



Free

CERES Mountain Messenger

A publication of the Coalition of Earth Religions
For Education and Support

Imbolg 2005

Volume II, Issue I

Imbolg, Imbolc, Oimeic, Bridnasadh – Whatever the name, Happy Holy Day!

(by Suzanne LaCour, a.k.a. Saira)

I must admit, I have an overwhelming fondness for this time of year. After Samhain, Imbolg is my favorite holiday. I absolutely love feeling the energies – connecting with the first stirrings of the Earth as Nature begins to awaken all around us. You can feel it, sense it, even if you are still wading through two foot snow drifts. First, the Snow Drops bloom and they’ll be followed closely by the Crocus and the Wild Grape Hyacinth. The birds become more active, singing their little hearts out in search of a mate. The honey bees begin to make their first appearances later in the month. The sun feels warmer, the days are noticeably longer and the world just seems cheerier somehow.



This is the time dedicated to the Goddess, Brigid (Brid) in all Her Forms. The Elements of Air, Fire and Water work through Earth to bring about healing, purification, inspiration and poetry, fertility (particularly female fertility) and abundance. Imbolg (also Imbolc) is the first of the Celtic spring festivals and the word means “in the belly.” It is alternatively called Oimeic, meaning “ewe’s milk or sheep’s milk,” for this is lambing season. Some call it Bridnasadh for obvious reasons. Spring is here, or so close you can almost touch it. It may not seem so – considering that snow and ice still hold much of the country in its grip – but the Irish seasonal year was not set by the Solstices and the Equinoxes, the Lesser Sabbats. It was set by the Fire Festivals, the Greater Sabbats. The Irish divided their year in half – the Light Half (summer) and the Dark Half (winter) – and those seasons were divided yet again into spring and fall. Samhain marked the end of summer and the beginning of winter. Imbolg marked the end of winter and the beginning of spring. In between those two, Beltaine will mark the start of summer and Lughnasadh, the start of fall. The solstices and the equinoxes (where celebrated) marked the mid-points of the seasons. Yule and Litha are still known as Midwinter and Midsummer, respectively.

Depending upon the mythology you follow, the God is usually in a very youthful form. There are related holidays in other parts of the world, of course. Lupercalia was a Roman festival of fertility and purification. Some say it was dedicated to Pan, others to Faunus and still others believe there was no specific god involved. Some authors believe that Lupercalia originally honored an ancient Goddess, represented by the she-wolf. In any case, goats were sacrificed and youthful priests dressed in loincloths of goat skin ran through the streets flogging women with strips made of goat hide (called *februa* – as in February) to ensure fertility and easy childbirth. This usually occurred on February 15th. The Irish dedicated the holiday to St. Brigid of Kildare. The Scandinavians dedicated an almost identical festival to St. Lucia (Lucy). The festivities and fertility rites, so wide-spread across Europe, continued well into Christian times when

Psychic Readings Fundraiser a Success!

CERES members raised nearly \$900.00 in donations for tsunami relief by giving psychic readings at Asheville's popular local pub, Jack of the Wood, on January 5th and 6th. We were incredibly pleased with the outcome and all proceeds have been sent to Oxfam America's Asia Earthquake Relief Fund to help the victims of that terrible tragedy. We would like to extend a hearty congratulations to our volunteer Readers and we thank all those who gave so generously for your kindness and compassion!

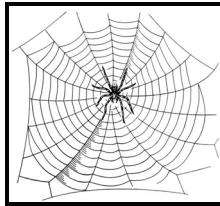
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CERES OFFICERS

Co-Presidents: Diotima and Saira
Vice President: Joy
Treasurer: Byron
Recording Secretary: Teleri
Corresponding Secretary: Diotima

**Happy Anniversary to CERES Mountain Messenger
as we begin our second year of publication!**

Weaving The Web Local Groups and Covens



Appalachian Pagan Alliance (APA)

Eclectic, with various Traditions represented, but mostly the Appalachian Granny Magic Folk Tradition. Contact: Ginger Strivelli at **EmpressGinger@charter.net**; P.O. Box 450 Weaverville, NC 28787

Brigidine Women's Circle

Closed womens' group which focuses on the Celtic Goddess Brigit and Her traditions. For further information, contact: **je yarnall@hotmail.com**

Coven of the Eternal Stones

Eternal Harvest Tradition of Wicca: We are a teaching coven with plans to incorporate a legally recognized Wiccan church as our parent coven did and to offer further services to the community of WNC. Accepting new students. Contact RavenWind and SapphireSkye: **mtnwicca@myway.com** or check out **www.mountainwicca.us/coven/**

Coven Ravencroft

We are a traditional Gardnerian group that is fifth generation from Gardner. Serious inquiries for more information may be sent to: **Ravencroft_Coven@yahoo.com**

Coven Shadow Veil

Gardnerian Tradition. If interested, contact Niki at **shdwveil@bellsouth.net3**

Crystal Moon Coven

Shamanic, Faery Tradition: Ceólraidh na Sidhe. Contact Saira at **imsaira@charter.net** or check our listing on at **www.witchvox.com** for more information

Mountain Myst Clan

Eclectic, multiple Traditions. Contact: Lady Cheetah at **GreyArabian31003@aol.com**; Subject line **must** state why you are contacting us or your email will be deleted! Note: We do not allow use of drugs or alcohol on our property or during our Circles.

Notre Dame de l'Herbe Mouillee

American Tribal. Contact: Byron Ballard at **byronb@buncombe.main.nc.us**

United Moon Circle

Eclectic/Dragon Tradition. Contact Sorcha SilverMoon at **SorchaMoon@unitedmooncircle.com**

Do you have a group or coven? Do you teach classes, offer workshops or otherwise provide services to the Wiccan/Pagan/Heathen community? If so, please email **imsaira@charter.net** with information about your group or event for inclusion in **CERES Mountain Messenger**. Please, if someone contacts your group, do them the courtesy of a reply, even a brief one.

Pagan Resources (The Silver Pages)

This is a new feature beginning this month. These listings are free for Pagan owned, Pagan-run and/or Pagan-friendly businesses in the Asheville area which provide goods or services of interest to our community. It is important that we support and encourage those who help and support our own!



Ancient Journeys

retreats, pilgrimages & workshops to delight your soul

H. Byron Ballard, wayfarer and guide

Return to the Celtic Homelands with us in October 2005! Try out the new "Embracing Willendorf" workshop in January!

see our website at **www.ancient-journeys.com** *where will your journey take you?*

James L. Nammack - Divination

I do playing card divinations. I use a card layout system first created by Maria Ivanova of St. Petersburg, Russia in 1820. That, plus the fifty-two card meanings that I have created render stunningly helpful divinations each and every time. My e-mail address is: **JLNammack@charter.net** and my fee is \$10.00 for each ten minutes or increment thereof.

Raven

Raven is a Traditional Japanese Reiki Master (Shihan) and a teacher of several different traditions of spiritual healing and empowerment. He is an Ordained Minister, and Spiritual Counselor, and has work professionally as a psychic since 1995. He can be reached by e-mail at **wncreiki@gmail.com** and on the web at **www.ncdharma.org/reiki/** or by telephone at 828-335-6190.

The Gift Fairies

Affordable gifts for everyone and every occasion!

(Fairy Incense Burner pictured at right). Wizards, dragons, griffins, angels, fairies (of course) and much more are available on our website at **www.thegiftfairies.com** Check it out and see for yourself!

We also offer lovely hand-crafted, fairy-themed gift items. Email us at **info@thegiftfairies.com**



Help us add to this list!

A Book Review (by Mary Monaghan)

The Circle Within by Dianne Sylvan



One of the first things I noticed about The Circle Within was that it was different from the plethora of "Wicca 101" books that are out there. This book went deeper into concepts of spirituality, leaving behind the endless lists of tools and correspondences. It was nice to read something new instead of the same old thing. On the other hand, the writer didn't seem to be able to leave her background behind. She even begins by stating that she grew up in a rural southern town, in a Baptist household. Although many Pagans did grow up under similar circumstances, many did not. She seemed to be trying to break people away from their anti-Christian attitudes, which is a good thing, but not all Pagans have these attitudes. As a writer, she could have appealed to a wider audience.

I didn't agree with some of her opinions, such as that a magick circle is always cut off from everything outside of it, including nature. But I guess no one has to (or should, for that matter) agree with everything a book says.

Many of her other ideas are good, such as the chapter about the graces which include love, compassion, forgiveness, integrity, wisdom, etc. These concepts really should be discussed in the Wiccan/Pagan community a lot more than they are now.

Overall, this book is a nice change from all the basic books that seem to say the same thing over and over again. Despite the fact that she can't seem to separate her own opinions from the text, she really explores some spiritual and religious concepts deeper than most writers do. I'd give it an 8 out of 10.

Mary Monaghan is the organizer of a Pagan Book Club. The Book Club meets the first Friday of each month at 6 p.m. at Atlanta Bread Company on Merrimon Avenue. February's selection is The Heart of Wicca, by Ellen Cannon Reed. The club is open to all interested readers. We hope you will join us!



CERES Calendar of Events

Date/Time	Event	Location
Wed. 1/26 7 p.m.	CERES Meeting	EarthFare Community Room Westgate Plaza
Wed. 2/2 5 pm to ?	Psychic Readings	Jack of the Woods Patton Ave
Wed. 2/2 7 pm to ?	PNO	Jack of the Woods Patton Ave
Fri. 2/4 6 to 8 pm	Book Club	Atlanta Bread Company Merrimon Avenue
Wed. 2/23 7 pm	CERES Meeting	Earth Fare Community Room Westgate Plaza
Wed. 3/2 5 pm to ?	Psychic Readings	Jack of the Woods Patton Ave
Wed. 3/2 7 pm to ?	PNO	Jack of the Woods Patton Ave
Fri. 3/4 6 to 8 pm	Book Club	Atlanta Bread Company Merrimon Avenue

PNO = Pagans' Night Out. CERES sponsors this informal get-together where you can meet new people, share ideas and network with others of like-mind. Families welcome. Psychic Readers are available throughout the meeting and all monies go to CERES. Come on down and have some fun!

CERES Meeting = Board Meeting for agenda discussion of issues and administration of organization. Open to all those interested in helping out.

If you, or your group, is hosting a class, workshop, festival or any event that is likely to interest Asheville-area Pagans, please send the information to Saira at imsaira@charter.net. Include day, date, time, basic description and location. Also, please include your contact information. Non-profit events and fundraisers are listed **free**.



Musings on Fire

(by John Hardin, a.k.a. Six)

From the Editor: This article seems particularly appropriate for this time of year!

I consider myself to be a pyro-enthusiast as I rarely proceed in a maniacal way. I do love fire and all things pyro. I also enjoy technology, ecology and philosophy. The centuries have married fire and technology in pyrotechnics. Eco-tech is a fresh field with many exciting systems on the horizon. I am interested in all studies that would marry the fire spirit with ecology in some second order science like pyro-eco or eco-pyro. (Gosh seems like the system will involve O(es))

I have always felt a philosophical connection between fire and community. Being raised Baptist offered little occasion for group interaction with fire and certainly in no relation to worship. My earliest attachments were drawn at what is called a deer camp. Many hunters would gather in a remote location where game was plentiful. Most stayed a week or longer and it often developed into something resembling a pagan gathering. The camp fire was the central to community bonding.

Meals were prepared and stories were told. Kicking the fire seemed to be the method used to pass the talking stick. Some one would come forward to feed the fire or to simply kick it adjusting it in some slight way. The person would take the attention and relate stories of the day or some fanciful tale of previous hunts and pranks. It was here that I first began to feel that the fire might in some how be able to draw out the truth and let down the ego. Even feuding clan were somehow able to jest with one another in good spirit within its light. I saw the joy it spread on the community formed around it. I have always felt a camp fire was a good thing.

As I got older I became interested in primitive outlooks of science and I was fascinated by ancient alchemical texts. As I began to learn more about the philosophical nature of the simplest elements and their relation to the universe in general, I began looking into modern religions and traditions based around these concepts.

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Imbolg Recipes

(by Saira)

In his book, *The Magic in Food: Legends, Lore & Spellwork*, the late Scott Cunningham suggests serving hot, spicy foods to honor the sun for the Imbolc feast. He specifically mentions garlic, chili powder and curry dishes. Patricia Telesco, in *A Kitchen Witch's Cookbook*, says to prepare yellow, red and orange foods in honor of the sun and fire. The following recipes meet both authors' requirements quite nicely.

Here's a recipe for a wonderful, fast and easy vegetable curry. This is very much a "kitchen sink" recipe – use whatever veggies that you happen to have on hand. You can also add leftover cooked chicken, tofu or tempeh if you like. The only absolute is the curry paste (SO much better than curry powder). You can substitute fat free evaporated milk or soy milk for the coconut milk if you want to do so. This curry is perfect to make in a crock pot too!



Vegetable Curry (By Saira)

1 onion, diced

A few small potatoes, diced (optional, but tasty!)

1 carrot, coarsely chopped

1 smallish eggplant, cubed

1 zucchini, diced

A few mushrooms – cut in half will do

A cup of frozen peas.

1 can LITE coconut milk (you can get it in the Asian foods section of any grocery store)

A cup or so of water

A handful of raisins, optional

4 hard boiled eggs, shells removed (optional)

Fresh cilantro, optional

2 – 3 tbs. Patak's MILD Curry Paste (Use the HOT variety at your own risk)

If you are using a crock pot, just dump everything in except the fresh cilantro, stir it around, set the pot on low and leave it until the veggies are nice and soft. Add the cilantro just before serving.

If you are cooking on top of the stove, you need a pot with a well-fitting lid. Heat the pot and add a couple tablespoons of olive oil. When the oil is hot, add all of the vegetables. Stir and allow to brown just a bit. Add the milk, water, raisins, eggs and Curry Paste. Stir well until all the paste is distributed. Cover and let cook over medium-low heat until the potatoes and carrots are fork-tender, about 30 minutes or so. Add liquid as necessary. This should be a wet curry. Add the peas toward the end of the cooking time. Just before serving, remove the eggs and cut in half so that the yolks are showing. Arrange

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A fortunate opportunity was presented to me. I became involved in a nature sanctuary which lent itself to multiple traditions. I worked within that community for several years and was able to serve the sanctuary as a member of its board of directors. It was definitely a learning experience for all involved. I made hundreds of contacts and was able to broaden my search to other locations, gatherings and festivals. My attachment to the fire has remained and I continue to enjoy all forms of community built around it.

To Siva

I call to the Lady of Life --
 and you answer me
 I call to the Lord of the Wild --
 and you answer me
 I call to my own soul --
 and find yours
 gently answering me in love
 Where do I look
 and not see you?
 Who can I address
 and not hear your love in response?
 All rivers are one river
 flowing from the love in your heart

Ocean in my blood,
 Mountain in my bones,
 Blaze in my soul,

Tempest wind in my breath --
 all given of yourSelf to me
 How is it I feel alone and unloved?
 I delude myself of my solitude
 For You are everything and in everything
 O Lord of the Dancing Waters!

Zaivalananda - written 9/5/2004
©2004 by Gerald L. "Moss" Bliss



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egg halves on top of the vegetables and sprinkle with fresh cilantro just before serving. Great over rice! Enjoy!

Serve a fresh green "Spring Mix" salad with this lovely dressing from Patricia Telesco's book (p. 255)

Orange-Lemon Dressing

- ◆ ½ cup olive oil
- ◆ ¼ cup orange juice
- ◆ 1 lemon, peeled, seeded and chopped
- ◆ 2 tbs. chopped nuts

Place all ingredients in a blender and mix on medium until smooth (or whip by hand for 5 minutes). Store in fridge and shake before using. Yield: 1 cup. Magical attributes are cleansing, health and sweet love

Other food suggestions include: dairy foods, especially sheep's milk cheese (also butter, milk, eggs), asparagus, dandelion greens, lamb and fish

Word Scramble

Unscramble the names of these Goddesses!
(Answers on p. 6)

1. ATNHAE _____
2. EMAISTR _____
3. CEEATH _____
4. APNEO _____
5. ACHLIEACL _____
6. IGRBID _____
7. HREA _____
8. SHTIRA _____
9. WICNRDERE _____
10. ANADI _____



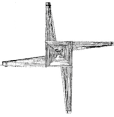
Brigid at the Forge 1985
© Joanna Powell Colbert

(Continued from page 1)

the church borrowed/adopted/ usurped it as Candlemas, a purification festival dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

Of course, here in America, most people recognize February 2nd as Groundhog’s Day. They don’t realize that forecasting the weather was part and parcel of the original Irish celebration (and still is). If the weather is fine on Imbolg, six more weeks of winter are expected. If Imbolg is rainy, winter has fled and spring has sprung! It was a custom that no work was to be done that involved anything sacred to Brigid – no smithing, spinning, weaving, writing; nothing that involved a spinning wheel (much like the Norse custom at Yule) was performed until after the rites were completed. Sacred fires were lit, animals were purified by running them through the flames (which, incidentally, rid the animals of all sorts of little pests) and bits of cloth were hung on trees by sacred wells and rivers in the hopes that wishes would be granted. Houses were thoroughly cleaned in honor of the Goddess that she might visit the home and leave her blessings. The tradition of “spring cleaning” may very well have emerged from this practice. Another tradition was the creation of corn dollies – weaving creations, including solar (equal-armed) crosses out of grain in which to house the “spirit” of Brigid. A Bride’s Bed was set by the hearth – a doll wrapped in white cloth was laid in a basket and a priapic wand placed beside it – to bring fertility and abundance in all forms into the household. The doll was frequently a simple sheaf of wheat. To it one says, “Now we banish winter; now we welcome spring. Brid has come!”

This is a time of action – the Quickening is here! Time to get busy – clean your home, organize your papers and your thoughts, take care of the things you’ve been putting off, get rid of stuff that’s been holding you down (physical and metaphysical) and get those fires going – in the hearth, the heart, the mind and the spirit! Welcome Spring!

Goddess Names Scramble Answer Key 1. ATNHAE is ATHENA. 2. EMAISTR is ARTEMIS. 3. CEEATH is HECATE. 4. APNEO is EPONA. 5. ACHLIEACL is CAILLEACH. 6. IGRBID is BRIGID. 7. HREA is HERA. 8. SHTIRA is ISHTAR. 9. WICNRDERE is CERRIDWEN. 10. ANADI is DIANA.	Imbolg symbols and colors White, red, pink; candle flames in general, ring of candles, equal-arm (solar) Cross, bride (corn) dolly, sacred wells, ribbons or cloth tied to trees or hanging by deep pools of water
	Herbs/trees All types of early flowering bulbs: crocus, snowdrop, daffodil, paper-white narcissus; angelica, heather, rowan, dogwood, blackberry (which is not actually available at this time, but it is sacred to Brigid, so have in the form of blackberry wine)
	Rites of Passage Wiccaning/Paganing; Saining (Naming Ceremony); Purification Rites; Coven Dedication, Coven Initiation, Coven Re-birthing
	Crafts  Make candles after using up your winter supply; create a candle wheel; make a Corn Dolly (Bride Doll) and Bride Bed; create Sun Wheels, Solar Crosses (Brigid's Cross) and God’s Eyes (probably originated in the Aryan homeland of the Celts, but later became a symbol of Brigid, the “All-Seeing One”).

CERES Mountain Messenger publishes four (4) times per year, approximately two (2) weeks prior to Imbolg, Bealtaine, Lughnasadh and Samhain, the Greater Sabbats. We may begin creating interim newsletters, but only for website publication. **CERES Mountain Messenger** is edited and published by Saira, so please send all submissions to im-saira@charter.net. Articles, poems, recipes and so forth should be approximately 250 to 350 words in length. Pictures and Graphics may be in GIF or JPEG format. Event listings must be submitted at least ten (10) days prior to our publication dates. **We need your talent and your submissions to keep CERES Mountain Messenger in print! All submissions for the next issue must be received no later than March 4, 2005.**

What is CERES?

The Coalition of Earth Religions for Education and Support is a long name that we shorted to **CERES**, after the Roman Goddess of fertility, prosperity, abundance and growth in all forms.

We are a faith-based charitable organization that serves WNC’s growing Earth Religions community. CERES offers emergency services to those in need. We co-sponsor a Harvest Home Public Ritual each Mabon (which was flooded out this year due to the hurricanes), as well as, various activities during Earth Religions Awareness Week in October. Our vision for the future includes a building with land, for ritual, and a community garden space. CERES members are available to speak at special events, including schools and churches and we provide media contacts for those with questions about Earth Religions. For more information, please visit our website. Brightest Blessings!