



Reclaiming Tradition



Reclaiming is a community of women and men working to unify spirit & politics.
Our only creed is the Reclaiming Principles of Unity, presented on page four.
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Our vision is rooted in the religion and magic of the Goddess: The Immanent Life Force.
We see our work as teaching and making magic — the art of empowering ourselves and each other. In our classes, workshops, and public rituals, we train our voices, bodies, minds intuition, and energy. We use the skills we learn to deepen our strength, both as individuals and as a community, to voice our concerns about the world in which we live, and bring to birth a vision of a new culture.
— Reclaiming Mission Statement

A Working Definition of Reclaiming — by Starhawk

Reclaiming is a tradition of the Craft (we could say Wicca, Pagan, Witchcraft...). Because we value freedom of thought, we accept no dogmas nor implement any required beliefs. To us the Goddess is the wheel of birth, growth, death and regeneration. We always invoke Goddess into our circles and often, but not always, God as well. We recognize an eclectic pantheon of Goddesses and Gods, with whom we are co-creators of change & fate.

The Five-Point Agenda — The DreamRoads Collective, Starhawk

1995 www.dreamroads.com/power/stara.html www.starhawk.com

Sacred Values: Peace, Community, Family — For us, the sacred is embodied in the living systems of the earth and the human community. We see all things as interconnected and interrelated, and these values inform all our political stands. We support alliances across the barriers of difference, while recognizing that political decisions arise out of what we most value.

Diversity — We embrace diversity as integral to our country's strength and central to our common heritage. We understand the vital importance of biological diversity. We support education that includes many viewpoints and heritages and teaches respect for differences. And equal access to resources and decision-making power for all.

Self-Determination — We stand for the right of all people to have a voice in decisions that affect them, the right of individuals to make free and informed choices regarding their bodies, their sexuality, their powers of reproduction, and their manner of life.

Environment — We affirm that the interconnected life-systems of the earth have a right to be and an inherent value that goes beyond their usefulness for human ends.

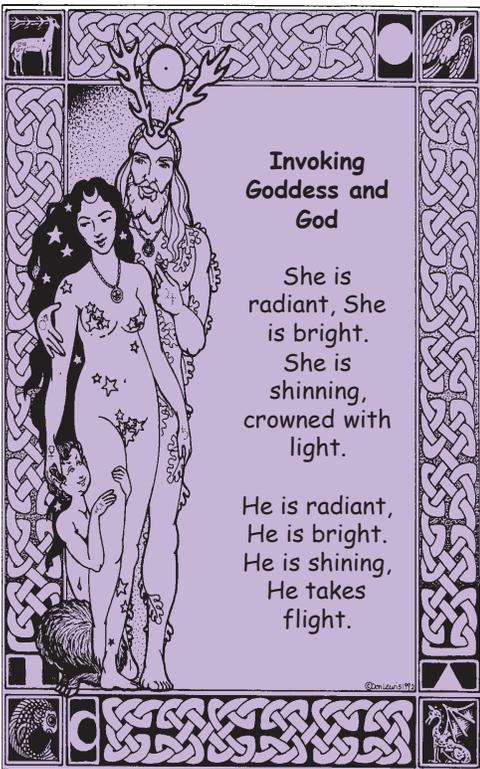
Human Needs and Social Justice — Human beings have a right to those things that make possible a fulfilling life. Rather than protect the privilege of the few, government has the responsibility to assure that each person has access to the means and opportunities to pursue their own view of happiness.

Distinguishing features of the Reclaiming Tradition of Witchcraft

- group priest/esshoods and non-hierarchical covens;
- no specific pantheon;
- no formal membership or requirement of initiation, and when initiations are undertaken, customized ones;
- strong emphasis on political involvement and social and ecological responsibility/consciousness;
- no set liturgy (except in certain large, public sabbat rituals) but rather training in principles of magic and the structure of ritual, and how to “speak as the spirit moves you” within that structure;
- cultivation of ecstatic states (customarily without the use of entheogens or psychotropics) and divine colloquy — more shamanic than ceremonial;
- cultivation of self-empowerment, self-discovery, creativity;
- extensive use of chanting and breathwork in magical rites;
- intense “energy-raising,” often using our trademark spiral dance (or even double helix/DNA molecule dance);
- magical use of Pentacle of Iron construct and its obverse, Pentacle of Pearl;
- concept of Three Souls or Selves: Younger Self (unconscious mind), Talking Self (verbal and conscious expression), Deep or God Self (Divine within);
- encouragement of the creation of new ritual forms by anyone.

M. Macha NightMare, and Vibra Willow © 2000

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Wheel of the Year

Vibra Willow

Witches describe the cycles of the seasons as the Wheel of the Year. There are eight major holidays, called "sabbats," based on solar events and marking the "Turning of the Wheel." Some holidays are celebrated on the "eve," the night before. The following calendar dates reflect the Northern Hemisphere perspective. These are the holidays as observed in the Reclaiming Tradition.

• **October 31, Samhain** — (pronounced sow, to rhyme with cow, and win = sow'-win) also known as Halloween. This is a major holiday; we honor our achievements in the past year, welcome babies born, celebrate the ancestors, mourn those who have died, and seek to contact the spirits of the dead. It is sometimes called the Witches' New Year.

• **December 21/22 Yule** — This is the Winter Solstice, the shortest day and longest night of the year, and the birthday of the sun. We watch the sun set, and then stay up all night and keep the Yule log burning as we midwife the rebirth of the sun. We sing the sun up. Many of presents!) in our homes, life and regeneration.



Imbolc, Candlemas, we honor Brigid, or Bhríde, forge, the flame and the ing, and poetry. We make in front of the sacred gentle signs of early spring, ter the darkness of winter.

• **March 22, Spring Equinox** — Also known as Oestara or Easter, named for the Goddess of Spring. The days and nights are of equal length, and it is time to start the garden, to sow the seeds. We try to do this in our lives as well as in the earth. We celebrate the renewal of life, the endless cycle of rebirth, symbolized by the egg.

• **May 1, Beltane** — This is also called May Day. Traditionally it is a time for lovers to celebrate (and get together!). We dance around a Maypole, weaving ribbons; and we leap over the Beltane fire, for fertility and creativity and love of all kinds, and for healing.

• **June 21, Summer Solstice** — The longest day and shortest night of the year. After this night, the days will begin to shorten, so we call this the death of the Sun-King. We watch the sun set, and celebrate the beauty of midsummer.

• **August 2, Lammas** — This holiday is also known as Lughnasad (loo-noss'-sid). This is the early harvest, when we rejoice in the first fruits of the season. Also, we begin to prepare ourselves for the coming winter, and think about what we will need to make it through the dark, cold season.

• **September 22, Fall Equinox** — This is the major harvest or thanksgiving festival, also known as Mabon. It is again a time when day and night are in balance, or of equal length. We have a feast, and also perhaps plant a winter garden. We remember to slow down, and to rest, to enjoy all our blessings, especially our families and friends.



Charge of the Goddess Traditional by Doreen Valiente / Starhawk

Listen to the words of the Great Mother, Who of old was called Artemis, Astarte, Dione, Melusine, Aphrodite, Cerridwen, Diana, Arionrhod, Brigid, and by many other names — Whenever you have need of anything, once a month, and better it be when the moon is full, you shall assemble in some secret place and adore the spirit of Me Who is Queen of all the Wise.

You shall be free from slavery, and as a sign that you be free you shall be naked in your rites. Sing, feast, dance, make music and love, all in My Presence, for Mine is the ecstasy of the spirit and Mine also is joy on earth.

For My law is love unto all beings. Mine is the secret that opens the door of youth, and Mine is the cup of wine of life that is the caldron of Cerridwen, that is the holy grail of immortality.

I give the knowledge of the spirit eternal, and beyond death I give peace and freedom and reunion with those that have gone before.

Nor do I demand aught of sacrifice, for behold, I am the Mother of all things and My love is poured out upon the earth. (continued next page)

Reclaiming Correspondences, Definitions

From: www.reclaiming.org and Suzanne Sterling

Elements — Four substances necessary to the creation of life:

Air-East/Eurus; Sylphs; athame; incense, feathers; woodwinds; To Know, mind, insight, intuition, psychic work, abstraction, analysis, martial arts; breath; heart chakra; smell; dawn; spring; Gemini/Mercury, Aquarius/Uranus; birds, insects; aspens; white & pale shades of yellow & pink; quartz, topaz, moon stone; frankincense, myrrh, lavender, sage; yarrow, clover, spearment

Fire-South/Notus; Salamanders; wand; candle, flame, heat; string instruments; To Will, passion, purify, change, relationships; aggression, innocence, playfulness, dance, drama, strength, exercise; anger, affection, sexual desire; nervous system; solar plexus chakra; sight; noon; summer; Aries/Mars, Leo/Sun; lions, mice; almond; red, gold; sparkles; sweetgrass; garlic, basil

Water-West/Zephyrus; Undines; cup; seashells; bell, gong; To Dare, unconscious, dreams, healing, harvest, reflection, emotion; balance masculine/feminine; fluid qualities: depth, mutability, purity; blood; belly chakra; taste; twilight; autumn; Cancer/Moon, Neptune/Pisces; all water life; willow; blue, purple, silver; abalone, coral; thyme, sandalwood; ferns, catnip, lettuce, poppy

Earth-North/Ophion; Gnomes; pentacle; stones, dirt; percussion; To Keep Silence, create, nurture, structure, endurance, fertility, sustenance, sensuality, abundance, diversity; mountains, rocks, caves; bones; root chakra, touch; midnight; winter; Taurus/Venus, Capricorn/Saturn; all land animals esp. bear, cows; oak; green, russet; crystal; cedar; ivy, fruits, grains, birth/death, the Mother

Pentacle — Five-pointed star, one at the top, enclosed in a circle. For psychic balance and to experience various connected energies. Each point is associated with different powers and qualities.

Pentagram — Qualities of solidity and structure lend the five-pointed star to the presentation of sets of values and ideals:



Spirit — Center of the Circle is life; Aether/Soul; wheel of year; cauldron; major arcana; To Integrate, consciousness/body in all life forms (animals, plants, mountains, rivers); throat chakra; hearing; beyond time, Arachna (13th sign); mythological beasts; World Tree; clear, rainbow, black light; mastic; mistletoe

Weave Your Circle

Lady, weave your circle tight,

Spin a web of glowing light,

Earth and air and fire and water,

Bind us to you.

Earth my Body
Earth my body,
Water my blood,
Air my breath and
Fire my spirit!



Ritual Planning Using the Elements Dori's and Cynthia's notes of Starhawk's California Witchcamp Workshop

Center/Spirit — What is the transformation or change you want to happen in this ritual? Spider the ritual, see that the parts fit together, watch the movement of the energy and people, priest/ess the order of the ritual. **Air/Mind** — What story will this ritual tell? What idea or theme will it have? The story should be a simple concept expressed clearly in two or three sentences. Plan the opening and the closing, explain the ritual to the participants, teach chants, being the voice for the ritual.

Fire/Energy — This is about the pattern of energy movement; how is it going to move or what is its structure in the ritual? When ideally will it rise and fall within the story of the ritual? Plan the raising of the cone, work with the energy, priestess the cone of power, tend the fire, drum.

Water/Emotions — What are the emotions you want to invoke or will likely arise during this ritual? What does the flow (timing) look like? How will people move physically and emotionally? Plan the body of the ritual, tend people whose emotions are brought up, be aware of emotional shifts of the ritual as a whole. **Earth/Body** — How will you physically manifest this ritual? What are the logistics? What props do you need? Who is doing what? Many ideas and inspirations will come up, to be saved and weighed at the end as to how well they answer the questions raised by the other elements, from a ritual performance standpoint. In this way keep the ritual to its focus; all the elements working together as a whole.

Structure of a Ritual Vibra Willow 1999-2000



• **Grounding and Purifying** — We use salt and water, or incense, cleanse ourselves spiritually and mentally, getting rid of any thoughts or feelings that might interfere with our participation in the ritual; and we meditate together, remembering that we are all connected.

• **Casting a Circle** — We draw an imaginary circle around the ritual place, creating a sacred space. In each direction, we draw a pentacle, as an imaginary window letting in the spirits and powers we will invoke. ... When the Circle is cast, the participants are said to be “between the worlds” and the ritual begins.

• **Calling the Directions** — Using words, song, chant, and/or movement, we call the powers of the four directions, and the elements associated with them.

• **Invoking the Diety** — We invoke different Goddess(s), and God(s), depending on the purpose of the ritual. We invoke one or more dieties to witness and assist magical work, and to empower those who are working the magic, generally a deity who is known for particular powers or qualities. It may be accomplished with poetry, song, sounding or music of any kind, movement or dance. One person may take the role of invoking, or all participants may do it together.

• **Magical Working** — We might heal ourselves, or something in the world, raise energy and send it out to the world, or seek guidance or power within ourselves. We might sing or dance, or make something out of arts and crafts materials. We might be very serious, or we might be joyous, laughing and joking. We work in harmony with the forces of nature. When the moon is waning, we get rid of things, casting out what we don't want. When it is waxing, we try to increase the good things in our lives. With the full moon, we fulfill promises, bring projects to completion, and remember the infinit possibilities in the universe. We might also harmonize our work with the seasons of the year, or the phases of the moon.

• **Sharing Food and Drink** — We bless something to eat and drink by acknowledging them as gifts of the Goddess/God, and share them. Passing them around the circle, the giver may say to the recipient, “May you never hunger/thirst.”

• **Devoking and Opening the Circle** — At the end we thank the deities that were invoked, and the spirits of the Directions, this time in a counter-clockwise direction, “Stay if you will, go if you must.” We imagine the circle we cast being erased, dissolved. “The Circle is open, but unbroken; may the peace of the Goddess stay in our hearts; merry meet, merry part, and merry meet again!”



Charge of the Goddess (continued)

Hear the words of the Star Goddess, the dust of Whose feet are the hosts of Heaven, whose body encircle the universe — I Who am the beauty of the green earth and the white moon among the stars and the mysteries of the waters, I call upon your soul to arise and come unto me. For I am the soul of nature that gives life to the universe. From Me all things proceed and unto Me they must return.

Let My worship be in the heart that rejoices, for behold, all acts of love and pleasure are My rituals. Let there be beauty and strength, power and compassion, honor and humility, mirth and reverence within you.

And you who seek to know Me, know that the seeking and yearning will avail you not, unless you know the Mystery: for if that which you seek, you find not within yourself, you will never find it without.

For behold, I have been with you from the beginning, and I am that which is attained at the end of desire.



Reclaiming Ritual: EIEIO

by Starhawk

Ecstatic: We aim to create a high intensity of energy that is passionate and pleasurable.

Improvisational: We value spontaneity within the overall structure of our rituals, encourage people to create liturgy in the moment rather than script it beforehand, to respond to the energy around us rather than predetermine how it should move.

Ensemble: In our larger group rituals, we work with many priest/esses together taking different roles and performing different functions that, ideally, support each other like the members of a jazz ensemble. We encourage a sharing of those roles over time, to prevent the development of hierarchy and to allow each person to experience many facets of ritual.

Inspired: As we each have access to the sacred, we are capable of creating elements of ritual. Although we honor the myths, songs and stories coming to us from the past, we are not bound by the past, as divine inspiration is constantly present.

Organic: We strive for a smooth flow of energy in a ritual that has a life of its own to be honored. Our rituals are linked to the rhythms of cyclical time and organic life. Our practice is alive and growing, constantly renewed and changed as the spirit moves us or the need arises, rather than a ‘tradition’ to be learned and repeated in a formulaic manner. We could add more E’s: experimental, eclectic, evolving.

Introduction to Witchcraft

Vibra Willow 1999-2000

Witchcraft is a religion. Historically, Wicca is one type of Witchcraft. It is an earth-based religion in some ways similar to Native American spirituality. The religion of Witchcraft or Wicca is recognized by most state governments, the federal government, and the United States Armed Forces. Courts have recognized the right of prisoners to practice this religion on an equal basis with other religions.

Witchcraft is part of what is called "Neo-Paganism," ... exploring nature-based religious traditions which have historical roots in pre-Christian culture. Other modern Pagans include: Druids, Church of All Worlds, and Radical Faery.

Witches belong to dozens of different sects, which we call "Traditions:" Celtic, Faery, Gardnerian, and New Reformed Order of the Golden Dawn. The Covenant of the Goddess (COG) is an organization of many covens and circles. The Reclaiming Tradition is a feminist tradition started in California.

One of our most basic rules: "Harm no-one, and you may do as you wish." One of our favorite sayings of the Goddess: "All acts of love and pleasure are My rituals."



Reclaiming Principles of Unity

"My law is love unto all beings . . ." — The Charge of the Goddess

The values of the Reclaiming tradition stem from our understanding that the Earth is alive and all of life is sacred and interconnected. We see the Goddess as immanent in the Earth's cycles of birth, regeneration. Our practice commitment to the Earth, to magic with political action.

Each of us embodies the authority is within, and we interpret the sacred to us. We and honor intellectual,

We are an evolving, dynamic ourselves Witches. Honoring work with female and male images of divinity, always remembering that their essence is a mystery which goes beyond form. Our community rituals are participatory and ecstatic, celebrating the cycles of the seasons and our lives, and raising energy for personal, collective and earth healing.

We know that everyone can do the life-changing, world-renewing work of magic, the art of changing consciousness at will. We strive to teach and practice in ways that foster personal and collective empowerment, to model shared power and to open leadership roles to all. We make decisions by consensus, and balance individual autonomy with social responsibility.

Our tradition honors the Wild, and calls for service to the Earth and the community. We value peace and practice non-violence, in keeping with the Rede, "Harm none, and do what you will." We work for environmental, social, economic. Our feminism power, seeing all systems of rooted in structures of

We welcome all genders, all orientations and all those background, and ability that strive to make our public and safe. We try to balance the need to be justly compensated for our labor with our commitment to make our work available to people of all economic levels.

All living beings are worthy of respect. All are supported by the sacred Elements of Air, Fire, Water and Earth. We work to create and sustain communities and cultures that embody our values, that can help to heal the wounds of the earth and her peoples, and that can sustain us and nurture future generations.

A Brief History of Reclaiming — Vibra Willow

The **Reclaiming Collective** was a group of women and men in the San Francisco Bay Area (1978-80) formed from classes in magic taught by Starhawk and Diane Baker. In 1997 the **Principles of Unity** were written and the collective dissolved. Reclaiming Witches are in US, Canada, UK, and Germany, largely due to the influence of Witch Camps in those places, as well as the influential writings of Starhawk.



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The "W" Word, or Why We Call Ourselves Witches

M. Macha NightMare
1998-2000

By calling ourselves Witches, we honor our oppressed foremothers who survived centuries of inequities. Reclaiming Witches place a high value on social justice. Reclaiming a word that was used to denigrate our foremothers identifies us more strongly with them. It reinforces our work on behalf of the disenfranchised and against all forms of injustice.

We in Reclaiming call ourselves Witches for the very reason that others do not. It's an in-your-face word. We, as feminists and people who honor our own divinity as well as our interdependence with the rest of Gaia, the Mother, reclaim the term Witch.

Some people call themselves Wiccans because the term is less loaded than Witch. Or they may describe themselves as practitioners of the Old Religion or Nature Religion. Or as Pagans or neopagans. To me, this is retreating from our potential. I want respect for my spiritual practices from the rest of society, but I don't necessarily want respectability.

The word Witch evokes power. What better word to describe a movement of Goddess-worshipping, Nature spirituality, performers of "all acts of love and pleasure?"

In Her Peace	Spiraling into the Center	Come Earth	A River of Birds	She Comes	Tall Trees
In Her Peace, in Her peace	Spiraling into the center, the center of our soul (2x)	Come earth, Come air, Come fire, Come water. (3x)	There's a river of birds in migration,	She comes on a wave, From the cauldron of ocean.	Tall trees, Warm fires, Strong winds, Deep waters, I feel it in my body, I feel it in my soul.
In Her wisdom, find release.	We are the weavers, We are the woven ones, We are the dreamers, We are the dream.	Bring us the power to heal!	A nation of women with wings.	Swept to the shore, Transformed once more.	
I am Goddess, I am Goddess.					

Source is unknown for all chants. See: www.reclaimingquarterly.org/web/chants04/index.html

