



PANEGYRIA

Here comes the Sun. doot-n-doot-doot Here comes the Sun, and I say, it's all right.

—George Harrison

The Official Voice of the Aquarian Tabernacle Church

A recognized open Wiccan Church with affiliated congregations worldwide.

Post Office box 409, Index, WA 98256-0409 U.S.A.

Tel. (360) 793-1945; Fax (360) 793-3537; Info (360) 793-9258 or PYE-WAKT

On the Web: <www.AquaTabCh.org> E-mail: <ATCAdmin@AquaTabCh.org>

Issue #107

BELTANE

May 2009

Critical Care for Animals: Be Part of the Solution

Blood drives are going on all the time. Many of us have rolled up our sleeves and given blood, because you never know when a loved one—or even you yourself—could wind up in the ER needing a pint or two. Think about that for a moment. Hospitals have blood on hand 24/7.

Unless you have a rare blood type, chances are they're going to have what you—a *human*—need. But we're not the only species on the planet.

Your cat has been hit by a car! Your dog is suddenly bleeding from his nose and mouth—you suspect he may have gotten into the rat poison in the barn! Your cat has just been diagnosed with bone marrow problems. There's a half-dead raccoon in the yard and your dog's left ear is torn almost completely off! Obviously, dogs and cats require emergency care just like we do. The difference between life and death can be emergency surgery or a blood transfusion. Where does that blood come from? I've never heard of a blood drive for dogs and cats. Have you?

I saw a bumper sticker at Spring Mysteries that got me thinking about this. I'm ashamed to say that it hadn't crossed my mind before, and I live in a three-dog household! I talked to the owner of the vehicle, and she told me about ACCES or Animal Critical Care and Emergency Service. Armed with the information provided by JaCee, I jumped on the website at <http://www.criticalcarevets.com/> and starting reading.

The need for blood for veterinary services is at critical levels. There just isn't enough awareness about the need, or places to go if you want to be part of the solution.

ACCES is a 24 hour service that provides blood products for dogs and cats in the Puget Sound area. In fact, they're the central repository for blood products in Western Washington. I had no idea they even existed, having been fortunate enough to not require their services for Moira, Roscoe or Dooley. Visiting their website gave me valuable information on how those of us with dogs and cats can really help the animal community by becoming donors.

How do you become a donor? Here's the checklist from the ACCES website.

Canine Donor Requirements

- ... Between 1-5 years of age
- ... Over 55 pounds
- ... Good temperament
- ... Will lie still for 10 minutes
- ... Healthy
- ... Not used for breeding
- ... Has not been diagnosed with a heart murmur
- ... Has never received a blood or plasma transfusion
- ... Free of infectious disease
- ... Willing to commit to 3-4 donations per year for 2-3 years



Feline Donor Requirements

- ... Between 1-5 years of age
- ... Weigh 10 pounds or more
- ... Healthy
- ... Not used for breeding
- ... Has not been diagnosed with a heart murmur
- ... Has never received a blood or plasma transfusion



- ... Free of infectious disease
- ... Willing to commit to 3-4 donations per year for 2-3 years

Now that you've found out about the animal blood donor program, let's answer a few questions.



Is there any kind of initial screening my dog and cat have to go through before they can be donors? On your initial visit, your dog or cat will be given a brief exam by a veterinarian. A small amount of blood will be drawn at that time for typing. Dogs and cats,

like humans, have different blood types. Cats only have 3 blood types—A, B, & AB—making them universal donors, so any cat can donate. Dogs, on the other hand, are considered universal donors if they are DEA 1.1 **negative**. I won't go into the details, because to be honest, I'm not a Vet and don't understand a whole lot of this kind of thing.

The point is, however, that dogs must be pre-typed to qualify as a donor. The risk of transfusion reactions is greatly reduced from dogs who are DEA 1.1. negative, which is why this is the only dog blood type that ACCES accepts.

How long does it take to donate the blood? The procedure only takes about 10 minutes with dogs. They're usually better able to sit still with no problem, once they get used to it. The staff also gives them lots of love, attention, and treats when they're there, making the experience as positive as possible.

It's a bit different for cats, however. Dogs aren't usually sedated, but cats need to be for safety reasons. The sedation is light and tailor-made for each cat. While the procedure itself doesn't take long, recovery can take up to 4 hours. While sedation does carry some minor risks, the staff at ACCES work hard to make this a safe and positive experience for your cat, so they do everything they can to make it so!

How often can my dog or cat donate blood?

Donation can be done safely every 6 weeks, but ACCES only asks their donors to come in every 3-4 months to give the donor plenty of time to recover. If your dog or cat is currently on medication for any reason, they won't be able to donate blood, since the

medication gets transfused, too. It's just not a risk that the folks at ACCES are willing to take.

How much blood will they take? For dogs, it's a full human pint—that's 450mLs. That's why the program designates dogs weighing 55lbs or more. It's not recommended to take that amount from dogs weighing less because the blood in reserve in their bodies is not ample to cover the amount donated. Cats donate 53 mLs. Again, it's based on the amount of blood reserve the animal has.

These are just the guidelines for the ACCES program. Donor requirements may vary depending on the program. ***The easiest way to find out if there's an animal blood donor program in your area is to call your local Veterinarian.*** In the Puget Sound area, the demand for feline blood is high, so it's vital that more cat donors are found.

But blood donation isn't the only service offered at ACCES, they have emergency care onsite 365 days a year, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. I encourage you to contact them for a pre-screening for your furry, four-footed friend today. Make a difference.

BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

ACCES

Animal Critical Care Emergency Services

Open 24 hours

11536 Lake City Way NE

Seattle, WA 98125

www.criticalcarevets.com

Phone: 206-364-1660

Fax: 206-364-3667



MUSINGS...



from the Mother Superior

I have been attending Spring Mysteries for 21 years and I am amazed and humbled by the fact that I *always* learn something new. The ritual drama touches places totally unexpected and I am once again made aware not only of the great depth, majesty, power, and mystery of the myth of Demeter, Persephone, and the Dark Lord, but also of the power, dedication, and commitment of the army of volunteers who put this ritual together.

Spring Mysteries is not just another Pagan/Wiccan gathering. It is a ritually driven spiritual opportunity to learn, to experience, to meet the Gods. And it does take an army to make it as powerful and as safe as we can. We are committed to serving our community in the best way possible. As always, Pete works 24/7 for the festival. He lives and breathes it for weeks. And Elizabeth (Tennis Davis) is our anchor. It is because of her that

our eggs are all in a basket, our ducks in a row, our “i”s dotted and our “t”s crossed. She sees the big picture and can get it together by sheer persistence and exuberance. I cannot thank her enough.

This year Carolyn Keppler asked how she could help. I asked if she wanted to be my assistant (AssFERD). And she said “yes”. That “yes” turned into incredible vision and action. She could see the big picture; she knew not only what to do, but also how to do it and how to do it better. The truth of the matter? She was not the AssFERD, but in all respects the FERD (Festival Executive Ritual Director). My stress level was significantly lowered; I didn’t need to worry about things getting done (and getting done in a *nice* way), and I could concentrate on my other priorities with a sense of wonderful freedom. Thanks, Carolyn.

So many people helped and gave so much of themselves: Brenda in Registration and her team; Dewey, Elizabeth and all the kitchen and snack kitchen staff; Loralyn and Tim and team for wonderful family services; Jimbo, Black Cat, Sylvan Grove and Green Star Grove for the shrines, serving at the Feast, MCing the Friday Night at the Apollo (and that incredible auction \$\$\$!), and Skyclad; Elaine for great workshops; our security people our Tappies, our Den Mommy; our Men’s and Women’s Circle Coordinators; our Youth Rites of Passage

team; our AAoP team; everyone, everyone, everyone!

Brian Hatcher took Kathi’s new script (with much writing help from Touran) and turned it into a thing of beauty. Kathi’s soul was in this script and it showed. The cast gave their hearts and the power was tangible. As always, Touran created an ambiance of power, beauty, mystery, and awe.

An army. An army of love, dedication, commitment, and purpose. This is not just an ATC event. We have people from all over the greater community helping and volunteering. And the great gift we get back? We all experience the deep mystery of the myth. We are renewed and transformed.

For me to say thank you to everyone can never be enough. How can I truly thank you for the immense gift you have given the community, the Gods (and the Gods, us), each other and yourselves? We are all changed because of all of you.

It is not only the cast and staff who give so much of themselves. No, it is also everyone who attends. Everyone lends their energy, their spirit and will. All of you who attended helped with your work duties, clean-up, buying auction items, but most importantly with who you are. Thank you. Thank you.

I am blessed by all of you.
—Deborah





GROWING paganism

By Rev. BellaDonna Thompson

I have watched Wicca face many challenges over the years. We have accomplished much. We have received recognition as a valid religion. The IRS has granted church status to some Wiccan groups. We have festivals all over the US—traveling far and wide to worship together. We have many networking resources that allow us to find each other. We have tons of books on the subject. We even have books about books on Witchcraft. We have grown tremendously in numbers and in ideologies.

Today we witness a variety of concerns. We want manicured temples in which to hold handfastings, wiccanings, and requiems. We want rites of passages, and to honor our seasonal celebrations as a community. We want to frequent pagan businesses, drink at pagan pubs, and send our children to pagan schools. We want to celebrate our religion locally, without having to make a major investment in camping gear or driving to a remote location and battling the weather so that we can worship in privacy and peace.

Today's biggest challenges to Wicca are not lack of volunteers or lack of ideas, lack of heart, courage, or ambition. Our biggest challenges are lack of organization and resources. We are an amazing, interesting, multi-talented, powerful and charismatic people. Yet we are so driven in our individualism that we have difficulty working together as a whole.

Churches provide the many social programs that we are begging for, such as schools, food banks, community centers, and public temples. Churches provide legal protection, validate our clergy, accredit our schools, network our businesses, minister to our sick and needy, and host our seasonal celebrations. They provide religious support and social services to the community that

makes our world a better place. They give us the opportunity to connect as a society and allow us to do more working together than we could do as individuals acting alone. They foster culture, such as music, art, poetry, and theater.

Churches are a vital part of a healthy community. It is through churches that each of us can find our place to serve the greater community at large. But, we don't have many churches, and the ones that we do have very closely resemble covens. They are, for the most part, small with no formal meeting place.

Why, with a throng of people begging for ministering, can we not provide services for our seekers? Is it because we don't believe in proselytizing? Is it because we are afraid and want to hide from public view? No. It's because we don't monetarily support a clerical body to freely provide religious services.

Let's be honest with ourselves. When was the last time that you went to a pagan event and offered ANY money to the facilitator that wasn't a required fee? When was the last ritual you attended where a plate was passed to collect money? When was the last time that you got your paycheck and



ONE DOLLAR ... LOOKS LIKE IT'S TIME FOR THE SERMON ON TITHING AGAIN

thought, 'I should give 10%, 5% ,or even \$10 to my local priestess?'

Statistics prove that 99% of us would have

to answer: NEVER. My question to you is, "Why not?"

For any of us to ever have the community we dream of, YOU and I have to tithe to our local groups. You can't wait until you have "extra" money, or until you see others doing it. YOU have to set the example. YOU have to make it a priority. You have to decide to budget it in. You choose to spend your money on what's important to you. You can choose to set aside some for the Goddess, or you can choose not to.

We wonder why other churches don't take us seriously, but we have been sending a very clear message to our government, our community and our clergy that while our books, candles, herbs and crystals are very important to us, our religious institutions are not.

I run a church. It used to be a coven, but now it's a legal entity under the umbrella of the Aquarian Tabernacle Church. I am asked to tithe 10% of our receivables to the mother church monthly. There are many affiliates who utilize the resources that the ATC has to offer. It costs the ATC about \$75,000 a year to provide the services that we enjoy. Less than \$1,000 of that money comes from Tithes.

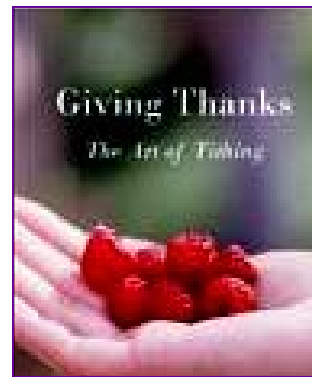
The church must charge a fee for their celebrations in order to raise this money, or they would not have the funds needed to continue operations. Last year, I invested over \$20,000 of my personal resources into our church. I received less than \$500 in tithes from our members. Although it is a marked improvement from the year before, you can see the inequity.

Say what you will about charging for spells, that's not what I'm talking about. It's true that making money off the craft can lead one down a dark road. But, I ask you, when is the last time you suspected a High Priestess of purchasing a new car on embezzled church funds? We are not in jeopardy of making anyone rich off the pagan community, yet.

I strongly encourage you to be watchful of your leaders. Immediately quit giving your money to anyone whom you feel is misappropriating it. Don't support ANY leaders whom you do not feel deserve an energy exchange for their services. But,

if you participate in a community, find some way to give back, even if it's just the spare change you collect in a bowl on your altar.

Many of you volunteer your time and services. This is important. The community runs on volunteerism. But volunteer labor doesn't pay the light bill. It won't buy land or a building. Time, talent, and treasure together make up an appropriate offering to the Goddess. It doesn't take a lot of money. If every person who considers me their spiritual leader were to give me \$1 a month, I could



open a public temple and sit in it all day planning free public events, teaching free classes, and giving readings, healings, and free spiritual counseling to the community. Each of us could have an on call spiritual leader, if we'd work together to support the ones who are already doing the work. Isn't that the world we would rather live in?

We have become jaded against the idea of giving money, but it's only through pooling our mutual resources that we will ever have the common services that other religions enjoy. Churches provide the services that we are asking for. We don't have these services, because we aren't supporting our local pagan ministries so that they have the resources to grow these services for us. Lack of tithing, donating, offering, or sponsoring is the single biggest obstacle Wicca faces today.

Our spiritual institutions have already overcome many obstacles as a religion, such as getting the government to put Pentacles on military headstones. The one obstacle that continues to loom over every pagan leader is lack of funding.

It's time we changed that.

Walking in a Wiccan Wonderland

by Janice Van Cleve

"If that which you seek you find not within yourself, you will never find it without."

The market is full of all kinds of books on Wicca. They speak of Sabbats and spells, recipes and charms, and a few even go so far as to address correspondences and history. Yet rarely do they really investigate the deeper religion and mindset of Wicca. It is important, therefore, to touch if ever so briefly, on some basic concepts that underpin walking in a Wiccan Wonderland.

The human species, by its inherent nature, seems to have a proclivity for creating religions. There is something about consciousness that wants to connect to the realm of the spirit. Some say that our consciousness remembers a prior existence in a spiritual realm. Others say that our essence is spirit and our consciousness yearns to be freed from its temporary attachment to a material body. Still others say that our consciousness is aware of a spiritual plane beyond the material and that it seeks connection to it. Whatever is the impulse for creating religions, they generally fall into two groups: the supernatural and the natural.



Supernatural religions reach beyond the natural world and fabricate nonsense (literally not of the senses) which cannot be reached by either sensory or rational means. Supernatural religions are faith based religions because the doctrines

they propose often fly in the face of what our senses and reason tell us. The only way one can follow a supernatural religion is by making a leap of faith to believe in things that cannot be proven by natural means. Supernatural religions often propose a deity and a moral code of behavior. They often attempt to encompass the whole universe to answer questions such as creation, the meaning of life, and life after death and base their beliefs on a sacred scripture.

Natural religions, on the other hand, remain solidly rooted in the natural world and they are informed completely by the senses and by mental analysis. Natural religions are experience based because they depend on individual and group experiences. For this reason they are often lacking in doctrines, rigid moral codes, and answers to ineffable questions. Practices and concepts that are similar or held in common are most often based upon mutual agreement rather than upon strict hierarchical demands by some authority.

Natural religions by and large tolerate diversity because they see diversity all around them in nature and they understand that each person's experience of nature is different. Supernatural religions, on the other hand, generally do not tolerate diversity because faith in one belief is by definition "one size fits all". It is for this reason that supernatural religions are driven to proselytize or persecute while natural religions live and let live.

The caveat should be made here that assigning specific religions totally to either the supernatural or the natural category from their beginnings to the present day would be stretching the point. Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, Pagans, and a host of other religions and philosophies have displayed aspects of both categories through history, sometimes even simultaneously. However, as a generaliza-

tion, understanding these two groupings is a helpful heuristic is finding the Wiccan Wonderland.

Wicca is a branch of Western European Paganism, which is a natural religion. The word "Wicca" is an Anglo-Saxon word meaning wisdom. Wiccans or witches (both come from the same root) are the wise ones. They study and explore and experience nature to develop their knowledge. They may specialize in herb lore, astrology, spells, counseling, science, philosophy, or any other branch of knowledge. That is why Wicca is sometimes called "The Craft." It is a learned body of knowledge and skills. Wiccans do not "believe" in their religion. They work at it and learn it until they know it. The more obscure questions of creation, the meaning of life, etc., are well outside the Wiccan experience and they are generally content to leave them there and not to offer any hypotheses about them.

One part, therefore, of walking in a Wiccan Wonderland is the constant thirst for knowledge. For this reason Wiccans are not called "the chosen people", "the elect", or "the saved". Rather they are called "seekers" because they continue to seek for knowledge and to perfect their skills. Some find satisfaction in accumulating this knowledge for its own sake or in teaching it; but for many Wiccans, the purpose of knowledge and skills is to use them.

Knowledge helps us make informed choices. Living by choice is a significant part of walking in a Wiccan Wonderland. It is amazing how many things over which we really have a choice once we think about it. For example: Nobody makes us happy or makes us sad. These reactions are how we choose to respond to a situation. Likewise we don't have to go to this meeting or that party, eat up all our food, or send a card for a birthday or buy a gift. We can choose not to do these things. All the social rules of etiquette and manners, as well as ethics and morals, are culturally learned behaviors. A Wiccan's only guide, besides her own experience, is the Wiccan Law which is variously expressed as "And ye harm none, do what ye will."

This does not, to be sure, give Wiccans free license to run riot. Choice bears consequences. We are free to choose not to go in to the office, but the boss is then empowered by our choice to fire us. We are free to drive over the speed limit, but the officer is then empowered by our choice to pull us over. We learn from our mistakes and add the knowledge gained to our experience. Of course we don't have to reinvent the wheel by learning everything from personal experience. More often than not, we choose to go along with laws, manners, and other culturally learned behaviors because these are usually the result of the learned experience of others or they make rational sense.

As children we are conditioned by parents and peers, pastors and professors, to follow a whole laundry list of rules. Later as we grow up and are exposed to a broader set of experiences, we begin to question some of the things we were taught and we begin to make up our own minds. When we decide that something we were taught is not true or no longer serves us, we intentionally get rid of it. Conversely, when we figure out something new that does seem to serve us, we intentionally adopt it. By the same token, when a Wiccan finds a practical application of Wicca in her life that suits her needs, she dumps old mindsets and habits that get in the way and adopts the new application.

One of the basic new applications made by Wiccans is the rearrangement of time. Time is an artificial construct. Hours, days, and months are completely arbitrary. The natural structure of time is the seasons. So another part of walking in a Wiccan Wonderland is structuring our lives around the seasonal calendar. This is a tough one because schools, jobs, and modern social institutions are formed around measuring time by clocks and Gregorian calendars. But let's think about it. The most holy Christian holiday is Easter but Roman and Orthodox Catholics celebrate it on two different days. The Jews have



Yom Kippur, Hanukkah, Passover and a whole host of other holidays that the mainstream does not. Professions have their own calendars, too. Politicians follow three seasons of the year—legislating, blaming, and fund raising. Accountants have four seasons, which correspond to their quarterly reports. If all these people can rearrange time according to their needs, certainly



Wiccans can organize their time around the eight Sabbats of the year.

If a Wiccan seriously applies the eight Sabbats to her daily life, she goes a long way toward walking in a Wiccan Wonderland. The eight Sabbats occur in the natural world. We feel the quickening of spring at Candlemas and we see the daffodils at Spring Equinox. We know the warming of Beltane in our hearts and all around us. We experience the long light of Summer Solstice, the late summer flowers at Lammas, and the falling leaves at Autumn Equinox. At Samhain we feel the nip and chill of winter and at Winter Solstice we rest in quiet peace - to the degree we can escape the commercial madness artificially created by the American material culture around us.

The natural seasons reflect the accomplishment of our wills—our intentions. We set our intentions each year at Candlemas. Through the year, we grow in our enjoyment of life, our appreciation of new sensations, filling our seeking with new knowledge, and intentionally pursuing our goals. Then in autumn we take stock, fulfill our debts, forgive our injuries, and look back in satisfaction at what we accomplished even if we did not complete all the grand plans we

made. Then at Samhain we release it all. We die. We surrender to the inevitable ending of all things. We close the book. We put away the score sheet. That tally is done. We empty ourselves and become completely free. In winter we lie in quiet and peace, carrying no baggage from the past nor imposing any requirements on the future. We don't have to. We know - as opposed to having faith - we know as Wiccans that we will be reborn and that new possibilities and opportunities await us when Candlemas comes round again. We know that we will grow in the Craft from new knowledge and new skills. Christians speak of new life, new zest, and new possibilities when they are "born again"—and they only get born again once! We Pagans get to do it every year!

Wiccans bring home this cycle of the year with daily prayer. Daily prayer is key to walking in a Wiccan Wonderland. We begin by grounding and centering ourselves in alignment with the four elementals - Air, Fire, Water, and Earth - and their corresponding directions - East, South, West, and North. This in itself is a powerful renewing and rewarding practice. It is a statement that we are here and we know where we are. It is a statement that we intentionally take a position in the spiritual realm and in that position we claim access to the forces of spirit that operate there.

After grounding and centering, it is useful to express first gratitude for the blessings and ac-



complishments appropriate to that direction. For example, I am a writer. I thank the East for any writing I accomplished the day before, for ideas that popped into my head, for emails that I wrote, letters to the editor or to leg-

islatures that I sent. In the South, I express gratitude for the instances in which I showed courage, where I stood my ground, or for journeys I made safely. In the West, I am thankful for friends and relationships, for a date the night before, and for nice things people have said to me. In the North, I am thankful for healing of the various aches and pains that my aging body seems to acquire in increasing frequency, for money that has come to me, and for the material things that provide me comfort and enjoyment. Many of these thank you's are for things I asked for in prayers the day before. After thanking, I ask for things I want this day. Asking - receiving - thanking is a daily loop that helps me remain conscious of the spirit realm while I am working in this material realm. This daily loop also replicates in a micro way the macro pattern of the seasons.

In conclusion, walking in a Wiccan Wonderland can be summarized as living intentionally, full in the knowledge of who we are, of what we want, of what we're doing, and of what is happening around us. Walking in a Wiccan Wonderland is making conscious choices and taking full responsibility for them. It is a land of ever-renewing seasons - ever knowing, ever growing, ever changing, ever lasting.

Blessed Be!

Janice Van Cleve is a priestess of the Women Of The Goddess Circle in Seattle. Copyright 2009.

*celebrate the great marriage of the goddess and the god,
which brings great abundance to us all!*



Original Art by Lori Campbell





The Artist—Lori Campbell



I have been an artist my entire life. It is so much a part of who I am and such a gift, that I usually give it away. I graduated from The University of North Texas in Denton with a BFA (Bachelor of Fine Arts): I majored in Printmaking major, minored in Philosophy (aesthetics and metaphysics mostly), and almost a double major in photography, with a bunch of additional art history thrown in to make everything come alive.



Many of my line art drawings were originally created for the cover of *Widdershins*, a local Pagan Newspaper that is no longer in circulation. Painting is new to me, and I am still learning the technique. Much of my inspiration has come from the work I've done over the last 8 years with the Gods and Goddesses as a cast member for SMF and HSF. It is such a gift! I am also a new wife of 2 years, and a new, full-time step mom of 4. Inspiration comes from the amazing beauty of life all around me. I am so blessed!

After taking some graduate level computer classes working as a research assistant on a Computer Literacy Text with my mentor, a great White Witch, I moved to Seattle. I went back to school at the Art Institute and ended up with a job at Aldus/Adobe supporting other artists using new software tools. I have been working with art and computers ever since. In September 2000, I got my MS in Management from Antioch to further my career.

My art work is going to be shown in the Issaquah Art walk, May 1st at Salon Troy! It's a beautiful venue about halfway down the main drag on the library side of Front Street. More information about the event can be found at the Web Address below.

<http://www.downtownissaquah.com/modules/event/events.php?eventid=162>

See these and more original art by Lori Campbell May 1st at Salon Troy in Issaquah, WA!

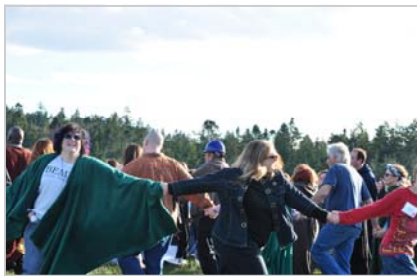


Original Art
by
Lori Campbell

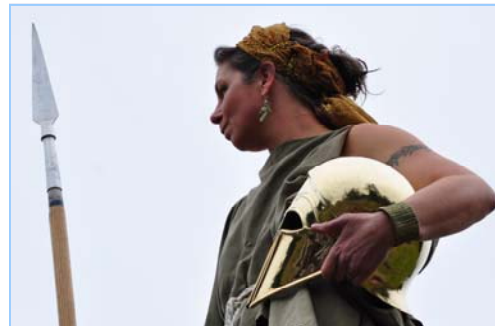
A FEW HIGHLIGHTS FROM SPRING MYSTERIES XXIV



Thursday Afternoon registration queue



Opening Circle Spiral Dance



Athena watches. She doesn't look pleased.



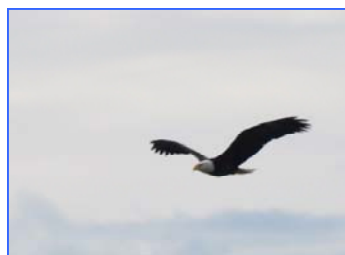
Zeus loves playing with lightning bolts!



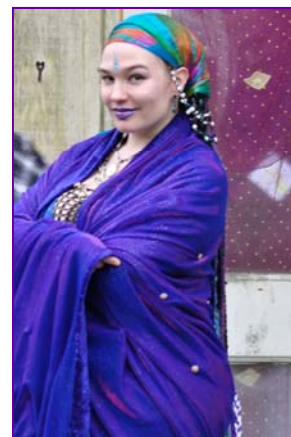
The Hierophant speaks...



The Royal Family gathers...



Zeus' eagles (no less than 7 of them!) guarded us all weekend. What an awe-inspiring sight they were!



Tempting? Best beware!



Love the fashion show!



Talent show: transcending words—



I think most folks would agree that the kitchen was in fine form. What an excellent crew!



Sylvan serves it up at the feast—best of the best!

The kitchen gives a resounding round of applause & MUCH LOVE to Sophia, our most excellent Kitchen Consultant. And an extra special THANK YOU to Ceinan & Constantina. All of these fine women are from Chalice Hart. Huzzah!!! Thanks for letting us steal them away, Jessa!



Blacksun has written many things over the years, most notably his book, The Spell of Making, a definite must-read for anyone and everyone interested in ritual construction! He's a regular contributor to *Panegyria*, and is currently teaching online at the Woolston-Steen Theological Seminary.

Now, this most beloved of High Priest's is turning his hand—and his humor—to fiction. We're pleased to be able to publish, in serial form, his novella, The Once and Future Witch. Join us as we follow the journey of Senator Starr Draper as she wends her way through the hazardous halls of our nation's capitol.

The Once and Future Witch Part III

by Blacksun

That had been a little more than a year ago. A year in which what was once considered the impossible, had grown into a reality. Starr Draper, on the way to her inauguration, still had moments of complete terror where she wanted to bolt out of the car and run away. She'd never wanted the damn job in the first place.

"Which is why you'll be perfect for it, my dear.

'Between the election and the inauguration of a president, there are ten thousand things requiring decisions from the President-elect. Actually, there are about a million things, but if the President-elect is smart, she'll make a few early decisions about staffing that greatly reduce the number of items commanding her personal attention. Primary in this process is the selection of the Chief of Staff. This person acts as the filter between the President and the rest of the world. He or she is the keeper-of-the-gate for the Oval Office and holds a great deal of power in the political circles of Washington. Often, it is the Chief of Staff who determines which bill gets the nod from the President and which doesn't.

Since the Chief of Staff is in a position to make the president look incredibly stupid or dictatorial simply by making the wrong decisions about the power mechanizations of the thousands of politicians and influence peddlers, the President's appointment for this position is crucial. The Chief of Staff makes hundreds of decisions hourly with the authority of the President's office. If the CoS is not in tune with the President, or if he is not on the same page with the priorities and agendas of the Commander in Chief, then almost everything that the President plans will likely fail. President-elect Draper's choice may have come as a surprise to some political

pundits, but she had no doubt who she wanted from the moment she entered the race.

Helios D'Amico was the second son of a Greek immigrant. Other than a small government education grant, he had paid for his college education by being a program strategist for Sony Games, a job that had even his professors seeking him out for insights into managing complicated cases requiring delicate handling. First in his class at Harvard Law, it was no surprise that Helios was courted by major firms all over the country before he had even passed the bar.

Starr and Helios' first meeting was one of those coincidences that later seemed more like a push from the hand of fate. While on assignment for her e-news company in Boston, Starr attended a Full Moon circle run by a long-time friend. Following the ritual, she struck up a conversation with another attendee that lasted long into the wee hours. One would think that with the first name of Helios, he'd be your typical Greek warrior/god type. But this man was too short and slim for that role. Standing only half an inch over five and a half feet, he probably weighed less than Starr, though she was about the same height. His reddish/gold hair did have a slight Greek hero type curl to it, but wasn't the most dominant feature by any means. It was his eyes that stopped everyone when they first met him. They weren't brown or golden brown; they were, quite simply, gold. Pure, polished gold. When Starr looked into them on that first 'chance' meeting, she had the oddest sensation of looking back at herself.

It was the beginning of a process of discovery that neither of them had ever expected, but both found totally fascinating. Neither Starr nor Helios had any psychic talent to speak of individually, but together they found that they connected on a level akin to mind reading. It wasn't telepathic and it wasn't just empathic; it was, to all intents and purposes, a shared mind experience. It was a bit eerie at first, each one having their own individual thoughts, but 'knowing' that they were enough like the thoughts of the other that they could rely on there being complete understanding between them. For some, such a relationship might prove to spark a romance; for others, it could be a living hell. But Starr and Helios related synergistically, bringing about a positive change in each of them. Starr benefited from Helios' marvelous legal and strategic mind, and he had access to her nearly photographic memory and eye for details.

Their meeting marked the beginning of Starr's political career. She had toyed with the idea before, but felt she lacked the abilities needed to be effective. Helios filled in her gaps with his strong analytical mind and pragmatic approach to the law. He too had hoped to enter governmental service in some way, but had doubts about his ability to sway people with words. Her ability to put people at ease while saying just the right thing to get them to open up and see her viewpoint was exactly what Helios needed. They found that as long as they were within about two kilometers of each other, their communication was nearly complete. The pair couldn't really call what they shared a total mind reading; it wasn't as if they knew the actual thoughts of the other. It was more like their own minds were operating along parallel lines with the addition of the other person's knowledge and skills. Each had discovered that they were aware of the other's proximity even before they could be sensed in any other way. Being able to parallel process information in this way, they found their own native abilities were greatly enhanced. It took some getting used to, but they quickly learned to use their unique situation in a way that played to their strengths and shored up their weaknesses. When Starr had her first audience with Lady McGuire, she and Helios had known each other less than a year; by the time she made her bid for the Senate, they had become a formidable team.

During the presidential race, their ability to mind share was a definite plus, not only politically, but spiritually as well. The stress of a presidential campaign can

be overwhelming; never far from each other, Starr and Helios acted as a pressure relief valve for each other. Not only could they arrive at a decision more quickly, they would invariably arrive at the *same* conclusion. Few people knew about their joined status, even after she named him as her Chief of Staff. Helios' own accomplishments in the public sector had the folks on the hill nodding over her wise choice for that powerful position. It was no secret they teamed up on causes and political movements over the years, so their ability to work as a team had a history seen as a plus. Only Allen, Trenton, and Lady McGuire knew of their unusual psychic symbiosis. If she had had to appoint anyone else for the Chief of Staff position, Starr would have been terrified. As it was, she was still unsure of being put in the position of President. Maybe she'd grow more used to it as time went on. But today, only hours before she was to be sworn in, she was close to a panic attack.

As her limousine turned a corner onto Pennsylvania Avenue she saw the Capitol building that, more than any other piece of architecture in the world, symbolized a complex mix of dreams and ideals that had driven some to impossibly great accomplishments and others to unimaginable stupidity. Her breakfast today with President Picossa would be his last official act as President. In a way, she envied him; his tour of duty was now over and he could live the rest of his life with the prestige and power afforded all past presidents without the harrowing pressures that she knew she would be facing in just a few hours. While the past and future presidents broke their fast, Helios would be getting together with the current Chief of Staff.

Two months earlier, when the President and his wife had hosted them for a private luncheon. Since the President had helped campaign for her, they were on much more familiar terms than just political colleagues. The first half of the luncheon was for the media, so the President and the President-elect had appeared without any other official staff members. It wasn't until they had shooed away the reporters and cameras and actually sat down to a meal that Helios had joined them. Though it might have been considered strange that he had been part of the meeting, President Picossa understood the reasons Starr had requested he be included. The President had included his current Chief of Staff in their meeting as well in the hope that he could help D'Amico in some way. The

current Chief of Staff had proven a capable CoS for the outgoing President since his appointment a year and a half before. Douglas Eisenhower, a distant relative of a president who had come into power just after the only atomic bomb to be exploded in war had been used against Japan by the United States, was a youngish man in his early forties. He was, as the media had said many times in describing him, as good looking as a chick-flick video star. Perhaps the most unusual point about him, however, was the fact that he was a Pentecostal Christian. President Picossa was a devout Roman Catholic who had ridden into the White House as the Earth Party's candidate. Though ironic in the extreme to those who analyzed politics in DC, none of it seemed to matter to anyone except those political pundits. Starr wasn't the only one who had become more or less blind to a person's professed faith identity; most of the country was just as unimpressed by what label a person used and more concerned with how they interacted with their world. What might have once been considered an odd combination of ideologies was now hardly a blip on the collective consciousness. The luncheon had proven to be helpful to Starr and Helios in several ways, and she had enjoyed the humor of the First Lady immensely.

The breakfast meeting she was about to have with President Picossa would in all probability be slightly more somber, more like a wake she thought. There was something almost sad about a President going quietly into the night. After eight years of holding the most powerful office in a country that still could be considered the leader of the world, slipping out the south door to board Marine One for the last time without every reporter in the world watching would certainly have to feel strange. She wondered what he would be thinking about for the hour and a half trip to his home in California.

Her limo and entourage of Secret Service people pulled into the security tunnel leading to the underground garage of the White House. Starr was escorted to the personal dining room of the President of the United States by no less than ten alert, grim-faced people well equipped with audio and optical implants and sporting tell-tale bulges under their jackets. Though the room wasn't used for public state functions, it was nevertheless quite large and boasted a table that could easily accommodate thirty. She knew that the Presi-

dent and his wife often sat at the cozy six-person table in the corner of the private kitchen that overlooked the south lawn to take their morning coffee. Starr suspected that the kitchen offered a much more pleasing atmosphere than this room, but some protocols had to be followed even for a private meeting, so it was to the so-called 'private' dining room where the two met.

Starr's VP running mate, the somewhat elderly Thomas James Hunt was having a similar breakfast meeting with the outgoing VP over at Blair House. Starr had known Hunt only distantly while in the Senate, so they didn't have a close relationship. She'd felt compelled to choose him because of his expertise in international relations and his sound understanding of world trade. With China controlling much of the economy, knowing how money moved around the planet was crucial for understanding the power fluctuations of the world political situation. Starr could use TJ's help, and he had appeared early on in the campaign as the one who would be her best choice. His bid in the primaries looked strong at the beginning, but he had decided to pull out after a bad showing in the New England states. After that, he'd enthusiastically thrown in with Starr's campaign, where he was welcomed with open arms by nearly everyone. Also, his sizable campaign money chest was added to hers, which was most welcome because she wasn't the best at raising funds.

Starr walked through the huge double doors and was met by a warm smile from the First Lady. Dwight and Helios, sitting to the left of the president, were speaking in muted voices, but stood up as she entered the room. The staff appeared a moment later with the morning meal. As they retreated, President Picossa gave his CoS a slight nod. On cue, Eisenhower asked if he and Helios could be excused to hold their conversations in another room. The President agreed, and the two men left the room. Conversation was light as breakfast got under way, but after only a quick glass of orange juice, the First Lady excused herself, and the pair were alone.

Starr smiled at the President, "I don't have to be psychic to know you arranged for us to be left alone here like this, Mr. President. Are you now going to pass on the keys to the closets containing all the skeletons?"

"Hardly." he said, a wry tone to his voice. "I might

need them to keep the hounds at bay after I leave here today. But I will tell you that if you're smart, you'll not look too closely under some of the rugs."

She gave a polite chuckle. She knew the President was only partly joking. "So, what do we talk about now, sir?"

To her surprise, he reached into his jacket and pulled out a gold cigarette case. Holding it up between them he asked, "Do you mind?"

She had had no idea the President smoked. Of course, it was against all the rules for him to smoke anywhere inside any enclosed space, but how could she refuse the man one small vice? "Of course not, Mr. President. I have no problem with it. Tried them once but never caught the habit. Couldn't get past the coughing."

"Ahem, yes... well, you get used to it. Of course, as my daddy used to say, *You can get used to hanging if you hang long enough*. I never wanted to test that theory, but then maybe I'm doing just that with these." He took out a matching gold lighter and put flame to cigarette tip. Taking a deep drag, he sat back, a look of pleasure on his face. "Back in the day, they used to serve brandy with these. Nowadays, the doctors say I shouldn't have either one. What do they know, eh? I'm ninety-seven and can still chop wood and haul water if I need to."

Starr loved when Robert Picossa pulled out his homespun persona and relaxed. Both he and the First Lady were solid Midwestern farming stock and very practical people at the core. "I believe, Mr. President that the tradition was brandy and *cigars*, but I'm sure the difference is of no consequence."

They sat in comfortable silence as he drew on the pencil slim tube of tobacco. Starr took a moment to relax, something she didn't think she'd do once she set foot in the White House. With a small, satisfied sigh, the president stubbed the butt out on his plate, wrapped the remains in a napkin, and tucked it into his jacket pocket.

"Can't have the evidence around for the help to write a tell-all book on, can we?" From his tone of his voice when he looked over at her, Starr knew it was time to get into the *real* reason he'd arranged for them to spend this time alone.

"Starr..." he began, coughing and looking at her almost shyly. "I'm going to call you Starr and you can call me Robert or Bob. Here," he gestured around the

room, "we're just two people dumb enough to take this job. So let's drop the formalities, okay?"

She smiled, then nodded for him to continue.

"Yes, well... oh, hell, I'll just say it. How well do you know TJ?"

Of all the things she had imagined the President might want to discuss with her, the VP-elect was *not* one of them. She hid her surprise. She trusted the President, even if she didn't know where this was going.

"About as well as I know you, sir. Meaning I haven't any real knowledge of him, other than public record. But the party gurus recommended him and I can't say he's not come through on the campaign. Personally, I find him a little... I don't know... a little formal? I guess I'd characterize it that way. But he's never been anything but helpful. I wouldn't exactly say we're friends, but I do believe we respect one another. Can I ask why you're asking?"

"You can, but only after you answer my next question. What connection does TJ have with Stamper?"

Starr carefully set down her glass of juice and considered how she to answer the President. Until this moment, Stamper's name hadn't come up in any conversations dealing directly with politics outside the walls of Maggie's home. Allen, Trenton and she had met there only a few times since the campaign had begun. To Starr, who had been focused more on the campaign than on Stamper's activities, the President's question sounded an alarm bell. She wanted to learn what he might know about Stamper, but she didn't want to tip her hand and destroy one of the reasons she had run one of the most grueling races any politician can face. After only a momentary pause, she replied with a disarming smile. "None that I know of, Bob. Please don't tell me that TJ has done something financially that's against the rules?"

"Hah! Him?" Picossa snorted. "He's a Puritan when it comes to political ethics. But only on the public side. And who the hell knows anything more? The man's never been married and I have no idea what he's like on the inside. He's a Wally, you know."

Just as there were people with natural psychic skills, so were there some who could not be read, even by the most gifted of psychics. They were called Wallies because it was like running up against a wall for anyone trying to peek into their thoughts. The term had made the name Wallace rather unpopular for the last fifty years, and was considered somewhat derogatory.

Picking her words carefully, Starr replied. "As, I believe, are several politicians we could mention. in our business. It might be considered a bonus, don't you think?"

The President also had been called a Wally. She had no direct knowledge whether that was true or not because she couldn't read anyone that way herself. Her reply didn't actually come out and say he too was a Wally, but she knew he would understand the subtext correctly. She didn't know how he would take her remark, but in less than three hours she would be the one behind the desk in the oval office and he wouldn't. So she thought it was high time to stop playing games.

"What's going on, Bob? Let's not waste taxpayer dollars here. If I need to know something, just come out with it."

"Okay, I'm sorry. I know I've got a reputation as a Wally too. And I am. And, as you pointed out, it can be an advantage in our game. *But that doesn't mean I'm not psychic.*"

Political training aside, Starr caught her breath as she realized that the President hadn't spoken his last sentence out loud. She was amazed, not only by the fact that he'd projected his thoughts to her, but also because it had come through as distinct words, just as if she had heard him say them. She was used to the kind of communication she and Helios had, a sort of parallel thought processing. But to have individual words come through, as in a complete series of words, processed as if they had come through the auditory channels and into the language processors in her brain, was completely unexpected. She had, of course, heard of this ability, but it was very unusual.

Contrary to popular belief by those who didn't know much about psychic phenomena, mental telepathy, as it was commonly called, wasn't really like verbal communication. Psychics often likened most telepathy to 'shared meaning.' Our words are really not the meaning in some respects. They are just sound-symbols that point to the meaning of what we wish to communicate. Verbally, words are sometimes confusing because they often mean one thing to one person and quite another to the next. Therefore, in some ways, telepathic communication was considered superior because it bypassed the 'translation' of words and dealt directly with their meanings. For a person to communicate in words by mental means only was very, *very* rare. People who were able to project their thoughts into another person

were usually trained to project meaning instead of words. So even if a child could do what the President had just done, they were usually taught what was considered to be a better means of utilizing their skills.

Starr had to laugh at her own naiveté. She had never thought of a Wally as anything but psychically inactive. Now that she considered it, it made sense that they could simply have amazingly superior mental shields. She realized that the President had purposely tricked her, and was now enjoying himself as he watched her process the experience. In the split second it had taken her to respond, it was obvious that he'd accomplished what he set out to do—shock her.

Grinning like a boy with his first deck of tarot cards, he said, "What's the matter, Starr? You think witches are the only ones who have psychic skills? I may be just a good old Catholic boy, but I can still give a lot of you Wiccans a good run for the money. Poor Barnstead hates it when I do that. He hasn't been able to crawl around inside my head, yet I'm able to get past his best shielding and lay eggs in his language cortex. It really burns him when I do that, heh heh.

"But I'm making a point here, young lady. There's a lot that you and Mr. Sunshine, your Chief of Staff, won't be able to guard against unless you crawl into a cave high up in the Andes Mountains. And one of those things is Thomas Hunt. Allen can't read him, Maggie can't see him, and most of us can't trust him." The intensity of his speech had him leaning forward, his eyes boring into hers.

"Then why in the world did the Party recommend him? I depend on Allen and Trent's help in these matters, for goddess' sake. Why would they give a pass on TJ if they couldn't trust him?"

"Take it from an old political war horse, Senator... excuse me, I guess I should get used to calling you Madame President."

"I thought we agreed on Bob and Starr."

"Ah, yes... so we did. Well, take it from me: not everything a psychic thinks is necessarily right. Sometimes I believe this Party relies way too much on what they call magic and far too little on what I call political savvy. I may not be all that good a seer, but one thing I do see is that TJ Hunt and Eric Stamper have some, shall we say, similar tastes and are closer than most people believe."

"Similar tastes? Are you saying they're secret lovers or something?"

"Oh, no. They're both hetero. And they're both confirmed bachelors. C'mon Starr, let's not be naïve here. How do rich men *usually* satisfy their sexual desires?"

"With the prettiest women who are willing. But I doubt that either one of them have any trouble attracting their share of women. There are a million women in DC alone who would happily bed down with the very rich and powerful just for the thrill of it." She shook her head, trying to clear her thoughts. Starr was striving to make a connection here. Something was there, but it was murky.

"Quite true, but don't forget the fact that any time one of us goes to bed for a quick bounce, half of the press corps will do anything to get the juicy details the next day. Sex may not be a bad word anymore, but it still sells e-mags. One of the things that the professional ladies here in DC have learned is that they can sell more than their lusty bodies; they can market their silence for an even higher price. And while high prices don't mean a hell of a lot because you're rich, it's silence that usually means even more.

"TJ Hunt and Eric Stamper share similar tastes in their women. And they apparently don't mind sharing the same room with each other. Maybe they trade off or something, but I really don't care. My concern is that they're more than close; they have emotional ties as well. I know about McGuire's and Trenton's worries about a fundamentalist movement within the Wiccans. I brought my information to Trenton when TJ's name started to be sent around as a possible VP choice for you. Know-it-all Trenton decided that I was being a prude or something. Told me that men needed to get laid and Wiccans had a different view of sex than Catholics. That's true, but it doesn't change what sex does to your mind. I have no idea what it does to women, but there's a reason guys say they're 'eff'd up' when they talk about going off their rocker or something. Sex to a guy has a tendency to make you lose your ability to think straight. That doesn't change because of the religion you practice."

Starr knew the President wasn't just concerned with two men who might make fools of themselves with women. But she wasn't clear what exactly he was worried about. "If they're doing as you say, then you're telling me I have to be wary? But I'm not sure what you're getting at. Is Tom one of Stamper's people? Am I being set up?" Still murky, but there. Something that she'd

noticed, but she couldn't quite grasp what it was.

"I don't know. That's the short answer. TJ has a seemingly spotless record with the Party. But the fact that he's a Wally isn't the only thing that worries me. I've been keeping an ear to the ground, as they say. I've wondered about his political rise for a while now. If you look back at some of the stuff he's been messed up with, it's amazing he's come through so squeaky clean. Most people who have dealings with him seem a little brainwashed about him. A lot of them say the same things about him. I mean *exactly* the same things, word for word. Even Trenton told me about him using the exact same words that I'd heard from two other people in the Party not more than a week earlier. I know sometimes we learn to say some things the same way because of advertising or strong public relations blurbs, but I worry that this might be more insidious."

Starr was thoughtful for a long moment. Her mind cleared as she reflected on possible explanations for what she too now recognized as a pattern. How TJ Hunt seemed to impress people. How people who had spoken to him seemed to be so strongly on his side. How he always managed to sway people. She let out a breath she didn't know she was holding.

"Do you think it's possible that Hunt can mentally influence people without being open to other psychics?"

He nodded slowly and steepled his fingers. "I know that modern Mentation Theory says that's not possible, but that's exactly what I fear."

"So you believe TJ Hunt is a Trojan horse that has been passed by both Barnstead and Lady McGuire. And you think he can mentally influence others without ever giving any kind of signal to some of the world's best readers, is that about right?"

He pointed his finger and thumb like a gun and 'fired' at her, saying, "Bingo."

"Let's suppose you're right and we've now put the fox inside the henhouse." Starr drummed her fingers on the table, a look of determination on her face. She looked at Bob Picossa.

"What do you propose we do?"

"We? *That*, Madame President, is *your* decision. I'm just passing on the concerns of an old political hack. I've talked to Trenton and Allen, and they've both told me I'm wrong. Maybe I am. It's up to you now. But if I'm right, if your VP is one of these Wiccan

fundamentalists and is hiding it well, you'd better watch the fine print in any piece of legislation that passes. I'd have a team of legal-eagles combing the wording of everything that is voted into law. Not just the stuff that lands on your desk either, but the regulatory stuff that happens as well. I'd find money to keep these lawyers busy 24-7 and make sure they're kept shielded." He leaned back in his chair, watching her as the implications of what he said sunk in.

Starr's knew that every president had a bevy of legal advisors who were engaged in keeping the oval office free from scandal and legal intrigue, but she didn't know if any president before her had set up a team to do what the President proposed. How to do that without some hint of it leaking and causing a huge conspiracy rumor would be difficult. Picossa had awakened a fear in her that, the more she thought about it, the more threatening it seemed.

She turned her thoughts to Senator Hunt, trying to recall why she had accepted him as her running mate in the first place. When Trenton had come to her with the idea, he'd brought along the senator with him. That in itself was odd. Usually, the candidate would be proposed and vetted before actually being approached. When Hunt had shaken hands (he was 'old fashioned' that way according to him) with her, she'd made up her mind about him that moment. From that day on, every other candidate seemed grossly inferior. It made her wonder if the President wasn't on to something. She needed to talk to Helios.

Wherever Helios had gone with the President's CoS, it wasn't far. She was just about to call him when a soft bell sounded. They both turned to the door and the President said, "Open for entry." The door unlocked and the light over it turned from red to green. Eisenhower entered with D'Amico right behind him. Helios looked straight at Starr, concern written all over his face. She gave a slight nod of her head, but said nothing. He immediately knew that they would talk later; she didn't want to say anything about what was worrying her at the moment. He mentally acknowledged her nod as the President's CoS said out loud, "Please excuse the interruption, sir. Mr. D'Amico said the President-Elect was going to be late if we didn't wind things up in the next few minutes."

The President looked over at Starr and grinned. "It would seem you have begun your training as of now,

Madame President. Trust me, your Chief of Staff will run you like an old time train. You won't be able to sneeze if it isn't on the schedule." He rose and reached across the table, touching fingertips with her. "My very best wishes to you, Madame President. If you need me, I will of course be at your command. Just try not to make it during fishing season, hmmm?"

"Of course, Bob. Thank you for everything. And give the First Lady my thanks as well. You both have helped this country in a million ways. Go catch a boatload of trout." She turned and left with Helios. The ever-present Secret Service people assigned to her were just outside and fell in around the President-Elect in perfect unison with the P-E's step. She heard one of them say into an invisible throat mike, "Glenda is leaving for the garage." She still found it terribly amusing that they had chosen the name of the Good Witch of the East from the Wizard of Oz as her code name. She was sure that Helios was also designated with a code name from the same venue, but as yet, she hadn't heard what it was.

Her mind was busy with the enigma of Tom Hunt, her VP. Who was he? Was he the 'man behind the curtain' in the land of Oz? Was she going to have to conquer the Wizard before she could get on with running the country? Her thoughts ran with the power of her mental comrade-in-arms, Helios. Strategies and contingencies began to race alongside thoughts about creating networks to keep the country moving forward. One of her campaign platforms had been to reseed the old forests east of the Mississippi, and she wanted to build a task force for accomplishing that before her term was over. Even though it would take at least twenty years to accomplish the program, she didn't want it to languish until she had to win a second term. And the problem of the clean water supply to the whole country was still around, years after it had been declared an emergency. Chow-Ling Industries had come up with a technology that offered real hope, but their price was so high it was in orbit! And, of course, there was the pesky problem of...

"Madame President, your vehicle is waiting." The Secret Service woman in charge of her detail brought her back to the moment. Indeed, the limo was waiting with the doors open. Helios had already gotten into the back and was facing the seat directly across from the one she always used. Embarrassed that she'd been caught daydreaming, she smiled at the woman

and gave her a slight bow. "Thank you, Lynn, mustn't keep the people waiting." As she slid into the spacious back of the ground limo, two burly men from the Secret Service got in the front and another hopped onto the rear-guard platform on the back. Four other identical vehicles drove with her out of the White House garage and sped on their way to the hotel suite where Starr Draper would be dressed, coifed, and painted to look presentable to the cameras as the new President of the United States of America.

The whirlwind of activity at the hotel was enough to distract Starr from the topics discussed in the President's private dining room. She had practiced her inaugural speech several times the night before and was confident she would be able to deliver it with all the energy necessary to set the right tone for her first few months. By eleven o'clock, she was speeding along in her limo to the designated entry tunnel to the Circle Plaza. Once inside, she was transferred to what looked like an old-fashioned golf cart and whisked along to the central belowground complex under the central stage. Everyone who was to be part of the ceremony were ready and waiting.

Two people Starr hadn't expected to see walked up to her as she extracted herself from the silly looking cart. Lady McGuire and Trenton Hartford greeted her with smiles and finger touches.

Before Starr could say a word, Lady McGuire spoke "Forgive us, Madame President for disrupting your schedule. But I felt it necessary to take another minute of your time before this important ceremony."

She handed Starr a simple stick of incense, saying, "I bless you with the power of Air so that your mind is always clear."

Producing a lighter, she put the flame to the tip of the incense, saying, "I bless you with the power of Fire so that you have command of your energies."

Trenton handed a very small vial of clear liquid to Lady McGuire, who passed it on to Starr, saying, "I bless you with the power of Water so you my know the meaning and feeling of your life."

Then Trenton passed what looked like a coin and the Lady handed it to Starr, saying, "I bless you with the power of Earth so you may know the value of the world you help to create."

Starr gazed at the face of the 'coin': it was a silver round with her face and today's date on one side and a

pentacle on the other. Raising her head, she looked straight into the eyes of Lady McGuire. Reaching out a gnarled hand, the old witch anointed Starr's forehead. "I bless you with the Spirit of all the gods and goddesses that shall accompany you through your life. May your heart be at peace and your soul be true to their will."

Starr was close tears. What a marvelous surprise! She threw herself into the Lady's arms, laughing and trying hard not to smear her makeup. "Thank you, Maggie. Thank you a thousand times. I hope I won't fail or disappoint you in any way. Goddess knows I'm as nervous as all get-out. I *will* carry out this duty to the best of my ability, but...wow...do I wish I could see into the future."

Sniffing back the unshed tears, she laughed and hugged the woman even tighter for a moment longer. Releasing the embrace, she turned and hugged Trenton, thanking him as well. Starr placed the incense and water on a table where various articles of hers were being piled. The coin went into her pants pocket. With a sigh, she gave her surprise reception party a grateful smile, turned, squared her shoulders, and walked into the ring of people who would be part of the swearing-in ceremony.

A young woman dashed over and did something to her eye makeup, quickly brushed at her cheeks and smiled confidently. "You look like magic, Madame President," she said before disappearing back into the crowd of people.

Starr stepped over to the Chief Justice who would be administering the oath; there were a few items she wanted to review before the ceremony began. Starr didn't much like Chief Justice Stella Moran, but she at least respected her office. Since she would have to have more contact with the woman over the coming years, she put aside her personal differences for the moment and took care of the business at hand.

Above them, the venerable Walter X. Chu, senior senator from Massachusetts, was starting his introductory speech. It would be another ten minutes before Starr would be brought up to the central stage. She couldn't decide if she wanted the intervening time to speed up or slow down; it wasn't like her to be so self-conscious and nervous, but then, she'd never been sworn into an office with over a billion people watching. The last time she'd felt this anxious was when

she'd conducted the Solstice rite at Circle of the Winds. How her life had changed since that day! Now she was to lead a nation and attempt to make the world a better place for everyone, all nine and a half billion of them.

She smiled to herself. "*What's the big deal? Hey, magic can, like, fix anything, right?*" She had actually said that to her Magic 101 teacher the very first day of class when she was only seventeen. She recalled the withering look Ms. Haines had given her over that incredibly naïve and stupid remark. Whenever she thought of the immense tasks ahead for her, Starr also remembered back to Ms. Underwear's (Starr wondered if the woman ever knew they called her that) first rule of magic: "Every spell begins with the words, 'I will.'"

Even though there was a double shielding of impenetrable spider-glass surrounding the central stage, Starr *felt* the sound from the half-million people crowded into the Circle Plaza as like a crushing wave. She stepped from the platform onto the stage amid thunderous applause marveling at the deafening power of it all. It was beyond anything she'd felt before in this lifetime. When it died away, it was to a silence that was equally unimaginable. Starr was transfixed by the raw power evident both in the welcoming applause and the sudden quiet. That she could and would hold that power and wield it as the President was as humbling as it was exciting.

The actual swearing-in of the new President and Vice-President took less than thirty minutes. Then, for the first time as President, Starr addressed the people of her nation. The first half of her speech was mostly scripted by tradition: mention of the dignitaries, the outgoing President, her relatives and friends both on the stage and off, statements of gratitude and humility, and promises to be true to the ideals of the country and her campaign. Then she paused, taking a deep breath before continuing on to the real 'meat' of her inaugural address.

Facing not the cameras, but instead turning very slowly in a complete circle so she could view the entire multitude present, President Starr Draper let her action show everyone that what she was to say next would be the underlying theme of her term in office.

"This grand circle is tiny when compared to the one that encompasses our planet. This nation has grown in ways completely unexpected by its founding fathers... and mothers." As expected, this brought a small mo-

ment of laughter. "In the previous century, we became a world power. Our economy and our military might were such that we could impose our will nearly anywhere on the globe and nations would have to give way just to survive. At the turn of this century, we had grown so arrogant that we hardly blinked when we tried to force our will again, this time in an area of the world that hasn't known peace for thousands of years. The result was that we lost any claim to having a moral superiority to anyone and we have suffered the consequences of our political and cultural arrogance. Today, we stand with many other nations... not as an enforcer or instructor, but as an equal. Our power can only be supported through our knowledge and humanity, never again through our ignorance and conceit.

"We are learning how to share power because we must not ever again allow ourselves to believe that we can't be wrong. We will question every move, not only those of our global brothers and sisters, but those we make... most especially of our leaders.

"The office of the President of the United States of America is a great honor. But it is also a great trust. I will be your president, but I will not expect your trust unless I earn it. After the long campaign, some presidents have believed they have a mandate from their people. They have misused the trust offered to them. I will never assume such a thing. I will work on your behalf and assume only one mandate: that I will earn your trust.

"In the coming days and months, we will continue the previous administration's work on solving our water and energy problems. We will find better ways to educate our people and employ our skills for the benefit of all mankind. We will strive for compassion and aid for the sick, and find better ways to feed the hungry of the world. We will work in harmony with other nations who share these worthy goals. We will not fight unless we know our cause is truly righteous, but we will maintain a highly trained and well-equipped fighting force that is capable of defending this beautiful nation. We will not bend our knee to any who think to conquer us. But we also will not try to dictate to them or any others who wish to live in peaceful coexistence.

"Tomorrow, in this same circle, I will have the honor of leading the celebration of the Summer Solstice. For those who do not honor this as a religious holiday, rest assured that it will be in the spirit of the

brightness that day represents: that the warmth and light of our lives will give health, wealth, and good purpose to all our endeavors. Just as the Winter Solstice represents hope for renewal, so does tomorrow acknowledge the good that can be found within each human heart.

"To the envoys and dignitaries from other countries who have graced this inauguration, I invite you to share this country's celebration of the light that shines on – and from – every person on our fair planet. Let it truly be a day where all come together in love and trust."

In the speech she had written with her two writers and practiced up until late the night before, this was to be the end. But back from the breakfast with the outgoing President and in the limo with Helios, she had made a decision, mentally composing an addition to her prepared notes.

"Finally, to the millions of people in this country who work every day to better their lives and the lives of their loved ones, I give you my heart. Know that it beats in time with yours and that I will work just as hard as you to keep this nation free and prosperous. I will serve you with every breath and every heartbeat. But all of our hopes and dreams cannot be made manifest without your help. I have decided to form a special team of advisors that will perform a vital task for all of us. These people will be my link to all of you because they will take your suggestions about anything... *anything* whatsoever that you wish to say to me—in your letters and in your email. They will bring the brightest and best of these to me and *I will read them*. This nation has some of the world's greatest minds, highly educated and innovative. *Everyone* has good ideas, sometimes even great ones. As your chosen leader, I welcome them.

"Don't be afraid to speak your mind because not only is it your right, it is vital that I be told what you think. No one... and let me be crystal clear about this... no one will be punished for expressing their opinion about anything. I have just sworn to uphold the Constitution of this great land, and freedom of speech is one of our greatest strengths. Of course, you may not threaten or incite to violence, but you can tell me exactly what you think without fear of retribution. I *want* to know what you think. And I want to know *why* you think that way. All too often, leaders are fed words that people believe their leader wants to hear. I want to hear from the people; I want to hear from *you*. I want

to hear from the first three words of our Declaration of Independence; I want to hear from 'We, the people,' because we... every single one of us... are the greatest body of free minds in the world. 'We, the people' are everything America is about."

Starr's "Thank you" was completely swallowed by the roar of the cheering, clapping multitude. Stepping back from the podium, she acknowledged the crowd both in the Circle Plaza, as well as the video audience. The applause lasted for almost a minute and began to lessen only when she turned and walked back to the platform that lowered her to the chamber below. The familiar opening chords of *America the Beautiful*, joined a moment later by Elizabeth Torun's glorious voice, rose to the nearly cloudless sky in such clear tones that it melted the hearts of everyone. Even Starr, who was flush with the energy of the moment, let a tear fall over the intense emotion the woman put into the old song.

Helios smiled at her as she wiped away the escaping tear. She smiled back and whispered, "Gods, that woman can call the west anytime on my circle!" He laughed with her as they made their way across the lower chamber toward the carts that would take them back to the garage.

He leaned close as she sat down in her cart. "A small surprise, that last bit in your speech. When did you decide to put in *that* little bombshell? And do you realize how many people it will take to do that?"

She gave him a meaningful look and said quietly, "I know. But I also know we can hide our political legal eagles in that pile of people and nobody will be the wiser. I want a team of three or four figured out before Congress goes back into session. We've got to find some way to collect them and keep them safe. Get Barnstead to help you. He'll find out what we're doing if he doesn't know already, so tell him I'm asking for his help."

As her Chief of Staff climbed into the cart beside her, she turned to give him one last instruction. "And, Helios, I don't..."

"I know: you don't want any Wallies on *that* team."

She smiled broadly and copied the 'finger gun' the now former President had aimed at her that morning. "Bingo."

TO BE CONTINUED...



THE ATC FAMILY TREE

WITH AFFILIATED GROUPS WORLDWIDE!



MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN MICHIGAN

Crossroads Tabernacle Church—ATC



The National Day of Prayer and Meditation was established by President Truman as an opportunity for people of all faiths (and no faith) to gather together in prayer on behalf of the nation and our own spiritual well-being. A group calling itself the “National Day of Prayer Task Force” was established by numerous Evangelical groups primarily to ensure that the National Day of Prayer excluded anyone not of their specific beliefs. They do this by encouraging governors to write Proclamations that are exclusive in language, and by inviting these same governors to attend events that the Task Force hosts; events that once again are exclusive in nature.

Our own public Ordains tell us that only by standing up for our rights can we obtain them. I decided to write our Governor and ask her to write a proclamation that was more inclusive and welcoming in nature. I was very careful to identify myself and my church, including a copy of the “What in Heaven’s Name” pamphlet that is available at the Mother Church. I sent this off, expecting at best to receive a polite form letter, and perhaps a press photo or two.

A few days later I received a package addressed to the Church from the Governor, marked “do not bend.” Instead of press photos, I was pleasantly surprised to find a copy of this year’s Proclamation from Governor Granholm. There is a photo of the proclamation accompanying this article, so I won’t copy the language here.

This is, to my knowledge, the first time that a Wiccan Church has ever been acknowledged in this fashion by a State Governor. A small step

towards equality and acceptance, but long journeys are made up of small steps. There is a conversation taking place in our country right now about faith, and we have an opportunity to include ourselves in it; but only if we step forward and ask for the chance to speak. What I hoped to show with my own interactions with Michigan’s Governor is that if we do speak up, we will be heard.

Robert Keefer
High Priest
Crossroads Tabernacle Church, ATC



Menhir News



*“Spring is sprung, the grass is riz.
I wonder where the flowers is?”*
– poet Ogden Nash

The unusually dreary, icy, wet winter of '08 is over. It was particularly destructive. Our shrubs are broken and several buildings in Index, including the historic Red Men's Hall, collapsed under the icy snows. A bad year. Winter is also destructive to our psyches – it's no wonder the ancients feared the worst in winter.

But spring comes once again, as it always does, and brings with it rebirth, renewal, re-growth, both physically and metaphorically. Some times, some of that renewal may be slow to arrive, as Ogden Nash pointed out in his poem.

Some times we can't just expect the flowers to bloom and the grapes to appear on the vine in abundance without some help. To be the most effective, the renewal that is signified by this season needs our

attention and help. To get the most out of it, we have to pull out those nasty weeds from the flowerbeds. We have to prune those withered branches from the vines to get the biggest and best crop this time around. When things are clotted with weeds and the vines sapped of vitality by dead branches left to rot, we leave things entirely to chance.

Recovery from a bad season doesn't come nor does sweetness and light show up in our lives automatically, unless we tend our gardens with lots of hard work and loving attention. If we just walk away from the garden instead of working the soil, it goes to seed. The weeds take over; the moles eat the tuberous bulbs; the slugs eat the rest. Flowers? Ha! It's totally predictable.

Life's like that, too. In hard times like these, after a horrific winter and with a contracting economy, it can seem like the dead of winter did to the ancients – the end of life as we know it. But it isn't, and doesn't have to be. We have to focus ourselves on tending our gardens. *“What should I do? How do I handle this problem?”* Often it seems so hard that we are tempted to give up, to take the “easy” way out.

You know, whether you see the glass half full or half empty, it will *always* look that way to you if you don't do *something!* Things can change – the only constant in life is change – but only when we get down in the dirt and start pull-

ing up those weeds and pruning the dead branches that sap the life from the growing plants that are our lives.

Let's face it – life isn't a carousel that we can just step off of when things don't seem to be going our way, then step back onto later, without the risk of the ride ending before we're ready. The framers of our revered U.S. constitution knew the “pursuit of happiness” was not just a right; it is more a *journey* than a destination. Like a garden, it requires constant work to maintain.

Winter is over. Let's all start filling up that half-glass by pruning and pulling the weeds up in the relentless pursuit of happiness. That's our right, but only while remembering the Charge of the Goddess, for it is the relationship between us and our gods that governs the path of our lives.

Know thy seeking and yearning shall avail thee not unless thou knowest the mystery: if that which thou seekest thou findest not within thee, thou wilt never find it without thee, for behold, I have been with thee from the beginning and I am that which is attained at the end of desire.

- Pete Pathfinder Davis

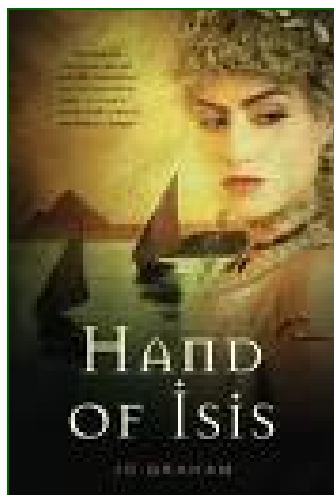


The Need - Fire

By Naomi M.

Hand of Isis

by Jo Graham



(Orbit, March 2009)

Intrigue, passion, murder, lust, revenge, political plotting, beauty, strength, endurance and love strikes the hearts and minds of those who read the newest book of the Need-Fire. No, it has nothing to do with the White House, congress, or your next door neighbors. It has to do with the power of the Goddess and the strength of her followers.

I have only recommended one other fiction book in the past. I am hesitant when it comes to them simply because I have very particular interests and would hate to cram them down your throats! However this one, like the Alchemist, has an inner story that can speak to every-

one on any level.

Hand of Isis by Jo Graham, is a fabled tale of the times of Cleopatra told through the eyes of one of her handmaidens, Charmian.

At first, I was unsure of the route this story was going to take. In fact I had thought that it would revolve more around Isis, instead of three sisters. However, that in no way negated the terrific story telling of Ms. Graham. Charmian is an engaging character whose voice speaks well on its own accord. Your introduction to her is strong and you are immediately engaged into the tale of her life.

Page one... "In twilight I approached the doors, and in twilight they stood open for me. I was not surprised. I knew that I was dead.

I walked through the doors and through the hall beyond, pillars thick as the tallest trees carved round with symbols in red and gold, with stories of those who had walked this way before. Above the high capitals ornamented like lotus blossoms was not the star-painted ceiling one might expect, but the wide expanse of the night sky, blue-black and deep as eternity. I stood in the halls of Amenti, the Uttermost West, and the sun did not come here. I walked in starlight."

See what I mean? What an enticing way to open a story! (But let me just say that the inset alone was enough to suck me into this

book.)

Succession was immensely important in ancient times and what was done to obtain the right to power was often-times appalling. Not so different from today really, we are just less apt to be so public about it and maybe less brutal.

Rituals, procedures and etiquette had to be adhered to by strict law before a woman any right to power, let alone the right to rule. And Cleopatra was no exception. Here's an excerpt from 'Coming Forth By Day' pg. 140...

"Then she stepped forward, between the censers and Cleopatra and I saw that it was a priestess gowned as Ma'at. In her hand were her scales, and her dress was red as sunset. 'Daughter of Egypt, why do you seek the Halls of Amenti?'

'I seek my lord Serapis, whom You name Osiris,' Cleopatra said. 'He brought justice and peace to the Black Land, and now He is dead.'

'Will you serve Me here and above?' Ma'at asked. 'Will you serve out justice to your people, and weigh their hearts when they are brought before you as righteously as you may?'

'I will,' she said solemnly.

'Then pass, daughter of Egypt,' Ma'at said, and it seemed She stepped back into the wall, though I knew it only and alcove that stood in shadow.'...

I know just enough of the life of Cleopatra to be able to recognize some of the occurrences in Ms. Graham's book. But as with any good tale, you get to see the person behind the mask of this great Queen and that leaves me to wonder if there is more true history within this tale than I had imagined.

Witnessing, through story, the triumphs and failures of individuals seeking their path, whether it is to lead or to follow, helps you to connect the dots of your own life. And when you have finished putting the lines between the marks, maybe, just maybe you will find a grand and colorful picture staring back at you.

May this Beltaine find your dreams taking flight and your desires being fulfilled.

Blessed Be!
Naomi



On a side note, if anyone would like to see a particular book like reviewed, please feel free to email me at NaiOshaskey@hotmail.com, and I will do my best to get it into *Panegyria*! Blessings!

CURRENT EVENTS

April 30th, 7pm-9pm

Beltaine Circle at Edge of the Circle Books on Capital Hill in Seattle. This is an open ritual—all are welcome.

April 30th, 6pm-8pm

Beltaine Ritual at Sacred Wisdom Healing Center. This is an open ritual—all are welcome. Directions to SWHC can be found at www.sacredwisdomhealing.com

May 9th, 7pm-9pm

ATC Open Full Moon Circle at the church in Index, WA

For further information visit the church website at: www.aquariantabernaclechurch.org. Bring a dish to share for the potluck following the ritual. Don't forget to bring your \$10 contribution to the Cauldron of Prosperity

May 23rd, 7pm-9pm

ATC Open Dark Moon Circle at the church in Index, WA

For further information visit the church website. Bring a dish to share for the potluck following the ritual. Don't forget to bring your \$10 contribution to the Cauldron of Prosperity

June 6th, 7pm-9pm

ATC Open Full Moon Circle at the church in Index, WA

For further information visit the church website. Bring a dish to share for the potluck following the ritual. Don't forget to bring your \$10 contribution to the Cauldron of Prosperity

June 20th, 7pm-9pm

ATC Litha Ritual.

Come celebrate the Sabbat with us at the church in Index WA. For further information visit the church website. Bring a dish to share for the potluck following the ritual. Don't forget to bring your \$10 contribution to the Cauldron of Prosperity

July 11th, 7pm-9pm

ATC Seasonal Celebration at the church in Index, WA

For further information visit the church website. Bring a dish to share for the potluck following the ritual. Don't forget to bring your \$10 contribution to the Cauldron of Prosperity

July 25th, 7pm-9pm

ATC Diana's Bow Circle at the church in Index, WA

For further information visit the church website. Bring a dish to share for the potluck following the ritual. Don't forget

August 8th, 7pm-9pm

ATC Full Moon Circle at the church in Index, WA

For further information visit the church website. Bring a dish to share for the potluck following the ritual. Don't forget

August 22nd, 7pm-9pm

ATC Diana's Bow Circle at the church in Index, WA

For further information visit the church website. Bring a dish to share for the potluck following the ritual. Don't forget

August 21st & 23rd

Maxine Sanders is coming to Seattle! Join us on August 21st at Maxine's book signing for her latest book, *Firechild*, at Edge of the Circle Books on Capital Hill in Seattle. On August 23rd, attend a special lecture by Maxine about the origins of the Alexandrian Tradition at Queen Anne Masonic Temple. Times to be announced. Save the dates and check out www.amagickallife.com for updates on this once-in-a-lifetime event!



ABOUT THE A.T.C.: The church was founded by Pete Pathfinder Davis in November of 1979 in an effort to create a safe worship place for Seattle-area Pagans to gather and worship in peace. But the gods had other ideas, and the church grew and spread. PANEGYRIA was started on the Spring Equinox in March of 1984 as the official voice of the Aquarian Tabernacle Church, a fledgling American Wiccan tradition less than five years old. Today, the ATC has grown to be worldwide in scope and, while still small on a global scale, it grows daily by leaps and bounds. Why? Because Wicca is a religious philosophy and practice that seems to fill the void left in the "mainstream" spiritual paths of today's modern culture. The people of the ATC have set their sights on establishing a part of Wicca that is a worshipping community open to all, easily found and accepted, respected and protected under the law by our cultural establishments—governments and other religions. We have successfully done that, at least in our own areas of influence, and we continue to expand those areas of influence as we accept and guide Affiliated Church groups into the ATC fold. We are here not to dictate doctrine or methodology like other churches, but to help and guide like-minded Pagan groups to gain the same degree of success, freedom and acceptance we have attained. If you or your group have an interest in learning more or joining our "family," please contact us and ask for details. The Affiliation Information contains complete information on organization, incorporation and affiliation, and can be found on this website.

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DEADLINES are generally four weeks before the nominal publication date, and materials are preferred on disk in PC format or sent as text only over the internet via email to: [ATCAdmin @ AquaTabCh.org](mailto:ATCAdmin@AquaTabCh.org). Cartoons, artwork and the like are also welcome. We welcome all comments and suggestions, including criticism.

