

## OPEN V. CLOSED PRACTICES

Any time an individual or group is engaging in spiritual beliefs and practices, it is important to consider if the belief and practice being engaged with is of an open tradition or a closed tradition. The same consideration applies in Nature-Centered communities when engaging in reconstructionist or devotional spiritual beliefs and practices.

A tradition is considered "open" if membership, leadership, and access to its teachings, beliefs, and practices are available to the public and require minimal investment to achieve formal membership status.

A tradition is considered "closed" if membership is restricted based on various factors including, but not limited to gender identity, culture, initiation/oath status, or official membership that requires significant investment.

## CULTURAL EXCHANGE, APPROPRIATION, AND APPRECIATION

When we consider engaging with spiritual beliefs and practices outside of our own, it is important to consider the concepts of cultural exchange, appropriation, and appreciation. Often, this distinction is not based on the intention of the individual considering engagement with the belief and practice but rather on the impact of the practitioners of that tradition.

Cultural exchange occurs through contact in the workplace, through depictions in the media, unplanned encounters in our daily life, or in intentional experiences where thoughts and ideas are freely shared between the two cultures.

Cultural appropriation occurs when an individual adopts beliefs or practices from a closed tradition without explicit permission from another culture.

Cultural appreciation occurs in the context of a respectful cross-cultural exchange. This includes explicitly learned cultural

understanding, recognition of use and context, equitably engaging with and supporting the original culture of the practice or belief, and listening to the wants and needs of the other culture.

### WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE?

Here is a resource that you may use access to learn more about The Sacred Well Congregation:

Sacred Well Congregation:  
[www.sacredwell.org](http://www.sacredwell.org)

### WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT OTHER FORMS OF PAGANISM?

For additional resources on other forms of several other Nature-Centered spiritual traditions, you may access the following resources:

The Pagan Federation:  
[www.paganfed.org/](http://www.paganfed.org/)

Cherry Hill Seminary:  
[www.cherryhillseminary.org/](http://www.cherryhillseminary.org/)

The Asatru Community (Norse/Heathen):  
[www.theasatrucommunity.com](http://www.theasatrucommunity.com)

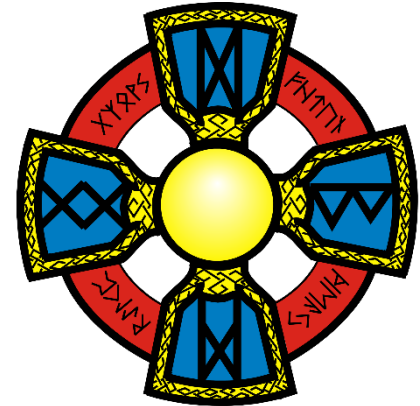
Order of Bards, Ovats, and Druids (Druid):  
[www.druidry.org](http://www.druidry.org)

Hellenion (Greek):  
[www.hellenion.org](http://www.hellenion.org)

Kemetic (Egyptian):  
[www.kemet.org](http://www.kemet.org)

# What is a Nature-Centered Fellowship?

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## WHAT IS A NATURE-CENTERED FELLOWSHIP...

A Nature-Centered fellowship is a group or setting where practitioners from various Pagan and Nature-Centered spiritual traditions come together to form a larger, inclusive community. This inclusive community prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, sex, marital status, national origin, mental or physical disability, political belief or affiliation, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression of any other class of individual protected from discrimination under state or federal law. This approach to inclusive community is in line with the third of our five tenets, which states: "We affirm as inalienable the Right of every individual 'either alone, or in community with others, in practice or in private, to manifest her or her religion or beliefs in teaching, practice, worship and observation.' (Article 18, Universal Declaration of Human Rights). We recognize the responsibility of every individual for his or her own spiritual development and transformation, and that every individual is his or her own ultimate authority in all matters of spiritual and religion." Additionally, this approach does not limit participation to any specific tradition. All are welcome, so long as they enter into the space and community in a way that is both respectful and open-minded to others and other spiritual traditions. Often these Pagan and Nature-Centered spiritual traditions are categorized in one of two ways—devotional polytheism and reconstructionism.

**DEVOTIONAL POLYTHEISM:** Devotional Polytheism is a category of practice in today's modern Pagan landscape. Devotional Polytheism is defined as the culmination of drawing together devotion and polytheism to worship more than one aspect of the Divine. This approach guides how some individual spiritual practitioners establish and maintain their relationship with one or more aspect of the Divine.

**RECONSTRUCTIONISM:** Reconstructionism is another category of practice in today's modern Pagan landscape. This practice is more of a philosophy that attempts to re-establish historical beliefs, practices, and rituals through research and rediscovery. Most commonly, the below practices (which commonly participate in the Open Circles of Sacred Well Congregation) participate in this philosophy.

**ASATRU:** Asatru is also known as Norse Paganism or Heathenry. This spiritual tradition is rooted in Norse, or Northern European, culture and history. Practiced mainly in Scandinavia, England, Germany, France, and Iceland around the 7<sup>th</sup> century. It is believed that these beliefs and practices are the closest to the indigenous beliefs and practices of that time. In modern society, many Norse symbols have been corrupted and adopted by white supremacist organizations. However, most practitioners stand against discrimination and white supremacy.

**DRUIDRY:** Druidry is also referred to in many circles as Celtic Paganism. These beliefs and practices are rooted in what is known through historical Roman accounts and documentation and mythologies of the British Isles from approximately 2,500 years ago. Druidry is viewed by its practitioners as a living tradition that seeks to draw on recent history to address modern contexts and issues while drawing on the interconnected relationship between the individual (self) and others (people, animals, world, and the Divine).

**HELLENISTIC PAGANISM:** Hellenistic Paganism is also known as Hellenismos, Dodekatheism, or the Ethnic Peoples' of Greece by its practitioners and is rooted in Greek culture and history. It is believed that these beliefs and practices are revivals of and the closest to the indigenous beliefs and practices of that culture at that time.

**KEMETIC PAGANISM:** Kemetic Paganism is a set of spiritual beliefs and practices associated with ancient Egypt. These beliefs and practices are rooted in historical documentation of ancient Egyptian cosmology, religion, and rituals which provide a meaningful framework for personal practice.

**KITCHEN/HEDGE WITCHERY:** Kitchen/Hedge Witchery is commonly an eclectic, solitary pagan, or Nature-Centered, spiritual tradition that emphasizes nature and includes a significant focus on working with herbs.

**RELIGIO ROMANA:** Religio Romana is also known as Roman Paganism. This set of modern beliefs and practices is historically and culturally rooted in an attempt to reconstruct the ancient beliefs and practices of ancient Rome. This reconstruction attempts to account for modern sensibilities and contexts as much as possible.

**SLAVIC PAGANISM:** Slavic Paganism is also known as the Slavic Native Faith. This set of beliefs and practices is rooted in the indigenous religious practices and beliefs of the Slavic peoples, which spanned from Finland to Persia, from the Atlantic Coast to Kazakhstan. These beliefs and practices often venerate their ancestors and then their deities. While the names of the various Deities differ, their titles and associations are often the same. Many of these deities have been portrayed in petroglyphic form as far back as 12,000 years ago.

**STREGHERIA:** Stregheria is a tradition within modern paganism that embraces early, pre-Christian witchcraft. This tradition venerates the presence of masculine and feminine while drawing on ancient Etruscan religion and Italian folk magic to honor the Goddess as represented by the Moon and the God represented by the Horned God.