

The Journey...S

Official Newsletter of Church of the Spiral Tree
an Ecumenical Pagan church

Issue 19
Summer Solstice, 2002

NEWS

CST Library: We have one! And we've been receiving new books recently to be added to the library. I'll keep the list of books updated on the web, and will publish it here once a year. If you'd like to help organize the library at any time, just come to one of the CST rituals held at Waverly, Alabama, which is where the library is stored. Remember, send silica gel packets to keep the books dry!

Goings On: Things are moving along nicely right now - May Day went well, as did Moondance, and the Summer Solstice ritual is set for June 29. I'm already working on dates for next year's rituals, and will have that published in the next issue. Things are clicking right along... If you'd like to help, by volunteering to write and run a ritual, or by taking on one of the CST volunteer jobs, please let me know!

Articles: Thanks to all who submitted articles for this month's issue! I've got several more to publish, including some really nice ones by Frater Yod (James A. Roesch) that I just didn't have room for in this issue. Imagine! Not enough room! At any rate, look for Frater Yod's articles once again starting in the next issue, along with some more by Frank Palmer, and probably others, as well. Thanks, everyone, and keep writing!

Letters: Thank you to those who have contacted some of our other members! Remember, if you're shy about giving out your home address, you can send letters to us here, and we can forward them in a CST envelope to the recipient. Many of our members, especially inmates, have contact listings, but receive no letters from other members, and they in particular feel the need for contact from others. Also, we can publish Letters to the Editor, meant to be read by the whole membership, in The Journey. Please consider writing to either another member, or to the newsletter in general, next issue. Just be sure to state on the letter that it is for publication.

Also, Frank Palmer specifically asked me to print a thank you to Sparrow for the Yule card! Keep the letters and cards going, folks, especially to our inmate members!

- Linda

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Who Are We?

Church of the Spiral Tree (CST) is a non-profit, volunteer-staffed, ecumenical pagan/wiccan church, designed to foster and celebrate a sense of community and family among pagans, both locally and in other regions of the country/world. CST celebrates the unique pagan family: parents, children, elders, and extended family. It is an ecumenical church in that it encompasses all traditions, and is non-exclusive. It welcomes all who revere the Earth Mother and adhere to the tenets of the Wiccan Rede ("An it harm none, do as you will"), regardless of which tradition one is affiliated with.

CST was incorporated in August 1997 to provide a legal, tax-exempt status to the Pagan community. This status enables us to offer to the community a variety of open rituals that anyone may attend, to ordain ministers, and to extend our tax-exempt status to sub-groups of CST. One of our projects has been the forming of a Pagan cover school program for homeschooling families in Alabama (Sacred Grove Academy). CST also has a Disaster Relief Fund, so we can collectively donate money in the name of an established Pagan church to disaster relief efforts, including the American Red Cross.

If you would like to help with any of our projects, have any further ideas for the church, or have any resources which would be of benefit, please contact us. CST is also seeking volunteers to help with various parts of the church. Call us with ideas!

Info About Our Services:

Ministers: CST, being a church, may ordain any member over the age of 18 a minister. The fee for this is \$35.00, and you must also be a paid member. This ordination is for life; you do not have to maintain your membership to continue to be a CST minister, but we would really appreciate it. Each year we have to renew our "Registered" status in various states in order for our ministers to be legal, and your continued membership fees help pay for this. Ministers are entitled to perform legal weddings, baptisms, and funerals. Ordination as a minister does not automatically confer "Elder" or "High Priest/ess" status upon anyone.

Subordinate Organizations: The main form of a local CST group is a Grove. This can be formed by at least three paid church members, who apply to CST for a charter. If you are interested in forming a Grove, simply find two other like-minded friends, and encourage them to send in their membership to CST, then apply to us for a Grove charter. The application and first year's fee is \$35.00. Note that whomever forms a Grove and runs it, including writing and performing rituals and teaching mysteries, does not automatically become a "High Priest/ess."

Note on Ministers and Groups: For those of you who wish to form a local group or become ordained as a minister, if you're somewhere besides Alabama or Georgia, you just need to let us know a bit ahead of time.

For the group and the ministership to be legal, we need to be registered in your state. This takes a little time to get the paperwork done and sent in. We will register in other states as needed, as there's a bit of expense involved. Your membership fees and the fees for ordination (\$35) and forming a group (\$35) help pay for these costs. CST is already registered in Georgia, so anyone wishing to put together a local CST group there can do so. Full info on starting a CST grove and becoming a minister is now on the web site, < <http://www.spiraltree.org> > .

Ritual Link: You have the option of participating long-distance in our rituals. All you have to do is let us know that you want to do this, and before each of our planned rituals, we will mail, email, or FAX a copy of the ritual to you, along with the "kick-off" time and date of the ritual. This way, members who wish can do the same ritual the rest of the group is doing, at the same time, on the same day.

Let us know if you're interested in participating this way. As our rituals sometimes are not completely written till the night before, we need either an email address or FAX number to quickly send you the ritual.

Natural Family Planning: Cathy, a health services professional, is offering counseling on natural methods of family planning, both fertility and contraception. For more info, email her at tabbatcat@yahoo.com.

Wildcrafting

by Tony Curtis Jackson

Merry Meet, Fellow Limbs of the Tree:

Wait! Come back! See... no soap box this time for me to preach from! Today I only want to practice what I preach and share with my family.

What I have access to that you may not is a subscription to “Wilderness Way” primitive skills and earth wisdom magazine. I found Vol. 8, Issue 1, most enjoyable, due to so much shared regarding the use of plants. Not only are the articles informative, the accompanying photos are in color and of good quality. Granted, there is no substitute for witnessing the actual plant, but colored photos of the plant in its environment does beat a sketch on a page in an herbal book.

For those of you who are also interested in herbs, as preached time and time again in various texts, there is no substitute for learning the Latin name of plants. If like me, this is easier said than done, but well worth the effort in trying to. Just practice with what’s in your yard... with what you are familiar with. If this is too difficult, just remember a variety of plants may all share a common name, but each very different with their properties.

One case in point would be sage. We all know what sage is, right? You probably have some in your kitchen right now. Well, the cooking sage is of the mint family (*salvia* genus) and should not be confused with the sage used to smudge with (*artemesia* genus), which also happens to be the medicinal sage. I’ve noticed in some magical texts where “sage” would be mentioned, yet the properties of both genus would be combined; and if done once, it has probably been done a few more times as well.

Then we have the opposite to consider also... same plant with a different common name. Creosote (the plant, not the wood-tar distillate) is also commercially called chaparral (which in Spanish means any low-growing shrubbery), and is actually *Jarrea tridentata*. It is the closest a plant can get to being a cure-all. It’s a powerful disinfectant, used in treating dysentery, colds, flue, and fever, as well as in purifying ground water.

Ever heard of nopál? Well, that’s our old prickly pear (*Opuntia ficus indica*) which I’m sure you’ve heard of, with it’s edible “fruit.” But perhaps you never heard it’s a wonderful substitute for aloe vera in treating burns and bruises. Another useful cacti would be cardón (*Pachycereus pringlei*), which is applied as

a poultice to a wound, helps stop bleeding. Seep willow (*Baccharis salicifolia*) is also used for this purpose. By the way, seep willow is not really a willow, but rather is in the family with the daisy.

None of this is important while we are outside, enjoying what spring and our Mother are blessing us with, but it could prove important in any spell-work or medicinal remedy one cares to check out.

There was also a good article regarding stinging nettle (*Urtica doica*). It grows in Georgia, so I’m sure it’s in Alabama also. I’ve seen plenty of it during my childhood and am willing to bet all of you have encountered it, whether you were aware of it or not. I’ve yet to read any herbal book that does not mention it. It’s said some craft-wise people can pick it with their bare hands without being stung. Knowing the stinging hairs exist on the stalk and underside of the leaves should aid those not so ‘wise’ but who wish to be... that info plus knowing the plant’s formic acid is the same chemical injected by the red ant should help one to handle it with care. The irritating chemicals are removed by cooking or drying.

To use the plant medicinally, nettle should be gathered when it first flowers, and the leaves and stems dried in a shady place. It is an astringent as well as a diuretic. Numerous medicinal plant books recommend drinking nettle tea as a general tonic... to restore the body’s vitality after an illness or as a skin tonic.

Though nettle is described as nutritious and delicious, to use in a culinary dish it should be harvested prior to flowering since after a nettle blooms, the foliage develops gritty particles called cystoliths that may cause urinary tract irritation if ingested in large quantities. One favorite way of cooking nettle is to steam the leaves and small stems gently in a covered pan with a little water, just until they wilt and become tender. Salt and a little butter or lemon juice can be added. To cook nettle, as many edible plant books suggest, for 5-10 minutes, creates a somewhat mucilaginous dish. It’s a good substitute for spinach or chard.

As a survival food, nettle is outstanding. Per 100 grams, nettle has 65 calories, the highest of any green plant, wild or cultivated. Protein content is 7% for the green plant and 42% for the dried—hence, the dried leaves can be pulverized and added to flour, soups, or stews in both survival outings and home cooking.

Nettle is very high in Vitamin A, C, and D, and has good quantities of iron, calcium, and manganese.

Nettle fibers taken from the dead stalks are as strong as those of the yucca or milkweed, and almost as strong as dogbane (Indian hemp). Ten good-sized stalks will make a really strong rope suitable for a bow drill apparatus (or to show one's 'measure').

Well, that's it for now. Thank you for enduring this class. I'm just a beginner, but hopefully I've shared something of value with you.

Until we merry meet again,
Peace and joy,
Tony

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To Be A Wiccan: A Lesson For Incarcerated Wiccans

by Timothy O'Brien
An Incarcerated Wiccan

Anyone can say he/she is a Wiccan. But it takes much more than that to be a Wiccan. The "Principles of Wiccan Belief," adopted by the Council of American Witches in April, 1974, states: "Calling oneself 'Witch' does not make a Witch... A Witch seeks to control the forces within him/herself that make life possible in order to live wisely and well, without harm to others, and in harmony with Nature." That is a good definition of what it means to be a Wiccan. But the prime definition is summed up in the Wiccan Rede: "Bide the Wiccan Law ye must, In perfect Love, in perfect Trust. Eight words the Wiccan Rede fulfill: AN YE HARM NONE, DO AS YE WILL. And ever mind the Rule of Three: What ye send out, comes back to Thee. Follow this with mind and heart, And merry ye meet, and merry ye part."

To be a Wiccan means to abide by the Wiccan Rede: AN YE HARM NONE, DO AS YE WILL. This tenet should be accepted by all who profess to be Wiccans. This is a Wiccan's code of ethics and personal conduct. This law prohibits a Witch from doing anything that might harm any other living being, and most significantly prohibits us from violating any living beings free will.

As Raven Grimassi states in his book, Wiccan Magick, "It is easy to interpret this to mean 'Do whatever you want as long as you don't harm anyone in the meantime.' " Is it as simple as that? Oh, IT IS NOT! He goes on to state: "The inner teachings actually state that each person must seek out their True Will, the nature of their Higher Self. We are not meant to simply wander about doing whatever feels right, without regard to a goal and the impact of that goal. We have a responsibility to ourselves and to each other." In his book, The Wiccan Warrior, Kerr

Cuhulain puts it another way, "The Wiccan Rede is a serious responsibility. It teaches us that every action has its price. It calls upon the Wiccan to examine every one of their actions to determine their implications to others. It calls for a high level of self-discipline from every Witch." And Viviane Crowley agrees in her book, The Old Religion For A New Millennium, "This (Rede) is no easy morality but a difficult one which makes us scrupulously examine the motives for what we do."

Ethics, personal conduct, responsibility, self-discipline, and self-examination? Not so simple, and not so easy either. But wait, there is even more to it yet. And since I really like his teachings so well I will use the words of Raven Grimassi; from his books, The Wiccan Mysteries and Wiccan Magick. "The Craft is a system of spiritual development... It teaches us to walk in balance. We learn that everything connects and shares a relationship with everything else. What we do to the Earth, and to each other, we do to ourselves." "The basic philosophy of the Old Religion is based on the ways of Nature, and humankind's understanding of spirituality as revealed in the sense of a healthy community." "It is within the supporting structure of codes of conduct, common courtesy, and respect for others that the essence of our spirituality can be discerned." "A Wiccan lives by a code of ethics that is built on the Laws of Nature." "Behavior is not regulated by a fear of what awaits one in the afterlife, but a respect for what awaits one in this life." "One of the greatest tenets of belief in the Old Religion is that of accepting responsibilities for our own actions. We build or destroy our own lives, and we allow or disallow our own lot in life." "Wiccans cannot turn everything over into the hands of the

gods and say 'You take care of it now.' We must be responsible for ourselves and our own actions (or lack thereof), for more often than not, it is we ourselves who brought the situation into manifestation."

How many of you, after reading the last paragraph, stopped to think about your present situation? And how many of you feel animosity towards me for bringing up the connection? Being a prisoner, I know all the different thoughts going thru the minds of the prisoners who read this lesson. From those who are trying to walk the Wiccan Path and are saying its about time someone wrote this lesson, to those who don't want to hear it and curse me for bringing it out in the open and think I'm soft, After nine years of being a prisoner, I can pretty much imagine every reaction there is; and every rationalization as well. I say that because I have known prisoners who call themselves Wiccan, and yet constantly find excuses to stray from what it truly means to be Wiccan.

To walk the Wiccan Path in this environment takes honest heart, as well as courage, gratitude, compassion, integrity, ethics, discipline, responsibility, and maturity; just like in the "free world," except in this environment those are not popular attributes.

Prison is one of the most negative environments a human being can experience. From the outside no one can fully know what I mean, not having lived it themselves. It is an environment where ego reigns supreme, expressed by each persons persona. Many choices are made based primarily on image; how one looks in the eyes of others is highly valued. Many prisoners actually work hard at their image.

Distortion is the norm. That is how I describe prison in one word: distorted. A good example is the distorted meanings of some words, such as "heart" and "compassion." In prison, to have "heart" means you are willing to get into physical confrontations, usually over the dumbest immature reasons; that ego/image thing. "Compassion" equals weakness. Any kindness is considered the same.

And let's not forget all the greed, selfishness, prejudice, bigotry, manipulation, lying, conning, hustling, abuse, violence, and all the rest of the predatory anti-social behaviors one is confronted with every day as the prison "norm." Not exactly the kind of environment supportive of a person walking the Wiccan Path. It means living a positive spiritual path in an environment that considers such ways anathema. It also means taking a good honest look within oneself and learning what is needed to be done within, as well as without, to walk the Wiccan Path to

ones fullest potential and integrity. As Janet and Stewart Farrar put it in A Witches Bible, "Self-development and the full realization of one's unique yet many-aspected potential are a moral duty. That which helps evolution forward is good, that which thwarts it is evil; and each of us is a factor in the cosmic evolutionary process. So one owe's it not merely to oneself but to the rest of mankind and the world to look inside oneself and to discover and release that potential."

Why are self-development and full realization so important, besides being positive and beneficial for you? One answer is magick. If one expects to be able to do beneficial magick then he/she must first learn to conduct him/herself in a beneficial manner on a regular basis. Without a strong foundation of moral conduct, the power one raises in magickal workings can turn on one. "Magick requires mental discipline more than it does anything else. You must keep your word whenever you give it, and always follow thru with everything you undertake. To do otherwise is to negate your own 'will.' We often see in Wiccan magick the phrase: 'as my word so mote it be.' If your word means little to yourself or others, then it will reflect in your magickal ability." (Raven Grimassi, The Wiccan Mysteries). "The path of Magick in Wicca teaches personal power and personal empowerment. It also teaches personal responsibility and reveals that everything is connected together. It is like a web, the threads of which are joined together. Any vibration causes a reaction felt by every other thread. It is from this law of cause and effect, action and reaction, that the code of ethics for Wiccans arises. To walk the path of magick the Wiccan must be ethical, intuitive, strong willed, and compassionate to those whom he/she encounters on the Path." (Raven Grimassi, Wiccan Magick).

To walk the Path also means to be careful of those who would harm it. It is an unfortunate part of prison life; when something good comes along chances are someone will abuse it and/or ruin it. Wicca has not been immune to this. As we all know, D.O.C. officials are always looking for any excuse to clamp down harder and harder.

And the same goes for our "free world" connections. Recently I have been informed by four different sources that prisoners have been abusing this too, writing disturbing letters to "free world" Wiccans. Please be careful, or before we know it our "free world" Wiccan support will be even less.

I also suggest the avoidance of those who walk the "left hand path", (a term that points to those people who feel that they are justified in using magick

for purposes that are not constructive to other human beings), such self-serving individuals should not be associated I with.

Out of the 30+ prisoners I have met who call themselves Wiccan, I would honestly have to say that less than half of them followed the Rede. Some did not even have a clue that Wicca is a religion and spiritual path, and only wanted to “play” with magick. Others saw Wicca as a way to rebel or to be anti-Xtian. And in the lot there were the few dangerous manipulators and predators that were using Wicca for their own twisted means.

“Just as the wilderness has always been seen as a refuge for civilizations outcasts, so Witchcraft is often perceived as a haven for those who cannot or will not conform to society’s conventional systems of belief. Unfortunately, just as the American frontier drew both Thoreaus and Billy the Kids, so the renascent Old Religion attracts both wise, sincere seekers and unstable, irrational drifters. Witches work with powerful, elemental forces. Few students possess the physical stamina, emotional balance, and spiritual core necessary to master hundreds of years of occult magick. We have seen many enthusiastic newbies perish on the shoals of their old bad habits. Liberated from arbitrary Xtian rules, they revert to a kind of anarchy of the id. They often appear to think that freedom means the ability to do anything they want. REAL FREEDOM IS THE ABILITY TO DO THINGS OTHERS CAN’T). Wicca is not for the faint of heart or weak of mind. To be a true Witch, you must be reverent, seriously studious, and capable of applying yourself over the long haul” (The Flake Filter, a thesis by Passion and Diuvei).

My friend and mentor Snowfire is fond of saying “be smart about your spiritual life.” Think of it as applied common sense; our actions and words ripple outward from us, touching countless other lives in one way or another. It’s a challenge to find a constructive, positive way to deal with the situations we all face in the course of our lives.

Wicca is a lifestyle as much as it is a religion. To be a Wiccan centers around living the Wiccan Rede. Living the Rede means to Stop and Think so as to Harm None. Remembering this code allows us to rise above anger, jealousy, hatred, etc., and helps to transform potentially destructive emotions into positive energies.

And that goes for all who profess to walk the Path of Wicca.

CST Calendar:

Church of the Spiral Tree welcomes church members, beginners, newcomers, solitaires, and anyone else interested in participating in rituals honoring the Sabbats. You need no experience or knowledge to participate, but we do request you come with an open mind and heart, and show respect for your fellow participants. Email us for directions. We share a potluck dinner after each Sabbat, so those who come are asked to bring some type of food to share.

Please wear something comfortable and appropriate for outdoors. Ritual robes are welcome but not necessary. No skyclad, please! Children of all ages are welcome. Donations to the Church are entirely optional but appreciated.

Lammas: August 10. We will meet at 6:00 pm, with a pot-luck and party afterwards. Weekend of Board of Director’s meeting.

Pagan Pride Day/Fall Equinox: September 21, Pagan Pride Day, including the Fall Equinox ritual, at the Arboretum, on the Auburn University campus, Auburn, AL. CST is co-coordinating with Pantheon.

Samhain: November 2 OR 9, location TBA. We will meet at 6:00 pm, with a pot-luck and party afterwards. Weekend of Board of Director’s meeting.

Yule: December 21, at Waverly, AL. We will meet at 6:00 pm, with a pot-luck and party afterwards. Also CST’s 2nd annual General Membership meeting.

Upcoming Festivals (Not CST events):

Earthdance	August 16-18, 2002	Hard Labor Creek St Pk, Athens, GA
FallFling	October 11-13, 2002	Dragon Hills, Carrollton, GA
Moondance	May 22-26, 2003	Dragon Hills, Carrollton, GA

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The Celts, Druids and Totems

by Senagenas Na Saille, a.k.a. Frank Palmer

I will begin with a few definitions. Totem: 1) “A totem is any natural object, animal, or being to whose phenomena and energy you feel closely associated with during your life.” (From [Animal Speak](#))

Animism: the belief that every natural object, animal, land, hill, lake, etc. has life, is alive, with a spirit, personality, and character of its own.” As a special note, even man-made objects can be awakened and given life. This is what is done when “magic” items are consecrated, and this makes them totems (crane bags, Druids’s staves, etc.).

In all animistic society/religions it is believed that every single thing has a spirit, life. All things have neutrons, electrons, protons, atoms, and ether. This is part of what makes up its energy field, its life, its spirit.

In working with totems, we work with the spirits of these beings. They may become our spirit guides, helpers, co-walkers, etc. No matter whether it is an ancestor, faery, god/dess, stone, or feather. They can be used for good or ill.

Some may wonder how this ties in with Paleo Druidism and neo-Druidism (which is what is practiced today). As neo-Druids (mainstream, I should clarify) we use our archeology, mythology, and surviving cultural customs to recreate as accurately as possible the practices of Paleolithic Druids, as possible with some variation. As all things, most evolve, or become extinct.

From these forms of evidence we have been able to deduce the possible, and probable, evolution of Druidism from its Paleolithic roots. Admittedly the majority of info is supposition from remaining evidence. However, any shamanistic spiritual path cannot be lost because we will always have people with the second sight, and therefore access to the ancestors.

There is actually a fair amount more info now on things to piece it together and get a fuzzy picture of our past. Most of the Paleolithic information comes from still standing structures, such as Stonehenge, the cave mounds of New Grange, mythology, and observations from other rival cultures.

From the mass of information it is simple to see that Druidism and the Celtic people practiced totemism. This can be seen in all forms of evidence we have, quite clearly.

It is believed that the spiritual path of the Celts evolved from the two oldest cults; the Cult of Man

and the Cult of Woman. The Cult of Man brings the hunting/animal cult, the Cult of Woman brings the vegetation/cultivation cult.

It is believed (by some) that it is largely from the Cult of Woman, “Dryadism,” that Druidism evolved, although it’s foolish to say it only evolved from that, as we can certainly see the influence of the animal cult in myth and art.

The cult of animals began to decline when our ancestors learned to plant and cultivate, moving from hunter-gatherers to plant cultivators, thus decreasing the need for hunting. Where the earlier vegetation cult of was Woman and the Goddesses, men now became a part. It is interesting to think this may be what heralded the downfall of the matriarchy and the subsequent rise of the patriarchy.

The animal cult never lost its grip, however. This can be seen in many ways throughout Celtic mythology. Many warriors had “geas” not to kill and/or eat certain animals. The great Irish warrior Cuchuillain is an excellent example.

There is also a king who reigned at Tara in the Ulster Cycle, Conaire. He was aided by the zoomorphic bird god Nelhgam. The god gave Conaire geas not to kill birds. He also said, “Our bird reign will be great...” (From “The Ulster Cycle,” in [A Treasury of Irish Myth, Legend and Folklore](#)) These are indicators of totemic practices.

Some more mythic evidence of such practices include: the legend of the hawk of Achill, where Fintón consults a hawk reputed to be one of the world’s oldest, about the past.

In the finding of Mabon, the knights of the round table must consult many animals, the oldest animals, to discover the whereabouts of Mabon. The Sword of Excalibor (Cadalog), the Holy Grail, the Lady of the Lake, are all forms of totems.

The great Irish treasure, Lía Fál, or density stone, the Spear of Lugh, the Sword of Nuada, the Dagda’s Cauldron, the “Undry” (and his harp) are all totems, as are the crane bags, or medicine bags, of our people.

The silver branch used by bards, Druids, and ovates was a personal totem. Then there is “the little stone of Quests,” a piece of red quartz used in divination, most notably the Frith of Brighid. Consult the myth cycles for more examples.

The semantics, or use and trappings, of these

totems may vary from culture to culture and time to time; however, the core belief remains the same.

As Celtic spirituality evolved, it came to be that animals had a zoomorphic deity or king/queen spirit over all related beings. A spirit could be found for birds, vegetation, stones, etc.; for any group of living entities.

The following is a minor list: Donn Fhaoladh (don-ail-ah), "She of the Golden Fur," Wolf goddess; Nelgham, bird god; Blueddewedd, a vegetation spirit (can also be seen as an owl); and the Old Crone Calliach Brara, mineral/rock/cave goddess. At one point Celts traced their descent from animals, like the Amerindian animal clans.

These are just a few, you can look at Lír, and Manan Mac Lir, The Lady of the Lake, etc. Typically what is misunderstood is that totemism isn't just animals, but any living thing, anything you draw energy from. A tarot deck, a book on your religion, all of these can be totems.

With training and experience a person can learn to work with spirits/beings both mentally and astrally. This covers construction and destruction uses. It is typically a symbiotic relationship; you may be given a task, geas, or bonds in return for the spirit's help.

The spirit beings are like us, as diverse as the human race. They have personality. One way of gaining wisdom from them is by attuning yourself to them, not by "worship"; there is a difference.

The following is a highly generalized way to deal with animal totems. One of many; don't limit yourself too much. Be creative.

Animal Totems (Including Birds, Reptiles, Insects)

Always remember, animals are just people in fur, leather, and feather coats. Just because some may seem less intelligent doesn't mean they don't deserve our respect and love. (Actually, you'll be dealing with the spirit, which is as intelligent as ours, just not able to express it through their current mind/body.)

Some people seem to have a certain animal(s) totem(s) that stays with them for life. However, animal totems may have a transitory relationship with a person. Typically, that is when they come to teach a lesson, comfort, carry you through a tough time, or even herald a death or event.

It is typically not a good idea to brag about your totem, it's abilities, etc., though it is harmless enough to say you have a certain love or affinity for what type of being, thing, etc. The reasoning behind this is that disbelief of any kind can create negative energy. Also

remember, animals have personalities and feelings, too. These beings are our brothers and sisters.

You may be wondering, "how do I know what my totems are?" This is discovered through many means. Just because you like or are fascinated by an animal doesn't mean, necessarily, that it is your totem.

One main method of discovering your totems is what the Celts called second sight, or others call vision quest. Another is through study of your personality and surroundings (such as unusual animal/bird activity). Totems may continually come to you in physical form or in dreams. Once you become conscious of your search, you will know it as they come to you.

You can use these spirits as guides and helpers. Befriend them, attune yourself to them. There are several ways to strengthen your relationship to them. You can buy knick-knacks of them, rings, jewelry, pictures; go work with them in animals shelters. Another good way is to study them through books, and by paying attention to life span, mating cycles, birth cycles (gestation, etc.), anything cyclical, as these cycles may give you clues into cycles of your life. Try to study them, by sight, every aspect of them, attune yourself to them. Try thinking like them sometimes. In short, honor them.

There are many ways they will communicate with you. Observe them in their natural environment. Notice their body language, their grunts, growls, any behavior. The behavior of birds and animals can foretell of rain, volcanic activity, earthquakes, etc., with near scientific accuracy.

Get to know the animals, their habitat; if a predator, know their prey; study it. If it is a prey animal, what is its predator? For example, birds, like crows and ravens, will work with wolves. Pay attention to this kind of thing.

Other ways of communication are spiritual/astral, and mental. Some people believe in animal-, bird-, or insect-to-human telepathy. This is done by trying to project your thoughts into the animal's mind and by becoming more sensitive to their projections into your own.

Next is a simple exercise you can tailor to fit any path:

Cast a circle, or create a sacred space however you do so. In that center sit, lay, etc. like that animal. Relax, close your eyes. Try different positions the animal may make, noises, growls, etc. Try to think like that animal, become that animal in your mind. See through its eyes, smell through its nose. Feel the Earth Mother through its claws, paws, flippers.

Try to see yourself with the pack, flock, pod if its that type of animal. Hunt, flee, fly, even try mating! Try whatever comes, be that animal. Then thank the Spirit of that animal, and close the circle.

You can talk to these spirits too, as human to animal, spirit to spirit. *Be careful, but sensitive to the spirit, try not to repeatedly ask the same questions.*

There are many other ways to honor and strengthen your ties. Chanting, drawing, etc. Chants can consist of calling on the qualities of your animal. Put music to it; be creative. Try using feathers, fur, nails, etc. from creatures. They can help to enhance your efforts. Deer antlers can be used nicely this way. *Do not kill the animals solely for that purpose!* But if you already hunt, it's certainly honorable to use every

part of that animal. Leave an offering, and give the dead animal a drink of water to honor it.

References:

Animal Speak, by Ted Andrews, Llewellyn Publications, St. Paul, MN, 1993.

Celtic Myths and Legends, by Charles Squire, Gresham Publishing, London, 1912.

Druid-by-Mail Course, by Daniel Hansen, Celtic Studies Center, 27013 Pacific Hwy. 5 #315, Des Moines, WA 98198.

A Treasury of Irish Myth, Legend and Folklore, by W.B. Yeats & Lady Gregory, Crown Publishers Inc., and Gramercy Books, Avenel, NJ, 1986.

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MINUTES

Church of the Spiral Tree

Annual Membership Meeting

May 26, 2002

The meeting was called to order by Linda Kerr at 10:00 pm, at Moondance, Dragon Hills, Carrollton, GA, with the following Directors and members present:

Craig Kerr, President; Linda Kerr, Secretary/Treasurer; Heath Frye, Alice Rose, David Morris, Jon Gay, Marsha Sillery, and Christi Burnham.

New Business

Nominations for election of officers and directors of the church: President: Craig Kerr; Vice-President: Cathy Rankin; Secretary/Treasurer: Linda Kerr; Member-at-Large: Don Mikotivz (Nion). There were 3 absentee ballots sent in.

Results of election: Votes received are unanimous for President: Craig Kerr; Vice-President: Cathy Rankin; Secretary/Treasurer: Linda Kerr; Member-at-Large: Don Mikotivz (Nion).

Current Business

The CST budget was reviewed and discussed. CST practices were reviewed briefly for the benefit of 3 new members in attendance. CST ink pens were handed out to all.

The CST library was described; Cynthia Martinez-Perez, a bookstore owner in Carrollton, has offered to donate several books to the library.

The project, "Adopt a Military Pagan," was discussed. This has been sent around the internet, inviting individuals or groups to "sponsor" a military pagan. Marsha is interested in handling this for CST.

One of our main concerns is getting CST more widely recognized, and also getting our members more involved in the day-to-day work of the church. Linda has sent out emails inviting volunteers to help with certain things, to no avail. It was suggested we hire a secretary, or at the very least, a gopher - a person who can help with several different things, possibly a teenager with free time.

Upcoming Things

Our next CST ritual is Summer Solstice on June 29. William and Pelayah will be writing and running the ritual in a Gardnerian style.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:10 am.

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Contacts:

Remember, you get a free listing with your paid membership. You may also submit your listing at any later time. NEW SERVICE: You can send letters to CST, and we will forward them to your intended recipient.

Cori Tindragon: <cori_tindragon@hotmail.com> .

Densho: <densho@knology.net> , from Montgomery and all points thereof.

Frank Palmer: (a.k.a. Bridget), Druid (always in training!), seeking friends to correspond. I am incarcerated, please don't let that deter you. Frank Palmer, a.k.a. Bridget #546776, Box 9200, New Boston, TX 75570-9200.

James A. Roesch: Advanced adept in multiple disciplines and orders. Hermeticist/Qabalist, A.A.S.R. 320, Rosicrucian. Will advise, guide, or discuss the Craft as any may desire. Write to: James A. Roesch #049547, Mayo Correctional Institution, P.O. Box 448, B1-2117-U, Mayo, FL, 32066.

Jimmy Pesci: Encouraging all members to contact me for intellectual and spiritual rewards. Jimmy Pesci, Box 495, F.C.C.C., 13613 S.E. Highway 70, Arcadia, FL 34266.

Lori Irey: (Magickal Name: Reverend-Priestess Aradia) Practice Avalonian and Druidic Mysteries, located in the Orlando, FL area. Contact info: <ireytribe@mindspring.com> .

Rob Von Allmen: Tired? Bored? Wanting to find true love and happiness? Well, what are you doing talking to me?! I don't have all the questions, much less the answers. But I do have a clue (I found it in a cereal box) and am licensed to share the wisdom of the ages (answered an ad in Rolling Stone). If you also ponder such mysteries as "Is there life after death?," "Was he a man dreaming he was a butterfly...?," and "Where am I parked?," then please drop me a line at: Swann's Tr. Pk. #1, Lot 130, Auburn, AL 36863, <skippy_the_witch@yahoo.com> , 334-826-3953.

Shadowhawk: <WJPalmerJr@CilleDaire.org> or <ShadowHawk@CilleDaire.org> ,
<http://www.CilleDaire.org> , Ozark, AL, 334-445-0647.

Stacy Bandura: <sbandura@tuckercapital.com> .

Steven D. Richert: Beginner Asatru Gothi and still new to this path, recent CST Minister and general all-around eclectic Celtic and Norse pagan. I'm looking to write with anyone who will write an inmate in prison. Steven D. Richert #17987, S-208-L, IC/USCF, 2136 N. Main St., Cedar City, UT 84720.

Timothy O'Brien: Sincere, mature, responsible Irish pagan seeking correspondence - prisoners welcome. Interests: all Wiccan-Druidic-pagan related topics/studies, self-transformation, music, fantasy art, environmental issues. Working to become spiritual counselor and pagan clergy of depth and character. Mentors needed. Timothy O'Brien, #69221, P.O. Box 1010, Canon City, CO, 81215-1010.

Tony Jackson: Just an ole Pagan Seeker with a desire to know fellow members - do you have rune, herb, folk lore, or Fairie Faith knowledge you wish to share? I could be your captive audience. Tony C. Jackson EF 183981, Dodge State Prison, Q2 16T, P.O. Box 276, Chester, GA 31012.

Notices:

Wiccan/Pagan Fellowship Club

The Circle of the Goddess sponsors an international pen friend club for shut-ins. What we do is match up people with similar interests from the “free world,” with those who find themselves shut-in.

The program has been in operation for over ten years now is ever growing. Many great friendships have developed over the eight years we have been going at this little labor of love.

We are looking for outside people to get involved via the inky trail.

If you are interested please contact the address below and information will be sent to you. Any requests for information will be just that, information only. You will be sent membership forms and full details, and then if you are still interested you can return the forms.

Douglas H. Lagossy (Aspen)

P.O. Box 760

Campbellford, Ontario

Canada K0L-1L0

The following organization puts out a newsletter for prisoners:

The Millennial Kingdom

681 North Second St.

Pottsville, PA 17901

Rev. Paul Salem or Louise Salem

Newsletter: Rays of Light Newsletter

Cost: 4 postage stamps per issue (quarterly) for prisoners

A prisoner may send 4 stamps initially, requesting the most recent issue of the newsletter, and then go from there.

(From: Timothy O'Brien)

Lock of Love web site: <<http://www.locksoflove.org/>>

Locks of Love is a non-profit organization that provides hairpieces to financially disadvantaged children across the U.S. under age 18 suffering from long-term medical hair loss.

We meet a unique need for children throughout the United States by using donated hair to create the highest quality hair prosthetics. Most of the children helped by Locks of Love have lost their hair due to a medical condition called alopecia areata, which has no known cause or cure. The prostheses we provide help to restore their self-esteem and their confidence, enabling them to face the world and their peers. You can help by donating your hair after a hair cut!

The Breast Cancer web site: <<http://www.thebreastcancersite.com/>>

You can click a button on this site to help fund mammograms for women in need.

Important Dates

Board of Directors' Meetings:

August 3, 2002, Auburn, Alabama; November 2 OR 9, 2002, Auburn, Alabama

Annual Meetings of the General Membership:

December 21, 2002, Yule Ritual, Waverly, AL; May 25, 2003, Moondance, Dragon Hills, Carrollton, GA

CST Sabbat Dates:

Imbolc	February 2
Ostara	March 16
May Day	April 27
Summer Solstice	June 22
Lammas	August 10
PPD	September 21 OR 22
Samhain	November 2 OR 9
Yule	December 21

Church of the Spiral Tree
P.O. Box 186
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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED