

WICCA BEHIND BARS

AN INTRODUCTION
TO PRACTICING WICCA IN PRISON

by
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Mother Earth Ministries - ATC

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Affiliated with the internationally-recognized Wiccan body, the Aquarian Tabernacle Church based in Index, Washington, **Mother Earth Ministries** is a small, informal and diverse group of Wiccan/Pagan clergy working to facilitate the study and practice of Wicca (and other Pagan religions) in county, state and federal prisons. Currently, MEM volunteers visit inmates in the Tucson units of Arizona's state prison system. Others write – as clergy and mentors – to inmates throughout Arizona and in most other states.

Mother Earth Ministries' mission is to provide accurate information about Wicca for the potentially interested, and to facilitate Pagan prisoners' study and practice of Wicca and other Neo-Pagan religions. We offer brochures about Wicca, Ásatrú, and Druidry, and flyers about various aspects of Wiccan and Neo-Pagan belief and practice. We do *not* offer correspondence courses, sell or provide books or other religious items, or match inmates with pen-pals.

For more information about Wicca or about prison ministry, write to us at Post Office Box 35906, Tucson, Arizona, 85740-5906. Please include your return address in the body of your letter.

Brave heart and blessed be!

About the Authors

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About this Booklet

MEM no longer makes hard copies of *Wicca Behind Bars* available. **Permission is granted to copy the booklet, but only in its entirety, without additions, deletions or changes, and with credit given to Mother Earth Ministries-ATC.**

For a more complete guide to practicing Wicca in prison or places/circumstances that limit what is allowed, see *Enchantment Encumbered: the Study and Practice of Wicca in Restricted Environments*. MEM does not sell it directly, but it's available on line through **www.CreateSpace.com** and through Amazon. It's available by snail-mail from The Blue Eyed Witch (P.O. Box 475, Tombstone, AZ, 85638) for \$17 plus \$2 shipping/handling.

Chaplains and other Pagan prison ministries interested in making *Enchantment Encumbered* available to inmates are invited to contact us as Scribe@MotherEarthMinistries.org.

Part One

AN OVERVIEW OF THE CRAFT

Introduction

Wicca is a 20th-century interpretive revival of paleo-European Paganism. Wicca's modern roots can be documented from the late 18th century, and the religion took its present name and form in the middle of the 20th century from Gerald Gardner.

Today's Witchcraft is both enriched and prejudiced by stories, until recently accepted as fact, about persecution and survival through the Inquisition. Tales of medieval Witches' survival-by-secrecy are almost certainly *not* literally true; but even today, in the era of civil liberties, some Wiccans must stay in the broom-closet. Slowly, modern Witches are coming out of hiding to let the truth be known.

Wicca is not the only Western Pagan religion, but it is the best known. Others include the Norse Ásatrú, Greco-Roman and Egyptian traditions and Druidism, Native North and South American paths and Afro-Caribbean faiths. (Many incarcerated Ásatrúar follow practice legitimately, but some forms of Ásatrú or Odinism found in prison are far from the Norse Traditions practiced outside. Bluntly, aggressive, racist/sexist white supremacy is unwelcome in most American Pagan communities.)

Gerald Gardner introduced modern Wicca to the public when the last of England's anti-Witchcraft laws were repealed in 1951. In the early 1960's, Raymond Buckland brought a modified version of Gardnerian Wicca from England to the U.S. The Craft has been growing world-wide ever since.

Witchcraft? or Wicca? or both?

Some people use the terms interchangeably, while others distinguish between the practice of Witchcraft and the religion of Wicca. Mother Earth Ministries' volunteers like to recognize a difference.

Witchcraft is as old as humanity, and still uses spells, charms, talismans, potions, invocations, chants, and meditation to meet both daily and extraordinary needs with the magic of the universe. Witchcraft can be part of any religion, but it can also work non-religiously.

Wicca is a religion and a life path. All Wiccans are Witches, but not all Witches are Wiccan. And though it's uncommon, the religion of Wicca *can* be practiced without working magic.

Wicca is initiatory, decentralized and non-hierarchical, in keeping with the Pagan quest for unity with Nature. We use initiation rites to teach those mysteries – realizations about the

universe, sometimes called “Oh!” or “Aha!” experiences – that cannot be fully shared with words. There is no central registry for Wiccans or other Pagan worshipers; but it’s said that for every Witch who belongs to a coven, there are at least 10 solitaires (Witches practicing alone).

We know each other through networks, newsletters and gatherings. And except in agreed-upon situations, we have no hierarchy. There is no administrative queen or king of the Witches. (In Circle, yes, the Priestess is in charge; but in the mundane business of the coven, her vote is no weightier than anybody else’s.)

Although Wiccans in many states (and around the world) are still working to establish and protect our civil rights, we have already achieved much. For instance, Wicca is an officially recognized “dog tag” religion as far as the United States’ armed services are concerned. The Federal government, at least, has accepted that it is a “real” religion. Your right to practice Wicca, even in prison, is protected under the First Amendment and by the Religious Land Use and Incarcerated Persons Act (RLUIPA) of 2000. (That doesn’t mean it will be easy. If it were always easy, we wouldn’t call it *exercising* our rights!)

Neo-Paganism

Wicca, Ásatrú and other Heathen faiths, and Druidry may all be classified as Neo-Pagan religions. Although each is distinct in theology and practice, these three faiths have much in common, and followers recognize their kinship as modern Pagans. *Neo* means “new,” and the term Neo-Pagan lets us know we’re talking about modern-day religions distinct from classical Paganism – like ancient Greek and Roman and Egyptian – and even earlier practices. (Ásatrú and Druidry *are* older than Wicca, but *no* religion survives over centuries without change.)

Neo-Paganism is a broad term that refers not only to Wicca, Druidry, and Ásatrú but also to a number of lesser-known forms of non-Abrahamic spiritual beliefs and practices, like Goddess-worship and Neo-Shamanism, along with a variety of solitary (individual) Nature-based practices.

“Neo-Paganism” is a religious *category*, similar to “Christianity” in that it encompasses a fairly wide variety of faiths, different in some ways and alike in others. Thus, it’s appropriate to recognize Neo-Pagan religions individually, and also appropriate to acknowledge that they are related.

The differences among them justify providing separate Wiccan, Ásatrú, and Druidic services when this is possible; and their similarities make it reasonable to allow Neo-Pagan inmates, when they wish to do so, to attend services of any Neo-Pagan path when those of their own faith are not offered.

There is a (slowly) growing number of Pagan prison ministries, many of which serve followers of all these religions. In each faith, some priest/esses may be “cross-trained,” which means they may be competent to conduct services for more than one Neo-Pagan faith.

In many communities, services open to the public are attended by members of many faiths, and some community rites combine Wiccan and/or Druid and/or Ásatrú elements. We appreciate the differences among our religions, but still feel a kinship and solidarity as Neo-Pagans.

Part Two

WICCAN BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

The Goddess and the God

We worship differently than our ancestors did – indeed, we will never know exactly how our ancestors worshiped! – but the idea that the Gods are part of the universe and not separate from it has come down to us intact. (It’s super to be natural, and that’s as supernatural as it gets.) Ritual still attunes Witches to natural cycles. Sabbats still re-enact the God’s life cycle on the Wheel of the Year. Moon Circles, called Esbats, still honor the Goddess’ triple aspect.

Our primary image of deity is female. In nature, the female of the species produces the offspring, and so we conclude that *we* are the children of a Mother Goddess. Our God is also Her child. The Goddess is all that is generative and eternal, and the God is all that dies and is reborn.

She is Everything, the creative void, the grave and womb together. She is a triple Goddess: Maiden, Mother and Crone, represented by the waxing, full and waning phases of the Moon. She is the eternal, generative Source, the “soul of Nature that gives life to the universe,” as the *Charge of the Goddess* puts it.

He is the grain we harvest in the Autumn and replant in the Spring. He is the buck we hunt to eat this winter, reborn in next year’s fawns. He is our experience and our inheritance, physical, psychological and spiritual. He is symbolized in many ways. We see Him in the Sun’s annual waxing and waning, in the greening and fading vines and grains, and in wild animals with horns or antlers. The Sun and the Stag are His most common symbols. (By the way, He has nothing to do with the Christian Satan. Wicca does not recognize “the devil.”)

One of Wicca’s most beautiful pieces of liturgical material is called *The Charge of the Goddess*. The *Charge* is a poetic explanation of the nature of deity and our relationship to it, and is frequently read or recited when the Goddess has been invoked. Originally written by the late Doreen Valiente for Gerald Gardner, the *Charge* has been modified slightly by many of the Traditions that use it. The version below was modified by Lady Garr.

Listen to the words of the Great Mother, Who of old was known as Artemis, Astarte, Isis, Cerridwen, Diana, Brigid, and by many other names:

Whenever you have need of anything, once in the month, and better it be when the Moon is full, you shall gather together in some sacred place, and adore the spirit of Me, queen of all the Witches. You who would learn magic, but have not yet gained the deepest secrets, there I will teach you. There you shall be truly free.

Sing! Feast! Dance! Make music and love, all in My honor, for Mine is the spirit of ecstasy, and Mine also is joy on Earth. Love unto all beings is My law. Keep pure your highest ideal; strive ever towards it, and let nothing turn you aside. For Mine is the secret door that opens upon the Land of Youth, and Mine is the cup of the wine of life, that is the Cauldron of Cerridwen and the holy Grail of immortality. On Earth, I give knowledge of the spirit eternal, and beyond death, I give peace, freedom and reunion with those who have gone before. Nor do I ask aught of sacrifice, for behold, I am the Mother of all things, and My love is poured forth upon the Earth.

Now hear the words of the Star Goddess, the dust of Whose feet are the hosts of heaven, and Whose body encircles the universe:

I, who am the beauty of the green Earth, and the white Moon amongst the stars, and the mystery of the Waters, and the desire in all hearts, call upon your soul. Arise and come unto Me, for I am the soul of Nature that gives life to the universe. From Me all things proceed, and unto Me they must return. 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, honor and humility, mirth and reverence within you. And you who seek to know Me, know that your seeking and yearning shall avail you not, unless you know the Mystery: that if that which you seek you find not within yourself, you shall 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.



The earliest images of our Goddess, the Great Mother, are 60,000 years old. The earliest images of our God, the Horned Hunter, are 35,000 years old. We may understand them differently than our ancestors did, but these images are still meaningful and sacred today.

The Great Mother and the Horned Hunter have many aspects. Various cultures emphasize various “faces” of the Gods. Many Wiccans say “all Goddesses are one Goddess; all Gods are one God.” Others believe that each named deity is a distinct entity. What deities or aspects of deity – what forces of nature – are most important to people? That depends on where they live – what the land and the weather are like, who the neighbors are, what grows wild and what game is available. This is why there are so many pantheons, and so many names for the Gods.

The Elements

We consider the Elements – Earth, Air, Fire, and Water, as well as Spirit – to be holy, and we accord the essence or spirit of these Elements the same courtesy we show the Gods. Many of us address them as “Guardians of the Watchtowers” of the four Directions (North, East, South and West), or as “Old Ones” or “Powers” of their Directions. We also address these essences as “Guardians” of the Elements – Guardians of Earth, Air, Fire and Water. We call upon the Elements or Guardians to strengthen and guard our Circles and to bless and consecrate our Tools. Most of us use the symbols illustrated at the left to represent the Directions and Elements.



East
Air



South
Fire



West
Water



North
Earth

Other Beliefs

Wiccans say that life, the universe and everything is holy. We personify this concept of immanent deity as Goddess(es) and God(s). They are not in opposition, They're dancing; and Wicca's basic beliefs begin with this idea: life here and now is sacred, and the “dance of life” – the Spiral Dance – is holy.

⊗ Humanity's natural state is harmonious and “at one” with Nature.

⊗ There's plenty of ignorance and fear, and chemical imbalance, but no organized presence of “evil.”

⊗ This world and the spirit worlds (matter and energy) are equally wonderful and “good.” We also call this interconnectedness the “Web of Wyrd.” (Pronounce it “weird.” And yes, “wyrd” is the Anglo-Saxon origin of the modern word “weird.”)

⊗ We also believe that magic is a natural force, just like gravity. How you use it is your responsibility.

Sexual Attitudes

Because there's no conflict between the physical world and the spiritual world, there's no condemnation of our bodies and their functions or pleasures. The human body is beautiful, and sacred, not dirty or nasty or “bad.”

In Wicca, sexuality is an affirmation of life, and therefore sacred. Expressions of love between consenting adults are blessed acts. The skills of Witchcraft do not depend on gender or on sexual orientation. Male or female, gay or straight, you can learn to ground and center, shield yourself, visualize, and meditate. You can commune with the God/dess. Study and mastery of

other Craft skills and lessons should be unaffected too. On the whole, Wicca has no problem with homosexuality or other alternative lifestyles. Of course, you don't have to be homosexual to be a Wiccan, nor does being Wiccan mean that a person is gay or lesbian.

Some Traditions believe that magic is best powered by the polarity of male and female working partners. However, most Witches agree that there is a little of both Goddess and God in all of us. Jungian psychology has asserted this for decades now, so the public is not unfamiliar with the idea. What it means is that sometimes women can be "masculine" and sometimes men can be "feminine."

In everyday terms, this means women can change tires and men can change babies without betraying our genders. In Wiccan terms, it means that both men and women can raise and work with masculine and feminine energy. That's because when we talk about "feminine" energy, we mean "receptive" energy; what we call "masculine" energy is "projective." A practiced Witch should be able to draw upon whichever is needed. As a battery needs both its poles to function, so do we. We don't have to be typecast in our Circles.

Even Traditions with very strict rules about gender balance are less exclusive now than they were ten or even five years ago, and are beginning to tolerate varying sexual orientations. There is nothing in the liturgical material to suggest any condemnation or prohibition. The eclectic Pagan community has never had a problem with gay and lesbian Witches, and if you run into prejudice, it's probably that other person's personal problem.

Sin and Evil

There is no place in Wicca's cooperative universe for a conscious, supernatural, capital-E Evil. There's ignorance, there's fear – and greed and selfishness – and there's unbalanced brain chemistry, but there's no sentient source or reservoir of Evil. In fact, there's *nothing* supernatural because "Nature" is everything. Everything is connected to everything else. Harmony is humanity's natural state.

There is no concept of "original sin" in Wicca. There is no idea that mortal life is dirty or "bad." You can do things wrong, and do wrong things, but the God/dess is not watching you, waiting for you to make a mistake so S/he can punish you.

The Goddess and God are cooperative partners, not adversaries. We do not see mortality as a separation or a punishment, but as an experience that expands and enhances the eternal. Wiccan theology¹ is organized around the complementary principles of Individuality and Wholeness.

¹ We spell "thealogy" with an "a" so that it means "study of the Goddess and Her relationship to us and the rest of life." The spelling is attributed (by Starhawk) to Naomi Goldberg.

Reincarnation

Most Wiccans believe in reincarnation. We don't aim to escape the mortal cycle, we aim to explore and enjoy it.

How does it work? Well, there are lots of answers to that question. Some folks think you always come back on Earth, as human; some say your gender switches every time. Some say you can come back as an animal, or to another planet. Some say you'll always be with your same core group, and some say you meet new souls all the time.

Now, in the natural world we know, there's lots of ways that life reproduces and returns after death. One way or another, new life springs from the compost of death – and it seems likely that reincarnation works in more than one way, too. What matters is that when we expect to come back, we try to get the work of each life – inner and outer – done before we go, so it's not waiting for us when we come back.

Environmental Issues

By meeting at the Moons and celebrating the Sabbats we keep ourselves attuned to natural cycles, including our own and each other's. Living in tune with our environment and our companions is one purpose in life.

Varied though the forms of life on this planet are, we have more in common with them than we have differences. We believe that our ancestors in faith, "cave men," felt a deep kinship with Nature, and Wicca offers us a chance to reestablish that deep kinship now. As part of this, many Witches are committed to environmental issues and participate in recycling and other ecologically conservative programs, as well as animal advocacy programs and civil/human rights efforts.

There's no official Wiccan position on any of these issues. It's every Wiccan's responsibility to think them through, and base our opinions and actions at least in part on our religious beliefs.

WICCAN HOLY DAYS

Sabbats and Esbats

Each of the eight points on the Wheel of the Year is called a Sabbat. At each Sabbat, Witches celebrate the appropriate aspect of the God's life. Whether He is being born at Yule, marrying the Goddess at Beltane or dying in the Mabon harvest, we celebrate the *cycle* of His life. Different Traditions have different ways of symbolizing these, but such celebration is always the focus of a Sabbat.

When we gather at a particular phase of the Moon (usually full or new), our meetings are called Esbats. The Esbat focuses on and honors the Goddess. In Her *Charge* She tells us that

whenever we have need of anything, we should call upon Her, and that in our Moon Circles She will teach us. She also reminds us that if we don't find power within ourselves, we won't find it "out there" either.

When magic is needed, it's done at an Esbat. Just as often, though, we practice meditation and related skills, chant, drum – re-attune ourselves to the natural cycles and to our own thoughts and feelings and goals.

The Wheel of the Year

Witches observe lunar (Moon-related) and solar (Sun-related) holy days, and several rites of passage, with ritual designed to evoke the Craft's spiritual and ethnic (Anglo-Celtic) heritage. Thirteen full or new Moons (Esbats), and eight solar Sabbats, are celebrated every year.

Witchcraft was originally an agricultural religion. The liturgical calendar was first based on the farmers' cycle of planting, growing, harvest and fallow seasons. Two seasons, Winter and Summer, were recognized, and holy days were designated and observed from that perspective. Later, the astronomical holy days, the Solstices and Equinoxes, were added to the Wheel. The result is a paradoxical Wheel of the Year, which we accept as symbolic of the Mystery of Life, which is immortal and mortal at the same time.

Thus the Wheel of the Year, the calendar, can be a subject of meditation and study as well as a chronicle of Sabbats.

Wicca's liturgical calendar starts at **SAMHAIN**. (On the illustration below, look for the Jack o'Lantern. Yule is at the top because it corresponds to North, not because it's the beginning of the year.)

"Samhain" is Gaelic for "end of summer," and usually pronounced "saw-wan" or "saw-wayne." It's the most important Sabbat on the Wheel: Samhain is the final harvest festival, the Witches' New Year, and it's a sort of family reunion. We remember and communicate with our beloved dead, and symbolically share our harvest feast with them. They witness our New Year's resolutions, too. In addition, Samhain is the time we ritually unburden ourselves of grudges, attitudes, sorrows, guilts, bad habits and other such things no longer welcome in our lives.

At **YULE**, we say the Sun, symbolizing the God, is reborn. Yule is celebrated at the Winter's Solstice, the shortest day/longest night of the year. Though it's imperceptible at first, the days do start getting longer after Yule. Customs like decorating a tree, garlanding the house, stringing lights, caroling, and giving presents, go back at least to Roman times; Christians didn't start celebrating Christmas that way till the mid-1800's!

BRIDE (say it "breed"), also known as "Imbolc," "Candlemas," "Lady Day" and "Brigid," is celebrated around the first of February – when the days are obviously getting longer. "Imbolc" is Gaelic for "in the belly," for this is the time when lambs are born. We honor the growing light and

celebrate life's potential. Lighting candles encourages the young Sun to grow ever brighter through the weeks of planting and growing.

Bride is followed by **OSTARA**. Called after Eostara, Anglo-Saxon goddess of Spring, this Sabbat is celebrated on the Vernal Equinox (about March 21). Coloring eggs to strengthen the Sun and encourage fertility is a Pagan custom, too, and bunnies were sacred to the Goddess. Balancing our own energy along with the Earth's is the customary focus of Wiccan Ostara rituals.

Most everyone has heard of May Day; we call it **BELTANE** (look out for various spellings) and yes, Wiccans really do dance the Maypole. (If you can't dance with real ribbons, try it with energy ribbons that you visualize as you circle the 'pole and imagine the braid they're making.) At this Sabbat we're celebrating fertility of all sorts, from making babies to coming up with brilliant ideas. We are also acknowledging our sheer joy at being alive and part of such a marvelous universe. Many Traditions celebrate Beltane as the wedding of the Goddess and God.

Mid-Summer is called **LITHA** (usually pronounced lee-ha), and marks the Summer Solstice, about June 21st. The Sun is at His zenith now. After this day, though, the hours of daylight will begin to diminish. So we celebrate strength and abundance, not forgetting that the God has now begun to die.

The first harvest festival of the year is **LAMMAS**, celebrated around the first of August. Traditionally, we feast on "first fruits," such as strawberries. A bounty awaits us, both of crops to gather and personal goals and projects coming to maturity.

The second and main harvest festival is the Autumn Equinox, called **MABON**. At this festival, harvested stalks of grain symbolize death and rebirth – death of the stalk that is cut, but rebirth through its seed. This is Wicca's Thanksgiving. We honor the gifts that the Earth has given us through the Grain (and Game) God's willing sacrifice.



Part Three

PRACTICING WICCA IN PRISON

Introduction

Practicing the Craft is very different in prison than on the outside. However, the adjustments you need to make while you're incarcerated will sharpen your "energy skills" and those skills will serve you well for the rest of your life. And while you'll learn some new ways of practice if you follow Wicca after your release, there are some things that are constant, no matter where or when or with whom you Circle.

Etiquette

One consequence of practicing Wicca in prison is that it's hard to anticipate moving into Wiccan groups on the outside. You have to make a lot of compromises in here, and it's hard to know how to act in other Circles. But there are some common-sense courtesies you'll always be safe observing. Here's the text of a flyer Lady Garr's been distributing for some time now; it will work just as well for outside Circles as for those you can cast now.

Are you new to a Wiccan ritual Circle? Are you unsure of proper manners, yet don't want to chance offending others? It's really easy to participate, if your mind is open. The clergy conducting the rites would be happy to answer questions, either before the casting of the Circle or after its conclusion. Honest curiosity is welcomed.

Enter the Circle with a spirit of love, trust and an open mind. This is a religious ceremony, and casting the Circle creates our sacred space. Followers of other paths are welcome, providing they can bring a positive attitude to the experience. It's like going to a service at another church or synagogue, but this ceremony is a Wiccan one, honoring both Goddess and God.

When you come to Circle, be prepared to stay for the duration. Use the rest room, or get a drink if you need to beforehand.

Purify yourself as much as possible before coming to the Circle. Take a shower and change clothes if possible. Clear your mind of the stresses of the day. Deep breaths are helpful.

Once the Circle is cast, do NOT leave the Circle without asking the Priest/ess to open a Door. That would be like walking through the wall of a church, and is disrespectful and disruptive to the energy.

In general, ALL activities in Circle progress deosil (clockwise, or turning toward your right), with the possible exception of closing the Circle. Synchronizing motion keeps the energy flowing smoothly, so take your cues from the clergy conducting the ritual. If in doubt, turn clockwise.

Often, a part of the ritual includes sharing blessed cakes and drink among the participants. At public Circles, the beverage is always non-alcoholic. If you cannot share, take a

tiny piece of cake and sprinkle it on the ground or in the libation bowl. A small offering may be poured from the cup as well. Ours is a nature religion. As the Gods share with us, so may we share with the Gods.

We often conclude “prayers” by repeating “Blesséd be,” or “So mote it be,” etc. Please join in.

DO NOT, at any time, touch anyone’s personal ritual tools or jewelry without permission of the owner. This includes articles on the altar, as well as any religious items a Witch is wearing. We put a lot of our own psychic energy into these things, the focus of which may be scattered by the vibrations of another’s touch. If in doubt, ask first.

ETHICS

Many people are initially attracted to Wicca by the idea of doing magic. Well, magic is real, but it’s not like what you’ve seen on TV or in Hollywood movies. No flashes of fire or puffs of smoke, and no monstrous creatures forming out of thin air. No getting other people to “do your bidding,” either, no matter what you see in the backs of some magazines.

Magic’s been defined in many ways: as “the art of changing consciousness at will,” as “folk parapsychology, an art and science designed to enable people to make effective use of their psychic talents,” as “the art of sensing and shaping the subtle,” and as “the projection of natural energies to produce needed effects.” In practical terms, magic is doing a thing on the “inner” or “astral” planes so that it will also happen on the material plane.

Let’s go over the ground rules. In magic – and everything else we do – we are guided by two rules. The first is to do no harm in the expression of our will, and the second is that what we put into the world will come back to us “three-fold.” Because we believe in reincarnation, and expect to come back, we like to leave our karma cleaner than we find it.

The Wiccan Rede

The Wiccan Rede is short and sweet. “An [if] you harm none, do as you will.” (There are longer versions, but they are Tradition-specific, and this is the unembellished original.) But there are three tricky words in the Rede: *harm*, *none*, and *will*. Let’s take a quick look at how Wiccans interpret them.

Harm? If what you’re doing puts somebody else in a position you wouldn’t want to be in, don’t do it. Apart from a few obvious basics, which the penal code pretty well covers, there is no single definition. Certainly if you leave somebody without options, you harm them. Them?

This brings us to the second tricky word, *none*. On the whole, this is not taken to mean that we shouldn’t kill mosquitoes, for instance. The individual mosquito invading your veins and draining your blood has forfeited its rights ... but mosquitoes as a species have as much right to

make a living as you do. So yes, one on one, you can kill a mosquito, but it would be wrong to try to kill them *all*. In those species where individuality is substantial and meaningful, though, we are bound to respect individual lives as well as the right of the species to exist. Harming none doesn't mean we shouldn't ever cut *any* trees. It *does* mean we shouldn't cut down all of one kind, or all the ones in one place. "Life feeds on life," we say, and that includes not just the literal meat and grain and fruit we actually eat, but also the way we use the environment – from cutting trees or quarrying blocks of stone for buildings to polluting. Respect for Others and a sense of personal responsibility is behind everything we do, every decision we make.

There are other more comprehensive discussions of "harm," of course, but ultimately, each of us has to think about all these things and develop our own understanding. (This is one aspect of taking personal responsibility.)

What about *will*? What does that mean? It means more than "really want." Our "true will" is our deepest calling, our purpose in life. Sometimes people have an idea early on, and sometimes it takes years, even a whole lifetime, to discover our true wills. It's like being enrolled in college and not knowing what you want to major in.

What you do then is take classes that will make a good foundation for any major field you might choose. So it is with Wicca, too. If you haven't found your vocation yet, you start with the basics, and open yourself to inspiration.

The Three-fold Law

We *all* answer to the Three-Fold Law: what we put into the world is what we get back, multiplied. The only slightly tricky word here is *three*. Lots of people think the Three-fold Law means that if you do something wrong, then three similar bad things will happen to you. If you spill coffee on somebody, three people will spill some on you.

That interpretation forgets that three is a magical number, and must be taken more than literally. There's the trio of the physical, psycho-emotional and spiritual or astral planes, and everything that happens, happens in these three areas for all of us. So it's reasonable to expect repercussions from all these "realms," not just the physical. That interpretation also forgets that the Three-fold Law is not a threat of punishment. The good stuff you do comes back, too. In fact, the Three-fold Law reminds us that the universe is wider and deeper than we can imagine from this physical perspective, and that what we individuals do in this physical state actually has an effect everywhere and forever. The Three-fold Law is a promise that we're important and we matter.

Although the Rede and the Law apply to every aspect of our lives, not just the magic we do, we like to make it clear that the Rede and the Law do guide our practice of magic, very strictly.

You do magic for your own life, for your needs and for personal growth. You do magic

without malice to anyone else. You don't do magic on somebody else's life unless you have their permission. (No fudging or bending: not without permission.) You don't do magic "against" anyone.

Initiation

Initiations are ritual dramas that make a person's membership in a coven official, and/or mark a step toward the Pagan clergy. Can you initiate yourself? Many people feel that you can *dedicate* yourself to the Craft, but that someone *else* has to initiate you.

The thinking behind this is that a person has to be initiated *into* something, such as a coven or other group. If you are on your own, you have nothing to initiate yourself into. Even so, Wiccan "self-initiation" is accepted by many eclectic Witches, but not past the First Degree. Where dedications may be done by earnest but not yet well-educated followers, Initiations mark commitment to the God/dess after a period of study and practice.

Most (but not all) initiatory Wiccan Traditions use a three degree system. Very generally, a First Degree indicates full membership in the coven, and a basic knowledge of beliefs and practices. Second is an authorization to teach and to lead a coven under supervision, and Third is full ordination to any and all privileges, responsibilities and authority of the coven and/or Tradition. If you are a solitary Witch or following a non-initiatory Tradition of Wicca, you'll find other ways of measuring your progress.

Responsible priestesses do *not* initiate people they don't know and consider ready. Many Traditions require at least a year and a day of study and practice before the First Degree, and that long again before any further degrees are given. This is to protect the coven *and* the student.

When you take initiation into a coven or a Tradition, you are creating very strong bonds between yourself and your initiators. Your energies are co-mingling and everyone involved is accepting some very serious responsibilities. You do not want to rush into this psychic intimacy too quickly. Take your time exploring the local Pagan community when you get out, and take the time to get to know people before you ask anyone to be your teacher.

Do not get involved with a priest/ess or teacher who does not allow questions and/or discourages you from reading on your own or visiting other Circles. A good teacher will always be willing to explain (at least partially) why things are done in a particular way, and a teacher who resents being asked is either ego-bound or doesn't know the answer. (Teachers can't know all the answers, but good ones are always ready to look for the answers with you.)

You don't have to be initiated to be a Witch, but you *do* have to be initiated to claim to be a member of an established Tradition; and some covens require members to be initiated into their group. Being initiated doesn't make you a better Witch than somebody who isn't initiated. It only means you are a full-fledged member of an initiatory coven or Tradition.

It's easy to think that people will think more of you if you claim a high degree, but out in the world, people worth impressing will judge you more by your character, your attitudes and behavior in the world, than by any formal Degrees. (Everybody will think less of you if they find out you've claimed an initiation you haven't taken!) If you end up in an initiatory group, fine; but *don't* go after initiation just to be able to say you have a degree. That's an unworthy approach.

BASIC SKILLS

We all begin by mastering our own energy. ("Energy" in this sense includes all your emotions and all your thoughts and attitudes.) Start by learning how to sense and control your own energy. This is especially important in prison, where you can personally control almost nothing but your own energy.

Grounding and Centering

Grounding connects you to the energy of Earth. You can let excess stresses drain away to be transformed by the Mother, and learn to draw from that source at need. Grounding and centering involves paying attention to your breathing, calming your thoughts, remembering your natural dignity and not letting yourself be set off by what is happening around you.

⊗ Practice breathing to the rhythm of your heartbeat. Inhale for four beats, hold your breath for two, and exhale for six. Learn to slow your breath down, to fill your lungs completely ... and be careful not to hyperventilate.

⊗ Imagine yourself as a tree with roots that go deep into the earth, and branches that disappear into the sky. Through your roots, pull up the safe and strong energy of the earth and feel it rise through your body. Release it through your branches, and feel it flow back to earth around you. Coordinate this energy flow to your deep, slow breathing and find yourself calm and peaceful. Gradually settle this energy within you and withdraw your roots and branches slowly back to your center, letting any extra energy drain back into the earth.

⊗ Pay attention to the seasonal cycle. Notice different stars in the sky at different times of the year. Notice that the sun slants differently across the yard as the seasons change. See if there are any changes in the way you feel that are linked to the Moon's cycle. As your attention to these natural details increases, you will find it easier to center yourself in Nature.

⊗ You can also work to find your own physical center of balance, usually near your belly. Finding this center point and focusing on it before beginning any energy work will help you stay balanced as you proceed.

Shielding

Many people drawn to Wicca find that they have a significantly above-average amount of psychic sensitivity. Plainly stated, they are quick to pick up the feelings around them, and, when untrained, may be unable to distinguish their own emotions from those received from others. Because many feelings in a prison setting are of anger, resentment, hostility and depression, this is undesirable and unpleasant. It may foster acting out, causing discipline problems. An inmate once confided that a period in “the hole” was welcome as a quiet break from all the psychic babble of the dorm room.

The cure for this problem is to learn how to shield yourself from unwanted input. With practice it is not difficult, and can become automatic. This will allow you to build a safe and quiet place in your mind. The degree of filtering can be controlled as well, for times of extreme stress or when reception of others’ feelings is desired. This can also be used to protect others if you find yourself in a rotten mood that you don’t want to inflict on those around you. Two separate methods, of the many available, are presented here.

In all cases, ground and center *before* doing these exercises. This provides energy for the shield and insures that it is properly anchored within.

The Ball of Light

Most of you have blown soap bubbles in childhood, and the rest have seen it done. Recall that image. Now, at your center, picture a tiny bubble start to form of glowing light. It can be any color that seems right to you. Feel it glowing brightly within you with warmth and strength. Using energy from the Earth, feed the bubble and let it grow. It expands slowly, as you feed it more and more light. Picture it expanding, glowing brightly, until it grows larger than your body and surrounds you with brilliant light. You are safe and secure within your fortress of protection.

Now slowly pull this bubble back toward you, letting it cling to your form like a second skin. It fits perfectly and still glows brightly. Your body might tingle a bit. Will the shield to filter out all negative and hurtful thoughts, letting them drain away to the Earth for cleansing. However, tell it to let through the positive and healing energies, for to block all input is sterile and unhealthy. Now focus your mind on the shield, commanding it to stay with you always.

When you feel the shield is securely in place, take a deep breath, and reach down to touch the ground. This anchors the shield in the Earth, as well as within you, leaving a source of power for it even when your attention is elsewhere. Let any excess energy drain into the ground as well, and return your attention to the everyday world.

This technique can be repeated at future times to reinforce and strengthen the protection.

The Aura Condom

This technique uses a graphic image that works especially well for men. After grounding and centering, picture a giant condom of energy that you hold in your hand. Raise it above your head, and slowly pull it down over your entire body. As it stretches over you, focus on it filtering out all the negative energies but letting the “good stuff” through. Pull it all the way to the ground, either by stretching to touch the Earth, or just visualizing that in your mind. This shield is easily taken on or off at will, and can be done quickly after a bit of practice.

Release of Anger and Stress

It is important to get rid of anger and stress for several reasons. First, it is generally unhealthy to hold grudges, and wasteful to organize your life around getting even. Stress not only contributes to many health problems, but actually is a health problem all by itself. For people with hypertension or other “nervous” problems, it’s even worse. Therefore, it’s important to develop ways of releasing your stress and anger safely.

For this exercise you can use a tissue or one or two sheets of toilet paper. Holding the paper flat in your hand, focus your anger and stress into it. Visualize your anger. Does it have a shape? a color? Does it appear as a stain or spill on your tissue? Practice your visualization skills (see below) to see your bad feelings materialize on the paper. Then fold the paper up, and as you make each fold, let yourself feel less and less anger and stress. Flush the folded paper the next time you go to the bathroom.

Every shower is an opportunity for psychic bathing, too. Remember the power of Water to cleanse and create. See the water glowing with light. As you shower, brush left-over angers and annoyances off you with long, sure strokes. See them going right down the drain.

Visualization

Visualization is the art of creating and holding an image in your head. Most exercises and many rituals require basic visualization skills.

Practice remembering and holding a detailed image in your mind. Look carefully at a real object for two minutes. Then take some time to picture it exactly in your mind. As your skills improve, you’ll be able to hold the image longer, and you’ll be able to turn it around in your mind to see all sides of it.

Involve all your senses in visualization, not just sight. Feel coolness or heat in the air, hear birds or waves lapping or animals moving through the woods. Smell a rose-garden or the sea or a great meal. Feel the sand between your toes and the roughness of a mountainside. Taste salt and honey. If a visualization moves you to laughter or tears, let it.

Elemental Meditations

AIR (East)

△ Sitting comfortably in your Circle, ground and center. Imagine yourself on a windswept hillside; feel the wind in your face. Smell the mountain chill in the air, the scent of snow or grass or wildflowers. Imagine yourself in other environments and feel the difference in the wind, in the currents of the air.

△ Visualize your mind as an attic with some neat stuff and some junk stored in it, everything covered in thick, thick cobwebs. See a window at one end of the attic, and open it. Watch a seasonal wind blow in and begin to ripple the cobwebs. Let the wind blow until the cobwebs have been cleared out.

△ Imagine you're a bird, and can soar from a hill, out over the Earth. Fly higher and higher until you're in outer space and can see our planet as the astronauts do. As you glide back to your life on the ground, keep "the big picture" in mind and let it give you some perspective on your mundane frustrations.

FIRE (South)

△ Visualize a campfire in a safe circle of stones. See it burning strongly, watch the flames. See the delicate turns and leaps the flames make. See what shapes emerge for you. Light this campfire sometimes in the mountains, sometimes on the beach, the prairie or in a forest clearing.

△ Watch for the rainbow play of light through prisms, follow the patch of light reflected off your watch face; imagine distant stars as blazing balls like our own Sun, not the delicate twinkle-lights they seem to be from this distance.

△ Think of your own energy as a hearth fire. Think about ways to control your energies, so that the hearth fire is never too big (so as to destroy the house) or too small (to let the house get cold, and the food go uncooked).

WATER (West)

▽ Visualize the waters you love best, whether that's one ocean or another, a lake, a stream, a stock pond. Think about how something moving in the depths swells and ripples the surface, just as something moving into the pond leaves ripples on the surface.

▽ Think of cleansing rains; think of your frustrations as dusty, rock-littered sidewalks, and let a downpour of rain, which stands for the waters of birth and rebirth, wash them clean.

▽ In the shower (or washing hands or even flushing the toilet) visualize your built-up annoyances and bad moods washing off you and down the drain. When you feel lowest and like weeping, have compassion for yourself.

EARTH (North)

▽ See yourself in a vast, dark and cool forest. Hear and smell everything around you – the dark, fertile earth beneath your feet, the scent of pines, the rustle of deer and other forest creatures. Sit down with your back against a tree and let the patience of its long years flow into you.

▽ If you can, spend some time with a real tree. Speak to it (at least in your thoughts), water it, notice its cycles and health, learn more about its kind, etc. (If you can grow indoor plants, you can get to know them, too.)

▽ Visualize lying on the ground, your arms and legs outstretched, and letting the soft earth cradle you. Let your angers and fears drain out of your body into the earth, to be recycled. Know and trust that the earth will support you.

Part Four

WICCAN TOOLS AND ALTARS

Introduction

A Witch's first, best and most important Tool is, of course, his or her mind and the control s/he develops over it. Our lore (stories, not history) tells us that in the Burning Times, it was not safe to keep or use any Tools that could be identified with Witchcraft. (It is true that the peasants of Britain and Europe were illiterate, and therefore had no *Books of Shadows*.) Restricted as your collection and use of Tools may be, we know that we can get along with even less.

You will read about a number of Witches' Tools that you will not be permitted to keep or use. THAT'S OKAY! The power is in you, not in your Tools. We'll talk about these Tools anyway, so that you know what they're for when you can use them; and you'll learn what you can use instead in the meantime.

First: before you use a Tool in your Circle, you need to consecrate it – dedicate it to religious use only. You'll be doing this with your hands and breath, so wash your hands and cleanse your mouth before you begin. As you do so, understand that you are using your body as a Tool, and must move and breathe and act as an agent of holiness while you are working in your Circle.

Consecration

In the names of each Element in turn, and in the names of the Great Mother and the Horned God, declare that this Tool will never be used for harm. Touch your Tools, and bless them, with each element as you consecrate them. If your Tools are used for mundane purposes between Circles, reconsecrate them before each ritual.

Some Tools

- Athame** A ritual blade used to project personal energy on the material and astral planes. It is not used to cut material objects. Hands and fingers serve the same purpose. Wands (natural twigs or hand-made) can also be substituted.
- Bell** Can represent East and substitute for incense if necessary (for health or other reasons).
- Bowls** Used to represent West, to hold Water, to hold Salt and as a libation bowl, in which to share Cakes and Ale with the Gods. A paper cup is fine for all of these purposes.
- Candles** Used to mark the compass Quarters of the Circle, and burn for the Goddess and God on altars, as well as supplying light and being burned for specific magical purposes. Objects or drawings can substitute as Quarter markers and in spells.

Censer (or thurible)

Something to burn incense in. Anything practical will work; it's better if it's something you can pick up and carry.

Chalice or goblet

Represents the Goddess, represents West, and is used during Cakes and Ale. A paper cup is fine.

Cord

Used as a belt for your robe. (Color can be used to signify initiatory degree.) Traditionally four-and-a-half or nine feet long to be useful in drawing a nine-foot Circle, it's also a Tool for knot-tying magic. For magical purposes, a strand of hair can be substituted; so can short lengths of string or even the sleeve or leg of a garment.

Gazing ball

Usually between an inch and three inches in diameter if natural and from three inches up if industrially produced, these are sometimes dark and sometimes clear, with or without color. Used to scry – see "Mirror" below. (Scrying is gazing, with a question or concern in mind, at a ball, a mirror or a bowl of water to see what images form. The hope is always that the images will suggest or inspire some resolution to the question or concern you have in mind.)

Mirror

Used to scry, not to check the hair-do. A dark bowl full of water will also work, as will any dark, reflective surface.

Oils

Used to consecrate Tools and worshipers and to catalyze or seal spells. Sun screen is oil. You can also use the oil on your skin to seal a spell.

Pentagram

The five-pointed star, points connected, with a circle around it. There are some very elaborate models, but a drawing on a piece of paper will work just as well. This is a protective symbol. A medallion with this symbol, also called a pentacle, is worn by most Wiccans.

Salt or Earth

Used to represent the Element of Earth on the altar, used for consecration and for protection.

Wand

Traditionally the length of your forearm, of some propitious wood, cut at the right phase of the Moon. A found twig, or wand of rolled paper, can work too. A Wand channels energy like an athame does, but is more inviting than commanding.

Prison Altar Gear

Altars

An arrangement of Tools on an Altar is a representation of the universe. The Altar is usually oriented toward the North or the East. On it are items representing the Goddess and the God, and the four Elements. In prison, you'll have to do without some Tools, and others will have

to do double duty; it's likely that something else will have to do double-duty as your altar. It is a hardship, but you can work with this.

If you can, keep a piece of cloth or a bandana for an altar cloth. You can also fold your tools up in it before you put them in any other container you have for them. You might decorate your altar cloth with signs of the Directions, using pen or colored markers.

The Directions

Keep a feather to symbolize East and Air. The qualities associated with this Direction include new beginnings, freedom (flight) and intellect/ideas (quill-pen). A bell may also represent East, and ringing it can substitute for incense.

Use anything small and fire-colored (heart-shaped?) for South and Fire. The qualities of this Direction and Element include passion for a cause, courage, activity, protection, etc. You can also use a picture of the Sun.

At West and to represent Water, you can use a cup, bowl, or tumbler. The qualities associated with this Direction and Element include the love of friendship, feelings, dreams, and empathy.

Keep a stone or crystal for North and to represent the Earth. The qualities of this Element and Direction include strength, patience, loyalty, and confidence.

If you are permitted to have stones, look for yellow, red/orange, blue, and green colors. Small pieces of gravel from the prison yard, in yellowish, reddish, greenish and black colors can suffice. Use them at East, South, West and North, respectively.

Illustrations that you draw, color or paint on paper can stand for the Quarters too. If you are worried that you can't draw well, remember that for the magical purpose of a Circle, what your drawings *mean* matters more than what they actually look like. If you are still shy, you can use the Quarter symbols illustrated in a previous section of this handbook.

Tools in Context

We all *like* to have a lovely collection, and to use our Tools when we can, but we are all capable of working without them. Our bodies provide everything we need. So are Tools really *necessary*? No, in fact they are not. But –

Does this mean that no Wiccan or other Pagan inmate should be allowed to keep any Tools? Certainly not. They help to focus the mind, and are reservoirs of personal energy.

You could practice Wicca your whole life, and be quite successful at it, without ever owning a single Tool or piece of jewelry. You could also walk to do all your errands – to the grocery store, to the doctor, to work, going out to dinner. Walking would get you there, and it's good exercise, but you could do your errands and enjoy your life even more if you had a car. Tools

are like that.

And, like cars, Tools are double-edged. They'll work the way you want them to *if* you use them properly. Improperly used – without respect, without attention to protocol – Tools can get you in trouble just like driving a car without paying attention can.

Should you get yourself some proper Tools when you get out? Yes, if you can. But collect them slowly. Don't go out to some occult shop and buy the whole kit right away. (Some say that all Tools should be given to you, but for solitary practitioners, this is not likely practical!) If you find yourself a teacher outside, ask what tools you should get first. And when you decide, shop around.

There's no hurry. It's important to have Tools that really "speak" to you – that feel right in your hand. A Tool is something you use to extend your own energy, and so, like clothing, it needs to fit you. You won't find "your" Tools all at once, right away. Don't expect to, and ***do not feel pressured.***

In prison, you're learning to work with your body as a Tool, and these techniques of directing energy will always serve you well. It is better to use your finger to cast a Circle than to use an athame that isn't right for you. Tools are a convenience for the practicing Pagan, and not a measure of his or her worth, or of the success of her or his magic. Beware of people who are more interested in accessories than work.

Tools are more than convenient, of course. They do accumulate the power we project into and through them, and this power becomes part of our own reserves. Using Tools bonds us to other Wiccans and Pagans, through time and space; using them properly honors our Gods and our religion. ***Our ability to work without Tools should never be an excuse for denying them; and not having them should never be an excuse not to observe and celebrate Sabbats and Esbats or other rites.***

Is a piece of jewelry a Tool? Yes, it should be. In most Traditions it's customary for the priestess always to wear a necklace, bracelet, and/or a ring. This harks back to various mythologies in which the gods of magic wear such pieces. For many of us, certain pieces of jewelry – consecrated, of course – are signs of our faith, and can even work as Altar Tools when they're needed to.

You should understand the symbolism of anything you wear, and even if you have lots of things, you shouldn't wear them all at once. It gives people the impression you're in it for shock value and not for really making something of your life. If you are in it just to get people's attention, stop now and find another hobby.

Book of Shadows

The number of books you can keep is limited. Make one of them your personal journal,

which can double as your *Book of Shadows*. (This may well be your second most important Tool – your mind being the first.) A *Book of Shadows* is the hand-written journal most Wiccans and other Witches keep.

In it, you record the rituals and exercises you do (when, how you prepared, what you used on the altar, what you did and said, what you intend to accomplish, how you feel about the rite), ideas, hopes, fears, poems, sketches, questions, notes about the books you've read and so forth. Write down your dreams. When you think about religion on your own, when you talk about it with other people, when you read anything, make a note of what you feel and think about it.

There are published Books of Shadows, containing liturgical material that the book's author has chosen to share. There's nothing wrong with having one of these, but no published "BOS" can substitute for the one in which you keep your own religious and magical records.

Like other Tools, Books of Shadows are usually not handled by other people. They should not be read by other people, either. If it is impossible to keep other people from touching or reading your BOS, you may reconsecrate it after each incident. Be sure to ground any anger you have about it first, though, so that your anger or distress doesn't get stuck in your Book.

Witches' Bibles

Several books about Wicca have the word "bible" in the title, and though many of them are worthwhile, none of them are essential. This is because the Wiccan religion doesn't have a bible equivalent to the one Christianity uses. Wicca is "experiential," which means that each of us experiences rites in our own way, even if we're in a Circle with others and all participating in the same ritual. Thus, what all of us need is a book in which to record the rituals we do, the spells we cast, and the results of our magic, along with other related material.

CASTING A SIMPLE CIRCLE

Introduction

Casting a Circle equates to building a church. You are creating sacred space. You need to be grounded and centered before you begin. You should *never* do magic in anger or when you are depressed, because those feelings will corrupt your work.

A Wiccan Circle represents the world, so you will use all the elements to cast it. Stand in the middle of the space you are using. Know where the Directions are (North, East, South and West). Begin at North or at East.

(If you are angry or depressed, do one of the exercises to release anger and stress. If you are depressed, try some meditation to put your concerns in perspective. If possible, cry – because

crying actually purges your body of some of the chemicals that are affecting your mood. There have been studies analyzing tears that come from anger, sorrow, fear and depression, and the chemical make-up of each of those kinds of tears is different. Tears carry “bad chemicals” out of our bodies. Women have known forever that “a good cry makes you feel better,” and we know how that works. It’s still hard for a lot of people, especially men, to cry; and it may be especially risky in prison. Nevertheless, if you feel like crying and you can, without setting yourself up for a lot of hassles, do it.)

Drawing (Casting) the Circle

Outside, this is usually done with a sword or an athame. To draw the Circle without a blade, extend your “power” arm (right if you’re right-handed, left if you’re left) and point your index finger at the floor in front of you. Now, moving clockwise, visualize drawing an electric blue line of Fire on the floor, in a circle around you. You can do this in silence, or you can say that you’re drawing the Circle to make it a safe and strong place to worship.

When you get back to your starting point, the circle of blue light is closed. Now you are ready to “call the Quarters.” These are the compass directions and the elements and powers they symbolize.

Purifying the Space

Purify the space to break down and recycle any negative energy so it won’t get in the way. Make this holy water with a mixture of Salt and Water, charging it with your energy. Sprinkle it around your sacred space. If you cannot use Salt, use a bit of dirt to represent Earth.

Incense or a smudge stick combines Fire and Air. Use your own breath or voice, or a bell, as Air if you must (and your energy as Fire). Charge the Circle with that as well.

Calling the Quarters

To call the Quarters, face each direction in turn, beginning where you started to draw your Circle. Most Wiccan Traditions start in the East, the Direction of new beginnings, symbolizing birth. Some begin at North, the Direction of mystery and the womb. At each Direction in turn, visualize a pentagram in front of you so you can look at the middle part.

For each Quarter, visualize an appropriate scene. Skies, birds, and clouds are common symbols for East, which stands for Air. (An example for East is at right.)

A desert, tropical scene, or erupting volcano works for South,



which symbolizes Fire. A stream, lake, waterfall or sea is appropriate to West, which represents Water. Mountains and forests are typical for North, which corresponds to Earth.

As you hold the image of each Direction, invite its energy into yourself and your Circle: from East, invite clarity of thought, wit and creativity. From South, draw in enthusiasm and bravery. From West, you want to bring in compassion, empathy, an awareness of your own feelings. And from North, strength, fitness, patience.

Writing your own Quarter Calls is a good way to begin your relationship with the Elements. Most people say something like, "Hail, Guardians of the East! Welcome to my Circle! Protect and strengthen my work with your clear vision." You might refer to the South's "noble passion," the West's "love and intuition," and the North's "strength and beauty." Include images that bring the Quarters to life for you.

Now you have a suitably prepared Circle. You have cleared the space of any negative "vibes" and you have drawn a circle of energy to define a place of worship and keep it safe. You have acknowledged the Directions and Elements and brought Their energy and influence in. You have created a micro-universe. Take a moment now to prepare yourself.

Anoint yourself with water and/or kiss the fingertips of your "power hand" (right if you're right-handed, left if you're left-handed) and then touch your forehead. Clear your mind of any left-over cares and bothers. When you are calm, invoke the Mother Goddess and the Horned God.

Invoking the Gods

In a coven, the Goddess is often invoked into the Priestess. This means that she temporarily *becomes* the Goddess. (The God can be invoked into the Priest, too. This is usually reserved for Sabbats.) However, the Gods can also be invoked as the Circle's guests of honor, with the Priestess serving as hostess (and sometimes as interpreter).

The Great Mother and the Horned God have many names. Each Tradition of the Craft has its favorites, and you may already know Them by particular names. If not, invoke Them by Their oldest names:

"O Great Mother, our eternal Source, You are both Grave and Womb! Be with me now in my Circle and bless my work."

"Mighty Horned God, Hunter and Hunted, like us you die and are reborn! Be with me now in my Circle and bless my work."

Celebration or Magic

Whatever the "work" of a Circle is, it's done at this point. The Circle's been cast. The Quarters have been called. The Gods have been invoked. Everything is ready. Take a moment or two to steady your own breathing and then you can begin your Work. ("Work," with a capital W,

is what we call any magical projects we're doing, even if we work on them outside the Circle too.)

If you're doing magic, begin with a simple statement of your intent. You might say, "I am going to work now for _____," and then do whatever spell you have in mind. While you are doing the work, keep your mind focused on the intended end result. When you have finished, say something like, "I have done this Work to accomplish _____. As I will, so mote it be." When you're done, give yourself another couple of minutes to steady your breathing again, and then you can close your Circle.

If you're celebrating a Sabbat, you can begin by saying, "I am here in this Circle to celebrate _____," and then go on with your celebration – your singing or dancing or whatever else you have devised. While you are celebrating, keep your mind on the occasion. When you are finished, you can say something like, "I've celebrated _____ and will keep this joy in my heart." Take a couple of minutes to steady your breathing.

If at any time you feel your energy level is too high, put your hands on the ground or floor, flat, fingers spread, and visualize the extra energy pouring from your palms back into the ground, like a hose soaking the earth. Breathe deeply and slowly until you feel alert but calm.

Cakes and Ale

An important part of a ritual Circle is called "Cakes and Ale." We share food and drink with each other and with the Elements and Gods as well. Both cakes and ale are consecrated; and this ritual meal is *called* "Cakes and Ale" (sometimes "Cakes and Wine") no matter *what* food and drink we're using. It's Cakes and Ale whether it's gourmet cookies and white wine, rye bread and Guinness, cookies and milk or crackers and water.

Some Traditions share a feast with the Gods *before* the work of the Circle is done, and some wait until the celebration or the magic is finished. In some Traditions, members fast several hours before coming to Circle and sharing that symbolic communal meal.

The elements of the meal represent the Horned God's willing death to sustain our life. The "cake" is made from grains, and the "ale" is made from the vines, both symbols of the God and the cycle of life. The Goddess' hand is in the transformation of His life – grain and vine – to ours.

On the outside, the ritual knife, representing the God, is plunged into the chalice holding the ale, representing the womb of the Goddess. This is symbolic of the Great Rite, the sacred marriage, the universe's dance of fertility that keeps life alive.

Consecrate the "ale" without an athame by holding your hands over the "chalice" and projecting your own vitality into the liquid. Visualize it glowing with life. If you are sharing the "ale" with someone, pass the cup with the words, "May you never thirst," and if you are alone, sip from the cup and say, "I will never thirst."

If you have "cakes," consecrate them by holding your hands over them (everyone

celebrating should do this) and say “Blessed are these cakes, that give us life from death.” If there are others in your Circle, each of you may take a bite of the cake for yourself, symbolizing our simultaneous togetherness and individuality. Or, you may choose to feed each other, to symbolize our kinship and interdependence.

Often, a small portion of both Cakes and Ale is offered to the Gods, by pouring or crumbling a little of each onto the ground or into a libation bowl. As we do this, we say, “As the Gods share with us, so we share with the Gods.” (Materially is not the only way the Gods sustain us; sharing Cakes and Ale is not the only way we nourish them. Our libations and offerings in Circle are just tokens. We have a continuing obligation to the God\dess to repay our lives in everything we do.)

Thanking the Gods

When you are finished with the work of your Circle, thank the Gods for Their protection and Their participation. Most people say something like, “Thank you, Great Mother, for entering my Circle and blessing my work. Go in peace and blessed be,” and “Thank you, Horned One, for entering my Circle and blessing my work. Go in peace and blessed be.”

Dismissing the Quarters

Dismiss the Quarters as you called them, with respect. Beginning where you started to cast the Circle, move clock-wise (deosil) to each Quarter. Let the image of the pentagram that you visualized there fade away. As the image fades, thank the Guardians for their protection and contribution to your Circle and your work.

Some Traditions do this widdershins (counter-clockwise), ending on the Quarter where they started the Circle call, because they are “undoing” their creation. Others dismiss deosil (clockwise).

Opening the Circle

Now is the time to remove the Circle boundaries. Some Traditions do this deosil (clockwise), while others use the widdershins (counter-clockwise) motion for this. With your power hand (or athame), point at the floor or ground in front of you. Move around the Circle, visualizing the line of blue fire being drawn up into your arm. You can keep the energy you need, and channel the rest back to the earth.

When you come back to your starting place, lay your hands on the floor (or on your altar, if you have one). Breathe deeply and slowly and let the energy of the ritual drain back to the earth. When you feel relaxed again, say that “the Circle is open, but unbroken.” Groups often add, in unison, “Merry meet, merry part, and merry meet again.”

Part Five MAGIC

Introduction

We're going to repeat ourselves here; this is important. Many people are attracted to Wicca by the idea of doing magic. Magic is real, but it's *not* what you see on TV or in Hollywood movies. No puffs of smoke, no twitching of noses; no getting other people to "do your bidding," no matter what it says in the back of some magazines.

What is magic? It's been defined in many ways: as "changing consciousness at will," as "folk parapsychology," and etc. Wiccan writers and scholars have different takes on exactly how magic works, but there is general agreement that magic is an intuitive capacity, an evolved characteristic like an opposable thumb, and just as natural to use.

Just as we learn there are some ways we'd better not use our opposable thumbs (not in car doors or under hammers, for instance), we know there are some ways we'd better not use magic. Let's review: You do magic for your own life, for your needs and for personal growth. You do magic without malice to anyone else. You don't do magic on somebody else's life unless you have their permission. (No fudging or bending: *not without permission.*) You don't do magic "against" anyone.

Thus, modern Witches do not curse people, or do any other magic to manipulate somebody else. Even when it comes to healing, we ask permission before we start casting health-spells! *The power of any magic you do will come back at you harder than you send it out.* From thoughtlessly manipulative magic to deliberately harmful spells, the intent and intensity will rebound. If you are interested in Wicca or any other Witchcraft to get emotional, psychological or magical power over other people, you will be disappointed (or worse).

Every magical endeavor must meet certain criteria. First, you must not intend to hurt anyone, and you must not intend to help anyone without their permission. You must need, not merely want, what you are working for, and what you wish to accomplish must be clear in your mind. Preparing for a ritual usually takes longer than doing one.

Some Simple Spells

It is *always* alright to work magically to improve your own life, to change your own perspective or attitude. These ceremonies will give you practice in the fundamental techniques of magic, and ease you into the discipline that Witchcraft both requires and develops.

Spells can take many forms. Rhyming couplets are popular: *I'll find a job when I am free/as I do will, so mote it be* is an example. Spells can take the form of action (planting something, for

instance, or dancing). Spells can be spoken or written, sung, thought, drawn. No matter what form it takes, a spell is an intention expressed magically. Before you begin, your intent (healing, protection, personal growth are examples) must be clear in your mind, and it must be “clean,” which is to say, with no malice toward anyone.

You should do your “housecleaning” – grounding and centering, clearing away any left-over negative energies, and cast a basic “blue light” Circle to meditate. Call the Quarters and invoke the Gods to do any rites or magic.

Protection

○ The simplest method of protection is to “seal” all your entrances (doors, windows, drains, outlets, vents, etc.) by drawing a line of salt or earth over them. As you do this, ask for Elemental protections and the blessings of the Gods.

○ Another easy protection spell is to charge a small stone to set beside each threshold. Charge it saying, “Stone of strength and vigilance, keep me safe from malice and accident.”

○ Small signs of protection can be drawn on a wall or a floor (in chalk or salt water), or on a paper kept under one’s pillow or in a pocket. When writing these, and when folding the paper on which you draw a symbol representing (to you) safety, say, “By this sign and my faith in the Gods I call protection from malice and accident”

○ You can always, anywhere and at a moment’s notice visualize a globe of energy (a shield) surrounding you and protecting you from any dangers you face. Like most magics, these spells need to be recharged at least monthly (and there’s no harm in recharging them more often).

Healing

○ If you are not well, visualize yourself in a bubble of blue or green light. (If another color more strongly represents healing to you, use that color in your visualization.) As much as you understand what the problem is, visualize its reversal. See yourself standing up and fully recovered.

○ You may also see yourself being soothed and comforted by someone close and important to you. It is okay to imagine your mother stroking your temples, if that’s a soothing memory. With the power of your mind you can trigger your own body’s healing responses.

○ For this ritual, you need some water. Two glasses, one full, would be best. One glass and your cupped hand will work. Pour a little of the water into the empty glass or your hand. Project your illness into that water. (If you have the flu, cough into it, stomach cramps, hold a fist over it, and so forth.) Pour that water out (onto the earth or down a drain) saying “Back to the Earth with illness.”

Hold the rest of the water up to light or sunshine, and imagine “vibes” of good health

flowing from the light into the water. Drink this water, first saying, "Into my body with health!" Visualize sunshine and other images of health flowing into your body as you drink the water.

Personal Growth

Set a realistic goal. Let's say you want to get in the habit of keeping a journal. You can get the paper and pencil, you have the time. So on the full Moon, when you're in your Circle, visualize that you are walking down a path in a beautiful garden, full of roses and other flowers, butterflies, a perfect day. Walking along this path you come to a little cabin, and there is a woman there. She is old, but her eyes are lively. When you hear the splash of salmon in the nearby stream, and you see the cauldron steaming beside the door, you realize that this is the Goddess.

She asks you why you have come, and you say you have come to make a vow. Promise the Goddess that you will keep a journal for One week? Twice or three times a week? Every day for a month? Three months? Make a promise you can keep.

When you have kept your promise, visualize going back to the Goddess' cottage. Let Her tell you that you did a good job, and commit to your goal for another period of time. Remember to record your experience in the journal portion of your *Book of Shadows*.

Correspondences

When you do magic, it's like wearing your favorite shirt. You want it to look great, so you coordinate the rest of your outfit around it. Well, when we want magic to work, we coordinate all kinds of things to go with it, and strengthen it.

Let's say you want to do magic for a new start in life. Your magic is about beginnings, so you'll work facing the East, where new days dawn. In fact, you'll do your magic as close to the hour of dawn as you can, to strengthen the association with new starts. You'll use a white or yellow or other "East-colored" candle. If you write or draw something, you'll use a new piece of paper and a new pencil or marker. You see how this works? Here's a chart of some associations. (As additional correspondences occur to you, make notes in your journal.)

As you learn more about Paganism, other ways of doing these (and other) rituals will occur to you. Keep notes on all your thoughts and ideas. This work and your journals will be a record of your devotion to the Craft. Making these habits will help you develop the energy-working skills any Witch needs.

SOME CORRESPONDENCES

	EARTH	AIR	FIRE	WATER
DIRECTION	North	East	South	West
COLOR	brown, green black	white, yellow	red, orange, gold	blue, green
SEASON	Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall
TIME OF DAY	midnight	dawn	noon	sunset, dusk
ANIMAL*	stag	eagle	lion	salmon
TOOL	pentacle	wand**	athame**	chalice
ATTRIBUTES	physical strength	thought	passion, courage	intuition

* Some Traditions correspond different animals to the Directions, but these are typical.

* Some Traditions put the athame in Air and the wand in Fire. All the explanations make sense. Go with your instinct; just be consistent.

Part Six BEING and BECOMING WICCAN

To *be* Wiccan, you only need to accept the beliefs and start getting comfortable with the world-view and practices described in this booklet. No one has to give you permission to have a relationship with the Goddess and God, or to celebrate the Sabbats as your holy days.

When you are out in the world and telling people you are Wiccan, you will be expected to understand the basics, and to be able to conduct yourself appropriately in a Circle. (If you claim to be initiated or to be following a particular Tradition, you may be expected to name your teachers, and to show members of your claimed "Trad" a certificate or other token.) If your behavior is not consistent with the knowledge you claim to have, you may not be well accepted; and if you are unwilling to learn more, you may be dismissed as a "wannabe" or a "fraud"!

In the meantime, before your release, you may decide that Wicca (or another Neo-Pagan religion) is your personal path, and wish this to be recognized as your official religious preference.

Check with your chaplain about the forms you need to fill out and/or submit. You *may* need a letter from a priest/ess confirming that you now follow this faith. Ideally, you'd get this letter from a volunteer or contractor who leads services on the Unit.

Lacking that, you can write to an MEM volunteer. When you have satisfied a priest/ess that you understand the basic beliefs of your chosen path well enough to be making an informed choice to follow it, a supporting letter can be provided. (Please note that our writing clergy need to hear about the tenets of the religion, not about your love of Nature or your psychic powers.)

References and Resources

If you read more about Wicca and other Pagan faiths, and talk with other Pagans, you may see or hear some of these terms. Here's a basic primer, not comprehensive, but a start.

GLOSSARY

Altar The space where you use your articles of worship. Everybody wants to have a permanent one, but not everybody does. It's usually a table of some sort, but shelves and niches work just fine; in a pinch, so does a lap.

"as above, so below"

A way of saying that everything runs more *like* everything else than different from and that every world is a metaphor for all the other worlds.

astral The planes beyond ordinary sound and sight. For example: the afterlife is "on the astral," and so is Jung's collective unconscious. We are on the "material plane."

athame A ritual blade used to project personal energy on the material and astral planes. It is never used to cut material objects. Hands and fingers serve the same purpose.

between the Worlds

There's the World we live in, the "material plane," also called the "physical realm," and then there are the other Worlds, the astral planes, the other dimensions, which go by many names. When we cast our Circles they end up partly in this World, partly in the Others: *between* the Worlds.

"blesséd be." A traditional greeting (coming and going, like "aloha") that refers to a ritual blessing. The sense is not only of blessing the person you greet, but also of recognizing that person as a sacred being, naturally blessed. (See also **Five-fold Kiss**, below.)

Book of Shadows

Your collection of rituals, spells, dreams, poems, meditations, sketches, etc. A person's *Book of Shadows* is on the list of religious items not to touch without the owner's permission.

charm Combines material and spoken elements to charge an object (usually a box or

pouch) toward general protection, health and good fortune.

Dedication Ritual acknowledgment that you're prepared to make a commitment to study and learn the your chosen path. Sometimes a person dedicates him- or herself to Goddess and God.

deosil A direction of movement, to your right. When we're in a Circle, we have to move around – go from Quarter to Quarter, back to the Altar, and so forth. When we move inside our Circle, whether we're walking from one place to another or just turning in place, we move to the right. This direction of movement is also called "sun-wise" or "clockwise." (See also **widdershins**.)

Five-fold Kiss A ritual kiss to these or similar words: "Blesséd be thy feet, that walk the sacred paths. Blesséd be thy knees, that kneel at sacred Altars. Blesséd be thy [womb or phallus], without which we would not be. Blesséd be thy breasts, formed in strength and beauty. Blesséd be thy lips, that speak the sacred Names."

Great Rite The sacred marriage (*heiros gamos*) of the Goddess and the God, sometimes represented sexually and most often represented by an athame dipping into a wine-filled chalice to bless the Ale.

Guardians of the Watchtowers

The Watch Spirits of the Elemental Realms. They're also known as "the Quarters," and we invoke them when we cast a Circle.

guided meditation

Read aloud or taped, a narration or description of a meditative journey or contemplation.

Initiation A ritual quest through death (to your former life) and rebirth (into life as a Witch and Priest/ess). Initiations are generally into a coven or other coherent group, although self-Initiations are recognized in some eclectic Traditions.

inner planes People are multi-dimensional – we're physical, we're emotional, we're intellectual, we're psychological, we're spiritual. The inner planes (or "realms," or "landscapes") are the deep places in our minds and hearts where our true selves live. The inner planes are where you go to confront fears and prejudices and scary things about yourself, and also where you go to be renewed by your own strengths and joys.

ley lines Lines of magnetism that cross the planet's crust and seem to connect ancient Pagan sites in several local regions around the world.

magic Magic is both a form of energy, a natural force like gravity, *and* the act of using this energy to achieve your goals. (See also **spell**.)

libation Pouring of sacred drink into a bowl, or onto the ground, wherefrom the Gods can partake of it. Technically, food we share with the Gods is an "offering," but we tend to call it all a "libation" too. When we come to the Cakes and Ale part of the

Circle, many groups pour a bit of the drink and leave a pinch of the food for the Gods, symbolizing that they “feed” us and we “feed” them.

“merry meet” Another common greeting, short for “Merry meet, merry part, and merry meet again,” which is the closing line of most rituals. “Merry part” is also used as a conversational farewell.

offering A bit of the ritual meal left on the ground or in a container on the Altar, to share with the Gods. (We also pour out a bit of our “ale” for the Gods, and this is called a libation.)

pentacle/pentagram

Both are five-pointed stars with the points connected. The **pentacle** is *on* something – carved or painted on wood or stone, drawn on paper. The **pentagram** is a dimensional object in and of itself. Sometimes the plate on which Cakes are served, often decorated with the five-pointed star, is called the pentacle, too. Many people use the terms interchangeably, and that’s fine.

perfect love and perfect trust

“The Passwords,” the condition in which you promise to enter your Initiation Circle in most Traditions of Wicca. Of course you must love and trust the people you circle with, but it’s also about loving and trusting yourself and the God\dess.

runes Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon alphabets devised for inscribing on stone and wood. Today they are used for magic and ritual. Runes are still used mostly by the Ásatrú, but the New Age has popularized them more widely.

skyclad Clad (dressed) only in the sky. (Naked.) Skyclad rituals, like those conducted in robes or street clothes, are focused on the purpose of the rite; there are no orgies in Wicca.

spell A spell is an intention expressed magically. Don’t cast one you wouldn’t want landing on yourself. (See also **magic**.)

Spiral Dance The name of an excellent book by Starhawk, and also a real dance. It works like this: everybody stands in a circle, holding hands at arm’s length. Slowly at first, the leader begins to move the circle around, and when everybody’s moving, the leader speeds up a little. When everybody is half-running around the outside of the circle, the leader begins to spiral in toward the center, creating as many “loops” as possible. When the leader reaches the center, s/he does not stop, but right away turns and starts spiraling back toward the outer edge of the circle again. Like a giant snake, the line of people follows the leader – and if there are enough people, there will be several loops of people passing each other, going in opposite directions. Done properly, it is a spectacular event to see or be part of. The Spiral Dance represents the birth-death-rebirth journey we all take, and we start it heading widdershins (to our left) – this takes us to death in the center, and then back the other way, circling right through rebirth to the outside world again. The Spiral Dance is most often used to raise energy or to ground it at the end of a ritual.

- talisman** Similar to a charm, but more formally and ceremonially created and used, and to attract rather than act.
- Traditions** The denominations of Wicca. “Traditional Witchcraft” sometimes refers to pre-Gardnerian practices, which are *not* widely written about, and sometimes to Gardnerian and Alexandrian and related Traditions. New Traditions are also introduced quite frequently. A Tradition has to offer a complete philosophy, theology and liturgy, and most people agree that a “real” Tradition has to be practiced by more than one coven, and for five or more years.
- widdershins** A direction of movement – to your left, or counter-clockwise. Usually the only time we move widdershins in a Circle is to undo it. Some Traditions move widdershins to dismiss the Quarters, or to “undraw” the Circle itself. Some groups only move widdershins in the Samhain (Halloween) Circle. (See also **deosil**.)
- Wise Ones** Ancestors, cultural heroes, aspects of Gods and Guardians – archetypes of experience, style and wisdom.
- Work** “Work,” with a capital W, is what we call any magic or meditation we do in a magic Circle. The term comes from alchemy, where the Work is the always-in-progress work of self-improvement.

SOME RECOMMENDED BOOKS

As you read books about Wicca and other Neo-Pagan paths, keep in mind that most authors are sharing what they were taught or what they have experienced. Whether or not s/he says so, no author can tell you every true thing about Wicca, Ásatrú, Druidry, or any other Neo-Pagan religion.

Although there are many legitimate variations, there is no one and only right way to practice Wicca (or any other Pagan path), so when you read about different ways of doing things, see those as expanding your options.

Be aware that lists of herbs, oils, and other accessories are items you can choose among; you don’t have to have every single one. When you cannot follow instructions for rituals and spells exactly, it’s usually okay to substitute something you have on hand; you’ll find some suggestions for substitutions throughout this booklet.

New books come out all the time. It’s impossible to list them all here. Make notes of the titles and authors you like. Be sure to credit them when you quote them or write their ideas down in your Book of Shadows.

By the way, in alphabetical-by-author book lists like this one, a blank (_____) on the line underneath an author’s name, followed by another book title, means that this book was written by the same author named in the line above. And in notes that you’ll see crediting quotes, the word “Ibid.” means that the quote comes from the same source as the one previously mentioned.

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RESOURCES

Remember that when you're requesting information or materials from any outside source, a self-address, stamped return envelope isn't always required, but it **is** always appreciated. Address and sign request letters respectfully, and include your return address in the body of your letter in case it's separated from the envelope.

Remember too that many groups are run by just a few people, many of whom have day jobs and obligations beyond their volunteer work. Stores go out of business and groups' membership and addresses can change. It may take time to get a reply to your inquiries.

Indeed, in some cases, you may not hear back at all! Don't take this personally, and don't judge the entire Pagan community by that experience. You won't make things any better by taking out your frustrations on the next person you write to, either.

Upon your release, a good way to find out about resources in your area is on line at **www.Witchvox.com**. They have state-by-state listings of groups, individual clergy and teachers, and stores.

We do not specifically recommend any correspondence courses for several reasons. One is that we haven't been able to preview them to know whether we want to vouch for them. Another is that we can't guarantee how long any of them will be available. A third is that although you can learn much from "distance courses," no certificate or Degree you get from any of them will "prove" anything to anybody who hasn't taken the same course. We think your best bet is to learn for your own satisfaction, and, when you get out, see what classes and open ritual opportunities there are in your locality.

As we revise *Wicca Behind Bars* in March of 2011, we don't know of any sources of free books or other religious items. Mother Earth Ministries doesn't sell or provide any gear, either.

The Blue Eyed Witch
Post Office Box 475
Tombstone, AZ 85638
info@TheBlueEyedWitch.com

Circle Sanctuary
Circle Magazine
Post Office Box 219
Mt. Horeb, Wisconsin 53572
(608) 924-2216 **Circle@mhtc.net**

Llewellyn Publications
Post Office Box 64383-591
St. Paul, Minnesota 55164-0383
1-800-THE MOON **www.Llewellyn.com**

Resources listed here are offered in good faith, and are accurate as of March, 2011. Corrections will be made as we become aware of the need for them, and we are not responsible for any inconvenience caused by outdated information.

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*This edition of **Wicca Behind Bars** is dedicated to the memory and spirit of Scott Stahl.*