**Children’s Spring Equinox Ritual**

 This ritual is designed for children between the ages of 4 and 7 (give or take a year). It is written so that actual open flame is not necessary, although a fire can be used if the children are properly supervised or if an adult places the offerings in the fire. If no fire is used, the contents of the Offering Bowl can be burned, buried or drown by the person running the ritual after the children are gone.

 For this ritual you will need:

Child safe offerings for the Earth Mother (and Sky Father if desired), the Well, the Fire, the Tree, the Gate Keeper, the Ancestors, the Nature Spirits, the Shining Ones, Fodla, Banba and Eriu. Some examples of child safe offerings would be flowers, fruit, paper objects, and age appropriate arts or crafts. If very small children are present (under the age of three) remember that anything that can fit through a cardboard paper towel tube is considered a choking hazard and if could be edible, it might be eaten so don't use anything potentially poisonous like Daffodils, Lily of the Valley, etc.

A bowl to put offerings in (if no fire is available or inadvisable due to the age of the child/children involved)

Paper and markers for the offerings to Fodla, Banba and Eriu

Drums, rattles, bells and any other instrument that the child/children might want to use during the songs

Eggs filled with goodies and slips of paper with omen concepts in them

Wooden discs to write the Blessings on so that the children can take them home to remember what they got

**Pre-ritual Briefing:**

 Today we are going to have a party for the goddesses Fodla, Banba and Eriu. They are land goddesses who are in charge of keeping the plants and animals healthy. We need to say thank you to them for all of the food that we take from their land. To say thank you, we are going to have a party for them.

When we have a party what do people sometimes bring us? (Presents!!) Just like we get presents at our parties, we are going give Fodla, Banba and Eriu presents and sing them songs at this one. Then, we’re going to thank them for all the land provides for us and ask them to keep the plants and animals from getting sick.

Each of you needs a present for Fodla, Banba and Eriu. I am going to give each of you a piece of paper and some markers so you can make them one. You can either draw a picture or write a few sentences about why you like plants or flowers or animals.

*Give the children 20 minutes to make pictures for Fodla, Banba and Eriu.*

If you know the words to the songs we are singing today, sing along with me. If you don’t know the words, can you all clap along with the song or play your instrument?

We are going to walk over to where we are having the party and we are going to sing a song as we are walking and sitting down. If you know Skidamarink, sing along with me, if not, clap or play along with the song.

**Procession:**

 Skidamarink

Skidamarink a dink a dink,
Skidamarink a doo,
We love you.
Skidamarink a dink a dink,
Skidamarink a doo,
We love you.

We love you in the morning
And in the afternoon,
We love you in the evening
And underneath the moon;
Oh, Skidamarink a dink a dink,
Skidamarink a doo,
We love you!

**Purification:**

Before we start our party for the land goddesses, we want to make sure that we can pay attention. I want you to think off all the things that might keep you from paying attention.

*Give the child/children a minute or so to think*

Imagine that all those distractions are little flies buzzing around your head. We are going to sing a song about getting rid of flies and every time we say “Shoo, fly.” imagine that one of those annoying flies is kicked out of the room.

 Shoo Fly

 Shoo, fly, don't bother me
Shoo, fly, don't bother me
Shoo, fly, don't bother me
For I belong to somebody

 *Repeat as needed until everyone has gotten rid of all of their “flies.”*

 Now that everyone’s flies have been kicked out of the room, we are all able to pay attention. Is everyone ready to pay attention and have a party for Fodla, Banba and Eriu?

**Honoring the Earth Mother:**

 Parties are very exciting for boys and girls but it is important to remember the mommies and the daddies who have worked so hard taking care of us. Before we start the party for Fodla, Banba and Eriu, we are going to sing a song for their mommy, the Earth Mother, who is such a great mommy.

 She’s Got the Whole World in Her Hands

She's got the whole world in her hands,
She's got the rivers and the mountains in her hands,
She's got the oceans and the seas in her hands,
She's got the whole world in her hands.

She's got everybody here in her hands,
She's got everybody there in her hands,
She's got you and she's got me in her hands,
She's got the whole world in her hands.

 We are going to give their mommy, who is also our mommy, the Earth Mother, a present. Who wants to come up and put the Earth Mother’s present into the Offering Bowl for us?

**(Optional Sky Father Offering)**

 Now we are going to sing a song to their daddy.

 Sky Father (Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes)

 Sky Father, clear and bright, clear and bright

 Sky Father, dark at night, dark at night

 You are free of clouds, grey or white

 Sky Father, clear and bright, clear and bright

 *(Repeat if desired)*

 We are going to give their daddy, who is also our daddy, the Sky Father, a present. Who wants to come up and put the Sky Father’s present into the Offering Bowl for us?

**Statement of Purpose:**

 Today is the middle of spring. It is starting to warm up and soon we will be able to grow plants that make food. Fodla, Banba and Eriu are land goddesses. The land belongs to them and we have to thank them for letting us use it to grow food. We are going to throw Fodla, Banba and Eriu a big party so that they know how much we love them and how grateful we are for all of the food we grow on their land.

**(Re)Creating the Cosmos:**

 Fodla, Banba and Eriu are goddesses and live far, far away. We want them to be able to see their party and their presents and hear the songs we sing for them. How can we talk to them if they are far, far away?

 *Hopefully a child will come up with the answer “a telephone.” If they respond with computer based technology (e-mail, instant messaging, skype, etc.) you can either redirect them to the phone metaphor, or you can change the metaphor to a computer based one.*

 We have a way of talking to gods and goddess who live far, far away but we need water, fire and a special tree. If we sing to them and give them gifts, they act like a telephone and help us talk to not only to gods and goddesses who live far, far away, but also people we loved who have died and plants and animals too!

 To create this special telephone, first we are going to sing to the Well and give it a gift.

 There’s Water in the Well (The Farmer in the Dell)

 There’s water in the Well

 There’s water in the Well

 Hi-ho, the derry-o

 There’s water in the Well

 The water’s cold and dark

 The water’s cold and dark

 Hi-ho, the derry-o

 The water’s cold and dark

 Who would like to put our gift for the Well in the Offering Bowl?

Next, we are going to sing to the fire and give it a gift so it will help us make our special telephone.

 Twinkle, Twinkle Little Fire (Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star)

Twinkle, twinkle little Fire

As we sing you rise up higher

Little flame, warm and bright

A tiny piece of holy light

Twinkle, twinkle little Fire

As we sing you rise up higher

Who would like to put our gift for the Fire in the Offering Bowl?

Finally, we are going to sing to the tree and give it a gift so that we can make our special telephone.

Big, Green Tree (Three Blind Mice)

Big, green tree

Big, green tree

You are so tall

You are so tall

You reach the sky with your branches high

Your roots dig into the ground nearby

You are the link between earth and sky

Big, green tree

Who would like to come up and put our gift to the tree into the Offering Bowl?

**Opening the Gates:**

 We want to make sure that we reach Fodla, Banba and Eriu and all of the guests we are going to invite to our party using our special phone. To do that, we need the help of someone named Manannan Mac Lir. He’s a god who is going to make sure that we don’t dial any wrong numbers. As we sing his song and give him his gifts, he’s going to connect our phone to all of the people we want to talk to.

 Pop! Goes the Gate (Pop! Goes the Weasel)

O god, far out to sea come play

We need your help, please guide us

Keep us safe along the way
Pop! goes the Well gate.

O god, far out to sea come play

We need your help, please guide us

Keep us safe along the way
Pop! goes the Fire gate.

O god, far out to sea come play

We need your help, please guide us

Keep us safe along the way
Pop! goes the Tree gate.

 *(At each Pop! give an offering to Manannan and open the appropriate gate.)*

**Inviting the Kindred:**

Now that we can talk to everyone far, far away, we are going invite more guests to our party. First we are going ask all the people we know and love who have died to come to our party.

Ancestors

Grandmas, Grandpas Come and Play (London Bridge)

Grandmas, Grandpas

Come and play

Come and play

Come and play

Bring your parents

Don’t delay

It’s a party.

*(Repeat if desired)*

Who would like to come up and put our gift to our ancestors into the Offering Bowl?

 The next guests that we are going to invite to our party are all of the animals and plants and rocks and stones and everything that lives outside.

Nature Spirits

 Do Your Ears Hang Low?

 Do your ears hang low?

 Do you look like a crow?

 Do you live in the snow?

 Do you need sun to grow?

 Can you fly? Can you run?

 Do you swim? Weigh a ton?

 Do your ears hang low?

 Yes our ears hang low.

 Yes we look like a crow.

 Yes we live in the snow.

 Yes we need sun to grow.

 We can fly. We can run.

 We can swim, weigh a ton.

 Yes our ears hang low.

Who would like to come up and put our gift to the Nature Spirits into the Offering Bowl?

 The last group of guests we are going to invite to our party are Fodla, Banba and Eriu friends and family, the other gods and goddesses.

Shining Ones

 Gods and Goddesses (Frére Jacques)

Gods and Goddesses

Gods and Goddesses

Please come play

Please come play

Welcome to our party

Welcome to our party

We love you

We love you

Who would like to come up and put our gift to the gods and goddesses into the Offering Bowl?

**Key Offerings:**

 Now that we have all of the guests here, we have to invite Fodla, Banba and Eriu, so that we can give them the presents we brought.

 Invocation of Fodla, Banba and Eriu (Mary Had a Little Lamb) to be sung while doing the bunny hop around the Hallows.

O Fodla, we pray to you,
Pray to you, pray to you,
O Fodla, we pray to you,
To bless our land and seeds.

Grow the crops, big and tall,

Big and tall, Big and tall,

Grow the crops, big and tall,

And keep away the weeds.

O Banba, we pray to you,
Pray to you, pray to you,
O Banba, we pray to you,

To bless our plants and trees.

Grow the fruit, big and sweet,
Big and sweet, big and sweet,
Grow the fruit, big and sweet,
And save the honey bees.

O Eriu, we pray to you,
Pray to you, pray to you,
O Eriu, we pray to you,

To bless our cow and chick.

Grow the stock, big and strong,

Big and strong, big and strong,

Grow the stock, big and strong,

And don’t let them get sick.

O Goddesses, we thank you,

We thank you, we thank you,

O Goddesses, we thank you,

For all the land we use.

 Now each of you needs to come up one at a time and give the present you made for Fodla, Banba and Eriu to them by putting it in the Offering Bowl.

**Prayer of Sacrifice:**

 Ancestors, Nature Spirits, Gods and Goddess, we hope that you liked our gifts and our party. Mighty Fodla, Banba and Eriu, we hope that you liked all of the pictures we drew for you and sentences we wrote for you. We hope that you will accept our gifts and warm up the ground so that the plants can grow more food.

**Omen:**

*(During the opening part of the ritual, have an adult “hide” the eggs. For the Omen, have the children find the eggs and bring them back to the ritual space. Once they are all back, have the children pick three special eggs and then empty the contents of the rest of the eggs into a basket or onto a tray. Use the omen slips in the three special eggs as the omen for the ritual and put the contents of the eggs in the basket/on the tray with the rest of the goodies)*

 We have thrown such a nice party for Fodla, Banba and Eriu and all of our guests that they are going to give us gifts that we can take home with us. I am going to read the papers from the special eggs you picked and they are going to tell me what the gifts are.

*(Talk to the children about what the omen means.)*

**Blessings:**

*(Pick up the basket with the goodies hold it up to the Fire, Well and Tree)*

 Fodla, Banba and Eriu, gods and goddess, plants and animals, and our loved ones who have died, thank you so much for giving us *\_(fill in the omen)\_*. We know that when we eat this candy that we will be able to use the blessings you have just given us.

 Thank you for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. *(Have all the children take a bite of their candy.)*

 Thank you for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. *(Have all the children take a bite of their candy.)*

 Thank you for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. *(Have all the children take a bite of their candy.)*

 *(Allow the children time to finish their candy.)*

**Closing the Gates:**

 Our party for Fodla, Banba and Eriu is almost over and we have to thank all of our guests for coming. Can you all help me thank everyone?

 First we are going to say thank you to Fodla, Banba and Eriu for coming. Ready? On the count of three. . . one . . . two . . . THREE!

 THANK YOU FODLA, BANBA AND ERIU!

 Now we are going so thank the gods and goddesses for coming. Ready? One . . . two . . . THREE!

 THANK YOU GODS AND GODDESSES

 Next we are going to thank the Nature Spirits for coming. Ready? One . . . two . . . THREE!

 THANK NATURE SPIRITS

 Last, we are going to thank all of our ancestors for coming. Ready? One . . . two . . . THREE!

 THANK ANCESTORS

 Now it’s time to hang up the special phone we made that allowed to talk to all of our guests. To do that, we are going to clap after I say the word “close.” Is everyone ready?

 Fire gate CLOSE! *(clap)*

Well gate CLOSE! *(clap)*

 Tree gate CLOSE! *(clap)*

 We’ve just hung up our telephone and now we have to say thank you to Manannan Mac Lir, who helped us dial it. Ready? One . . . two . . . THREE!

 THANK YOU MANANNAN MAC LIR

 Now we have just two more thank you’s. Can everyone say thank you to the Earth Mother and Sky Father? *(Sky Father part optional)*

 THANK YOU EARTH MOTHER AND SKY FATHER

**Closing the Rite:**

 GREAT JOB! This part of our party for Fodla, Banba and Eriu is over and everyone did a fantastic job.