

# Oak Leaves

The Quarterly Journal of Ár nDraíocht Féin Issue #65





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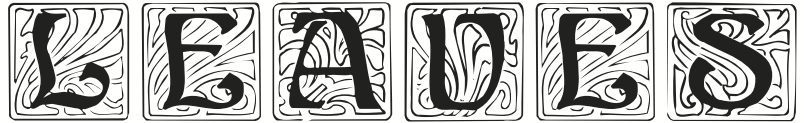
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# Archdruid



I was recently reading *National Wildlife*, the magazine of the National Wildlife Federation, and a specific statement jumped out at me:

*The unique power bestowed on each individual to do good and even change the course of history quite often is underestimated.*

I know this applies to me. I suspect that it applies to all of us as well. How often, when faced with a difficult problem, project, or need have we thought to ourselves, "I can't do this," or "I can't do this well; someone else will have to do it," or "I have no idea *what* to do?" How many times have we sold ourselves short, with the end result that nothing gets done?

When I think about climate change (or global warming, as we used to call it), or troubling world affairs, I sometimes feel exhausted. The problems seem so great, and so unwieldy. How can one person make a difference, when entire nations are unwilling or unable to do anything about things? What could I, one person, possibly do to create change?

The obvious answer is to first create change within ourselves. The example of change inside us may inspire change in others. All politics are local, and all great changes start out small with the potential to grow into something big.

So look around you. More importantly, look inside you. When we create change in ourselves, and call upon our relationships with the gods and spirits, we can surely change the world.

*~ Rev. Kirk Thomas  
ADF, ArchDruid*



## OAK LEAVES

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# Druidic Ritual: The Social and Psychological Dimensions

By Wayne Keysor

## INTRODUCTION

Ritual is a central focus of Druidry. It is therefore useful to consider the uses to which we put ritual. This article will first attempt to characterize the three most important purposes of ritual: the magico-religious, the social, and the psychological. It will then argue that, while the magico-religious is the primary and most elemental of these purposes, the social and the psychological functions are also extremely valuable and deserve careful consideration when planning and designing rituals.

The second section of this article will present the Samhain ritual as a case study, illustrating the potential value of a specific ritual in answering a psychological problem. This case study will specifically focus on the Samhain ritual as a celebration of the feast of the dead. It will argue that Samhain ritual can play an important part in fostering a healthy attitude toward death among individuals.

## PART I - RITUAL AND ITS USES

Ritual is not a one-dimensional phenomenon, and it is therefore useful to separate the various purposes of ritual. In the spirit of Druidic triads, I will employ a simple tripartite division: the magico-religious, the social, and the psychological. The use of this tripartite division is not intended to argue that these are the only purposes of ritual, but only that they capture the most essential. The first function, the magico-religious function, is perhaps the most well known and elemental to the practice of Druidry. The magico-religious attempts to employ ritual to achieve some tangible action in the world through spiritual communion. This is perhaps the primary intent of all Ar nDraiocht Fein (ADF) rituals. Michael Dangler in his article, "Nine Central Tenets of ADF Ritual," states it in this way:

*"Druidic ritual is based not only on the idea that the Kindreds are receptive to our voices, accepting of our gifts, and interested in a relationship with us; but also that they will speak back to us, offer us*

gifts in return, and continue the relationship with reciprocity." (*non-italics mine*)

These gifts, to use Dangler's language, are not limited to the realization of changes in the physical world, e.g. a new job, improved environmental conditions, a more peaceful world, but also include less tangible outcomes like wisdom, self-knowledge, or spiritual insight. The ADF has provided a vision of the magico-religious purpose by expressing three intentions of Druidic ritual: to rectify and empower the souls of the worshippers, to serve the Gods, Goddesses, and Spirits, and to bless the folk and the land. Much attention has been paid to this function of ritual, and for many, it remains not only the most essential, but the *only* purpose of ritual.

The social function of ritual serves to strengthen the identity of the group and expresses shared values in a form observable to the participants. It reaffirms bonds between individuals and orients the group as a single unit to the world. This orientation helps the group make sense of its role in the world. The social function of ritual remains extremely important because of the innately social nature of our species. The Enlightenment era myth of the human as an independent, rational actor fails to capture the primal embeddedness of our existence and ignores fundamental parts of our natures. It is not without reason, I think, that Aristotle claims, "Whosoever is delighted in solitude is either a wild beast or a god." Thus, ritual re-grounds our social life, binding us more harmoniously and more cooperatively with our fellows. This binding strengthens the institutions and connections that allow cooperative enterprises, which are an essential ingredient of human achievement and flourishing.

As social cohesiveness has diminished in modern culture, for both good and ill, the value placed on the social function of ritual has correspondingly diminished. It seems plausible that the social function of ritual is much more important in communities that live closer to the margin of survival and therefore where cooperative action is

more essential to their well-being. A point of evidence in favor of this view is the highly ritualistic tenor of military life across societies. Because unity and social cohesiveness is so important for the success of military institutions, success being measured in terms of life and death, one would expect ritual to play a large part in military life, which it does. As I noted above, this is not the case for most people in contemporary United States; however, if one were interested in building strong communities, ritual would be one valuable tool to help achieve this end.

The psychological function of ritual does for the individual what the social function does for the group. It provides the individual a way of locating himself in the world and helps give meaning to experiences. It reinforces the individual's personal narrative, which turns an otherwise meaningless series of life events into experiences rich with meaning. This need for meaning is especially important for life experiences that are traumatic or significant. Without this narrative, life can seem disorienting and terrifying. A life full of meaning is richer and more satisfying. While rites of passage are perhaps the most obvious types of rituals that serve a psychological function, most rituals perform this function to varying degrees. Although I think it is often an over argued claim, some of the forms of social anomie and isolation that afflict modern western societies might be attributed to the diminishment of the importance of ritual.

Having analyzed the importance of the social and psychological functions, it has become apparent that these aspects of ritual are extremely important for the health of both the community and the individual. Despite their importance, I would argue that they remain underappreciated elements of Druidic ritual. While the magico-religious function will always remain the primary focus because without this focus, ritual will devolve into empty formalism bereft of any spiritual substance, the social and psychological elements of ritual remain critically important. The Druidic liturgist should consider all the aspects when designing ritual. I

think it is worth more study and reflection by liturgists on how to better integrate the social and psychological functions of ritual into Druidic practice. A conscious effort to consider these other functions along with the magico-religious when designing ritual can only improve the experience for worshippers and bring overall benefits to individuals and the community. I think it is precisely the multi-layered nature of ritual that gives it its power.

## PART II - SAMHAIN RITUAL AND THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FUNCTION

Having made the argument for the importance of the social and psychological in Druidic ritual, I would now like to use the Samhain ritual as a case study. This case study will focus on the psychological function. The purpose of this analysis is not to create a ritual handbook or give specific advice about how to conduct a Samhain ritual. This task is better left to

*"Having analyzed the importance of the social and psychological functions, it has become apparent that these aspects of ritual are extremely important for the health of both the community and the individual."*

more experienced and talented liturgists. Rather, it is intended to demonstrate how a specific ritual might enhance the psychological well-being of its participants. This analysis focuses on only one aspect of Samhain – its connection with death and the psychological significance this connection creates. It will first present the psychological problem associated with death and then analyze how a Samhain ritual might aid individuals in overcoming this problem.

### The Problem of Death

Death is inevitable. It is an essential part of the human condition. We are born, and we die. These are the facts. Everything else concerning this subject falls into the realm of speculation. The apparent finality of death and the profound transformation it renders has made it a subject of great fear and wonder throughout recorded history. The action of the earliest known mytho-poetic work, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, centers on a quest for immortality prompted by the fear of death. The Greek epic poem *The Iliad* is the story of warriors trying to escape the sting of death by seeking everlasting glory. Apart from literature, we know from our own experiences that the occasion

of a funeral can be very discomfoting to the living precisely because it reminds us of the inevitability of our own demise. As Catholic theologian John Haught notes, certain types of experiences, death being among them, raise profound categories of questions that transcend our everyday way of thinking. He argues:

*“There are certain “shipwreck” or “earthquake” experiences that occasionally break into the routine of our lives and when they do we experience the superficiality of our pragmatic “how” questions and the invasion of “why” or “ultimate” questions. Such shipwreck experiences raise questions that stand at the “limit” of our ordinary consciousness of life, and they can sensitize us in an extraordinary way to the mystery that always silently accompanies and encompasses our lives.”*

This sensitization process can be terrifying, especially when it comes to ultimate questions surrounding death. Such terror can be debilitating in extreme cases and generally leads to a diminishment of quality of life, unless it can be successfully managed. The essential problem is that people fear death because it is unknown, and that fear makes them suffer. I think that the correct response to death is to first acknowledge that it is a mystery. But mystery or not, it also must be recognized that it is an inevitable and natural phenomenon. Therefore, fear, struggle, and agitation are not useful ways of relating to death. Druidry emphasizes the naturalness of the cycles of life and death and encourages its adherents to embrace rather than resist the natural world. We are physically embodied spirits for which certain natural laws and rhythms inescapably pertain. To struggle against this reality is to reject ourselves and our essential natures.

### Death and Ritual

The question then becomes, how might a Samhain ritual help achieve these realizations? The mystery and power of a Druidic ritual rests in its ability to connect the participants with the natural cycles of life and death on a non-conscious, non-rational level. It is during ritual that the participants might escape their individual identities and experience a

greater unity with the totality of the world. It is possible to achieve an altered state of consciousness where participants perceive the rhythms and flows of the natural world on an emotional, instinctive level. This change presents a unique opportunity to reach people in a way that logical argumentation and disputation cannot.

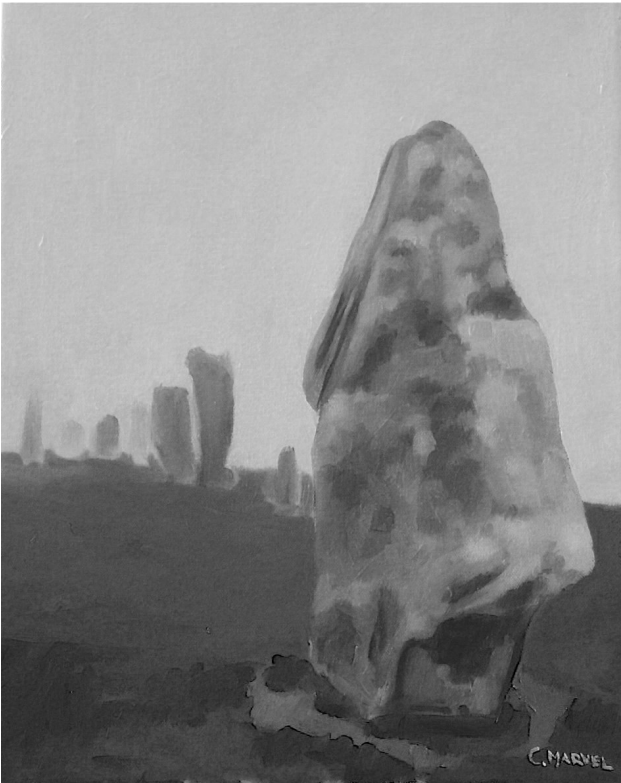
This proposed function of ritual is very similar to certain views of the ancient Greek institution of tragedy, which developed out of religious rituals held during the festival of Dionysus. According to Aristotle, the first and perhaps most influential critic of tragedy, the function of the drama was to present incidents “arousing pity and fear in such a way as to accomplish purgation (*katharsis*) of such emotions.” I think Aristotle is correct in emphasizing the emotional aspect of ritual and its ability to generate emotional release. It is in our emotions that the fear of death lurks, not our higher minds. A person might very well be able to accept on a rational, conscious level that death is

*“Druidry emphasizes the naturalness of the cycles of life and death and encourages its adherents to embrace rather than resist the natural world. We are physically embodied spirits for which certain natural laws and rhythms inescapably pertain. To struggle against this reality is to reject ourselves and our essential natures.”*

an inevitable, natural part of life, but this thought process alone is rarely sufficient to banish the fear. The mind must be reached at a far deeper level. It is the difference between knowing something and *knowing* something. The ritual effect I am proposing is similar to

Aristotle’s view of tragedy in that it seeks a purgation of the emotion of fear; however, this purgation is only directed at the fear of death and the ritual’s intended result is a state of acceptance, which will allow the fear to dissipate naturally. This acceptance must be instantiated at the most basic levels of knowing and consciousness for it to be effective. Ritual enacted repeatedly over a long period has the potential to aid this process.

The use of Samhain specifically for this purpose is intimately connected with its tradition as a festival of the dead. Samhain was a festival of the dead for the pre-Roman Celts, and this association has been carried into modern ADF ritual and practice. This is an important fact because it predisposes ritual participants towards the contemplation of the ultimate questions surrounding death even before they enter the ritual space. This preexisting cognitive attunement has the possibility of



Avebury by Christina Marvel

heightening emotional responses to a ritual that focuses on the experience of death. Thus, Samhain, more than any of the other festivals of the wheel of the year, is ideally suited for this type of liturgy. The strong emphasis on the ancestors and the web of being that connects the living and the dead and the naturalness of death encourages participants to feel a sense of acceptance toward death, born out of the recognition that all who lived before passed through this natural rite of passage as they also inevitably will.

## CONCLUSION

While much attention is paid to the magico-religious function of Druidic ritual, there are other functions that are also important. The social and psychological functions of rituals can be extremely beneficial for the community. These functions should be consciously considered, along with the magico-religious, when designing Druidic ritual. Further liturgical research and experimentation should be conducted to learn how to better integrate the social and psychological functions in all Druidic rituals.

A specific example of the psychological function of ritual is Samhain's potential to manage the fear of death. By participating in a ritual designed to communicate acceptance in the face of the natural

and inevitable process of death, individuals are aided in their efforts to instantiate this acceptance at an emotional level. Acceptance will lead to a richer, more satisfying life in the face of the mystery of death. In this way, the liturgist can teach the essential druidic lesson of acceptance of natural cycles and acceptance of self, which is central to the faith.

## Notes:

**Pg. 3** - Aristotle, Politics 1253a. Aristotle is not saying that people do not enjoy some level of solitude. It is empirically verifiable that this is the case. What he means is that most people cannot lead a flourishing life totally and completely alone, without any human contact or congress. It is in our nature to seek out our fellows.

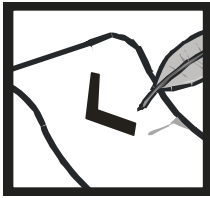
I would like to thank William Pearson of Cedar Light Grove for bringing this point to my attention.

## Author Bio:

*Wayne Keysor is a member of CedarLight Grove. He has completed his Dedicant's Path as well as the Generalist Study Program. He is also active in the Bardic Guild, having earned the rank of ADF Journeyman Bard. He is a circled member of the ADF Order of Bardic Alchemy. His hearth culture is Irish, but retains a deep interest in classical Greece and Rome.*

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# Encounter at the Station

By D. Rowan Grove

One of the important Virtues for those who would be upright and honorable is the keeping of one's word. Sometimes this is tested through consciously sworn oaths, and sometimes through things that happen in daily life, seemingly by chance.

I was working on an urban college campus, at one end of which was a station for the light-rail commuter train. It was an evening on the edge of winter; the light had faded early to a chilly, liminal grey, and the wind was sharp. The station was crowded with students, and as I waited for the train, I noticed a man making his way through the crowd. He wasn't a big man; perhaps my height, sinewy and lean. His clothing was shabby, his grey hair long and shaggy, but his beard had been trimmed. He seemed to be asking for money from those he encountered, and he also seemed to be heading in my direction. I don't usually contribute to panhandlers, and kept the corner of a wary eye on his progress as he threaded his way through the crowd; within a minute or so he was at my elbow, mumbling something about, and "spare a little change?" For some reason, instead of the mute headshake that discourages farther speech, I said, "Whatever's in my pocket," and thrust my hand into my left-hand pocket. I thought I might find a few coins, but what emerged, besides a tissue and a couple of pennies, was a ten-dollar bill that I had no recollection of having put there. I looked at it, a little taken aback; he looked, not at the money, but at me. After a moment, I said, "Well, I did *say*. . ." and handed it over.

He took it, saying, "Gods bless you, ma'am." Not "God" – "Gods", plural, quite clearly. I looked sharply at him, and saw for the first time that he had only one eye; the good one had been turned toward me; the scarred and drooping lid of the other was just visible through his shaggy grey hair. The possible implications took my breath away. Then the commuter train slid noisily around the curve of the campus, the crowd surged forward, and the man slipped away, leaving me catching my breath and my ride home, and wondering just what *had* happened.

Two years later. . . . Do I think I had a visitation? On reflection, it seems a little unlikely. Do I think I encountered Odin Himself at the train station? Again, I doubt it, though it's always possible; you never know, with that One. Do I think I was tested? Indeed: for however any of the rest of this might have been, I *was* tested, by myself. I made a careless offer to a stranger, and then discovered that the keeping of the bargain was more costly than I had anticipated. I considered, hesitated – and stood by what I'd said. So whatever the situation, I find that I am particularly glad that I kept my word that day. As it happened, although there were often various folk cadging changes from the campus crowd at the light-rail station, I never saw that man again. I am not likely to forget him.

## **Author Bio:**

*D. Rowan Grove set up her first Pagan altar at the age of ten, which was quite a while ago. She joined ADF in 2010, completed her DP in 2012, and the first circle of the Seers' Guild study program in 2013. Rowan currently serves as Bard for the Silver Branch Golden Horn grove in Denver, CO, and as Chief of the Scholars' Guild. She is a member of the Gaelic and the Fire and Ice Kins, a Flame-keeper within the Brigid's Hearth SIG, and continues to work on the IP, GSP, Bardic, and some other study programs.*



*Bleeding Heart* by Chelly Courvette

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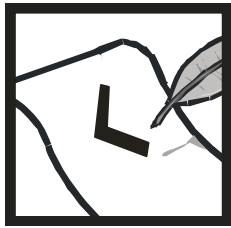
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# An Interview with Rev. William Ashton

By Mike Kaan

Rev. William Ashton was born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana. He attended Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado where he graduated in 2007 with a major in Religious Studies and a minor in Psychology. Rev. Ashton currently resides in Boulder and is the Grove Organizer for Mountain Ancestors Protogrove. Originally joining ADF in 1997, Rev. Ashton soon after went on spiritual walkabout taking time away from his Druidry, ultimately returning to his ADF practice in 2009 with renewed perspective and passion. On February 8th, 2014 he was ordained as a priest in ADF.

*How did you come to find Paganism? Was there one defining moment or was it a growing interest over the years?*

I came to paganism after going through phase-one of my long and sordid religious journey. I consider myself a Recovered Catholic (nearly a seminarian), who had explored born-again Christianity, Baptist practices, and Zen Buddhism in my younger days.

Essentially, during my post-Catholicism period, I was sampling the stuff that floated to the top of New Orleans' religious gumbo.

To make a long story short, my reading drifted from religious topics, and I dove headfirst into my Aikido practice. There, I could find spirituality without the hassles of what I knew at the time to be religion.

I began teaching private Aikido students, one of whom worked for a bookstore. Our deal was he could either pay me \$50 cash per lesson, or double the value in books (since he had an employee discount). I took the books.

After about 9 months, I ran out of things to read that interested me in the tiny Waldenbooks (do those still exist?), and I staggered across Raymond Buckland's 'big blue book.' My friend was surprised that I picked it up, since prior to that moment I'd been picking up books on Eastern Thought, Buddhism, and martial arts/Aikido. He informed me that he was indeed a witch (who knew?), AND his lady ran a coven, AND that I

could come check it out. I agreed, once I read the book, to see what I was getting myself into.

So, I read the book, and practiced with this coven for about 3 years. Lots of great magic working, lots of personal transformations... at the time, I was VERY satisfied with the magic-tech part of Wicca, but my personal need for religious expression arose again, and it wasn't being met in the practice. I knew I couldn't practice long-term as a witch since I didn't see the cosmos in their terms, but I didn't know what else was out there.

*How did you come to find ADF and what attracted you to the organization?*

After my experience with Wicca, I was hip to the pagan scene, but didn't quite jive with what I knew of with my VERY limited exposure. Talking to a friend about my challenges, he strongly recommended I score myself a copy of Real Magic. I took my friend's advice, and looking back, that moment changed my life. At the back of that edition of Real Magic was an ad for ADF, and I could even read about this new druidic order on the new-fangled interwebs thang.

I read about ADF, and dabbled in it for a few years before joining. Looking back at my colorful and diverse religious journey, I have to say that ADF just works for me. The way I see things, and how I participate in the cosmos around me is framed neatly within it's structure of Pan-Indo-European paganism.

*What hearth culture speaks to you on a religious and spiritual level? Why?*

Hmmm... here's where I cross into ADF fuzzy territory. If I could simply self-identify in my ADF paganism, I'd call myself a New Orleanean Polytheist, serving the people of Colorado. Let's call that character a Mountain-Dwelling-Swamp-Druid.

In all seriousness, I personally (disclaimer: just ONE man's opinion and experience) have a challenging time identifying with the Kindred of a

Hearth that isn't either a part of me in the way that New Orleans is a part of me, or that isn't of the place I am currently calling home.

*That's a very unique take on the matter. Would it be accurate to say that your hearth is of heart (the land you identify as home) and place (the land you currently live on)?*

That's a great way to put it. I should make a qualifying statement: I rely on Ceisiwr Serith's work on Proto-Indo-European practice, Deep Ancestors, for a lot of my structure and cosmology.

*I've heard you talk about "civic Paganism." What does that mean?*

Before touching on that, I should begin at a time when I first encountered Isaac's work, and 'plan' for ADF. I walked away with the idea of someone who identified as a 'Druid' being a servant of the people, and civic structure... not just other druids and druidry. The unpacking of that idea led me to work on creating a ministry that holds welcoming space for any who identify under the very large, very unwieldy, and very delicate umbrella of paganism.

Civic paganism manifests through leaders' efforts to build community. Civic paganism has the ability to, over time, have Heathens, Wiccans, and Eclectics (as well as the obligatory 'druids') standing around the Fire making offerings, addressing their Ancestors through the well, and standing together as a diverse people - even if but for a short time.

If my Druidry, ministry, and practice aren't building that kind of community, that sort of local folk-identity, then I have failed in my work. Druids BUILD civic paganism.

*What would you consider your greatest spiritual triumph and greatest challenge?*

Geez... that's heavy. Triumph, hmm? I would say returning to ADF after leaving to go walkabout for a decade. Our Druidry works. It's a SOLID practice... I'm blessed to have realized that while I still have time and mental strength to practice. Greatest challenge? Doubt. Self-doubt.

*What kind of doubts, if you don't mind me asking?*



Rev. William Ashton

Doubt that the skills and learning I've acquired, coupled with my ability to use those tools in my toolbox for the appropriate situation, aren't enough. Did I study enough, did I practice enough, and did I offer enough? Was I prepared? After all, as a minister (dare I say pastor), I'm quite responsible for my folk... at least that's how I see it. That's the weight of the obligation of vocation.

*Where do you see modern Paganism going in the future? What aspects are propelling the movement forward? What aspects do you feel are holding it back?*

Wow... who am I to answer that? I'm just a guy who lights fires, pours offerings, and has a bunch of folk supporting me, and who think it's important that I do that.

*Do you feel that question is important to think about or do you feel it's best to worry about what an individual can do in their own sphere?*

Very important. But we must begin where we are... remember, from the center of our cosmos is where we act. Be present in all actions.

*Recently you were ordained as a priest. What prompted you to take that path within ADF? What was the ordination experience like?*



*Last Rose of Summer* by Skye Windsinger

To me, that's what a druid is. The experience was humbling, inspiring, invigorating... so much, really.

My ordination ceremony was attended by Wiccans, witches, druidic pagans, eclectics, professors, alumni, Catholics, Protestants... it was my 'civic' recognition as a religious servant to the Colorado community.

I mean, geez... the Southwest Regional Druid flew out from California to attend. Who the heck am I to warrant that?

*What advice do you give those who may wish to become clergy?*

If you'd feel lost and without purpose if you couldn't offer yourself in service, then the CTP would be worth exploring. Short of that, start with the GSP and IP.

*There's a lot of work that goes into the CTP studies. Did you find them particularly challenging? I've seen the list myself and it seems daunting at times. What's the best way, in your opinion, to tackle the assignments?*

We all have different methodologies for study. The one that works for me is to read over all the

questions, mark ones of particular interest, and read what I'm moved to read as I'm moved to read it, jotting down notes for future answers, or points of interest.

Bite by bite, the same way one eats a whale.

*What is your favorite thing about ADF? If there was one thing you could change about the organization, what would it be?*

Favorite thing? Structure and academic expectations.

What would I change? I'm pretty much a loyalist when it comes to the organization. I gotta say, at this moment, I'm kind of okay where things are. We're growing slowly, and working on more and more

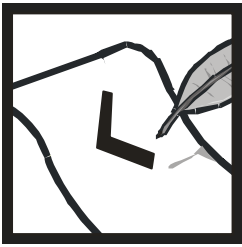
sustainability models each season. I kinda think for now, we're doin' okay.

**Author Bio:**

*Mike Kaan has been a member of ADF since December of 2012. He has recently finished Dedicant Path and a member of Eldr ok Iss (Kin of Fire and Ice).*

*Castlerigg Stone Circle, UK* by Maja Mosch





# The Transformative Abilities of ADF Ritual and an Indo-European Precedent

## Part 2

By Reverend Amber Cannon

*(continued from Oak Leaves Spring Edition #64)*

The transformative power of ritual is not diminished when ADF work is compared to a pair of cultures which merge their lore with the reality of their historical scenarios in their practices.

In the Vedic culture of India, sacrifice is repeated over and over based on the ideology that ritual sustains the forces of life against the forces of death. This idea goes back to the earliest songs of the Rig Veda addressing the martial sky gods like Indra and the Maruts. These gods participated in the struggle of vitality against the forces of decay. When humans sacrificed animals of value or soma, this recharged the strength of the sky gods in those battles. (Mahoney, 124).

A second reason for repeated sacrifice is the belief that the universe is fractured into a chaotic multiverse through the dismembering of Purusa. In later lore, Purusa is referred to as Prajapati, the Lord of Creatures. After he gives all parts of his body to become the Vedic cosmos, his body lays broken and lifeless. Priests representing the Brahman community join spiritually with celestial beings in attempts to rejoin Prajapati's body in a ritual drama, and thus reforming an ordered universe. (Mahoney, 124).

In this first example of sacrifice, the forces of decay are also the forces of constraint and death called the Danavas. In reality, the Danavas symbolize the waters trapped within the mountains unable to flow down to crops, or the illumination of the Vedas which the people are yet to fully realize when Vedic warriors overtake disorganized tribes of the land. The Danavas are the seasons of drought, disease, pestilence and struggles among the castes. All these are forms of anrta, or chaos. Myth holds that as quickly as the Danavas were defeated, more would be reborn.

*"In the Vedic culture of India, sacrifice is repeated over and over based on the ideology that ritual sustains the forces of life against the forces of death."*

This is why repeated sacrifice is necessary. (Mahoney, 126). The times when the Danavas posed the greatest threat were transitional times, such as when day becomes night, and night becomes day. They posed threats when the moon transitioned between phases of full and dark, and when a soul journeyed to the afterlife. Offerings done at transitional times were called Oblations to Agni. To aid in the transition from life to death, a rite called "Praise of Light" was performed. Common rituals to Agni are called "Agnistoma." The Vedic people having been transformed by commitment to religious belief (mythical) see that humanity has an obligation to

give gifts and sing songs at periodic times when chaos and danger threaten cosmic order and beings. (Mahoney, 130-131). The concept of periodic timely intervention compares to the ideology of seasonal festivals and rites of passage which occur at

transitional times.

There is a general Vedic rule of five sacrifices and two of which may be applied to sustain ADF's orthopraxic endeavors. To illustrate the importance of "right practices," a Vedic axiom suggests that "you may not always have an animal to sacrifice, but you can find a twig to burn in a small fire honoring Agni. You may not always have access to pressing your own soma, but you can offer a cup of water to the thirsty Ancestors." (Mahoney, 147-148).

Heesterman describes the rules of sacrifice as the "first institutions of the world" assisting in the founding and maintaining of social order. The preceding explanations for repeated sacrifice in the Vedic culture support the phrase echoed by Heesterman, "All this here follows sacrifice." (Heesterman, 84). If we are to view Vedic ritual as a supernatural injunction preserving the order of the universe, then all possible perils

must be removed from the ritual itself. This takes the potential for transformation to an extreme level by eliminating conflict which initiates growth and evolution. Since the king or ksatriya is already viewed as performing unclean acts, he is already disallowed participation in the Agnihotra and must make his offerings to Agni by offering to the Brahmins, providing them food and shelter and protection. (Heesterman, 91). This suggests that cosmic ordering can be taken too far, stunting the growth of the universe. The use of symbolism in these rites then, not only provides ordering, but makes creative use of the chaos which reduces its effects on the participants. (Turner, Theatre, 23). As reflexivity of consciousness is awakened in the ordering process, any anxiety caused by the process is tranquilized making repetition a more comfortable practice. (Grimes, Begin, 58).

When a component of history or cultural reality is compared to the mythical cosmology and then compared to ADF's cosmology and work, we run into a problem of resource verification. Although there are many Vedic texts available to us in the Rig Veda, this culture just like many others, started out as an oral tradition. Their religion held that it was impure to recite any written text after having read any text other than the Rig Vedas. This created an aversion to written text and an oral tradition existed for the purpose of passing on knowledge. It is also theorized that the earliest Vedic immigrants didn't possess a written language when they composed the earliest parts of the Vedas. (Kaliff, 52).

There is a similar situation in the Norse culture. Skalds maintain the early records of folklore and are responsible for passing down the traditions. (Kaliff, 59). The foremost witness to their rituals is Tacitus. He is credited for recording his observation of a veiled Nerthus being drawn in a cart and accompanied by a Priest. He observes the cleansing of the Goddess totem at the end of the journey at the ocean and the drowning sacrifice of the slaves who cleanse it. Tacitus also observed that people worshiped in the open but this observation doesn't appear again until much later in sources. (Raudvere, 33-34).

Myth and reality become intertwined in the lore about a pagan temple at Uppsala from the *Eyrbyggja Saga* written by Adam of Bremen in 11 CE. There was a great Christian influence in Sweden during these years. Observations which Tacitus made will shed some light on the lore of the Uppsala temple. Sources which back up Tacitus' observation of worship in the open, also mention a horgr which may be reddened as if by the blood of sacrifice. Etymologically, horgr is related to the High German cognate for a "pile of stones and rocks." This cognate is often found occurring with the mention of a sacred rock or sacred grove. Tacitus also observed that people did not create images of their gods, however, these are said to be present in Bremen's pagan temple. In the *Eyrbyggja Saga*, Adam of Bremen goes on to describe a blot that takes place every nine years at this temple. Sources indicate Adam was a Chronicler at his church who became Director of his Cathedral School. He was a strong advocate for the conversion of the Northern people to Christianity. His record of the blot may have transformed modern practices, but it is likely his perception of the religious practices was also influenced by his beliefs. (Lindow, 33-34).

*"The early practices of Indo-European Ancestors help transform the modern practices and ideologies of ADF. Bearing these comparisons above in mind, we can see how a belief system originates from a convergence of truths and world models which challenge each other."*

In the work of ADF, we also gather at regularly appointed times to make sacrifices. We gather in sacred groves and hallowed spaces around an altar which corresponds to a sacred pile of rocks. Like the followers of Nerthus, we believe offerings to a fertility deity will also grant us abundance in our crops and the projects we begin. The early practices of Indo-European Ancestors help transform the modern practices and ideologies of ADF. Bearing these comparisons above in mind, we can see how a belief system originates from a convergence of truths and world models which challenge each other. Religion in its form as a set of formal practices is based on an abstract concept. (Raudvere, 105-106).

### **From Myth to Mimesis**

During the period 1936-1947, German scholar Erich Auerbach composed his influential *Mimesis*:



Land, Sea, and Reflective Sky by Rev. Jean Pagano

wood. In stanza 28, we have evidence of a seidr ceremony. The third ritual which appears is the utisetá marked by sitting out for knowledge. (Raudvere, 105-108). These occurrences of prophecy compare to the importance of the omen in ADF work.

In another example comparing the lore and reality of a hearth culture with the work of ADF, we can

*On the Representation of Reality in Western Literature.* He described how mythology depicts and portrays historical events blending them together in a mythical landscape to make everything appear credible. It is only through a study of rhetoric, writing style and pragmatics, which essentially converts a religious text to a system of codes, that there exists the possibility of interpretation. By applying Auerbach's mimesis to the Voluspa poem, three rituals are uncovered revealing support for Old Norse norms and values. (Raudvere, 103).

The first of the three rituals is a formal assembly. In reality, this was called the Thing and corresponds to a gathering of the tribes, similar to what takes place in Ireland, and similar to ADF's National Meeting. A practice of the Grand Sumble, which also takes place at National Meetings, is the roll call of groves which corresponds to the naming of gods necessary to reform the cosmos in the following:

*Then the powers all strode to their thrones of fate,  
sacrosanct gods, and gave thought to this: to night  
and her offspring allotted names, called then  
morning, and midday, afternoon and evening, to  
count in years, (Vsp 6)*

This verse establishes recognition of their eschatology as they “count in years” at their “thrones of fate”. Prophecy is suggested here and is mentioned again in stanzas 21 and 22 as three maidens who dwell at a tree and incise slips of

examine the ritual traditions surrounding the Vedic gods Agni and Soma. These are complimentary deities in a sacrificial rite. Fire itself is the manifestation of Agni on our plane. Soma manifests in the ritual drink and is the plant used to produce it. As the ritual drink, the God Soma grants blessings to the gods, just as the Waters of Life grant blessings to us. The drink soma compares to the mead of inspiration which contains all the knowledge of the Norse gods after it is made from Kvasir's blood. Imbibing the mead confers a similar blessing of the gods. (Kaliff, 70-71).

Re-examination of the Scandinavian horgr, indicates a connection to burial mounds and graves by a shared opening or hole through which blood could be poured or collected for the purpose of the Ancestors. This also compares to ADF work of offerings at the well. (Kaliff, 80). Ancestor offerings were made at the barrows alongside Scandinavian farmlands in a central part of the landscape. These offerings were believed to improve the farm's abundance and the fortunes of the people who lived there. Regarded as part of ancestral cult worship, these practices are recorded as recent as the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (Kaliff, 82-83).

The word horgr also refers to burnt mounds which suggest offerings were burnt and not just poured or placed on top. This suggests the gods received offerings at the burial mounds and graves. (Kaliff, 112). Since these burnt mounds or horgrs appeared often at the center of the

landscape or clearing, they appeared to form a sacred center or axis mundi. (Kaliff, 125). This compares to the sacred center layout of ADF work. Sacrifice at the center of the barrows, like the center of our space, transforms our cosmos, re-creating it and marking it as special before the Gods, (consecration) so that the Gods and Ancestors are prepared to receive offerings. In Norse funerary practices, when a body is cremated on the funeral pyre, this deceased then would become an offering to both the Gods and Ancestors.

### **Pulling It All Together**

When we understand the similarities between ADF work and the practices of ancient cultures, we can begin to understand the transformations possible within the framework of what we do both within and outside of our rites. By examining how religious practices affected the beliefs of the Indo-European people, we may catch a glimpse of how orthopraxic commitments can transform the beliefs of ADF Druidry.

Society renews its sense of identity by assembling. This is done via group activities that include everything from neighborhood yard sales to concerts in the park and county fairs. (Durkheim, 295). The more that structure is implied, the stronger the suggestion of cognitive qualities. The more that empirical quality is emphasized, the more resilient is the potentiality of a *communitas*. Our ADF work falls into both these categories. Many folk negotiate between assisting with the successful operation of ADF and its training programs and being part of the general membership. No social structure is immune to effects of alienation however, *communitas* typically dissolves the norms of institutionalized relationships by placing one person in relation to another. (Turner, 127-128, *Ritual Process*). By reducing the amount of alienation, the social structure of ADF transforms its folk by offering them opportunities to gather publicly to worship, to receive training, to achieve their potential in the organization and through encouragement to continue their work domestically. This becomes an inclusive opportunity where no one need feel left behind.

*“By examining how religious practices affected the beliefs of the Indo-European people, we may catch a glimpse of how orthopraxic commitments can transform the beliefs of ADF Druidry.”*

The next way in which ADF work transforms the folk is by scheduling High Day celebrations within a two week window of traditionally-scheduled dates. Durkheim posed a theory of positive and negative cults in which he described a positive cult as maintaining a cycle of festivals regularly recurring at fixed periods. If a person kept these practices, they supported the positive cult and opened themselves up for the possibility of “moral renewal.” (Durkheim, 259). A cult was considered negative when the “profane” is separated from the “sacred” but it retains its full power. In a positive cult, the power of the negative cult is diminished when the negativity is removed. (Durkheim, 242).

The third way in which ADF work transforms participants involves ADF symbology. Our liturgies are full of symbolic communication, gestures, props and actions. Our offerings are often symbolic of live sacrifices upholding our stand against the use of live animals. We use a collective of symbolism and it works. Images give forms to mythological archetypes. (Eliade, 174, *Symbols*). This system of symbols also provides a liturgical method *a priori*, forming connections across hearth cultures between myths, sagas, and lore and neoDruidic ideology. (Turner, 22, *Theatre*). Ritual symbols open the way for a beginning understanding of hermeneutics during a ritual performance, thus leading to a greater reflexive and transformative experience for all people involved both in delivering and observing the presentation.

The three types of opportunities for transformation catalyzed by the orthopraxic work of ADF are only available to those open to new perspectives of expression. In the studies of symbols in a ritual context, religious studies scholar Catharine Bell found that changes in symbolic meaning reflected changes of a social and economic nature impacting cultural processes. (Bell, 252, *Ritual Perspectives*). Religion and its practices can only be properly understood from the viewpoint of the believer. (Pals, 221). In 1973, Clifford Geertz published his *The Interpretation of Human Cultures*, which featured

a collection of essays he had written in support of symbolic anthropology, which studies symbols to understand a society. If we accept what Geertz says, that a religion acts to establish motivations in humans, (Pals, 271-272), then we may find our work parallels the evidence of the Ancestor cult offerings at the barrows and horgs. We perform rituals because we seek the blessings of the Gods, fertility of our output and healing and wisdom. We can say religion transforms us by motivating us to believe the Gods and Ancestors may bless us if we act to provide offerings. These individual blessings measure the difference between religion and creed, which focuses solely on collective beliefs. Religion delves into the personal and intimate relationship that forms between a supernatural entity and the individual, providing meaning to the work and taking note of all extra mundane factors. (Jung, 20).

In human form, an individual represents only a portion of a person's total image and potential for experiences. This individual may be male or female, young or adult or mature elder. They may spend their life specializing in a skill or trade or not specializing in any trade at all. They may learn a craft. They may fill one or many societal roles. The total fullness of the human individual can only be begun to be considered by the boundary-crossing shape-changer, and even then there may be unforeseen limitations. Other than the Trickster, or shape-changer, the human

fills only a part of the possible whole. Transformation takes the human across the nearest boundaries. This person can break ties with the whole or part of it, as in alienation, or they may embrace it. This is transformation too. They can celebrate the effects of the world and nature upon themselves and do rites to endure it. No rite has yet been recorded to stop winter from coming, but to endure it, to rise beyond it. (Campbell, 330-331, 1000).

The transformation manifested by the work of ADF is similar to work and transformative ability of ancient religions, depicted in lore, both realistically and mythologically. The transformation most often sought, and quite possibly the goal of orthopraxy, is simply the ability to endure.

*[See Part I in this series for bibliographical information.]*

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*Rev. Amber Skyspirit (Cannon) has been a member of ADF since 2009 and recently completed her CTP Third Circle Training. She also serves as Seers Guild Preceptor. She is a priestess of Three Cranes Grove in Columbus, Ohio. She enjoys travelling to many Pagan and ADF events around the country teaching and meeting new people and sharing everything she has learned in her lifetime of following various Pagan paths.*





# Druid Poetry

By G. R. Grove

## *Lughnasa Manawydan*

Manawydan, mighty warrior,  
hunter, farmer, faithful friend,  
able craftsman, wise in council,  
you freed Dyfed in the end.

With great Bran your mighty brother  
Ireland's king you overthrew;  
shed bright blood in streams and torrents;  
sad returned, one of but few.

With Rhiannon and Pryderi  
well you ruled in Dyfed fair,  
until magic took your people,  
vanished in the misty air.

On your travels you avoided  
quarrels and bloodshed with your foes,  
came at last back home to Dyfed  
snares and magic to oppose.

Three fine fields you sowed and tended  
promised fair to bear good grain,  
green and growing, nearing harvest,  
nourished well by sun and rain.

Then disaster came in darkness,  
stole your harvests one by one,  
until, armed, you waited quietly  
to defend them there alone.

In the darkness then a war band  
came to take your grain away;  
you caught one, O Manawydan –  
in your glove you made her stay.

Next a gallows on a hilltop  
was your bait to trap your foe –  
well you bargained, Manawydan,  
and the end we all do know.

Manawydan, mighty warrior,  
hunter, farmer, faithful friend,  
able craftsman, wise in council,  
you freed Dyfed in the end.

By G. R. Grove / *Gwernin* (previously published as part  
of "A Garland of High Day Songs" in my collection *Druid  
Songs*, © 2013 G. R. Grove)



## *Drinking with An Dagda*

A vat of beer would not have been too great  
to slake his thirst; the best that I could find:  
one bottle large, divided twixt us two –  
the greater half poured out, of course, for him –  
fulfillment of a vow. On evening bench  
I sat alone – and not alone – to drink  
my share, and in the twilight seemed to feel  
his presence great. O Good God, great and strong,  
all summer's heat and passion in your heart,  
all growth and procreation in your loins,  
and master also of the harper's craft,  
no fear of foe, no drudgery too great  
to daunt your boundless courage. All things grow  
at your command, and ripen with the year,  
the while sweet harvest waits. Your course is sure,  
your fame is just. Inspire, I ask you now,  
my growth as bard and my fecundity  
to brew such mead of song as we shall share  
in days to come. O Lord who never fails,  
I praise you now! An Dagda, Good God, hail!

By G. R. Grove / *Gwernin* (previously published in my  
collection *Druid Songs*, © 2013 G. R. Grove)



### Midsummer Ceridwen

by G. R. Grove

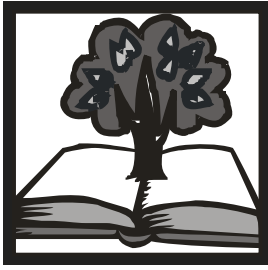
Summer's Queen, cauldron-keeper,  
magic-maker, she who knows,  
all that grows is your garden,  
and not hard for you its love.  
All above the dark earth now –  
fruit-bowed, blooming, sun-warmed, bright –  
your delight is, pleasure keen –  
blossom's sheen, snow-pale petals,  
tender nettles (sharp their sting),  
thorn-ringed red-black berries sweet.

Bleating lambs, white and fleecy  
please the ear and please the eye;  
skies of blue, pure, unbounded,  
loud resound with sky-lark's song.  
Cuckoo's gong, night-jar's whirring  
stir the woodlands, echoing  
through the twilight – softly dreaming –  
seeming endless, summer's lake.

Magic-maker, slow you wander,  
plunder gathering as you go,  
knowing well what herbs you need –  
seed and stem and root and leaf.  
Heath and moor, field and forest,  
best they give you for your brew –  
new-made wisdom, poet's mead  
leads to words and visions wild.

Child reborn (rough your birthing) –  
earth and water, fire and air,  
fair and foul will test him then;  
when you catch him, set him free.  
Sea-borne salmon, rivers roam,  
foam-flecked, storm-kissed, by your art,  
heartless, gentle, him you'll bring  
singing homeward, true-made bard.  
Hard your teaching, Ceridwen –  
Cauldron-Keeper, Summers Queen!

*By G. R. Grove / Gwernin (previously published as part  
of "A Garland of High Day Songs" in my collection  
Druid Songs, © 2013 G. R. Grove)*



# Earth, Water, Fire and Air: Essential Ways of Connecting to Spirit

Book Review

By Michelle A. Bassett

For centuries bloody battles have been fought and lines drawn firmly in the sand to segregate humankind's various religious and spiritual beliefs. Even today, in an era of spiritual evolution and burgeoning religious tolerance, far too many nations still harbor the prejudices that have instigated wars against one another.

In the book, *Earth, Water, Fire and Air: Essential Ways of Connecting to Spirit*, Cait Johnson strives to tear down the barricades of religious intolerance and ignorance by finding a common denominator that many can understand, the basic elements that make up not only the world we live in, but who we are as individuals sharing this world together.

Johnson has dedicated over two decades counseling individuals and instructing eager learners about the beauty of the Great Mother. As a former student of Sofia University, formally known as the Institute for Transpersonal Psychology, she shares her rich experience with readers in this book of blended traditions and shared beliefs. She easily breaks down various belief systems into how they each tie in the individual elements and concludes each section with light reflections and mental journeys for the reader to embark.

Each section of the book is divided by each basic element – earth, water, fire and air – and encourages readers to explore the intricacies of each element but also honors the idiosyncrasies of individual religions. Johnson draws her readers in by unifying each path by identifying its commonalities so we can all celebrate the element together.

For example, in her section titled “Earth,” she takes the reader’s imagination beyond the borders of our cities, states and countries and challenges us to look down at the planet as a whole, from outer space, and find the boundaries that segregate us all. Instead we are reminded that we are a witness to a “vision of wholeness.”

In many of her sections, she introduces (or reintroduces) the Divine Feminine to the readers. She not only uses poetic visual aids, but she also utilizes well-known religious references to support her writings.

For instance, she invites the reader to stroll through a lush garden rich with the smell of earth and newness. The garden is the biblical paradise known as the Garden of Eden. Such a utopia brings many of us back to our own human beginnings. It also reminds us of the care and protection we may have experienced when we were wrapped in our mother’s arms for the first time, being fed and cared for, like the nurturing protection offered to our ancestors.

Not only does she remind readers of how the earth shares nutrients and life with all of Her inhabitants, she also reflects on how the soil welcomes home those who die and the ritual of burial as “a return to the womb of the Mother.”

Each element is first described as its basic relationship to each of us; food, warmth, cleansing and breathing. Then, Johnson takes readers one step further and creates a personal and more intimate relationship with the element and the reader. By the time the reader finishes the section; he or she may feel like they met a new friend or have been reunited with a long lost partner.

Each section carefully unites readers, regardless of what religion he or she may follow, with neutral language that most would find comforting. However, if one is not comfortable with the feminine aspect of a higher power, he or she may not be able to completely embrace the message of balance and unity Johnson is attempting to portray.

The language in the book is simply written, and the references to other religion’s creation stories, basic tenets and even mythological tales are gently presented on each page like a platter of hors d'oeuvres, offering the reader food for thought.

The reflections and guided meditations at the end of each section reverently close the corresponding element as well as help further personify it to the reader as a companion we journey with during our lifetime.

The text is simple and can be enjoyed by anyone who is curious about nature and how it can relate to most major religions and earth-based spirituality. The reader does not have to have knowledge of the various spiritual paths being introduced; he or she simply needs to sit back and enjoy the information being shared.

Johnson's writing is unpretentious and truly calls the reader to gather by the figurative fire to hear her lessons. For readers searching for how to enhance their existing earth-based practices or those who want to learn how to integrate the elements into their regular prayer ritual, this is a perfect fit for their bookshelf.

However, if a reader is looking for more hardcore historical references that delve into comparative religion, he or she probably won't appreciate what Johnson is trying to offer as completely as other readers. Additionally, Johnson's book isn't a self-help book that instructs readers how to improve their life. It is a guide that draws readers into the realm of earth-honoring spirituality.

As a woman who follows the Druid path, I found Johnson's reflections and elemental comparisons refreshing. Her book was a soft read that didn't require me to rush to my reference books to draw tables of comparative notes to follow her examples. I thought she represented not only the major religions – Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism – but she also invites indigenous and earth-based paths to share the common ground. Nothing in Johnson's book made me feel like she was trying to convert her readers or ostracize any one belief system.

So many of us today are trying to find our way back to our roots, literally. Individuals from around the world are trying to come up with new ways to save our precious planet and by doing so have awakened the sleeping elements that many have long forgotten. By reminding us of how each element touches our lives so completely,

Johnson encourages readers to not only listen to the cries of our planet but also join with our brothers and sisters throughout the world in breaking down the barriers of beliefs and simply see one another as siblings of the same Mother.

#### **Author Bio:**

*Michelle Bassett has been a member of ADF since 2012. She is the Grove Organizer for the Star of the North Protogrove in Minnesota. Michelle's background is in comparative religion and transpersonal psychology. She currently is involved in outreach ministry in her area and is looking forward to broadening her focus to help families with loved ones in hospice care as well as prison inmates. She is a wife and busy mother of four.*

#### **Biography:**

Johnson, C. (2003). *Earth, Water, Fire and Air: Essential Ways of Connecting to Spirit*. [Kindle Reader Version]. Retrieved from <http://www.amazon.com>.

# TEMPLE

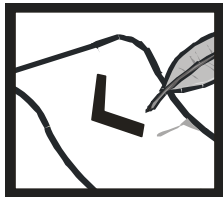
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# Creating a Year of High Day Rituals 101

It's Simpler than you Think

By Steph Gooch

Many Dedicants and Grove Organizers find the task of creating good High Day rituals to be overwhelming, but it does not have to be as difficult as it seems. There are many rituals available online at [www.adf.org/rituals](http://www.adf.org/rituals) and at various grove websites (which are listed here: [www.adf.org/groups/groves/index.html](http://www.adf.org/groups/groves/index.html)). You can experiment with other people's rituals, pieces of their liturgy, or create new liturgy of your own – or do all three in order of succession. However, it helps to have a basic understanding of how liturgy works and fits together, in order to create meaningful rituals for you and your congregants.

When you are beginning to write your own liturgy, there is a wealth of information on the ADF website (visit [www.adf.org/members/training/dedicant\\_path/articles/coortutorial/index.html](http://www.adf.org/members/training/dedicant_path/articles/coortutorial/index.html) and [www.adf.org/rituals/explanations](http://www.adf.org/rituals/explanations)). However, these in-depth articles can be overwhelming to take in all at once. Give yourself some breathing room to start \*somewhere\* and improve as the seasons and years go by. This article intends to be a primer for that journey.

## The Purpose of Liturgy

Rev. Isaac Bonewits cites liturgy as “used most often in English to refer to the Christian ceremony known as the ‘Eucharist’ or the ‘Mass’.” He goes on to define this concept more in general:

*A ‘ritual’ is any ordered sequence of events, actions, and/or directed thoughts, especially on that is meant to be repeated in the ‘same’ manner each time, that is designed to produce a predictable altered state of consciousness within which certain results may be obtained. (Bonewits)*

This is the state of consciousness we are trying to achieve in High Day ritual and forms the basis for the Ordinary part of our ritual structure (see next section). In his essay, ‘The Intentions of Druidic Ritual,’ Rev. Jeffrey Wyndham (Ian Corrigan) writes:

*[T]he patterns of our spiritual cosmos in the souls of individual worshipers...will be strengthened and deepened by repeated meditation and ritual*

*enhancement...[T]he strengthening of the Cosmic Patterns is achieved through repetition of these patterns, echoing in our rituals. (Wyndham)*

Bonewits further states, “The primary purpose of ritual is to reduce uncertainty, through the use of (consciously or subconsciously) established patterns of behavior that are known to have ‘worked’ in the past.” (Bonewits) So, feel free to choose bits of liturgy published online by other groves and individuals that resonate with you. Some people have expressed feeling “awkward” using another person’s liturgy, but it is *not* plagiarism if you do not take credit for it – indeed, many rituals on our websites have been edited and re-written by various individuals and cannot be cited as written by any one author. Think of them as liturgy that ‘works’ for various groves and therefore bears repeating.

## The Ordinary and the Proper

In Isaac Bonewits’ article, ‘Basic Principles of Liturgical Design,’ he cites Catholic Mass structure as a model for discussing ritual:

*If you have people showing up for rituals on a regular basis, and the ritual is essentially the same each time... then they will be thoroughly familiar with the liturgy... [You should] have the majority of your liturgy be the same each time but a minority of your liturgy change to reflect each occasion. In the Catholic Mass for example, this is known as the ‘Ordinary’ and the ‘Proper’. In most Druidic rites, this is accomplished by having a different God and Goddess as the primary deities for each ceremony, and by having new chants and songs for different occasions. (ibid.)*

One online dictionary defines the Ordinary as “the part of the Mass which is the same every day; - called also the canon of the Mass.” (*Ordinary*, Free Dictionary) And in the same source’s “disambiguation” of the Proper, it cites as “Ecclesiastical...The parts of the liturgy that vary according to a particular feast or season of the year.” (*Proper*, Free Dictionary)



*Prayer of Sacrifice: Cedarsong Grove, ADF Midsummer by Amanda Grieshop*

The Ordinary refers to those parts of ritual which are the same regardless of the occasion, whereas the Proper encapsulates those parts that are specific to the High Day or other occasion. The college textbook for my music history course included a liturgical outline of the Mass in use after Vatican II (p.45 Stolba) and I

have adapted it to ADF's Core Order of Ritual ([www.adf.org/rituals/explanations/core-order.html](http://www.adf.org/rituals/explanations/core-order.html)) to offer a clear way of mapping these parts.

[refer to table at end of article]

As you can see, most items fall in the "Ordinary" category, which is great because you only have to compose these liturgies once per hearth culture. So, if you have a single hearth culture for your grove or home practice, you only have to write it once for the entire year's worth of rituals. If you have a Celto-Norse grove, for example (Celtic cross-quarters and Norse solstices/equinoces is common, based on historical research), then you only have to do two sets for the eight High Days. Repeating these sections will allow your regular congregants to become familiar with the liturgy and help create that "predictable state of altered consciousness" (Bonewits) and "strengthening of the Cosmic patterns" (Wyndham) intended by our rituals.

For the Proper portion of the ritual, you might want to concentrate on the High Day research you do for the Dedicant Program. Immerse yourself in the information you gather about these High Days before writing the liturgy. Or incorporate one of the many invocations that our bards and liturgists have already composed, adapting them to your circumstance if necessary. You may wish to encourage your congregants to come to each High Day with Praise Offerings (poems, songs, and even physical offerings to the

Fire/Well) that specifically correspond with the occasion. The Proper should highlight the "reason for the season" and act as a focal point for the congregation's consciousness developed by the Ordinary.

Keep doing what "Works" for your congregation. And improve upon your liturgy – both the writing and performing of it – as the years go by, using the articles on the ADF website as well as your own research. It's not that difficult to get started.

### **Author Bio:**

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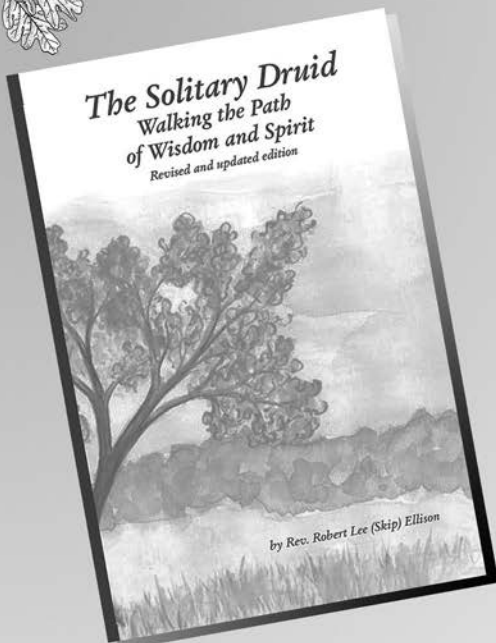
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ADF Core Order of Ritual mapped		
Ordinary	Proper	Works
<b>1) Initiating the Rite</b> May include: Musical Signal Opening Prayer Processional Establishing Group Mind (e.g. Two Powers)	Opening Prayer may be particular to High Day	
<b>2) Purification</b>		
<b>3) Honoring the Earth Mother</b>		
	<b>4) Statement of Purpose</b>	
<b>5) Recreating the Cosmos</b> Sacred Center in a Triadic Cosmos Three Worlds/Realms must be acknowledged Must include Fire (e.g. Fire/Well/Tree)		
<b>6) Opening the Gates</b> Must include Gatekeeper		
<b>7) Inviting the Kindreds</b> Ancestors Nature Spirits Deities		
	<b>8) Key Offerings</b> (to the Deities of the Occasion) includes Praise Offerings from the folk	
	<b>9) Prayer of Sacrifice</b>	
<b>10) Omen</b>		
<b>11) Calling for the Blessings</b>		
<b>12) Hallowing the Blessings</b>		
<b>13) Affirmation of the Blessing</b>		
		<b>14) Workings</b> (if any) e.g. Baby Blessings, DP Oath, Grove Officer Oaths, etc.
<b>15) Thanking the Beings</b> Kindred Gatekeeper	<b>15) Thanking the Deities of the Occasion</b>	
<b>16) Closing the Gates</b>		
<b>17) Thanking the Earth Mother</b>		
<b>18) Closing the Rite</b>		



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**Rebirth through Water -**  
**Symbols, Rituals and Myth**

*By Michelle A. Bassett*

This time of year, many parts of the world are still deep within the darkness of the winter months; at least I know this to be true in my home state of Minnesota. However, knowing that the sun is returning we wait for the seasons to change and the cold and darkness to go back to sleep. For many indigenous religions and cultures, winter represents Mother Earth withdrawing her fertility from the land until she is invigorated with new life. We witness her fertile bounty once again, with the return of spring.

Spring is typically symbolic of new beginnings and renewal. How often do we proclaim that, "It's time for a spring cleaning!"? Thus, purging our homes of unwanted clutter and scrubbing down the walls with that "pine fresh" scent. In many religious traditions, Easter Sunday is a hallmark day to celebrate the ritual of baptism; an infant water blessing. Several earth-based traditions celebrate the

holidays of Imbolc and Oestara. Through many of these spring traditions, we find a common denominator; the element of water.

**Symbolism**

Water, a life sustaining and giving element, has been used symbolically for millennia. Water often has been synonymous for life, purity, renewal, as well as a major element represented in the earth-based paths. Being fluid in form and lacking stagnant properties embodies an element out of which everything is created, equating it also as a symbol of fertility. Humankind has always known that without water there is no life. An embryo is suspended within the life sustaining amniotic fluid of the womb and therefore, we have all come into being by being born from water.

Water also illustrates transitory properties as we are able to witness its metamorphosis from liquid to solid and/or vapor. This transition is often used

to illustrate a human's evolution through the various stages of life. From more arcane perspectives, water symbolism can be found in the zodiac, divination techniques such as scrying or tarot card reading as well as being represented in the animal realm.

In astrology the signs Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces all are tied to water symbolism. The crab, scorpion and fish respectively illustrate purity, stillness and motion which are personified in the individual born under these signs.

The pure and reflective nature of water makes it a natural medium for an individual using it as a conduit for divination searching into its profound depths for Divine counsel thus making it characteristic of one specific trait impossible. Symbolically water is as fluid in meaning as it is in its natural aspect.

Even within the Christian New Testament water is used to symbolize eternal life in John 4:13-15. It reads, "Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life. The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty nor come all the way here to draw."

The Qur'an states, "We have created every living thing from water". Additionally, the Prophet Mohamed taught his followers that the most admirable act one could do was to give water to drink.

In dreams, to immerse oneself in water is akin to symbolically entering into the realm of the Divine Feminine, the dimension of the instinctual soul – renewed, restored and purified. (Harvey & Baring, 1996)

Figures such as the fish are also connected to water throughout many religions. The fish found its symbolic origin in Paganism as shown in Greek mythology. The son of Aphrodite (She was born of the foam that arose around the genitals of her father when they were discarded into the ocean) was Ichthys. Ichthys is also the Greek word for fish. In Christianity, the fish is also seen to represent Jesus Christ, the "fisher of men". Ichthys was also the name of the fish that swallowed the god Osiris' penis.

Christianity is ripe with water symbolism, and ironically, it also ties into the astrological signs and eras. As mentioned previously, the symbol frequently used to represent Jesus Christ was the fish or *Ichthys*. Beginning around the birth of Christ the era was known as the "Age of Pieces" (the astrological symbol is the fish). In the 1960's we were encouraged to prepare of the dawning of the "Age of Aquarius" (The Water Bearer). In keeping with the Christian perspective, this could also be viewed as the etheric Christ, bearer of new life and new eternal glory. (Powell, 2001)

## Myth

The vast nature and depth of water as seen in the rivers and oceans has historically been used as a symbol for heroes and heroines in search of rebirth and wisdom.

Water based myths are found in many creation stories as well as several myths involving hero's journeys. In many of the creation stories, new life actually emerges from the impregnated waters. Water flows out of a mother's womb indicating the onset of labor and subsequent birth of a child. This analogy is seen in Egyptian myth, as the Nile River was often viewed as the birth canal to the region, bringing life to its inhabitants. The antonym of this myth is illustrated in Greek mythology as the dead travel across the River Styx for their journey to their eternal resting place.

A popular water based story in Abrahamic religions is the story of Noah and his Ark. As told, God, seeing the wickedness that existed in his human creation is grief stricken and being so resolved to purge the earth of evil. He has decided to send a great flood to destroy the Earth. Not wanting to completely annihilate His creation he searches for a righteous man. He finds Noah and provides him detailed instructions on how to build the great ark and how to collect a male and female of all of the creatures within the animal world. Once Noah, his family and the animals are safe on board God sends the flood. The waters rise until all the mountains are covered and all life is destroyed. Eventually the waters subside and dry land reappears and Noah, his family, and the animals leave the Ark. Witnessing the devastation of his decision God vows to never again send a flood to destroy the Earth. A similar story is

memorialized in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and in the Hindu story of Manu.

Even across the oceans Mesoamerica has its own version of the great flood documented orally and transferred to written form. One myth, describes a man and his dog who survived the great flood (or deluge), soon the man sees that the dog has taken the form of a woman and the two then begin to repopulate the earth. Another myth told by the Aztecs describes how a man and a woman survive the flood by hiding in a “hollow vessel”. Finally, in Mayan mythology the creator Gods during their effort to create worshippers would destroy their failed creations, once by flood.

The common denominator in all deluge myths is that the world needed to be reborn and through the life giving symbolic renewal that exists in the water, was destroyed and subsequently restored by water. Parallels are often drawn between the flood waters of these myths and the ancient waters found in some creation myths. The flood waters are seen as cleansing humanity in preparation for rebirth and new life emerges from the primordial creation waters.

Additionally, as seen in the small sampling above, most flood myths also contain a hero whose sole purpose is to ensure this rebirth, but water is also used in some myths as a medium for a rite of passage. The hero’s journey is often found across or beneath the sea or his journey takes him to the “Water of Life”.

In Homer’s epic tale of the *Odyssey*, the hero Odysseus was “lost at sea” for ten years after his victory at Troy. Initially, he is trapped by the beautiful Goddess Kalypso and served for eight years as the Goddess’ lover. Eventually, Odysseus and his men create a raft and escape but, as part of his punishment for blinding Poseidon, God of the Sea’s son, Poseidon further delays Odysseus’ homecoming by conjuring up a storm. The vast nature of the seas are used by the Gods as a deterrent for a hero’s homecoming and a medium for moral and personal trials.

The ocean is one of the undiscovered “lands” on the Earth. We are just starting to create technology that can provide us a glimpse of her great depths. It is within the mysteries of these depths that

many myths are still sustained. Tales of the great Loch Ness Monster or the similar tale of the monster that exists in Lake Champlain have been passed on for centuries by inhabitants of those areas and the researchers attempting to capture unrefuted proof of the Paleolithic monster(s) existence. Hollywood has captured the myth of the mermaid in movies and animated films in addition to the countless pictures based on the Arthurian legend of the Lady in the Lake. Finally, two of the most famous water-born mysteries are that of the Lost City of Atlantis and the Bermuda Triangle; both holding tight to their secrets thus precipitating the curiosity of humans.

In addition to water being a symbolic life sign, it is also directly tied to the Divine Feminine across many spiritual traditions. This stands to reason, as previously explained, water is traditionally representative of life and the Divine Feminine is for many, the supreme deity that gives life to all beings. For example, the Greek Goddess Aphrodite is primarily identified as the goddess of love but, as stated previously she was born from sea foam. Isis and Mary were both known to as the “Star of the Sea”. The Great Mother heralds from the vast cosmic ocean.

## Ritual

Judaism – Washing with water was required under the Old Testament law, in fact, it held a considerable place in the temple ceremony (see. Leviticus 11:32; 16:4; 17:15; 22:6; Numbers 19:7; Exodus 30:18; 40:7), and sacrifices were to be washed (Exodus 29:4; Leviticus 1:9; 6:28; 14:5). Jews use water for ritual cleansing to restore or maintain a state of purity. Hand washing before and after every meal is mandatory.

Christianity – In this place, Jesus taught the significance of baptism by immersion in water. By being baptized, we symbolically go through the death, burial, and resurrection through which we become a child of God (see Romans 6:1-4). Water is intrinsically linked to baptism, which in itself, is a public declaration of faith and a sign of welcome into the church. In baptism, water symbolizes purification and the cleansing of Original Sin.

Hinduism – Water aids with spiritual purification. Morning ablutions with water are a daily duty. All Hindu temples are located near a water source and bathing is obligatory before entering the temple.

Shinto – Waterfalls are held sacred and standing under one is believed to purify the individual.

I have always felt a personal connection and affinity towards water. As a child, in order to escape the troubles that surrounded me, I would submerge myself in a warm tub of water in order to hear the Great Mother sing to me; to soothe my fears. Even today, when times are tough, I find myself performing this same ritual. The feeling of the water encompassing my body has always felt like the essence of the Great Mother blanketing me with her love and protection. Prior to performing any spiritual ritual, I also bathe using a mixture of water elements and “situational” herbs. To me, water is a conduit to the Divine Feminine.

My family has always poked fun at me when the weatherperson announces a rainstorm, especially if there is going to be thunder involved! I simply become giddy with excitement. The first spring rain with its rich earthy aroma simply sends my mind soaring; or, the tart tang of the air before the onset of a winter snowfall.

Water – a life sustaining element that has provided the basis to spiritual myths and symbolisms and for me, it represents earthly and eternal life.

#### **Author Bio:**

*Michelle Bassett has been a member of ADF since 2012. She is the Grove Organizer for the Star of the North Protogrove in Minnesota. Michelle's background is in comparative religion and transpersonal psychology. She currently is involved in outreach ministry in her area and is looking forward to broadening her focus to help families with loved ones in hospice care as well as prison inmates. She is a wife and busy mother of four.*



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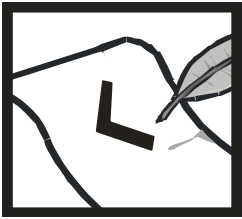
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*Cedarsong Midsummer Purification* by Amanda Grieshop



# Bringing Baby to Ritual, or not -

## Perspective for Maintaining a Family-Friendly Grove

By Kim Coley

### My Background Attending Ritual

I had been attending public rituals for about 8 years before the birth of my first son, and I loved them. I loved the social aspect, I loved making personal connections, and I loved participating in (or just listening to) the discussions with like-minded people that happen outside of the actual rite. I loved the fluid actions and flowing words of the ritual itself. I loved experiencing the Spirits and feeling the magic, which might occur before, during or after the ritual. After my son was born, I gained a more acute awareness of the benefits gained in ritual, as I saw it from a new perspective. It became a time I could spend away from my beautiful child, and there were times I desperately needed a break from the constant attention required from my baby. It allowed for some valuable “community time” (a variation on “me time”), something I had taken for granted before, and found I was missing between ritual days. It also became a time when I could interact with the folk and the Spirits in worlds that were beyond the mundane and focus on my existence as a spiritual being. It became increasingly important to re-establish this connection to my spiritual self when my daily life was so completely filled and focused on the mundane aspects of caring for someone else.

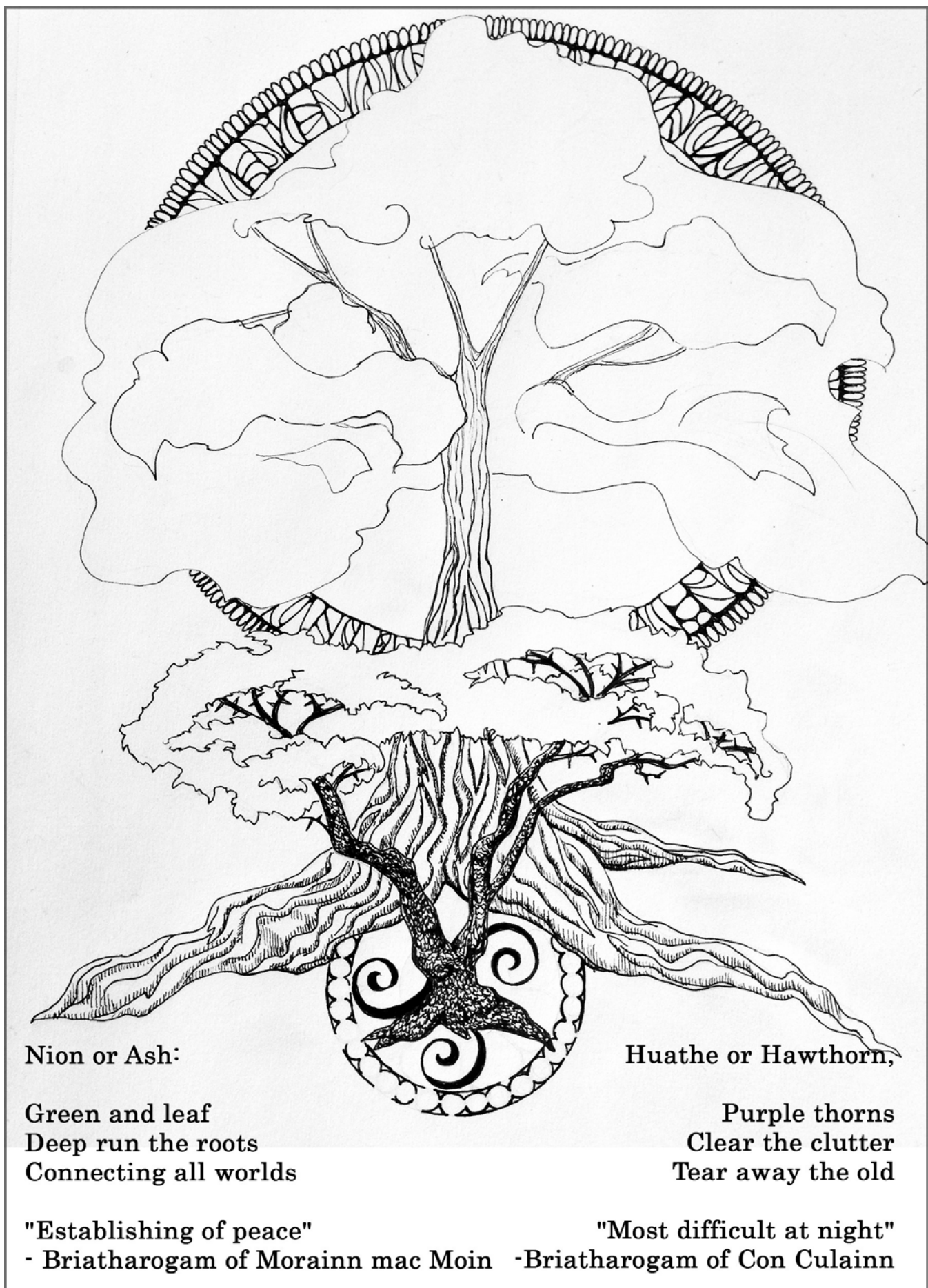
I breastfed my oldest son until he was about 10 months of age, but I had enough time outside of baby’s regular feeding schedule to pump and save milk for when I was away. Being able to pump meant I could still get out of the house, and my oldest son was happily drinking my milk from a bottle from an early age. My husband and I got into a routine where he would stay home with our son (since he does not attend ritual), and I could immerse myself in the ritual experience without the baby in tow. This only became easier once baby was weaned, and since he was always a Daddy’s boy anyway, this arrangement was a happy one.

Then came our second child. Our family now faced the challenge of coordinating care for two children with one parent attending ritual. I was again breastfeeding, but I wasn’t pumping as my schedule, and this baby’s increased requirements for milk, did not seem to allow for it. Unlike my first son, this baby did not like the bottle, and also refused being put to bed without nighttime cuddles from Mommy. This one was definitely a Mommy’s boy. The combination of the baby really not liking when I was away, and the additional difficulties imposed on my spouse now caring for two children meant that I was not going out as often without baby. Since taking baby was (and remains) a bit of an event requiring a fair amount of coordination and outside help, I found myself going out less frequently. Our established pattern of my leaving the baby home for most rituals wasn’t going to work as well this time around. If I wanted to go out, most of the time I was going to have to take baby with me.

We made a new compromise, where I would take baby with me to most events and leave my oldest son home with my husband. This of course greatly changed the dynamic for me of every event I attended, including rituals. It forced me to make compromises and to accept how baby’s presence would change my plans, timelines, and personal experience. Of course, the hardest part was learning to accept help from my Grovemates, something I would have to do if I wanted to continue to participate in Grove events and not let my fears or apprehensions turn me into a hermit.

### The Parent and Baby Ritual Experience

Attending a ritual with baby, or coordinating one’s time away from baby, affects how one prepares for and experiences ritual. Here is one perspective on ritual attendance that may help Groves finding themselves hosting babies or new parents as ritual attendees. Please note, my experience will undoubtedly vary from that of other parents, but it is a place to start building an understanding.



Nion or Ash:

Green and leaf  
Deep run the roots  
Connecting all worlds

"Establishing of peace"  
- Briatharogam of Morainn mac Moin

Huathé or Hawthorn,

Purple thorns  
Clear the clutter  
Tear away the old

"Most difficult at night"  
- Briatharogam of Con Culainn

*If I've brought the baby....*

\* I will have a lot of stuff. At minimum, a diaper bag, but probably also a purse and another bag/box/bin of my own ritual supplies (ritual book, personal offerings, divination tool, journal, feast item, food/other donation, feasting supplies, etc.). Oh, and the baby too, who may be small enough to be transported in a carrier that may double as their seating, or who may have outgrown it and have to be carried another way (such as in a sling or just in arms). In any case, I will not be able to make it easily to and from the car to the ritual site. And, I'm likely going to forget my coffee/hot chocolate/tea in the car. Any help you wish to offer, especially the careful transportation of my caffeinated beverage, will be appreciated.

\* The time before ritual, in addition to being spent taking the usual potty break, familiarizing myself with ritual parts, and gathering offerings or other equipment needed for my participation, now also includes last minute feeding and/or diapering of the baby. As these are messy activities, what I may assess as requiring ten minutes may turn into longer because baby is distracted or has decided that a whole wardrobe change (theirs, mine, or both) is required. So when I have to work through the conversation you are trying to have with me before ritual, act a bit more stressed than usual heading into ritual, or if I decide I just want to spend a few quiet minutes more to ground than anyone else, just roll with it. Now is probably not the time to spontaneously ask me to do more things or involve me in some new conversation unrelated to ritual preparation.

\* Most likely I have planned out where I am going to be during the ritual. I will have my supplies for baby and ritual in a specific place in the circle of folk. I may also arrange to have specific people around me that have agreed to help with baby during the ritual. My ritual

location will be in the shade if we are outdoors (and may therefore need to be moved if the sun position changes significantly over the course of the ritual), or will be somewhere to allow me quick access to additional supplies if I need to step away. Please be aware of this if it means that I am out-of-step with the rest of the procession in my attempt to get to my established place.

\* Baby is going to need something during ritual. I may have to whip out a toy, or a soother, or a clean diaper, or a breast in order to attend to them. I will do my best to be as least disruptive as possible and to time these events (ha!) outside of when I have ritual parts to perform. I will perform the more distracting activities outside of the ritual space (if possible), and will avoid walking through the circle of folk or in front of anyone performing a part. Don't let me distract you from what you want or need to do during the ritual, and

please don't bring more attention to me than may be required while I and my helper(s) manage the baby.

\* If I am passing the baby to someone during ritual, I have likely arranged that with them ahead of time, or they are familiar with the

baby and have offered to hold the baby while I do something else for the ritual. I understand ritual is not the time to play "pass the baby" just to let people play with them, and I will appreciate that everyone else involved with my baby's care during the ritual respects this also. Also note that all the rules that govern how I want you to handle (or not handle) my baby outside of ritual also apply within ritual. Although I appreciate your offer of help, if you haven't "met" my baby before or haven't held them outside of ritual, during ritual is not going to be your first time with them.

\* If I have placed myself within the ritual space, then I and my baby are participating in ritual. If I don't want to be censed or asperged, or I can't take the litany cup when it is passed to me, or am having trouble participating in a physical action of the Working, I will let you know subtly (or not) when the time comes.

*"Please do look for some communication from me on what needs to happen at the time, and try to maintain ritual flow no matter what occurs. I am there because I want to be there, and I prefer that the folk see my baby's presence as part of the ritual experience rather than just something to be endured."*

Please don't assume I want to be excluded. Please do look for some communication from me on what needs to happen at the time, and try to maintain ritual flow no matter what occurs. I am there because I want to be there, and I prefer that the folk see my baby's presence as part of the ritual experience rather than just something to be endured.

- \* I haven't brought the baby in order to disturb your ritual experience, or to make a political statement, or because "it was just easier", ignoring the possible effects this action would have on others present. I will most likely have gone through some weighing of possible options involving leaving baby at home, taking baby to ritual, attending only some activities of the ritual day, or skipping ritual altogether, before I figured out what to do. I may also, even though I've weighed all my options, still be carrying some anxiety about my choice, so your emotional support of my decision (even when it changes from one ritual to the next) is appreciated.

*If I have left the baby at home...*

- \* I may be joyful that I have this time apart from them, or I may be completely pre-occupied thinking and worrying about them. I may want to dive into helping with setup or clean-up or grabbing ritual parts, or I may just want

*Beltane on Lummi Island, WA* by Scarlett Messenger



to limit my activities and enjoy some time to absorb and reflect away from baby. Please forgive me if I go back and forth between extremes, feeling alternately reclusive or hard to talk to and expressing unusual (and sometimes inappropriate) outbursts of glee. As I fall into more of a routine, and as my hormones level out, this emotional disparity will resolve.

*Whether or not I've brought the baby...*

- \* I may not be on my game. I may be tired, even if I am not being woken up in the night by the baby, his sibling(s) or my partner. My reactions, comedic timing, and body language may be off if I have spent most of my time interacting with the baby and haven't been experiencing much in the way of adult conversation. If I am recently post-partum, breastfeeding, have recently stopped breastfeeding, or have just been exposed to baby's pheromones, my hormones are also going to be having an effect on my responses. Don't take it personally - you are still funny even if I am too tired to get your jokes, and I'm sure I will be able to comprehend that complex concept you are relating to me later when I have some time to think.
- \* I will do my best to show up in the best condition I can. I will endeavor to show up in the cleanest clothing I have that still fits, but this may not resemble my usual ritual attire. If I am breastfeeding, I will be choosing an outfit that is easy to nurse in. If I have spent more than five minutes with baby at any point after I got dressed, I may already have some bodily fluid other than my own on my person. I am not unaware of my appearance, nor am I trying to be disrespectful, but this may just be the best I can do right now.
- \* When it comes time to go home, I really, really have to go home. If I've brought baby, he may be ready for bed, suffering some effects of his time outdoors, or frustrated with the number of people and excitement he's been exposed to. If I've left baby at home, I may have a deadline to get home for feeding or bedtime, or to offer relief to my partner left at home, or to myself if I have gone extended

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The Grove that strives to become (and remain) “family-friendly”, supporting its guests and members as their family dynamics change and grow, is the Grove that will retain long-term support from its folk. It will also reap the benefits of a well-rounded dynamic and the wealth of experience that parents and children can provide.

**Author Bio:**

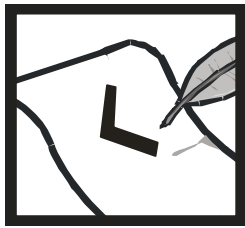
*Kim Coley has been an ADF member since 2009 and is currently active in Dancing Lights Grove.*

hours without breastfeeding. I may need to cut our post-ritual conversation short, be the first to start cleaning up and loading the car, or sometimes skip the post-ritual feast. I am not trying to shirk responsibilities or be anti-social; rather, there is just someone else depending on my timing at the moment.

I have been fortunate that my Grove has had experience with babies and young children in the past, and also has current members with children who understand all of the challenges that they pose. I have been made comfortable bringing baby as well as leaving baby at home. I have felt comfortable breastfeeding when needed, and have been given the amount of privacy or company that I requested. Grove members have coordinated with me to take care of baby while I load or unload my car, give offerings, take omen, eat something during feast, or just experience part of the ritual day without baby in my arms. My Grove has also been supportive when I had to reduce my participation, and when my husband has had to show up unannounced with the baby I left at home because he was completely refusing his bottle and needed Mommy. The keys to success have seemed to be maintaining flexibility, providing emotional support, and suspending judgment. These are the same skills, by the way, that are necessary to support a Grove member going through any sort of life adjustment. I would even say that a healthy Grove is one whose members practice all of these skills all of the time for all of its members and guests.



*Cedarsong Midsummer Altar by Amanda Grieshop*



# Understanding Grounding and Centering

By Wayland Stafford

The terms grounding and centering are thrown around in the Neo-pagan and New Age philosophies often without a clear explanation of meaning or purpose. What are these things and why are they important to me as a pagan. What are Grounding and Centering? Why are these things important and how do they affect the flow of mana during ritual? Can or should you perform one without the other?

Grounding describes two different actions: First, the physical or psychic connection to the earth as a source of stability and mana and second, the electromagnetic draining of excess energy into the ground (Bonewits 64). The anchoring and exchanging of energies between your being and the earth is referred to as “grounding”. This is represented as the Waters of the Earth rising into your body in the Two Powers Meditation and serves as a nice visual. From this moment forward you are using your will and the powers of the earth to bring about change in the world around you.

Centering is a term used to describe finding your center of awareness within (63). Often this center is associated with an image, a chakra, or a distant star, but all three examples play a vital role in the visualization and association with your center and that object. Centering can also be helpful when working and building upon group dynamics. Centering allows all members of ritual to focus on one common purpose so that the flow of mana can be controlled more easily, and in return this will also help build and establish a ‘group mind’ (65).

Understanding the use and effectiveness of grounding and centering during ritual can help a person facilitate an effective ritual. Knowing when to allow time for reflection without losing the interest of participants is not an easy task by any means. As well, any priest or person leading ritual should be able to effectively control the operable amount of mana raised during sacrifice and be able to “feed” that energy into the gates and to the Gatekeeper and Kindred.

There are instances where it is perfectly acceptable to perform grounding, yet not centering, or vice versa. For example, working with the public, certain people can become overwhelmed by the amount of energy that is ‘dumped’ upon them by everyone that they come in contact with. Grounding can help provide a healthy outlet to drain that energy and to anchor a stable connection to the earth in which you can use to calm and collect your thoughts and to clean and cleanse your psyche. Or what if you are feeling a bit anxious and overwhelmed with the amount of work that you have been given to complete and you find that your mind is wandering from task to task and making it hard to focus on the task at hand? Wouldn’t you say that centering your mind to sharpen your focus would be a good idea? It is perfectly acceptable to practice one form without the other, just keep in mind in matters of ritual they are more affective when practiced together.

Grounding and centering are techniques at your disposal that can be used to develop a strong mental discipline as well as a proud sense of who you are and how valuable you are as a living being. Use these tools to explore your mind, body, and spirit and your relative place in the cosmos.

## **Author Bio:**

*Wayland Stafford is a seeker and a student at The Cherry Hill Seminary. He is pushing the boundaries of convention and exploring the depths of prayer and service. He hopes to begin the IP and the GSP soon, and to eventually walk the path of ordination. To learn about this man of mystery and accomplishment you can read more of his work at [liminalmusingandpaganrites.wordpress.com](http://liminalmusingandpaganrites.wordpress.com)*

## **Bibliography:**

Bonewits, Isaac. Rites of Worship: A Neopagan Approach. Earth Religions Press. Dubsar House Publishing. 2003

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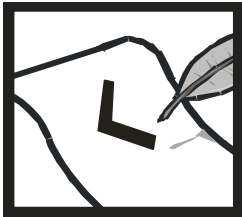
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# Finding the Virtues in the Dedicant Path – Part 1

by Ci Cyfarth

When we undertake the Dedicant Path, we are asked to define and discuss each of ADF's nine virtues: Wisdom, Piety, Vision, Courage, Integrity, Perseverance, Hospitality, Moderation, and Fertility. The DP student is encouraged to reflect on these virtues, and to think critically about how they fit into the path.

While it is useful in its own right to think about virtue, the knowledge of virtue is hollow if it doesn't affect our actions and way of being in the world. Knowing the virtues and being able to define them in our own words is a good beginning, but a better goal is, I think, to internalize virtue and to use it as a framework for personal development.

Over the course of my Dedicant year -- which actually ran about eighteen months from initial preparation to completion -- I realized that I was finding ways to put the virtues into practice within the context of my studies, and that the Dedicant Path offers a marvelous framework for understanding the virtues as practical, supportive guidelines instead of abstract concepts.

To demonstrate, I'd like to share my own completed virtue essays, and then expand on how these virtues were (or could have been) of use. In this first installment, I'll be discussing my experience of the virtues of Wisdom, Piety, and Vision during my Dedicant Path work.

## Wisdom

Wisdom is the virtue that governs discernment, judgment, and our ability to apply knowledge and experience effectively. Knowing one's boundaries, how to act in a particular situation and the right words to say are examples of wisdom in action. Put another way, wisdom gives one an accurate directive on how to enact right action.

While one can cultivate some wisdom through reflection alone, more often our best result is a combination of knowledge, reflection, and lived experience. For example, one may go into a situation with set expectations, but find that things

do not play out as planned. Taking the time to examine how and why things occur with a sense of openness and curiosity can lead one to new insights, as well as greater and deeper wisdom."

During the course of my Dedicant work, one of the things I discovered about wisdom is how difficult it is for me to accept the wisdom of others without first learning some of the lesson on my own. The most obvious example of this might be the way I ignored (or at least didn't act on) the good advice of others with regard to compiling my Dedicant Path work bit by bit as I went. Completing the work was simple enough, but at the end I was faced with the task of organizing mismatched, scattered, and sometimes incomplete material.

Now that I'm assisting others in my grove on their Dedicant work, I know that all I can do is encourage others to consider the voice of experience, and be ready at the end for anyone who finds themselves in that same situation.

This is a small lesson, and one I've learned often in other pursuits, but actually applying the knowledge that perspective and experience change the nature of a thing continues to be helpful, and is a simple example of Wisdom at work.

## Piety

Piety is the virtue that embodies right action with regard to the Kindreds. While in its basic form it encompasses the basic obligations of worship (e.g. observing festivals, making offerings, performing devotions), at its core piety calls one to do the work to build reciprocal relationships with the Kindreds.

We cultivate piety by developing a regular and sincere practice (and putting in the time and effort to do it correctly), giving thanks for good things, asking for help, and keeping vows. We also cultivate piety by learning the lore, experimenting with and refining our practice, and listening to what the Kindreds have to say in return. Because



*Temple of Athena at Delphi by Rev. Michael J. Dangler*

this path is one of experience, doing the work of piety is essential to the work and to the development of the individual practitioner..

Having come into my Dedicant Path work as an experienced meditator, I chose to focus on keeping a daily devotional practice for my Mental Discipline requirement. I had experience with devotion too, but I was not consistent in my practice, and I wanted to improve this area of my spiritual practice. I knew that the requirements of the DP would serve as a good framework in terms of motivation and discipline.

Some of this work meant moving my shrine out of its neglected corner in my writing space and into the main room of my home, an act that was just as much an acknowledgement of my need to prioritize and commit to the work as it was to bring it closer to the physical center of my home for the Kindreds. Mostly, though, the practice of Piety during my DP simply required me to settle on a basic practice and consistently do it.

I learned during my Dedicant Path work was that building and maintaining relationships with the Kindreds is simple in the same sense that maintaining relationships in ordinary life is simple: care and attention are necessary. The more consistent and authentic I was – and the more I

held up my end of things, and was careful only to agree to things I could reasonably give or do – the more vital that relationship felt.

Just as I'm imperfect with my friends, I'm still imperfect in my Piety. Like my friends, the Kindreds seem good with that as long as I keep trying.

### **Vision**

Vision is a virtue that incorporates many qualities, including awareness, curiosity, perspective, and inspiration. With the cultivation of vision, one comes to understand the nature of things as they are how they came to be that way, and to imagine paths to possible futures. Vision is both seeing what is, and being able to formulate what could be, and how best to bring it about.

Like wisdom, vision is a virtue that is best cultivated with a combination of experience and reflection. Acquiring knowledge of the lore, history, philosophy, etc. gives one the tools to comprehend what is observed, but without practical observation and participation, this knowledge may be incomplete. At its best, the true cultivation of vision occurs when knowledge and experience are fully integrated in ways that give one the ability to dream and act skillfully.

There was a point, embarrassingly early in my Dedicant Path work, where I sat down with the ADF website and a spreadsheet and charted out all of the coursework in the Generalist Study Program, the Initiate Path, and the circles of the Clergy Training Program.

I still have this spreadsheet.

While I undertook the Dedicant Path in part because I wanted a refresher on fundamentals, and to better ground myself in ADF's way of doing things, I admit that I also did it because it's the preparatory work for other training programs. Finishing the DP opens up other possibilities, and I wanted to try them on, even just in the abstract, to see what interested me. It's a tiny act, but it's still an act of Vision.

Vision has also carried me through more difficult times during the DP. When I became frustrated or bored with the work, I would eventually get to a place where I could pause and put things into perspective. Suffering unnecessarily over a 300

word essay, for example, is not necessarily the best way to spend a Saturday night. Should I put it aside? Give up? And is there a better way to approach this that will make it less difficult? When we work through these questions, we're cultivating Vision.

While these examples are simple, I think their simplicity supports the idea that the virtues of ADF aren't abstract, airy concepts, but things we can use and cultivate daily, and especially as part of our studies.

**Author Bio:**

*Ci Cyfarth (Christian Young) is the current Senior Druid for White Hawthorn Grove in Columbia, MO. He has been a member of ADF since 2012, and completed his Dedicant Path work in 2013. He is a member of the Roman Kin, the Brigid's Hearth SIG, the People of the Purple Feather, and the Warriors Guild. Currently he is working on the Generalist Study Program and the first circle of the Warriors Guild training program.*



**Lughnasadh Toast**

By: Amy Fleming (Phoenix Rose)

The days are getting shorter  
But it is still hot  
The fireflies are leaving  
But the crickets are aht (out)

The first harvest is ready  
Let's pick some crops  
And prepare for the feasts  
Of Lughnasadh

Now come in from your gardens  
And gather your kin  
There's games to be played  
Before the feasts begin  
You'll need strategy and skill  
If you're going to win  
Taitiu's games at Lughnasadh

Let's all raise a cup  
In Taitiu's name  
Stepmother of Lugh  
And a Harvest Queen  
Protectress of our Grove  
To her we sing

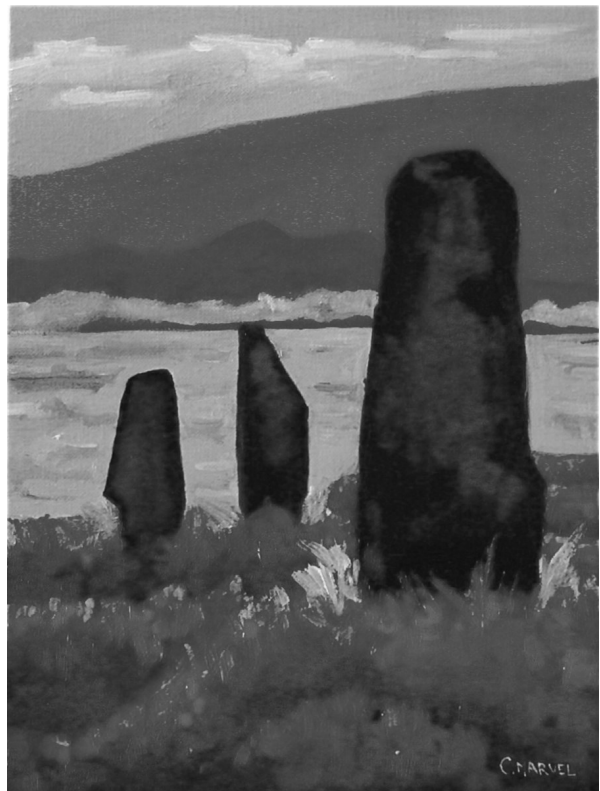
At this Rite of Lughnasadh  
Now we come to Lugh  
The Samildinach  
Lugh of the Long Arm  
Protects the Tuatha from attack  
It is he who created  
The Lughnasadh games  
So let's drink to him  
And honor his name

Be ye from the North,  
East, South, or West  
Be ye a warrior, farmer,  
Craftsman, or druidess  
Come join me in honoring  
Our Patrons tonight  
At this, our Lughnasadh Rite

Hail Taitiu!  
Hail Lugh!

**Author Bio:**

*Amy Fleming (Phoenix Rose) has been a member of ADF and Cedar Light Grove since Samhain 2011. She completed her Dedicant's Program in early 2013 and is now working on the GSP, IP, and several Guild Study Programs. She currently serves as Scribe at CLG.*



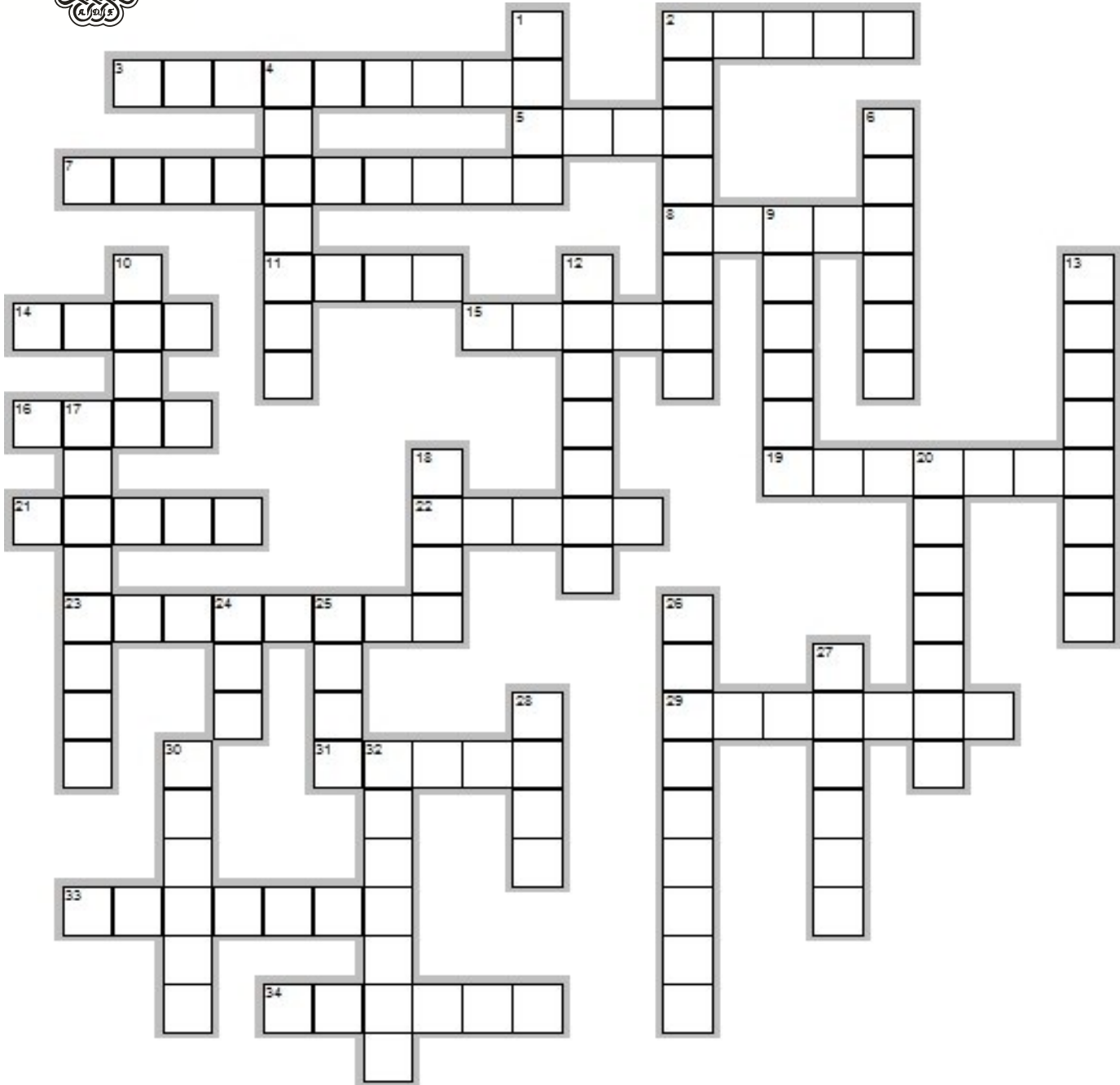
Ring of Brodgar by Christina Marvel



# Crossword Puzzle

Game of Gods

By Chris:)



Edipedia.com

## Across

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 2. Rune of Joy                              | 11. Gift's Rune                            |
| 3. N- Yggdrasil's Squirrel                  | 14. N- Clouds were created from his brains |
| 5. G -Charons Coin AKA                      | 15. Slavic Morning and Evening stars       |
| 7. G -His liver was eaten daily by an eagle | 16. Vedic Sacred Fire God                  |
| 8. N-God of poetry                          | 19. R -Patron of horse racing              |

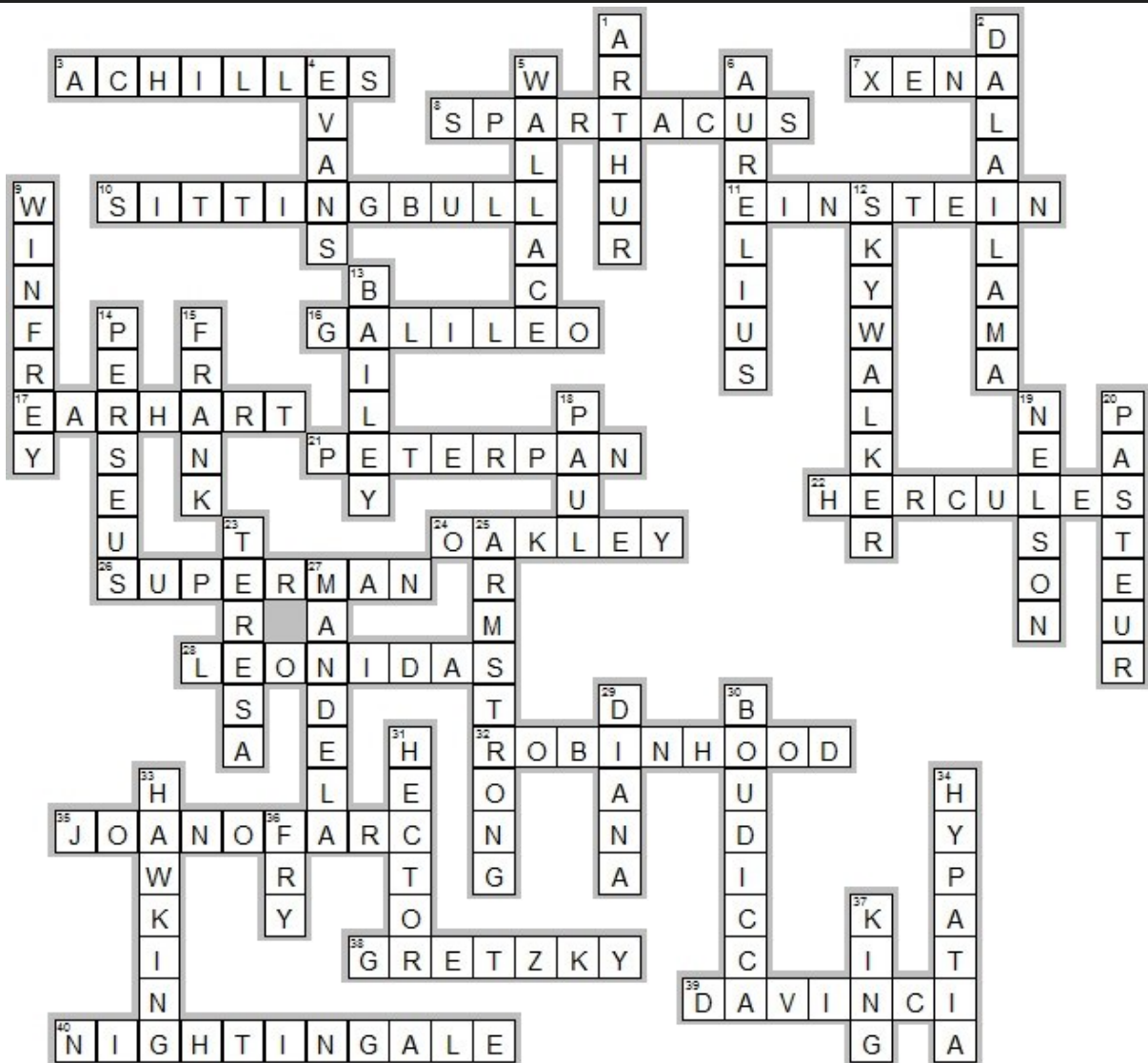
21. C- Son of Dian Cecht
22. C - God of youth
23. Crataegus oxyacantha
29. G- Hades for Heroes

31. C- Porridge eating god
33. N- Gleipnir ingredient Bird \_\_\_\_\_
34. G-The son of Uranus and Gaia

## Down

1. G- God of love
2. Sus scrofa ferus
4. C - Famous Milesian poet
6. C- A patron saint of Ireland
9. C- He burned down Tara every Samhain
10. C- The Fianna were his band
12. Gaulish God of healing
13. G -He guarded the gates to Hades
17. C- Irish smith God
18. C- Father of Lugh
20. G- Slayer of the Minotaur
24. N- Fenrir took his hand
25. Roman writer of Metamorphoses
26. Slavic War God
27. I - Vedic Divine Twins
28. R- The Lover of Venus
30. N- The Memory Raven
32. G -Hades River of sorrow

## Last Issue Puzzle Key





# Manannan Prayer

German & English Translation

By Mairi NicDhoiseu

German:

English:

Manannan, Sohn des Lir, Du segnest unser Land,  
Segne uns und unser Boot, lass uns gut hinaus-  
fahren  
Und besser zurückkommen, lebend mit reicher  
Beute.

Manannan Beg Mac y Leirr—  
Little Manannan Son of the Sea,  
Who blessed our Island,  
Bless us and our boat, going out well,  
Coming in better, with living and dead in our boat.

Manannan, der Stolze  
Harfenspieler, einmal gut, ein andermal schlecht  
Sohn des Lir  
Sohn des Meeres

Manannan, proud one,  
Harp player, one time well, the other time bad,  
Son of Lir,  
Son of the sea

Culain der Schmied  
Oirbsen  
Gilla Decair  
O' Donnel's Kern

Culain the smith  
Oirbsen  
Gilla Decair  
O' Donnel's Kern

Hüter der Seelen  
Hüter des silbernen Apfelzweigs  
Hüter des Kranichbeutels  
Hüter des Mantels des Vergessens

Keeper of souls  
Keeper of the silver apple branch  
Keeper of the crane bag  
Keeper of the mantle of forgetting

Herr der leuchtenden Pferde  
Herr der Unterwelt  
Herr der Magie  
Herr von Emain Macha

Lord of shining horses  
Lord of the Otherworld  
Lord of magic  
Lord of Emain Macha

Lehrer von Diarmuid und Cuchul-  
ainn  
Ziehvater von Deirdres Kindern  
Gemahl der Fand  
Gemahl der Aine

Teacher of Diarmuid and Cuchulainn  
Foster father of the Children of  
Deirdre  
Husband to Fand  
Husband to Aine

Schneller Hase  
Gestaltwandler  
Heiler  
Spieler

Fast hare  
Shapeshifter  
Healer  
Player

Saure Milch und Holzäpfel sind deine Speise  
Aus deinen Schuhen spritzt das Wasser  
Du schwebst über den Wellen  
Du heilst unsere Herzen

Sour milk and wooden apples are Your food  
Water splashes out of your shoes  
You hover over the waves  
You heal our hearts



*Prayer Beads* by Mairi NicDhoiseu



# News and Announcements

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## Dedicant Path Completions

**Elizabeth Williams (Eilidh Nic Sidheag)**  
Solitaire  
Date completed: February 2014

**Michelle Stottlemire (Marzena)**  
Ad Astra Grove, ADF  
Date Completed: March 2014

## Guild Program Completions

**Matthew Rutledge**  
Circle 1 of the Liturgists Study Program.  
Date Completed: February 2014

## New Protogrove & Grove Approvals

**Hearthstone Grove, ADF**  
Chartered Grove Status  
Date of Charter: January 21, 2014

**Five Rivers Protogrove, ADF**  
Pikesville, MD  
Date founded: January 31, 2014

**Columbia Protogrove, ADF**  
Tigard, OR  
Date founded: March 10, 2014

~ Congratulations to all ! ~

## ADF News

The ADF Clergy Council announces a new Order:

**The ADF Order of the Dead**  
Date Founded: February 2014

## Upcoming Events

**Trillium Spring Gathering**  
April 17-21, 2014  
Cross Junction, VA

**WellSpring Gathering**  
May 22-27, 2014  
Sherman, NY

**Three Rivers Festival**  
June 6-8, 2014  
Eganville, ON Canada

**Spirit of the West Druid Gathering**  
June 13-15, 2014  
Sylvan Lake, AB Canada

**Starwood Festival**  
July 8-15, 2014  
Pomeroy, OH

**Sirius Rising Festival**  
July 14 -21, 2014  
Sherman, NY

**Eight Winds Festival**  
July 17-2, 2014  
Truchee, CA

**Summerland Gathering**  
Aug 14-18, 2014  
Yellow springs, OH

**Festival of the Midnight Flame**  
Sept 4-8, 2014-03-16  
Ballaire, MI

Visit <http://www.adf.org/events>  
for more information.



# ADF Directory



## The Mother Grove

Archdruid	Rev. Kirk S. Thomas	adf-archdruid@adf.org
Vice-Archdruid	Rev. Jean 'Drum' Pagano	adf-vice-archdruid@adf.org
Treasurer	Sara Blackwelder	adf-treasurer@adf.org
Secretary	Rev. Robb Lewis	adf-secretary@adf.org
Members Advocate	BJ Rogers	adf-members-advocate@adf.org
Chief of the Council of Regional Druids	Sharon Gorbacz	adf-cord-chief@adf.org
Chief of the Council of Senior Druids	Flip Rutledge	adf-cosd-chief@adf.org
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Non-Officer Director	Rev. Kelly Kingston (Carrion)	carrionmann@gmail.com
Non-Officer Director	Rev. Barbara Wright	ceorua@gmail.com
Non-Officer Director	Rev. Ian Corrigan	tredara@ncweb.com

## Additional Leadership Positions

Administrator	Selene Tawny	adf-administrator@adf.org
Archdruid Emeritus	Rev. Isaac Bonewits	[deceased]
Archdruid Emeritus	Rev. Ian Corrigan	tredara@ncweb.com
Archdruid Emeritus	Rev. John 'Fox' Adelman	john.adelman@trw.com
Archdruid Emeritus	Rev. Robert 'Skip' Ellison	skip@dragonskeep.us
Chronicler	Steph Gooch	adf-chronicler@adf.org
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Information Manager	Rev. Rob Lewis	adf-info-manager@adf.org
Listmaster and Moderator	Rev. Jean 'Drum' Pagano	adf-listmaster@adf.org
Preceptor	Rev. Crystal Groves	adf-preceptor@adf.org
Store Manager	Rev. Jean 'Drum' Pagano	adf-store@adf.org
Webmaster	Rev. Robb Lewis	adf-webmaster@adf.org

## Committees

Clergy Council	Chair: Rev. Kirk S. Thomas	adf-archdruid@adf.org
Council of Lore	Chair Rev. Crystal Groves	adf-preceptor@adf.org
Grove Coordinating Committee	Chair: Rev Caryn MacLuan	adf-gcc-chair@adf.org
Grove Organizing Committee	Chair: Aigeann	adf-goc-chair@adf.org
Prisoner Relations Committee	Chair: Rev Barbara Wright	adf-prison-ministry@adf.org

For information on **Regional Druids** please see the full listing at:  
<<http://www.adf.org/members/org/cord/>>

For more information on **Groves, Guilds, Special Interest Groups (SIGs), and Kins**, please see the full listing at:  
<<http://www.adf.org/groups/groups-list.html>>



# Submission Guidelines



Oak Leaves welcomes submissions of artwork, articles, poetry, letters to the editor, and anything else that might be of interest to our Druid readers. Submissions, and especially artwork, relating to the turning of the wheel of the year and the celebration of the High Days are particularly encouraged. Submissions from non-members will be accepted, however, if space is constrained, preference will be given to submissions from ADF members. Certain pieces may receive preference, depending on available space.

## References and Notations:

Since excellent scholarship is one of ADF's goals, please document sources of ideas and materials that you used for your writings. Detailed endnote references are preferred rather than simply providing a bibliography. Please follow the standards for references in the MLA Handbook or Style Manual. We will not accept submissions with footnotes, as they require considerable editing to convert to endnotes.

## Medium of Submission:

Electronic submissions are preferred, sent as email attachments to the Oak Leaves submissions address:

**[oak-leaves@adf.org](mailto:oak-leaves@adf.org)**

Please send one submission per attachment specifying the format, author's name, your email, and membership status. Be sure the title of the piece and your name are at the top of the page, and you have checked it over for spelling and grammatical errors. Also: please include a brief ADF-related bio for all articles and essays.

Written submissions should be sent in one of the following formats: MS Word (doc/docx), Rich Text Format (rtf), or Text Format (txt).

While electronic submissions are preferred (and may be given priority for printing), readable hard-copy submissions may be sent to:

OL Editor,  
P.O. Box 17874  
Tucson, AZ 85731-7874

Submitted materials will not be returned to the sender.

## Art Submission Guidelines:

We now accept photos as well as drawings and computer generated pictures. Some of the color pictures will need to be modified to grayscale but we will do that as necessary. We would like to have pictures submitted at 300 dpi, and in a useable format such as .jpg, .png, tiff, etc. Please send them to the Art Director at [adf-ol-art@adf.org](mailto:adf-ol-art@adf.org). Contact the Art Director to inquire whether hard copies of your art may be submitted, depending on scanner availability.

## Deadlines for submissions are:

Spring: December 1st,  
Summer: March 1st,  
Autumn: June 1st,  
Winter: September 1st





# Ar nDraiocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship

P.O. Box 17874, Tucson, AZ 85731-7874

## Membership and Subscription Form

One form per person please.



Beside your name, address, phone number, and e-mail address, please indicate whether the information is: Publishable (P), meaning it can be printed in ADF publications and we can give it out freely to people who wish to contact you; Shareable (S), meaning we can give it out to ADF members who request it; or Confidential (C), meaning that only the Mother Grove and ADF office staff will have access to it.

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 Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ P \_ S \_ C

The information on this form represents a:  
 New Membership Renewal Revival of Expired Membership.  
 Information Update (If name/address changed indicate previous)

If this is a new membership, where did you hear about us?  
\_\_\_\_\_

If this is a membership renewal please state your ADF membership number:  
\_\_\_\_\_

In which ADF Grove do you intend to participate in, if any?  
\_\_\_\_\_

I am 18 years of Age or Older: { } Yes { } No (If no, see waiver below.)

### ADF Membership Rates:

Regular Membership \_\_\_\_\_ years @ \$30/year = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Prisoner Membership \_\_\_\_\_ years @ \$10/year = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Subscription to Oak Leaves - Members \_\_\_\_\_ years @ \$20/year = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Subscription to Oak Leaves - Non-Members \_\_\_\_\_ years @ \$25/year = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total Due \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail this form with your check or money order (made payable to "ADF" in U.S. dollars only.) Please allow 4-6 weeks for processing. There are special rates for Prisoners. Please contact us if you are a prisoner or are assisting one. This form may also be found online at: <http://www.adf.org/joining/join.html>.

### Under 18 Membership Waiver

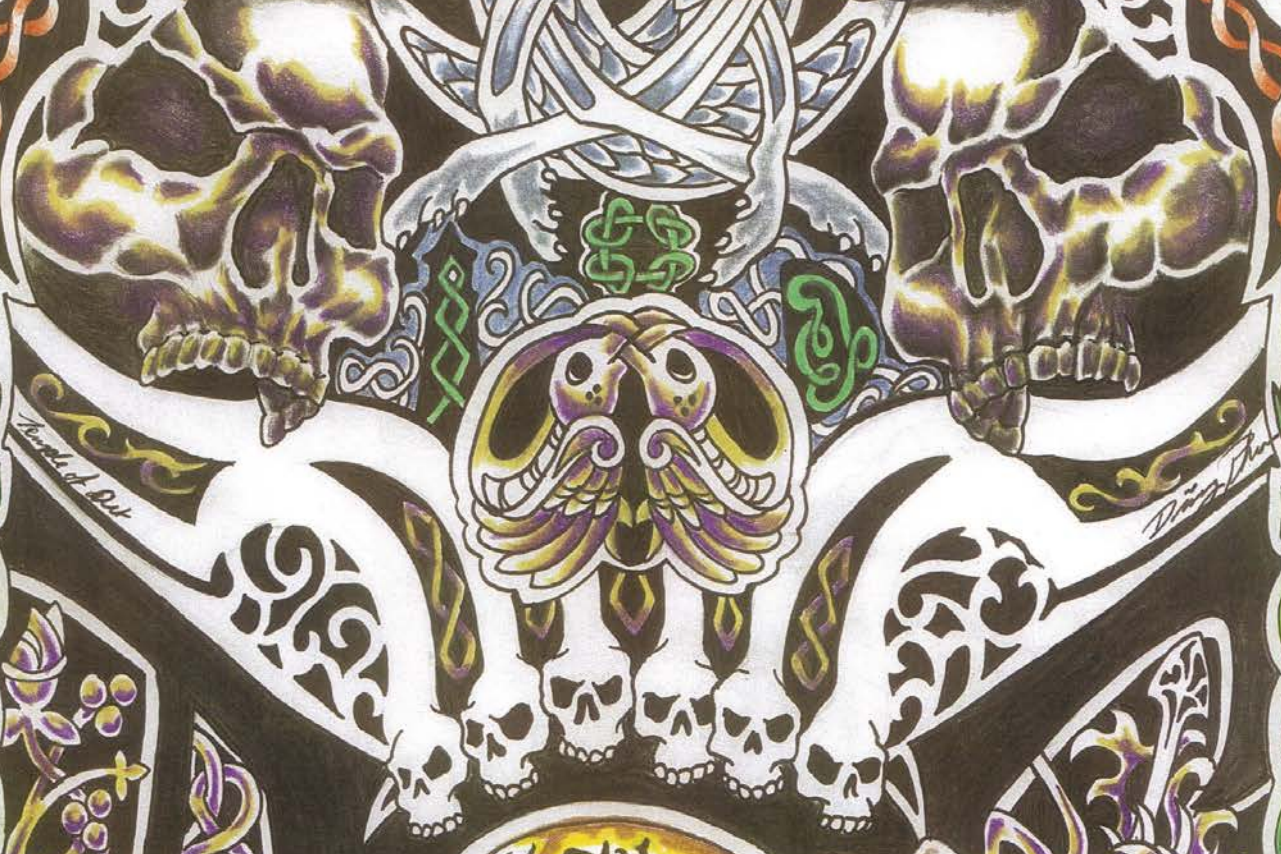
If you are under the age of 18, you must have a parent or guardian sign this waiver to indicate her/his permission for you to join ADF, and that signature must be notarized.

To whom it may concern: (enter child's name here) \_\_\_\_\_ has my permission to become a member of ADF, and I am fully aware of the Neopagan nature of this organization.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

Notary Seal:

# summerland



AUG 14-17<sup>th</sup> 2014

DETAILS VISIT:  
[6thnight.org](http://6thnight.org)

# Midnight Flame Festival

*Hosted by Grove of the Midnight Sun, ADF*

*September 4-7, 2014 in Beautiful Bellaire, MI*

*<http://www.grovemidnightsun.org>*

*Grove-of-the-Midnight-Sun-ADF on Facebook*

## Prayer of the Midnight Flame

*Bright on the edge of the night,  
The flame brightens and beckons.  
Fueled with fellowship and faith,  
The fire never dies in our hearts.*

*Spirits dance, and sing, and play,  
Their voices crackling and soft,  
Breaking through the spaces between  
Inviting us along, giving merry chase.*

*May we be the bright ones now:  
Our voices cheery, hands clasped tight.  
May our hearts never fail us  
As the night gives way to dawn.*

*Let us spend our time among friends  
And warmed before the fire.  
Let the flame support us and warm us  
From hearth to darkened mead hall.*

*The Midnight Flame burns  
At the center of all worlds.  
May we each be brightened by it.  
So may it be for all time.*

*Prayer by Rev. Michael J Dangler  
Image of the fire by MJD, from*

*The Midnight Flame Festival, 2011*



[http://www.grovemidnightsun.org/midnight\\_flame\\_festival.html](http://www.grovemidnightsun.org/midnight_flame_festival.html)