

Mother Earth Ministries sheds some light on "Neo-Paganism"

This flyer was created by AO
for Mother Earth Ministries-ATC.
Copyright Ashleen O'Gaea and MEM, 2011.

Wicca is a 20th-century revival of what we understand of paleo-European spiritual attitudes. Wicca's modern roots can be documented from the late 18th century. Wicca (also known as "Witchcraft," "the Old Religion," or "the Craft") took its present form in the late 1940s. Wiccans believe in a Goddess and God, who together keep the cycles of life and the Wheel of the Year turning.

Ásatrú, sometimes called Odinism, is a Northern European Heathenism, what some people like to call "the Viking religion." Despite some racist groups' use of the faith, it is not inherently racist, sexist, or otherwise discriminatory. Its recorded history dates back to Medieval times. There are other forms as well, including Anglo-Saxon Heathenry. Ásatrú honors the gods of Northern pantheons.

Druidry, also called Druidism, is another 20th-century revival of an older European religion. The ADF is the largest Druid group in North America, and OBOD, the Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids, is the oldest group in England. Druids honor ancestors, Nature Spirits, and British and European gods.

Mother Earth Ministries-ATC is a Neo-Pagan prison ministry based in Tucson, Arizona, and affiliated with the internationally recognized and respected Aquarian Tabernacle Church. MEM's mission is to provide accurate introductory material about Wicca, Ásatrú, and Druidry. MEM clergy also lead ritual in some Arizona prisons, offer suggestions for practicing Wicca and some other Neo-Pagan religions in prison, and answer letters from inmates all over the U.S. MEM's clergy aim to honor and present Neo-Paganism's diversity in their work.

Enchantment Encumbered: The Study and Practice of Wicca in Restricted Environments, is a Wiccan Book of Shadows (and more), written by two MEM priestesses, Carol Garr and Ashleen O'Gaea. MEM sells it to inmates for \$20, which includes shipping; we accept checks, money orders, and first-class forever stamps in payment.

Mother Earth Ministries-ATC
Post Office Box 35906
Tucson, AZ 85740-5906

www.MotherEarthMinistries.org



In addition to Ásatrú, Wicca, and Druidry, there are large number of less well-known Neo-Pagan religions, and quite a few individual forms of Pagan worship. (Satanism is derived from Christianity, and is *not* Pagan.)

Wicca, Druidry, and Ásatrú are all Neo-Pagan religions – though it should be noted that most Ásatrú and others practicing Northern Pagan religions call themselves, and prefer to be called, Heathen..

As shown above, Neo-Paganism is a broad term that covers not only the organized religions of Wicca, Ásatrú, and Druidry, but also applies to a number of lesser-known forms of polytheistic worship (not all of which are represented in our illustration). These include Goddess-worship and Neo-Shamanism, along with a variety of solitary (individual) practices based on ancient and modern religions.

Even though each is distinct in theology and practice, Wicca, Ásatrú and Druidry have much in common. For instance, each celebrates at least the eight Sabbats on the Wheel of the Year.

In more and more communities, Neo-Pagan services are open to the public and attended by members of several Neo-Pagan faiths; sometimes public rituals combine Wiccan, Druid, Ásatrú, or other Neo-Pagan elements. Generally, these celebrations are in addition to rites held by/for followers of individual Neo-Pagan faiths.

Most Neo-Pagans would prefer to meet with members of their own faith. Still, many choose to celebrate a different Tradition's or path's service rather than celebrating alone or not attending a Sabbat rite at all; and many appreciate the opportunity to learn how other Neo-Pagans mark a Sabbat or rite of passage (such as a baby-naming or a handfasting – a Pagan wedding).

Not all prisons recognize, understand, or (can) provide meeting time for every Neo-Pagan faith practiced by inmates. Sometimes followers of a particular path outnumber the followers of other Neo-Pagan faiths, resulting in rites that don't satisfy everyone. Some Pagan inmates who might want to are not permitted to attend Neo-Pagan services not specifically intended for their religion.

There are not very many Neo-Pagan prison ministries, so the current "norm" is for inmates to have to meet on their own to hold Sabbat rites or study sessions.

It's appropriate to recognize Neo-Pagan religions individually *and* as related. The distinctions justify providing separate worship opportunities, while the similarities make it reasonable to allow Neo-Pagan inmates, when they wish to, to attend services of another Neo-Pagan religion when services of their own faith are not offered.

With questions about the relationship of Wicca to Ásatrú and/or Druidry, or for basic information these religions, please contact Mother Earth Ministries-ATC by mail or through our website. (Our addresses are listed at left.)