

AFA UPDATE

A PROJECT OF THE ASATRU FOLK ASSEMBLY

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AN AFA MOOT - "WINTER NIGHTS IN THE REDWOODS!"

"Winter Nights in the Redwoods" started out as just another regional gathering, drawing on our members and friends in northern California. We picked out a really nice location on the coast, in a redwood forest near the town of Mendocino, and started putting together our agenda.

It didn't take long for us to realize that changes in the AFA necessitated another approach. The success, not only of the AFA Member's list but also of the "think-tank" approach used by the AFA Working Groups, convinced us that it was imperative to draw together as many of our emerging leaders, as well as a sizeable chunk of the general membership, to assess where we were and to stimulate action for the future.

The result? On October 21 - 23, the AFA will host a gathering in one of California's most picturesque areas. We will of course celebrate Winter Nights with blot and sumbel, but we will also conduct a leadership training session and formally introduce our "Fundamentals of Asatru" course (previously known as "Asatru 101"). Perhaps most important of all, many of our most active AFA members will have the chance to meet each other face-to-face. The expected outcome will be a greatly enhanced ability to fulfill the AFA's ambitious program.

Attendance is open to AFA members, trusted friends, and those vouched for by members. Members will receive a discount on the admission fee...one more good reason to join the AFA! (You can contact us at info@runestone.org, or write us at AFA, PO Box 445, Nevada City, CA 95959, for information on how to become a member of the Asatru Folk Assesmbly.)

“ASATRU 101” COURSE NOW DESIGNATED “FUNDAMENTALS OF ASATRU”

The “Asatru 101” project, which will be formally presented to AFA members and friends at our “Winter Nights in the Redwoods” gathering, now bears the official title “Fundamentals of Asatru.”

By any name, the course will be a major accomplishment. It will be an authoritative, detailed introduction to our religion that can be used in a variety of contexts. As presently designed, it consists of eight modules, each made up of from six to twenty lessons. Once finalized, the course will be available in several different media.

POETRY BY PIPARSKEGG STILL AVAILABLE!

We still have some remaining copies of A Skaldic Pebble, donated by Piparskegg as a fundraiser for the AFA. They are autographed, numbered, and contain forty poems that will inspire and uplift you.

We are selling them for \$13.50, which includes first class postage within the United States.

To order: You can send us a check or money order in the mail, but if you do so, email us so that we can set one of the copies aside for you! Alternatively, you can email us and have us bill you via Paypal.

ASATRU, NATURE, AND US

It is common to describe neo-paganism, Wicca, and similar traditions as “nature religions” because they typically express strong beliefs regarding humanity’s relation to the environment. Asatru, too, has received this label. To what extent is this true? What, exactly, is our connection to nature?

Briefly put, Asatru is respectful of nature. As thinking human beings, we understand that the universe around us is the result of a long process of evolutionary development. This process gives nature a coherence and a harmony so strong that we are tempted to conclude that “nature knows best.” This effect is most common in the biological world, where species have interacted with each other and with the physical environment around them for a very long period of time, each affecting the other. Paradoxically, even competition, predation, and conflict become an integral part of the greater harmony.

How does the human will fit into this scheme? One can say that since man is an animal, and thus a part of nature, everything that we do is by definition natural - that, in fact, it would be impossible for us to do anything “unnatural.” True to a point, no doubt; as one

writer pointed out, why is a beaver dam “natural” but a dam built by evolved primates with opposable thumbs (homo sapiens) unnatural?

Despite the seductive appeal of this argument, the fact remains that humans are, literally, a different breed of animal. Our cognitive abilities and our social skills, combined with those previously mentioned opposable thumbs, give us the ability to impact the world around us to an astounding degree. This brings with it a tremendous responsibility.

Asatruar are willful. We are not the sort to sit back and say “nature knows best” when confronted with challenge. People told us that nature did not make man to fly, so we determined on our own that we would take to the skies on artificial wings. People tell us today that a decline in function with aging is “naturally” inevitable, and we search for ways to impose our will on nature. Some say that we should abandon technology and return to hunting and gathering in local bands, so we can be “in harmony with nature” - and we scorn them in our Faustian search to evolve, grow, and overcome. We will not accept limits...and that is good!

We recall that, in our myths, the world is an artificial creation given form by the will. Ice and fire gave birth to the cosmos through natural processes - but it was the Faustian will of Odin and his brothers that slew Ymir and made the world we know from his corpse.

Does this mean that we claim a right to despoil the world? Strangely, in light of the preceding paragraphs, the answer must be an emphatic “No!” Will must be guided by wisdom. The integral harmony of nature is a powerful orlog we would do well not to casually disturb. Besides, as products of nature, our esthetics are so shaped that we respond instinctively and spiritually to beauty. A spoiled landscape, a devastated environment, could only be tolerated by deadened souls from which all higher virtue had flown.

Will and wisdom must strike a balance, and that balance manifests in the world as a sense of proportion. Yes, we will use resources. We will cut down trees, eat animals and mine for metals. But we will do these things judiciously - for the sake of our own long-term survival, for our descendants, but also out of a sympathy, a love, for the web of living things that surrounds us. This love is fundamental, and reflects our love of Midgard and of our lives in it.

This attitude should not be confused with the “wise use” movement, much of which is controlled by industry lobbyists and amounts to nothing more than a cover-up for financially-motivated exploitation of the environment. We believe that indeed we can “heal the Earth” (to use the cliché) and, at the same time further our ancestral belief in liberty - by evolving our spiritual awareness and taking concrete action based on that awareness!

What we do, we do for all life on Earth.

Recent links of interest regarding the environment:

http://www.livescience.com/environment/050811_global_warming.html

<http://www.nature.com/news/2005/050808/full/050808-12.html>

...and for us light skinned folks -

<http://www.newsday.com/news/printedition/health/ny-hscanc104377742aug10,0,5406246.story?coll=ny-health-print>

HELP SAVE NORWAY'S WOLVES!

Odin's own special animals, symbols of wildness and freedom, have been hunted to near extinction in a country that once honored the One-Eyed God!

Can we allow this to happen? The AFA doesn't think so, and we're trying to do something about it. You can help.

Take a look at our Yahoo group, http://groups.yahoo.com/group/norwegian_wolf/. Here you'll find updates on the wolf project as well as photos, various files, and other resources.

Please sign our petition at

<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/takeaction/399085910>

...and drop a line to Kimberley@troi.ws to find out what else you can do to help.

LORE CLASSES

The AFA sponsors twice-monthly classes on Eddic lore in the Sacramento area. Anyone interested in attending can contact us at info@runestone.org.

AFA MEMBERSHIP

Do you believe in what the AFA stands for? Do you like what we're doing?

If so - we want you as an AFA member!

You can find relevant documents and an application on our web site at <http://www.runestone.org> or you can contact us at info@runestone.org.

DONATIONS!

The Asatru Folk Assembly is a 501 c (3) religious organization, and donations to it are tax-deductible. Why give money to the government when you can use it to advance the program of the AFA?

ODIN LIVES!

The groundbreaking radio program Odin Lives! is broadcast every Thursday night at 8 PM Eastern Time on a frequency of 7.415 MHz. This broadcast is repeated the next Tuesday morning at 12:15 AM on the same frequency. You can learn more by going to their web site at <http://www.odinlives.org>.

IMPORTANT DATES

September 9 - Day of Remembrance for Herman of the Cherusci. Herman learned the art of war under the Romans, then deserted the Imperial eagles to lead his tribe in revolt against the Mediterranean intruders. In the fall of the year 9 CE, he annihilated three legions in the Teutoburgerwald, a victory which saved Germania from Roman occupation. Plant an oak tree, eat in a German restaurant, and remember Herman with a glass of fine beer from the Fatherland.

September 22 - Winter Finding. Now, at the fall equinox, is the time when day and night are of equal length. This is a harvest festival, and you can celebrate it with a meal at which you give thanks to the Gods for the powers of the soil. Raise a horn of your favorite drink to our two deities connected with fertility and prosperity - Freya, and her brother Frey.

Hail the AFA!

Stephen A. McNallen
Asatru Folk Assembly

DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND WHO SHOULD BE GETTING THESE UPDATES?
Please refer him or her to AFA_Bearclaw-subscribe@yahoogleroups.com.

VISIT OUR WEB SITE at <http://www.runestone.org>.