

PAGANISM 101

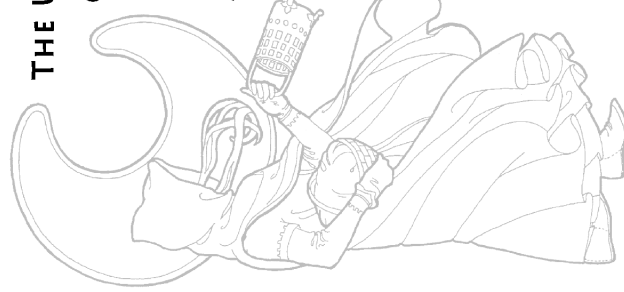


A UNITARIAN EXPLORATION OF THE NEW PAGANISM

by **LOUISE BUNN**

with FRITZ MUNTEAN and KARA CUNNINGHAM

THE UNITARIAN CHURCH OF VANCOUVER



AN INTERACTIVE CURRICULUM
IN 10 SESSIONS INCLUDING:

- STUDENT LESSON PLANS
- LEADERS' GUIDES
- RELATED ARTICLES
- READING LISTS
- AN AUDIO SELECTION OF CHANTS

AN EXTENSIVE REVISION & EXPANSION
OF THE ORIGINAL 1998 CURRICULUM

Paganism 101 is an experiential curriculum that will enable participants to conduct Pagan rituals on their own as independent practitioners.

It introduces the practices, beliefs, and history of Modern Pagan spirituality, a nature-based worldview that is deeply rooted in Western Esoteric traditions.

It is an active and powerful way to engage with Unitarianism's *Sixth Source* — "Spiritual Teachings of Earth-centred Traditions that Celebrate the Sacred Circle of Life and Instruct us to Live in Harmony with the Rhythms of Nature."

1. INTRODUCTION

- What Paganism Is and Isn't
- What is Sacred (Everything?) and Why
- A Short History of Modern Paganism

Activity: *The Stone Game*
Practice: *Grounding*

2. RITUAL

- Using Symbols to Access Spiritual Energy
- Ritual as Psychological Tool
- Value of Group Practice

Activity: *Kinesthetic Body Meditation*
Practice: *An Hour in Nature*

3. THE CIRCLE

- Creating Sacred Space
- Calling the Directions
- Accessing the Power of the Archetypes

Activity: *Eclectic Ritual & Guided Meditation*
Practice: *Casting the Solitary Circle*

4. THE ELEMENTS

- Working with Magical Correspondences
- The Elements in Daily Life
- Dancing the Four Directions

Activity: *Elemental Spiral Dance*
Practice: *Invoking the Directions*

5. THE GODDESS & THE GOD

- Personifying the Divine
- Godness & God — the Importance of Balance
- Archetypes & Stereotypes

Activity: *Making Masks*
Practice: *Finding Goddess & God Images*

6. THE FEMINE & MASCULINE

- Polarity (both/and) & Duality (either/or)
- The Nature of Myth
- The Once and Future Goddess

Activity: *Dancing your Mask*
Practice: *Finding your Wand*

7. THE WHEEL OF THE YEAR

- The Celebratory Circle
- The Solstices & Equinoxes
- The Four 'Great' Holidays

Activity: *Making & Blessing Magical Tools*
Practice: *The Antimate & the Inintimate*

8. MAGICAL PRACTICE

- 'Wicca' and 'Witchcraft'
- The Art of Manipulating Symbols
- Spellcraft and Ethics

Activity: *Making Magical Charms*
Practice: *Working with Dreams*

9. THE MOON

- Symbols and Meanings
- Dreams and Divination
- Moon Lore

Activity: *Journey to the Temple of the Moon*
Practice: *Divination*

10. WRAPUP

- Living on the Earth
- Political Paganism
- Nature and the Nature of Evil

Activity: *Mural*
Practice: *An Eco-Quiz*

Louise Bunn is an active member of the Unitarian Church of Vancouver, having served on Worship, Religious Education, Chaplaincy, and Ministry committees, as well as being a board member for the Northwest Wilderness Society. Louise is a sculptor in her day job, and she's been a practicing Pagan for over 20 years.

Fritz Muntean has been a practicing Pagan for about 40 years and is an active Unitarian. He has a graduate degree in Religious Studies, and he's the founding editor of *The Pomegranate*: The International Journal of Pagan Studies.

Kara Cunningham is a professional editor. She has a graduate degree in Religious Studies, and she has been a practicing Pagan for about 10 years.

The New Paganism

Today's Pagans revere the Earth and all its creatures. We see all life as interconnected, and we strive to attune ourselves to the cycles of nature. Our practices are rooted in a belief in immanence — the concept of divinity residing within.

The many Modern Pagans who've found a home in the Unitarian community are grounding our work in the rational structure, the intellectual balance, and the humanist core values that have descended to us from the Enlightenment. We're working to develop a religiosity that is entirely compatible with, and complimentary to, modern Unitarian rationality.

The new curriculum represents Modern Paganism as:

- A thoroughly modern and well-tested approach to Mystery.
- A performative, lively way of attending to the rhythms, wisdom, and demands of Nature.
- A way of using the richness of myth and ritual to build religious community.

The New Curriculum

This course consists of 10 sessions, each about three hours long. Every lesson includes an article to read and a practice activity. Students are given these as homework, and are encouraged to come to the next session ready to discuss. Active participation is expected between sessions — reading, practicing, meditating, gathering materials, etc, providing more opportunities for students to interact with the material in a deeper way. A series of questions to consider are included with each lesson to help focus discussion.

We rewrote the course in two steps. After the first, we taught the course to 18 students at the Unitarian Church of Vancouver. We kept track of the questions people asked, and included our responses in the final revision.

The new curriculum is considerably more focused. The course now intentionally integrates authentic 21st century Pagan spiritual practice into the life of Unitarian congregations. We believe that Modern Paganism, as a religious practice, makes an excellent addition to Unitarianism. As a spiritual discipline, it can bring to Unitarianism an experience of the transcendent, while Unitarianism brings to Paganism a grounded common sense.

An Academic Perspective

Over the past 15 years, Modern Paganism has attracted a great deal of attention among scholars of religion and religious history. The results have been dramatic.

- First and foremost, it has provided us with the solid and verifiable *historical* information we've needed to flourish.
- It has developed the pre-eminence of the *Celebration of the Wheel of the Year* and the viewing ancient deities more as the archetypal patterns at work in sacred story cycles.
- It has moved away from a dualistic approach toward a more balanced and more nuanced orientation that embraces polar opposites in dynamic balance — 'both/and' rather than 'either/or.'
- It has created a new emphasis on working together in groups to achieve a more collective religious experience.
- It has initiated a move toward a spirituality based on practice, identifying pagans by what they do, by the religious acts they perform.

An Extensive Reading List

Only the most up-to-date and academically verifiable information has been used in the production of this lesson plan and bibliography. Those who teach this curriculum have the opportunity to read some of the finest and well thought-through writing on Modern Paganism available.

- *The Very Latest Scholarship*—20 books and articles, some reprinted from academic journals
- Another 24 as *Other Important Works* and 12 as *Early Wiccan Classics*
- 6 important *Pre-Gardnerian Classics* (like Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and Graves' *The White Goddess*)
- A dozen landmark books about *Goddess Spirituality*, many from a Jungian perspective
- Our 6 favourite books and articles about *Ecological Spirituality*
- 7 classics of *Womyn's Spirituality*, including Merlin Stone's *When God was a Woman* and Starhawk's *The Spiral Dance*
- Plus an extensive list of epic poems, hymns, histories, tragedies, and comedies from Classical Greek Literature — chosen to illustrate what we believe to be the powerful value of myth and mythical history, as it has come down to us from the ancient world.

To Order this Interactive Curriculum on CD-ROM

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