with the rosemary and bays,  
Down with the mistletoe ;  
Instead of holly, now up-raise  
The greener box, for show.**

***Refrain:*  
Thus times and seasons shift; each thing his turn doth hold ;  
In God new thoughts and things succeed, as former things grow old.**

**The holly hitherto did sway;  
Let box now domineer  
Until the dancing Easter day,  
Or Easter's eve appear.**

***Refrain:*  
Thus times and seasons shift; each thing his turn doth hold ;  
In God new thoughts and things succeed, as former things grow old.**

**Then youthful box which now hath grace  
Your houses to renew;   
Grown old, surrender must his place  
Unto the crisped yew. *Refrain***

**When yew is out, then birch comes in,  
And many flowers beside ;  
Both of a fresh and fragrant kin  
To honour Whitsuntide. *Refrain***

**Green rushes, then, and sweetest bents,  
With cooler oaken boughs,  
Come in for comely ornaments  
To re-adorn the house. *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***

And May the blessing of the God of life and death

In whom the seasons grow and fade

In whom all of us are held in love

Our Father and Mother who made us

Our Brother Jesus who mends us

Our Sustainer the Spirit who moulds us

Be upon as at this time

And in all times to come

**As Winter Gives Way to Spring**

**An outdoor celebration**

**For**

**Brigid-tide & Candlemas**