



Church of the Spiral Tree News

Happy Yule! We hope you find the articles and rituals in this issue informative and useful. Don't forget, we always want contributions from members! Articles, stories, poems, artwork, book reviews, rituals, etc. The deadlines are March 1 for Ostara, June 1 for Litha, September 1 for Mabon, and December 1 for Yule. All contributions should be emailed to: churchofthespiraltree@gmail.com.

Currently the new Board of Directors (BoD) is getting settled in and handling administrative things. Expect to see bios for each in the upcoming newsletter issues. Our new Member-at-Large, Terrin, wants to be sure everyone knows he is available to you as your direct representative! His email is memberatlarge@spiraltree.org.

CST wants your input on how we can better serve you, our members. Please let us know what services you'd like to have offered, or changes you can suggest. Along those lines, CST has maintained for about 15 years (!) some pages on our website to help people make connections. Because a lot of the listings on these pages are very old, and we've only heard back from twothree people after emailing to ask for updates, we've decided to delete these pages, and just encourage everyone to create new listings on Witchvox (http://www.witchvox.com/).

Witchvox serves the Pagan community very well, and already has a structure in place for people to create accounts and list themselves as local contact, ministers, groups, events, and more. The CST pages listed below will be deleted on December 31, 2015. These pages are: www.spiraltree.org/Ala.html www.spiraltree.org/contacts.shtml www.spiraltree.org/ministers.shtml

In other news, our Pagan
Prisoner Committee is still alive,
although not as active as it was
previously. CST will continue to
update the list of inmates who
want a pen-pal, as time allows.
This is a fairly passive list,
meaning we do not necessarily
monitor who is writing to whom,
and of course there are no
guarantees that an inmate on the
list will have anyone write to him or
her.

Please consider writing to an inmate! Unsure who to pick, out of the 235 listed? Choose someone who is close to release. You could make a serious difference is his/her life after prison. Here is the list (also linked on our website): https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1takT08T__oKUif_MQPZv8KaoQYjm9rNmUPK5vthgoIE/edit#qid=0

Thank you, everyone!

Yule 2015, #60

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Circle of Life

Birthdays for January-February-March! Happy Birthday to the following CST members:

Susan E. (January 3) Joshua H. (January 31) Jacob C. (February 2)

Danielle C. (February 8)

Brian T. (February 9)

Arsh D. (February 9)

William L. (February 18)

Troy L. (March 2)

Joanie T. (March 3)

Cliff L. (March 11)

Alexander H. (March 18)

Siryn D. (March 22)

Jacob P. (March 25) April M. (March 26)

Shaniqua P. (March 26)

CST Ministers

CST, being a church, may ordain any member meeting the below eligibility requirements as a minister.

The policies below have been put in place to ensure that CST and our ordained ministers remain committed and connected to each other, and is effective for all ministers ordained in the year 2012 and on.

Eligibility Requirements:

You must be a currently paid member of Church of the Spiral Tree, and not incarcerated.

You must have been a paid member of CST for at least one vear previous to applying to become a minister.

You must be at least 21 years of age.

Your application must include a photocopy or scan (front and back) of official picture ID; e.g. driver's license, student ID, state ID, work ID, etc.

Your application must include your payment of \$50 for the ordination fee.

Important:

Paid members of CST who are currently incarcerated are not eligible to apply for ordination through CST.

The Board of Directors of CST reserves the right to deny and/or revoke any ordination as determined by vote of the Ministerial Committee and the Board of Directors that said minister has misrepresented him/herself or CST; or has behaved in a manner that is inconsistent with the policies or bylaws of CST or behaves verbally or physically in a manner that has a negative impact on the reputation or credibility of CST.

It is the responsibility of all ministers to be informed of, and conduct ministerial work in accordance with local, state, and federal laws.

Ordination is for Three-Year Period:

Your ordination will be good for a period of three years, during which you must maintain your paid CST membership. After this three-year period, and if you still meet the eligibility requirements and your membership has been maintained continuously, you may apply to renew your ordination (\$25 fee).

Maintaining Paid Membership:

If the paid CST membership is not maintained during this three-year period or at any time thereafter, the ordination will lapse 30 days after the membership lapses. After renewing your membership, you may apply again to become ordained, for a \$50 fee.

How to Become Ordained:

The ordination process begins with your application (found on our website: www.spiraltree.org/ordain.shtml) along with the \$50 fee. Your application will be reviewed by the Board of Directors. If you are not approved, \$40 of your fee will be refunded.

If ordained, you will be entered into our database, and will soon receive your certificate of ordination and a card to carry with you.



Ritual and Yule

by Matthew R. James

From:

https://naturalpantheist.wordpress.com/2012/12/18/ritual-and-yule

With Yule fast approaching, I have written a Solstice Ritual to do at the hour of the Solstice (11.12am) on Friday. I use the format found on my Ritual page and then add to the "Explanation" and "Workings" parts to create a ritual customised to the season. I was inspired by a poem in the Solstice Ritual of Allergic Pagan so have used that as part of mine too.

When it reaches the "Explanation" section, I do the following.

Say: "As I stand here on this celebration of Yule, the sacred wheel of the year has turned once again and it is now midwinter. As my forebears did, I do now, and so may my descendants do in time to come. It is the Solstice, the longest night and shortest day. Today I celebrate the return of the Sun. Since the summer, it has gradually become colder and darker, but from this time forwards, the days shall get longer and lighter and warmer again. The Solar year has run its course and completed its cycle and a new year begins, bringing light, life and hope to the earth."

When it reaches the "Workings" section, I do the following.

Say: "Now in the darkness of winter, as the earth awaits the return of warmth and light, the Sun begins its journey home."

Say: "At this threshold when all is quiet, I contemplate times past and times ahead."

On one side of paper write negative things from past year you want to get rid of or bad things that happened in the past year. On the other side of the paper write goals for coming year.

Say: "I release what is past

and welcome what is coming."

Burn the paper and spend a few minutes in silence.

Raise arms.

Say: "Great Sol, I call upon you now. Return from the shadows this day and renew hope upon the earth. Return! Return!"

Lower arms.

Say:

"When the earth is barren, the light is reborn.

When the animals sleep, the light is reborn.

When the leaves have all fallen, the light is reborn.

When the rivers are frozen, the light is reborn.

When the shadows grow long, the light is reborn.

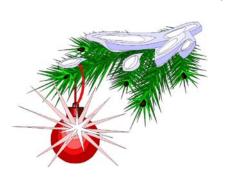
When warmth has fled, the light is reborn.

In the darkest night, the light is reborn."

Say: "As my ancestors did, so I do now. At this sacred hour, I light the Yule Log and celebrate the rebirth of the Sun this Solstice day."

Light Yule Log Candles. Ring Bell.

Say: "The light of the Sun is returning to the world. Darkness will vanish and life will be renewed. Hail the rebirth of the Sun! Great Sol, I thank you and welcome you back. May you shine brightly upon the earth."



About CST

Church of the Spiral Tree (CST) is a non-profit. volunteer-staffed, ecumenical Pagan 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. 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.

Church of the Spiral Tree is classified as a 509(a)(1) & 170(b)(1)(A)(i) organization. We are tax-exempt under section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code as an organization described in section 501(c)(3).

Birch: A Question of Authority

by Arion of Methymna

Originally published in <u>The Hazel Nut</u>, Issue 6, December 1993 http://www.faeriefaith.net/HazelNut/Issue6.html

The first moon is the Birch moon; Birch and Bay Laurel being the traditional royal life-trees—the 'king's tree.' The condition of the Bay and Birch in a place was seen as a reflection of that realm's rule and authority (Richard II, Shakespeare). So Birch is the tree of authority.

The person satisfied with such an answer gets the right to be scourged with a Birch wand.

Why is Birch the tree and moon of authority? Why is it the first moon and tree? Why is the Birch associated with kings and rule? The answers are not in the first paragraph, only clues to them. Start with some simpler questions:

What is a king or ruler? What does he do?

What is authority—really? What makes one an authority?

(Is power the same as authority? Is influence? Is it just specialized knowledge, or having more knowledge than the next person, that makes authority?)

Power is a poor replacement for authority, likewise influence, though both may result from authority. Any specialized knowledge is like an echo of only part of the answer to "What is authority?" The best catalysts to anything like an answer are, appropriately, three:

- The mascots for this moon are Janus the Previewer and Reviewer, and Argos of the Hundred Eyes.
- 2) The bark of the Birch grows around numerous boles in such a way as to form 'eyes.'
- Lastly, the most common Greek word for authority is εξουσια.

Exousia breaks down thusly: ekout of, from; ousia-being (a participle of 'to be'). So authority is a natural, innate, reality, an extension of one's being, not something added-on like specialized learning

or circumstantially valuable trivia. We're dealing then with internal realities, intangibles, the subjective (which was not always the dirty word it has been for the last 200 years). The primary authority then, is authority with oneself. And this "authority" is a natural extension of a person. So, is it charisma, then? No, for to charm is power and influence but does not involve authority with oneself or one's self.



Argos had eyes all around his head, so that he was ever alert, watchful, vigilant, aware. Janus guarded the year-gate. He was aware of what had been and looked upon what was vet to be—simultaneously. Both were keepers of something precious, holding great responsibility. Both were watchful, aware of all about them, and not by means artificial to them; they could not confine their awareness to just one path or way, one direction, one perspective. They were aware and sensitive and responsive to all about them.

The eye is often a symbol of wisdom—of responsible awareness over against the knee-jerk, reactionary, unidirectional awareness of the adolescent. The rebelling adolescent reacts against another and, in doing so, confirms the authority of

this other. Reacting is not responding, is not being responsible. A person reacts whose authority is external (a book, a man in gilt and trappings, a group in business suits, a person long dead), and whose strength and discipline depend on the circumstance of that external authority —for otherwise inside the reacter is anarchy waiting to happen: The Gerasene Demoniac of the New Testament's Gospel of Mark (Mark 5:1-23). He must be an anarchy. He perceives, senses, so much, but without a center, without an internal point in which to trust, all is a buzzing confusion. Inside, no part of the reacter will take responsibility.

Responsibility, then, is involved in authority, in the Birch moon; though more needs to be said of responsibility later.

Awareness, vigilance, within and without, before and behind, is also a syllable of the Birch's true name—as is obvious from the mascots Janus and Argos. In most 12-step programs the combination of awareness and responsibility is expressed in phrases like "regularly engage in a fearless and searching moral inventory of ourselves... continued to take responsibility for our own recovery, and when we found ourselves behaving in patterns still dictated by (our condition), promptly admitted it. When we succeed, we promptly enjoyed it..." (From the Welcome Pamphlet of the Survivors of Incest Anonymous.) Failure of awareness, in psychological and counseling jargon, comes out as transference, projection, denial, inappropriate emotional reactions. some histrionic behaviors. But failure of awareness, no matter the form, is a matter of

intention—some part of the person chooses not to receive or acknowledge input. So awareness is indivisible from responsibility.

There is also sensitivity involved, and this is the most difficult aspect to describe.

Awareness, and a facile form of responsibility, without sensitivity, is incarnated in the facade of Mr. Spock of the old Star Trek series. While he was aware of practically everything that occurred around him, he labored at insensitivity—at being unaffected. Events and crises had no impact on his manner or behavior. Pity, or compassion in its popular sense, is not the sensitivity of Birch. A sensitive person is teachable, willing to be vulnerable, open, willing to be as aware as organismically possible and open to being affected by what he or she becomes aware of. Even to the point of 'com-pas-sion,' the point of 'feeling-with' others (though this point, and all it entails, is the lesson of another moon). Even to the point of 'feeling-with' another, not just sadness, but all four basic emotions: mad, sad, glad, and afraid.

A Birch disciple is aware of all he or she can do, and senses, is sensitive to, all he or she can be. Without sensitivity, understanding is impossible; a person becomes merely a chronicler, a data collector. Sensitivity is vital, else the Medusa of simple self-awareness will turn one to stone without the mirrors that others provide.

This awareness and sensitivity is not sufficient. People with dazzling awareness and alertness, as well as incredible sensitivity, end up in mental institutions, in codependent or caretaking relationships, or as stunted adolescents with no self of their own. Neither sensitivity nor awareness alone can calm the anarchy inside nor govern or prioritize the demands and anarchy outside. They just make both realms into more acute sources of pain.

What turns such anarchies into communities is responsibility—the ability to respond.

A king is a ruler, a regulator, the

one with the regulae or rules. He or she takes the sensitivity that a life of awareness provides and he or she chooses what response is appropriate to him or her. And in the calm, not dispassionate but nonjudgmental, inner stillness is the achievement of self-authority, the fulcrum of right action and creativity. A king must be his own regulator first, else he can be no one's ruler: To accept, with a severe scrutiny. To reclaim the qualities once considered foul, scary, obscene; not acting from them necessarily but not making fear of them your master, and not making them monsters. To reconsider those qualities once considered angelic, noble, fine, with a steady and consistent awareness that pierces to the core of things, to the ambiguity in motives. Just like this moon's mascots, who see clearly; aware, open, and responsive, not condemning or disowning any input...so also does a Birch-king or Birch-queen not close their eyes—any of them —out of fear or laziness: To do so leads to reacting again and to the diminishing of sensitivity.

Being responsible with as full an awareness as possible is a discipline, it is being a disciple, being teachable. If you react to the demands or coercions without, or the demands and emotion-gales within, you are a slave. If you can actually choose how you will respond to the clamor, and you know who is making the choice—whose is the responsibility—then you have become the Birch's disciple.

How can a person learn to be responsible? Well, how do you learn to breathe? There is no simple, or complex, how-to. By making choices and being aware of the choices you make. By you yourself making yourself accountable for those choices. By you yourself becoming the one to judge the appropriateness of your actions. If this all sounds like a result or end rather than a method or means. well...that is because again—heresy of heresies—there is no "how-to," no technique. How authority is achieved is an individual thing, and

this is only appropriate since we deal with Birch—the loner.

One or two other concerns.
Birch is the rune of living
authority, self-mastery, the
solitary, the aloof one. Yet Birch is
also the gatekeeper for commun-

ion and true compassion. How?

Well, remember Hamlet and King Lear? Oedipus? In each instance, Claudius, Lear, or Oedipus, the status of the king or malfeasance in the kingship was echoed in the land and the vassalage. A king was his universe, his realm, in microcosm. Likewise, an honestly aware and sensitive person contains or claims the objects and people about him or her, instinctively—the acquisitive mode to human perception. More to the point, an honestly aware and sensitive person acknowledges their capa-city to resonate at some level with everything that exists—the empathic mode of human perception that Terrence touched on in the claim "I am a man, nothing human is alien to

me."

Perhaps a simpler way to express this is to say that the king does not have to go disguised among his people to understand them—he need only go wandering through the land of his own psyche to see he is capable of everything any human being has ever done—he has a deep and real commonality with all creation. A reciprocal Heisenberg Principle. and one not confined to a humanto-human realm, but an undeniable correspondence of human to created entity. So Birch is the tree of the One, the individual and the totality, distinct from everything else and indivisible from everything else. Also, in order to appreciate community, communion, one must be a Self, be their own person. One must have learned the initial lessons of the Birch moon.

Two more points need to be mentioned.

Continued on page 6

Hold an Imbolc Candle Ritual for Solitaries

by Patti Wigington, Paganism/Wicca Expert

From: http://paganwiccan.about.com/od/imbolcfebruary2/ht/CandleRite Sol.htm

Imbolc is a festival of light -- celebrate it with candles and flames!

Hundreds of years ago, when our ancestors relied upon the sun as their only source of light, the end of winter was met with much celebration. Although it is still cold in February, often the sun shines brightly above us, and the skies are often crisp and clear. As a festival of light, Imbolc came to be called Candlemas. On this evening, when the sun has set once more, call it back by lighting the seven candles of this ritual.

**Note: although this ceremony is written for one, it can easily be adapted for a small group.

First, set up your altar in a way that makes you happy, and brings to mind the themes of Imbolc. You'll also want to have on hand the following:

Seven candles, in red and white (tealights are perfect for this); something to light your candles with; a large bowl or cauldron big enough to hold the candles; sand or salt to fill the bottom of the bowl/cauldron.

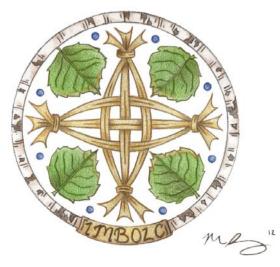
Prior to beginning your ritual, take a warm, cleansing bath. While soaking, meditate on the concept of purification. Once you're done, dress in your ritual attire, and begin the rite.

If your tradition requires you to cast a circle, do so now.

Pour the sand or salt into the bowl or cauldron. Place the seven candles into the sand so they won't slide around. Light the first candle. As you do so, say:

"Although it is now dark, I come seeking light. In the chill of winter, I come seeking life."

Light the second candle, saying: "I call upon fire, that melts the snow and warms the hearth. I call upon fire, that brings the light and makes new life. I call upon fire to purify me with your flames."



Light the third candle. Say:
"This light is a boundary,
between positive and negative.
That which is outside, shall stay
without. That which is inside,
shall stay within."

Light the fourth candle. Say: "I call upon fire, that melts the snow and warms the hearth. I call upon fire, that brings the light and makes new life. I call upon fire to purify me with your flames."

Light the fifth candle, saying: "Like fire, light and love will always grow. Like fire, wisdom and inspiration will always grow."

Light the sixth candle, and say: "I call upon fire, that melts the snow and warms the hearth. I call upon fire, that brings the light and makes new life. I call upon fire to purify me with your flames."

Finally, light the last candle. As you do so, visualize the seven flames coming together as one. As the light builds, see the energy growing in a purifying glow.

"Fire of the hearth, blaze of the sun, cover me in your shining light. I am awash in your glow, and tonight I am made pure."

Take a few moments and meditate on the light of your candles. Think about this Sabbat, a time of healing and inspiration and purification. Do you have something

damaged that needs to be healed? Are you feeling stagnant, for lack of inspiration? Is there some part of your life that feels toxic or tainted? Visualize the light as a warm, enveloping energy that wraps itself around you, healing your ailments, igniting the spark of creativity, and purifying that which is damaged.

When you are ready, end the ritual. You may choose to follow up with healing magic, or with a Cakes and Ale ceremony.



Birch: Cont. From page 5

First: The lessons of the Birch moon are one lesson; awareness, sensitivity, and responsibility are reference points for one capacity and range of behaviors. Listing three aspects for the Birch-moon lesson is a concession, a compromise in the face of the limits of the English and Romantic language and thought patterns.

Second: What is given here is an exposition of an initial level in the mystery that is the first moon. There is more, involving a deepening into what is called intuition and what is blithely labeled "divine-human dialogue" and the healing of the thought (or wish) / action split that so plagues westerners' behavior (the 'what I think to do I never get around to' and `I had meant to do that, but...' syndrome). All these fall under Birch's lesson of authority.

Arion of Methymna is a former student of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and has also been active in the Craft for 10 years.



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.

Rev. April Iris McLeod: P.O. Box 916, Grand Bay, AL 36541.

Gary Fimple #1204170: I am looking to correspond with any Wiccans. Augusta Correctional Center, 1821 Estaline Valley Rd., Craigsville, VA 24430.

Dr. Katharyn Privett-Duren (and family): Minister, Priestess of Gangani Tribe of Alabama.

LaTonya Jones of Peoples Care: Auburn, Alabama, (334) 524-1364.

Madeline W.S.:

makalinakittenmother@yahoo.com

Neil Ferrell #39921: Eclectic practitioner of witchcraft for the lat 10 years, and I will be a free man in April 2016. I would like to establish some like-minded contacts. Lovelock Corr. Center, 1200 Prison Road, Lovelock, NV 89419.

Nion and

LeePhether: We are vibrational alchemists who facilitate Reiki sessions/ attunements based on Usui, Lightarian, and other non-traditional methods. Ordained as clergy (Nion CST, Lee CST & ULC), we offer handfastings/ weddings. baptisms, requiems (passing-on rites), as well as spiritual guidance. We are on the council of The Sweet Potato Clan of The Free Cherokees and are pipe carriers. As certified **Angel Therapy** Practitioners (ACP) and certified Wholeness Blessing Facilitators we are excellent listeners.

We reside in west Georgia and can work in the Southeast USA. Contact info: Nion011@aol.com, Leephether@gmail.com, or (404) 789-4178.

Ricarda Munch: (256) 590-8502.

Richard Peebles #523160: | will correspond with Wiccan gay or straight males and females alike; I only ask to write and make friends, and an opportunity to learn something new in Wicca. Riverbend C.F., ED115, 198 Laying Farm Rd., Milledgeville, GA 31061.

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: "Skippy" Rob Von Allmen, 425 Webster Road #934, Auburn, AL 36832, <skippy the witch @yahoo.com>, (334) 826-3953.

Robert Kaczorowski: <Bobbykacz@silverhands.net>.

Siryn Dolphinsong-**Bradford:**

<lassiryn@yahoo.com>

Zebate bon Manbo (Danielle Bozeman): dunes38@ymail.com.





CST Calendar

CST welcomes church and community members, beginners, newcomers, solitaries, 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 greatly 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 < www.spiraltree.org/upcoming.shtm| > for up-to-date information, directions, and links to RSVP for each ritual. Rituals without at least five attending will be cancelled.

EVENTDATELOCATION/HOSTYule Celebration12-20-15 (Sunday)Roxanna, Auburn, AL/CSTBeltane Celebration5-8-16 (Sunday)Farm or Roxanna, Auburn, AL/CSTLitha Ritual6-19-16 (Sunday)Roxanna, Auburn, AL/CST

Board of Directors' Meetings: The next BoD meeting will be held February 7, 2016. BoD meetings are held four times a year; check website at www.spiraltree.org/upcoming.shtml for dates and locations of upcoming meetings.

Upcoming Festivals (Not CST events, admission fee charged):

DragonStead Ostara: March 18-20, 2016, Roxanna, Alabama **DragonStead Beltane:** April 29-May 1, 2016, Roxanna, Alabama

Moondance: May 26-30, 2016, Roxanna, Alabama

DragonStead Litha: June 24-26, 2016, Roxanna, Alabama

Church of the Spiral Tree P.O. Box 3165 Auburn, AL 36831-3165

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED