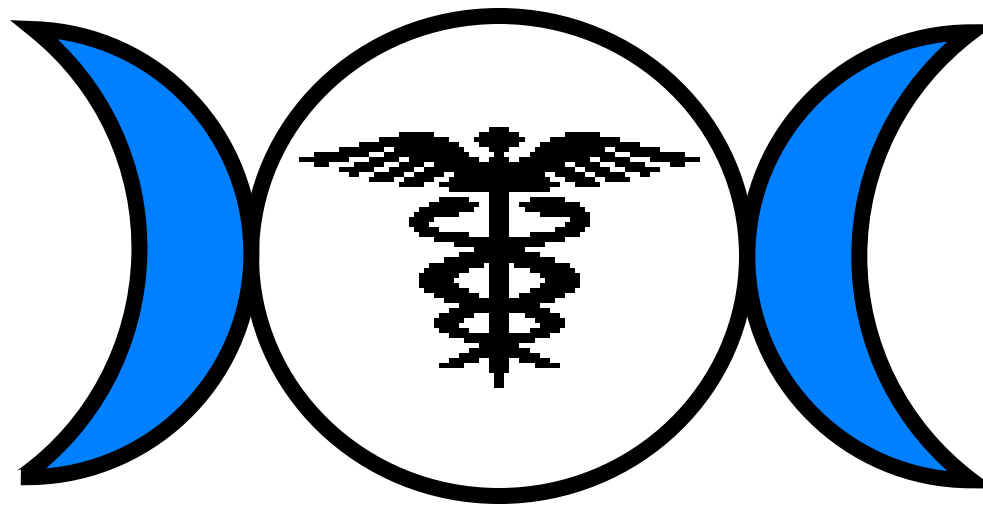


Paganism & Hospitals



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Meeting the Growing Need



Paganism & Hospitals

Presentation Overview

- What is Paganism?
- What Paganism is Not
- Why Deal With It?
- How to Handle
- Pagan Community
- Pagan Clergy
- On-Hand Resources
- Learn More



What is Paganism?

An umbrella term for a diverse group of modern religions that **usually** share belief in:

- Immanence of deity/ interconnectedness of life
- Focus on here-and-now rather than after-life
- A religious interest in and rites to acknowledge the seasons of the year, and other sacred natural processes such as growth, dying, and fertility
- A “harm none” philosophy
- Exploring ancient wisdom for its relevance to the modern world



What is Paganism?

An umbrella term for a diverse group of modern religions that **usually** share belief in:

- Direct deity contact/little to no church hierarchy
- Personal responsibility for spiritual growth and mundane world affairs
- The use of tools and props in religious ritual
- Subdivision of the Divine into components for easier understanding (Gods and Goddesses)
- Most commonly worship the Lady and Lord (note focus on feminine aspects of deity)



What is Paganism?

- A group of modern religions that focus on pre-Christian European roots (There are exceptions)
- This presentation mainly uses Wiccan illustrations. Asatru and Druid practices differ
- Aboriginal faiths (Amerindian, African, etc.) are not usually included
- Santeria and Vodun are not usually included
- Major non-Abrahamic faiths from Asia (Buddhism, Hinduism) and scripture-based religions are usually not included

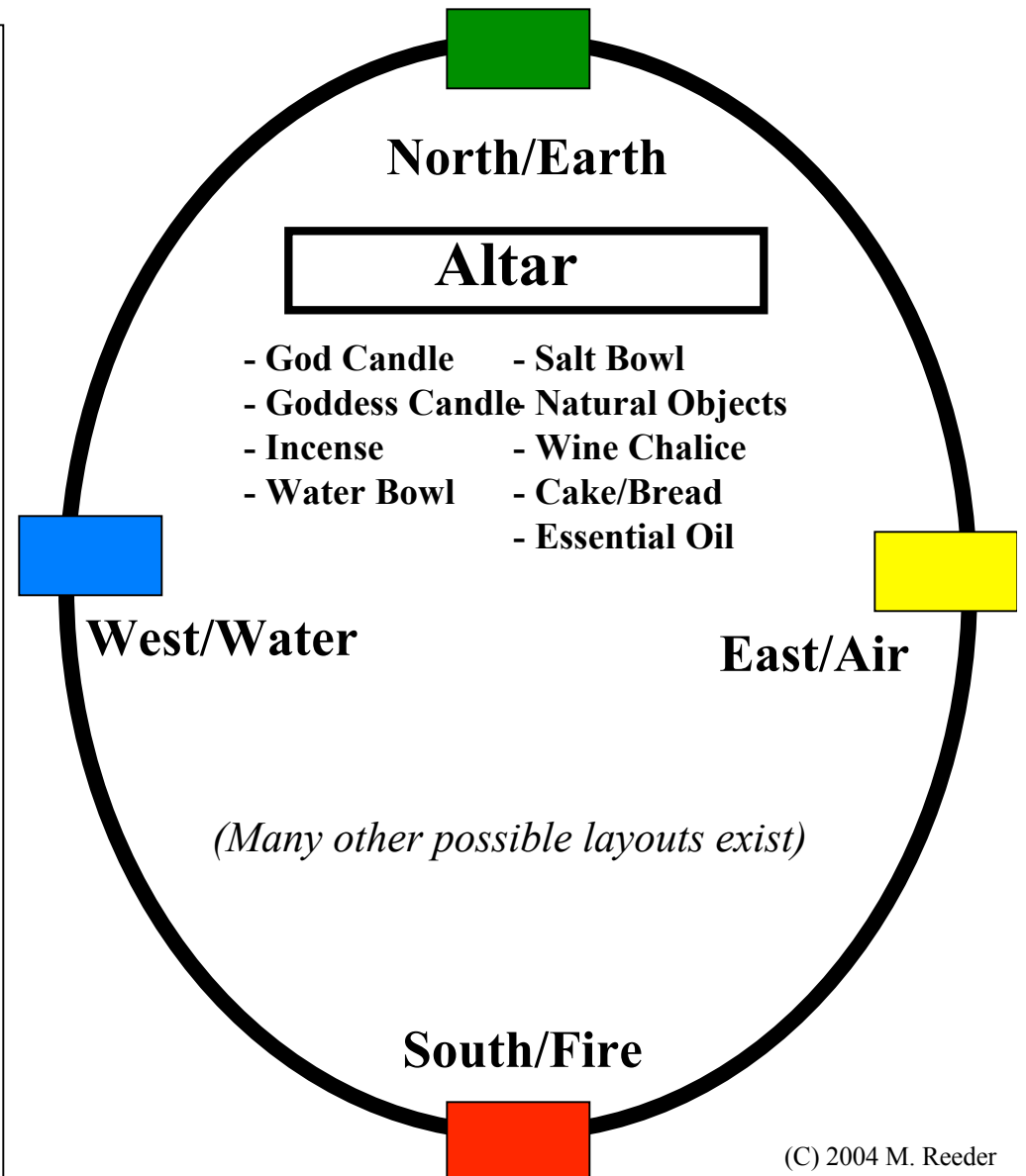


What is Paganism?

A Wiccan Esbat:

(There are many possible formats)

- **Cleanse Space/Raise Circle**
- **Call Elements**
- **Call in God and Goddess**
- **Celebration:**
 - **Poems, songs, meditations.**
 - **Magical Work**
 - **Great Rite**
 - **Bread and Wine**
 - **Cakes and Ale (Discussion)**
 - **Thank God and Goddess**
- **Release Elements**
- **Release Circle**





What Paganism is **Not**

Satanism

- Few Pagans believe in him
- Satanism is an offshoot of Christianity. Paganism is a separate religious movement



A Cult (*In the Modern Sense*)

- Cults have charismatic leaders; separate followers from money, family, and friends; & encourage childlike dependence
- Paganism encourages study and thought, worldly interaction, and personal responsibility



What Paganism is **Not**

Evil Spellcasting

- Some Pagans practice magic, some don't
- The ethic of “harm none” applies
- Think of magic as “enhanced prayer”. We think we can perform divination, healing, and the like. Obviously no one is flying or turning into toads





What Paganism is **Not**

Evangelizing

- Pagans believe that there are many proper paths to the Divine. Many people are better served by traditional religions
- Pagans don't try to recruit unless someone shows interest first and requests information
- The presence of Pagan clergy in the hospital won't lead to recruiting efforts



Why Deal With It?

Fast Growth Curve:

- USA Estimates: 200,000 to 768,000
- Baltimore/Washington estimate: 3,000
- Wiccans reported doubling in US every 30 mo.
- Scotland: Neo-Paganism doubling every year!
- Australia: 373.5% Wiccan increase 1996-2001.
- Canada: Suspiciously large increase in people claiming "no religion"



Why Deal With It?

We Are Already Here!

- Many intake forms lack a Pagan category
- Tendency to quietly utilize own clergy during regular visiting hours
- Reluctance to come forward
- Often identify as "no religion", Unitarian Universalist, or New Age
- Most under 30 years of age



How To Handle

Sick people all need the same things!

- Be familiar with general Pagan beliefs. Ask the patient for the specifics of his/her Tradition
- We are respectful of hospital regulations. We know we can't bring in everything that we might normally do
- Negotiate and clearly communicate as needed
- Pagan rites are usually very flexible & amenable to changes as necessary



How To Handle

Required Religious Functions

- There are rarely absolutely required functions
(No baptism, confession, or last rites.)
- You may encounter:
 - All sorts of prayers & shamanic journeying
 - Healing ceremonies for the sick
 - Divination tools: Tarot, runes, pendulums, etc.
 - Clerical presence desired at moment of death
 - Vigils with the dead body
 - Celebrations of holidays and full moons
 - Clerical support present or requested for events other religions don't cover, such as at an abortion



How To Handle

Religious Objects:

- There are no required religious objects
- Many patients won't bring them
- However, these should be treated with respect:

Likely to Encounter:

Books: (Some psych. wards permit Bibles and Korans, but no books on Wicca/Paganism)

Medallions/necklaces

Medicine pouches

Crystals or Stones

Tarot Cards

Unlikely To Encounter:

Handle only with permission:

Athame (dull ritual knife)

Wand

Small Statues

Robes/Headgear

Candles/Incense (Alternatives include scented oil)



How To Handle

Energy Work:

- Pagan practice involves the raising of energy for directed uses, such as healing
- A few members of the community may need to be present. Our priesthood are facilitators of energy amongst participants, not preachers
- Please consider allowing more visitors in the room than usual when safe and possible
- Pagan worship is similar to Christian worship, but involves more activity and movement



How To Handle

Chanting/Incense/Commotion:

- Most groups have the sense to know you don't use candles and incense in a hospital
- Soft chanting or music is likely if a group is coming to see the patient. This should be negotiated with the patient's roommates and nursing staff beforehand
- On the other hand, no Catholic patient would be denied Last Rites due to roommate objections!



How To Handle

Soul Guidance:

- A few Traditions believe in helping guide the soul onto the next plane at death. Clergy or a friend will want to be present
- A few traditions believe in vigil with the body to help the deceased realize they are dead

Family Problems:

- Relatives may not want Pagan friends around
- The patient may be hiding religion from family
- Relatives may order inappropriate interventions



How To Handle

Holidays Patients May Want to Celebrate:

Full Moons: Roughly equivalent to regular Sunday services

Samhain: Nov. 1st or Oct. 31st.
The Feast of the Ancestors and Witches' New Year

Yule/Midwinter: Dec. 22nd. The Winter Solstice. Celebration of the rebirth of the Sun since days begin to grow longer

Imbolc: Feb. 1st. Feast of Returning Light. The Earth starts to warm after Winter

Ostara/Eostre: March 22nd. The Vernal Equinox, Feast of Planting and Rebirth

Beltaine/May Day: May 1st.. A feast of fertility and growing life. Beginning of light half of year

Litha/Midsummer: June 22nd. Summer Solstice. Feast of the Sun

Lughnasadh/Lammas: August 1st. "Feast of Lugh," or "Loaf-mass." Festival of the first harvest

Mabon/Harvest Home: Sept. 22nd. Celebration of the Harvest



How To Handle

Hearing Spirits and “Abnormal” Behavior:

- Pagans commonly believe that they are in communication with various entities, and take dreams and visions seriously
- This was normal behavior in ancient times
- Various Christian mystics, saints, and Native American healers have had similar beliefs and have been afforded respect



How To Handle

Medical Treatments:

- There are no prohibited medical treatments
- There is a strong emphasis on herbal remedies in the Pagan community
- It's possible that a few more Pagans will elect for alternative medical treatments than the general population



How To Handle

Foods:

- There are no prohibited or required foods
- On rare occasion, followers of certain deities may have deity-specific dietary prohibitions
- A general concern for the Earth may lead to a slight positive correlation between Paganism and vegetarianism or the desire for organic foods



How To Handle

Also No Special Requirements:

- Birthing
- Dress Codes
- Organ Donation / Blood Transfusions



Pagan Community

Community Organization (of Wicca):

- Covens are generally very small (2-10 people)
- Clergy are referred to as High Priest or High Priestess (HP and HPS)
- Covens are generally part of Traditions, which sometimes mandate training requirements
- Some few legal entities with licensing requirements, such as Covenant of the Goddess (CoG) exist, but membership is erratic



Pagan Community

- Pagan groups usually band together for larger festivals, workshops, and social events
- Conference and multi-group organizations, are more likely to have 501(c)(3) status
- Involved Pagans might attend class once per week and rituals every 2 weeks; and attend 1-2 social outings, lectures, or social service events per month with community organizations



Pagan Clergy

- Always unpaid, part-time volunteers
- Liturgical, philosophical, and hands-on training is usually excellent. 2-4 year training programs
- Counseling skills training is usually lacking



On-Hand Resources

Admissions Data

- We need “Pagan” on intake forms
- Admissions needs to actually use these categories. (Not omit or mark “None”)



On-Hand Resources

Required Tools and Texts

- There are no required religious texts, such as the Bible. A few books covering prayers, rituals, and philosophies should suffice
- There are no required tools and ritual items. Most items such as athames, cauldrons, etc. are not useful in the hospital setting



On-Hand Resources

Optional Ritual Items

- Candle covers (if covered candles are permitted)
- A crystal (to play light through as a meditation focus instead of a candle)
- Mild essential oils (for ritual in lieu of incense)
- A few small bowls (for salt/earth, and water)
- A container of sea salt
- A symbol for the multi-faith chapel (if existent).
A pentacle, triple moon, tree, green man plague.



On-Hand Resources

Books: Prayer and Rituals

The Pagan Book of Living and Dying, Starhawk & M. Macha Nightmare, Harper San Francisco, 1997.

A Book of Pagan Prayer, Ceisiwr Serith, Red Wheel/Weiser, 2002.

Earth Prayers From around the World: 365 Prayers, Poems, and Invocations for Honoring the Earth, Elizabeth Roberts, Harper San Francisco, 1991.

Books and Cards: Classics

Rider-Waite Tarot Deck. For study and meditation.

The Spiral Dance, Starhawk, Harper & Row, NY, 1979.

Wicca, a Guide for the Solitary Practitioner, Scott Cunningham, Llewellyn, MN.

Pagan Theology, Michael York, New York University Press. 2003.



Learn More

To Learn More on Paganism:

Modern Pagans:

- <http://www.pfpc.ca/info/general/paganism/modern.html>

General questions about Witchcraft and Wicca:

- <http://www.cog.org/general/iabout.html>
- <http://www.cog.org/wicca/faq.html>
- <http://www.witchvox.com/basics/wfaq.html>

Brief descriptions of several Neo-Pagan religions:

- <http://www.witchvox.com/basics/intro.html>



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