



Peppermint And Sage

18



Yule 2015



January 2016

Had Editor block - had the issue laid out, but too many white spots that needed to be filled, normally once I stop asking - I find things to fill in and get it finished, but this issue nothing seemed to work.

As always we are looking for submissions for the next issue. And once again we ask for letters of comment. This is the only pay we get for what we do - and so far no one seems interested enough to drop us a line at pas@dragonpalm.com.

We now have all the deadlines for 2016 on the facebook group page and in our Yahoo group calendar.

Want to thank everyone who submitted to this issue.

Blessed Be

Dreamweaver

Peppermint And Sage Issue 18 YULE 2015

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Editor/Publisher: Dreamweaver

All submission should be sent to pas@dragonpalm.com

Peppermint And Sage is published eight times a year: Samhain, Yule, Imbolc, Ostara, Beltane, Litha, Lammas, and Mabon.

All issues are free in PDF format. Permission to print as long as all content is included and nothing is added.

Peppermint And Sage is created using PagePlus X8 by Serif.

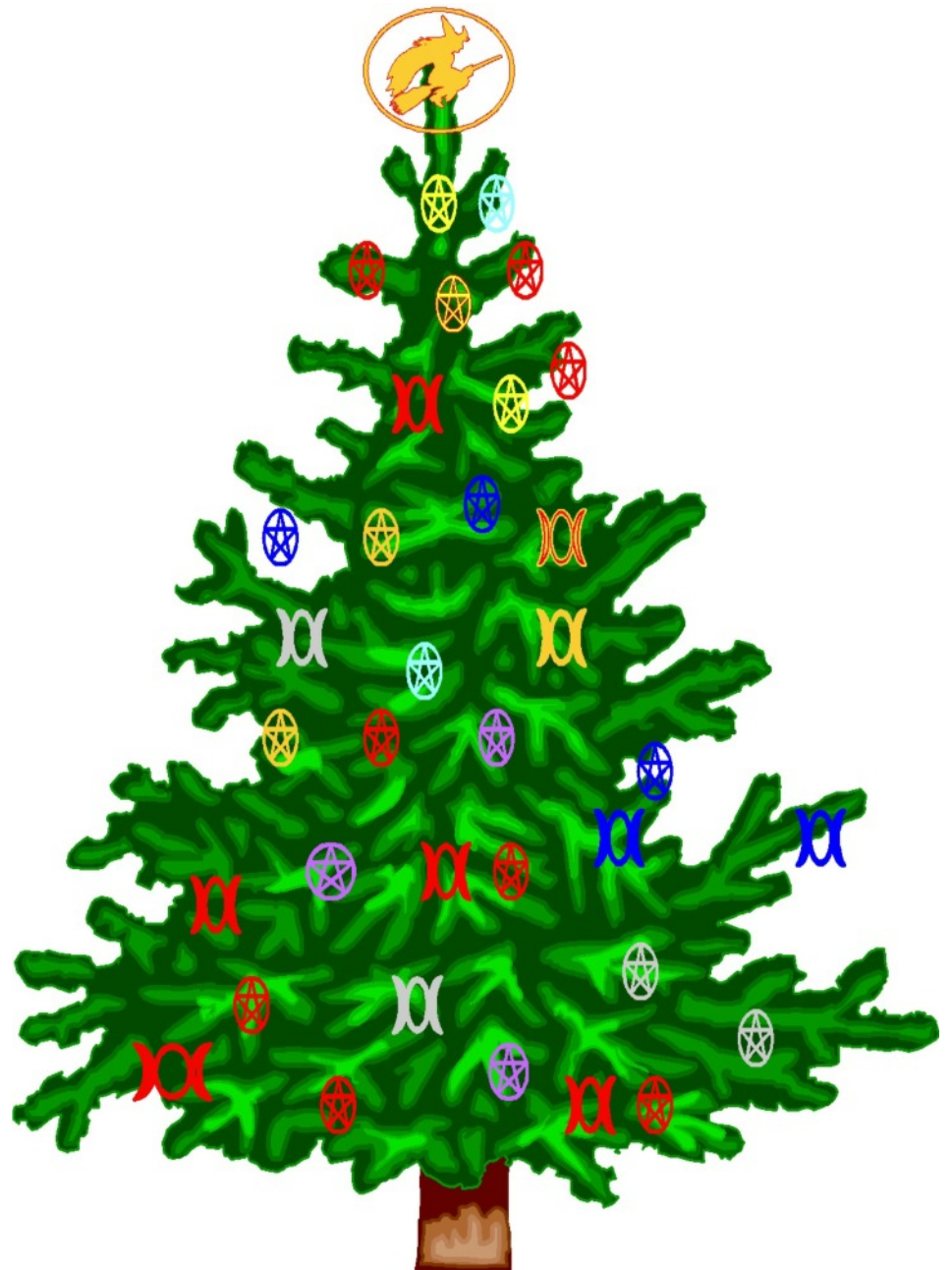
1	Fri	New Year's Day
2	Sat	
3	Sun	
4	Mon	
5	Tue	
6	Wed	
7	Thu	
8	Fri	
9	Sat	NEW MOON
10	Sun	
11	Mon	
12	Tue	
13	Wed	
14	Thu	
15	Fri	
16	Sat	
17	Sun	
18	Mon	Martin Luther King Day
19	Tue	
20	Wed	
21	Thu	Dragon Palm PNO
22	Fri	
23	Sat	FULL MOON
24	Sun	
25	Mon	
26	Tue	
27	Wed	PAS 19 Deadline
28	Thu	
29	Fri	
30	Sat	
31	Sun	

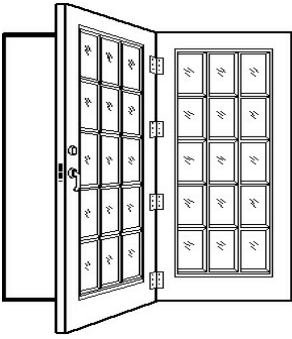
February 2016

Calendar Events:

1	Mon	
2	Tue	IMBOLC
3	Wed	
4	Thu	
5	Fri	
6	Sat	
7	Sun	
8	Mon	NEW MOON
9	Tue	Mardi Gras
10	Wed	
11	Thu	
12	Fri	
13	Sat	
14	Sun	Valentine Day
15	Mon	President's Day
16	Tue	
17	Wed	
18	Thu	Dragon Palm PNO
19	Fri	
20	Sat	
21	Sun	
22	Mon	FULL MOON
23	Tue	
24	Wed	
25	Thu	
26	Fri	
27	Sat	
28	Sun	
29	Mon	

For more information on Dragon Palm Circle Events join the Dragon Palm Events group on Facebook or contact:
dreamweaver@dragonpalmcircle.org
For Earth'[s Web events information go to their web site: EarthsWeb.org
If you have a calendar event mail the information to: pas@dragonpalm.com. The calendar can be used for festivals, retreats, open rituals, PNO's, concerts and other events of interest to pagans.





The Door to the Beyond: Mental Health and Paganism by Moss Bliss

Door to the Beyond

Part XVIII

Stars & Dung

I tend to read my horoscope every week. Not the silly one in the daily papers, but Rob Brezny's Free-will Astrology. It's amazing how close to home he hits, although I often get the idea he's talking about what I just went through, not what I'm about to go through. Here is the one for me (Sagittarius) for the week of October 15-22, 2008:

"Be humble for you are made of dung," says a Serbian proverbs. "Be noble for you are made of stars." I expect that you'll soon be getting vivid evidence of that truth, Sagittarius. Your challenge will be to resist the temptation to believe that you're more dung than stars, or more stars than dung. That might be hard, given the fact that practically everyone around you believes they are one or the other. But I promise you that you have the power to do it. You can exude cheerful equanimity while dwelling right at the crux of the paradox."

I really think that fits all the bipolars I know, not just the Sagittarians. We are all too often being told that we are dung, and quite often feel ourselves among the stars, while in our humbler moments we are busy feeling like dung while others are trying to lift up our hearts.

I have often been told that "it isn't what you know, it's who you know." If I had ever believed that, I wouldn't have gotten half the opportunities I have. In fact, I think it's safe to say that a valid demonstration of what you know could easily lead to knowing somebody who can help you get somewhere.

Let me give an example or two from my own life.

In 1999, I volunteered to do whatever I could for the Western North Carolina AIDS Project. (I hope most of you can see that there are very few, if any, items on the agenda for gays that are not identical to the items on the Pagans' list, and I did this although I am not gay and do not have AIDS.) After several months of working with individuals and doing mailings, I got the opportunity to take over working on their website. I learned quite a few new things doing that, and it has helped me beyond measure in my later websites.

In 2001, I let a homeless couple use my couch for several months. Sure, there were times I wanted the place to myself, but I like helping people. The woman came up with an idea that, as far as I can find, had never been thought of – a membership organization for homeless people, especially the ones who are working to rise above homelessness. I couldn't see anywhere that would go that would be helpful, but I attended the meetings she arranged. I then volunteered to write the website (from what I had learned at WNCAP). We got a lot of good attention, and then she left town. I couldn't see keeping the organization going, but a couple people encouraged me to do so. In January 2006 we

got our first press (in December 2005 I scraped the money together for legal incorporation, and sent out a press release, which was ignored by all but one local paper). Since then, some months we had too much press to keep up with. We got one large donation in 2007, and while we spent it all we did quite a lot of good with it and got a lot more notice. I was President of the Asheville Homeless Network for over 5 years before moving on, and had meetings with a number of City staff including the Police Chief and two City Councilpersons. It took a long time, and there were times I was about to give up, but we got notice.

In Spring 2008, I felt I wasn't doing enough. (Funny thing, one of my friends said I was doing more than any other TEN activists she knew, and I don't particularly consider myself an activist.) So I went to an orientation for volunteers for Habitat for Humanity, and found my services very much wanted for fixing bicycles that had been donated. (I fix them, they sell them, and it makes money for their building projects.) Since that time, I have gotten a new recliner for \$34 (which they delivered for free, since I was a volunteer), a dresser for \$12, and just last week a 21-speed mountain bike for \$8 that would have cost at least \$350 new. That is only a small part of what I have gained from this experience, but I think you can see the benefit.

In terms of getting to know the right people, I have long had a personal ad on NoLongerLonely.com (a totally free site for people with mental health diagnoses to meet others without the stigma of your diagnosis holding you back or being hidden.) One woman I had some conversations with added me to her MySpace Friends, and we talked, without any intent of a relationship forming, for quite some time. In March, she announced that she had purchased a struggling publisher of eBooks, Eternal Press, and was looking for editors and copyeditors. I was hired in April as Administrative Editor. My June quarter royalties were a whole \$4.01... my September royalties were over \$50 and our sales climbed 384%. I have very high hopes for December and beyond. If I hadn't stuck my neck out on a dating site, I plainly would not have even known about the opportunity, let alone gotten the job.

Those are a few of the highlights of my last 10 years in Asheville, NC. Each step has made me feel better about myself and given me something to do other than sit at home and live off my SSDI Disability check. I really think Uncle Sam has gotten his money's worth out of me. (If you want to see a list of ALL the things I do, which is extensive enough that I have an anxiety attack every time I look at it to update it, send me an email.)

During 2009, my parents twice told me they were proud of me. When they said that in January, it was the first time I have ever heard it (to the best of my memory). If you don't think that feels good, then you're not a bipolar Pagan with hardworking, mainstream Christian parents and there's nothing I can say. My father regularly read all my blogs and articles and asked my progress in some of the other things I'm doing until he passed in 2011.

After leaving Asheville to get closer to the East Tennessee Pagans, I moved around a bit but eventually actually found employment I could do without losing my SSDI check, and (skipping a lot of intermediate stuff) eventually connected with Lady Emrys, who founded Triad Bardic College at the request of Lord Serphant in 1992. I am now living on their "retreat" property, still working at my job, and have been installed as Steward of the College.

OK. This is me. This is all about how I didn't give up hope, and got somewhere. I'm not making millions of dollars (still on SSDI) but I'm comfortable and am where I am needed. It took a lot of growth, prayer, and magick to get here. You're Pagan, you have all the tools I do. If you're also a Diagnosed, Labelled Individual as I am, you have the same (approximately) challenges as I do. All it takes is to find your friends, and find a niche that might help them (no matter how long it takes to develop). Maybe find two or three or four such niches (Multi-Level Marketers call this "multiple streams of income"), but don't even do more than you can and be ready and able to cut back when you don't

have the same energy. Keep a plan of what things are easiest to cut back, what things mean the most to you, and what friends and other support systems you have in place.

Then keep doing what you're doing. It took 3 years for Asheville Homeless Network to get the least amount of media attention; by the end of 4 we had more media attention than we could keep up with. But even that was at the end of years of learning and developing and struggle. Stars and dung, my friends. Stars and dung.

Please feel free to contact me, for ideas, support, or just to let me know how you're doing (or how I am). And we can walk together to the next Door. Talk to you next month.

Hugs,
Moss





Angus WaterStone

Reality

by Lady Sky



Winter Wonderland

Colder weather is on the way and so is snow and ice. But remember that the sun is shining a little longer every day. We are halfway through the winter and can almost feel the promise of spring.

Now is the time for light and renewal, for candles and bonfires, for positivity and family gatherings.

Light is starting to shine in the areas that were once just shadows.

Rebirth of the sun is a renewal of our commitment to be a better person, one who is not afraid to make sure the best today leads us to an even better tomorrow.

So take a stance and rejoice in your own personal beliefs! But don't forget to let others do the same in whatever they believe too!

It is not as important to preach your beliefs to others as it is to live those beliefs every day and lead by example, not force.

In this country we have too much inequality to be pointing fingers at other countries. We need to live tolerance and love. We need to rise above the petty people. The people who would persecute us. Who would hate us without even knowing us!

Be the bringers of light to everyone you meet. This time of year and the whole year through!

Peace, love, and light everybody!

Magickal Tip

Add cinnamon to a spell to give it extra power and speed.

CharissasCauldron.com

Magickal Tip

Use black pepper in protection sachets for protection against magickal attacks.

CharissasCauldron.com



we meet every third Thursday of the month at 8 PM at the Sevierville Books-A-Million in the coffee shop. If the weather is nice we meet on the outside patio. They are located at 190 Collier Drive, Sevierville, TN. (Collier Drive is the light at the Sevierville Walmart). This is not an official BAM event, so do not contact them for information on the PNO, but for directions their number is 865-908-8994. Contact dreamweaver@dragonpalmcircle.org for more information or join our Facebook group "dragon Palm Events" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/221898301197684/>

2016 PNO

Jan. 21	Feb. 18
March 17	April 21
May 19	June 16
July 21	Aug. TBA
Sept. 16	Oct. 20
Nov. 17	Dec. 15

Our PNO's are informal gathering of Pagans - we talk about just about everything and check out the new books. We always welcome new people. Check out our website to see our pictures so you know who we are.

www.dragonpalmcircle.org

SINGING IN THE TREES: THE MAKING OF BARDS

by Moss Bliss, Steward of Shemai



Singing in the Trees
Yule 2015

by Moss Bliss
Steward of Shemai and Chief Bard of Earth's Web

I have just recently returned from Foothills Correctional Facility, where Darla Kaye Wynne and I held a Yule Gathering among the studious inmates of the prison. They let me in, with my guitar, with my crystal athame, but without my knitting needles. This means they got more music than they had planned.

These men amaze me every time I visit with them. They are in an intolerable situation due to being forced by society to take responsibility for their actions. Most of the guys who came to the Gathering were intelligent, studious, magickal people who really want to work their way out of their problems. And even the least committed of them wanted to sing carols, even though he had no idea what the tunes were.

Pagan Prison Ministry is a project of AREN (Alternative Religions Education Network), which is headed by Dr. Leo Louis Martello, a quite prominent member of the Wiccan community. AREN picked PPM out of the ashes when WARD (Witches Against Religious Discrimination) crashed and burned due to internal politics. Darla and I have kept it going -- Darla has done nearly all of the ongoing work, but I put my hand in whenever needed and have safeguarded the documents over the years.

So it's all about teaching responsibility through Paganism. We are blessed by the prison Chaplain, David Turbeville, who has continued to work with us for over 15 years.

This year, the first half of the Gathering was all music. We even had amplification, with a bass guitar, an electric guitar, my acoustic plugged in, a drum kit, and some other inmates singing or adding miscellaneous percussion. One inmate added several attempts at rap lyrics, I performed "We Won't Wait Any Longer", one inmate tried to sing some carols (thanks to Kirsdarke for printing the carols from 1992's Filk Echo files and Earth's Web for letting me take the printouts to the prison). We had workshops, ritual, and lots of food.

And then I drove back to Shemai, where my cats were anxiously awaiting my return.

At present, there are very few prisons that let us in, and Darla continues to do 90+% of the work. We need more access, and we need more priest and priestesses to do the work. Contact Darla at aklover@aol.com if you're interested in helping.

From here, the only remaining item on my schedule is GAFilk in Atlanta, January 8-10, where I will be once again connecting with my oldest friend in the world, Blind Lemming Chiffon, and singing with dozens of friends, sharing tunes with or without religious over- or under-tones. Sunday Morning's Ecumenifilk is always worth attending. I am open to appearing at any event or living room where you would like to hear me. Hopefully, I will be able to play out more in 2016, this is the end of my year of getting settled at Sojourn, my

first year as an initiated Bard. Thank you all for your love and attention, and may your forthcoming calendar year be the best you've ever had.

Hugs,
Moss

[Moss Bliss is a fallible human being who also appears to be a decent musician, singer, and songwriter, and is an Elder Bard in the Triad Bardic College tradition. He can be reached at zaivalananda@gmail.com or at TBC's phone, (865) 344-7156.]



Hardwood, Pitch and Fire

By Faucon

The villagers attempted to muffle laughter and crash of broken branches, but mischief does not always lend itself to stealth, especially at Saturnalia. The Yule log had lain two years in drying and preparation and was lighter now for all that, but it still took six men to transport in a sling. Only two men had known of its hidden spot, and every child in the village, of course. Such was the magic of the season! The struggling band little noticed the chill blown down from the snow-fringed peaks, while each panted breath rose prayer-like in frosty image of smoke from an extinguished votive candle. Neither did they notice my shadowy form amidst the variegated hues of autumn's blush on vine and sycamore. I was not particularly well hid, but as I willed not to be seen, it suited their focused will that I not be there. Such is the magic of the forest! I have come to observe the celebration of the Yule log and its effect on the Christian spirit. What is the kinship of fire flame and passion for the eternal flame birthed in the distant Holy Land where even now Teutonic Knights pledge to follow an uncertain quest? Will Yeshua ben Nazareth be present here at this pagan fire or locked up in the Eisenach Monastery on the hill? Where will I find You? At least my hands would be warmer here in the village.

I am now used to the name Kiyān. In other lands I have other names. I am a traveler and searcher and acclaimed a Gusari of ancient tradition. As I tell stories and sing songs drawn from histories different from the monk's I am often called pagan. Because I believe in the one, true universal God and wear a tryzub symbol with center cross, I am not welcome at some secret gatherings in misty wooded glade. Yet, my staff connects me sure with Mother Earth and something sang deep in my blood when I stood before a Druid monolith. But I have walked alone with Elizabeth, Landgravine of Thuringia and shared her simple wisdom and faith. She placed my hand in that of a sickly child and said, "Your songs at dinner stir my heart and give pause to my calling to silence and intense listening of the spirit. This wrestling is good and I am better for it, though the suffering of soul is like the lashes of willow on my back." Such is the magic of the Saint!

I have heard the songs of Hildegard and have been transported. How can one not be a Christian, driven by canted prayer in rhythm with the crash of creation and the fluttered wing of dove's salvation? But what does it mean? What calls now as the sun flies low in the heavens and the night seems an endless passage? Why is it important to remember the birth of our Lord on next day but four when everyday should be call for celebration? Does my song on that day carry more weight? Why is it called evil to place figures of birds in the evergreen trees but grace to burn incense before a barren tree in a chapel? Are not the cross and evergreen both symbols that life will return after winter's end,

one of the land, the other of the spirit? Those on the hill proclaim great faith and call us all to gather under their guidance for Christmas. The chosen "all" that is. If faith be strong then why does intolerance and condemnation smell like fear? Nay, my prayers are better heard here by the pebbled brook where silence improves my senses, and my Lord speaks to me in leafy whispers and sudden shooting stars. Low embers in the fire pulse and ebb like a breathing force. Are those eyes there watching me divine -- or something else? The drifting smoke declares my presence to any that should care. A symbol or a prayer? Pulse, pulse. "Like incense let my prayer rise before you, O God, the lifting of my hands like an evening Oblation." Silence.

I choose. I will enjoin with men in celebration of Your birth, not for me, but to lend support to those simple prayers of those who do not yet know You. This is the magic of the heart!

The Yule log has been made special through clandestine efforts of the simple folk. Long shafts of hardwood have been driven deep in holes drilled to the heart. Plugs of pitch hide the handy work and insure a ready blaze, while the hardwood will smolder slow and gain an extra day. For at Yule's end in ashes cold will come the set of winter. It will be difficult for those of weakened faith to toil into the spring. The pitch and hardwood ploy gives hope to the weary and is felt a good joke on the Baron and noble friends. Not known is that the spikes come from the Baron's own land across the marsh, and that it is he who laughs that extra day. Such is the magic of hope!

I will spend this last day alone, for I am never less lonely than here in prayer and contemplation. Tomorrow I will join the village at their fire and will trade my songs and stories for mead, food and children's games. The fire log will crackle and spit its defiance, hiding its secret inner strength. Each man will find warmth and courage here, some in Christian faith proclaimed, some in confusion or other calling. Of this I know, each will think upon the season and the day, the mystery of the wood pressed deep into their joyful souls. If any ask me of Christmas I will say, "Celebrate today the birth of Christ in all of us. This starts the path to a distant tree. Our fellowship here will guide the way. In whatever way you can, pray with me. We are one." Awake Goddess, shine as Mistress of the Night. We celebrate life eternal. Such is the magic of the Great Spirit!





Pagans and politics

Now is the time to register to vote if you haven't already done so. This is important since many states are trying to make it harder and harder to vote by making the time to register shorter. We see some try to take away the right of Americans to vote by saying it will prevent voter fraud – yet most voters' fraud has come from the machines being tampered with than someone voting who doesn't have the right to do so. And if you think about it – tampering with machines can get someone elected that was not voted for faster than a few people voting that shouldn't. The most popular is the double ID demand that many conservative states are doing. They make it easy to get the voters registration (federal law protects that) but then add the need of a second ID that has a photo – the question that should be asked of those state is why not make the voters registration a photo id. The answer would be – they would have to have more places where people could get them. What most states are asking is a driver license or state issued ID – which can only be gotten at places that can be gotten to very easy for a person with a car. Here in Tennessee the license bureau doesn't have locations in all counties and where there is, it's not easy to get to without a car. The one here in Sevier county has no mass transit going to it. This is a good way of keeping low income and elderly from getting photo ID. Driver license cost as do state photo ID's. And you need a birth certificate to get them the first time (tell me how a birth certificate proves who you are – and is it really yours) Now if you do not have a copy – it cost money to get a copy, if you can get a copy. Younger people who have only lived in the computer age – it seems to be an easy thing to get. Before things went digital, things like birth certificates were stored either on paper or microfilm, and stored in a court house or warehouse. And could be easily destroyed by fire or flood – or lost when being moved – or misfiled, which is as good as being lost. The BC effects older Americans – many who have been voting for years – and now find they don't have the needed ID to vote.

Voter fraud is bad, but these actions have yet to really prevent any true voters fraud, yet prevents many Americans from voting – which in itself is a form of voters fraud. Remember things some time sound reasonable until you look closer. Photo ID's are not unreasonable – until you see how hard they are for some to get. Someone who has been voting for years and is known by the people in where they vote should not have trouble getting a new photo voters registration card- no harder than renewing the non-photo ID's.





SWIRLING

By Faucon

The theater was slow to empty that evening, a statement of appreciation more profound than the earlier applause. Chad did not stir from his hunched “thinker” posture as he was listening. Small groups of spectators chatted about the performance style or magic or mystery. Snatches of words and emotion swirled about Chad even more than during the show. His long training allowed for an academic detachment that held his personal bias at bay – or so he believed. He was not yet ready to tell the world of what he knew of magic.

Chad closed his notebook and released himself to his own impressions of the performance. He chuckled at the subtle touches of the ending. Roland had not exited the stage or stood in place as the curtain closed. Instead he had walked slowly down the side steps used earlier by volunteer assistants and out the wide doors through which many spectators would exit. He was just a man! As he touched the main floor the curtains began to close only to open once more. All of the props and tables on the stage were gone! All that remained were glints of sparkling fairy-dust caught in the swirling colored lights. Magic would live on! The professor silently applauded to artistry and power of the final effect that had focused attention so intently that the stage preparation had been invisible.

Yes, the individual magical skits and effect would be forgotten against the greater story of how events had occurred for which there was no ready answer – no possible answer except for magic. Many would deny the term, of course, choosing a more popular word not mangled by Hollywood and marketing or political “spin-doctors.” Chad knew that each person holds close a collection of memories of such events and the secret thrill of having participated in awe and wonder without any need for an answer. It had always been so.

Many years earlier Chad had experienced an “out of body” transcendence or vision or delusional stupor. After many sleepless day of frenetic work of his doctoral thesis. he had collapsed on the furry rug before the pulsing logs of the fireplace. The half-empty bottle of brandy may have played a part. Shadowy images from wind-tossed branches defying the moon had their say. The isolation of the cabin sought out from a need for solitude also whispered of loneliness. It has been said that any person can become called to be Shaman after a near-death shock of awareness. This was close enough.

Chad glanced around the forest glade seeking the source of the drumbeat. He shivered and drew the bearskin closer around his shoulders. Other people-forms swayed to the dancing flames and there were glowing eyes amidst the trees. He sensed that he should be afraid and pondered on why he was not. A trembling hand sought his in the darkness and he was washed over by caress of conjoined bonding of the tribe. The mysterious drumbeat dissolved into a chant of many voices. The words were meaningless but the message clear: “all is one – one is all.”

A solitary figure on the rock seemed favored by the moonlight. An ancient story was told in which people had once been afraid of many things like lightning and clouds and animal cries in the night. They

were reminded of how the people had come together and shared their experiences and knowledge and the fears had been conquered. The murmurs of the listeners were in appreciation of the courage and wisdom of their fathers. Next the Bard had performed some simple magic tricks to relieve the tension and prompt laughter. Colored stones vanished and reappeared in unexpected places. A basket of nuts suddenly held a squirrel and an empty gourd sprinkled water on the glowing coals. Yes, that which seemed impossible could indeed be controlled.

Chad's dream misted away as another figure in a hooded robe began to foretell the future of the tribe, of the need to move to a better hunting place and trade children with another tribe. By right each member of the tribe should have been afraid of the unknown portents and cower before the weight of impossible tasks ahead. There was no fear – only the memory of the chant and the magic and the courage.

Swirls of spiritual currents and instinctual memories. Just an illusion.

Some people left the theater that evening with unknown “warm-fuzzy” feelings because they sought a diversion called “entertainment” and had been rewarded. Others found some validation for the fictional games they played everyday at work and school and a reason to continue the deceptions. A few pondered over some personal impossibility to be faced tomorrow. Perhaps one would dig out the magic kit from their youth and seek a truth beyond the opinions of FaceBook friends.

Chad? Tomorrow he would stand before a classroom of students seeking answers to questions they were afraid to ask. He would tell them stories and perform some simple magic and speak of a future for which they were unprepared. Each student understood that he knew things that they did not.



A New Look at Clergy Basics

by Mistress Belladonna aka Kenya Coviak

When I first wrote this piece in its original form, it was in preparation for a small book. I presented these points in a workshop at Michigan Pagan Fest in the June of 2015. This is basically a word for word copy of the requirements as this writer saw them at that time.

Your friendly neighborhood Detroit Paganism Examiner has been a practicing ordained minister for a very long time. Being clergy has had its ups and downs, and being Pagan clergy has certainly been challenging. The ride has been long and bumpy enough that [Betty Davis](#) would appreciate the seat belt usage involved.

That being said, since having committed to teaching an outer court grove over the last year, it has come into conversation what the basics of being clergy are. What are the commonly held standards, and who sets them? While [Cherry Hill Seminary](#), and others, are model schools, they are not the only route to being living, practicing, clergy. Academic training is marvelous, but it does not invalidate the coven based traditions or other modalities of training.

So, in the interest of sharing some of this person's views, as well as protecting their formatted listing from plagiarism since they are going to be published in an upcoming book this summer, they will be listed here under Mistress Belladonna's guide to Pagan clergy basics.

1. You should have at least attained the age of 21. Why? Because you should be able to enter a bar and pick up your damn covener/parishioner from the damned floor and take them to the car.
2. You should also be able to enter into contracts and be able to understand them.
3. You should know the laws on Confession. And be able to use them to protect yourself and your client.
4. You should know the laws on Mandatory Reporting in your state.
5. You should know the laws and requirements governing marriages and weddings in your state. Also, in this same matter, you should know the requirements to perform a marriage for someone who has divorced and what paperwork you need.
6. You should know the protocols, procedures, and laws on Hospice, Medical Advocacy, Medical Directives, DNR orders, and rudimentary statutory will forms so that you may assist your client to get these resources.
7. You should know the laws on Birth, Paternity, FosterCare, Kinship Programs, and Adoption so that you may be a source of information and advocacy for your clients.
8. You should know the laws on Prison Ministry, even if you do not perform this service, and maintain knowledge of Prison Chaplain requirements in your state.
9. You should know the laws on Burial Rites, and have a resource guide for those making end of life decisions that you can access to assist them.
10. You should have at least a rudimentary knowledge on Substance Abuse Education and Treatment Programs. Even better, at least some training in this area.
11. You should have access to mental health service providers, and be experienced enough to know when SOMEONE'S PROBLEMS LIE OUTSIDE OF YOUR SCOPE OF LAY SPIRITUAL COUNSELING. You should know the laws on referring someone for treatment.
12. You have studied, or at least familiarized yourself with the basics of, military chaplaincy and the rights of the people of your faith group
13. You have earned the respect of you, yourself, and others in your peer group as someone who is of good character and consistency
14. You have cultivated the qualities of leadership in yourself and can undertake hard decisions with

fairness and firmness, yet be able to temper them with mercy and discernment

15. If you are of a martial bent, you have the mettle and the character to be a spiritual leader, and a channel of inspiration and bravery in battle

16. You are recognized as a Judge in the community, impartial and fair, with Wisdom

17. You should have a set of basic rituals on hand that you can perform in the event you are called into service. These include, but are not limited to;

- I. Wiccaning/Baptism
- II. Wedding/Handfasting/Commitment Ceremony
- III. Divorce/HandParting Ceremony
- IV. Memorial Services
- V. Funeral Service/Rites
- VI. House Blessings
- VII. Blessing a Person
- VIII. Rites of Passage Ceremonies
- IX. Saging/Croning
- X. Warrior Rites
- XI. Queening/Fathering
- XII. Surgical/Medical Pre Prayers
- Others

18. You should be able to explain what your beliefs are and some of their history.

19. You should be able to not have to engage in shock and awe, but engage in quiet, polite, civil theological conversation in general with other ministers of their faiths about matters of spirituality and life

20. You should know the meanings behind every tool you use, every ritual, and every hand gesture you use in YOUR practices

21. You should have some sort of First Aid Training (this includes Mental First Aid)

22. You should be able to walk into a room and hold your ground, soundly, in the face of those who would ridicule you

23. You should bring no disgrace to those who associate themselves with your ministry

24. You should bring honor to your faith, and associate nothing false

25. You should be able to be an advocate for the weak, no matter the faith

26. If you are of a martial bent, you should be able to be at the forefront of social causes to the best of your ability if your conscience moves you so

27. You should have no fear, nor eat your heart, when you witness something evil or wrong and call it out

In addition to these, there are some experiences that make really good clergy. Not all, but at least some of these are necessary for a balanced view of real life.

1. You have lost someone close to you to death

2. You have had a major medical procedure

3. You have had a brush with death

4. You have had a child

5. You have dealt with someone with a substance abuse issue OR had one yourself OR both

6. You have volunteered to help those less fortunate and/or have been helped because you were less fortunate

7. You have attended the practices, rites, and ritual services of other groups on your path and on other paths and examined them objectively

8. You have led at least one person through a personal crisis
9. You have been in an accident
10. You have been married or in a long term relationship where you lived with the other person
11. You have done military service
12. You have someone in your circle who is in the military

Is this an all encompassing list? Not at all. Does it mean that academic studies are invalid? NO. They are a part of the process of growth and give the ability to convey their inner depths of understanding. However, these markers are a good way to test if you are lay clergy or are actually a representative of your beliefs through that office. It is a self test, and a community test that can be used to evaluate where you are in your practice.

Now, an important addition to this piece comes today. After being interviewed by Goddess Rhonda, and Goddess Starr, of the [The Priestess View Show](#) last evening, I was blessed with an more expansive view. Something that truly is the Powers That Be working. Hearing the insight and eloquent sharing of Rhonda, and experiencing the comments of the contributing listeners, there came a Eureka moment.

Add to this list something that should have been at the beginning. Add to this list that which is essential. Add to this list a simple, yet monumental thing:

TRANSPARENCY

When acting in any leadership position, this is important. But in Priestly, or Clergical, matters, the need for this is critical. It is beyond vital that we appear, unadorned and free, in our dealings with others and our communities. Our successes, our triumphs, our challenges, and yes, even our failures, must all be able to be used and put on the table as necessary. Why? Because by presenting the whole human experience, it is another form of ministry.

Often times people can put folks on pedestals. Those in the helping professions and callings often are there when the night is long and dark. This can place a glamour of sorts around the mind's image of those seen as rescuers and comforters and confidantes. It is only by making sure we present as fully imperfect that we can go a long way towards assuring that this does not only go to their heads, but to ours as well. Thank you, Goddesses Rhonda and Star, for this teaching.

(Originally posed in my blog, Detroit Paganism Today, on 12/29/15)



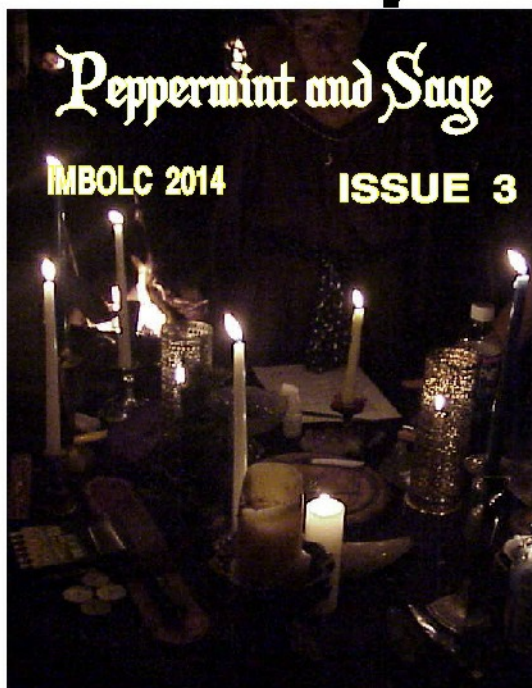
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IMBOLC 2016



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