

SWORD & CHALICE

Wiccan Church of Canada

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IMBOLC - SPRING EQUINOX

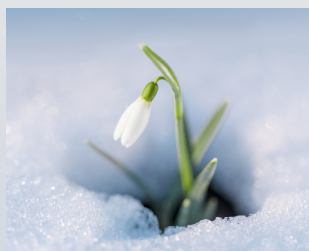
The Wiccan Church of Canada has offered open Wiccan temples facilitating classes, rituals, and training to the public since 1979. Drawing on resources available in our own communities and temples, we are a diverse, accepting, caring, group of people united by our love of the Gods and our own journeys. W.C.C. rituals are open to one and all, regardless of one's level of knowledge in the Craft. There is something for everyone, an experienced practitioner or someone who's vaguely curious. We hope our newsletter will reflect the diversity of our membership by offering the pagan community articles, resources, local events, links & libraries and the W.C.C calendar.

DUE TO THE CURRENT SITUATION WITH COVID-19, IN-PERSON CLASSES AND RITUALS CONTINUE TO BE SUSPENDED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

However we are pleased to offer free online weekly classes alternate Saturday & Sunday.

As well as a social Meet & Greet Wednesday nights via the ZOOM conferencing app.

If you wish to participate, please email LPH.WCC@gmail.com with your email address.



Here in Canada, Imbolc is often filled with ice, snow and slush along with bitter winds; and its difficult to find the Wheel manifesting its new turning. In fact, during this time of the year in our modern lives we aren't paying attention to the small changes hidden in the days of February as we trudge along under iron-grey skies. Winter seems endless and our inner fire slumbers like a quiet ember waiting for the breath of Spring to bring it blazing back to life. And yet, we know that it is coming and so we wait for Life's enthusiastic return, like listening to a distant drum. Our spirits seem to rest in the stillness that occurs in the darkness of germination.

Keeping in mind it is all about new beginnings, dedications/ initiations and fresh starts ... its a time of spiritual spring cleaning that proceeds the physical act of flinging open a window and allowing the brisk clear air to lighten our hearts and be reflected in our actions with others. In cleansing our hearts and homes we acknowledge that which came before, the way the Winter and the dark half of the year has shaped us. Consider the old practice of Saining; similar to smudging, it was carried out on Imbolc and other holy days. It was done primarily to remove influences of negative energy or spirits on places, objects, and livestock. Purification practices helps us to uphold our principles of living within the right order of things, our focus and spiritual realignment, and it doesn't hurt giving yourself a fresh start, preparing for the Spring.

In the northern hemisphere, spring arrives with that almost unnoticed glistening drop of melted ice and the first tiny white flowers known as snowdrops. We can, if we stand still long enough and listen, hear and smell the change... there may not be a green leaf in sight, but the snow gives way to the delicate snowdrops and the crocus that never fail to come. Its time to allow yourself to emerge from the winter renewed and ready for new experiences.

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THE BOOK NOOK WITH BELLA

Greetings and Happy New Year.

What a beautiful sunny day to reflect on life. So, after Ross's class on Ethics, I decided to pulled out a book I had been reading on and off for several years. Yes, years.

Emma Restall Orr

Living with Honour – A Pagan Ethics.

Published by O Books

ISBN: 978-184694094-1,

www.o-books.net.

Part One - Finding a perspective, deals with the complexity and the various interpretations of what Paganism is. Does it need to involve the Gods, spirits, entities... or not? From there we delve into the 4 possible paths of Paganism. Interlaced with personal experiences, and historical facts, the subjects and sub-categories within each chapter are cause for pause and pondering. For instance, Chapter 5 begins with the ritual of a Handparting, and the reverence, and honour to be found within. Which leads into the whole

question of what is honour? The array of emotions, feelings, conceptions and misconceptions that are put into play, when trying to define it in the human and non-human arena, is more than just food for thought.

Part Two – The Pathways of our Choices, asks questions about our values. How do we value our interpersonal relationships, and our further relation ships with all that is around us, human and non human? How do we value and respect nature, animal, the environment, and the web of life that holds everything and us, together? Each section with the author's compelling arguments, is again, a chance, a point to stop, contemplate, and meditate over, how do "I" feel about this and what are "MY" values and ethics.

Part Three – Walking the Path, tries to explain, why, when we see all that is wrong with the world, that more Pagans don't step forward and try to bring about the positive change we seek? This leads headlong into a chapter on, Integration and Integrity. How does fear or freewill play into

our action? Where does empathy and sympathy fit in our lives? Are we tribe, or wanderers? Everything is perspective, and experience, good or bad. And yet, nothing is so poignant as the last page and the last 4 paragraphs, entitled ... An Expression of Devotion.

If you find this book, it is well worth reading or having as part of your own library. Until next time, stay safe, stay healthy, and Big Hugs!

Happy Reading!

Bella



WEE WITCHES WITH XYLIA

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In Canada, the festival of Imbolc is right in the middle of Winter. It is a great time to have fun indoors, keeping warm with your family. For some, it is a time to celebrate the Celtic Goddess Brigid. You can gather your family in the kitchen and make some festive food (try making potatoe pancakes!). On the evening of February 1, Brigid walks the land giving out blessings. It is said that if you hang a small piece of white cloth outside your front door before you go to bed, Brigid will bless it as she walks by. In the morning, collect your piece of cloth and put it somewhere safe. Your house, and everyone in it, will be kept healthy and well.

Another Celtic Goddess, the Cailleach, can tell us how long winter will be. Her name means "old woman". She loves winter so much that at Imbolc she makes the weather bright and sunny so that she can go outside and gather lots of firewood. With lots of firewood to

keep her home warm, the Cailleach can make winter last a long time. But, if Imbolc is not such a nice day out, the Cailleach must have slept in and wasn't able to collect a lot of wood. If there isn't a lot of wood for her fire to keep her warm, then she will make winter a lot shorter. So watch the weather on Imbolc! If it is sunny and bright – a long winter. If it is not so nice out – then we won't have much longer to wait for it to be over.

Did the story of the Cailleach sound familiar? It's kind of like Groundhog Day!! If the Groundhog can see his shadow (because it is sunny) then winter will be here a while. But, if he doesn't see his shadow (a cloudy day) then spring will come sooner.

Although it is Winter, we should keep our eyes out for signs of the coming spring – keep looking at the ground...you might see some early flowers, like snowdrops poking through the wintery blanket.

NATURES WORKSHOP

WITH GLENYS

Heather and Heath: Using a midsummer plant for Imbolc

Calluna vulgaris (True Heather)

and *Erica carnea* (Heaths)

Also known as Ling or Lyng, Froach. These closely related plants are in the Ericaceae family which also includes blueberries, cranberries, rhododendrons and azaleas

When I think of the highlands or moors of Scotland, I think of the vast open fields of Heather. Heather are evergreen plants with spiky grey/green leaves which although flat and scaly seem almost needle like because of their small size. Heather has tracts of tiny cup like flowers with six petals. These range in colours from white to a variety of shades of pink or purple flowers. Heaths have needle like leaves with four petal bell shaped flowers and come in a similar range of colours

They are hardy plants growing in zone 4 and above with some varieties growing in zones as low as 3. They are very cold-hardy and will survive freezing conditions. They are also drought hardy once established. Both plants have a subtle fragrance.

Although true heather blooms in the summer, *Erica carnea* will bloom in winter to early spring. It is often referred to as Winter Heather, Winter Heath or Mountain heath. As such Heath and

Heather are the perfect plant for Imbolc and either plant can be used interchangeably since



Heather blossoms will dry very well

Dried Heather make wonderful torches which are carried around the field by farmers to ensure fertility for their cattle. Burning heather is also said to summon rain

Heather is feminine, associated with the element of water and the planet Venus. It is sacred to Isis, Aphrodite, Brigid and the Irish God Nechtan. It can be carried to guard against violent crimes. Heather can be used to aid fertility and is also useful for manifesting dreams and contacting spirits. It is also useful in spells for new beginnings, beauty and ending or avoiding conflict. Heather makes a wonderful herb to include in your besom because of its cleansing properties. Both Heath and Heather flowers (and upper leaves) are edible and make wonderful editions to tea and ales where they are often substituted for hops. They also make a wonderful crop for nearby hives and honey bees. It can be useful for kidney and lower urinary tract conditions, enlarged prostate, fluid retention, gout, arthritis and respiratory issues.

As always, know what you are picking before ingesting

HAMILTON TEMPLE LEGACY LIBRARY

Learning through lending and legacies.

Membership requests can be sent to WCCHamiltonTemple@gmail.com subject line: HTLL

cloud.collectorz.com/hamiltontemple/books



UPCOMING CLASSES



- Feb 7 - Egyptian Mythology
- Feb 13 - The 5 Paths
- Feb 21 - The Elements
- Feb 27 - Auras & Energy
- Mar 7 - Norse Mythology
- Mar 13 - Spring Equinox
- Mar 21 - Patrons & Shrines
- Mar 27 - Fairy Tales

All classes are being offered via Zoom. If you would like to sign up for the classes, please send an email to LPH.WCC@gmail.com

THE SABBAT TABLE

Boxty is a traditional Irish potato pancake that contains a mixture of mashed and grated potatoes, resulting in a unique texture that's part pancake, part hash brown.

You are going to need:

- 2 pounds (3 to 4 large) Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled
- 3/4 cup whole milk
- 1 1/4 teaspoons fine salt, plus more for seasoning the potatoes before cooking
- 1 large egg
- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 to 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into small pieces

Peel and chop half of the potatoes into medium sized pot. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to low, and simmer uncovered until fork tender, about 8 minutes. When the boiled potatoes are ready, drain them, return them to the pot, add 1/4 cup of the milk, and mash until the potatoes are smooth.

Meanwhile, grate the remaining potatoes. Toss with 1/4 teaspoon of the salt and place in a fine mesh strainer set over a medium bowl. Press excess liquid out of potatoes. Add the grated potatoes to the mashed potatoes .

Place the egg, 1/2 cup milk, flour, pepper, and 1 tsp. salt in a large bowl and whisk until smooth. Add the potatoes and stir until evenly incorporated.

Heat a large nonstick frying pan or griddle over medium heat. Once the pan is ready, add enough butter to lightly coat the bottom when melted. Drop 1/4 cup each of the batter into the pan and spread each to about 1/4 inch thick. Cook until the pancake bottoms are golden brown, about 4 to 5 minutes. Flip and cook the other side until golden brown.



<https://www.chowhound.com/recipes/boxty-irish-potato-pancake-28172>

POETS CORNER WITH NELSON

“The Frost Myth”

Alice Williams Brotherton

Out of Frost and Fire
sprang Ymir,
Type of Chaos, long ago;
Mighty Odin slew the giant,
As the Norsemen know.
From the rushing blood
the ocean
In swift thunderous
torrents whirled;
From the ponderous carcass
Odin
Carved the Mitgard world,--
Of his hair made
waving forests,
Of his skull the vaulted sky,
Moulded from his bones
the mountains
Which around us lie.
Lo, today, upon my window
Odin carves on every pane,
(To rebuke my skeptic smiling),
A new world again.
Mountain, forest, plain
and river,
Flash upon my raptured sight;
Here is Summer's
perfect joyance,
And Spring's dear delight.
Ferry cliff, cascade and grotto,
Glitter on the frosty pane--
Miracle the Norsemen chanted
Here is wrought again.
Who shall say the gods
have left us,
Or that Odin's power is lost,
When new Mitgards rise
before us
Out of Fire and Frost?