

AFA UPDATE

A PROJECT OF THE ASATRU FOLK ASSEMBLY

Issue 55

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EXPANDING THE ASATRU "CUSTOMER BASE"

There are still some Asatruar out there who argue that it's wrong to proselytize. I understand their concerns. After all, religions are often ham-fisted and arrogant about the way they present their messages, and the last thing we want is to have the Germanic religious revival lumped in with the arm-twisting soul-savers of evangelical television, not to mention those door-to-door harassment experts who somehow manage to ring your doorbell at the most inconvenient moment possible.

But can we spread the word of Asatru without being obnoxious and invasive? Yes. And is there a need for telling the world we exist and, more to the point, a need for increasing our numbers? Again, the answer is in the affirmative.

To understand the need for growth, think of all the things we'd like to do within the Asatru community. For example, we might want to start intentional communities to show the world (and ourselves) what our faith looks like when practiced by real people in the real world. But how many people would uproot themselves from their present lives and gamble everything they have on the success of such an endeavor? You'd get a few idealistic, hard-core Asatruar, of course. But many of your applicants would be people with lives that don't work who feel they have nothing to lose - men and women who have failed at everything else and are desperate for another chance. Their intentions may be good, but are they likely to be ideal applicants for such a project? Another obstacle lies in the truth that Asatruar are often cantankerous, idiosyncratic, and stubborn - hardly the best recruits for an experiment in community-building!

The answer is not to give up on the idea of intentional communities, because these social experiments have a lot to offer our movement. The solution is simple: Have a large enough base from which to draw. If we had ten times, or a hundred times, the pool of human prospects we would be ten or a hundred times more likely to find people who

could work together, who had the vocational skills, and who had the will to join a deliberate community of the sort we'd all like to see.

Take another example most of us can identify with - organizing Asatruar on a local or regional basis. We're all in touch with Asatruar from one end of the country to the other, thanks to email and the telephone. But outside a few urban areas we are so spread out that it's hard to muster any mass. Sure, we can meet weekly in small groups that fill a small living room, and every month we can scrape together additional folks willing to drive a greater distance, but doing anything large and frequently is almost impossible. Is there anywhere in the world that enough Asatruar can get together on a weekly basis to fill even a modest Christian church? Probably not. And would there be advantages to such a concentration? Most definitely. Think of all the things the ordinary Christian congregation does that are currently beyond our reach!

Consider our ability, or lack of it, to mount a successful campaign against discrimination...or stage a march on Washington...or persuade a major publisher to reprint an important book. Given our present tiny size, we are hampered in a hundred ways. But if we expanded our base, we could accomplish projects of this size with no trouble.

In short, we need more Asatruar - tens and hundreds of times more Asatruar than we have today.

CARRYING OUR MESSAGE TO THE FOLK AROUND THE WORLD

Can we gather such numbers? Yes. But not by using the methods that have been at our disposal so far. I'm not suggesting we abandon any of the forms of outreach we've been doing; all those are good ancillary means of reaching people. Contacts via web sites, email groups, flyers posted at cultural events and notes on bulletin boards all attract a few people and we should not stop doing any of these things. But all these are tiny when compared to the way that businesses and large non-profit organizations do outreach.

We need to ask ourselves a simple question. What would a corporation do if it wanted to sell a million widgets? Would it post flyers in book stores? Would people who worked for the corporation carry brochures to hand to their friends? Probably not. The corporation would hire one or more experts in marketing or public relations, put together a professionally-designed campaign to reach a designated target audience, and get to work. To keep from wasting money and time, they'd start off with a modest test project and then adjust their marketing plan as needed. This basic method has been used to sell hamburgers, automobile tires, presidential candidates, and religion. It can tell the world about Asatru, too.

Marketing Asatru does not mean pressuring people, or lying to them, or creating an artificial need. Nor does it mean reducing our holy religion to the moral equivalent of Krispy Kreme donuts. Rather, it means packaging our beliefs in a way that is honest,

understandable, and attractive - then telling our audience that we exist. There is nothing dishonorable or cynical or “unspiritual” about this process. Ultimately, we have to ask ourselves: Which course of action does a disservice to the Gods and the ancestors: Telling our truths to millions of men and women? Or stumbling along the same old ineffectual way we have done for the last few decades?

I say it's time to be bold, assertive, and proud - and to bring about a new Golden Age. Let's match the Age of Migrations, the Vendel period, and the Viking Age...and then surpass them!

WANTED - MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS PROFESSIONALS!

Everyone has a role to play in this saga. Each of us can continue to reach out to those around us, and to set a personal example that will show the Germanic Way at its best. We can all LIVE Asatru in our daily lives. All of us can support those who are trying to extend our message to a larger public.

But there are some men and women who can help in very special ways, and the AFA wants to call them forth.

The AFA is not interested in maintaining the status quo. We intend to carry out the kind of program described above. There already exists considerable talent within the AFA - Some of us can write, others can speak in public still others have as background in business. The AFA has some of the most progressive, forward-looking men and women in Asatru. But to make the team complete, we need professionals in the fields of marketing and public relations. Out of the nearly six hundred people who regularly receive these AFA Updates, it is statistically likely that at least some professionals in these fields are reading these words.

We ask them: Would you professionals join with us to take Asatru to a new level? Will you donate your time and experience to change the world?

Let's do it!

DONATIONS!

The Asatru Folk Assembly is a 501 c (3) religious organization, and donations to it are tax-deductible.

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>.

OTHALA

Ancestral Land -

Where the gods rule
There is my ancestral land
Where the trees crack, the night flares
Flash of steel of frost of fire
Where the blood of my fathers
Makes muddy the sod
Where my brain seethes
There is my ancestral land
I greet the land spirits
Carry fire around the borders
Heap up stones for my fathers
And prepare to haunt my sons.

- from A Runic Inspiration, available from the AFA. Visit us at <http://www.runestone.org> for ordering details.

IMPORTANT DATES

December 9 - Day of Remembrance for Egil Skallagrimsson. Warrior, poet, and devout follower of Odin, Egil's complex character is mirrored by the paradoxical nature of his patron among the Gods. Read excerpts from Egil's saga on this day, or better yet, write a poem...or do something bold!

December 20 - Mother Night. Coming just before the winter solstice, Mother Night is when the new year is born. The traditional twelve days of Yule begin now. This is a season for honoring the family line and rejoicing in the sun's renewal. Celebrate Yule with all the ancient trimmings, such as wreaths of evergreen, a Yule tree, and good cheer. Visit kin. Tell your children stories about the family and show them photos of their ancestors. Drink a toast to the God Frey, and to the reborn sun.

December 31 - Twelfth Night. As Mother Night is the beginning of Yuletide, Twelfth Night is its culmination. Meditate on the past year - what you did, and what you wish you had done. Take stock and set a course for the future. Making New Year's resolutions is an old Germanic custom that goes back at least to the Viking Age, and

perhaps much earlier. In the old days, these oaths were sworn on a boar sacred to Frey, the God of fertility and prosperity.

Hail the Holy Ones!

Hail the AFA!

Stephen A. McNallen
Asatru Folk Assembly

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Contact us at info@runestone.com and we will send him or her an invitation.

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