**Goddess/Earth Circles: Overview of Wicca**

**January 23, 2022, 1-2:30pm**

**UUCC Zoom: Meeting ID 8238070673, Passcode 6971**

Join us to explore:

Is this an ancient or contemporary religious system?

Said to be spiritually empowering, life changing, world-transforming, what does that mean today?

Does Wicca have anything to offer UUs?

What are your experiences with Wicca? What questions or reflections do you have?

Session leader: Mary Shifman.

**GENERAL OPENING AND ENTERING**

ENTERING Three Breaths. *READER*

In preparation for entering sacred space, let us be conscious of three breaths.

As you inhale the first breath, be aware of what you are *leaving behind*. As you exhale, let go of that which would keep you from being here completely.

As you inhale the second breath, feel the *presence* of being here. As you exhale, notice those who are here with you.

As you inhale the third breath, *step over the threshold* into the space where spirits meet. As you exhale, let your spirit join with other spirits present.

spirits of the directions, elements, life stages, seasons. *READER*

East, Air (Life), the Maiden/Younger Woman, New Moon, Spring

The new moon is a time for new beginnings and growth, for blessing, initiating, and calling forth ways to activate life direction. This is the time of *developing*.

South, Fire (Energy), the Mother/Nurturer, Full Moon, Summer

The full moon is the nurturing phase, the period of giving. The Mother/Nurturer is fulfilled through giving of herself and her gifts, and through nurturing others. This is a time of *actualizing.*

West, Water (Flow), Crone, Waning Moon, Autumn

The waning moon has given the fruits of the summer for harvest. The self-described woman moves from nurturing of others to awareness of her own wisdom, growth and interests. She supports others on their own paths while paying attention to her own. This is a time of *acknowledging.*

North, Earth (Grounding), Sage, Dark Moon, Winter

This phase of the moon is the time of mystery, of gestation, of rest. There is deep understanding of what needs to be held, what needs to be let go, and what needs to be transformed in the continuous cycle of existence. This is the time of *surrendering*.

Power of the Center. (You are welcome to light a candle where you are.)

Feel the love of the Goddess and show that love to others. May we find a place where our hearts give and receive love. It is hoped that we can bring the inner and outer truths into fusion - creating the great "wholeness" within ourselves. When wholeness occurs there is an energy from within - an illumination which touches all the corners of the self.

Casting the circle *Helen*

Reach your hands toward the screen.

Feel the energy of the circle enter through your hands.

Feel the sky energy enter through your head, and the earth energy through your feet.

Feel your heart expand as you open to the spirit within.

As the energy builds around and through you, feel the flow intensify around the circle, becoming tighter and stronger binding us together for the time of this meeting.

You are invited to speak aloud the names of ancestors, goddesses or other beings whose presence you wish to call into the circle.

We welcome you all and thank you for being with us in spirit and inspiration."

The circle is cast as sacred space and time. We are between the worlds – the worlds of our lives as we came in and the world of our lives when we leave; the world of light and the world of dark, the physical world and the energy beyond the physical. What we do here between the worlds affects all worlds.

COVENANT FOR TIME TOGETHER

We value our time together and revere each being that is present. We share and we are silence to accept the sharing of others. We speak from our hearts and for ourselves only, without needing to respond or give advice. We hold our sharings in confidence within our circle.

PERSONAL SHARING

You are invited to share how things are with you today and what you might need from us.

**OVERVIEW OF WICCA (p.3)**

**CLOSING**

As we extinguish our candle(s), we release the energy of the directions and open the circle. We return to the world changed by our time together.

To the spirits that have joined us, we thank you for your presence in our circle.

Go if you must, stay if you will.

Tis with great love and gratitude we bid you farewell.

The circle is open, but not broken.

*Response:Unison*

By the earth that is her body, And the air that is her breath,

By the fire of her bright spirit, And the waters of her living womb,

May the peace of the goddess be ever in your heart.

Merry meet, merry part, And merry meet again. Blessed be.

**OVERVIEW OF WICCA**

**Introduction** *Helen*

References to Wicca arise in our conversations, yet we have not taken time to explore what that means. Interest has been expressed about such exploration. Mary Shifman is offering today’s overview and opportunity to go further if there is interest.

**What are your experiences** with Wicca? *Mary*

Mary’s experience with Wicca.

Opportunity for each of you to briefly share experiences, questions and what you like to know?

**What's Your Wicca IQ?** For each question, choose the answers that apply.

1. **Wicca is described as...**
   * a modern Pagan religion.
   * the practice of magic and spells.
   * the ancient religion of Witches and Shamans that survived for centuries underground.
   * a type of lightweight reeds used for weaving baskets and furniture.
   * anything you want it to be, really. No one has a right to tell you what to believe.
2. **Wiccans worship...**
   * the Earth, or sometimes the entire Universe; all of nature, basically.
   * God-- the One and Only.
   * a variety of Pagan Gods and Goddesses.
   * the devil; Wiccans are known Satanists.
   * whoever they want, if they want-- Wicca doesn't really have anything to do with worship.
3. **The main thing Wiccans do is...**
   * cast spells for healing, justice, and other things to help others and make the world a better place.
   * cast spells to curse people, manipulate people, and cause general mayhem.
   * work on unlocking and developing their natural powers.
   * get together at the full moon to have wild sex and drug parties.
   * live normal lives like any other religious people. Wiccans are a diverse group.
4. **You spot a Wiccan by...**
   * the goth or hippy clothing.
   * the pentagram around the neck-- Wiccans always wear pentagrams.
   * the long flowing robes and excessive silver jewelry.
   * asking. Since they look and dress like everyone else it is hard to pick them out.
   * the mark of the beast tattooed somewhere on their bodies.
5. **To become a Wiccan you have to...**
   * learn what it is and decide you want to live and worship as a Wiccan.
   * be formally initiated into a coven.
   * learn about Wicca for a year and a day, then initiate yourself.
   * cast your first successful spell.
   * kill baby kittens and drink their blood.

**What's Your Wicca IQ? ANSWERS**

1. **Wicca is described as...**
   * *a modern Pagan religion.*
   * *the practice of magic and spells.*
   * *the ancient religion of Witches and Shamans that survived for centuries underground.*
2. **Wiccans worship...**
   * the Earth, or sometimes the entire Universe; all of nature, basically.
   * a variety of Pagan Gods and Goddesses.
3. **The main thing Wiccans do is...**
   * cast spells for healing, justice, and other things to help others and make the world a better place.
   * work on unlocking and developing their natural powers.
   * live normal lives like any other religious people. Wiccans are a diverse group.
4. **You spot a Wiccan by...**
   * asking. Since they look and dress like everyone else it is hard to pick them out.
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   * learn what it is and decide you want to live and worship as a Wiccan.

**Read-Around the Group. And you are welcome to pass**

**What Is Wicca Spirituality? (adapted)** *Mary*

<https://www.wicca-spirituality.com/>

Wicca has the potential to be a world-transforming, life-changing, spiritually empowering sacred path. What does that mean?

**It’s spiritually empowering** because it gives you practical, powerful tools to connect you with Nature, with the Divine, and with the truth of Who you are and why you have been born here and now.

**It’s life-changing** because when you make this connection and start to LIVE from this awareness, you not only begin to activate the hidden powers that are lying dormant within you, but your whole life changes!

*You feel happier, more at peace, more optimistic and positive... anxiety, stress, depression, anger, and confusion fade away into history... you enjoy a sense of purpose, enthusiasm, and overall wellbeing!*

**It’s world-transforming** because what the world needs more than anything else is [the special sauce that Wicca Spirituality has to offer](https://www.wicca-spirituality.com/why-wicca.html) — heart-centered, higher-dimensional consciousnesses that is rooted in love and respect for Mother Earth.

<><><><><> *READER*

## Wiccan Spirituality -- a whole new approach.

The fundamental essence is the **spirit** in Wicca Spirituality...

* The philosophy,
* The ancient mystical truths,
* Even the scientific reality behind Wicca,
* And especially the personal, intimate LOVE of the Divine

#### Meet the Goddess within you & all things,

#### to discover Who you truly are, to evolve personally in all areas of your life, and to elevate your spiritual frequency

## Spirituality Is the Heart Of Wicca

**Here you can uncover the secret to real Magick.** It's not waving a magick wand and incanting some arcane language. It's much more practical, and exciting, than that. It's *becoming a co-creator of reality.*

You also gain access to the deeper, rarely-accessed **Power** of this practice ...

* The power to heal yourself
* The power to live a fulfilling life
* The power to heal the world
* The power to liberates the Divine Within

This is Wicca as a deep spiritual practice!

The time has come for humans to discover nirvana here on the Earth, instead of striving to escape or "transcend" life. The spiritual goal of this millennium is no longer for humans to "rise" to the Spirit, but *for the Spirit to manifest on the Earth, through each of us!*

**<><><><><><>** *Helen*

**Basic Concepts of Wicca** By [Patti Wigington](https://www.learnreligions.com/patti-wigington-2561385) Updated on April 04, 2019

<https://www.learnreligions.com/basic-principles-of-wicca-2562829>

There's an old saying that if you ask any ten Wiccans about their spiritual beliefs, you'll get at least fifteen different answers. That's not far from the truth, because with hundreds of thousands of Americans practicing Wicca today (and the actual numbers remain unclear), there are thousands of [different Wiccan groups](https://www.learnreligions.com/paganism-wicca-traditions-4684800) in existence. There is no one governing body over Wicca, nor is there a "[Wiccan Bible](https://www.learnreligions.com/there-a-witches-bible-2561559)" that lays down a universal set of guidelines. While specific practices vary from one group to the next, there are a few ideals and beliefs common to nearly all modern Wiccan groups.

Keep in mind that [not all Pagans are Wiccans](https://www.learnreligions.com/wicca-witchcraft-or-paganism-2562823), and not all Pagan traditions have the same set of principles as the core beliefs of modern Wicca.

## *Origins of Wicca*

Wicca as a religion was introduced by [Gerald Gardner](https://www.learnreligions.com/what-is-gardnerian-wicca-2562910) in the 1950s. Gardner's tradition was oathbound, initiatory, and secret. However, after a few years, splinter groups began forming, and new [traditions](https://www.learnreligions.com/different-traditions-of-witchcraft-2562912) were established. Today, many Wiccan groups owe their basic foundation to the principles laid out by Gardner. Wicca is not an ancient religion, but Gardner did incorporate some old esoteric knowledge into his original tradition, including Eastern mysticism, Kabbalah, and British legend.

**See: UTNE The Wicca That Never Was By Andy Steiner , Oct. 23, 2007** [***https://www.utne.com/community/the-wicca-that-never-was/***](https://www.utne.com/community/the-wicca-that-never-was/)

## <><><><><> *READER*

## *Basic Beliefs of Wicca*

While not exclusive to every single tradition, the following beliefs are some of the core tenets found in most Wiccan systems.

**Karma and the Afterlife**: For many Wiccans, the idea of [karma](https://www.learnreligions.com/what-is-karma-p2-1770055) and an afterlife is a valid one. What we do in this lifetime will be revisited upon us in the next. Part of this idea of a cosmic payback system is echoed in the [Law of Threefold Return](https://www.learnreligions.com/rule-of-three-2562822). In addition, generally speaking, Wicca does *not* embrace the concepts of sin, heaven, or hell.

**Ancestry**: Our ancestors should be spoken of with honor. Because it's not considered out of the ordinary to commune with the spirit world, many Wiccans feel that their ancestors are watching over them at all times.

**Holidays**: [Holidays](https://www.learnreligions.com/pagan-wiccan-calendar-4110202) are based on the turning of the earth and the cycle of the seasons. In Wicca, [eight major Sabbats](https://www.learnreligions.com/paganism-wicca-sabbats-and-holidays-4684802), or days of power, are celebrated, as well as monthly [Esbats](https://www.learnreligions.com/esbat-rite-celebrate-the-full-moon-2562864).

**Personal Responsibility**: Everyone is responsible for their own actions. Personal responsibility is the key. One must be willing to accept the consequences, either good or bad, of their behavior.

**Avoid Causing Harm**: "Harm none" is a common theme in many Wiccan traditions. While there are a few different interpretation of what actually constitutes harm, most Wiccans follow the concept that no harm should intentionally be done to another individual.

**Respect for Other Beliefs**: Wiccan groups generally avoid proselytizing. In Wicca, practitioners recognize that each individual must find their spiritual path on their own, without coercion.

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## *Calling Upon the Divine READER*

Wicca acknowledges the polarity of the Divine, which means that both the male and female deities are often honored. A Wiccan may honor simply a non-specific god and goddess, or they may choose to worship specific deities of their tradition.

Most Wiccans believe that the Divine is present in nature, and so nature should be honored and respected. Everything from animals and plants to trees and rocks are elements of the sacred. You'll find that many practicing Wiccans are passionate about the environment. The Divine is present in all of us. We are all sacred beings, and interaction with the gods is not limited just to a select group of individuals.

**<><><><><> *READER***

## *Magic Happens*

The belief in and [use of magic](https://www.learnreligions.com/how-does-magic-work-2562346) and spellwork is nearly universal within Wicca. This is because, for most Wiccans, there's nothing supernatural about magic at all. Instead, Wiccans view magic as the harnessing and redirection of natural energy to effect change in the world around us. In Wicca, magic is simply another skill set or tool. Most Wiccans do use [specific tools](https://www.learnreligions.com/magical-tools-for-pagan-practice-4064607) in spellcrafting, such as an [athame](https://www.learnreligions.com/make-an-athame-2562331), wand, herbs, [crystals](https://www.learnreligions.com/magical-crystals-and-gemstones-2562758), and [candles](https://www.learnreligions.com/introduction-to-candle-magic-2561684). Magical workings are often performed within a [sacred circle](https://www.learnreligions.com/how-to-cast-a-circle-2562859). The use of magic is not limited only to the priesthood; anyone can [craft and perform a spell](https://www.learnreligions.com/how-to-write-your-own-spell-2562351) with a little bit of practice.

In some magical traditions, there are guidelines as to how and why magic should be performed. For instance, some Wiccans adhere to the [Law of Threefold Return, or the Rule of Three](https://www.learnreligions.com/rule-of-three-2562822), and others may follow [the Wiccan Rede](https://www.learnreligions.com/the-wiccan-rede-2562601). This is not necessarily universal, though, so if you're not part of a group that mandates these guidelines, you might opt not to follow them. Magic can be incorporated into ritual, or it can be used as a stand-alone practice.

## <><><><><><> *Mary*

## *The Spirit World is Out There*

The concept of an afterlife is typical in most branches of Wicca, and there is a general willingness to accept interaction with the spirit world. [Seances](https://www.learnreligions.com/how-to-hold-a-seance-2562865) and contact with the unknown are not uncommon among Wiccans, although not all Wiccans actively seek communication with the dead. Divination such as [tarot](https://www.learnreligions.com/tarot-basic-overview-2562790), [runes](https://www.learnreligions.com/norse-runes-basic-overview-2562815), and astrology are often used as well. Whether you're [holding a seance](https://www.learnreligions.com/how-to-hold-a-seance-2562865) or dumb supper\*, or simply trying to identify and [find your spirit guide](https://www.learnreligions.com/find-your-spirit-guide-2561603), it's commonly accepted that the dead and other entities are out there and can be reached through various methods of communication.

## \* Meal held in silence, dinner to honor the dead. “Dumb” refers to silent. See <https://www.learnreligions.com/feast-with-the-dead-2562707>

**Open Discussion**: Resulted in the following PLAN:

The following items will be sent to the Goddess/Earth Circles list:

The script of the session, which will also be posted on the UUCC website. You can link to additional resources.

*What is Wicca? A Beginners Guide to the Wiccan Religion* <https://wiccaliving.com/what-is-wicca>

Let Helen know if you would like a printed copy of these items.

The February 27 Wicca Follow-up

How does/could Wicca enhance our spiritual approach as UUs?

Interest in having sessions on Wicca, separate from the monthly Goddess/Earth Circle meetings. Mary is willing to plan these.

What specific parts of Wiccan practice would you like to explore?

A major resource for these discussions is What is Wicca? Beginners Guide to the Wiccan Religion. This is being sent electronically with this e-mail. Let Helen know if you would like to have a printed copy.