



The Journey

Church Of The Spiral Tree An Ecumenical Pagan Church

President's Point

2007 was a tough year for my family and me. My mother required two major surgeries. She turned 79 years old in ICU. Fortunately, she is now happy and healthy in her new life with my sister and her family in Louisiana. I am convinced that my sister's well water is from the fountain of youth. Mom is now doing senior yoga, going to parties, and keeping up with the grandchildren since moving down there last fall. As a result, I have gotten considerably behind with my CST duties. I am working diligently to get things mov-

ing again and to set up a back-up plan so that if anyone of the staff members finds themselves in a situation where they are temporarily unable to perform their duties, there will be someone to take over during the interim. My apologies for the delays in getting stuff like membership cards, minister certificates, etc. to all of you. We are back on track now and catching up with ourselves and catching up all of you, too. We have several new staff members that we will

be introducing in this edition of the newsletter. All of these people have been instrumental in one way or another in getting the newsletter out. Please read their profiles so you will know the volunteers who are contributing their time and wonderful energy in service to our CST members.

Summer Solstice 2008 Edition

Newsletter Date: June 30, 2008

Special points of interest:

- Military Affairs Committee
- New CST Web Master
- New Sacred Grove Web Master & Designer
- New Home School Director
- Table set for one.
- Rituals that CST has Held

Inside this issue:

Military Affairs	2
CST Web Master	3
Sacred Grove Web Master	4
Sacred Grove Director	5
Interfaith Medicine Wheel	5
Table Set for One	5
Rituals	6

Military Affairs Committee

Church of the Spiral Tree now has a Military Affairs Committee. More and more of our military personnel are choosing pagan religious traditions. Since CST's home base is located in Columbus, GA, next door to Fort

Benning, we have a perfect opportunity to provide support for our pagan soldiers and other military personnel who have in turn become some of CST's best supporters. Below is an introduction to our new Military Affairs

committee and its chairman, Sgt. Marcus P. Rice. Marcus has returned safely from Iraq since he wrote his introduction. He is on a well deserved vacation with his family before he returns to his military duties stateside.

Bio of Marcus P. Rice

Aka: The Shadow Knight

I am Eclectic Wiccan/Pagan. Started out Wiccan and lean more towards general eclectic Pagan. I am married to beautiful woman who has given me three beautiful kids. I have been in the military for over 13 years, 3 years Arkansas National Guard, and 10 years regular Army. I have been stationed at Ft. Benning since November of 1999. My wife Kimberly and I are raising our kids to respect all faiths so that they may make their own educated decisions as to what path they will follow. I have studied many different paths of Paganism

and have recently started studying different traditions of ceremonial and higher magics. I had been mostly a solitary and family practitioner of Wicca and Paganism until the wife and I finally decided to join with CST. I had checked out a few other groups over the years and never felt comfortable in any of them. When the wife and I came to our first CST meeting we felt welcome and like we finally found a family that we never knew of. I enjoy wood working and reading, and I am looking into amateur blacksmithing. I am currently deployed to Iraq. I am the first Distinctive Faith Group Leader to be

sponsored by CST and have been working to make this process better for both CST and the DFGLs. I run an eclectic Pagan Open Circle on my base camp in Iraq following the example of CST. I have been ordained clergy through CST so that I may provide services to my fellow soldiers.

Well that is me in a nut shell, now how I got in there is a craft secret...lol

Marcus P. Rice

Military Affairs

By Marcus Rice

Aka: The Shadow Knight

Tsk_sword@yahoo.com

We have just started a new Military Affairs Committee and I am rearing to get started. This part of CST came about due the need for Distinctive Faith Group Leaders (DFGL) to support our Pagan soldiers who are deployed over here in Iraq. I had spent several months gathering the information I needed to become a DFGL for Forward Operating Base (FOB) Rustamiyah in Baghdad, Iraq. Of the things I needed were a sponsoring Chaplain and a sponsoring religious organization that was recognized by the federal government. So naturally I asked if CST would endorse

me. As for the sponsoring Chaplain I had two who were willing to sponsor me, my Battalion Chaplain CPT Kerr, and the FOB Chaplain CPT Highhouse. Chaplain Highhouse holding the higher position became my sponsoring chaplain. He has been very helpful in pushing my request up through the proper channels and cutting through all the red tape. I have now been approved all the way up through Corp. level (MNC-I the highest level of command in Iraq.) as of 29 August 2007. What this means to CST is that it has been recognized as a sponsoring organization for DFGL's in Iraq.

CST is currently sponsoring three DFGL's two of us are in Iraq and one just returned home from Iraq.

Now that it has been recognized as a sponsoring organization the other two DFGL's approval should go through in days instead of months like mine did.

My goals as head of the Military Affairs Committee are not many but are far reaching. First assist other Pagan soldiers who are trying to get DFGL status get all the information and support that they need. Second is to collect and organize data collected from all CST DFGL's to show how many Pagan soldiers are being supported by CST, for future reference incase it is needed. Third is to work with other Pagan military organizations to try and make the DFGL process easier so that once a DFGL is approved then all that they will need

in order to start a new circle or take over an existing one (in the event the old DFGL is leaving that post) when they move to a new post is to get a sponsoring chaplain.

To sum things up we currently have two DFGL's operating two Open circles in Iraq right now, FOB Rustamiyah and Balad. Both have been operating unofficially for a while now and the numbers are low but now that we are official we will be able to advertise and our number should go up. Rustamiyah Open Circle meets on Saturdays at six pm local (ten am

EST)
Balad Open Circle meets on Thursdays at seven pm local (eleven am EST)

Well that is all that we have accomplished so far. I hope to have more information next time.

Wishing everyone the brightest blessing from Iraq.

Marcus Rice

New CST WebMaster

Please welcome our new webmaster, Paul Syck. Paul and his family have been active in participating in CST rituals and events in Columbus. Paul will be updating and making improvements to the CST website. If anyone has sugges-

tions or wishes to add or update any of their information on the website, please notify Paul at webmaster@spiraltree.org or through Tree Talk.

Paul's Introduction

My name is Paul Syck Jr. I live in Fort Benning, Ga I have been in the military for over 21 years. I am married with 2 children. My wife's name is Heidi and my sons are William (16) and Michael (12). I have been studying as a Solitary

Wiccan for about 10 years. My wife and Michael have only been studying for about 6 months. I learned about CST by doing a web search. I enjoy meeting other pagans and learning different things. I enjoy working with computers, fast cars and cooking.



New Sacred Grove Webmaster and CST Web Designer

Please welcome our new webmaster for our Sacred Grove Academy and web designer for CST, Susan Berleue. Susan and her family have also been active in participating in rituals and events with the new grove in Columbus, GA. Sue is updating the Sacred Grove website. She is also adding some very interesting and exciting designs to the

CST website. Susan and Paul are serving as back up for each other in the event that one of them is unavailable when a website problem occurs. If you have any ideas or information that you want to update for Sacred Grove just email Sue at SueRenae1975@yahoo.com.

Sue's Introduction

My name is Susan Renae Berleue; I am 33 years old. We currently live in Auburn Alabama; where I also hold a full time job at a local restaurant as a shift manager. I hold an Associates Degree in Computer Sciences where my Major was Web Design at International College of Naples Florida. I am married and have been with my husband for the past 16 years. We have three children Ashley (14)

Destiney (13) Zachery (11); all of whom will be beginning Home School this year. I am what most would call a coding junkie. I love to sit back and write web pages out in code then test my code to see how well it works. I am also teaching myself other aspects of web design. I am very glad to add my talents to CST and to Sacred Grove. My husband was raised Catholic and I was raised along several different

religious beliefs. We felt that these paths were not the right road for us which is how we found ourselves drawn to Wicca and to the CST. My family is Eclectic Wiccan following several different paths. We each add parts of ourselves to the large pot of the CST which make up a family that is always there when you need someone to talk to or assist with a situation that you or

New Home School Director

Please welcome Patricia Greer-Middleton as our new director for Sacred Grove. Patricia and her family have been active members participating in the CST sponsored

rituals and events. Patricia will be greeted her first grandchild this year.



Patricia's Introduction

I am Patricia Greer-Middleton I am the new Director of Sacred Grove Academy. I have two children, 19 and 13. My oldest is about to celebrate her 1st wedding anniversary on 21 Dec. My youngest is a typical teenager so I can empathize and sympathize with those of you going through the raising of teenagers. It's rather hair-raising on occasion! I hope I prove to be as capable a director as Linda has been and I hope you will bear with me as I "learn the ropes". I appreciate Linda being available to help

if I hit any snags or just have general questions. I'm sure our new address is posted online but just in case, here it is again.

Sacred Grove Academy
P.O. Box 3338
Phenix City, AL 36868-3338

The phone number for Sacred Grove Academy is 229-669-5991. If I miss

your call, please leave a message and I'll get back to you as soon as

possible.

Bright Blessings,
Patricia

Interfaith Medicine Wheel

On the third weekend in May, Maka Wakan hosted the Columbus Spoke of the Medicine Wheel Ceremony. Blue Thunder, a Shoshone elder hosted a Healing Ceremony for the Earth Mother. There were two main nodes, one in Stone Mountain, GA and one in Australia. Each main node was supported by eight surrounding spokes. Maka Wakan is located in Salem, AL and is a ceremonial space where Purification lodges are held every month. Many of us know Jerry Newsome and Joy Brown-Newsome and

Lana and Lamar Sizemore, as they attend our rituals. They live on site at Maka Wakan and volunteered to host the ceremony. The Healing and Ceremony were very positive and powerful. We opened by lighting a Ceremonial Fire at dawn on Saturday, which was maintained throughout the 30 hour ceremony. We then continued with Prayer and Song to the Creator, Father Sky, Mother Earth and the Four Directions. We Prayed and Sang at every hour until noon. At noon we offered Prayer Sticks and more

Prayers and Songs. After the Prayer Sticks we held a Purification Lodge. We enjoyed a delicious Wopila (a Thanksgiving Pot Luck) after Lodge. Cathy and David held Space all night at the Ceremonial Fire along with several people who came and stayed for a time, offering Prayers. At dawn on Sunday we held the closing of the Ceremony. We had a wonderful turn-out and made many new friends from near and far.

Table Set for One

On Memorial Day May 30, 2008 the Church of the Spiral Tree New Columbus Grove held a luncheon gathering at Ryan's steakhouse in Columbus Georgia. We held this lunch in memory of those who currently serve in the armed forces, police forces, Fire Fighters, and Emergency Medical Technicians whom have given their lives for those of us here everyday. We had a table set off to the side with one chair; a white table cloth; a goblet turned upside down for the fact that they are no longer here with us to toast to the free-

doms we now have. One the table with in a vase was a single red rose to represent the blood that they has shed in order to protect everyone else in the world. The speech was given by Paul Syck. We all remember that there are many who were not able to attend today either they had died trying to protect us or they were still fighting for us. in memory of all the military service men and women, law enforcement officers, and firefighters/EMT's who lost their lives in

the line of duty. We set an empty place to represent each group at the table. Paul read a very moving ritual.



C.S.T. Rituals

All of the rituals that were once scripted out both here in the newsletter and on the website will soon be archived into PDF format according to the Sabbath they correspond to. For all those who wish to look over the scripts to gather ideas for future rituals please check out the web site for details. www.Spiraltree.org.

Addition: You can also read the Board of Directors Meetings from the web site as well as they will also be archived by year and turned into PDF format.

CST Website Changes

As many of you will see there are several changes on the CST website. We were granted permission by the Atlanta Georgia group Spiral Rhythm to use their music on our website. We are also linking back to them so all those

who love the music can purchase their CDs or learn more about the group. You will also see a new way to navigate throughout the pages of CST. There also some new backgrounds for the website. Keep

checking back as soon there will also be the indexed Board of Directors Meetings and Scripts for Rituals. There will soon also be different pictures from each ritual for your enjoyment

Ostara Ritual

The CST Spring Equinox (Ostara) ritual was held on March 22, 2008 in Manchester, GA. It was a beautiful spring day with a light breeze which made it difficult to keep the candles lit but was very pleasant otherwise. Jasmine was a beautiful Spring Maiden. While the adults were in main ritual,

Bob had an interactive puppet show with the children. The sounds of the children's laughter wafted through the breeze and lightened our hearts in the ritual circle. After ritual and potluck, all 16 of the children participated in an egg hunt. It was great fun for all. The adults learned a

valuable lesson: chocolate easter eggs will melt outside in Georgia even in April. Next year will definitely stuff the eggs with candy that does not melt.

Beltane Ritual

The CST May Day (Beltane) ritual was held on May 3, 2008 in Manchester, GA. The day was brilliantly sunny and the Maypole was beautiful. Jasmine was crowned May Queen and Bob was crowned May King. Bob asked with a most innocent voice if he and Jas-

mine were married after jumping over the fire together. Jasmine blushed and the rest of us had a merry chuckle. The children made drums and rain sticks with Kim. Young and old danced the maypole. All in all, it was a magical day.

Litha Ritual

The CST Summer Solstice Ritual (Litha) on June 21, 2008 was held in Smiths Station, AL. Jerry lead the circle in a focusing meditation to start the ritual. David did a great job leading his first group ritual in the Kemeti tradi-

tion. The ritual was held at high noon so we all an opportunity to appreciate the Sun God's energy in full. The children creatively painted suns, moons, and stars for their activity. While the paint was drying, they danced and

sang in a ritual of their own.

NEW HOME GROVE

We have an official home grove now! Our members in the Columbus, GA area decided to become a grove. All of these people are not only participate in ritual but they have become indispensable in their support of CST. They have held two yard sales with profits going to support both the local grove and the main church. Several of their members are dedicated staff members who volunteer their time, knowledge, skills, and energy for CST projects. Mike and Sue were life savers by manning at the CST booth at Moon-

dance. Sue and Paul have made great strides in updating and improving our websites for CST and Sacred Grove Academy. Marcus organized two Distinctive Faith Based Groups while he was in Iraq. He is continuing to assist me in getting CST on the Department of the Army's approved personnel list for religious organizations. Patricia, president of the Columbus grove, is also the director of Sacred Grove Academy. Patricia is also assisting the CST president with some administrative tasks such as writing and organizing policies and proce-

dures. David has his hands full just keeping your electronically challenged president functioning on the computer. The families of the staff members have all pitched in and helped out with various assorted tasks and have been just generally supportive. Thank you, Columbus grove for all you do!

Upcoming Ritual Dates

Lughnasdh (Lammas):

August 2, Paul’s House in Smith Station

Mabon (Fall Equinox) :

September 20, Stephen house in Camilla, GA. during the Pagan Family Reunion.

Samhain and General Membership Meeting:

November 1, Cathy & David’s house in Manchester GA.

Yule : December 20, Place of meeting TBD



Wheel of the Year

Board Of Directors

First let me apologize for the long delay in getting the ballots out to all of you. CST has gone through a lot of changes since the last election. I think were back on track now and will be getting ballots, newsletters, etc. out as scheduled. Ballots are included in your newsletter. You must be 18 years or older to vote. You must also be an active member. Since there have been

some delays in collecting, updating, and correlating our membership lists, many of the memberships have lapsed. Therefore any annual membership renewed prior to October 31, 2008 will be good through October 31, 2009. Membership forms are included in the newsletter which can be returned with your ballot to be sure that your vote counts. The ballots must be postmarked

by July 31, 2008. Results will be posted on the website by August 2, 2008 on the website www.spiraltree.org.

Membership

All annual memberships renewed on or before October 31, 2008 will be good through October 31, 2009. The new memberships cards are ready and waiting for your name to be added. The membership dues help to pay for administrative expenses such as printing, paper, office supplies, and postage. Joining CST gives you a chance to sup-

port your pagan community as well as making a statement for freedom of religion. Because CST is ecumenical in that all pagan traditions are respected, the opportunity to experience various forms of group rituals is available. Also CST is not exclusionary. Your connection to your higher power is an intensely personal choice which deserves re-

spect. You can be a valued member of CST and belong to any other religious group or organization that you choose. CST provides support for its members by forming a nationwide, and even worldwide, sense of community among pagan individuals and groups through community relief for individuals and families in dire need, through support for



Membership cont.

our military personnel, and through our pagan prisoner ministry. Please renew your membership to keep these important activities going and encourage your pagan friends and family members to join too. There is strength in numbers. Pagans have a much stronger impact on their local and world community when they show unity in their

commitment to freedom of religion.

Pagan Prisoner Committee

Siryn Dolphinson is the chairman of the Pagan Prisoner Committee (PPC). The PPC is in need of pen pals for incarcerated pagans. You can make a difference in a pagan prisoner's life when you show support for their religious beliefs and provide healthy contact with the outside world. These men and women are much more likely to turn their lives around if they do not feel totally alienated from the pagan world.

If one person is helped to become more enlightened spiritually, if one person is helped to know that they are not alone in their beliefs, then the purpose of the PPC ministry is fulfilled. You must be 18 years or older to be a pen pal. For security reasons, please use the main church address (P.O. Box 8396, Columbus, GA 31908) for your return address. You will be supplied with return address labels at your request. Please make sure that you have emailed or

mailed your address to Siryn so that the letters sent by your inmate pen pal can be forwarded to you in a timely manner. You can join the Pagan Prisoner Committee on line by going to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PaganPrisoners/>. Siryn cannot do this job alone so if you just choose to be pen pals with even one inmate, it will be a huge help.

Moondance Fundraisers

Linda Kerr sponsors the Moondance gathering every Memorial Day weekend. It is a great time for sharing and bonding with other pagans from many different areas. CST had a booth in vendor's row that provided an opportunity for the Moondance participants to learn about the church and to learn what we do. One of the activities that was sponsored by CST was a fundraiser raffle

for a beautiful, wooden Zen table hand made by Hans Brandt which included sand, meditation stones, and a hand carved rake covered with a removable plexiglass lid so it could be used as a coffee table or ritual table. Stuart was the lucky Moondance participant who won the table in the raffle. The vendors, as well as some members, were very generous in donating items for a si-

lent raffle that was held on that Saturday. Links for the contributing vendors will be posted on the CST website (www.spiraltree.org) under supporting businesses. Thank you to Mike and Sue who helped man the booth over the weekend and to all the gathering participants who bought raffle tickets and made bids at the silent auction.

Board of Directors & General Membership Meeting

There was a Board of Directors and General Membership Meeting held at Moondance near Carrollton, GA on May 25, 2008. The next Board of Directors Meeting is scheduled to be in Columbus, GA at the Columbus Library on Sunday, August 3, 2008 at 2:00pm. The next General Membership Meeting will be held after

the CST Samhain ritual in Manchester, GA on November 1, 2008. Please contact Cathy Rankin at (706) 570-1017 or president@spiraltree.org for directions to each location.

Leave No Trace

Linda Kerr is attempting to incorporate these principles into the Pagan Festivals she sponsors. I felt that this is a good place to try to explain what it is and where it all started. Leave No Trace is a set of principles for participation in outdoor recreation that seeks to minimize the impact on the natural environment. Proponents of Leave No Trace believe that individual impacts caused by recreation can accumulate to degrade the land. Therefore, the Leave No Trace message encourages people who spend time in the outdoors to behave in such a way that they can minimize unavoidable impacts and prevent avoidable impacts. It is often summarized: "Take only photos, leave only foot prints. The roots

of Leave No Trace can be traced to the 1970s and 1980s. In those decades, the United States Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the National Park Service started to teach their non-motorized visitors how to have a minimal impact on the land. Also in the 70s, groups such as the Sierra Club were advocating minimum impact camping techniques. A pilot program in the 80s between the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) and the High Uintas Wilderness tried to reach a wide audience. Finally, a national education program was developed in 1990 by the United States Forest Service in conjunction with the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS). James M. Turner has examined the political history of "Leave No Trace". Turner attrib-

utes the creation of the LNT ethic to wilderness advocates, who needed popular support for wilderness, but wanted to minimize human impact on wilderness. Severely limiting wilderness access would lose support for the Wilderness Act. Turner claims that wilderness advocates turned wilderness ethics 180 degrees, from 'woodcraft' (where wilderness travelers exploit wilderness resource in order to rebel against modern technology), to 'Leave No Trace' (where travelers use the latest technology to minimize impact).

Continued on the next page.

Leave No Trace cont.

The Leave No Trace program is managed by the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics, formerly Leave No Trace, Inc., which is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and inspiring responsible outdoor recreation through education, research and partnerships. Leave No Trace tries to build awareness, appreciation and respect for our wildlands.

In high-use areas, Leave No Trace suggests that people concentrate activity, which makes further damage unlikely.

In areas of very little or no use, Leave No Trace encourages people to spread out. Taking different paths when hiking off-trail will avoid creating new trails that cause erosion. Dispersing tents and equipment, and moving camp daily will avoid creating permanent-looking camp sites.

3.) Dispose of Waste Properly: Though most trash and litter in the backcountry is not significant in terms of the long term ecological health of an area, it does rank high as a problem in the minds of many backcountry visitors. Trash and litter are primarily social impacts which can greatly detract from the naturalness of an area.

[5] Thus, Leave No Trace recommends that trash and litter should be packed out. Further, backcountry users create body waste and waste water which requires proper disposal according to Leave No Trace. Waste water: Avoiding soap and dispersing

Leave No Trace provides a framework for outdoor recreation decision making, which is summarized in the following 7 principles:

1.) Plan Ahead and Prepare: Poorly prepared people, when presented with unexpected situations, often resort to high-impact solutions that degrade the outdoors or put themselves at risk. Poor planning can result in improperly located campsites because groups failed to plan

dishwater far away from natural water sources will prevent contamination.

Human waste: Proper human waste disposal prevents spread of disease, exposure to others, and speeds decomposition. Catholes, 6 to 8 inches deep and 200 feet from water, are often the easiest and most practical way to dispose of feces.

4.) Leave What You Find: Leaving rocks, plants, archaeological artifacts and other objects as found will allow others a sense of discovery. Similarly, Leave No Trace directs people to minimize site alterations, such as digging tent trenches, hammering nails into trees, permanently clearing an area of rocks or twigs.

5.) Minimize Use and Impact of Fire: Leave No Trace encourages people to use lightweight camp stoves, instead of fires, because the naturalness of many areas has been degraded by overuse of fires and the increasing demand for firewood. If a campfire is constructed, Leave No Trace suggests using an existing fire

enough time to reach their intended destination, or improper campfires or excessive trash because of failure to plan meals or bring proper equipment.

2.) Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces: Damage to land occurs when surface vegetation or communities of organisms are trampled beyond repair. The resulting barren area leads to unusable trails, campsites and soil erosion.

ring in a well-placed campsite or to use a fire pan or mound fire. True Leave No Trace fires show no evidence of having ever been constructed.

6.) Respect Wildlife: If enough people approach or interfere with wildlife, it can be disruptive to animal populations.

7.) Be Considerate of Other Visitors: Following hiking etiquette and maintaining quiet allows visitors to go through the wilderness with minimal impact on other users.

For more information check out the next issue of this newsletter as well as checking out the website listed here: www.lnt.org