



The Journey...



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

President's Point

The Earth and all its organic and inorganic inhabitants are going through rapid changes as the planet moves through its cycle of destruction and creation. Our lives are in a state of flux on all levels of our being: physical, mental, emotional, and most of all spiritual. Change is often difficult for humans, more so than with most of Earth's other creatures. Sometimes we resist change, regardless of how inevitable, because we are afraid of the final results of that change. One of the changes that no child of the planet can escape is that of growing older. As anything animate or inanimate ages, some parts become weaker and some become stronger. This is so often reflected in the cycle of our lives as we move from maiden to mother to crone or, for males, youth to father to sage/wise man. Some of us resist this progression, reluctant to let go of the beauty of our youth for the wisdom of the elder. This resistance is especially common in our current society with its focus on youth, glamour, and slimness. Somewhere many of us have lost sight of the particular beauty that comes with the wrinkles of age, an appreciation of the character developed through life's lessons and the unique stories behind each wrinkle and crease. There are those that embrace their elder years with grace and dignity befitting a person of knowledge and experience. I was honored to officiate at the Croning Ceremony of Elder Garnet Dragonfire after the Green Gate Grove Yule Ritual. Elder Garnet Dragonfire requested a croning ceremony to symbolize her readiness and willingness to

accept the apex of her life as a teacher and wise woman amongst the Pagan people. Her graduation into cronehood was an inspiration to all of us that were present. By accepting her position as an Elder, she made it clear that each stage of life has its gifts and should be cherished. Elder Garnet Dragonfire wanted to share her croning ceremony with others so it is included in the newsletter and may be used as a prototype for other croning ceremonies if anyone so desires. Also, included in the newsletter are the lyrics to the wonderful songs that Lucidian performed during the ceremony. Elder Garnet Dragonfire and I hope you find the ceremony and the songs as touching as we did. Thank you Elder Garnet Dragonfire for the wonderful example that you have set for us all. May we all evolve with the dignity and honor that you have.

Love and Light,
- **Cathy Rankin, President, CST**

Church of the Spiral Tree
P.O. Box 8396
Columbus, GA 31908
(706) 489-1017
cst@spiraltree.org
www.spiraltree.org

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CST Directors:

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Pagan Prisoner Ministry	Jonathan Medley
Military Affairs	Marcus P. Rice
Newsletter Editor	Linda Kerr
Webmaster, CST & Sacred Grove	Linda Kerr
CST Founder/Advisor	Linda Kerr

Circle of Life

☞ **Lord Senthor, aka Steve Collins, of the Pagan band Moonstruck, passed into the Summerland on Monday, March 14, 2011.** Senthor had been playing Pagan music since 1980, and many Pagan artists owe him a great debt. He was formerly a 3rd degree High Priest within the Church of Ravenwood in Atlanta and served there in various capacities, and was an elder and leader in the Pagan community for 30+ years. Lord Senthor will be sorely missed by all.

☞ **Birthdays for April-May-June! Happy Birthday to the following special people:**
Katharyn Privett-Duren (April 4)
James Bryant (Sig) (April 5)
Stephanie Paige (April 19)
Lana Sizemore (April 21)
Katherine Hobbs (May 1)
Kirsten Rice (May 14)
Zachariah Privett (May 17)
Sherry Coffee (May 26)
Willow Farris (June 1)
Regena Andrews (June 2)
Bill Meadows (June 5)
Zachary Berleue (June 7)
Craig Kerr (June 8)
LeePhether Mikovitz (June 8)
Taavi Kellett (June 13)
Todd Duren (June 28)
Windy Lawrence (June 28)
Tabitha Taber (June 29)

☞ Welcome home to Jeremy & Malia Farris and their three beautiful children! They just moved back to Alabama/Georgia from Fort Bliss, Texas.

If you have important news that you would like to share in Happenings or Circle of Life in the Litha edition of "The Journey," please email your info to Linda Kerr at info@spiraltree.org, or mail to CST, P.O. Box 8396, Columbus, GA, 31908, no later than June 1, 2011.

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 who respect themselves and others, 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 Community Relief Fund, so we can collectively donate money in the name of an established Pagan church to individuals in need and to disaster relief efforts, including the American Red Cross. CST is also pleased to offer a Pagan Prisoner Ministry, which provides outreach to incarcerated members (on hold temporarily until funding improves), and a Military Affairs Committee, which offers support to deployed Pagan military personnel.

Newsletter Deadlines

Our newsletter, "The Journey," is an important outreach tool to our members; as such, CST is committed to publishing this newsletter on a regular quarterly basis. Publication dates and deadlines are as follows:

March 21 (deadline: March 1)
June 21 deadline: June 1)

Info About Our Services:

Ministers: CST, being a church, may ordain any member age 18 and over as a minister. The fee for this is \$50.00, and you must be a current paid member and must have been a paid member for at least one year prior to applying for ordination. 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."

September 21 (deadline: Sep 1)
December 21 (deadline: Dec 1)

Please note that these deadlines are **firm!** Any submissions received after these dates will be published in the following newsletter.

Our Board of Directors meetings are held around the cross-quarter days (Imbolc, Beltane, Lammas, Samhain), to allow updates and news from these meetings to be published in the next newsletter.

Earthdance

September 9-11, 2011, Kolomoki Mounds State Park, Blakely, GA

<http://www.spiraltree.org/Earthdance/earthdance.shtml>

Announcing CST's new official festival!

Earthdance, to be held every year on the third weekend of September, is CST's official festival, and is where our annual membership meeting and elections will be held. Earthdance is held at the group camp at Kolomoki Mounds State Park in Blakely, Georgia.

Earthdance has a long history; it was first started by Shadowcat at FDR State Park in Pine Mountain, GA, and was then taken over by Stormy & Sandy. They ran it for a couple of years together, and then it became Stormy's responsibility. Under her guidance, Earthdance moved to Hard Labor Creek State Park east of Atlanta, GA, and then finally to Kolomoki Mounds State Park. After her passing in 2004, her daughter Carol Lynne took over. Earthdance was last held in 2005, and after this 6-year hiatus, Carol Lynne has graciously given CST permission to revive Earthdance and hold it in Stormy's honor.

About the site: Earthdance is held at Kolomoki Mounds State Park, at Camp Hicita. This group camp consists of a dining hall, a covered pavilion, and four dormitory-style cabins with bunk beds that sleep a total of 135 people. Georgia state parks do not allow tents or RVs in the group camps, so all attendees must sleep in one of the cabins (bring your own linens). If you prefer to camp, there is a campground about a mile away from the group camp (campsites cost \$25-\$35/night), but you must reserve your campsite on your own through the reservations web site (above). Also, you will need to purchase a parking pass (\$5/day/vehicle) when you arrive at Earthdance. We will have these for sale at registration.

Prices: If you pay by midnight on: June 1 - \$35; August 1 - \$50; thereafter - \$65. Children 11-17 - 1/2 price; children 10 and under, or 2nd or more child - free. CST members get \$5 off registration prices. Vending fees extra.

Raffle

CST is sponsoring a fundraiser for our building fund by raffling off a handmade Zen coffee table, with the drawing to be held at Moondance 2011. The table will be on display variously at Bio-Buzz in Albany, GA, at DreamScapes in Auburn, AL, and Cosmic ConneXion in Kennesaw, GA. The table is hand-carved by Hans Brandt. It comes with a handmade rake and spade, five rocks with each representing one of the five Chinese elements, and sand to be added once it finds a home. Photos and purchase details are posted on our website, www.spiraltree.org. If you win and are not present at Moondance 2011, you will need to plan to pick up your table at one of the display locations unless you make other arrangements with one of the Board of Directors officers. Tickets are \$3.00 each or 2 for \$5.00. If you purchase a ticket by check or money order, please note on it that it is for table raffle. You can also purchase tickets online through PayPal and at Bio-Buzz, DreamScapes, or Cosmic ConneXion, and in person at any CST ritual or event including at the CST booth at Moondance.



Serving in a Pagan Circle Behind Bars

By Rev. Rowen Greenwolf

Introduction:

I am a Minister with the Church of the Spiral Tree and a Grove Steward. I am also the Chaplain's assistant for their Pagan Prison Ministry. I have three years' experience in the Pagan Prison Ministry in general. However, I have only six months of being a CST volunteer. I want to make this clear before any action is taken—after reading this article, please check with your Department of Correction's and facility's policies on religious groups.

The Chaplain:

Working and networking with the prison Chaplain is not as hard as you might think. Just remember one rule: don't fight with the Chaplain, work with him/her by offering ideas. If your facility has a Pagan circle already, the Chaplain may choose to meet with an inmate leader in your circle on a regular basis, such once a month, to discuss the needs of your circle. I would suggest to start there. The group can meet with this individual before he/she goes to meet with the Chaplain to talk openly about different topics regarding your circle. If your circle has a particular need, then that should be made that the primary topic of concern. Stay focused and be professional. The members of your circle can share ideas among themselves regarding that topic of concern. This can be done at the ritual gathering prior to the meeting scheduled with the Chaplain. If you only have one hour for ritual, then use 30-45 minutes for your ritual, then use the last 15-30 minutes for your meeting. Have the circle liaison with the Chaplain or another person within the circle take notes on all the ideas and topics discussed. That way, when your liaison goes to the chaplain's meeting for your group, he/she can talk to the chaplain about the topics that were discussed at the circle meeting/gathering. Doing it this way allows for everyone to help with coming up with ideas for bettering your group.

When the meeting/gathering is over and everyone returns to their housing unit, then your liaison can take time to look over the policies for religious groups and revise the notes into a report, leaving out what is not allowed by the policy, and revising some of the ideas to fit into the boundaries of the policy. If your liaison is not good at writing reports, get one of the other people in the circle to help him/her with the report to the chaplain and use a dictionary to help with spelling and to properly define words. If you have a type writer or computer, use it. The more professional it looks the better prepared you look.

Funds:

If your group gets funds for books and supplies for the practice of your beliefs, talk with your group to figure out what is needed.

Tools:

Athame and Wand: A lot of your ritual tools will not be allowed, and with good reason; for example, the athame is not allowed in a correctional facility because it is a knife. Even though it is only used to cut magickal energy, it's still a knife. A real athame is going to be always a NO. However, propose to the chaplain about making a cardboard or paper athame for the symbolism. A wand may be made from the same materials.

Altar Cloth: If you are allowed to have one then get one.

Candles: If you're not allowed to have an open flame, then put a proposal in for the battery-operated flame-less candles to your chaplain. However, if you are allowed to use an open flame candle, be sure not to use them unless you have a staff member or a outside volunteer present.

Incense: You will have to check the policy on this. Some states say yes, others no. I would look into it first.

Salt and water: This is the easy/hard part. Just so you know, you can use water from a sink or a drinking fountain... easy. Now the hard part... the salt. Do the best you can, even if that means using a piece of paper that says earth on it. Some states will allow real salt, some will not, and others may allow soil, dirt, or sand as a substitute.

Volunteer:

If you're allowed to get a volunteer, do the research for your chaplain. Get the other circle members involved. Get your friends and family on the outside involved. Make it a group project to collect information on potential volunteers. Once you get several names, telephone numbers, addresses, and emails of potential individuals who might volunteer their services, give the information to the chaplain at the liaison meeting.

Remember to try to have fun with this. Always treat each other with perfect love and perfect trust. Form a bond with your circle members; they are your circle family. You are all children of the Goddess and she loves you all very much. And be courageous for the Goddess Mother.

Blessed Be!



Croning Ceremony for Garnet Dragonfire

Written & Officiated by Rev. Cathy Rankin
December 11, 2010

We are gathered in this place at this time to witness and honor the passage of Lynn Bishop into the Crone phase of her life. The Crone represents the third face of the Goddess in the Circle of Life.

Crones have learned many valuable lessons in life as maiden and mother. In transition to Crone, a woman relishes her memories as frolicking maiden, the wonders of fertility and life as Mother, and passes into an honored time of wisdom and leadership as Crone. Crone is not the end of life but the apex of the circle from which the spirit eventually ascends with its life's lessons to begin the circle once again. Each Croning Ceremony is unique, as is each person's time of passage into maturity and wisdom. Each new crone brings her own special knowledge and wisdom to the kin. And so now is the time for Lynn Bishop to cross the bridge into the honored state of the Crone.

Light white candle.

I invoke the Lady Aradia, daughter of Diana and Lucifer, Queen of Witches, Defender of the Craft. Bless this woman with your presence in her life by attending her ceremony in this time and space.

Light red candle.

I invoke Gaia, Earth Mother whose foundation keeps us rooted, whose fertility provides life for all things, whose bounty fills our spirits, minds, and bodies. Bless this woman with your presence in her life by attending her ceremony in this time and space.

Light black candle.

I invoke Ancient Nyx, Goddess of Night, Honored One of old age, Crone of Crones who provides the wisdom to see through the shadows and comprehend the wonders of Universal Existence. Bless this woman with your presence in her life by attending her ceremony in this time and space.

Lynn Bishop, you come before the kin today requesting passage into the world of the Crone. Will you honor those responsibilities to yourself and to the kin as Crone Goddess?

Do you pledge to share your wisdom with those amongst the kin whom you may deem worthy of such knowledge?

Will you vow always to use you wisdom, power, and strength in a kind and gentle way when teaching the kin of the ways of witchcraft, magick, and universal energies?

Do you pledge to always follow the light of the path set forth for you by the Lady Aradia?

Do you vow to always and ever act in the best interest of the kin by teaching honor for the Earth Mother, Gaia?

Do you pledge your allegiance to the Goddess Nyx by learning the secrets of the shadows with the intent to teach those secrets to those of the kin who

earn the honored title of Crone?

Do you accept the title of Crone for yourself hereafter?

Do you accept your Crone name to be known henceforth as Garnet Dragonfire?

Place shawl over the shoulders of Garnet Dragonfire.

May you now be gifted with the shawl of knowledge which you have earned through your years of life's lessons.

Place the crystal crown upon the head of Garnet Dragonfire.

May you also be gifted with the crown of wisdom which you have earned by following the path set before you by your special bond with Lady Aradia, Mother Gaia, and Ancient Nyx.

Anoint third eye chakra with blessed frankincense and myrrh oil with goddess symbol)0(.

You are now anointed Crone, Elder, Leader, Wise Woman, and Teacher to the kin; Protector of the Earth, and Keeper of the Universal Knowledge.

As it is meant to be, so it is.

Toast with mead.

All hail Elder Garnet Dragonfire, new Crone of the kin.

All: Hail Elder Garnet Dragonfire.

Please join in the chants and songs for our new crone lead by Lucidian. As we are chanting and singing each person is asked to approach Elder Garnet Dragonfire and give her a verbal blessing and with your gift if you brought one.

Crone chants and songs led by Lucidian (see next page).

Elder Garnet Dragonfire will close the ceremony:

I give thanks to the Lady Aradia for the blessing of her presence in my Croning. Hail and farewell.

Extinguish the white candle.

I give thanks to the Earth Mother, Gaia, for the blessing of her presence in my Croning. Hail and farewell.

Extinguish the red candle.

I give thanks to the Ancient Nyx for the blessing of her presence in my Croning. Hail and farewell.

Extinguish the black candle.

I give thanks to those of the kin for the blessing of their presence in my Croning and the many blessings with which they have honored me.

All: Hail Elder Garnet Dragonfire.

Merry meet, merry part, merry meet again. Blessed Be.

Chants for Croning Ceremony

God/dess Chant

(Original chant written by Z. Budapest, added to by many others over the years)

We all come from the Goddess
And to Her we shall return
Like a drop of rain
Flowing to the ocean

*Isis, Astarte, Diana, Hecate, Demeter, Kali,
Inanna*

*Nephtys, Artemis, Hera, Jiva, Bastet, Sekhmet,
Ma'at, Selene, Inanna*

We all come from the Horned One
And to Him we shall return

Like a spark of fire
Rising to the Heavens

*Odin, Kernunnos, Anubis, Osiris, Apollo, Shiva,
Tubal Cain*

*Horus, Baphomet, Hermes, Loki, Dagda, Lugh,
Ra, Pan, Herne*

Hoof and Horn, Hoof and Horn...all that dies shall be reborn

Corn and Grain, Corn and Grain...all that falls shall rise again

Crone and Sage, Crone and Sage....wisdom is the gift of age

Sage and Crone, Sage and Crone....wisdom's gift shall be our own

Ancient Mother

(recorded on Ancient Mother, Wings of Song, by Robert Gass)

Ancient Mother, we hear you calling
Ancient Mother, we hear your song
Ancient Mother, we hear your laughter
Ancient Mother, we taste your tears

Ishtar, Cerridwen, Hecate, Inanna
Isis, Artemis, Sophia, Athena
Coatlicue, Aphrodite, Mielikki, Astarte
Gaia, Saraswati, Kali

Pele, Paso Wee, Demeter, Parvati
Hera, Akewa, Diana, Nidaba
Chicomecoatl, Lilith, Shekina, Morgana
Maya, Izanami, Shakti

<http://www.myspace.com/lucidianmusic>

Pagan Prisoner Ministry

The Pagan Prison Ministry (PPM) has been revived. PPM needs volunteers to be pen pals for the inmates who are listed in the database on the PPM Yahoo group. You can request admission to the Yahoo group, "cst_paganprisonerministry." This is a moderated group. Any ideas for fund-raisers for this ministry are welcome. CST would like to raise enough money to supply the prison libraries with a select set of pagan reference books so that they will be available to all the pagan inmates. Several prison chaplains have contacted CST on behalf of their pagan inmates. It is very important for CST to be as supportive and helpful to those chaplains as possible. CST president, Cathy Rankin, will be working a fundraiser for our PPM program at the North Georgia Solitaires booth at the Atlanta Pagan Marketplace of Ideas on March 26, 2011 in Atlanta, GA. This wonderful group has offered their support and assistance as part of their Pagan Assistance Fund. Also, inmates can submit sellable works of art in lieu of paying cash for membership. Our latest donation will be raffled at the Pagan Family Reunion being held in Camilla, GA on April 29-May 1, 2011. Please pay a visit to the North Georgia Solitaires

booth and to the CST booth if you are in the area on either or both occasions. CST Ministers: (Please include changes to requirements for becoming ordained through CST and new prices for replacement documents as we discussed at bod meeting.) A Yahoo Group has been established for CST ordained ministers only as a forum for questions and exchange of ideas related to your ministry. Any handfasting, wedding, naming, funeral, croning or other ceremony officiated by our ministers can be added to the files as a resource center. Please feel free to submit any ceremony or ritual that you would like to share. If you have not yet gotten an invitation to the group, you can submit your request to (please put group email address). Cathy has not yet had a chance to finish sending out invites to everyone and offers her sincere apologies. Also, some of the email addresses that are listed in our database are obsolete so by requesting membership to the group, it will give us a chance to update our records. Please be sure to add a note with your name as it appears on your minister's certificate so we can verify that you are a CST minister.



Contacts:

You get a free contact listing with your membership. You may also submit your listing at any later time. As an additional service, you can send letters to CST, and we will forward them to your intended recipient.

Angela Ragsdale: 10470C
Rush Lane, Grand Bay, AL,
36541,
classymomma1@yahoo.com.

Angela S.:
wyanetmagenta24@aol.com.

Clifford Joseph Bowling #020406: Wanted: D/W/M eclectic Wiccan with interest in Thelema, Kabbalah, Greek/Roman/Sumerian/Babylonian/Egyptian paths, seeks similar female to share knowledge and thoughts. Zephyrhills Corr. Inst., D2116L, 2739 Gall Blvd., Zephyrhills, FL 33541-9701.

Revs. James & Rita Middleton: Known as Papa James & Mama Rita. James is ordained under the ULC, does all rites of passage and closed circles, is based out of Dragon Hills Retreat in Bowdon, GA, a spiritual place that offers a safe haven. No event is too small or too big. (770) 258-0863 or drdjmid@aol.com.

Jason Braasch #364347: Looking for Pagan resources such as magazines, catlogs, music, correspondence courses. Also looking for legal help for group. Stanley Corr. Inst., 100 Corrections Dr., Stanley, WI 54768-6500.

Dr. Katharyn Privett-Duren:
dr_privett@yahoo.com.

Kevin Anderson: (334) 297-6243.

Michael Lee Harris #221321: Wiccan pagan, my path is Celtic. Interest in reading Wiccan pagan books, Circle magazine, Pagans and the Law by Dana D Eilers. Fox Lake Corr. Inst., Box 200 HU One, Fox Lake, WI 53933-0200.

Phillip James Bartley #HJ6640: Eclectic Wicca, god & goddess studies, witchcraft, some Qabalah studies. S.C.I. Huntingdon, 1100 Pike Street, Huntingdon, PA 16654-1112.

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: 425 Webster Rd. #934, Auburn, AL 36862, <skippy_the_witch@mindspring.com>, (334) 826-3953.

Richard Allen Hartsock #1202681: Ordained Wiccan High Priest for the Nocturnal Tradition specializing in eclectic witchcraft, spiritualism, divination, and shadow work. Keen Mountain Corr. Center, P.O. Box 860, Oakwood, VA 24631-0860.

Rev. Rowen Greenwolf: I am a 2nd Degree self-initiated Celtic Witch. I also serve as Ritual Priest and Grove Steward for the Bluewater Pagan Grove in Port Huron, MI. I am an active member and ordained with CST. (810) 689-7074.

Russell Ray Jones #382494: Solitary witch seeking information on Voodoo, amulets, talismans, charms, etc. STSRFC, Unit 6, 1045 Horsehead Rd., Pikeville, TN 37367.

Siryn Dolphinsong-Bradford: Siryn can be reached at her store Cosmic ConneXion in Kennesaw, GA, where we have a vast array of metaphysical and root-working supplies. Also offering in-depth classes, workshops, and seminars, at some of which Siryn shares different topics on the many paths she has traveled, and the specific tools she utilizes today. She is available as a speaker at other venues on request. Siryn is a intuitive reader who offers Tarot, Aura, and Obi (shell) readings, and in-depth palmistry at the store, and has other readers available. She is a Usui Reiki Master/Teacher with Lightarian incorporating crystal healing, chakra cleansing,

pendulum clearing/balancing, guided meditation, energy work, lfa based root work, and spiritual/healing advisement. Her work as a minister includes all rites, most rituals, and she is willing to travel. Siryn is founder of the CST grove S.T.A.R. (Sacred Tribe of Ancient Roots), and creator of the Pagan Family Reunion (PFR). Siryn can be reached at Cosmic ConneXion, located at 3600 Cherokee St. Suite #113, Kennesaw, GA 30144; (770) 919-9193, and has a Yahoo group, a Facebook page, and currently working on a website, www.Cosmic-ConneXion.net. The store is affiliated with Bio-Buzz and Dreamscapes, owned by her husband Stephen Bradford. Siryn commutes but primarily resides in Cartersville, GA where she also offers classes. She can be reached at (229) 395-9718, la.siryn@yahoo.com, or cosmicconnexion@yahoo.com.

Sacred Earth (Maka Wakan): wanblee2@netzero.net; (706) 987-7179.

Stephen Bradford, aka Tyernan WaterOak: An intuitive medium and natural healer. Within my Eclectic Witch and Yoruba Path, I do Tarot readings, rootwork, chakra balancing, crystal healing, energy work, and Reiki. I own Bio-Buzz Botanica, a metaphysical supply and service oriented business in Albany, GA. As an ordained minister, I offer legal communions, handfastings, handpartings, Wiccanings, and requiems (passing on rites). At the store and across the US, I offer ongoing classes, workshops and various teachings. Bio-Buzz is also the home of Albany Pagans and the Magickal Mystery Tour, which is an ongoing discussion of anything metaphysical and spiritual related topics. I offer these services and classes with help from the

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Spring Equinox

by Cynthia Jurkovic, FOI Prs-Hierophant
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The days are growing noticeably longer, and the emergent greening of the Earth's renewal is replacing the brown of the fallow season. Trees, bushes, and plants are budding; early blooming flowers are gracing us with their refreshing beauty, reminding us that life "springs" eternal, and the new season of growth is HERE. As we approach the next turning of the Wheel, we fully greet the Spring at its apex, and the first of two points of equal light and dark in our calendar year. The strength and light of the sun has been waxing steadily since the Winter Solstice/Yule, and will continue to do so until the Summer Solstice/Litha. The balance of light with the darkness of night is briefly held at this approaching point on the Wheel we know as the Spring or Vernal Equinox, also referred to as the Neo-Pagan sabbat, Lady Day, and/or Ostara. Ostara means "movement towards the rising sun." The word "equinox" is derived from the Latin "aequus" (equal) and "nox" (night), because at the time of the equinoxes, night and day are approximately equal in length as the sun is aligned with Earth's equator.

Modern Pagan scholars assert that 'Ostara' is actually not the correct name for this sabbat. The reasons cited are based upon the knowledge of a Teutonic lunar goddess of Spring and fertility, Eostra, whose festival was celebrated at the full moon after the Vernal Equinox. Over time and misappropriation of the names, the folk name for Beltaine became Lady Day, which left no name for the Spring Equinox, but it's not too much of a stretch to see how the name Ostara was implemented instead. The variant spellings and names for this sabbat come to us from Germanic/Anglo-Saxon culture. Some of the ways in which this goddess's name has appeared are: Eostre, Eostra, Ostara, Eastre, and Estre. Bede the Venerable, a British scribe in the 7th century C.E., wrote that Ostara was honored in the month of April in Germanic lands, and her name was also the name given to that month. The Anglo-Saxon variation, Eostre, eventually became the name of the Christianized celebration of rebirth and resurrection, Easter. Other variants of the goddess's name became words such as estrus and estrogen. Estrogen is a hormone that regulates and maintains female reproductive cycles and organs. Estrus is a point during the fertility cycle of most female mammals during which pregnancy is possible and the female, who is in a state of sexual receptivity (which somehow sounded better than 'frenzy' here ;-)) will accept and mate with the male of the species, aka - being "in heat."

The Vernal Equinox always occurs in March, with the dates floating roughly between March 19th-23rd. This is one of the four lesser sabbats, a quarter holy day on the Wheel of the Year, that we associate with the Eastern quarter (on the Sabbat Wheel) and the

Element of Air. Astrologically, the exact date is figured upon when the sun moves into the fire sign of Aries, the masculine sign of action, symbolized by the animal totem, the Ram.

If you feel the urge to be outside, work in your yard or garden or with potted plants, walk in the woods, clean your house (spring cleaning!), begin work on new projects, complete unfinished projects, or you generally feel more inclined to be more active than you have in recent weeks or months....you have been infused with the energies of the season! This is the time of action, of progressing our attention from the planning stages to taking the actions needed for implementing ideas for projects; to manifest, to create, to clear out the old and make way for the new. This is a continuance and magnification of the energies that began to stir at Imbolc.

The energetic theme of the season includes: birth, rebirth/resurrection/initiation, all cycles of fertility/creativity, balance, awakening, cleansings (purifications), saining (blessing), activity, and growth. The common associations of the sabbat: eggs, rabbits, pastel colors, sweet and sensual fragrances; and other symbols of fertility, life, and balance. The planting of seeds both figuratively and literally is a major focus now. Prepare your garden, make plans for the summer and/or longer range plans, continue or finish developing (germinating) the seed ideas that will sprout as manifestations of personal change for the season of growth.

Even in modern times we celebrate our physical fertility with good reason, for it truly is one of the most sacred and profound mysteries we can experience while we are incarnated on Earth. In the cyclic fertility relationship of the God and Goddess, at Imbolc they were reunited as a couple in the innocence of youth, and their courtship began. Many traditions recognize Lady Day/Ostara as the time of consummation for the Divine Couple - the Sacred Marriage - Heiros Gamos; resulting in the pregnancy of the goddess once more to complete and begin another cycle. The New Sun God/Child of Promise will be born at the Winter Solstice.

The traditions and symbols that have been long associated with this fertility festival and sabbat are still popular even among people who do not know of their Pagan origins. The egg is a primary fertility symbol and is the Cosmic Egg of Creation. The hare/rabbit is another major symbol of fertility that can be seen in the face of the moon. In some other traditions, the cat (who I am told multiplies faster than rabbits!) is also strongly associated with fertility. These animal totems are sacred to several goddesses. The Priapic wand that is often lain in a decorated basket with the representation of Brighid at Imbolc, is a phallic symbol of the fertility and the creative power of the god. Remember also that the

wand is, in many traditions, associated with the East, and is a masculine and active tool used for directing energy in ritual.

The power of creation is manifest in the Sacred Triad, the Sacred Family. The joining of the God and Goddess creates the Child of Promise who is the combination of them both and who becomes the sacred manifestation of the magical number 3. An important symbol that represents fertility aspects of this sabbat as well as the concept of balance is the Star of David, the six pointed star and common symbol of Judaism, is a most ancient symbol consisting of two triangles overlaid upon each other, one with the point down, symbolizing the goddess (and the outer shape of the yoni); and one with the point up symbolizing the male (and the erect phallus). Note that there are an equal number of points, and that the sacred geometry of this symbol incorporates the number 3. The six pointed star also represents the joining of heaven (spirit) and earth (matter) - point down: spirit descending into matter; and point up: matter ascending into spirit.

Many rituals for this sabbat include activities like community plant and seed blessing and exchanges, egg dying and egg hunts for the children, the making of charms using eggs, seed and plant magick, fertility magick of any kind, planting sacred groves or individual trees or other growing things, house blessings, and consecration of magickal tools. It is also a good time for rites of passages like marriages/handfastings, baby blessings, Wiccanings/Paganings, coming of age, welcoming, and other community ceremonies and initiations. Focusing upon balance; and especially the balance of the creative power between god/male, and goddess/female is a good ritual intention for the sabbat. The Egyptian Ankh is a symbol of Life, also called the Crux Ansata or looped cross, and is indicative of male and female energy as well. Although Lady Day/Ostara is fertility focused, remember that fertility can be manifest in many ways other than physical reproduction. Fertility can be mentally, emotionally, physically, and/or spiritually centered.

There are two Christian religious observances that coincide with Spring Equinox. The Catholic church's observance of the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary is on March 25th, when the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she had conceived and would give birth to the new messiah, Jesus. Being a virgin in the physical sense, she naturally would have needed someone to inform her of her being with child! Having the annunciation in March, and with human gestation taking nine months, then it fits in quite intentionally that Jesus' birth celebration is on Christmas, December 25th. It is no coincidence that Christmas is only days after Yule, the Winter Solstice, as there were many cultures that observed and attached their own particular mythology to the "rebirth of the Sun." The early Catholic church appropriated and assimilated as many Pagan observances and celebrations as possible to encourage conversion by the masses. (no

pun intended there!)

The other Christian holiday that is connected with Ostara/Vernal Equinox, is as mentioned above, Easter, the observance of Jesus' resurrection three days after being placed in his tomb. This became the Christian's version of the God of Light conquering darkness (Death) which is simultaneously linked to the Sacrificial King/Solar Hero mythology and also deeply rooted in the ancient story of the descent of the goddess and hence, is closely corresponded to the new moon phase of the lunar cycle more than most people may realize. The date for Easter is different each year, and is calculated by determining the date of the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Vernal Equinox. Whether your spiritual tradition is Pagan or Christian, it is certainly easy to see the correlation of the height of Spring within the Great Cycle of Existence (birth, life, death/rebirth). Ancient Pagan theology and practices were integrated with the energies of the natural cycles and seasons, and were deeply ingrained in the hearts and minds of the people. Many other religious and cultural traditions have festivals, holy days, and other observances that are in alignment with several of our sabbats. Humans have long celebrated the seasons and the cycles of life and of the Earth.

The energy tides of this season further expand the annual Great Awakening bringing all beings out of winter's lull. It's time to breathe in the fragrance and the fullness of life and actively pursue the manifestation of goals and plans formed and incubated in the chilled darkness of Winter. Time to get your creative juices flowing, purify, balance and center; till the soil and sow seeds in the fallow fields of self and of the Earth in our evolutionary journey.

References:

The New Book of Goddesses and Heroines, Patricia Monaghan

The Witches' Sabbats, Mike Nichols

Contacts (continued from page 7)

community at my other store in Auburn, AL called DreamScapes, our second location of metaphysics and spiritual supplies galore. Look for me in the Panhandle of Florida and North Georgia quite often too! Stephen A. Bradford, 612 N. Slappey Blvd., Albany GA 31701, (229) 438-5878 or (229) 395-0963. Email: tyernan2003@yahoo.com.

Taavi Kellett: Can be reached by cell phone at (334) 297-6243.



CST Calendar:

CST and its affiliate Groves welcome church and community members, beginners, newcomers, solitaires, and anyone else interested in participating in rituals honoring the Sabbats and new & full moons. 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. We usually share a potluck dinner after each ritual, 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. Children of all ages are welcome. You do not have to be a member of CST to participate! Donations to the Church are entirely optional but appreciated.

Note: the schedule below is subject to change! Firmer times and locations of all rituals will be available closer to the date of the ritual. Please visit <<http://www.spiraltree.org/upcoming.shtml>> for up-to-date information, directions, and links to RSVP for each ritual.

EVENT	DATE	TIME	SPONSOR	LOCATION (HOST)
Full Moon Lodge	March 19	TBA	PSE	Salem, AL
Full Moon Ritual	March 19	7:00 pm EDT	DH	Dragon Hills, GA
Ostara Ritual	March 26	12:00 pm EDT	GGG	UU, Columbus, GA
Full Moon Lodge	April 16	TBA	PSE	Salem, AL
Full Moon Ritual	April 18	7:00 pm EDT	DH	Dragon Hills, GA
Beltane Ritual	May 1	TBA	GGG	TBA
Full Moon Lodge	May 14	TBA	PSE	Salem, AL
Full Moon Ritual	May 17	7:00 pm EDT	DH	Dragon Hills, GA
Full Moon Ritual	June 15	7:00 pm EDT	DH	Dragon Hills, GA
Midsummer Ritual	June 18	TBA	GGG	TBA
Full Moon Lodge	June 18	TBA	PSE	Salem, AL

DH = Dragon Hills Grove (Carrollton, GA); GGG = Green Gate Grove (Columbus, GA); PSE = People of the Sacred Earth (Salem, AL); STAR = Sacred Tribe of Ancient Roots (Albany, GA); TBA = to be announced

Board of Directors' Meetings: The next BoD meeting will be May 15, 2011, location TBD. BoD meetings are held four times a year; check website at <<http://www.spiraltree.org/upcoming.shtml>> for date of next meeting.

Festival: Earthdance, September 9-11, Kolomoki Mounds, Blakely, GA. Official CST festival.

Upcoming Festivals (Not CST events):

PFR - April 29-May 1, S.T.A.R. Retreat, Camilla, GA, <http://www.bio-buzz.com/PFR>

Old Earth Gather Beltaine - May 5-8, Dragon Hills, Carrollton, GA, <http://www.oldearthgather.com/>

Moondance - May 26-30, Dragon Hills, Carrollton, GA, <http://www.faeriefaitth.net/Moondance.html>

For a full listing of Pagan festivals, please visit: <<http://www.faeriefaitth.net/festival.list.html>>

Church of the Spiral Tree
P.O. Box 8396
Columbus, GA 31908

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED