

I ask for your assistance . I ask your permission . I ask for your strength to tell the story, to walk the circle, this holy evening. {PAUSE}

Tonight we gather at a beginning.

We gather to call forth and celebrate God-given gifts of love and wisdom.

We gather to discern our present and future paths.

We gather to mend and heal.

We gather to grow and be revealed in wonder. {DOWN TO REST, PAUSE}

Let us then enter into a circle of healing, regeneration and power. Let us utilize *Wisdom-truth* and Native-American truth to enter into a new respectful relationship with Creation and all its treasures . with the earth and her treasures . with each other. with our outer and inner lives . and with the God we sadly may be distanced from.

Adopt a comfortable position. Quiet yourself - your mind, your organs. Relax your jaw, shoulders. Breathe deeply, deliberately. Place your dominant hand on your heart, your other hand slightly below your navel, or on your thigh, whichever is more comfortable. Close your eyes if this encourages your journey. {PAUSE} Let your spirit rise. {LONG PAUSE} When you are ready, relax your arms and hands.

I invite you to enter into this journey . receive assistance to be alert and listen to your deepest self; affirm your needs as well as those of others; trust the insights that will come from your body, intuition, mind and feelings; be aware of the cost of change. {BEAT}

Here is the story of the circle. The circle is the form of all that is and will be. It is the form that life takes, that love takes. It is the frame of God. It expresses our continuity, our interdependence. When we form a circle we gather in power and God is very present. The Spirit surrounds us. In a great basket She weaves our work and our dreams and they become our history. The circle is set by four points which correspond to directions, principles, seasons, attributes and the passage of earthly time.

Here is the story of the circle and the directions, the principles and the quest.

Long ago, in a time before time there was a Grandmother Spider who was wise; She wove a web of strength and beauty of four directions and in between some of these directions, She rested and thought - and Her thought began life. Between North and East She thought. This is the beginning, the place of conception/birth. It is a shadowland, darkishly cool. This is the time before sunrise, of the green-yellow-grey, where things are not quite in focus. Late winter is the season of this place.

Thinking woman turned nearly around to secure a hold and this place is East. Youth reigns in this place. East holds the principle of KINSHIP. The sun becomes a circle at dawn. The colors of yellow and green announce growth and beginning and Spring. Vision and inspiration She founded in this direction.

Grandmother Spider moved about, singing a song of Creation. And the note of the song went forth to the South and the air that was stirred and whirled and the circle *glowed; the* sun went up and up. This is the home of adolescence and young adulthood. RESPECT resides here in the brilliance of noon. White, gold and *piercing* blue shout life. Summer builds a home for passion, playfulness, joy and generosity.

WiseMother Spider knew helpers were needed - and *i* knowing created two spirits who She taught to dream and sing and dance and weave things into being. After She taught them to dance the waters and call the mountains, She rested and dreamed. This dream became West. This is the place of prime adulthood - which holds the principle of BALANCE. This is the set of the sun. The basket of life here is criss-crossed with patterns of reds and oranges. Seasonal Fall provides a place in the West for courage and self-knowledge to emerge.

When Grandmother Spider woke from the dream, nearly all that would be was. But all that was was not complete. And Grandmother Spider shed a tear which became the katsina {ANGELS}. And Her eyes became clear and She had a vision and She spun a strong filament and stretched and the journey became North. North is the place of the aged and death. It holds the principle of HARMONY in the melody of the moon and the silence of midnight. The colors are concentrated into white and black. Features blend.

It is stark winter. Wisdom and guidance and the protective spirits abide in the North.

As we walk the circle, as we live life, we tell the story. Each of us is part of the story that must be told: Our story and God's story are one.

The story is not ended . there is more to tell. In order to explore the remaining two - and unmarked - directions, we must enter into a vision quest. In the quest you ask to see yourself plainly - ill and good - weaknesses and strengths. The insights gained in the final two directions will influence your life and your world. They will affect the circle you walk and the story you tell. Let us continue.

Here is the story of the final two directions and the story of Jesus and his first vision quest.

Grandmother Spider returned to the place of beginning, between the North and the East and perceived that there was more than here. And so She went across and from the center of great water all that was spirit seemed heavy and She held her breath and went within and down. This is a place without direction or color. And the heart of Grandmother Spider began to grow: it began to breathe - it did know and it did feel, it did see and it did hear. And then She rose from down. {PAUSE} She moved from within to without. She rose up. And her Being became center. And her Life became love.

So it was with Jesus. {PAUSE}

The time for waiting for Jesus had ended. He had walked the circle as a man among many and he was moved to seek the meaning he could not see. So he began his vision quest. He came to see the holy man in the center of the moving water to receive his blessing and guidance. John, recognizing Jesus' spirit to be that One that commands all that is hesitated - but Jesus asked for a water cleaning and preparation and John did so.

Coming up from the water, the sky opened and a large white bird of power swooped down to him. A voice spoke from beyond the clouds and the sky - This is my son, the one I love, and my favor smiles on him. {PAUSE} The powerful bird did not leave him; She lead him on his quest into the wilderness. He went forty days and forty nights refraining from food; listening - listening . and he ached with hunger. **And he moved inward.**

From around and beyond a dark force addressed him by another name without a name. 'If you are the son of the Great Spirit, you can create cakes of meal from the stones all around you'. Jesus replied: the holy ones have revealed that life is more than what is eaten - it is the word and breath of the Creator Spirit that sustains.

The force was persistent and cunning and became more solid. The evil one then took him to the top of the highest tent of meeting. 'Throw yourself down' he panted 'because if you are the cherished one of the All Spirit, all form of creature will come and prevent you from any bodily harm'. "According to the same source" breathed Jesus "you are forbidden to test the Ruler of All".

Deeper and deeper still did Jesus lean and all the spirits of doubt and darkness, evil and pride, corruption and greed enfolded him and brought him to the central mountain of the world and with one voice they bellowed 'I will give you all the lands and all the tribes, all the wealth and all the might: all that you see, and glory beyond human measure- IF you surrender your power at my feet and worship me.

Jesus, racked with hunger and pain, weighted down by anguish and the darkness shed a tear . and the tear penetrated his heart. From behind his eyelids he looked into the abyss of the evil force and thought BE GONE. You must worship and serve the Great Spirit - GOD - alone. {PAUSE}

And as he moved his lips with the thought, the weight of the darkness receded, the remnant of evil drew back and he came up. And he was in the center and rested in the arms of love, clothed by all manner of soothing, refreshing spirits which appeared from beyond the dome of the sky to comfort him. {LONG PAUSE, REGROUP} It is time for you to rejoin the circle.

This is the story of the circle and the directions, the principles and the colors, the seasons and the gifts. This is the story of Grandmother Spider and the first quest of Jesus. But the story is not ended - it is changing every day. Walk the circle, heed your dreams, sing the song, tell the story. There will be many circles.

The quest is yours.

# Prayers of the People

None of us were present when <sup>early</sup> injustices were done, but memory brings responsibility, and responsibility brings the need for your healing power and grace.

**Lord, mend the hoop of your people.**

Almighty God, whose Son taught us that if we bring our gifts to the altar and there recall that someone has anything against us, we are to leave our gifts at the altar and first go and be reconciled; we come now in need of your mercy and love. We ask you to bring peace to our conflicts with charity to those we have offended.

**Lord, mend the hoop of your people.**

For the times we have failed to love and forgive others,

**Lord, mend the hoop of your people.**

For the times we have failed to ask forgiveness,

**Lord, mend the hoop of your people.**

For the times we have hurt others without knowing it,

**Lord, mend the hoop of your people.**

For the times we have made fun of others, especially because of racial and cultural differences,

**Lord, mend the hoop of your people.**

For those for whom we are always called to pray: for the sick, the friendless and those in need, for the dead and those who mourn them, we ask your aid. We give you thanks in making us one in your Spirit through prayer in the name of your Son.

**Lord, mend the hoop of your people.**

(Leader) We invite you to include your petitions and thanksgivings to the circle of our worship.

(Leader) Lord Christ, we thank you for mending the hoop of your people.

(Celebrant) Lord God, creator of all things and all peoples, we walk now in a circle of love and power. Let us be like your light, like a great tree, mighty at the roots, might in the top, that reaches the sky where the leaves catch the light, and sing with the wind a song of the circle. Let our lives be like the rainbows whose colors teach us unity. Let us, Almighty God, follow the great circle, the roundness of your power, and be at one, through your son Jesus Christ and in the power of your Spirit we pray, Amen.

**Exchanging the Peace**

**Announcements**