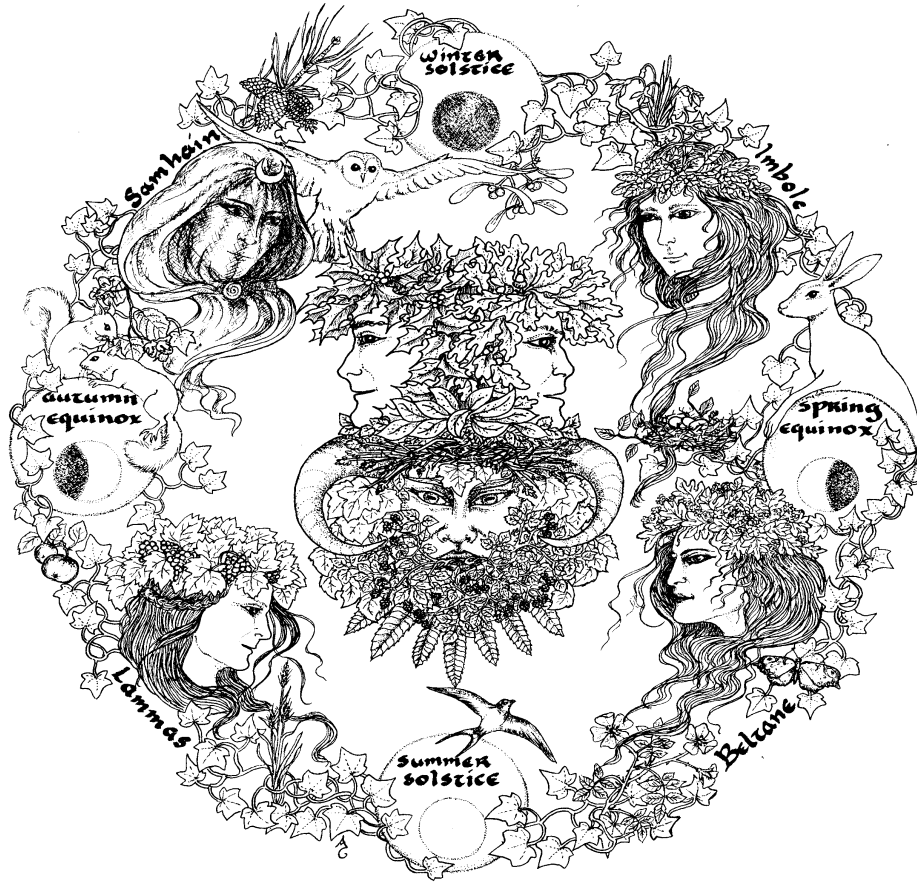


# The Pagan Federation



## *Witchcraft*

Information Pack



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## What is Witchcraft?

Many people think of Witchcraft as a magical practice - a means of spell-casting and looking into the future. Magic and divination can form part of Witchcraft, but only a part. Witchcraft as it is practised in the Western world today is a valid spiritual path.

Witches follow a nature-based spirituality and revere the 'Old Gods' - the pre-Christian deities of Europe. Witches worship principally the Goddess of the Earth and Triple Moon and her consort, the Horned God; but all Gods and Goddesses, including those of other faiths, are honoured as different aspects of the one Divine power.

The names by which Witches call their Gods vary in different traditions, but Aradia and Cerridwen are common for the Goddess and Cernunos (which means Horned One) and Herne for the God. In some traditions, however, the names of the Gods are considered so sacred that they are never spoken except in ritual and the Gods are known as the Lady and the Lord.

The rituals and practice of Witchcraft involve a re-linking with the life force of nature, on this planet and in the stars beyond. In country glades, in city flats, in suburban back gardens, groups of women and men meet at the full moons and at festival times to worship the Gods and to reawaken a sense of oneness with the universe, which has become lost in the frenzy of the modern world. By celebrating the forces of nature, in ourselves and in the world around us, we catch a glimpse of the origin of nature, contained within the world yet at the same time more than the world, expressed through time yet equally timeless.

Witches have a strong ecological awareness and sense of guardianship of the Earth. Since the Gods dwell within nature, Witches believe that our planet is sacred and must be protected from the ravages of humankind.

Witches also revere the wisdom of the past, believing there is much to learn from the myths and lore of our ancestors and that we can access these through ritual drama, poetry and song, and through living in harmony with the Earth and our fellow creatures.

*Modern witchcraft, in Europe and America, is a fact. It is no longer an underground relic of which the scale, and even the existence, is hotly disputed by anthropologists. It is no longer the bizarre hobby of a handful of cranks. It is the active religious practice of a substantial number of people. Just how large a number is not certain, because Wicca, beyond the individual coven, is not a hierarchically organized Religion. Where formal organizations do exist, as in the United States, this is for legal and tax reasons, not for dogmatic uniformity or the numbering of members. But the numbers are, for example, enough to support a variety of lively periodicals and to justify the publication of an ever-growing body of literature, on both sides of the Atlantic; so a reasonable estimate would be that the active adherents of Wicca now number tens of thousands, at the very least. And all the evidence suggests that the number is growing steadily. Wicca is both a religion and a Craft. As a religion its purpose - like any other religion - is to put the individual and the group in harmony with the Divine creative principle of the Cosmos, and its manifestations, at all levels. As a Craft, its purpose is to achieve practical ends by psychic means, for good, useful and healing purposes. In both aspects, the distinguishing characteristics of Wicca are its Nature-based attitude, its small-group autonomy with no gulf between priesthood and 'congregation', and its philosophy of creative polarity at all levels, from Goddess and God to Priestess and Priest.*

**Janet and Stewart Farrar**

### **EIGHT SABBATS FOR WITCHES**

The rites and practices of Witchcraft are not only a way of contacting the divine outside us in nature, but also a way of understanding our inner psyche and contacting the divine within. The importance of the rites lies not only in their outward form, but in their inner symbolism and meaning.

## **Traditions within Witchcraft**

The way of the Witch is not a series of dogmatic precepts or beliefs administered by a self-sustaining hierarchical bureaucracy; rather, we believe that we each have within us the capacity to reach out and experience the 'Mystery' - that ineffable oneness with life and the source of all life.

There are differing terms used to describe Witchcraft. It can be referred to as 'Wisecraft' 'Old Craft' or the 'Way of the Wise' One of the most recognised terms used is simply 'The Craft' which emphasizes that it is a skill and technique which must be learned. Notably one of the most prolific forms of modern Witchcraft is Wicca.

Some traditions have been handed down through families over generations. Others are more modern revivals. Some groups take their inspiration from the pre-Christian religions of certain ethnic groups (Celtic, Greek, Roman or Norse) others from the work of modern Witches - Gerald Gardner, Doreen Valiente, Alex Sanders, Robert Cochrane and others by seeking for inspiration and direction. In recent times, many women have turned to Witchcraft, finding in the role of the Witch an antidote to the lack of voice for women in the major world Religions. To whatever tradition Witches belong, they are united by their reverence for nature.

*Traditional Witches follow a form of Witchcraft that pre-dates the modern revival. It is sometimes known to its followers as the 'Old Craft'— a term which was first used in print by the hereditary magister or witch master Robert Cochrane (1931 to 1966) Today the term is widely used to describe the disparate forms of none Wiccan, pre-revivalist Witchcraft. The 'Old Craft' has no organised structure or central leadership except for a loose network of individuals and groups sharing common contacts and aims. While there are many differences within Traditional Witchcraft, there are also some quite striking similarities in the beliefs and practices of various traditions. Although some traditional crafters work in groups, many others are solitary practitioners following the path of the cunning man or wise women of olden times.*

**Mike Howard**

**2004**

## **Covens and Solo Witches**

Many Witches meet in small groups, called covens, which give room for each individual to contribute to the efforts of the group by self-knowledge and creative experimentation within the agreed group structure.

Not all those who practise Witchcraft do so in groups. Some prefer to develop their own personal practice by drawing from published sources and their own inspiration. *A Witch Alone* by Marian Green, a well-known writer on the Craft, points out the joys and difficulties of the solo path.

*The solo path is a traditional one, following in the footsteps of the oracle, the hermit, the shaman or Druid priest. Even those who are able to share the festival and healing rites with others may wish to develop their personal spiritual dimensions, gaining self-confidence and power as an individual witch as well as a member of a coven. But the solo path in any study is hard, and that which leads through the hidden worlds of Witchcraft perhaps even more so, because it is dealing with intangible things, with 'inner worlds', with gods and goddesses, and ancient myths and magic. ... Beginners will have to get used to dealing with the past, and the future, or aligning themselves with a new pattern of celebrations and with their own inner tides*

**.Marian Green**

**A WITCH ALONE**

## **Ritual Practices**

The roots of Witchcraft are very old, coming down to modern times through a variety of channels across the world. Much was lost when indigenous religions encountered pressure from Christianity and went underground in order to survive. To follow the old Pagan religions became a capital offence, and even the recording of these practices was risky.

The Pagan mystery religions all but disappeared when the outer forms of the Pagan religion were suppressed and their traditions were no longer preserved. Parents handed some traditions on to children, but through the centuries parts were lost or changed, and, of course, many new parts were created. These survivals, partly esoteric, through families and secret groups, and partly exoteric, through folk customs, have combined with research into the Old Ways to provide a rich foundation for the modern Craft.

### **Rites**

Witches hold rituals according to the turning of the seasons, to the tides of the moon, and to personal needs. Wiccans and some other branches of modern Witchcraft observe eight major seasonal festivals called the Sabbats. Four are solar festivals - the equinoxes and solstices. Four are Celtic festivals - Imbolc (Candlemas - February 1), Beltane (May Eve - 30 April), Lughnasadh (Lammas - 1 August) and Samhain (Hallowe'en - 31 October). Wiccans also hold rituals known as 'Esbats' at the full moon.

Where possible, rites are conducted outside in natural settings. By firelight and to the sound of drumming and chanting, Witches enact simple rites to celebrate the seasons and the gift of life.

If season, climate and location dictate the use of indoor ritual, often these are in people's homes. Some Witches keep a special room in their house as a temple for their rites. Others use any room that is convenient.

Within some practices of Witchcraft rituals are performed in a consecrated ritual space marked out as a circle. Within the sacred circle, the main activities occur - the worship of the Gods, the practice of magic, celebration and feasting. These are solemn mysteries, but in 'Craft' ritual there is always a balance between 'mirth and reverence'.

When the worship, teaching or magical work is finished, the blessings of the Goddess and the God can be called upon. This is the beginning of the feasting. Dancing, singing and revelry are an important part of the festivities. Like our ancestors, we believe we share such ritual feasts with our Gods. Thus, a portion of food and wine or ale is always offered as a libation.

Once the feasting is finished, the circle is broken and becomes an ordinary space once more.

## Magic

Witches practise magic. Witches believe that the moon influences our psyche and that we are more magically powerful at the full moon.

The types of magic performed include spells for healing and for helping people with their everyday life problems and personal spiritual development. Whatever their purpose, all spells involve the channelling of energy to achieve results. Trance work, clairvoyance and scrying (reading images reflected from a mirror, crystal ball or other surface) are also commonplace.

Many Witches see themselves as guardians of the natural world and the community, and direct their magic accordingly.

Magic involves the conscious direction of the will and is thought to accomplish a goal without direct manipulation of the material world. Results may occur through the use of subtle energies not yet recognized by physical science, or alternatively through apparent coincidence. Whatever magic is done will change the practitioner in accordance with its aims.

Many Witches say that magic rebounds threefold upon its sender, others believe it rebounds tenfold. Therefore they are very careful to work magic only for positive ends.

## Witchcraft as a Spiritual Path

Witches see the practice of magic as an expression of their spirituality and in some working of the magical arts, magic is carried out as a profound spiritual discipline. The aim of this magic is not transformation of the outer world, but transformation of the inner - the spirit and soul of the Witch.

Many traditions of Witchcraft practise rites of initiation which are designed to awaken us spiritually and to unite them with the divine centre within ourselves. The processes of initiation take them through a guided journey whose route has been well-signposted by those who have gone before. This journey ends in what is the ultimate goal of all spiritual systems - unity with the Divine.

The Craft fosters the spiritual development of those who follow its many paths. In Wicca each Witch is a Priestess or a Priest and is encouraged to develop within him or herself the intuitive wisdom and skill needed to channel the universal forces into a form suitable for communion with the ordinary human mind.

Through the practice of the magical arts, individuals are able to expand their consciousness and penetrate more deeply into the mysteries of nature.

## Magical Tools

Ritual implements or 'magical tools' can be used in magical rites to facilitate a mood, attitude or atmosphere, helping to achieve the psychic state necessary for the consecration of a circle or the working of magic.

In Wicca important symbols are the altar items which represent the elements of earth, air, fire, water. A Pentacle (a disc, usually of metal, stone or wood) is often used to symbolize earth and its properties: stability, material wealth and practical affairs. A small dish of salt or earth can also be used. An incense burner, a bell or a sword can be used to represent air and its properties: communication, insight and understanding. A candle or wand may be used to symbolize the qualities of fire: vitality, change and energy. A chalice of water symbolizes that element and its properties: cleansing, regeneration and love.

There are tools which are important in other traditions. These include the ritual knife, often called an 'Athame' which is used to direct power (Witches often also have a second knife for cutting herbs or inscribing magical symbols in candles etc.)\* The cauldron, a symbol of the Goddess and of creation; the besom or broomstick, which is used to cleanse the sacred space and the Stang - a forked staff used to represent the Horned God.

\*Note: When transporting any knife away from your own home the Pagan Federation advises that you wrap it up very securely and keep it out of easy reach

## **Seasonal Festivals**

The changing seasons still touch our lives. During the ages when people worked more closely with nature just to survive, the power of nature had supreme recognition. Rituals and festivals evolved to channel these natural changes for the benefit of the community, ensuring a good sowing and harvest, bountiful hunting and wise visions.

In common with many earlier cultures, most Witches consider the festival days to begin at sundown and to end at the following sundown. Hence a Wiccan Sabbat such as November Eve (Hallowmass or Samhain) runs through the day of November 1st. Here follow the most popularly recognised festivals. However it is worth remembering that some Witches do prefer to watch the changing tides of nature and do not follow actual specified dates in the calendar.

### **October 31st: Samhain\* or Hallowe'en** **\*(Pronounced 'sow'in'.)**

The ancient Celts, and many Craft traditions, consider this their "New Year's Eve" It is the night when the barriers between the worlds of life and death are as thin as veils, allowing the dead to walk among the living to be welcomed and to feast with their kin. This is also the night when the Celtic God Manannon Mac Lir holds the Feast of Age, where those old in wisdom come to learn the inner Mysteries.

The night lengthens and Witches work with the positive aspects of darkness in the increasing starlight and moonlight. Chilled by the first breath of winter, Witches focus within themselves to look 'through the glass, darkly' and to develop their divinatory and psychic skills.

### **December 21st: Yule**

The sun is at its lowest point, the longest night of the year. In the midst of darkness, there is a change in the tide. The days cease to grow shorter and the Sun is reborn. It is a time for present-giving, festivities and rejoicing. We decorate the house with evergreen boughs and perhaps a tree, to celebrate the enduring life force and return of light to the earth.

### **January 31st: Imbolc [Oimlec] or Candlemas**

As the sun's ascent through the skies becomes visible, candles are lit to hasten its journey. Witches see these as symbols of their own regeneration. It is a time for turning inward to clear the way for personal spiritual rebirth. The first signs of new life begin to stir within the earth.

Imbolc is the holiday of the Celtic Fire Goddess, Bridget, whose threefold aspects rule smithcraft, poetry/inspiration and healing. Bridget's fire offers cleansing, tempering and renewal. 'Februum' is a Latin word meaning purification and atonement, thus naming the month a time of cleansing.

### **March 21st: Spring Equinox (Ostara)**

Day and night are equal, as Spring begins to quicken the earth reviving growth and new-born animals emerge to explore the world. Many people respond by feeling 'reborn' after the long nights and coldness of winter. The Germanic Goddess Ostara or Eostre, flies over the countryside leaving the eggs of new life and her fertile animal, the rabbit. Festivals for the Greek Goddess, Aphrodite, and the Roman Goddess, Venus, were held on April 1st.

### **April 30th: Beltane**

As the weather becomes warmer and the plant world blossoms, an exuberant mood prevails. In many rural areas folk danced around the Maypole, with its promise of fertility. In some traditions, the Maiden Goddess marries her lover, the Young God, Robin or Jack-in-the-Green, on this day.

May Day was the mid-point of a five-day festival to Flora, the Roman Goddess of flowers. May morning is said to be the magical time of greatest power for the element of water, when maidens would go out to bathe their faces in the morning dew before dawn, and healers would collect 'wild' water (dew, flowing streams or ocean water) to provide the base for healing drinks and potions in the year to come.



### **June 21st: Midsummer**

On this, the longest day of the year, light and life are abundant. Wiccans focus outward, experiencing the joys of plenty, celebrating the fullness of the season. Annual fairs and festivals are often held around this season.

In some traditions, the transformation of the Green Man into the Sun King, or a battle between the Gods of Light and Darkness is celebrated. Rhea, the Mountain Mother Goddess of Crete, was said to have breathed out all of creation at this season, which is also the festival of the Chinese Goddess of Light, Li.

### **July 31st: Lughnasadh\* or Lammas (Celtic - pronounced 'loonassah')**

This festival has two origins: it is one of the Celtic fire festivals inaugurated by the God Lugh in honour of his step-mother Tailtiu. It is also the Saxon Feast of Loaves, Lammas, at which the first of the grain harvest is consumed at a ritual meal. This time is also sacred to the Greek Moon Goddess, Artemis, personification of the moon and the timeless laws of Nature.

### **September 21st: Autumn Equinox (Mabon)**

This day sees light and dark again in equal balance, before the descent to the dark time. A harvest festival is held, thanking the Goddess for providing food for the coming winter.

## **The Wheel of the Year**

We return to Samhain, our starting point, having journeyed the 'Wheel of the Year' with its eight spokes: the four major agricultural and pastoral festivals marking solstices and equinoxes – begins and ends at Samhain.

For Wiccans and many Witches of differing traditions, the eight festivals are times for both celebration and communion with the powers of the Old Gods. They are times when the gates between the worlds are opened and the Gods join hand in hand with the dance of human life.

It is not surprising that many Craft festivals coincide with holidays of the Christian calendar. This is no accident. These points in the seasonal cycle were important community celebrations long before the advent of Christianity. They remained largely unchanged, though in name they were rededicated to Christian saints. This continuity in celebration over the centuries points to the deep spiritual truths which are celebrated at these times.

For Witches, the mysteries of the seasons can never be reduced to a simple written dogma or codified as absolute teaching or creed. Witchcraft is a mystery path or craft, founded upon traditions which lead each individual to seek a personal vision of the turning wheel of seasonal change. Each Witch must make his or her own journey of understanding by celebrating the seasons and walking in the ways of nature.

For Witches, the cycles of the natural world reveal the hidden yet ever present mysteries of nature. As Spring gives way to Summer, Autumn and Winter, so the Gods are revealed. The cycles of life and death, honoured.

## **Commonly-Asked Questions: With Answers**

**Q. "Is Witchcraft a Religion?"**

**A.** *"Yes and No Wiccans revere the Goddess and God and as such the practice of Wicca can be seen as a Religion. Other practitioners of Witchcraft describe it as a spiritual path and some as a "craft" to be learned.*

**Q. "Is Witchcraft a 'cult'?"**

**A.** *"No. A 'cult' is generally taken as a gathering of people who owe blind allegiance to one charismatic leader who ostensibly represents 'truth'. This is the antithesis of the Witchcraft experience. Most Witches come to the Craft through reading or through communing with Nature, later finding a like-minded group. Witches tend to be highly individualistic."*

**Q. "What form does the practice of Witchcraft take?"**

**A.** *"Practices range from elaborate ceremony through spontaneous ritual to simple meditation and vary from group to group. Dancing and ritual drama are often involved."*

**Q. "Do all Witches practise their craft in the same way?"**

**A.** *"No. Witchcraft is a highly individualistic practice which contains a minimum of dogma and a maximum of choice. In Wicca practitioners adhere to the following rule (though a stringent one, when you think about it) 'If it harm none, do as you will'. Most traditions, however, share many similarities such as a reverence for nature and the working of magic. "*

**Q. "Are only women Witches?"**

**A.** *"No. There are roughly equal numbers of women and men in the Craft, as the polarized working of Goddess and God is usually stressed in rituals. Some traditions, such as the Dianic, admit only women, and there are some male-only covens. A male Witch is simply called a Witch, never a 'warlock'."*

**Q. "Do Witches have a sacred book such as the Bible?"**

**A.** *"No! The Bible is a book containing the sacred writings of Christianity. The Craft is derived from Pagan folk-religion, and as a Mystery path, it stresses individual experience.*

*A Witch may keep a 'Book of Shadows', which contains rituals, discoveries, spells, poetry, herbal lore, etc, of interest to that person. Covens may keep a similar group book, and some traditions have basic information which is passed on to new members by copying from the group's book; but there is no one document taken by all Witches as authoritative, as in Judaism, Christianity or Islam. The 'Book of Shadows' is so called because the rites within it are but a 'shadow' of the personal experience they represent."*

**Q. "Do Witches cast spells?"**

**A.** *"Yes, Witches do cast spells but since many Witches notably Wiccans, believe that what is sent out returns to the sender, perhaps magnified threefold, they tend to be very careful with spells. A spell is a formula or series of steps to direct the will to a specific end. Energy is drawn from the Earth and from the Witch's own power, concentrated, and sent out into the world. It is believed that with the proper training and intent, human minds and hearts are fully capable of performing all the magic and miracles they are ever likely to need, through the use of natural psychic power."*

**Q. "Do Witches work naked?"**

**A.** *"Some do, while others wear robes or everyday clothes. Nakedness is typical of Mystery Religions. Naked initiates are shown in Roman murals. Nakedness symbolizes the true self laid bare before the Gods, and it is believed by some Witches to facilitate the transfer of vital power.*

*Like western naturists and native peoples worldwide, Witches do not find nakedness - 'being skyclad' - shameful; nor do they assume it is automatically to do with sex.*

**Q. "What place does sex have in rituals?"**

**A.** *"Sex is seen in a positive rather than a negative light, an expression of the great creative polarity of Goddess and God, the equal and opposite forces of Nature. Within many rituals sex is represented symbolically as the "Great Rite" and is symbolised with the Athame and Chalice. Sex should only take place between consenting adults, Witchcraft is not an excuse for amoral or criminal behaviour.*

**Q. "'Witch' and 'Witchcraft' are negative terms. Why continue to use those names?"**

**A.** *"Virtually every Religion can look back into the dark (and recent) corners of history and find a period when it was held in disrepute. Catholics suffered discrimination in mainland Britain up until the last century. Just because a group was persecuted and maligned at some point is no reason for it to change its name."*

**Q. "Do Witches worship the Devil?"**

**A.** *"Absolutely not. The concept of the Devil, the personification of a supreme spirit of evil, is a creation of Jewish and Christian theology.*

*Historically, the Gods of an older religion are always branded as the devils of a newer one. This process occurred in Europe with special vigour from the tenth century onwards. When Christians started to persecute the followers of Horned Gods such as Faunus, Pan and Cernunnos, Satan began to be depicted with horns and hooves.*

*Satanism is a Judaeo-Christian heresy, the profaning of one of these religions, rather than an independent religion, Pagan or otherwise. Witchcraft is derived not from Christianity but from the Pagan religions of Europe. It has nothing to do with Christianity, its Gods or demons. Witches do not believe in the Christian Devil, and certainly do not offer homage to it.*

**Q. "Do Witches take part in Satanism or Black Magic?"**

**A.** *"No. Satanism is a Christian concept. As for black magic, Witches believe that evil rebounds upon the evil-doer. There is no incentive to perform evil."*

## Definitions

### **Coven:**

A group of Witches traditionally limited to thirteen members or less, who meet together on a regular basis to celebrate the festivals and to work magic.

### **Esbat:**

A minor coven meeting, usually held at the Full and/or New Moon. (From French s'esbattre - to frolic.)

### **Magic:**

The art of bringing about change in the material world, or within the consciousness of the practitioner, through the use of will and subtle mental energies, aligned with the forces of the universe.

### **Mystery Religion:**

A religion of personal experience, usually entered only by initiation, which aims at direct contact with deity, rather than at the harmony, accordance with or obedience to deity enjoined by the exoteric, public religion which contains it. Others examples: Sufism in Islam, Tantra in Hinduism and Buddhism, the Chassidim in Judaism.

### **Occult:**

From the Latin, 'hidden or secret': the study of hidden or secret knowledge.

### **Pagan:**

Originally from the Latin 'paganus', meaning a country dweller; later a term of mild abuse used by urban Christians for provincials who still worshipped the old Classical pantheon. Now used for a follower of an Earth religion. **Neo-Paganism:** A group of modern Earth religions. Practices are derived from pre-Christian Paganism, often with input from their own contemporary theologians.

### **Sabbat:**

One of the eight major Wiccan seasonal festivals which occur at approximately equal intervals throughout the year, timed by the solstices and equinoxes. (From Babylonian 'sha-bat': heart's rest, the monthly feast-day of the Goddess Ishtar; later introduced into Hebrew and thence into English.)

### **Wicca:**

The term is Old English in origin, but the exact derivation is obscure. The plural Wiccan has come to be used as a singular noun, plural Wiccans. It is a style of modern Witchcraft.

### **Witchcraft:**

A magical and mystical spiritual path or practice including diverse traditions derived from many cultural sources. Current traditions include: Gardnerian Wicca, Alexandrian Wicca, Hereditary Witchcraft, Traditional Witchcraft or Old Craft, Dianic Craft and Solitary (Hedge Witch).

## **Becoming a Witch**

Some people come to the Craft from Witch families, having been raised in one of the long-standing family traditions, or from parents who are members of one of the Craft revivals.

Others come to the Craft having had psychic and mystical experiences. They may come from other religious backgrounds or from no religion at all; but often they will have felt since early childhood that they were Witches.

Others discover the Craft through chance contact with a Witch, from reading a book or article, or from a television programme.

By whatever route people come, they tend to share a common experience of feeling as though they have arrived 'home'. They experience a sense of déjà vu when they first encounter the Craft. Learning the Craft can be a re-learning, a remembering of something buried deep within their psyche.

If you are interested in finding out more about the Craft, you are recommended to first read some of the books on the Introductory Reading List and to obtain some Craft magazines. These will give you an idea of whether this is the right path for you.

Many Witches prefer to follow their path alone. They seek to commune with nature in her woods and fields and to work the ways of the Wise Woman or Cunning Man. While they may seek an individual teacher, they do not feel the need to join a Coven. For those drawn to the solitary path, Marian Green's and Rae Beth's books are recommended.

If you decide to join a coven, this may require persistence. Witchcraft is not a missionary religion and does not seek converts. It is more difficult to find Wiccan or Craft groups than to contact most known religions and, at present in Europe, Witches have no public temples. However, Witches believe that anyone who sincerely seeks contact with the Craft will be drawn to the right source.

The Way of the Wise is a hard one. Despite what you may have read elsewhere, Witchcraft does not provide a means to gain magical power over others, a cloak for sex-orgies, or a carte blanche for an amoral way of life. Witches face considerable ignorant prejudice, while the Wiccan requirement to 'harm none' is a demanding one. Thus, no bona fide coven will consider admitting anyone until it is absolutely satisfied that the individual is right for the Craft and the Craft is right for the individual.

Most Covens will not initiate anyone under eighteen; unless perhaps they are part of a family tradition. For those who become interested in Witchcraft in their teens, there may be a long wait before they can pursue their chosen spiritual path.

There are reputable organizations which run conferences; study groups and can provide contacts with covens and groups. Some Witches organize discussion groups or teach classes, at which people may form their own opinions about whether The Craft is for them. There are also periodicals and networks through which a seeker can make contact with the larger Craft community.

The method of entering a coven will depend on the tradition. In many traditions, entry is through an initiation ceremony. Sometimes this can happen relatively quickly, but traditionally at least a year and a day must expire before a new Witch is admitted and a longer training period may be required.

Joining a coven is about finding a group of people with whom you feel compatible, but as in all aspects of life, unscrupulous people may masquerade as spiritual teachers in order to exploit others.

Use your common sense when choosing a Coven or working group, just as you would when choosing any group of people with whom to work and be friends. It is better to be a solo Witch than to try and join a group where you do not trust or feel in harmony with its members.

## The Essence of the Craft

Witchcraft has no 'creed' or statement of faith to which we must adhere. Books can provide insights into the Craft, but the true essence can be appreciated only by participating in the simple beauty of the rites. One of the most poetic parts of Wicca is the 'White Moon Charge' written by Doreen Valiente. This tells us much more than any book about the way of the Goddess.

*"Hear ye the words of the Star Goddess, She in the dust of whose feet are the hosts of Heaven; whose body encircleth the universe."*

For I am the beauty of the green earth  
And the white moon amongst the stars,  
And the mystery of the waters,  
And the desire of the heart of man,  
I call unto thy soul  
Arise and come unto me;  
For I am the soul of nature  
Who gives life to the Universe.  
From me all things proceed,  
And unto me they must return:  
And before my face,  
Beloved of Gods and man,  
Thine innermost divine self  
Shall be enfolded in the rapture of the infinite.  
Let my worship be in the heart that rejoices  
For behold all acts of love and pleasure are my rituals.  
Let there be beauty and strength  
Power and compassion  
Honour and Humility  
Mirth and Reverence, within you.  
And those who seek to know me, know  
That your seeking and yearning shall avail thee not,  
Unless you know the mystery:  
If that which you seek you find not within yourself,  
You will never find it without;  
For behold I have been with you from the beginning,  
And I am that which is attained at the end of desire.

***Blessed Be***

## Books on Witchcraft

- Rae Beth           **Hedge Witch: a Guide for the Solitary Practitioner.**  
Hale 1990  
Hedge Witch: Guide to Solitary Witchcraft.  
Hale 1992  
**The Hedge Witch's Way: Magical Spirituality for the lone spell caster.**  
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## The Pagan Federation

The Pagan Federation is an international organization, which is run by volunteers. It was founded in 1971 to provide information and counter misconceptions about Paganism. It helps and supports members of the Pagan community and campaigns on issues which affect Paganism.

The aims and objectives of The Pagan Federation are:

To seek to support all Pagans in their personal and public life, to help ensure that they have the same rights as the followers of other beliefs and members of other religions.

To promote a positive profile for Pagans and Paganism and to provide information on Pagan paths and beliefs to the media, official bodies and the greater community.

To facilitate effective communication, education and dialogue within and between Pagan communities and with non Pagans, through publications and events.

The Pagan Federation promotes and defends Paganism in all its many forms, it provides contact between Pagan groups and genuine seekers; it promotes contact and dialogue between various branches of European Paganism and other Pagan organizations worldwide; it provides practical and effective information on Paganism to members of the public, the media, public bodies and Government Departments.

The Pagan Federation works for the rights of Pagans to worship freely and without censure. Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to which Britain is a signatory, states:

*'Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.'*

Some of the main work of the organisation includes Hospital Visiting, Prison Ministry Work and Interfaith liaison. We provide educational resources for education authorities and other public and private agencies. We also have an international network of contact points to supply information for the media and the establishment.

Within the United Kingdom the Pagan Federation is divided into thirteen districts. Each district has a District Manager, Regional Co-Ordinators and Local Co-Ordinators to help and support the members of their Pagan community. We strive to support both individual Pagans and Pagan organizations alike.

Local meetings called 'moots' – for socialising and debate – have developed. These take place in pubs, coffee bars and private houses. In addition, most districts also produce their own local contact lists and magazine/newsletter, for their members.

Pagan Federation International covers Europe, North America, South America, Canada and Australia. It serves as a contact point for Pagans outside of the United Kingdom and Ireland.

The Pagan Federation publishes a quarterly journal, *Pagan Dawn*, formerly *The Wiccan*, founded in 1968. It arranges members-only and public events, and maintains personal contact by letter with individual members and with the wider Pagan community. There is an annual convention and there are district and regional gatherings throughout the year. Membership is open to anyone who is 16 years of age or over and agrees with the three principles.

Annual subscription rates to *Pagan Dawn* are available in the current issue, or by sending for an introductory leaflet. If you wish to become a member, a membership application form can be requested by post or downloaded from our Website.

A sample magazine is available at a cost of £3.00 UK, £4.50 overseas (including post and packing). Only sterling cheques can be accepted. Please enclose SAE (UK only) or 2 International Reply Coupons (available from large post offices worldwide) when writing.

If you would like further help or information please write to the following address, enclosing an SAE and allowing 28 days for a response:

The Pagan Federation  
BM Box 7097  
London  
WC1N 3XX

Visit our Website at: [www.paganfed.org](http://www.paganfed.org)

**General Help and Information Telephone Line: 07986 034387**

**The Pagan Federation: In Service to Paganism and the Pagan Community**