



# The Journey...

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



## What is CST to You?

by Linda Kerr

As we begin 2018, I'm led to wonder: What does Church of the Spiral Tree mean to you personally? What prompted you to join as a paid member? What keeps you coming back? What (or the lack thereof) would cause you to drop your membership and not renew? We're sending out an on-line poll (and will mail hard copies for those of you without internet access) to ask just these sorts of questions.

One of the things we offer paid members is this newsletter that you are reading now—probably the most tangible benefit. We also paid members offer a discount to local Pagan festivals and certain Pagan-owned stores. And as a church, we offer ordination as a minister to those who have been a paid member for at least one year.

CST also hosts rituals for most every Sabbat, monthly Meetups, and an annual Pagan Pride Day. These are open and free to all members of the community; one does not have to be a paid member of CST to attend or participate.

Since CST was formed in 1997, we have always strived to bring together and offer networking and a sense of community to Pagans who otherwise may not have any other resources. Paganism is not quite so "in the shadows" as it was 20 years ago when a small group of us began this organization. However, we are still not mainstream by any means,

and having a legally incorporated, IRS-recognized tax-exempt Pagan church (to my knowledge, the first in Alabama) can lend us legitimacy. CST has fought for Pagans' rights, alongside Laby Liberty League; one notable example was in 2011 when a teacher in Georgia harrassed a Pagan student for his beliefs (see page 6 for reprints of this story). Having this sort of organization is an intangible, but very real, benefit for the local and greater community.

So why are you here? Are you here for the rituals? The potlucks? This newsletter? Are you here to lend financial support to Pagan causes? Where would you like to see CST go? Would you like to participate more? What would you like to be involved with? Most of the programs we've begun and causes we've been involved with have been started with help from our members and the community. The Board of Directors of CST is just a small group of four people, supported by an equally small staff. We are all volunteers, and have jobs and families. We cannot, by ourselves, take this organization to new and greater places: We need you, our members. Is there something you would like to see CST begin doing? A cause you think we should get involved in? Step up and volunteer! We welcome your input and your help.

## Yule/Imbolc 2018, #68

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### CST Directors & Staff:

- Founder . . . . . *Linda Kerr*
- Treasurer . . . . . *skippy*
- Solitary Representative . . . . . *Madeline Wells Smith*
- Member-at-Large . . . . . *Billye Welburn*
- Ritual Coordinator . . . . . *Linda Moore*
- Meetup Coordinator . . . . *Callie*
- Pagan Prisoner Correspondent . . . . *Callie*

**Church of the  
Spiral Tree  
P.O. Box 3165  
Auburn, AL 36831-  
3165  
(706) 489-1017  
churchofthespiraltree  
@gmail.com  
www.spiraltree.org**



## Circle of Life

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

- David C. (January 2)
- Carie C. (January 2)
- Sandra H. (January 5)
- Amara M. (January 14)
- Joshua C. (January 29)
- Joshua H. (January 31)
- Jacob C. (February 2)
- Danielle C. (February 8)
- Brian T. (February 9)
- Kayla F. (February 10)
- Mickie J. (February 14)
- Jennifer D. (March 1)
- Joanie T. (March 3)
- Cliff L. (March 11)
- Callie N. (March 21)
- Erin W. (March 22)
- April M. (March 26)
- Shaniqua P. (March 26)
- Christian P. (March 27)



## CST Recaps

### **A Note From the Outgoing Pagan Prisoner Correspondent: - By Mickie J.**

My time working with CST handling the inmate communications was surprisingly fun, and enlightening. Over the past several weeks, I had a chance to get to know some people I otherwise wouldn't have even thought about. I recommend others take the time to sit down and write to an inmate; some of these people literally have no one on the outside. The occasional pen pal letter might be all they have left to look forward to.

### **Fourth Quarter Auburn Pagan Meetup Recap - By Callie Pursley**

Good day all, I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season and awesome fall. We've had 3 meetups over the last quarter: A potluck at the UU Busch Center in October with 13 attendees; a restaurant meetup at Chappy's deli in November that Linda Kerr hosted in my absence; and a potluck in the fellowship hall of AUUF in December.

We've had a few new people join us at the meetups over the last quarter and welcome more. We love meeting like minded people and expanding our Auburn community. The next meetup is Monday, January 8, 2018 at Chappy's deli in Auburn, AL. Hope to see you all there. Till next time, love and light to all, Callie

## 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).*

# Heathen Woman: Keeping Our Words Sacred

by: Heather O'Brien

From: <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/agora/2013/12/heathen-woman-keeping-our-words-sacred/>

In today's world, words are easily exchanged. Promises are made off-handedly.

Commitments are taken as light feathers or fleeting moments of interest, only to be discarded when they no longer serve their original purpose.

We live in a world where few are bound by their word, but this has not always been the case. In fact, historically the Norse people took the word of a person as being of utmost importance and if an oath had been made, it was expected that every measure would be taken to ensure its fulfillment.

This was part of having honor. Men and women carried out their responsibilities with pride, for they knew the value of family, their gods, and the place that they held among those things.

Does that mean that every person in Norse culture always acted honestly and with integrity? Does it mean that a lie was never told, or an oath broken? No. While great emphasis was placed on honor and keeping an oath that had been made, there was never a guarantee that someone would value that as a part of their character—just like today! Asatruar and Odinit alike believe that those who have led a corrupt life or one that consists of broken oaths and harmful intentions go to Náströnd upon their death. Their sentence will be one that fits the actions they committed, just as those who have lived a just, brave, and honorable life will be given a place befitting theirs. Náströnd is not the Christian "hell," for no such place exists in heathen faith. However, we are aware that all actions are measured and weighed by council



upon our death and do not expect that someone who has lived dishonorably will spend eternity in Valhalla. It doesn't work that way. The entire weight of a person is taken into account, and honor is certainly placed highly into the examination.

What makes honor so important? Why should we still be concerned with keeping our word in a society that places such little importance on it? Heathens have no doctrine or dogma, but this does not mean we lack guidelines for conduct that honors our gods. The Hávamál, the sagas, and the attributes of the deities all play important roles in creating a foundation from which our values can be built. For instance, if our habits go against everything the Hávamál says, and we take no heed of the natural world and environment around us, then we are consciously deciding to ignore our gods and basic tenants of our faith-based values. Our spiritual leanings should complement to our personal habits in a way that honors ourselves and our gods.

There doesn't have to be a set of rules carved in stone for us to be aware of these things. Our minds and bodies are free to spin our *wyrd*, but being mindful of what keeps a measure of honor will help guide our part in spinning that web. We do not do things because a set of words tells us to; instead, we value the sacred truths within those texts in a way that is mirrored by how we stay true to the traditions, customs, and beliefs of our ancestors.

When you speak, and others can rely on what you say, you build trust. In addition to that, being honest is a gift that sets you free. It is healing and cathartic to release your own truths in a way that reflects your beliefs without fear. Once you get past the lies or the habit of breaking commitments, you gain a sense of pride in the knowledge that others are open to what you have to say—specifically because they see those words coming from a place of determined honesty and commitment. Others can learn from your courage in being open and demonstrating integrity through keeping your word whether or not someone else keeps theirs.

There may be times when someone's word to us is broken. We cannot control how others value their own responsibilities, oaths, and honor. We do not own those things, and trying to make them our own (even if it

**Continued on Page 5**

# Helpful Hints for Prison Ministry

by: Ken Laporte

## Greetings All:

I was an inmate from January 2008 to September 2017 due to a mistake I made in life. While in prison I learned a lot about myself and discovered a purpose: I want to be a big advocate for Pagan/Wiccan inmates. With help from CST and others I think I can achieve this goal. I know that Pagans do not have a main organization that the outside Pagan community can make donations to like Christians and Catholics do. You can make donations to CST. Some institutions will allow books as well as candles, oils, and herbs as donations. Contact any of the inmates listed on CST's website and ask them what they need and find out if they can receive donations. Being a penpal is VERY helpful. Making donations to other organizations that also help inmates can be very helpful: MotherEarthMinistries.org, and CircleSanctuary.org can always use donations. BBIMedia (they do the periodical "Witches & Pagans") can also use donations because for a while they were putting out over a few thousand a year for inmates to receive free issues but had to stop due to lack of funds.

I read with delight two incredible articles in issue #34 of the "Witches & Pagans" feedback section: The first was from a Senior ADF priest and how he changed his view of inmates. He was never one to advocate/mentor or just be bothered with inmates until he and others from the ADF went to a prison and learned. His story was very touching and I hope when others read it they to become inspired to help. The other is a woman who has a ministry that helps Pagan inmates (I will look

into finding out more on her ministry) and she gives a bit of info for all outsiders to understand about inmates.

A lot of people in the free world do not understand when it comes to inmates during and after their incarceration. Most outsiders see inmates as monsters among other negative views. Anyone can end up in prison. The U.S. is the ONLY developed country in the world to lock up more of their citizens. Arizona defines "child molestation" as touching a child's private area(s) over and under clothes. Thus changing a diaper is considered child molestation. Poor Santa can get in trouble for having a child sit on his lap for a photo. National Association for Rational Sex Offense Laws (NARSOL.org) is an organization that is trying to change the laws for sex offenders in a positive way. They want to change such laws like in Arizona. NARSOL is NOT trying to change laws for adults and minors to have sexual relations. Please check out their website and learn the truth behind the myths.

People still believe Pagans/Wiccans/witches believe in the "devil." If they go to websites about us they can learn the truth. Most often when Pagan/Wiccan inmates seek aide from the outside community are often ignored or rebuffed. Most Pagan/Wiccan inmates will/do convert to another religion that does get support from outside sources and also because Pagan/Wiccans are mistreated by staff. Please check out Lady Passion's oldenwilde.org and click on "Pagan Prisoner Advocate's Guide," and you can learn a lot about the mistreatment Pagan/Wiccan inmates face and why it's important for the outside

community to get involved in many different ways. You can also learn from Lady Passion how to be a penpal to inmates. You set boundaries right from the beginning.

I know CST does what they can for inmates, and my goal is to let the outside Pagan community know that if they make donations of books, and other literature to CST it can make a big difference. I am trying to put the word out there from the point of view of an inmate. You can contact any of the inmates that are in touch with CST and ask them what are the procedures for donating books if they need these, or any literature. For the inmates out there, I am also adding another organization that will send great brochures to inmates. The organization Mother Earth Ministries has been sending info to Pagan/Wiccan inmates since 2000. The brochures are explain how to continue and practice Wicca while in prison. Every reply they send to inmates has a bit of info on the Sabbat of that time. If they reply to you during Samhain then they will include a small ritual on Samhain. BBI Media has a great magazine called "Witches & Pagans," and it's filled with incredible info and stories. When you write to any organization please send a SASE if you can otherwise it can take time for a reply.

I was released September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017, and the Goddess blessed me with a nine months halfway house. I just hope the Goddess will bless me with an understanding parole officer, because I want to continue along with CST and others who want to

help: volunteer, mentor, and advocate for Pagan/Wiccan inmates.

My contact information: Sebastian Knowles (Corvus DarkMoon), c/o Help From Beyond the Walls, P.O. Box 185, Springvale, ME 04083 Darkmoonpunk13@gmail.com.

REMEMBER THAT MOST ORGANIZATIONS RELY ON DONATIONS. TO GET A QUICK REPLY SEND A S.A.S.E.

\*ANY items that you need to be printed out for you from the bottom you can contact:

- **Help From Beyond the Walls** (Michael Cole-owner), P.O. Box 185, Springvale, ME 04083; helpfrombeyondthewalls@gmail.com

\*He does print outs, research, erotic photos/stories, FaceBook, and has info on pen pals. Contact him and ask.

- **Mother Earth Ministries:** P.O. Box 35906, Tucson, AZ 85740-5906; (motherearthministries.org)

They offer great information for Wiccan inmates. They have several brochures/guides to practice in prison. They have a book called Enchantment Encumbered for inmates to practice Wicca in prison. The book is \$20 (shipping included), and they take stamps as a payment (two flat books ONLY!) as well as other payments. They also have "Wicca Behind Bars," which is a small version of the book. You can have your chaplain (if they're friendly/helpful) print it out.

- **BBi Media** c/o Anne Newkirk Niven: P.O. Box 687, Forest Grove, OR 97116-0687; (BBiMedia.com)

Great magazine, "Witches & Pagans," that comes out three times a year. Inmates can subscribe, and Anne, the editor, is

willing to take stamps as a payment. Inmates pay \$20 a year (two flat books only!). If you have a friendly/helpful chaplain they can also subscribe on the website or they can send a letter and payment with their prison letterhead.

- **Second Chance Book L.L.C.** (David Krause): 127 Weaver St., Buffalo, NY 14206; secondchancebooks@outlook.com (SecondChanceCatalog.com)

Has a large variety of book genres: Horror, Urban, Fantasy, Sci/Fi, Wicca, Mysteries, and even RPG. Contact him and ask for his author/title lists. Thanks to me he's a distributor for Llewellyn. (For those who do not know Llewellyn is one main source of Pagan/Wiccan books.) He's in the middle of moving but can still take orders via email address for BOP inmates. Any other BOP and state inmates who do not have email access can have family/friends contact him via his website and set up a prepaid account and order for you.

- **Circle Sanctuary:** P.O. Box 9, Barneveld, WI 53507; (circlesanctuary.org)

They have a list of their old periodical "Circle Magazine." Send them a letter with a SASE and ask for their list. The magazine is filled with incredible stories.

## Heathen Woman, continued from page 3

affects us) would mean trying to merge ourselves with someone else's understanding and choices. Every person sees, feels, and interprets things differently and not everyone lives by the same standards. In this, you'll notice Gebo, Wunjo, Uruz, Raidho, and more being demonstrated through personal action.

If you've been deliberating on this, consider coming to Vár, the Norse goddess associated with oaths and promises. Read through the Hávamál, which reminds us to speak words of value. Carefully consider what you put into words. Take time to really consider what you've committed yourself to as far as roles and responsibilities, and do not over promise. When we aim to make everyone happy, we begin to stretch ourselves too thin and end up in roles that we may not have wanted to assume. Sometimes, it's necessary to examine how we can narrow our responsibilities so that we are honoring our commitments with passion, yet not becoming exhausted or resentful.

As a society, there often seems to be a race towards the lowest common denominator. Opening a newspaper, or simply turning on the television, results in a blaring display of just how intense that race has become. However, we should strive to be more than the sum of our parts and model how and why honor is important. By keeping our words, staying close to our truths, and being resolute in our commitments and oaths, we can be beacons rather than a weights. This is a deliberate choice.



# A Look Back at 2011: The Turner Family, Bowden, Georgia

(Originally published in *The Journey*, Yule 2011, Issue #45)

You may have heard about the saga of the Turner family in Bowden, Georgia. At Samhain, when their Pagan orientation became known, they began experiencing prejudice and discrimination in the local public school system. Below is the original article published December 3 that drew attention to their plight, followed by a statement released on December 7 by North Georgia Solitaries (NGS), Covenant of the Goddess (CoG), Dogwood Local Council (DLC), Lady Liberty League (LLL), and Circle Sanctuary. Following a meeting at the school between the school officials, the mother, and the task force which pulled together to provide support to the family, a statement was released on December 13 by the Bowdon Elementary School, Carroll County School District, and members of the Turner Family Support Task Force as represented by LLL, NGS, CoG, DLC, and Circle Sanctuary. Finally, as of press time, we are able to publish an upcoming statement from Circle Sanctuary, CST, CoG, DLC, LLL, and NGS.

Please note that throughout this time period, Lady Charissa Iskiwitch, founder of North Georgia Solitaries and the Pagan Assistance Fund, and newly-elected Member-at-Large of Church of the Spiral Tree, has been heavily involved. She was instrumental in gathering support for the Turner family, after contacting the family and creating the Facebook page "Turner Family Support" (<https://www.facebook.com/turnerfamilysupport>). She contacted Selena Fox with the details of the case, at which point they formed the task force between the various organizations, and together were able to bring about a positive resolution for this family in less than 10 days. We are proud that Lady Charissa is associated with CST.

Church of the Spiral Tree was honored to be able to provide assistance to the Turner family in Bowden, Georgia. CST was able to offer funds from our Community Relief Fund for immediately-needed gas, groceries, and repairs to the family's home, and aided by Pagan Assistance Fund Grove (PAF, CST's newest grove), has also donated furniture, food, and clothing to the family. Dragon Hills Grove is providing labor and materials for needed repairs. PAF is giving toys to the family for Yule that were donated to PAF's Toys for Yule Program; Green Gate Grove and Dragon Hills Grove each collected quite a few toys over the past few months. CST also gave the Turner family a complementary one-year family membership, so that the family knows that they are not alone; that Pagans are a community that help provide and care for their own. As members, the family is automatically eligible for assistance through the CST Community Relief Fund which is designated specifically for CST members as funds are available. Further monetary donations to either CST's Community Relief Fund or to PAF would be appreciated, so that more help can be offered as needed, not only to the Turner family, but to other Pagan families in need.

## **Children Have Rights Too!!!**

**Submitted by Anonymous on Sat, 12/03/2011 - 11:04pm**  
<http://atlanta.indymedia.org/local/children-have-rights-too>

Christopher Turner, an 11 year old student from Bowden, Georgia, is your every day kid. He plays basketball down the street with his friends, he is a straight A student, and he likes to go to church every Wed. with his friends because he finds it fun and like to socialize. What makes a straight A student who loves school to be fearful of returning to school?? Bullying, plain and simple.

When bullying happens it is usually taken care of by the school, but what happens when a mother's cry for help gets no answer? What happens when the faculty at the school are the ones doing the bullying? Nothing apparently, except for even more discrimination and harassment.

Towards the end of October the Turner family was getting very excited for Halloween, or for them Samhain. For them it is not just a time to get free candy and dress up for a night, but rather it is a holiday to give thanks and to remember ancestors for the lives they lived. Samhain fell on a Monday, and like any other religious holiday, Christopher did not attend school. The next day Christopher's teacher, Mrs. Ross, pulled him out of class and proceeded to drill him about Paganism, ending the conversation with "Paganism is not a religion." Remember, this is an 11 year old student, with no parent present while being harassed about his religion by someone who is suppose to be an educator.

Christopher's mother, a single mother of three, immediately called the Carroll County Board of Education. She was transferred to Mr. David Goldberg, assistant Superintendent. He apologized and assured her that her son had every right to Freedom of Religion in school. He promised that a meeting would be set up between the teachers of all three of her children with the principal of the school present, but she was never given the opportunity to also be involved in these discussions. Is this what our school system has come to? Secret closed door meetings about our children, belittling students in front of their peers, pulling 11 year old children out of classrooms in order to bash them for what they believe in? It's a pretty disgusting way to run our education system, but I guess that's how Carroll County likes it. Who needs religious freedom anyway? Certainly not Pagans.

It didn't stop there for little Christopher's nightmare. Thinking the worst was behind, Christopher went back to school, but there was another surprise from Christopher's teacher. On November 29th Mrs. Ross informed her class that they would be doing an essay on "How Christmas started". In the good ol' fashion of history, she informed the class that they couldn't have anything on their report pertaining to Paganism. Intrigued, a female student in Christopher's classroom asked what paganism is. In response to the question, Mrs. Ross looked directly at Christopher, not the student asking the question, and replied "anything that is non-biblical is paganism." According to David Goldberg, assistant superintendent of Carroll County Board of Education, Christopher was assured religious freedom. Is this religious freedom? Can a school force a student to write only about "biblical" essays when his religion is different than that of Christianity?

Understandably, Christopher didn't know what to do, especially when later that day he got suspended on the bus ride home for speaking Spanish. He was speaking Spanish with other Spanish speaking students and was told by his bus driver, Mr. David Ayers, that he couldn't speak Spanish on the bus. Christopher being part Hispanic, continued speaking with his friends, who were not given the same warning. After being kicked off the bus and being given two days of ISS (in school suspension), his mother was told by the bus driver "If he (Christopher) continues to speak in a language that I can not understand then he will get in trouble." Not only will this 11 year old child be bashed by his teacher for his religion, but now he will get suspended for speaking a language that he has every right to speak. Is this YOUR America?? If you can stand for this type of treatment for our children then our country is in serious trouble.

Since this time, Christopher has been back to school once. His mother has tried to call his teacher and Mr. Goldberg, but no one will call them back or give them the time of day. Christopher cries every night thinking he has to return to this bullying and discrimination from the same people he feels should be there to protect him. It is sad that with everything children have to overcome in this day and age, that they have to be fearful of the one thing that is there to give them an opportunity in life. We can not stand for this!

This family is in need of help. Please call and blow up the phone lines and email boxes of the people responsible for leaving this child fearful of attending school. No one should have to deal with this type of harassment!

## **Statement from NGS, CoG, DLC, LLL, Circle Sanctuary December 7, 2011**

After concerns spread about some problems with accommodating Pagan students needs at Bowdon Elementary School (BES), there was an overwhelming show of community support for the Turner family of Carroll County in western Georgia, USA. Many local Pagans and associated organizations reached out to assist the Turners by providing emotional support and offering practical advice. The Turners have been deeply touched by this out-pouring of spirit and wish to express their sincerest gratitude.

In addition, a Task Force of local and national Pagan organizations have come together to help resolve issues between the Turners and BES. The Task Force also hopes to provide the school with Pagan accommodation information and materials with the hopes of avoiding misunderstandings and other problems in the future. Represented in this group are the North Georgia Solitaries (NGS), both the local and national chapters of the Covenant of the Goddess, Circle Sanctuary and Lady Liberty League.

Currently, Carroll County Schools, led by the assistant superintendent, has expressed an active interest in resolving the current tensions and is planning to meet with Ms. Turner. The family and the Task Force are requesting that those with concerns about their situation do not directly contact the school or its employees. It is important that everyone involved have the maximum space needed to focus on resolving this conflict in a



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positive way. However, all concerned individuals are welcome to show their support for the Turners through the Turner Family Support Facebook fan page or through the simple use of prayers and energy toward a peaceful resolution and healing.

# **Statement from Bowdon Elementary School, Carroll County School District, and members of the Turner Family Support Task Force as represented by Lady Liberty League, North Georgia Solitaries, Covenant of the Goddess, Dogwood Local Council, and Circle Sanctuary December 13, 2011**

The Turner Family, Task Force, and School District want Bowdon School to be a positive, supportive environment which fosters the emotional and educational growth of all students.

With education, cooperation, and open dialogue, all things are possible.

At times, a lack of life experience and/or other circumstances can make it difficult to perceive how words and actions might cause offense or upset. The parties involved acknowledge that words and deeds can be hurtful even without the intent of making them so.

In an effort to reach a positive and collaborative resolution to recent events, an alliance of the parties involved has come to pass which will set the stage for future education for school staff, students, and parents on the topic of equality and respect for all students and families in the Carroll County School System.

First, a sincere apology for recent events and misunderstandings has been given by School Administration and accepted by the family.

Second, the Bowdon Elementary School guidance Counselor will educate staff and students about honoring and accepting the differences that make us individuals.

Third, procedures have been put in place to ensure classroom activities don't alienate students. As part of this, the administration and teachers will have yearly training about the District's Code of Ethics and the responsibilities of each staff member to preserve the integrity of every students' rights.

We appreciate the hard work and open dialogue of all the parties involved to create this positive resolution. The Turner children will return to school. The Carroll County School District will continue to strive to be a place that fosters the emotional and educational growth of all students regardless of religion, race, national origin, gender or disability.

## **A Week in Bowden, Georgia: Our Final Thoughts Circle Sanctuary, The Church of the Spiral Tree, Covenant of the Goddess, Dogwood Local Council, Lady Liberty League, North Georgia Solitaries December 15, 2011**

**Text written by Miraselena, PIO of Dogwood local Council, Covenant of the Goddess**

In the wake of frustration, unity often rises. Out of the hands of chaos, humanity can shine. We found both to be true this week. The power of solidarity and the compassion of humanity broke free from a very unfortunate situation in the small, rural town of Bowden, Georgia; where a Pagan child allegedly experienced religious discrimination.

"I have worked on many religious freedom cases with Lady Liberty League since its founding in 1985. Never before have I seen a Task Force come together so quickly with so many different organizations involved. It was truly historic for our community," notes Reverend Selena Fox, founder of the Lady Liberty League.

The Bowden situation attracted the attention of both local and national Pagan organizations; all of whom simultaneously came together to assess and manage the problem as a single Task Force. Locally, these groups included Dogwood Local Council, North Georgia Solitaries, Pagan Assistance Fund, and The Church of the Spiral Tree. Nationally, the organizations involved were Covenant of the Goddess (National), Lady Liberty League and Circle Sanctuary.

"Many of us had known of each other but had never worked together. We are not only representatives of

different organizations, we are also from different Pagan traditions, or denominations, as it were. And we managed to work together to affect change,” added Lady Arsinoe, First Officer of Dogwood Local Council, local affiliate of Covenant of the Goddess.

And the work did pay off. On December 12, Carroll County School System officials and concerned School personnel met with the Turner Family, accompanied by members of the Task Force. The meeting lasted over 3 hours with much discussion and collaboration; after which, all parties felt satisfied with the results. In a statement issued on Dec 13th, the School Administration offered their apologies for the actions or lack of actions that led to this unfortunate point. And, within the privacy of the meeting, various school personnel expressed similar apologies directly to the family.

Moreover, the School Administration demonstrated a sincere willingness to work with the Turners going forward and to put systems in place to alleviate many of their concerns. Unfortunately, we are not at liberty to disclose the details of these actions because of the involvement of minors. Such private information is normally reserved for approved school personnel and primary caregivers, in this case, Ms. Turner.

However, we can say with confidence that, as a Pagan community, we have made significant steps forward in the education of our educators.

“In all my Civil Rights work within school systems, I have never seen an administration willingly to work toward a peaceful solution and then, collaborate on a joint statement. As Pagans, we need to fully understand and appreciate the magnitude of this aspect of the Bowdon case,” adds Selena Fox.

While these steps alone will not prevent future cases of religious discrimination, they are small steps on our path to freedom and full acceptance. And a small step forward is the beginning of the journey to understanding.

As the Turner children return to school, resume classes and reunite with friends, our thriving Georgia Pagan community will continue to offer them needed support. Both North Georgia Solitaries and The Church of the Spiral Tree have extended their hands of friendship and spiritual strength during this Yule season and beyond.

“I’ve found in my work through NGS...that there are many really good organizations in Georgia. I think the general public would be surprised to know how many of us are in this area,” remarked Lady Charissa of NGS, on the Turner Family Support fan page.

Dogwood Local Council, local affiliate of the Covenant of the Goddess, is making plans to provide their services to the Carroll County School System as an educational resource for future questions concerning Pagan students. And, Lady Liberty League and Circle Sanctuary will continue to monitor the Bowden situation as the transitions are made into the New Year.

Over the past week, we, the Task Force, have been absolutely amazed at the coming together of the local, national and international Pagan community through the Turner Family Support fan page. At this time of peace and unity, we thank each and every one of you for showing your support in whatever way was possible. The demonstration of solidarity and cooperation was historic and will not be forgotten. In addition, on last night’s Pagan Warrior Radio, Stephanie Turner, the child’s mother, personally thanked the entire Pagan community as well as the Task Force for all of our efforts.

Over the next few months, please continue to send your energy to the Turners and to all those victims of religious discrimination within our schools. In addition, send your positive energy toward the effective change in religious discrimination cases, so that we may all grow together.

While the strides we made this week will not universally end the problem, the demonstration of solidarity across traditions, geographical boundaries and organizations may have just begun a new chapter in our history. And, furthermore, this unification resulted in one of the most positive of gifts that we could give to ourselves – an open door to educate those people who educate the next generation. Not only is this a gift for our community today but, more importantly, it is a gift for the community of tomorrow.

Blessed Be and Yuletide Blessings!



Imbolc



# A Simple Imbolc Ritual

by: Pam Bustin

From: <https://pambustin.com/2013/02/01/a-simple-imbolc-ritual/>

Hello-Hallay it's a glorious day!

Imbolc—called Candlemas by some—is the Feast Day of St. Brigid. It is the First Rite of Spring—though it never really feels like that 'round these parts. Those of you who have read *Mostly Happy*

(<https://pambustin.com/the-work/mostly-happy/>), know that I have a particular fondness for Brigid. In lore, she is Celtic goddess of fire (the forge and the hearth), poetry, healing, childbirth, and unity. For me... Brigid brings healing and inspiration. And goats... but that's another tale.

Imbolc is a time to move TOWARDS Spring. To heal. To nurture that which is growing within. To make plans to bring forth something new. It is also a day of Weather Divination—as is the perhaps more well known—GROUNDHOG DAY. As with the groundhog—if today is bright and sunny and fair... we can look forward to at least 6 more weeks of winter. SIGH. Ah well... more snow means more water in the earth come spring, right?

I continue to mark the turning of the year with simple rituals. And so... I share this one with you.

As with my Yule Ritual... the core of this ritual can be adapted to any belief system and range from the simple to the elaborate. You can cast a circle and call the directions to enter your sacred space – or you can just sit and breathe and centre yourself. You can do it outside, in a special room, or at your kitchen table. All you really need is quiet, a pen and paper, a candle (make it white for Brigid if you like, but anything will do), and match or lighter to light the candle.

You will not burn the paper this time. So you don't need a fire proof container. You might like to sip a glass of milk at the end of the ritual. To honour Brigid and the season. At its heart this ritual is about new growth. About welcoming and nurturing inspiration and/or healing. Again—you can write few words or many—whatever works for you. This writing will be saved... tucked away in your journal, your Book of Shadows, or pinned up somewhere that you can see it. It is bringing your intention into the world.

Here it is in a nutshell. You can also grab a pdf version [HERE](#).

**A Simple Imbolc/Candlemas Ritual**  
**Dedicated to Brigid – Goddess of Fire, Patroness of Poetry, Smithcraft and Healing**  
**The First Rite of Spring**  
**Rejuvenate/Rededicate**



- Enter the sacred
- Connect to the divine – especially to the Creative/Healing essence
  - “Brigid, Blessed Healer, Keeper of the Fire of Creation, be with me tonight.”
  - “Lord of the Light, be with me tonight as I seek our Lady Brigid.”
- Light the candle to welcome the returning light
- Sit and consider what Imbolc and/or Brigid signify for you this year
  - Is there something you would heal in the coming months?
  - Something you would like to create in your life?
  - Something growing within you that you would like to nurture?
- Write down what you would like to heal/create/nurture
  - Write down the steps you could take towards this goal
  - Ask the Lady and the Lord to support your efforts in manifesting these goals in the coming months — as we move towards Spring.
- Take some time to rest in warmth and drift into the season knowing that Brigid will be with you until the wheel turns into Ostara
- When you are ready, Ground yourself and the power raised
- Return to the everyday

May the sun warm you.

Go easy -p



# 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.

**Holly Cannon:** (334) 520-4318, [wannakitkat06@yahoo.com](mailto:wannakitkat06@yahoo.com).

**Ken Laporte:** Former inmate and back in PA. Eclectic/nocturnal/solitary Witch. I am a gay male and will become a permanent member of CST because I want to help/advocate for Pagan/Wiccan inmates. 301 E. Erie Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19134; Darkmoonpunk13@gmail.com.

**Madeline W.S.:** [makalinakittenmother@yahoo.com](mailto:makalinakittenmother@yahoo.com).

**Matthew Thomas Parker #281518:** I am new to Wicca and would like to correspond with like-minded people. Easterling, 200 Wallace Dr., Clio, AL 36107.

**Neil Cole:** 9724 132nd Ave NE, Kirkland, WA 98033; [theelfneil@icloud.com](mailto:theelfneil@icloud.com).

**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 GA and can work in the Southeast USA. Contact: Nion011@aol.com, Leephether@gmail.com, or (470) 399-4928.

**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) 707-9076.

**Robert Kaczorowski:** <Bobbykacz@silverhands.net>.



## 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 before or 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 always 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 CST's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/Church-of-the-Spiral-Tree-81596562207> for up-to-date information, directions, and links to RSVP for each ritual. Rituals without at least five attending will be cancelled.

### **EVENT**

Imbolc Ritual

Ostara Ritual

May Day Ritual

### **DATE**

2-3-18

March 2018

May 2018

### **LOCATION**

UU Busch Center, Auburn, AL

Roxanna, near Auburn, AL

Roxanna, near Auburn, AL

**Board of Directors' Meetings:** The next BoD meeting will be held in February, near Auburn, Alabama. BoD meetings are held four times a year; check website at [www.spiraltree.org/upcoming.shtml](http://www.spiraltree.org/upcoming.shtml) for exact date and location of the next meeting.

## **Upcoming Alabama Festivals (Not CST events, admission fee charged, but CST members get a discount):**

**Moondance:** May 24-28, 2018, Roxanna, Alabama

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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED