



Earth Healer



A Unitarian Universalist Congregation



The Official Newsletter of the friends and members of Gaia Community February 2004

HARM NONE AND THE USES OF ETHICS—Barbara Griggs

Recently some members of Gaia Community had a discussion of the principle “Harm None.” Some questioned its validity as a “rule” or “law” while others pointed out that their particular tradition does not include such a stricture. I noticed as I listened in to the conversation, that we were brushing against but not fully confronting an aspect of religion, which I suspect many of us prefer to avoid. This is the issue of ethics. Out of the several dictionary definitions, I am using the word to mean a code of conduct or behavior. I am further expanding the word to mean a code that is freely and consciously chosen and followed. Most of us, I assert, do indeed have our own chosen code of ethics; but I also assert we often let this code go unexamined and live as though we either had none, or as though our ethical code was prescribed to us by others, or endemic in the world around us.



Ethical behavior is a religious issue partly because many people ascribe the source of their ethical code to the deities(y) they worship. Some do this overtly, as in saying that one obeys the Ten Commandments because Yahweh dictated them to Moses on the mountain. Others are more implicit: “I know right from wrong-it’s just natural! Doesn’t everyone?” Actually, the ancient Hebrews viewed the ability to tell right from wrong as so seminal that it features in one of their creation stories-for it was the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil that brought about the “fall.” In fact, my observation suggests that the ability to formulate a code of behavior as a model to com-

pare one’s own and others’ behavior to is one of the singular qualities of being human.

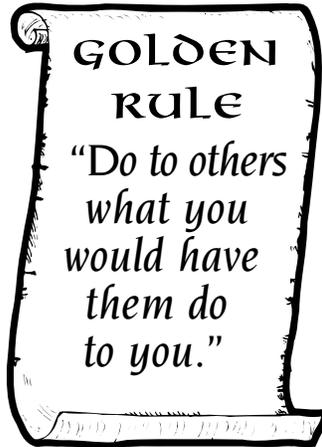
As a free individual, I have the privilege, and the obligation, to create my own ethical standards, and then monitor how well I live up to them. Naturally, hating to reinvent the wheel, I look to others’ systems for models. For this reason, I personally latched on to “Harm none.” Incredibly simple, elegant, and easy to remember (have you ever tried to write down, by number, the “Ten Commandments”? Not easy, and that’s only ten). However, it is not an easy standard to live up to. While I assiduously attempt to avoid harming other people, and nice furry mammals and such like, I know that I accidentally harm other beings from time to time. I swat mosquitoes that

are biting me and spiders that I think might be brown recluses, and wasps that come into my house. I have sanctioned the killing of mice by my cat and allowed exterminators to put poison in and around my foundation; I sometimes use antiseptics and take antibiotics. Then there’s the fact that I eat meat and fish and have been known to plunge lobsters into boiling water, and I eat clams and oysters alive. (Don’t think about it too much!)

So from my point of view, Harm None was a pretty useful ethical principle to adopt. It keeps me on my toes, noticing where I do not live up to my own standards and the many places I do try to. I honestly felt that it covered most situations until I heard of James Towey, the White House Deputy Assistant to

the President and Director, Office of the Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, who reportedly answered a question about Pagan faith-based groups having access to these funds, saying, “I haven’t run into a Pagan faith-based group yet, much less a Pagan group that cares for the poor. Once you make it clear to any applicant that public money must go to public purposes and can’t be used to promote ideology, the fringe groups lose interest. Helping the poor is tough work and only those with loving hearts are drawn to it.”

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All Sunday activities take place at Shawnee Mission UU Church; 7725 W. 87th St.; Overland Park, KS (near 87th & Metcalf) and begin at 4 P.M. unless otherwise noted.

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

Sunday, February 1st



Ritual—Imbolc

Our celebration of the first stirrings of life from our Mother Earth. The mid-point between Winter Solstice and Spring Equinox, were we help stir the seed within the earth back to life. Join us to turn the seasonal wheel and to feast and make merry these new beginnings.

As with all Sabbats, we will be holding a potluck, so bring a dish for 8 hungry people and remember to label the ingredients! In order to care for the earth and each other, we ask that you refrain from using disposable containers or tableware if possible.

Sunday, February 8th



Ritual—"The Four Winds" New Member Sunday

"Spirit of the Wind, carry me. Spirit of Wind, carry me home. Spirit of the Wind, carry me home to myself."

Winds bring change. A truism that can not be denied. We will be welcoming our newest community members and then will use the body of the ritual for trance work. From each direction the wind can blow and with its help we will gain gifts and insights to help us with our states of constant change.

Sunday, February 15th

Sharing Our Spirits—Blowing Kisses (Valentine's Day) facilitated by Kimberly Gier

Sharing Our Spirits rituals are a chance for everyone to co-create a ritual together. Bring music, poetry, inspiration or a desire for something you'd like to see done and we'll see if it can be worked in. The theme for this day's ritual is "Blowing Kisses". Please be open, be creative, and be ready to express your love for the universe, in whatever form it presents itself to you to be loved.

Sunday, February 22nd

Class—"Chant Writing Workshop" facilitated by Kitty Degler

We will discuss what chant is and the intent of chant. The goal of the workshop is to create a new chant for Gaia to use in their rituals and give you some techniques and tools so you can confidently write your own chants.

Sunday, February 29th



Ritual—Leap Year

Leap Years come around every four years to account for that 'extra day' that gets left behind in the calendar year. This February 29th, we'll be taking that "extra time" to get acquainted with the thousand little gods in our lives, the ones that take care of all of the things that are left behind by the classical pantheon's - the gods that cure hiccups, protect the tree in your backyard, or run off with your left socks.

Maybe you'll create a new patron spirit, synthesize a power previously unacknowledged, or form a new relationship with an existing deity. Come prepared to explore the unknown, the overlooked, and the left behind.

Ritual Team Members:



Kitty Degler
Jacki Kelly
Collene Newby
Jeff Park



Caroline Baughman
Nicole Turner
Eric Simpson



Kimberly Gier
Carey Oxler
David Reynolds

WEAVE AND SPIN



Splinters from the Board

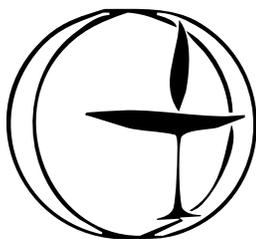
From Jeff Park, Board Member at-Large

Rituals for Business are not simply board meetings. They're open to all members and friends—the more, the merrier. Although actual voting is restricted to active membership, everyone's voice is important. Please join us at SMUUC, downstairs in the Franklin/Jefferson Room for our next meeting: 9:30–11:30 A.M., Saturday, February 14th. David Reynolds will be facilitating, so get in touch if you want to add an item to the agenda. *Minutes from any Ritual for Business are available upon request from the Secretary.*

Last month's meeting started on a very chilly morning and we discovered that doing donut magic beforehand really works. Two dozen of the little creations turned up unannounced but very welcome.

Topics of the agenda were:

- David Reynolds, (Treasurer) certified to Praire Star District that we have 34 full active members.
- Adult Education was discussed and many different ideas were tossed about concerning the Tuesday Night RE. Suggestions for different classes were BYOT (Build Your Own Theology) a UUA program; Wicca 101; Druidry; Ritual Skills workshop and Trance/ Meditation. Kimberly Gier was heading up this endeavor and did poll the Gaia Community yahoo-egroups list serv recently. If you have ideas, concerns or questions about Adult RE, contact either Kimberly Gier or Caroline Baughman.
- Barbara brought us up-to-date with Praire Star District annual conference at All Souls. Gaia Community will man and facilitate a meditation room and we decided to create their own labyrinth on cloth for use at the conference. This being done by our own Craft Circle.☺



Gaia Community Board Members

President—Barbara Griggs
bpmg@earthlink.net or
816-587-2350

VP—Caroline Baughman
carolineo@earthlink.net or
816-729-7112

Treasurer—David Reynolds
naebli@kc.rr.com or
816-941-7626

Secretary—Nicole Turner
saffronhare@kc.rr.com or
913-706-9159

Members at Large

Collene Newby
oedipus_the_doomed@yahoo.com
or 913-221-3278

Jacki Kelley
opaljax@aol.com or
816-228-0018

Jeff Park
jpark2@kc.rr.com or
816-361-0465

continued from page 1—Harm None

Now this is a nasty, ignorant and bigoted comment; and a few other adjectives that cannot be printed in a family newsletter. I know many, many loving pagan hearts and stalwart pagans who do the hard work of helping the poor and unfortunate every day—many of them in our own community. However, even things I vehemently disagree with can push me into thinking about them. In this case I realized that an equally dismissive, yet far more accurate reply, could have been made by a more knowledgeable person by saying something like, “I am not aware of a significant number of Pagan Faith-Based charitable organizations, and this may be because many Pagan faiths do not include serving the poor in their explicit standards of ethical conduct.” Now, there are hundreds of other reasons why there are not a lot of organizations who are Pagan-Faith-Based and exist to serve the poor, and they are good and compelling, and I could eagerly delve into any of them—but that's another conversation. The insight I was left with, after thinking this far, was that my beloved law, “Harm None,” does not include any injunction to help anyone.

This realization does not lead me to abandon what I consider a perfectly good ethical standard but only to add to it. One addition, suggested by a community member, is the “Golden Rule,” “Do to others what you would have them do to you.” This is broader, and includes ideas like mercy, and compassion, and assistance and forgiveness. If I were starving, and someone else had food, then I would want them to give it to me, wouldn't I? Thus it includes an imperative to help those less fortunate than ourselves. The “Golden Rule” tests out pretty well against specific examples of behavior I call “right” or “wrong.” It's big enough and hard enough to give my conscience exercise; “Harm None” is mostly included within it. I have a feeling it has limitations around people from other cultural backgrounds or just different upbringing than I have.

Now that I have started, however, I am interested in continuing this inquiry. What ethical standards do other religions have? What about the pagan paths I am familiar with, and those that are more obscure? What about schedules of required worship practices? Do these count as “ethical systems”; or are they merely pragmatic? How do beliefs in an afterlife or divine intervention affect ethics? Or, as someone in the new member class put it, is it possible to be good “for goodness sake”? ☺

DARE TO DREAM...
FOR ONLY UNREALIZED DREAMS
ARE WASTED.

FEAR NOT...FOR OUT OF CHAOS
COMES THE LIGHT OF HOPE.

DARE TO DREAM...FOR IN DREAMS
DO WE SEE OUR TRUE LIMITS.

BY MICHAEL O'RILEY

KIDSPACE

from Linda Boyce

Dear Parents,

This year, on the third Sunday of the months (with two changes), the preschool class of KidSpace will be studying altars and creating the pieces to make their own little altars and a box to keep everything. If you would like to help with any of the classes or have supplies/ materials that the children could use please let me know at jboyce@mind-spring.com or call me at 816-419-9447 (my cell phone).

- 01/18/04 What is an altar? Where are altars? How do we behave around altars?
- 02/15/04 Candle safety. why are there candles on altars? Decorate candle holders with glass paints and glue.
- 03/14/04 Talk about right and left directions. Altar-cloth use and decoration. Make small muslin altar-cloths with fabric paints.
- 04/18/04 Talk about bells and other instruments common in ritual. Make rattles of plastic bottles.
- 05/16/04 Talk about colors, directions, and what the pentacle means. Make a felt Pentacle with rainbow lines.
- 06/20/04 Talk about incense and safety with the same. Make small clay incense burners.
- 07/18/04 Talk about Cakes and Ale that appear in some ritual and correct behavior during the same. Decorate a plate of their own.
- 08/15/04 Talk about altar tools, safety (ex: knives), and correct behavior around the same. make their own wands from small branches they bring from home (Nature walk time, parents).
- 09/19/04 No class lesson due to our family's work at KCRF. If a parent would like to plan something for this date, please contact Andrew.
- 10/17/04 Discuss the idea of God and Goddess. Make clay God and Goddess figures.
- 11/21/04 Review what we have done this year. make boxes to store our altars in.
- Winter Bazaar: an extra one of each altar piece and a box will be made so the class can donate it to the Bazaar, either KidSpace booth or raffle table.
- Winter Solstice: Kids can sing the poem.

Following is the poem Up On The Altar, from the book Raising Witches by Ashleen O'Gaea, that the lessons for the preschool class will be based on this year. At this time, the goal is for the children to be able to recite the poem at December potluck. Please help your child work on the stanzas as we learn them each month.

Up On The Altar (can be sung to the tune of Up on the Rooftop)
Up on the altar, what do I see?
I see candles, one, two, three!
One for the Lady, one for the Lord,
And one in the middle for little ol' me!

Up on the altar, what do I hear?
I hear the bell that rings so clear!
Once for the Lady, once for the Lord,
And one more time to call me near!

Up on the altar, what have I found?
I found a Pentagram, flat and round!
It's for the Lady, and it's for the Lord,
And it helps me center and ground!

Up on the altar, smooth and bright,
The altar-cloth glows in quiet light.
Left for the Lady, right for the Lord,
When I touch the altar-cloth it feels just right.

Up on the altar, what do I smell?
I smell the incense, starting to swell!
Some for the Lady, some for the Lord,
And some for me 'cause I like it so well!

Up on the altar, what can I taste?
Cakes and Ale that the Gods have graced!
Some for the Lady, some for the Lord,
And I get to share when it comes by my place!

Up on the altar, what have we got?
We've got some tools we use a lot!
Some for the Lady, some for the Lord,
And some for me when I am taught!

Up on the altar, what can they be?
Figures standing sym-bol-ic-ly!
One is the lady, one is the Lord,
And I know for sure that They love me!

The Wiccan Rede (editor's note: this is but one version of the poem and I thought it helpful to show its full content with regards to page one's article.)

Bide you the Wiccan laws you must, in perfect love and perfect trust.

Live and let live, fairly take and fairly give.

Cast the circle thrice about, to keep the unwelcome spirits out.

To bind the spell every time, let the spell be spake in rhyme.

Soft of eye and light of touch, speak little and listen much.

Deasil go by the waxing moon, chanting out the Wiccan rune.

Widdershins go by the waning moon, chanting out the baleful tune.

When the Lady's moon is new, kiss your hand to Her times two.

When the moon rides at Her peak, then the heart's desire seek.

Heed the North wind's mightily gale, lock the door and trim the sail.

When the wind comes from the South, love will kiss you on the mouth.

When the wind blows from the West, departed spirits will have no rest.

When the wind blows from the East, expect the new and set the feast.

Nine woods in the cauldron go, burn them quick and burn them slow.

Elder be the Lady's tree, burn it not or cursed you'll be.

When the wheel begins to turn, let the Beltane fire burn.

When the wheel has turned to Yule, light the log, the Horned One rules.

Heed you flower, bush and tree, by the Lady, blessed be.

Where the rippling waters go, cast a stone, the truth to know.

When you have and hold a need, harken not to other's greed.

With a fool no seasons spend, or be counted as his friend.

Merry meet and merry part, bright the cheeks and warm the heart.

Mind the Threefold Law you should, three times bad and three times good.

When misfortune is enow, wear the blue star on your brow.

True in love you must ever be, lest their love be false to thee.

These words the Wiccan Rede fulfill: An it harm none, do what you will.

GAIA AROUND TOWN—EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

Voices of Gaia

Thursday, February 12th, 7:00 P.M.

We meet downstairs at SMUUCH in the classroom with the keyboard. We had a great turnout in January and lots of fun. We sang 4 part rounds, 3-part harmony and a great bass section. I'm hoping everyone who came will come back this month and more people will join us. When we have eight or more people we can do some amazing things!

In February we'll continue to work on some of the more complicated chants we sang in January, plus focus on some songs of love and passion in honor of Valentine's Day. If you have chants you'd like to share, let Kitty know at (913)469-8779 or songbird@kc.rr.com for more information. Future VoG dates include March 11, April 8 and May 13.

KidSpace Committee Meeting

Friday, February 13th, 7:00 P.M.

The KidSpace Committee Meeting is a place for all parents, kids at heart, and KidSpace volunteers to come together and discuss the future of our children. Plans for future activities, volunteer opportunities, dinner, and the direction of the future of KidSpace could all be on the agenda.

Come to the meeting or contact Andrew Turner, our Director of KidSpace Programming, for more information at agmmn@kc.rr.com or (913) 706-9167.

Games Night

Friday, February 20th, 7:00–10:00 P.M. at SMUUCH

Games Night is a chance for gaians to get together for fun, frivolity, and food, and NO OFFICIAL BUSINESS allowed! (We're not kidding—the Games Guru has spoken on this.) Bring a game (or ten), bring a friend (or ten), or just bring yourself and a willingness to play and visit. Snacks are welcomed but not required, to help the gaming crowds keep up their strength!

Friday Night Supper Club

Friday, February 27th, 7:00 P.M.

Join your fellow Gaians for food, friendship, and frivolity. Kick back and stuff yourself silly! February's FNCS will be feasting at JackStack. For more information contact Jeff Park at jpark2@kc.rr.com or 816-361-0465.

Caring Committee Connection Circle

We will meet every Sunday before Ritual. We will start at 2:30 P.M. This is a place to meet and talk. If you've had a bad week, and you need to talk about it, come on by. If you've had a good week, and need to shout it from the rooftops, come on by. If you just need to be with people, or whatever, come on by. We'll have coffee and tea, and if you'd like bring some food. Bring enough to share!

Site Committee Meeting

Wednesday, February 4th, 7:00 P.M.

The rescheduled meeting from January is on February 4, 2004 at 7 p.m. The meeting was to be at the Johnson County Libraries Main Branch; 9875 W 87th, OPKS 66212; in one of the study rooms. Collene Newby is the committee chair and is searching for interested people in looking for a future Gaia Community home. You can contact her via her cell phone (913) 221-3278 You need not be a member to assist on this committee.

Tuesday Night Adult Education

Is on hiatus until further notice

A look ahead at next month

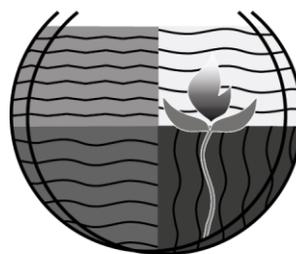
Mar 7 Forum—"Is it an Omen, or is it a Pizza?" - Carey

Mar 14 Ritual—"All Snakes' Day" - ☯

Mar 21 Ritual—"Ostara" - 🍷

Mar 28 SOS—"Chariot of Fire" - Eric

Apr 4 Ritual—"All Fools' Day" - ☯



Growing Season

**Prairie Star District
Annual Conference
April 23–25, 2004
Kansas City Marriott
Country Club Plaza
Hosted by All Souls
UU Church**

COMMUNITY CARES Joys and Concerns

Compiled with YOUR input.



Peace & strength to . . .

- Friends who are rolling with the punches of unemployment and job searches.
- Those struggling with substance abuse and addiction.
- Those in our community experiencing the pain of divorce or separation.
- Hope that everyone gets plenty of rest and relaxation after the hectic "holidays."
- Toast to chosen Family.

Happy Solar Return to people celebrating their birthday this month:

2–5: Carey Oxler

2–6: Maria Snyder

2–12: Mercedes MacDonald

2–15: Rita

If we've missed you, clue us in again! Let Earth Healer know—earthhealer@gaiacommunity.org or 816-361-0465 or just sort of let the people at the greeter's table know.

And a special welcome to the folks who visited us for the first time recently:

Michael Stailey; Judy and Norrie Naster; Rachel K. Brandon; Melody Briggs; Sue Wacaser-Sharp; Lynn Wacaser; Dave Dansby.



P.O. Box 45307
 Kansas City, MO 64171-8303

Address Correction Requested

CONNECTION CIRCLE

Sundays 2:30 pm

Sponsored by the Caring Committee

Coffee, tea and a compassionate ear

SACRED RHYTHMS

Sundays 3 pm

Bring your drums; Bring your shakers

Bring your heart, your feet and your hands

No previous experience needed

Contact Earth Healer

Send letters, articles, poetry or prose, borrowed wisdom, comments and suggestions to: earthhealer@gaiacommunity.org or by phone (number inside) no later than the 15th of each month.

Please tell us if you are receiving duplicate copies of *Earth Healer*, if we're getting your name/address wrong or if you prefer to receive the newsletter by email. Let us hear from you before the March *Earth Healer*.



February 2004						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
CCCC 2:30 SR 3pm 1 Ritual Imbolc Potluck 4 pm	2	3	4	Ritual Teams Meeting 6:45 pm	☉ 6	7
CCCC 2:30 SR 3pm 8 Ritual The Four Winds New Members 4 pm	9	10	11	Voices of Gaia 7 pm	☾ 13 KidSpace 7 pm	Ritual of Business 9:30 am
CCCC 2:30 SR 3pm 15 SOS Blowing Kisses 4 pm	16 Deadline for EH sub- missions	17	18	19	● 20 Games Night 7 pm	21
CCCC 2:30 SR 3pm 22 Class: Chant Writing Workshop 4 pm	23	24	25	26	27 FNCS 7 pm	☾ 28
CCCC 2:30 SR 3pm 29 Ritual Leap Year 4 pm						