

Glossary of terms:

Between the Worlds: n. The sacred space defined at the beginning of a Pagan or Wiccan ceremony, believed to be half in the normal world and half in the space of the Gods; see also Casting the Circle.

Calling the Quarters: v. Invoking the four classic Elements of Earth/North, Air/East, Fire/South, and Water/West. Used to symbolize balance.

Casting the Circle: v. The beginning of a ritual where sacred space is demarked.

Circle: n. 1) A group or congregation of Pagans. 2) A ceremony held by Pagans.

Coven: n. A congregation of Wiccans or Witches, usually a group smaller than 13.

Elements: n. The classical elements of Earth, Air, Fire, and Water, used in Pagan religions as symbols of balance and wholeness, often associated with the four compass directions.

Esbat: n. A lunar holiday; usually Full Moon.

Grove: n. A name sometimes used for a Pagan congregation.

Mabon: n. A term used by some Pagans for the Autumn Equinox.

Magic: n. see also Magick. The art of changing consciousness with will. Encompasses psychic energy, visualization techniques, and tools that enhance specific mental states that are believed to encourage change.

Magick: n. This spelling is to differentiate it from stage illusions or slight of hand.

Pagan: n. A difficult term to define because of the individualistic nature of the spiritual paths it encompasses. For the purposes of the Pagan Pride Project, a Pagan or NeoPagan is someone who self-identifies as a Pagan, and whose spiritual or religious practice or belief fits into one or more of the following categories:

- Honoring, revering, or worshipping a Deity or Deities found in pre-Christian, classical, aboriginal, or tribal mythology; and/or

- Practicing religion or spirituality based upon shamanism, shamanic, or magickal practices; and/or

- Creating new religion based on past Pagan religions and/or futuristic views of society, community, and/or ecology; and/or

- Focusing religious or spiritual attention primarily on the Divine Feminine.

Pentacle: n. See also Pentagram. A five-pointed star in a circle. Rooted in the beliefs of the Greek Pythagoreans, for whom the pentagram embodied perfect balance and wisdom; inserting the star in the circle adds the symbol of eternity and unity.

Pentagram: n. A five-pointed star, symbolizing the four elements and Spirit, the fifth element.

Ritual: n. A Pagan ceremony.

Sabbat: n. A solar holiday; the beginning or midpoint of each season.

Spiral Dance: n. Dancing in a circle that may spiral in to the center and out again; used to build psychic energy to focus for a specific purpose such as healing.

What does the Pagan Pride Project do?

All over the world, local coordinators host public Pagan Pride celebrations around the Northern Hemisphere's Autumn Equinox. At a minimum, a Pagan Pride event will involve three main activities:

Public religious ceremony

A public Pagan religious ceremony celebrating the Equinox.

Food drive

A food drive or charitable activity, to share our harvest with others in need, and to make a clear statement to those who have misconceptions about Pagans. We know that our ethics, based on concern for ecology, personal responsibility, and individual freedom, mean that we feel strongly called to actions of social responsibility. It is important for us to highlight our similarity to other religions in that regard.

Media presence

We ask the media to present the truth about Paganism, refute common misconceptions, and draw political attention to the positive elements of Paganism in order to try to prevent legislative discrimination against Pagans.

Who can I contact locally?



What are these people doing?

A guide to Pagan Pride's public ritual

Who are these people?

These people are practitioners of Pagan religions.

What are they doing?

They are holding a religious celebration to honor the Autumn Equinox.

Are they for real?

They are indeed. Today, there are many people turning to spiritual paths that harken back to the polytheistic religions followed by tribal and pre-Christian societies. Those who practice these are trying to reclaim the word *Pagan*, as it is by rights the term that encompasses all their separate religions. Their spirituality is serious to them. And they seek to practice their religion without persecution, just as you do. That is why they celebrate here today, where you can see what they do.

What kinds of religions are covered under the term Pagan?

While pagan with a small “p” covers almost any religion that isn’t Judeo-Christian, those in the modern Pagan movement (sometimes differentiated by using the term *NeoPagan*) are people who base their religious practices on those of indigenous tribal religions, mostly European. Thus, you have *Wiccans* (or *NeoPagan Witchcraft*, or simply *the Old Religion*) basing their practices on ancient religious practices of the Irish, English, French, or Italians; *Asatru* honoring Norse Gods; *Goddess-Worshippers* encompassing the Divine Feminine from any culture from Sumerian to South America; *Khemetics* following the Gods of pre-Christian Egypt; *Druids* adhering to the Celtic order of bards, wise men and clergy; *Reconstructionists* recreating Celtic, Hellenic, or other ancient religions; and others simply calling themselves Pagan and drawing from both old and new sources.

Aren't they just a few fruitcakes from the West Coast?

Far from being a few isolated individuals, Paganism is enjoying a growing renaissance today all over the world. Though the individual nature of the religion makes it difficult to identify numbers of practitioners, the American Religious Identification Survey by the City University of New York identified a 1675% increase in the number of Wiccans in the US between 1990 and 2000. A Barnes and Noble bookstore marketing executive estimates a Pagan book-buying audience of 10 million. *Witchvox.com*, one of the premier Pagan sites on the internet, averages a million page hits every 12 days, with networking listings in every US state, all Canadian provinces, and more than 42 other countries. There are more than 100 Pagan Pride events like

this one being held this year. And, as you can see in front of you, there are Pagans right here in your community.

What are their practices based on?

Pagans believe spirituality is very individual, so all Pagan practices may vary by the practitioner; there is nothing you “have to” believe in to be Pagan. There are some common themes, though. Pagans generally center their spiritual practices on natural cycles—the cycle of the Sun as the Earth spins through its solstices and equinoxes, the cycle of the Moon each month from waxing to Full and then back to New, the agricultural cycle as plants bud, bloom, give fruit, die, and are reborn from their seeds. They honor being in balance with nature, often symbolizing that through honoring the four classical elements—earth, air, fire, and water. And they honor the divine spirit, the “fifth element,” as the immanent Divine found in the Earth, in the natural cycles, in other beings and creatures, and in ourselves. Some Pagans do believe in magic, sometimes spelled magick, but they believe it follows natural (if sometimes un-codified) laws, and indeed is much like creative visualization and other motivational techniques. Because they believe that the world, and everything in it, is sacred, Pagans focus on positive actions like ecology, healing, and joyous celebration, not negative ones like intolerance, causing harm, or judging another’s actions when no victim is involved.

Why are they doing a ceremony today?

Today they are celebrating the Autumn Equinox. This is a time when night and day are in balance, so their ceremony will encourage balance of mind, spirit, emotions, and body. This is also traditionally the harvest season, so their rite also involves sharing that harvest with others through blessing the results of their food drive.

What do they do in this ceremony?

The ceremony today will begin by claiming the ground they stand on as sacred space, since most Pagans practice simply by sanctifying where they are, rather than going to a temple or church. They will then call to the elements and directions (the “quarters”) as a way to balance their rite. They welcome the Gods and Goddesses whom they call on today. They then will perform the ceremony specific to the day. They will bless the results of the charity drive, share food and drink in fellowship, and close the ceremony by thanking the Gods, the elements, and each other, for what they brought today.

Why are some of them wearing robes?

Some Pagans wear robes or Renaissance-style clothing for the same reason that some Christian ministers and Jewish Rabbis wear robes or vestments: in many religions, special clothing is

chosen as set apart or “sacred.” In Pagan religions, each member is believed to be their own priest or priestess, with no intermediary needed; wearing the clothing emphasizes to the individual that they are in sacred space.

What is the table in the middle of the circle of people?

This is a Pagan altar. On the altar may be many different religious symbols. Candles are often lit in honor of the Goddess and God, and sometimes the directions. There are also often tools sacred to the directions. The wand or staff is related to Air, the power of change and new knowledge. The cup encompasses Water, healing, and emotion. Salt represents purification, foundation, and Earth. Incense stands for the merging of Air and Fire, the will to act, and helps set the mood for the ceremony. Statues of the Goddess and God are sometimes used, as are natural symbols of the elements such as seashells or stones. The pentacle, a five-pointed star in a circle symbolizing the four elements and spirit in the circle of eternity, is often used particularly in Wiccan ceremonies and may also be present both on the altar and as religious jewelry worn by practitioners.

Are they trying to recruit me or my kids to join them?

Absolutely not! Pagans believe that the path to the Divine is unique to each individual. While they will give you information about their religion, they will insist that your spirituality is your business, not theirs. They have no interest in telling you what to practice or believe; they do ask that they remain free to practice their religion without persecution or discrimination. Virtually no Pagan group will accept members under 18 without parental consent, and many will only take children of adult members. Most Pagans teach their children about many religions and encourage them to make their own choice when they come of age.

Where can I find more information?

Modern Pagans have traditionally been quiet about their religion due to reprisals from monotheists; however, as more Pagans “come out of the broom closet,” more information is available. Any search engine on the Internet will come up with thousands of pages related to *Wicca*, *Pagan*, *Neo-Pagan* or *NeoPagan*, *Asatru*, or *Druid*, and most bookstores and libraries have books in categories such as *Metaphysical*, *Occult*, *New Age*, *Women’s issues*, or (preferably and finally) *religion*, *philosophy* or *spirituality*.