

# OAK LEAVES

The Quarterly Journal of Ár nDraíocht Féin Summer 2021 ~ Issue No. 93



## **Hymn to Ariniti**

**Hail to you, Ariniti,  
Goddess of the Sun,  
Shine upon the land this day,  
Shine on everyone.**

**Even on the days that dawn,  
When clouds may rule the sky,  
Remind me of your sunny days,  
As I watch this day pass by.**

**- Rev. Jean 'Drum' Pagano -**



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## OAK LEAVES

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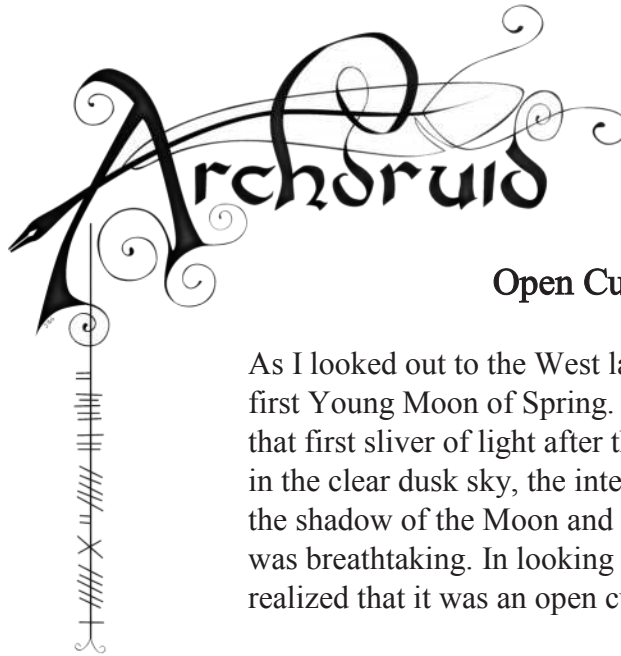
### Front Cover:

“Miach on Airmid’s Cloak”  
By Rev. Bryan Perrin

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## Open Cup

As I looked out to the West last night, I saw the first Young Moon of Spring. The Young Moon is that first sliver of light after the New Moon, and in the clear dusk sky, the interplay of light against the shadow of the Moon and the darkening sky was breathtaking. In looking at that scene, I realized that it was an open cup.

2020 was a hard year and while there were bright spots, there were many, many challenges that people everywhere faced during the dark days of COVID-19. In many ways, we found ourselves depleted, overturned, and off-center. With the coming of a new year, the hopes for renewal and recovery were on many people’s minds.

For those who follow a practice, one day follows another, marked by devotion, repetition, and discovery. In our isolation, we discovered, perhaps, the power of prayer and devotion, of practice and looking within for answers, for reasons, for a depth we may not have previously fathomed.

I run every morning and I remember the cold days of winter, with temperatures below the freezing mark. The practice of running kept me going. The hope that the weather would change and warm encouraged me, although those changes seemed far away. As I ran, my devotion blended with the trees that surrounded me as I moved on by.

Among the many bare trees, I would see the oak leaves hanging on the branch, a stark reminder that there was life here and that the memory of that life remained, calling to me across time and pulling me forward with the promise of renewal.

Imbolc came quietly, softly, almost unnoticed, as



the mornings slowly stretched backwards, and the sun rose a bit earlier each day. In my daily wanderings in the forest, I began to see buds on the trees, along with light reds and pastel greens as the springtime emerged a bit more each day.

As the days passed, the winter felt farther away, seemed like a memory as opposed to an occasional visitor, and heavy over-garments were replaced by light materials and then less and less as the days moved by.

Suddenly, as if by magic and the gift of the Gods, in the western sky I saw the outline of a circle, an outline of the Moon, backlit, glowing around the edge, radiant around the crescent-edge. As I gazed into the sky, I beheld the shadow of that shape that would become the bright Moon, this large, moving circle in the sky. What it would become, I already knew. What it was tonight, was the open cup.

The open cup, the promise of becoming. No water spills from this cup because it is deep. This cup holds a season, coming into being and waiting. It holds a certain volume, and it holds so much more. It holds a day, a week, a month. It stretches past the two-dimensional view in the sky and grows and grows as the season blossoms, blooms, and laughs at the never-ending days. "Come, believe," it says.

The bounty of this open cup spills onto the Earth Our Mother, and quenches the thirst of the Nature Spirits, long waiting through their own winter, praying, and believing in their own spring. The Nature Spirits understand the cycles in our lives and act them out, again and again, on this stage that is the Earth, alive and green on one hand, slowing and pausing much further south.

The open cup  
It calls to me,  
Like the hand of the Gods,  
Reaching down from above.

"Drink deep,"  
"Take hold,"  
"These blessings I pour,"  
As cup and sky join in the season.

The Moon, in motion,  
Dances like leaves aflutter,  
First in shadow,  
Then in light,  
Then in brilliance,  
In the night.

The open cup,  
I jump into,  
Like a lake,  
Like a lifetime,  
Like a lingering moment,  
Again.

The wind calms,  
The leaves grow silent,  
The young crescent Moon,  
Shines a bit brighter,  
Like pure water  
In an open cup,  
Saying,  
"Drink, deep, here."

Blessings of the Season,

Rev. Jean (Drum) Pagano  
Archdruid, ADF

## Summer Issue of Oak Leaves

By Oak Leaves Editor-in-Chief Rev. G. R. Grove

Here we are again, with another summer issue of Oak Leaves. In this issue we have the usual column from our Archdruid, Rev. Jean “Drum” Pagano. This time, he talks about the new moon, and the changing of seasons. I have also included three of his poems from Facebook. Our Vice Archdruid, Rev. Amber Doty, has suggestions for your summer activities. And the usual column from Rev. Ian Corrigan offers two charms against

squirrel-based items. Nathan Large provides another poem in his quest to speak for unpopular entities, along with an interesting illustration. A non-ADF local friend, Devin Storm, responded to my call for poetry with an invocation to the Green Man, which I really should have included in the Imbolc issue but did not want to lose. Jenne Micale provides us with four more of her beautiful and haunting poems. Rev. D. Rowen Grove



disease, still a preoccupation of many of us.

We have a variety of articles from new and old contributors this time. Aimee Brannon discusses the use of string figures in Neopagan Magic, something which had not occurred to me although I have had the book on which she bases her ideas for over thirty years! Pigeon (aka James Fielder) applies an interesting logical analysis to the Core Order of Ritual, again something which would not have occurred to me. Rev. Diane Cacciato provides us with ideas on creating a Prayer Jar, a blessing for trees which are about to be felled, an article on Irish and Norse storytelling, and two poems. Thomas Brown reviews *A Practical Heathen's Guide to ASATRU*, and offers two

shared two of her tankas with us as well. And I filled a small remaining space with a short article on the Old Gods of Britain, a subject which I was researching already as material for my next novel (several previous examples of which are advertised on the inside back cover of this issue, by the way).

As always, I thank all our contributors, and encourage others to submit articles and poetry for future issues. Send them to me at oak-leaves@adf.org before June 15th, and you, too, may find your work in print.

Blessings to all,  
Rev. G. R. Grove

## Wandering the Wheel

*By Rev. Amber Doty*

Summer is my favorite season. The warm sun, the green growing things, the rumble of thunder... these are all things that bring me great joy in life. Blooming flowers are not only beautiful, but remind me of the growth and potential we all carry inside us. Having the ability to spend more time outside helps me re-connect to my spiritual practice and helps me feel more a part of the natural world. Summer brings with it a sense of renewal and peace.

Summer also brings with it the Solstice with the longest day and shortest night. It is in this season that the sun is the strongest and highest that it is all year. The Solstice represents the power of light and how incredibly blessed we are to have that, but it also shows how important the darkness of night is for our well-being. Even though I know that the days will once again grow shorter, I am grateful for the season of sunshine!

Below are a few ways that you can get out and enjoy the summer season, even if you don't love the heat:

- Design a flower crown. Flowers tend to be in full bloom during the summer, so adorn some of their gorgeous blossoms on yourself!
- Create a suncatcher. There are many different types of suncatchers, created with everything from beads and crystals, to dried flowers and contact paper.

- Do some gardening. Whether you grow a single flower, or a huge lot of your own produce, gardening is a wonderful way to connect with nature and see your own growth along the way.
- Drink some iced tea. One of my favorite summer memories is sipping iced tea in the shade, reading a book. Brew yourself some of your favorite tea, but make it iced!
- Visit a local park or nature center. Find some time to walk among the trees (following local protocols of course) and enjoy the beauty of the summer.
- Enjoy some quality time by the fire. While most of these suggestions are day-time activities, some of my favorite memories are from sitting beside a bonfire on a beautiful summer night!
- Setup a Signs of Summer scavenger hunt. Kids and adults alike can join in on the fun of finding fun ways to represent summer!
- Cook a meal, even if it's just for yourself, using foods that are in season in your region.
- Watch the sunset. Taking some time to appreciate the beauty of the sun can be a wonderful way to celebrate summer.

If you have other ways you like to celebrate Summer, I'd love to hear all about them, so feel free to drop me a message through email or social media. I hope you all have a wonderful Summer! Stay cool, wear sunscreen, and enjoy the sunshine!



## String Figures in Neopagan Magic

By Aimee Brannon

String figures can be a powerful form of modern magic. Nearly forgotten now, they are ripe for rediscovery. Many of us remember string figures as childhood pastimes; reviving them offers a fresh connection to tradition and magical practice. Cat's Cradle, Jacob's Ladder, and many other familiar figures have persisted throughout human culture, which attests to their nature as more than a meaningless game.

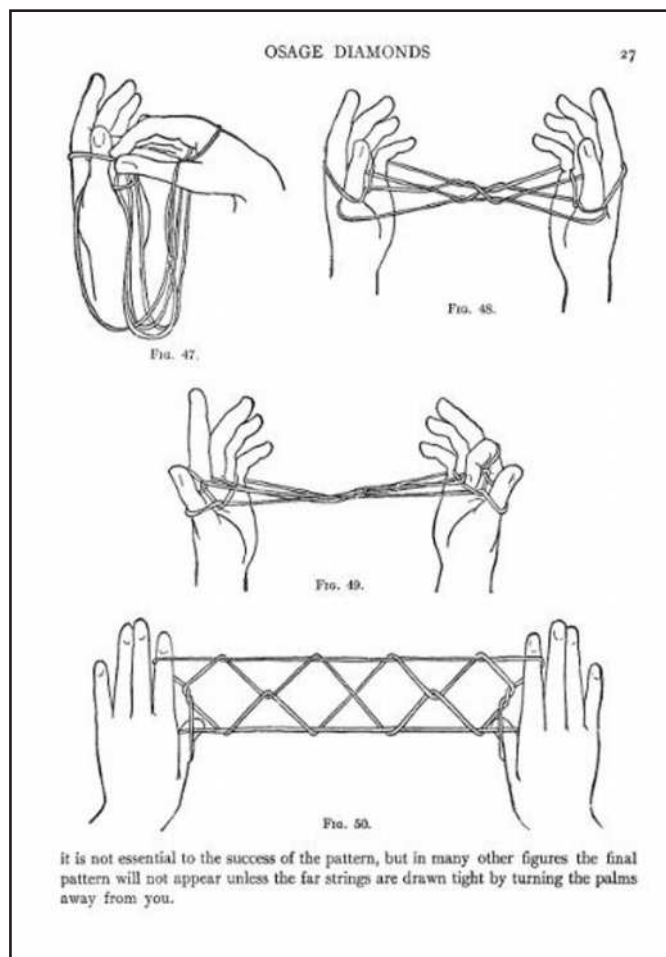
I rediscovered string figures during a trip to Fort Laramie in southeastern Wyoming. While browsing in the gift shop of the former fur trading post and Army fort, I ran across a used copy of Caroline Furness Jayne's *String Figures and How to Make Them*. Written in the early 1900s, it contains outdated language, concepts, and assumptions, but remains an invaluable source regarding the string figures themselves.

As soon as I picked up the book, I realized that string figures must be strong magic, and connected to the fort I happened to be visiting and the people who had frequented it in the past. String figures are well known features of certain Native American cultures, and Jayne's book describes a figure called Threading a Closed Loop, a version of which was made by the North American Pawnee people. The Pawnee originally lived near the North Platte river in southwestern Nebraska before their forced relocation to Oklahoma. Their Nebraska location was close enough to Fort Laramie that members of the tribe likely traded furs there. Spirits at the fort are noticeably present and, perhaps, influenced my interest in visiting the fort and of finding the book.

The Threading a Closed Loop string figure is also attested to in England and Argyle, Scotland. Whether early co-occurring string figures and their methods of construction were dispersed from original inventing cultures to receiving ones,

or were independently arrived at in different cultures, will never be known for certain. There is evidence of string figures from Paleolithic times, and because of their ubiquity and persistence across vast spans of time, it's not unreasonable to think string figures probably are indigenous to most cultures in which they're currently found. In fact, original string figures are presently being invented and could be considered an authentic expression of any number of modern cultures, although their use in a Neopagan magical context seems to be new.

Like other formerly important cultural forms, such as fairy tales and nursery rhymes, string figures have been relegated to the world of childhood. These cultural artifacts exist as diminished and misunderstood outer forms of

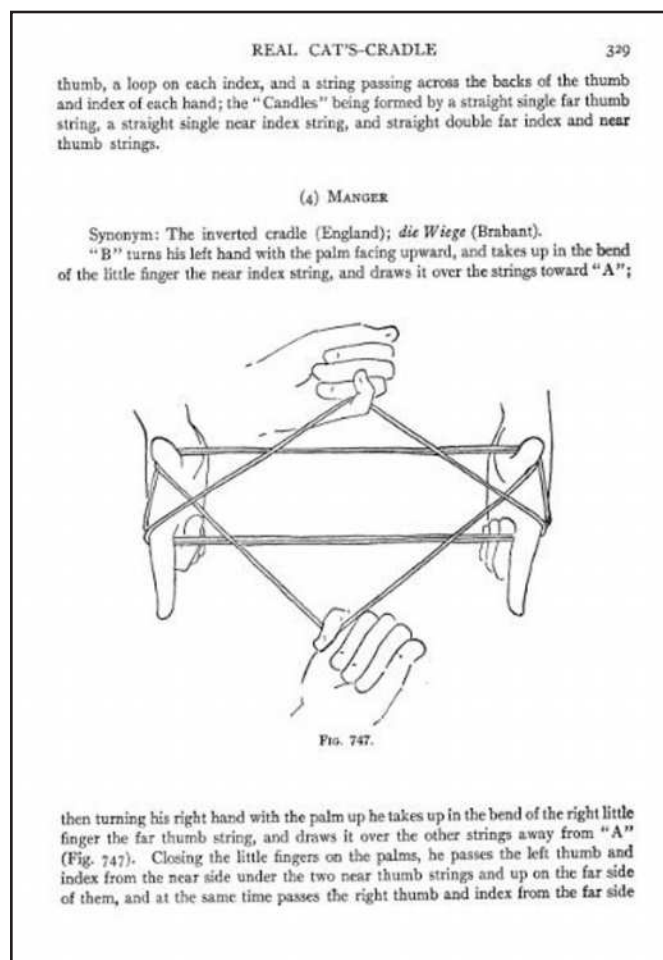


Wikimedia public domain image. Also called "Jacob's Ladder".

what were previously powerful ways of living in, understanding, and dealing with the world – i.e., contacting the imagination through storytelling, which forms a powerful relationship with the numinous. It is possible to revive something of the original meaning of these forms, animating them again with intent and thereby connecting with other ways of being. Kept safe in the childhood realm, these old structures await new interest and application in a world that has been drained of their lively presence and influence. The way back to them is through play and imagination, two things childhood excels at. Jayne refers to string figures as games in her Introduction. Games have often been misapprehended as meaningless child’s play, but many childhood games and pastimes, especially those based on old cultural forms that persist for long periods, probably arise from fundamental structures of the human psyche.

Games - imagination and play - are basic aspects of string figures; some require two cooperating skilled people, some have unpredictable outcomes, and some are called “tricks”, suddenly resolving themselves into a simple loop of string from a complex figure, made from many moves, with a single tug. These attributes keep string figures alive and give them their magical quality – imagination, chance, and unpredictability delight, and open the maker and observer of string figures to new possibilities.

A couple of busy years after the Fort Laramie trip, I finally got my copy of Jayne’s string figure book off the bookshelf. Even though I’d seen magic potential in them right away, I wasn’t sure that string figures really had anything to them other than passing the time. But the Introduction to *String Figures and How to Make Them* discusses the presence of string figures among Indigenous cultures across the world and the words and songs that many times accompanied them, even if the original meanings have been forgotten. Anthropologists of the time established that some string figures were connected with religious or magical meanings and uses in many Indigenous cultures; Alfred C. Haddon, writing in



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the Introduction to Jayne’s book, says that “...all over the world strings, cords, and knots enter largely into magical practices” (xxiii). Jayne specifically recognizes string figures’ magical nature (written in the early 1900s, the book contains outdated language):

*...many [string figures] are closely connected with racial [sic] history and mythology, with traditional tales and fortune-telling; some are accompanied by muttered chants or songs; in others a consecutive story follows from movement to movement, or perhaps a touch or word is associated with a certain turn or twist of the string.*

String figures have mysterious origins and indeterminate uses. They have reportedly been used for “good fortune in myth and magic”, as membership signals by shamanistic societies, and are sometimes played only at night, indicating a magical or ritual use (Yada 4). Learning and

You now have a loop on each wrist, two twisted loops on each thumb, and two twisted loops on each little finger (Fig. 20).

*Fifth* : With the right thumb and index lift the left wrist loop from the back of the left wrist up over the tips of all the left fingers, and let it fall on the palmar side. With the left thumb and index lift the right wrist loop from the back of the right wrist up over the tips of all the right fingers, and let it fall on the palmar side.

*Sixth* : Retaining the loops on the thumbs and little fingers, rub the palms of the hands together; then separate the hands, and draw the figure tight (Fig. 21).

This is a beautiful figure, and not at all difficult. Moreover it retains its shape no matter how tight you may pull it. It contains several interesting movements:

In the *Second*, the method of transferring the index loops to the wrists is unusual; as we shall see further on, a more complicated method is almost always employed. In the *Third* movement the changing of a string from one finger to another by means of the thumb and index of the other hand is a process not often observed. Indeed one may easily believe that the methods given in these two movements are short cuts peculiar to the individual who taught me the figure, and that,

some day, other Indians will be seen doing these movements in the usual elaborate style, whereby the strings on either hand are shifted and arranged by the fingers of that hand only. As far as I know, the *Fosarih* movement has not been observed in any other string figure. The rubbing of the hands together in the

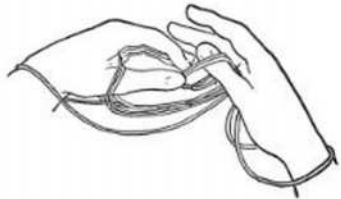


FIG. 19.

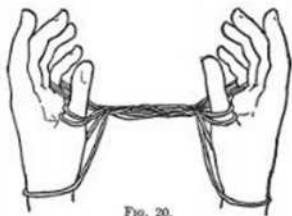


FIG. 20.

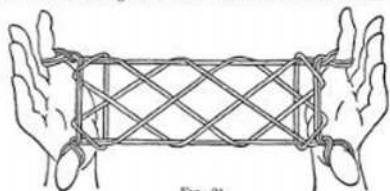


FIG. 21.

making the string figures, especially those that still have a story connected to them, is surprisingly engaging. Tallow Dips, a British Isles figure which consists of five serial figures that illustrate a story, is a good example of an absorbing figure. Sam Cannarozzi Yada quotes Rolf Hartung's *Fils et Tissus* in his "Stringeries" article:

*The sensorial excitation that threads and fabrics exert on tactile sensitivity sets off an extremely rapid reflex [...] a motor and creative activity of the hand... what we can touch is near, becomes familiar, and leads us to grasp. Manual activity provokes a rhythmic cooperation of the entire person.*

The connections among string figures, myth, magic, and shamanism have been noted by numerous anthropologists, explorers, and others interested in the origins and uses of string figures. Mark A. Sherman, in the Preface to *Kwakiutl*

String Figures, notes that "[i]n some cultures string figures have a religious or supernatural significance" (xiii). *Kwakiutl String Figures* is a trove of string figures and accompanying stories of some indigenous Canadian peoples, and is a rare, valuable collection that preserves irreplaceable cultural knowledge.

This nearly lost cultural knowledge is what drew me to string figures; I intuitively recognized their worth and possible role in a Neopagan setting, as well as in certain cultures prior to their colonization. Many other people are interested in string figures as a way to teach mathematics, tell modern religious stories, as children's entertainment, or as an interesting feature of fading traditions, but I wondered if anyone had ever used them as a magical technique. I quickly found people who currently use them for storytelling, or as a pastime among young people that connects them to their traditional cultures, but nothing specifically magical.

I further researched string figures as I taught myself how to make a few from Jayne's instructions, and rapidly confirmed that they were indeed powerful carriers of cultural knowledge and practice across the world, possibly going back to the Paleolithic (Abraham 6). I believe my pull to the string figures in a place thick with spirits was a call from them to fish the figures out of a whirlpool of nearly forgotten lore and regenerate their power for a Neopagan context.

Research shows that string figures were vehicles of mythological and magical knowledge in certain times and places, and there is good reason to revive their use in modern Paganism. Their past use in magic is not necessary to use them that way today, but would provide important context and connection to spirits of place and to Ancestors and their way of life.

I began practical application of my string figure theories by making a loop from cotton string I had on hand and learning a figure at a time. As I learned, I considered possible applications of the particular figure to magic. As string figures often serve as oral storytelling illustrations, I imagined

short stories that would fit a string figure and act as a spell as I made the figures. The first figure I learned was The Mouse, which had an immediate and obvious application. My old house has always hosted mice, which is usually fine, but sometimes they get out of hand. I was uncomfortable using lethal methods to control them, so I devised a short, spoken rhyme intended to make a deal with the mice, to recite while performing the Mouse trick:

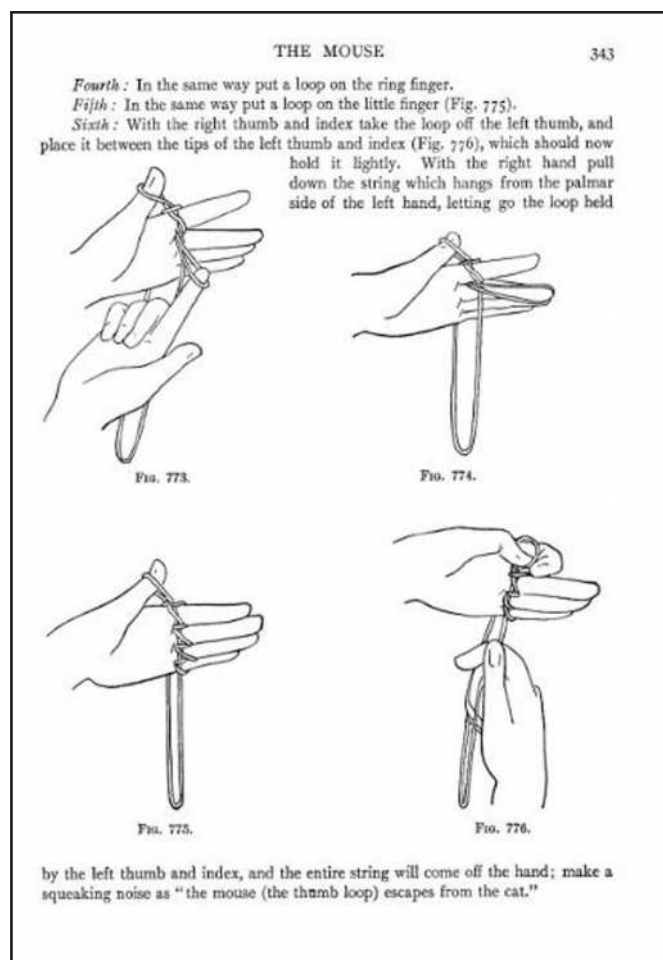
*“Mouse, with whom I share this house, I ask to establish relations with you.  
I ask you not to appear in my rooms; I ask you not to eat my food.  
Mouse, you’re welcome in my house, in my warm and dry walls. Mouse, may we be friends; hear my call.  
I ask you to avoid making a mess, and I will also act my best. No cat, no poison, no snapping trap.”*

This kind of magic takes little time and requires only a loop of string. It’s perfectly suited to magic needed quickly, simply, and discreetly. Nobody will know what you’re up to if you say the spell to yourself while making the figure. But if you are able to, you can enhance the spell by selecting a cord of a specific color or material, burning incense, lighting a candle, or taking other magical actions during the working. String figure magic can be as complex, as simple, as playful, or as serious as the magician requires.

Connecting us to the spirits, the web of life, and our own psyches, string figures are an accessible way to make simple, effective magic a valuable part of our lives as Neopagans. String figures simultaneously offer creativity and connection to tradition, engaging us in figuring our own fates.

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*Aimee Brannon joined ADF in 2016. She completed her DP in 2020. She is a member of Chokecherry Grove in Denver, CO.*

# The Logic of ADF Ritual, Part I: Core Order as Monomyth

By Pigeon

My idea for this article came from a conversation with Rev Victoria Selnes, who recommended I read a *Patheos* critique of comparative mythologist Joseph Campbell's monomyth structure (Jorgensen, 2017). Also referred to as the Hero's

Journey, Campbell argues that all myths follow the same template across cultures (Campbell, 2008, 210-211). Campbell's monomyth structure consists of seventeen thresholds across three acts of departure, initiation, and return, with the

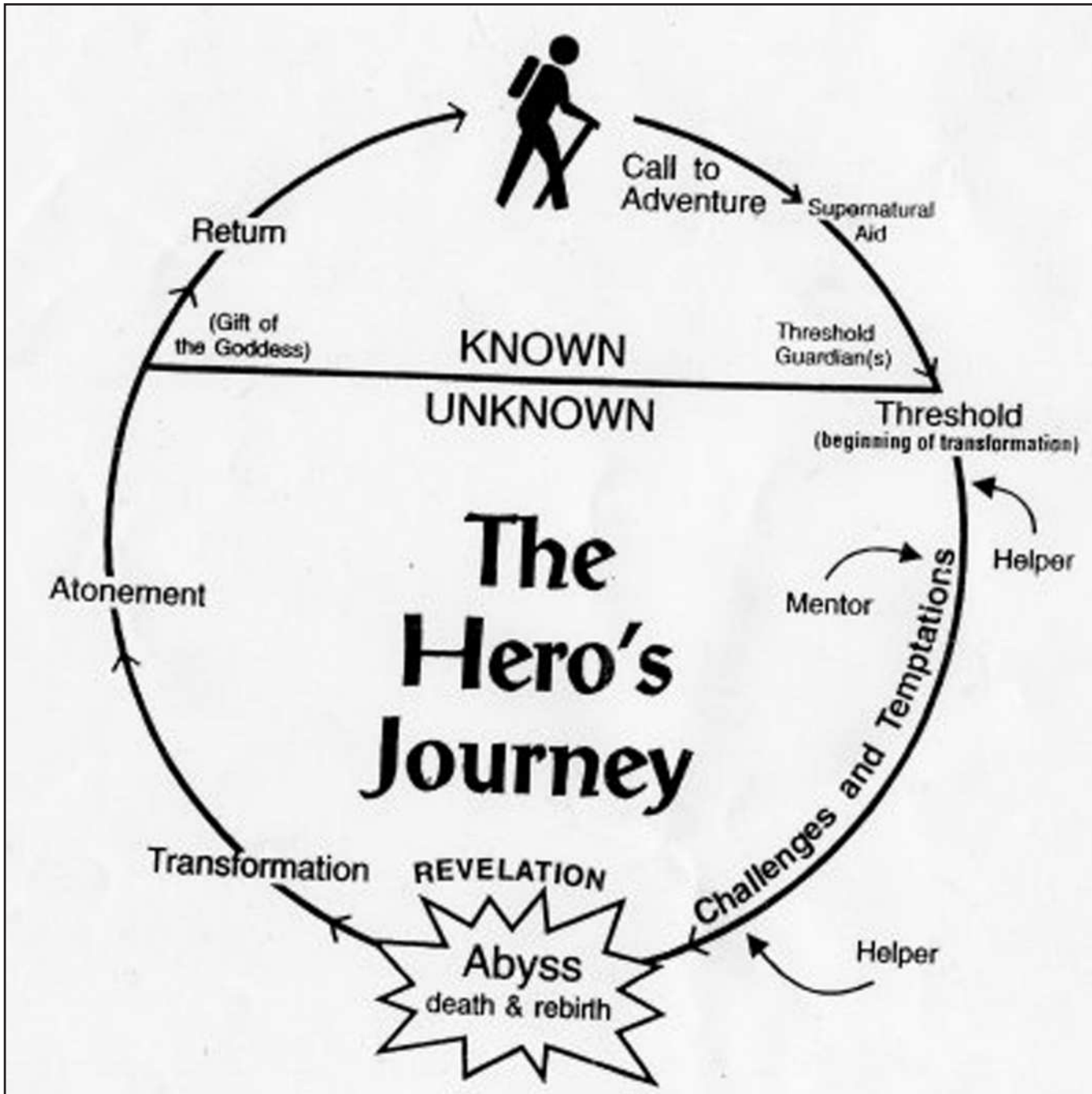
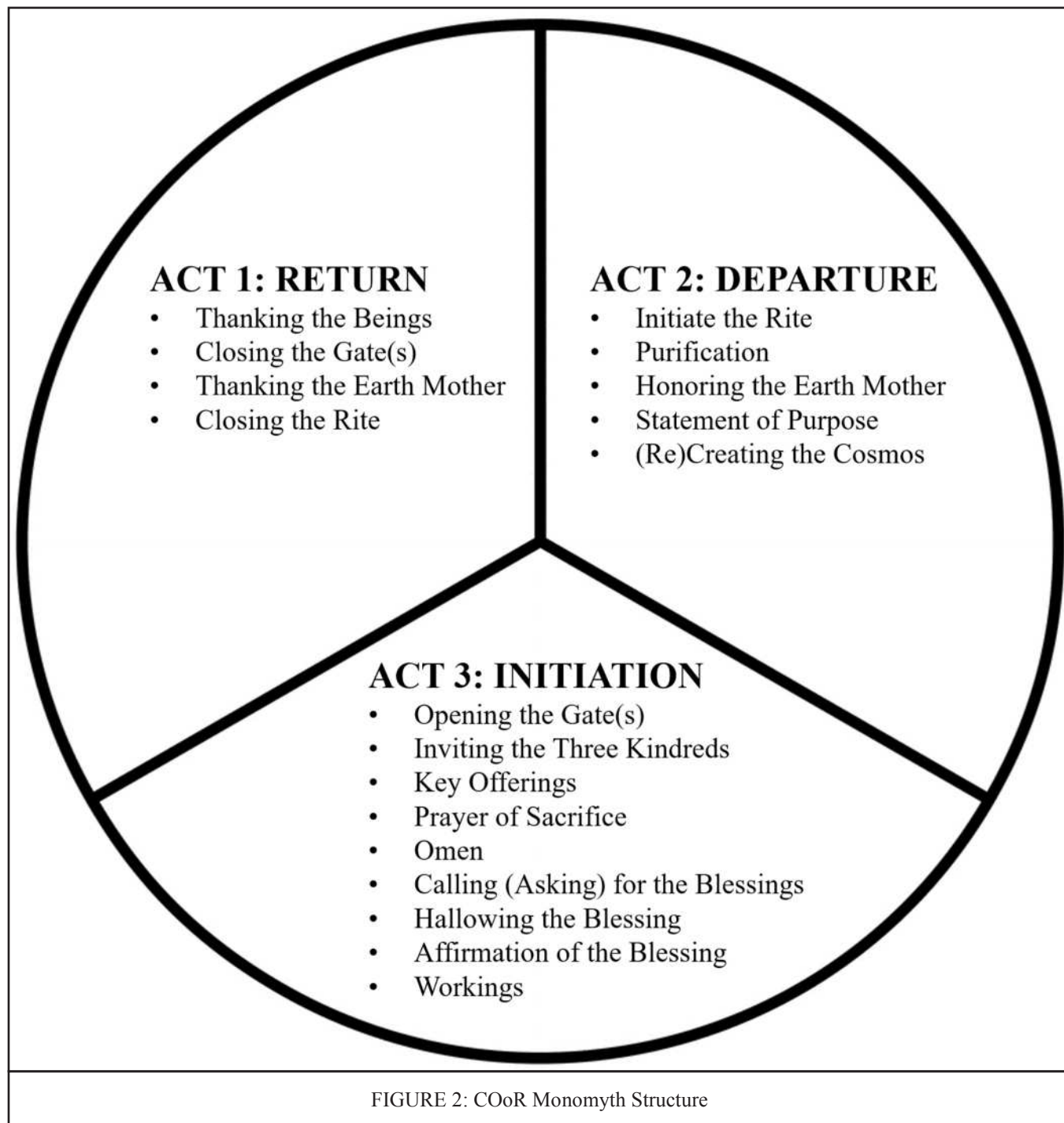


FIGURE 1. Volger's (2007) modified monomyth structure. Public Domain from Wikimedia Commons.

hero|ine resisting a challenge, questing to defeat the challenge, and then returning transformed. Figure 1 roughly depicts Volger's (2007) modified, 12-threshold version with the ordinary world unstated. Myths contained in Campbell's structure do not necessarily include every threshold, but they do include all three acts.

On the one hand, authors and filmmakers have

successfully used the hero's journey structure, with literature suggesting that hero's journey stories powerfully resonate with readers and viewers (Seastrom, 2015). On the other hand, Campbell's monomyth has been heavily critiqued by folklorists who argue that his work is too Western-centric, overlooks contextual details unique to different cultures, and at worst entirely overlooks myths that do not fit within the



structure (Jorgensen, 2017). I am somewhat more forgiving than the critics given that I interpret the structure as probabilistic rather than absolute, or at the very least, a useful inductive reasoning starting point.

My intent is not to weigh in for or against Campbell's work, but rather to present a thought experiment on how his generalized monomythic structure might describe ADF's Core Order of Ritual (COoR). In this case, however, I reverse Campbell's logic deductively, or tracing from generalized to specific mythic structures within our own Druidry. I argue that the COoR also features Campbell's departure, initiation, and return acts through which we journey from ordinary life (initiation through creating the cosmos), questing with the Three Kindreds (opening the gates through workings), then return to ordinary life while transformed in some way (thanking the Beings through closing the rite), illustrated in Figure 2.

If sticking rigidly to an absolutist interpretation of Campbell's monomyth structure, then Campbell's three acts are necessary and sufficient conditions for a common mythic structure while the seventeen thresholds are only necessary conditions (Most & Starr, 1989, 5, 50). That is, the three acts *must* be present for a common mythic structure (necessary and sufficient), but *not all* of seventeen thresholds (sufficient). Although my formal modelling skills read like the unhinged scribbles of a caffeinated madman, the models look something like this. Let  $X_{1...3}$  equal Campbell's three acts,  $Z_{1...17}$  equal the seventeen thresholds, and  $Y$  equal the monomyth:

iff (if, and only if)  $X_{1...3}$ , then  $Y$

Also stated as,  $X_{1...3} \Leftrightarrow Y$

If  $Y$ , then  $Z_{1...17}$

Also stated as,  $Z_{1...17} \Rightarrow Y$

Again, Campbell's monomyth is inductive in that

it starts with specific case examples to create a generalized, cross-cultural structure. Using the same logic in reverse, how does ADF's COoR turn Campbell's monomyth on its head? The COoR unites seven public hearth cultures and numerous private hearth cultures. The COoR's orthopraxic script encourages our spiritually diverse members to participate in public ritual no matter their personal hearth culture or the hearth culture of the public occasion. The COoR embodies the monomyth in that it generalizes our practice. However, unlike Campbell's specific to generic inductive structure, the COoR originates as a shared cosmos that is then deductively refined into our specific seven hearth cultures. Similar to Campbell, I argue that our COoR consists of three acts that *must* be present – necessary and sufficient – to fulfill our ritual journey.

Unlike Campbell, however, our COoR consists of eighteen thresholds that *also must* be present. One or more of Campbell's threshold items may be missing in a given story, but our eighteen thresholds are *always* present in public ritual. Our COoR also differs in that our ritual “monomyth” diffuses into multiple cultures, thus maintaining spiritual context, specificity, and granularity missing in Campbell's structure. How would this read in a logic model? Let  $X_{1...3}$  equal the COoR's three acts,  $Z_{1...18}$  equal the COoR's eighteen primary steps (thresholds), and  $Y_{1...7}$  equal the seven hearth cultures.

iff  $X_{1...3} + Z_{1...18}$ , then  $Y_{1...7}$

Also stated as,  $X_{1...3} + Z_{1...18} \Leftrightarrow Y_{1...7}$

In plain English, by practicing and sharing three acts and eighteen thresholds, we reveal aspects of *all* our hearth cultures. Indeed, this model only accounts for public ritual. Members may also incorporate non-Indo-European ancestors, nature spirits, and shining ones in their private practices, which further expands the model to:

iff  $X_{1...3} + Z_{1...18}$ , then  $Y_{1...n}$

Also stated as,  $X_{1...3} + Z_{1...18} \Leftrightarrow Y_{1...n}$

Where  $Y_{1...n}$  equals an unknown but measurable number of hearth cultures.  $1...n$  can also theoretically be infinite ( $1...∞$ ), but I am assessing that, although the choices are vast, the total number of hearth culture variances are measurable (but hey, who is counting?).

Put briefly, our Core Order of Ritual is a powerful mythic tool for focusing our shared practice while revealing our personal gnosis. Rather than being numerous myths crammed under the same roof, we share myths that open us to different skies. While I recommend reading both Campbell and his critics, for now I encourage you to take a moment to revel in your personal spirituality. In fact, in Part II of my series I will offer ideas on mitigating spiritual choice anxiety with all the tools we have available.

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Beltany Stone Circle, County Donegal, Ireland. Photo by Rev. G. R. Grove.

## Creating a Prayer Jar

*By Rev. Diane Cacciato*

Some of you may know that I am a writer. Every morning I am up at the crack of dawn, when the house is quiet, to write my 1000 or 2000 words for the day. I have developed a practice of using a prayer jar to help me get focused before I start my work.

I created my own prayer jar and here are the instructions for those of you that may want to do the same.

### Tools:

- Glass jar
  - Paper print off of a prayer to Brigid or whichever deity you choose (my prayer can be found below)
  - Paper print off of an image of Brigid (or whichever deity you choose)
  - Tissue paper
- Modpodge or white glue
  - Small paint brush
  1. Cut out the prayer and image so that they will fit on the jar.
  2. Brush the glue or Modpodge onto the back of the paper and attach the prayer and image to the jar.
  3. Brush glue or Modpodge over the image and prayer until they lay flat.
  4. Cut or tear pieces of tissue paper in random sizes – none should be too big.
  5. Brush glue or Modpodge onto the jar and affix the tissue paper to the jar, covering all of the bare area except the bottom and the rim of the jar and then cover the tissue paper with glue until it lays flat.
  6. Allow to dry.
  7. Place a tealight inside.



Photo by the author.

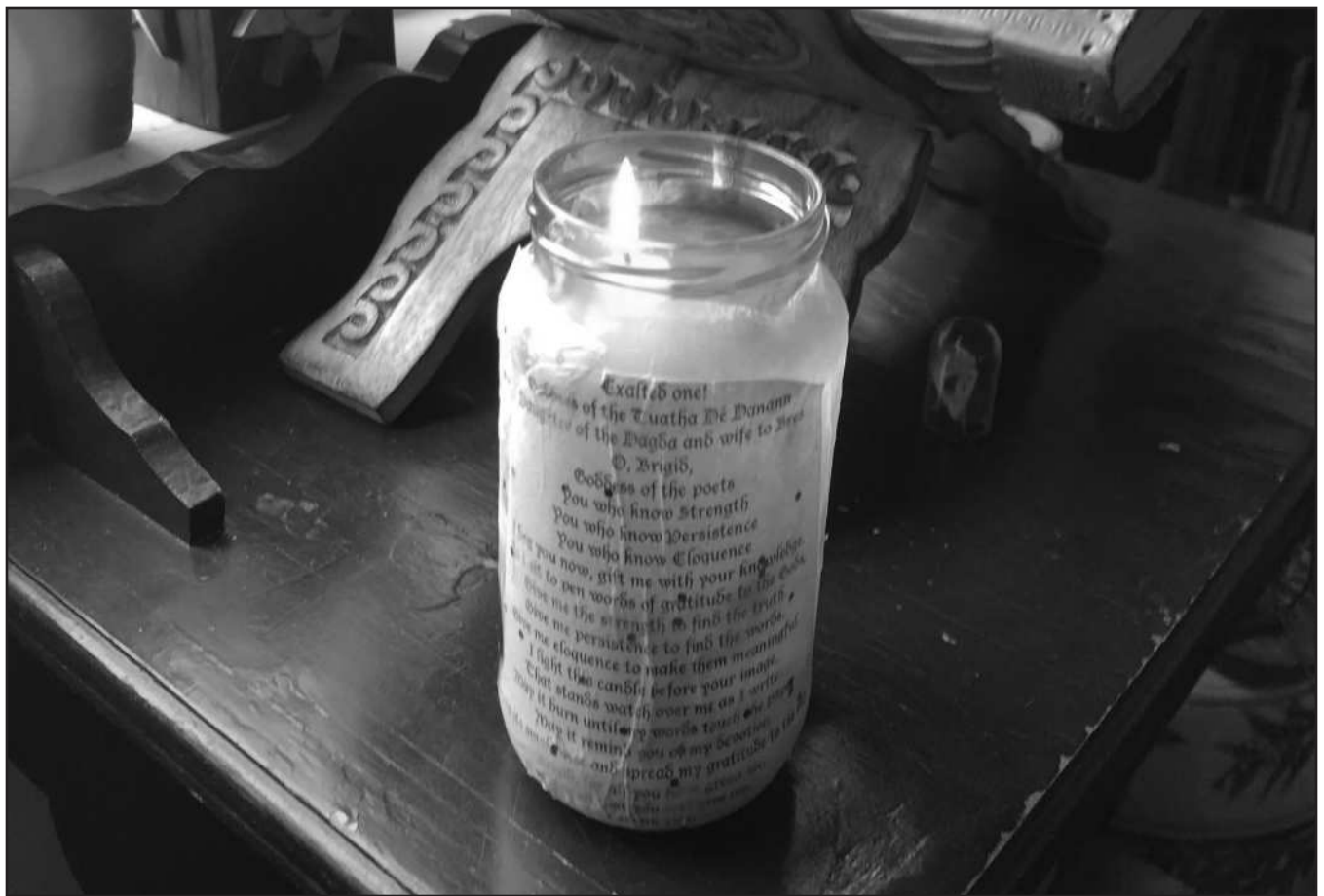


Photo by the author.

When I use this, I light the candle, then say the prayer, and then focus on the flame and ask for inspiration for the day.

Safety note:

If you use a candle other than a tealight, please ensure the flame does not get too close to the jar because the paper will burn, even with the flame on the inside of the jar.

Whenever you use a candle, make sure you do it safely, nowhere near anything that can light on fire!

**Bard's Prayer of Offering**

Exalted one!  
 Goddess of the Tuatha Dé Danann  
 Daughter of the Dagda and wife to Bres  
 O, Brigid,  
 Goddess of the poets  
 You who know Strength  
 You who know Persistence  
 You who know Eloquence

I beg you now, gift me with your knowledge.  
 As I sit to pen words of gratitude to the Gods,  
 Give me the strength to find the truth.  
 Give me persistence to find the words.  
 Give me eloquence to make them meaningful.  
 I light this candle before your image,  
 That stands watch over me as I write.  
 May it burn until my words touch the paper  
 May it remind you of my devotion  
 May its smoke rise and spread my gratitude to the  
 sky.  
 Brigid, for all you have given me,  
 For all that you will give me,  
 I thank you.

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## A Call to the Fire Burning

*By Rev. Jean "Drum" Pagano*

I call to the fire  
From the shadows it seems,  
So much to learn,  
So much to discover,  
In the living flame.

From the shadows  
And the darkness  
I am called:  
I see the Goddess,  
Brigid,  
Calling to me,  
Offering me wisdom,  
Beacon of knowledge  
And transformation,  
In the living flame.

I step out of the shadows  
Into the presence of the light,  
Rise and flicker-flame,  
Rise and colors-candle,  
Rise and beauty-becoming.  
From the shadows  
I ask the Goddess,  
Brigid,  
Blend with me,  
Let me become one  
With the ubiquity  
In the living flame.

Let me bring into being,  
In the living flame,  
Let me forge myself anew,  
In the living flame,  
Let me inspire those around me,

In the living flame.

From the shadows,  
To the brightness,  
May I consume the fire,  
And may it dwell within me.  
When I see myself,  
I see the living flame.  
When I remember my prior life,  
I see the living flame.  
When I look to my tomorrow,  
I see the living flame.

When the day is darkest,  
When reason cedes to fear,  
Let me always feel the flames,  
Burning always near.

When the fires of Imbolc  
Are banked another year,  
Let me always see the flames,  
Burning always near.

When my time is over,  
Before I re-appear,  
Let me always live in the flames,  
Burning always near.

By the four arms  
Of Brigid's Cross,  
May you be the sunrise,  
May you be midday,  
May you be the sunset,  
May you be the fire deep in the earth,  
This day and always.

May it be so.



### Eriu, Banba, Fotla

*By Jenne Micale*

You think she doesn't have personality,  
that three-in-one? That she was only trees  
and soil and rock with nothing to say, she,  
who gave the birds their songs and grew the  
    rosewood  
for your harp and even the prehistoric  
swamplife we refined for those nylon strings? She  
is the earth within all knowledge roots,  
with three personalities, three faces,  
three husbands and lovers without counting.  
She tells wonderful tales and rooted truths.  
She fills the gaps in our knowing, as bark  
heals over a void, as water funnels  
through the lowlands. Don't forget: Your mothers  
are persons too, with hummingbird wit, fox  
    smiles,  
the knowledge of everything whispered to earth.

### Charm for Squirrel Hollow Circle

*By Thomas Brown*

*A charm I wrote for the Squirrel HollerwCircle. I kept it a simple tune based on a dwarven dirge in Lord of the Rings. Here are the words...*

Through Northern climes,  
Two rivers meet...  
Together joining,  
Our Flame does speak.  
A humble squirrel  
Brings words from high...  
And travels low,  
Land, Sea and Sky.  
Sacred Hallows,  
Today Well sings...  
Our Hollow 'neath  
An Oath of Rings.



**Sarpedonas**  
*By Nathan Large*

I left behind an honored job,  
a high and holy place,  
Retreating to a refuge where  
I thought I might be safe.  
With sisters new, in solitude,  
I sought to start a garden,

But all it  
grows are  
foolish  
beaus,  
rejected,  
cold and  
hardened.  
Once, I  
was a  
treasure;  
men and  
gods once  
sought to  
lay me.  
Now that  
I'm a  
monster,  
men by  
gods are  
sent to slay  
me.  
I offer  
them a  
warning  
hiss

whenever they land here,  
To tell them only poison kisses  
wait for those too near,  
And some do come no closer,  
purely petrified by fear.  
But others, bold or foolish,  
seek to brave my stony stare.  
They bring me gifts, bright metal things;  
perhaps they think me vain?  
True, I once boasted of my locks,

a glowing, golden train,  
But soon I knew that beauty drew  
less virtue and more beasts,  
And by the time I'd learned the worst,  
the horrid truth cut deep.  
So, save your mirrors and maneuvers;



I'm a  
calloused  
hag.  
I know  
there're  
other  
reasons  
that you  
want me in  
your bag.  
Still, if I  
find your  
cause  
persuasive,  
I might  
take a fall,  
If only so  
my  
children  
might be  
freed of  
our exile.  
I've been  
harmed and  
armored

by the Fates' uncaring work,  
But they'll be golden, glorious,  
as I was once before,  
Free to fly and free to love;  
perhaps they'll be good friends...  
Yes, even to the Gods-blessed fool  
who brings me to my end.

*Photo provided by the author.*

## Brigid of the Dandelion

*By Jenne Micale*

You are in the dandelion, the gold  
of the summer your bright eye, its edged lace  
your mantle winter white in the grass, each  
sailing on the wind to root in new ground.

After frost they still reached out to bloom,  
burning  
in dim Samhaintide up until the snow  
where under that blank mantle they abide  
until the first fetching thaw. Roots reach deep  
and ensure their return, the same as thought,  
as a smooored flame slumbering in heaps of  
snowy ash until the wind of a word  
stirs it, a willing hand readies a twig  
and so brings back day's flame, the saving heat.

You cannot be eradicated, fire-eye  
and pale foot, the heat of thought melting the ice



## Spring Tanka

*By Rev. D. Rowen Grove*

Sunrise and sunset  
slip along the horizon,  
journeying northward  
until they come to their stand,  
then begin the long way back.

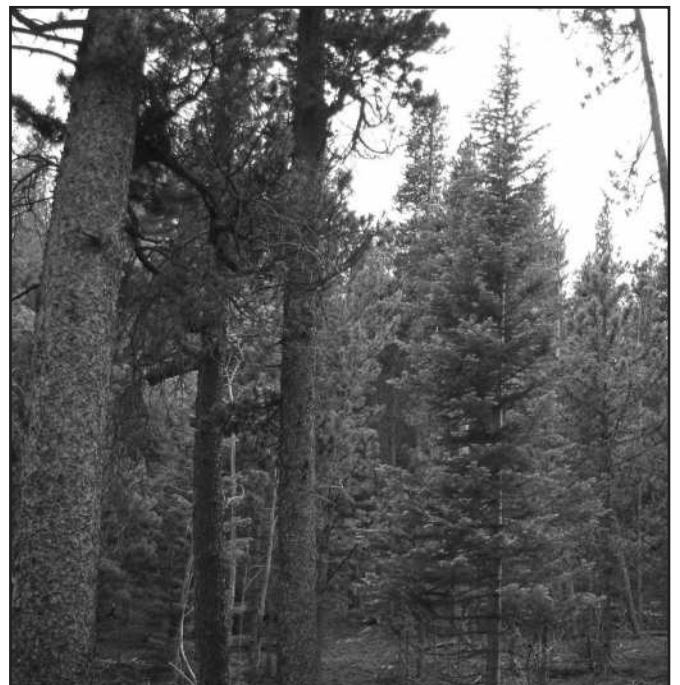
## Here Among the Trees

*By Rev. Jean "Drum" Pagano*

Footfalls,  
Like snow falling,  
Each tree has a story  
And I listen as I pass.  
A story of time and growth,  
Of life, quiescence, and renewal.

Footfalls,  
My footprints amongst  
The others,  
Some of paw,  
Some of person,  
Some of somewhere in between.

Footfalls,  
Each step a word,  
Each distance a prayer,  
Here among the trees,  
They listen,  
They move slightly,  
With the wind,  
As it carries all of our prayers,  
Here among the trees.





## Prayer to Demeter Erinys

*By Jenne Micale*

Prayer to Demeter Erinys  
O Bountiful One of the field and garden  
wheat-haired and orchard-limbed, draped in green  
and gold,  
garlanded with poppies, granter of prayers  
painted with sweat and need. O Panagia  
hear the worker's murmured plea, heed the tears  
of the foreign woman picking our fruit  
and the poor who pack and process our food  
while having so little themselves. In Rome,  
they called you protector of the commons,  
bearing justice with your cornucopia,  
damning us with famine should we fail the whole.  
Horse-headed Erinys, you set the rows straight.

## Sacred Space

*By Jenne Micale*

Here, on the hilltop, the fire of the soul  
The gray waters beneath, calmly lapping.  
The wind, the sky, the still air above.

Before me: dawn, the breeze, the sword of truth  
Before me: noon, the desert, spear of flame  
Before me: sunset, lakeside, the cauldron  
Before me: midnight, pine boughs, snow, the  
stone.

Out of darkness, the light in me rises  
Out of void, my bare foot touches the earth  
Each strand anchored here, the oak rooted deep  
I open my eyes to land, sea and sky

## Invocation to The Green Man

*By Devin Storm*

The Celts believed day started at dusk  
That the darkness of the womb was the start of  
life  
And that the year became new at Samhain - the  
darkest of times.  
Little wonder the poets sought darkness for  
inspiration.

Knowing that the sun would return with the  
dawn.  
Knowing that new life came bursting from the  
womb in its own time.  
Knowing that the cold and darkness of winter  
Would turn to warmth and light with the turn of  
the wheel  
Little wonder the poets sought darkness for  
inspiration.  
Knowing words would come

We each have braved the night,  
We each have braved the womb,  
We each have braved the winter,  
Now like sequestered poets we stir from our dark  
hovels

To call forth the spring from cold winter's hold  
To call forth the greenness of new growth from  
the depths of the earth  
And the Green Man from the hidden groves of  
snow-laden pines

Bring to us the growing seeds,  
Bursting from the Mother's womb  
Bring to us the smell of wet earth  
Fecund with life  
Bring to us the touch of spring  
Sweet on the wind like words from the Gods.



**Luna**

*By Rev. Diane Cacciato*

*A Calling to the Light of the Moon*

O silver Moon  
Divine queen  
You who dance in circles  
With Proserpina and Hecate.  
Luna, embodiment of the Moon  
You and Sol keep light upon our world  
Riding on your chariot.  
O two-horned queen of the stars,  
Shine your silver magic on my home,  
And keep safe all those within.

**Evening Tanka**

*By Rev. D. Rowen Grove*

Twining smoke rises  
from evenings' incense  
for the Ancestors,  
and also to some Others –  
a nightly rite before bed.

**Baba Yaga**

*By Rev. Diane Cacciato*

*Prayer of Gratitude for the Earth in Spring*

Baba Yaga  
Ancient Crone  
Your words bring us to our knees,  
Yet your wisdom carries us.  
We may not comprehend you,  
Yet even so  
You lead us to care for our Mother  
As She births the shoots and blossoms  
That proclaim the turning of the seasons.  
O Bony-legged Goddess  
You may be hideous  
But in your repulsive countenance  
We find gratitude  
To the Mother and her Infinite Beauty.



## Irish and Norse Storytelling

By Rev. Diane Cacciato

Both Ireland and Scandinavia have ancient storytelling traditions. The bards of Ireland and the poets/storytellers of Scandinavia travelled, telling tales of the gods, and of adventure and bravery of the lords and kings. These tales remained within the tradition of oral storytelling longer than in other parts of the Indo-European lands, leaving us with a rich mythological tradition.

In Ireland, the bardic classes were divided into ranks based on training. The *Ollamh Érenn* was the top ranking bard who was attached to the High King; other *ollamh* were connected to lower ranking kings; the *filidh* were educated and were of the few who were allowed to use satire as a civil punishment; the *baird* were bards that had talent but were uneducated; and the *seanchaí* were the historians and storytellers who were tasked with knowing "...the tales, poems and history proper to their rank, which were recited for the entertainment and praise of the chiefs and princes..." (McKendry) and whose role continues to this day.

The bards were afforded many perks and benefits that others could only dream of. Some of these included the right to travel freely. Only the nobles and the *aes dana*, or the 'people of the poetry' and certain other educated peoples had that right. All others were expected to stay within the confines of their *tuath*. (*Satire in Early Ireland*). Not only were they able to travel, they were welcomed everywhere they went – and that was no small thing. Each master poet would have a retinue of 30 second rank poets. Each of those poets would have a retinue of 15. They would expect food and housing at a moment's notice. They carried with them The Pot of Avarice, a silver chalice in which their host would place the fees for bardic

services rendered. Hosts did not dare to avoid payment as a good satire against the host would be devastating.

The arrival of Christianity did not end this system. In fact, it was not until after the Battle of Kinsale (1601-2) in Ireland and the Battle of Culloden (1746) in Scotland, with the demise of Gaelic Ireland and Scotland and the end of the Gaelic aristocratic classes, that the bardic system collapsed.

This did not, however, mark the end of storytelling in Ireland. While the Irish bards did not write down the stories, the Christian monks did. From the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE, they began to write down Irish history and stories. As a result, the oral bardic tradition coexisted with Christian written records for almost eleven centuries.

Many of the tales that were told came from the four cycles. The tales of the Mythological Cycle are the oldest and focus on the Tuatha Dé Danann, the most famous of which is *The Children of Lir*. The Ulster Cycle has the stories of Cú Chulainn and the Red Branch Knights of which the best known is *Táin Bó Cúailnge*. The Fenian Cycle is concerned with the stories of Fionn mac Cumhaill and the Fianna, including *The Salmon of Knowledge* and *Tír na nÓg*. Finally, the Cycle of the Kings, or the historical cycle, contains the histories, genealogies, and exploits of the most famous of the kings of Ireland such as that of Brian Boru and the Battle of Clontarf.

While the *baird*, *filidh*, and *ollamh* eventually disappeared, the *seanchaí* did not. Prior to the advent of film, radio and television, the *seanchaí* were an important source of entertainment and

were critical to the preservation of Irish culture at a time when the colonial powers would have been quite happy to see the disappearance of the Irish. In the space of ten years, 1.5 million people left Ireland due to the Great Famine, including, certainly, some of the *seanchaí*. Evidence of this can be found in the folktales of the Irish diaspora in the United States, i.e. ‘The Legend of Sleepy Hollow’, and in Canada as can be found in Helen Creighton’s classic, *Songs and Ballads of Nova Scotia*.

Helene Byrne, a modern day *seanchaí*, said the following of the *seanchaí*.

*I think what it means to be an Irish storyteller has changed greatly over time. Historically, the storyteller, or seanchaí, served a number of roles. Primarily, he or she brought entertainment to long, dark nights by the fireside, but they were also similar to early day journalists. Because they traveled from place to place, they were able to carry news from one village to another. Today the Irish storyteller has had to adapt to the modern environment of technology and social media. I believe our role has shifted towards keeping these Irish stories, which were such a significant part of Irish culture, alive. That, and of course, entertaining people through the ancient craft of storytelling, which can sometimes be an overlooked medium nowadays. (qtd. in Langen).*

The Norse equivalent to the bards were the *skalds*. They composed, memorized and told the stories and histories of their people. As with the Irish storytellers, the *skalds* were both honoured and feared. It was not just this, however, that paralleled the Irish bards. Their position within the ruling class was key as they acted not just as storytellers, but also as advisors and as ‘early day journalists’ (see above) carrying the reputations of the lords and kings from community to community. *Skalds* were also teachers to the young.

*Skalds conveyed essential information about how to behave in society through their poems and stories. Some say skalds were also musicians, playing the harp or lute while reciting poetry or sagas, although there is no conclusive evidence of it. From a skald’s poems and stories, children learned Viking history, literature and mythology. They picked up clues about the gods, honor, courage, initiative and other Viking virtues from the skalds. Children learned about the great men and their deeds, they learned of beautiful women and courageous heroes.*



Ler and the swans by Harold Robert Millar (1869-1942). Public domain image from Wikimedia Commons.

*Skalds made history come alive, and the gods and goddesses were fleshed out and became vividly real and alive to all who listened to the stories and poems.* (“Viking Skalds and Storytellers.”)

As with the Irish tales, the Norse sagas were not written down until the spread of Christianity. The Norse kept their traditional religion until 1000 CE, and even then, their tales lasted long after the conversion to Christianity in the form of the *Eddas*. The *Poetic Edda*, early scholars believed, came from the *Codex Regius* or *Konungsbók*. It is an Icelandic medieval manuscript that “... contains the 29 poems commonly designated by scholars and the *Poetic Edda*, or *Elder Edda*... It is the oldest such collection, the best-known of all Icelandic books, and an Icelandic national treasure...” (*Codex Regius*). Later editions of the *Edda* came from other scholars such as the Icelandic historian Snorri Sturluson, who gave us the *Prose Edda* or the *Younger Edda* which are the tales that most people today are familiar with.

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Opposite page: The Karlevi runestone in Vickley Parish, Mörbylånga Municipality, Öland, Sweden. The Karlevi Runestone inscription is a skaldic Old Norse poem in dróttkvætt, the "courtly metre", raised in memory of a Viking chieftain. Author: Berig. Image from Wikimedia Commons under the terms of the GNU Free Documentation License, Version 1.2 or any later version.



## The Old Gods of Britain

By Rev. G. R. Grove

We have very little information about the Old Gods of Britain before the Roman conquest. There are offering sites in pits or in watery locations, such as the deposits at Llyn Cerrig Bach on Anglesey (Macdonald and Anheuser; Aldhouse-Green, *Britannia* 40), and there are sparse finds of carved wooden or stone images which may have been representations of deities, but without writing, we have no way to know the names of the Old Gods or Goddesses who were worshipped in that way. The Romans, however, brought that tool with them, and as a result, we have names at last. Let me introduce you briefly to some of them:

### British Named Deities.

Some of the Old Gods whom the Romans (especially the army) appropriated and worshiped are known by what may be their original British names. A sampling, in alphabetical order:

**Arnemetia**, the Romano-British “Goddess of the Sacred Grove”, was worshipped during the Roman period by deposits of coins in the geothermal hot springs at Buxton, Derbyshire, but her name, incorporating the word “nemeton” (“sacred grove”), suggests an older origin (*Aquae Arnemetiae*; Woodward 52; Ross 62, 280).

**Antenociticus**, a British-named deity worshipped at Benwell, Tyne and Wear, on Hadrian’s Wall, is known only from one locality (or perhaps two), where he is attested by Latin inscriptions and a broken statue. Two thick strands in the statue’s hair are suggestive of the antlers of a young stag, and the torc around his neck confirms his Celtic nature (Aldhouse-Green, *Britannia* 73-75; Ross 77, 211, 272-273, 472-473).

**Belatucadrus**, another British warrior god whose name is variously translated as “the Fair Shining



CARRAWBROUGH: COVENTINA'S WELL.

Figure 1. Depiction of a triple Coventina from her well at Carrawbrough. Public domain image from Wikimedia Commons.

One” or “the Fair Killer”, was worshipped by Roman soldiers along Hadrian’s Wall in Cumberland and Westmoreland (Aldhouse-Green, *Britannia* 62-63; Ross 235-236, 466-467).

**Brigantia** was the British goddess of the Brigantes tribe, worshiped by natives and Roman military personnel in a huge region stretching from Yorkshire to Dumfries and Galloway, where she is attested by Latin inscriptions and Roman styled statuary (Aldhouse-Green, *Britannia* 75-76; Ross 452-453).

**Cocidius**, a British warrior god whose name possibly means “the Red God”, was worshiped along the western extent of Hadrian’s Wall, especially around Bewcastle, Cumbria. He was invoked as the God of Soldiers, and was associated with more than one classical god, including Mars and Silvanus. He is represented on two silver plaques as a warrior armed in native fashion with shield and spear (Aldhouse-Green, *Britannia* 63-64, 219-220; Ross 78, 222-224, 249-250, 467-468).

**Coventina** was a British water goddess worshipped at Carrawbrough, Northumberland, on Hadrian’s wall, who like Sulis at Bath may have been a healing deity associated with the water of her springs (see Figure 1) (Aldhouse-Green, *Britannia* 116-117; *Deities* 206-208; Woodward 56, 64-65; Ross 247-248).

**Nodens** was a native healer-deity associated with hounds, hunting, the sun, and water. The iron-rich waters of his stream at Lydney Park, Gloucestershire, would have been beneficial for certain conditions. The Roman period temple, built during the third century CE, was staffed by professional clergy, who may have included dream-interpreters for pilgrims who came and slept there. No statue of Nodens survives, but nine small images of dogs found at the site are suggestive that he might have been a shape-shifter (Aldhouse-Green, *Britannia* 94-96, *Deities* 208-210; CSAD *Lydney*; Woodward; Ross 230-233, 246-247; Henig 224-225).



Figure 2. Sulis Minerva, Roman Baths (Bath). Author: Hchc2009. From Wikimedia Commons under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license.

**Sulis Minerva** at Bath, Somerset, is an example of an originally British goddess of healing (**Sulis**) who was combined with Minerva by the Romans (see Figure 2.). There is evidence that her thermal springs were visited as a shrine in pre-Roman times – not surprisingly for a location where three geothermal springs pour out a quarter-million gallons a day of steaming hot water (Aldhouse-Green, *Britannia* 111-115; *Deities* 200-206; Cunliffe; Woodward; Ross 125-126, 246-246; Henig 223-224; *Aquae Sulis*).

#### Other Important Locations.

At other locations, the original British deities, like Sulis, were conflated with Roman deities to the extent that their original names are lost. A few important examples, again in alphabetical order:

**Cirencester**, Gloucestershire - Assorted religious material from Cirencester, tribal capital of the Dobunni in the Cotswolds, testifies to the many



Figure 3. Three Goddesses or Matres- Roman high relief sculpture, Corinium Museum, Cirencester. Photo by Rev. G. R. Grove.

gods and goddesses worshiped there, including the **Matres** (Figure 3), and particularly Mercury (Aldhouse-Green, *Britannia* 82-85; Ross, 268).

**Nettleton Shrub**, Wiltshire - **Apollo Cunomaglus** was worshiped there, along with other deities, at what appears to have been a popular pilgrimage

location. This site also boasted springs, and is a day's walk from Bath. "Cunomaglus" means "Hound Lord", and may have been connected with Apollo's role as a hunter; on the other hand, we do not know the origins of the British part of this God's identity (Aldhouse-Green, *Britannia* 89-91; Woodward; Ross 299).

**Uley**, Gloucestershire – The sanctuary on the hill above the village of Uley existed from the late Iron Age through the Roman period and into the early medieval era, when it may have become a Christian church. On a clear day the sanctuary of Nodens is visible across the Severn Estuary to the west (see Figure 4). The name of the original deity or deities worshipped there is not known; although votive deposits suggest a warrior god. During the Roman period he seems to have been assimilated with **Mercury**, parts of whose greater-than-life-size statue was found there (see Figure 5) (Aldhouse-Green, *Britannia* 192-193; Woodward; Woodward, Leach, and Bayley; CSAD *Uley*; Henig 224).

**Wanborough**, Surrey – We do not know the name of the Deity or Deities worshiped here, but one of them may have been the Romano-Celtic sky God **Jupiter-Taranis**, as a number of liturgical regalia, including scepters and wheel-crowned headdress-



Figure 4. View west across the Severn Estuary from Uley toward Lydney (center left). Photo by Rev. G. R. Grove.

es, emblematic of that god, were found at the site (Aldhouse-Green, *Britannia* 92-93).

### Summary.

Though some of the Old Gods of Britain survived under the Romans, albeit in partial or complete disguise, their pre-Roman worship, presumably under the guidance of the Druids, is lost—for the Druids left us no written records, and the Romans suppressed them in Britain as they had in Gaul. I hope this brief glimpse has been helpful, and that my references will offer you clues for your own research.

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Figure 5. Head of Mercury from Corinium Museum, Cirencester, similar to the one discovered at Uley. Photo by Rev. G. R. Grove.

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## Blessing for Trees to be Felled

By Rev. Diane Cacciato

As spring comes upon us, it is often time to look at the trees under our care and see if the winter storms have damaged them. Trees can often heal themselves, but sometimes if the root system has been damaged or is upheaving, or if the tree is now leaning precariously, it may be time for the tree to be returned to the Earth Mother.

I cannot stress enough how important it is to have a professional arborist do this if you are not well experienced in the felling of trees. **Before all else, your safety and the safety of the trees around must be ensured.**

Prepare the following:

**Healing music to play.** If you don't have anything in mind, here are a couple that might serve:

Make Sacred Space by Shawna Carol  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZKu0y\\_pYtY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZKu0y_pYtY)

Return to the Mother by Reclaiming  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9vYrpcD3hHI>

**Clooties** – if possible, one for each tree taken down, but if not, one for each type of tree taken down. A clootie is a strip of cloth made of natural fibres (don't use synthetics as it is not good for the environment) that are left as gestures of acknowledgement and respect for the spirits of the land. At its root, the tying of clooties is a quiet, private act of communion between human beings and the local spirits of the land.

Bread soaked in cider

Glass of water

Sit in the forest near the centre of the trees to be felled **IF IT IS SAFE**. Otherwise, the closest safe place is fine.

Take time to center and ground.

Play healing music.

Pray to the Earth Mother with the following:

*O Earth Mother,  
You who have birthed us, fed us, clothed us, and  
protected us,  
You who have given us our home to share,  
You are covered by your mantle of trees.  
They give us life.  
They protect the soil.  
They clean the air.  
They are the heart, the lungs, the life of this  
planet,  
And we, your folk, are responsible to care for  
them as they do their vital work.*

*O Earth Mother,  
There are times when your children are injured,  
There are times when they are ill,  
There are times when they must return to You.  
It is my honoured role today to help your children  
move on to the Otherworld.*

If it is **safe**, walk through and put your hands on the trees to be felled, saying:

*Back to the Earth Mother  
Back to the loam  
Back to the centre of all things.  
Alder, cedar, spruce, and pine\*.  
You have stood tall for decades, for centuries.  
Your branches reach up to the Sky Father  
Your roots spread down to the Earth Mother  
You have held all together, here at the Sacred  
Centre.  
Alder, cedar, spruce, and pine.  
Your job is done.*

*Today, I return you to the Earth  
Mother.  
May your fibres return to the Earth.  
Today, I return you to the Sky  
Father.  
May your cells return to the Sky.  
Today, I honour you for the work  
you have done.  
I thank you for your care.*

Fell the trees.

Tie a clootie for each tree or type of tree felled to other trees around those felled and say:

*Standing tree  
I give you this clootie  
For every moment it remains tied to  
you  
Spread your seeds  
And birth a new tree to rise up in  
place of the old.*

On each felled stump, place a piece of bread soaked in cider (a piece can be as small as a crouton), saying:

*I honour you with this bread, baked  
from the flour grown of the land.  
I honour you with this cider, fermented from fruit  
of the trees grown of the land.*

Stand roughly in the centre of the felled trees if it is safe, and pour the water on the ground saying:

*I honour you with the water, released to us by the  
Earth Mother and Sky Father.  
I honour you.*

If you can keep something made from the wood of one of the trees felled in your home, use one of the branches to make a staff, or just keep a tiny piece of the wood on your altar, it would be a really nice way to continue to honour the trees that were felled.

\*You may substitute the types of trees that will be felled.

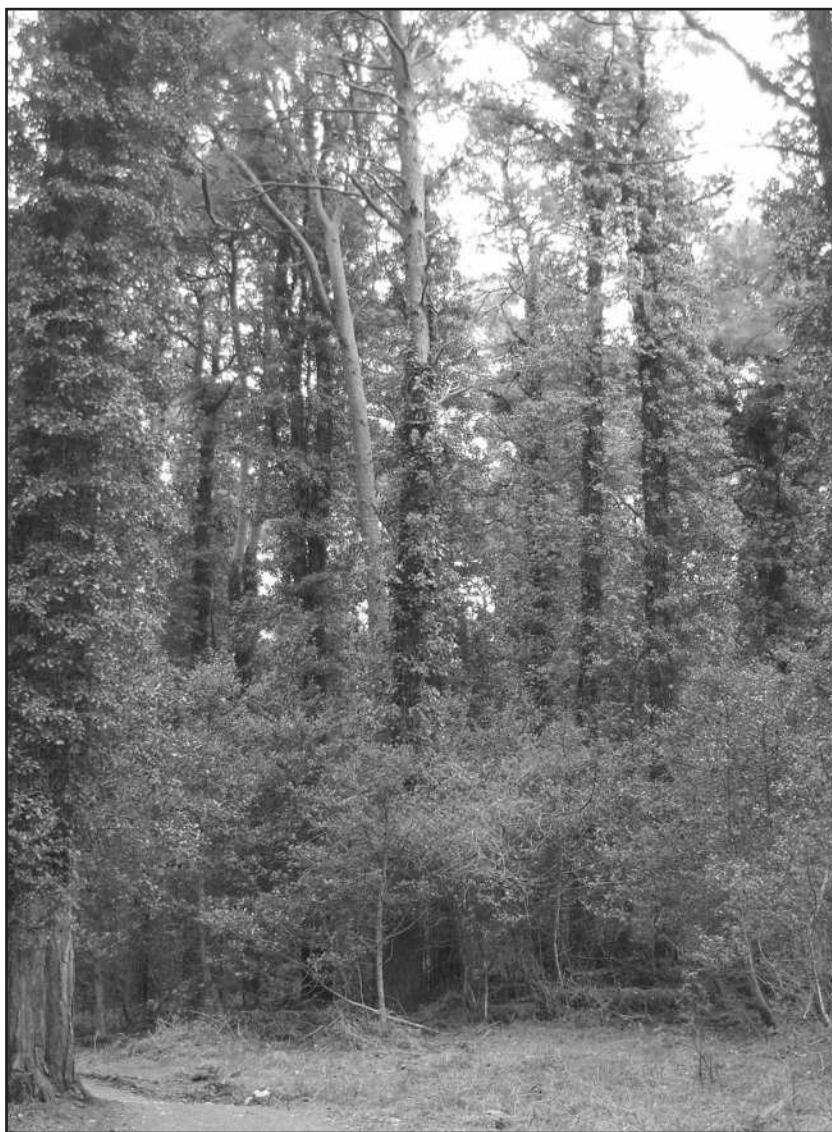


Photo by Rev. G. R. Grove

Articles from other sources on the felling and care of trees:

“Druid Tree Workings: Holding Space and Helping Tree Spirits Pass” <https://druidgarden.wordpress.com/2015/08/24/druid-tree-workings-holding-space-and-helping-tree-spirits-pass/>

“The Blessings of the Trees” <https://www.terriwindling.com/blog/2015/06/the-blessings-of-the-trees.html>

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## Ymir's Thumb: A Reimagined Tail of Origin

*By Thomas Brown*

A Skald speaks thus, “When the Aesir known as Odin, Vili, and Ve slew the giant and created the form and firmament of Midgard, they spared nothing in these labors. So now begins the tale for Ratatosk, the bore tooth, whose sacred duty is to travel Yggdrasil. The ancient squirrel also has buried a scatter hoard of trees in the Nine Realms. Some would say that is the sacred and humble legacy of the work. The deeds of three come from the squirrel's tail...”

“After the slaying and before the work is done...” Vili says to Odin, “Waste not the smallest of parts of this wretched giant, my brother. Make something proper from even the fingers and toes.”

Odin replies, “Have we not made rivers, and grass, even clouds and given those dwarves a job eternal for the Elves delight to ponder? Besides, this foe has twenty-three fingers, but only one thumb.”

Ve looks around at a job well done and the remaining parts of the defeated Ymir. Odin's brother says, “...Hmmm, I heard some boys suck their thumbs for inspiration, my brothers. They get this gift from fish or a witch's brew. I wonder if that's true for this primordial beast's?”

Odin, “Well, we killed him for drinking the Norns' water and lighting his pipe from Surtr's hearth. He was unruly. Maybe his thumb will bring these worlds together for gods and human kind?”

Vili and Ve, “Say the words, Har, speak of the Runes, and it is done.”

A Skald speaks thus, “Odin takes out his dagger and cuts off the thumb of Ymir. The Rune God chants, the waters swirl and flame ignites. In one hand is the thumb of Ymir, and a dagger in the

other. Quickly a volatile mixture of Fire in Water is summoned, and in the swirling mass Odin sees a Rune and then another, and another, and another until twenty-four Runes have been shown. Three stand out but no murkwood is seen - Sowilo the Sun, Hagalaz the Ice Egg, and Kenaz the Torchwood. Odin speaks and carves the



Photo by Rev. G. R. Grove



*Sciurus vulgaris* - European Red Squirrel Picture taken in Årøysund (Nøtterøy) near Tønsberg, Norway. Author: Jarle Nystuen. From Wikipedia commons, licensed under GNU Free Documentation License, Version 1.2.

Runes on Ymir's thumb and places it in the ground. A few moments later a squirrel pops out, runs up Yggdrasil, then looks at right at Odin.”

Odin speaks, “Hail, Mother of All.”

Ratatosk then speaks...

“Through northern climbs,  
Two Rivers meet,  
Together joining,  
Our Flame does speak.

A humble squirrel,  
Brings words on high.  
And travels low,  
Land, Sea and Sky.

A Sacred Hallows,  
Today's Well sings.  
Our Holler 'neath,  
An Oath of Rings”

Vili looks up and says, “We still have 23 fingers of this Jotun to dispose of, not to mention all these toes.”

Odin replies, “Excellent! I'm thinking frogs, and cranes, and other humble creatures for Midgard.”

The Skald speaks thus, “But that's another tale.”

*Thomas Brown is an ADF Master Bard.*

## Two Charms Against Disease

By Rev. Ian Corrigan

*[This material was posted on Ian's blog at <https://intothemound.blogspot.com/> on March 30, 2020. It is reprinted here with his permission.]*

In my personal work I have a long-practiced, nearly-unconscious pattern of applying the Two Powers (as some Druids say - the Underworld and Heaven Powers) to cleansing myself and maintaining a healthy pattern. For those not immediately in Our Druidic work, let me expound a little.

- One can approach the impersonal spiritual energies of the cosmos as the powers of Underworld and Heavens. Allow me to quote myself, from my "Basics of Pagan Worship":

*... the 'energies' of the spiritual world. Most common is the work called 'grounding and centering'. In that technique we make ourselves aware of a flow of "spiritual energies" in the cosmos, and balance those energies in our own bodies and spirits. ...*

*At the basic level we address these energies as the Light of the Heavens and the Waters of the Underworld. The Underworld Power is envisioned as the Waters Under the Earth, in which all the wisdom of the past is dissolved. The Power of the Heavens is seen as the Light of the Turning Sky, which brings order, pattern and growth. This duality corresponds to cosmic principles, poles of cosmic structure between which the manifest world appears. ...*

*Working with the Fire and Water can be a core technique of practical magic... The Fire and Water are the primal powers of creation. When we take conscious control of the Two Powers, through imagination and will, we are doing in the microcosm what the Gods and Spirits do in the greater cosmos.*



Photographer unknown.

*The standard of proficiency in this technique of energy-work is to learn to bring (awareness of) the Two Powers into the self quickly and surely... From that base any number of specialized forms and applications of the energies can be devised.*

The 'Fire and Water' healing charm here is precisely that sort of specialized application. I'm sure it could be worked with any sort of 'grounding and centering' but it is designed for the Two Powers work of Our Druidry.

A second charm is a direct invocation of the Goddess Brigid, who I look to as a primary healer goddess. It calls upon Her Three Powers - immediate daemons of the goddess who I know as the Cup, the Harp, and the Hammer. Details of that concept can be found in the "Court of Brigid" material (<http://intothemound.blogspot.com/2011/08/court-of-brigid-phase-two.html>). Even if you are not familiar with those ideas, following the images and poetry of the charm should get you close to the goal.

So, here's my wish, for strength to our flesh, skill to our physicians, and the comfort and protection of the spirits on us all.



### Healing by Fire and Water

#### *A charm to prevent infection and strengthen wholeness*

If desired you may work with a candle-flame and a small bowl of water. The charm can be worked in vision, conceiving the left hand as the Water and the right hand as the Fire.

- Begin by centering yourself in the Two Powers, establishing the Flow and Shine of Underworld and Heavens in your body. When you are ready:

- Extend the left hand (holding the water, or with a small amount in the palm, or only in vision), and understand the Underworld Power as flowing up through you, to concentrate in that hand. Breathing strongly and maintaining that vision, recite:

**Deep Water rise,  
Dark water bright  
Strength from the Deep  
All-Cleansing might  
(and incant this nine times, charging the water)**

- Then anoint the forehead, chest and belly or loins with the water, or place the hand on them in turn, from top to bottom, saying:

**Flow, Oh Power, from the deep, through my heart, to my hand, that I may be cleansed, that I may be rinsed, that every ill be washed away.**

**That bonds be broken, and washed away.  
That hooks be released, and washed away  
That every bit be cleansed, and washed clean.  
For the Blessing of the Water I give thanks.**

- Abiding in your cleansed state, extend your right hand, holding the flame, or lit incense, or only in vision, and understand the Heaven Power shining down into you, to concentrate in your hand. Breathing strongly in that vision, recite:

**Fire of heaven, Fire of the Sky  
Moon's white Silver, Sun's bright gold  
Shine upon me, shine within  
That your power I may hold.  
(and incant this nine times, charging the fire)**



• Then use your hand to warm or brighten the belly or loins, heart and forehead in turn with the flame, from bottom to top, saying:

Shine, Oh Light, from the heights, through my head, to my hand, that I may be made whole.  
 Let the Light of Formation fill every empty space, and restore me to wholeness,  
 Let the Light of Knowledge fill every empty space, and restore me to wholeness,  
 Let the Light of Illumination fill every empty space, and restore me to wholeness,  
 That I may be whole, and healed, and well.  
 For the Blessing of Fire I give thanks.

• And clasp the hands before the heart, understanding the whole work, the cleansing and restoration, and affirming:

So by Fire and Water  
 Let me be cleansed and whole.  
 So be it.

Brigid's Protection Against Disease

By the Might of Brigid, Daughter of Danu,  
 By the Mercy of Brigid, Flame in the Hearth,

By the Flow of Brigid, Water from the Well,  
 Spirit of the Hammer, Warm the Forge,  
 Spirit of the Quaich, Bear the Draft,  
 Spirit of the Harp, Sing Beauty.

So ring, O Hammer, in the Cauldron of Warming  
 Let my furnace burn warm, my power be strong,  
 to keep me from all ill.

Be full to spilling, O Cup, into my Cauldron of  
 Movement.  
 Let your healing flow through every course,  
 to keep me from all ill.

Sing like the Birds of Dawn, O Harp,  
 with words of understanding.  
 Let me hear the Song in my Cauldron of Wisdom  
 to keep me from all ill.

Mighty Goddess, make strong flesh and bone,  
 Loving Goddess, make clean blood and wind,  
 Wisest Goddess, Make clear mind and will,  
 In my heart and at my hearth  
 For my kin and for my folk  
 That we may all be well.

*Rev. Ian Corrigan is a Senior Priest and Archdruid Emeritus of ADF.*



In addition to the Christian Bridget's Well at Kildare, Ireland, shown as illustrations for Ian's article, there is also a Pagan Bridget's Well, a little harder to find. It's adjacent to the Irish National Stud and Gardens. Once you've parked, instead of entering the Gardens, follow the walk back to the west, and you'll find it.



## A Practical Heathen's Guide to ASATRU

*Reviewed by Thomas Brown*

Author: Patricia M. Lafayllve  
Publisher: Llewellyn Publications  
ISBN: 0738733873  
Paperback Edition 1st edition November 8, 2013.

Good Gods! I've been reading through Patricia's book *\*A Practical Heathen's Guide to Asatru* (2020) and there are a few odd assertions and omissions that it seems to this writer to be overzealous editing and/or an oversight by the author. Patricia asserts all branches of Heathenism are various forms of Asatru despite many creedist ideals wrapped up in those various branches (Odinism, Theodism, etc...). She fails to distinguish between religion and faith among IE speaking peoples. Most egregious, for this writer to consider, is that there is no emphasis on fire (hearth, purification, or sacrifice) in ANY of the ritual outlines. Lastly, the most interesting is Patricia's explanation of non-animal gifts to the powers as votive offerings. Yet, none of these criticisms minimize Patricia's explanations for the customs and ways of a heathen. The liturgy work is (English accent!) brilliant!

To begin, some modern Norse practices are not variations, as Patricia asserts, but cover ups for racism, separatism, discrimination and misplaced ideals for white supremacists. Glossing over these historical issues of modern heathenry is concerning and damaging for a guide to "practical heathens" in general. That is particularly true for heathens whose only exposure has been through the lens of prisons and gangs. A little more history to recognize this fact and noting that not every person with a Thor's Hammer is honorable, peace loving, or values scholarship in one's religion (Bowman 2016, 17-19).

Patricia states, "[h]eathenry is a faith of of many variations" (Lafayllve 2020, 7). The use of the

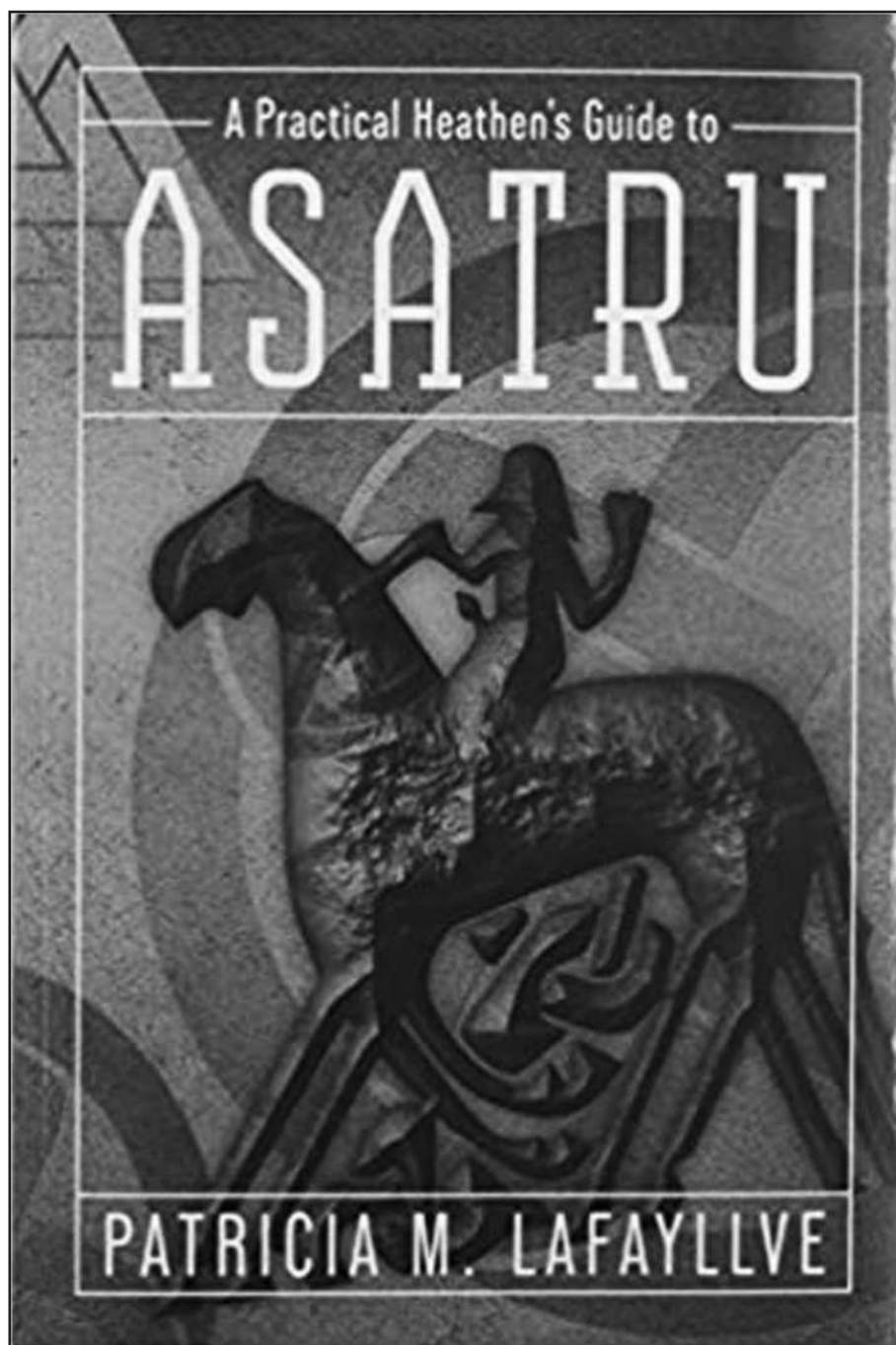
word "faith" to describe heathen orthopraxy is misleading because it implies salvation and "right" belief (Avende et al. 2019, 14). Heathens, and other IE cultures, didn't worship or make offerings based on faith. The impermanence of life and harsh reality of existence can form tribes into a warrior culture, as she calls it, to address the marginalization of such a society (Lafayllve 2020, 147). A more accurate word would be piety which was the maintenance of social contracts, observing customs of war and hospitality, and like the Romans, a civic duty (Avende et al. 2019, 45 Wilken 1984, 54-67). Furthermore, as Chapter 12 of Patricia's book illustrates, one's *wyrd* and fame are "world affirming" and not centered on right belief to obtain a desired afterlife (Lafayllve 2020, 145). Faith would be a foreign idea to pre-Christian Germanic cultures, let alone to a reconstructed Norse religion miscellany of the past fifty or sixty years.

Patricia has confused votive offerings with offerings of thanks (Lafayllve, 2020: 163:). A votive offering and a thanks offering look similar, but a votive offering is something given to the powers before a blessing and offered up as part of a vow fulfilled. A thanks offering is given when an unexpected blessing occurs (Thomas, 2015 89). Yes, this can be confusing to newcomers. Given the importance of oathing in Asatru it seems perfectly reasonable to make these types of offerings clear and straightforward. However, Patricia's prayers are quite exceptional and demonstrate a degree of orthopraxy that is beyond words.

Lastly there is very little mention of fire as personal or group practice. This is interesting since throughout the book devotional and prayers are presented in such a marvelous context of ancient worship practices. This seems an oversimplification of the point, but, claiming a

space, purification, and making an area habitable is a very Norse thing to do. According to Rev Michael Dangler, "...Thorolf Mortarskegg [upon arriving in Iceland] marked out his land and then took fire around the borders to claim the land as his own" (Dangler et al. 2010, 16). The fire altar as the "sacred centre" is not just a druid thing and I would argue should be included in a guide for modern Heathens as a breakthrough of the sacred, a \*hierophany\*, which all of us can experience as moderns (Thomas 2015, 37-57).

Patricia's book is great for newcomers and is a practical guide to Asatru for modern Heathens wanting to learn about orthopraxic religions. Yes, there are few areas that raised an eyebrow and made this writer question a few assertions and omissions that require discussion, but I'm sure to be forgiven by Patricia and others (Namely Ben Waggoner) because I admit I'm doing it wrong and no one is the boss of me.



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## Word Search Puzzle: Irish Mythological Cycle

*By Rev. G. R. Grove*

A	N	G	U	N	U	A	D	A	O	G	A
E	M	O	N	S	C	H	I	R	T	A	S
B	A	D	B	R	M	I	A	C	H	M	C
R	N	I	A	E	R	O	N	E	I	O	R
E	A	R	L	N	I	N	C	B	I	R	E
S	N	L	O	G	M	A	E	M	N	R	I
O	N	U	R	I	E	O	C	H	A	I	D
D	A	G	D	A	S	A	H	I	E	G	H
A	N	H	L	U	C	H	T	A	N	A	N
T	U	I	R	E	A	N	N	O	G	N	E
D	I	A	G	O	I	B	N	I	U	R	T
E	L	A	T	H	A	N	E	C	S	H	E

NUADA  
EOCHAID  
SRENG  
BRES  
DIANCECHT  
BALOR

LUGH  
MIACH  
ELATHA  
DAGDA  
OGMA  
MORRIGAN

AENGUS  
MANANNAN  
GOIBNIU  
CREIDHNE  
LUCHTA  
TUIREANN  
BADB

## The Poets

**Diane Cacciato** joined ADF in 2017 and is the Grove Organizer for Gary Oak Protogrove. She is an author, poet, essayist and retired teacher-librarian. She divides her time living between two islands worlds apart — Vancouver Island in Canada and Sicily.

**Jenne Micale** is a writer, singer, priestess and musician whose endeavors include the ethereal/wyrd music project Kwannon and, in former times, the wyrd folk band Belladonna Bouquet. Also a member of the Sisterhood of Avalon, she has published articles and poetry here and there. Listen to her music at [www.kwannon.net](http://www.kwannon.net).

**Devin Storm** has been in the craft since the mid 80's, functioning as the Gods require, sometimes as priest, sometimes as priestess, but mostly as a harper. She is an initiated 3rd degree Georgian

and also a Rowan Hold bard.

**Thomas Brown** joined ADF in 2009 and is an ADF Master Bard.

**Rev. D. Rowen Grove** joined ADF in the spring of 2010, and completed her Dedicant Path work two years later. She became an ADF Initiate in 2015 and was ordained an ADF Priest in 2016. She is currently Senior Druid of Chokecherry Grove, ADF, in Denver, Colorado.

**Rev. Jean “Drum” Pagano** has been a member of ADF since 1984 (he was ADF’s eighth member). He is an ADF Senior Priest, an Initiate, and our current Archdruid. He enjoys working with his various altars, spending time in Nature, and studying and teaching the Ogham.

## News and Announcements

### Program & Path Completions:

#### Dedicant Path

**Sarina** - 17 January, 2021

**Karen Larter** - 2 March, 2021

**Hervé Chauméton** (Eikthyrnir Odinson) - 14 March, 2021

**Meara Sháen** - 18 March, 2021

### Clergy Training Program

**Victoria Selnes** - Ordained 14 March, 2021

~Congratulations to all~

### Upcoming Events

Virtual **Wellspring** - 27-31 May, 2021.

For more festival information see [www.adf.org/events](http://www.adf.org/events)

Word Search Puzzle : Answers from Issue #92

B	A	L	D	R		Y	N	G	V	I	
R		O			F	O	R	S	E	T	I
A	S	K	A	D	I					Y	D
G	R	I	N	D	R	F	R	E	Y	R	U
I		I				R					N
S	O	L		O	D	I	N		T		N
E		M				G			H	F	
O		R	M			G			O	R	
S	H	E	I	M	D	A	L	L	R	E	U
T	O		M					S		Y	L
R	D	V	I	D	A	R	R	I		J	L
E	R		R	A	N			F	V	A	R

BALDR  
BRAGI  
EOSTRE  
FORSETI  
FREYJA  
FREYR  
FRIGG  
YNGVI

HEIMDALLR  
HODR  
ILMR  
IDUNN  
LOKI  
MIMIR  
ODIN  
RAN

RINDR  
SIF  
SKADI  
SOL  
THOR  
TYR  
ULLR  
VAR  
VIDARR  
VE



# ADF Directory



## The Mother Grove

Archdruid	Rev. Jean 'Drum' Pagano	adf-archdruid@adf.org
Vice-Archdruid	Rev. Amber Doty	adf-vice-archdruid@adf.org
Treasurer	Michael Van Den Hoek	adf-treasurer@adf.org
Secretary	Victoria Selnes	adf-secretary@adf.org
Members Advocate	Mike Kaan	adf-members-advocate@adf.org
Chief of the Council of Regional Druids	Shaz Cairns	adf-cord-chief@adf.org
Chief of the Council of Senior Druids	Rev. Caryn MacLuan	adf-cosd-chief@adf.org
Non-Officer Director	Arthur Shipkowski	ashipkowski@gmail.com
Non-Officer Director	Rev. Kelly Kingston (Carrion Mann)	carrionmann@gmail.com
Non-Officer Director	James Fielder	thebigpigeon@yahoo.com
Non-Officer Director	Julie Desrosiers	poledrasdaughter@gmail.com

## Additional Leadership Positions

Administrator	Jane Wayson	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
Archdruid Emeritus	Rev. Kirk Thomas	druidkirk@gmail.com
Chronicler	Manny Tejada-Moreno	adf-chronicler@adf.org
Information Manager	Arthur Shipkowski	adf-info-manager@adf.org
Listmaster and Moderator	Rae mac Lugh	adf-listmaster@adf.org
Preceptor	Rev. Kirk Thomas	adf-preceptor@adf.org
Webmaster	Arthur Shipkowski	adf-webmaster@adf.org

## Committees

Clergy Council	Chair: Rev. Jean 'Drum' Pagano	adf-archdruid@adf.org
Council of Lore	Chair: Rev. Kirk Thomas	adf-preceptor@adf.org
Grove Coordinating Committee	Chair: Michael Talvola	adf-gcc-chair@adf.org
Grove Organizing Committee	Chair: Rev. Robert Henderson	adf-goc-chair@adf.org
Prisoner Relations Committee	Chair: Rev. Kirk Thomas	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>

## Ár nDraíocht Féin: A Druid Fellowship

### Oak Leaves Subscriptions:

#### ADF and Oak Leaves Membership Rates:

Regular Membership: \$30/year  
Prisoner Membership: \$10/year

Subscription to Oak Leaves: Members: \$20/year  
Subscription to Oak Leaves: Non-Members: \$25/year

If you are already an ADF member but not an Oak Leaves subscriber, you can add a subscription either through our webpage (preferred) at <http://www.adf.org/joining/join.html>, or by contacting our Business Office at the following address:

**Subscription Service Dept.**  
Ár nDraíocht Féin (ADF) International Office  
1147 Brook Forest Ave #355  
Shorewood, IL 60404

[adf-office@adf.org](mailto:adf-office@adf.org)

If you would like to subscribe to Oak Leaves without joining ADF, please contact the Business Office at the address above.

### Submission Guidelines for Oak Leaves:

Oak Leaves welcomes submissions of articles, poetry, artwork, and anything else that might be of interest to our Druid readers. Submissions 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, but preference will be given to submissions from ADF members. Since excellent scholarship is one of ADF's goals, please document sources of ideas and materials that you used for your writings. 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. We reserve the right to reject submissions which do not meet our standards. When planning lengthy submissions, please inquire first at [oak-leaves@adf.org](mailto:oak-leaves@adf.org).

Electronic submissions are preferred, sent as email attachments to the Oak Leaves submissions address: [oak-leaves@adf.org](mailto:oak-leaves@adf.org). Written submissions should be sent in one of the following formats: MS Word (.doc/.docx), Rich Text Format (.rtf), or Text Format (.txt). Please include a brief ADF-related bio for all articles and essays. For more information on submissions, please see our web page at <https://www.adf.org/publications/periodicals/oak-leaves/submissions.html> or contact us at [oak-leaves@adf.org](mailto:oak-leaves@adf.org).

#### Deadlines for submissions (two months before publication date):

Spring Issue : December 1st;  
Summer Issue : March 1st;  
Autumn Issue : June 1st;  
Winter Issue : September 1st

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# The Wellspring Gathering



*Presented Virtually, on Zoom*

## May 27 - 31

By Stone Creed Grove, A.O.P.

Wellspring is our annual Druidic fair, feast and collegium. Usually we gather together in camp, and work our rites under the sky. In this second pandemic year we will continue to offer our program remotely. We hope you will join us for our lectures, rituals and hang-outs, in the comfort of your own home.

Lectures + Music + Rituals + Fellowship

featuring

**John Beckett**

**Diana Paxson**

and lots, lots more!

**\$25**

Info and Registration at [stonecreed.org/wellspring](http://stonecreed.org/wellspring)