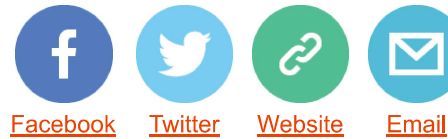


Asatru Folk Assembly's The Voice



Your input is needed to make *The Voice* a publication filled with events, photos and news. Please feel free to submit any events, news or photos to thevoice@runestone.org.

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Words from the Alsherjargothi



Life has been slightly crazy since the last issue of *The Voice*! By the time you were reading it on March 1st, I was in Iraq. I spent two weeks in and around Erbil, interviewing Kurdish elders who had fought with Peshmerga - literally, "Those who face death." Peshmerga was originally an underground movement fighting for a Kurdish state; today it is the recognized military force of the autonomous region of Kurdistan, in Iraq. They've come a long

way. I also interviewed an American who fought as an unpaid volunteer against ISIS. All in all, it was a very rewarding trip; I made some great contacts and plan on doing some writing about the situation there. Many thanks to the AFA member who gave me the contacts needed to do all this! (Quick comment - I paid my ticket to and from; no AFA member nor the organization itself were impoverished in the making of this adventure!)

What does this have to do with the AFA? More than you think. It is, first of all, an integral



interest in the struggle of ALL indigenous groups around the world - including my own European kin. By the way, the Kurds are mostly Muslims - and like others I met in Iraq, outstanding people. They are fighting ISIS every day, racking up the body count of Muslim extremists. As for the Muslims I met, yes, they do drink alcohol (for which I was quite glad). And no, they don't hate dogs. Two big points...

But enough of that. In a few days Sheila and I are flying out to Ostara in the

South, where we hope to meet many of you. I am quite excited, and have polished what I think will be an outstanding talk. Henrik Palmgren of Red Ice Radio will be a special guest. It is going to be a fine event! AFA gatherings are popping up all over the place; there was a very significant one a few days ago in Maryland, in the hof of Joe Marek and Gladshiem Kindred. Making new friends, building bridges, getting our message to folks - that's what it's about!

In the last two issues of *The Voice* I have written about AFA communities and how we need to spread them across the land. I have taken more steps in this direction, involving Folkbuilders in the plans. We've talked about this for years, and now we are moving on it in an organized way. Folkbuilder Coordinator Matt Flavel and I will give an update on this endeavor at Ostara in the South!

In the meantime...you can help us by bringing more good people into the AFA, by attending AFA gatherings and meetups near you, and by remembering us when you speak to the Holy Powers!

Stephen A. McNallen
Alsherjargothi, AFA

Welcoming Ostara at NewGrange Home





We began arriving at around 11 a.m. on Saturday, with folk trickling in from as far away as southern California and Minnesota(!), including a number of new faces and families. Introductions began, Rocco helped set me up with a recording system so my talk can be published as a podcast, and the overnight chill of NewGrange Hof began to dissipate under the rays of shining Sunna.

We blessed the lunch meal around noon, then moved to the outdoor ritual area for the opening rites. Surrounded by the rough-hewn God poles, we raised the horn to the Holy Powers and to the ancestors. One by one we introduced ourselves, made a toast, and called on the Mighty Ones to see us, and to ask that our deeds be worthy during this gathering. Josh, a young college student preparing a paper for his "Anthropology of Religion" class, arrived to take notes. (We had of course vetted him in advance.)

Later, in the hall, I spoke on Ostara from three perspectives: (1) the seasonal/natural, (2) the significance to us as individuals in terms of vitality, connection, and personal transformation, and finally, (3) from its meaning for the revival and empowerment of our Folk. Comments and conversation continued until it was time to prepare for blot.

Returning to the blotstead, we blessed the horg and called upon Ostara to be with us. The horn for Ostara was prepared in our usual fashion and offered to the Goddess of the Springtime. As a gift calls for a return, we held up a second horn to gather Ostara's blessings. I carried this horn from person to person in the circle. Sheila came behind me, presenting each man and woman with an egg as a blessing and as a promise of Becoming. Young Izzy followed Sheila, silently holding a bag of runes from which each of the folk drew a stave, committed it to memory, and returned it to the pouch.



silently into the surrounding trees for a moment of solitary contemplation. I returned the evergreen sprig to the tree from which it came, and gifted the tree with the remaining mead. We returned to the hall to feast. We basked in the warmth of kinship late into the evening.

In the morning, we came together for breakfast, continued work on a new

water line, planned improvements for the Hof needed for Midsummer, cleaned up - and returned to our homes.

Hail the Gods!

Hail the Asatru Folk Assembly!

Stephen A. McNallen

Family Safety Program: Desert

Note from the Alsherjargothi: The AFA Family Safety Program protects individual AFA members and families by (1) providing the information they need to survive emergencies and disasters of all kinds, and by (2) organizing material help in such events.

Safety/preparedness articles are provided by Jim Erickson.

The desert is well known for being really dry, hot and with very limited access to food and no water, but because of natural disasters some people will need to flee to the desert to survive. Should this be in your future, I have combined some tidbits on desert survival today.

Before just galloping off into the desert, do not fail to notify people where you are going

you will use, and who will be joining you on this trip. This is not a suicide mission; keep people informed.

Cellular phones are a necessity and they are a big help if you are in a big city but if you will need to flee to the desert, the network coverage will most likely be weak. Take a satellite phone with you also because you will need that to directly contact communication sites within the area.



"Learn a new skill every week" – Jim and Sara the Corgi

Topographical maps with aerial photography are a big help to desert travelers. You can have this by taking a GPS device with you. Satellite imagery is also one of its options which can help a lot and keep you from getting lost. Also consider loading apps on your cellular phone that can help you in your travel.

A person locator beacon is known for being used to call for help in dire situations. This small device has the capacity to send out a personal emergency signal to the rescuers nearby so they can find you easily.

Not all vehicles are fit for desert terrains. The vehicle you are using should be built for desert use and must be in top condition. You must also be a good off-road driver and make sure that you have your vehicle loaded with all of the equipment needed in case your vehicle will need a spare tire, water, oil, tools, and fuel. In case you get stranded in the desert, your vehicle can serve as your shelter as well so don't leave it anywhere in the desert and walk away.

The desert is a very hot area so make sure to bring enough water and food to sustain you even during an emergency, and no matter how hot it gets, do not remove your clothes because it will intensify the dehydration and also to keep your body covered against getting too much sun. Sunburn is painful. One gallon of water per day must be consumed when surviving in the desert.

can be found lurking about. Edible insects, reptiles and small mammals found in the desert can be captured for food.

Take all the medication you might need with you and a first aid kit.

Sand storms are common in the desert so expect this and if this occurs, cover your face to prevent the dust from entering your lungs.

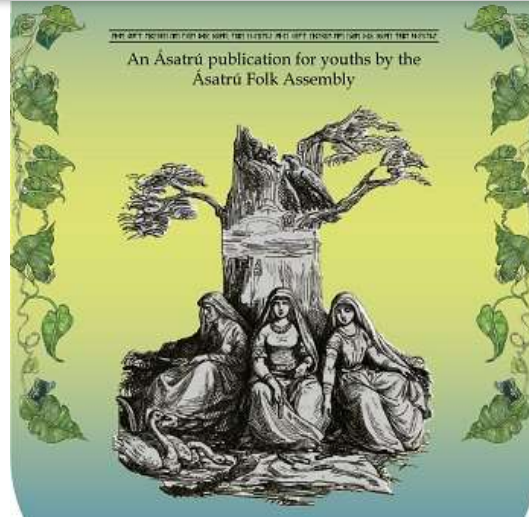
Flooding can also happen in the desert due to fast changing of the weather. Take note of the movement of the clouds and color of the sky. This can be a signal for you to take shelter in case a thunderstorm is coming.

Do not go unprepared because you never know what you might encounter in the desert.

Circle of Eir - A Call to Healing

The AFA Circle of Eir is up and working. A core group performs a monthly healing ritual calling on Eir and naming those AFA members and families in need of healing. If you would like to be in the AFA Circle of Eir Facebook group or if you would just like to submit the name of someone who needs healing, please let me know at patriciahall@runestone.org. The next healing ritual, which is jointly done by AFA members from both the States and Europe, will be performed on Thursday, April 14, at midnight EST/USA.

Runepobble



Runepebble: An AFA e-publication for Asatru families!

The next issue of *Runepebble* will be available on May 1st, and focuses on "Elves"... We'll discuss what they are, stories about them, where you might find them, and more. If you or a child you know is interested in contributing to the next issue, we are happy to accept submissions of all kinds, including artwork, stories, poetry, folktales, songs/sheet music, crafts, activities, recipes, educational articles, and more. To submit a contribution, or if you have questions about submissions, you can contact our primary editor, Rebecca, at Runepebble@Runestone.org.

Folk Services

AFA Folk Services is intended to provide modest, one-time monetary grants to AFA members in dire need of basic services. It is also to be a source for referrals and information to help members get help beyond what the AFA can directly provide. For more information, send a private message to the [Folk Services page](#) on Facebook.

Penny Pointers: Emergency Fund by Karen Carlson

You may have heard that you should have an emergency fund. So what exactly is it for? How big should it be? Where does it fit in your overall financial scheme? Where should it be?

The name implies this fund is for emergencies. But what kind of emergencies are we talking about? The biggest one for most people is unexpected loss of income. If you lose your job, or are unable to work for an extended period due to illness or injury, you still need to pay your bills. There could be other major, unexpected financial crises e.g., major medical bills, or a total breakdown of your car, or a once-in-a-century natural disaster that inflicts major damage on your house. Hopefully you have insurance to cover the brunt of these situations, but if it doesn't come through promptly or doesn't pay as much as you would have hoped, you don't want to have to go into expensive debt to get through.

There are a whole raft of things the emergency fund is not for: It is not for saving up for a new car, or furniture, or home improvements. It is not for reasonably foreseeable home maintenance, even major items roofs just do need to be replaced every so many years. We talk about saving for these kinds of things in another article.

The rule of thumb as to size of an emergency fund is 3 to 6 months' living expenses. Take into consideration the security of your income based, for example, on your type of work, the state of the economy in your locale, and number of wage-earners in your household. If you are in a particularly volatile career, you may need more than 6 months' worth. Living expenses don't need to include frills, but do include all your regular bills (mortgage or rent, utilities, insurance payments) and typical expenses for food, clothing, medical expenses, transportation, etc.

If you are just entering your earning years e.g., a young person at a first job it may take a little while to build up this reserve. It should be a high priority, but not necessarily take precedence over all other savings. You should also start saving for retirement as early as possible. In particular, if your employer offers any kind of matching funds on 401k contributions, try to contribute at least as much as they will match that's free money!

you invest it? In a bank account. Yes, it may be paying no interest. But the idea is that you have access to the money on very short notice, no matter what the stock market, bond market, or anything else is doing. You could consider a certificate of deposit (CD) if you are clear as to what the early withdrawal penalties are and that they will amount at most to a very small percentage of your investment. (A typically penalty might be something like 6 monthsâ€™ worth of interest, which will be deducted from the principal if you have not yet accrued that much interest.) Forget about stocks, bonds, mutual funds, etc. Even â€œconservativeâ€ mutual funds can be volatile and lose significant value over any given period. Remember the Great Recession? If you lost your job in that, and your emergency fund was tied up in an index fund that just plummeted, you could have lost a large portion of your emergency fund just when you needed it.

Having a healthy emergency fund can keep you out of real trouble â€” like a cycle of expensive debt that becomes ever harder to dig out of â€” if misfortune strikes.

Konservative Karen

Alaska Ostara
from Eric Whisman, Apprentice Folkbuilder





The morning of the equinox came with a surprise to the Alaskan AFA members with white fluffy stuff falling from the sky and about 4 inches of fresh snow on the ground. Regardless of winter's last stand, the folk from all over Alaska braved the dangers of snow-covered icy roads and blizzard-like conditions (a family even traveling over 200 miles in a minivan!) to arrive at the Bear Den in Palmer to welcome Ostara and celebrate the coming of spring.

As the hour of the equinox drew near, the snow was still heavily falling, but with spirits undeterred two of ours went down to light the ritual fire, and managed to do so with two sticks, a little tinder and much skill and a little luck. No easy feat to be sure!

The equinoctial blot was performed by our own Steven Morrell, who offered up a powerful invocation to Ostara, welcoming her to the coming year and asking her blessing of vitality and new life and passion on those gathered there. In the spirit of new life and the coming new year, a new member who has heard the call was asked to step forward and take his Affirmation to Der Volkstamm auf dem Nordiliche Bar, and begin his journey towards becoming an oathed member of our great tribe. This was a powerful moment for those oathed members of the tribe as well, as we also renewed our vows to each other, our tribe and our folk, as well as welcoming a new prospect to the fold.

Following the equinoctial blot, those gathered journeyed inside and enjoyed another glorious feast prepared by Channcie Bean. The rest of the night consisted of merriment and catching up between various members, all to the background of young children giggling and playing.

The following morning was met with the scent of coffee in the air and the voices of fellow

tangibly felt; in a stark contrast to the previous day, the sky was clear and blue, and Sunna's rays could be felt. Spring had won out over winter at last.

With the sounds of chirping birds in the background, the full gathered folk - men, women, and children - stood around the blot fire and began a galder of Berkano, and Steven Morrell led blot once more to Ostara, thanking her for her presence, and celebrating her victory over winter, asking her blessing on the full folk gathered there.

Blot was followed by a traditional Eostre egg hunt for the children and the decorating of a young birch tree with colorful eggs.

And once more, a great feast prepared by the women of Alaska was served and everyone left with bellies full of food and mead.

The concluding sumbel was as powerful as the blot that had preceded it, with heartfelt toasts to friends and ancestors, and a recitation of a poem composed by one of our members.

With bellies full of food and mead, a mind sharpened by the deep discussions of the weekend, and a spirit empowered by blot and sumbel, the folk said their goodbyes to each other, optimistic about the coming spring and summer, and eager to see each other again.

Northern Plains Update
from Blaine Qualls, Northern Plains Folkbuilder

Ostara in the Dakotas





Ostara here in the Dakotas was celebrated in grand fashion. Asatru folk from Minnesota and both Dakotas joined together for a weekend of celebration and enjoyment. Friday saw the people begin to arrive and get settled in. Old friends were heartily greeted and the horn passed long into the night. With Sunna's dawning Saturday we began an eventful day with a hearty breakfast made by one of our own, Shannon Liebold. Shortly thereafter we attended a brief presentation on Asatru put on by Brian Hemphill, educational and entertaining all in one shot. After that we began to gather for our Ostara blot; this was to be

With the ritual over we proceeded to our feast, and a feast it was ... ham, potatoes, stuffing, sauerkraut, chili, pies, and homemade bread ... pretty sure I gained at least 5 pounds that afternoon. With our bodies nourished it was time for our auction, time to help the AFA and fund our next event. Our auction netted the AFA about \$300 and a similar amount for our future gatherings. People were very generous and we had some very unique auction items, everything from a coyote bone rune set to a hand drawn picture of Odin and lots more besides. As the night wore on it was time for our sumbel. Three times the horn went round, three times people spoke their hearts and shared a part of themselves. Afterwards we were treated to several traditional songs sung by a kindred friend and also one sung by a newcomer; it is always something to sit in a circle with true men and women, a horn circling, fire roaring, and listening to olden style songs. I am transported back in time a thousand years it seems ...

Sunday saw some of us up before the sun. Taking a page out of Brad's book I decided to hold an introductory galder presentation. I was impressed to see so many faces so early. We all laughed a bit, learned a bit, and I hope came away with a new-found understanding of the runes and their applications. Breakfast followed as more people began to wander in. Then it was time for a Wayfarer blot to send everyone off. Hail the Folk!

Ostara in Minnesota



Ostara was celebrated by several of our members outside of the Twin Cities in Minnesota. These brave stalwarts have been trying to put together something for quite some time, but

Hopefully this becomes a regular occurrence there in Minnesota. I raise a horn to both Jason Gallagher and Wyn Alexander, two members who, with perseverance and steadfastness, made this happen. Hail to you both!

Hail the Gods! Hail the AFA!

News from the Midwest from Patricia Hall, Folkbuilder

REGIONAL CONFERENCE CALL

Our next Midwest conference call will be at 8:30 p.m. EDT/7:30 p.m. CDT on Thursday, April 21. I look forward to hearing you there! The call number is 641-715-3580: Participant Code is: 128-737 Call is optional.

AFA Midwest has its own FaceBook group! The FaceBook link is <https://www.facebook.com/groups/871639299583668/> Please request an add! This is for AFA members only. It will be a place to post conference call info, gatherings, and other goings on in the AFA as well as for discussion. Also if you have not friended me on Facebook, please feel free to do so. My Facebook link is <https://www.facebook.com/patricia.l.hall.92>

JOINT NORTHEAST/UPPER SOUTH OSTARA in Columbia Maryland â€” held March 19

On Saturday, March 19, your AFA Folkbuilders for the Northeast (Clifford Erickson, Patricia Hall) and the Upper South (Cody Mower) hosted an Ostara celebration at Gladsheim Hof in Columbia, Maryland.

We had folks from many different regional groups including almost a dozen children and teenagers. Represented were the Irminfolk Odinist Community, Hearthstone Theod, Svinfylkin Tribe, the Wissahickon Tru Folk, and Gladsheim Kindred as well as many



and attended our Ostara. We are hoping to see him again in late summer when he once again returns to the USA!

Our ritual to celebrate the dawning of Spring was led by three of the AFA clergy, Patricia Hall, Matt Flavel, and Joe Bloch.



The ritual began in the Hof itself and ended with offerings outside. The ritual was participative with the folk doing drumming and also joining the clergy in galder work welcoming the fertility of the season. As part of the ritual, we did an individual rune pull, with Patricia later doing the count and tally for the energy of the group during the coming season. The group rune energy was Fehu, a rune of physical wealth (gold, cattle) and possessions and also a rune of

circulating energies because by sharing our energies we reap even more. We also included a continental Germanic practice of the egg toss as part of the outside ritual closing. Young Billy McNamara of Hearthstone Theod was chosen to toss an egg high into the air. The height reached gauged the height of our crops and fortunes in the coming fertile and harvest seasons. Billy made a high toss and we were all thrilled by the promise of a good year! And a special HAIL! to Cameron Mower, Cody™'s son, who participated in his first large group blot and received his first hammer.



Our feast consisted of baked ham, roasted pork, potatoes, carrots, onions, salads and other foods so that both carnivore and vegetarian were well fed. A special thanks to Clifford Erickson who was the chief cook and produced one of the most succulent pork roasts I think many of us had ever had! This communal meal was especially bonding and we embraced new friends and old. Our raffle was a great success, raising several hundred dollars for NewGrange Hof. Joe Marek, Gothi of Gladshiem Hof, was a worthy assistant to Patricia in the grand raffle.





we were graced by the presence of Steven Piparskeggr Robinson. Also known as Pip, he gifted us with an original song each round. We were moved by his words and thrilled that, after a year of fighting illness, he came out to this gathering in strength and force. HAIL PIP!

Throughout the day from the opening remarks to the closing toasts, our host Joe Marek, founder and Gothi of Gladsheim Hof, was with us as one of us. He and AFA member Rick Ostrander, who is caretaker at the Hof, were indispensable in making this a smooth, welcoming, and memorable event. And we thank them. Hail Ostara! Hail the AFA!

News from the Northeast from Clifford Erickson, Folkbuilder

MONTHLY CONFERENCE CALL

Patricia Hall and Clifford Erickson (me), the AFA's Northeast Region Folkbuilders, host a monthly conference call open to all members to discuss news and updates for the Northeast Region. Our next Northeast conference call will be at 8:00 p.m. EDT on Monday, April 25, 2016. We look forward to hearing you there! Dial-in Number: (641) 715-3580
Access Code: 174-424

IRMINFOLK ODINIST COMMUNITY



On March 26th, the Irminfolk held their Ostara celebration in New York. We were blessed with beautiful weather, delicious food and wonderful company. The children painted wooden eggs and celebrated the birthday of the youngest Irmin child. The adults participated in a traditional egg decorating workshop using a technique known as psanky. We held a beautiful ritual and ended the night with a moving sumbel. We thank all of our family and friends who joined us in celebrating the beginning of spring.



The Irminfolk will be holding their 6th annual Folkish Summer Hallowing on August 18-21st in Milford PA. We are looking forward to honoring the Gods and our ancestors with our

Hail the Gods! Hail the Folk!

SKYLANDS ASATRU FELLOWSHIP

Skylands Asatru Fellowship, based in northern New Jersey, is pleased to announce that April is one of our most active months to date.

Sunday, April 3, 6:30: Asatru 101: The God Odin (Stanhope, NJ)

Thursday, April 7, 7:00: New Moon Offering (Stanhope, NJ)

Sunday, April 17, 6:30: Asatru 101: The God Thor

Saturday, April 23, 1:00: Sumarmal Celebration

In addition, we will be presenting an ecstatic dance ritual at the Striking Ceremony celebration held by the Church of Balder Rising on April 30 (Walpurgisnacht).

And we're also very pleased to announce that our tribal flags have come in! Behold our latest expression of tribal pride:



South Carolina News
from M. Annette Baum



Hirschwald had a wonderful Ostarra, which included a traditional ritual, the study of two key runes, music by Hagalaz' Runedance ("The Dawning"), and egg tossing. Delicious Monks Mead was served, made by Atlanta's first meadery.

Hearty Hail to All!
M. Annette Baum, M.A.
Hirschwald
Aiken, SC

Sandhills Kindred Pubmoot
from Paul Hester



On February 27th the Sandhills Kindred of North Carolina held a regional pubmoot. We spent hours talking with the AFA regional folkbuilder about networking opportunities and upcoming activities. Our goal is to build frith with others in our region as we become a catalyst for awakening our folk. We'd like to send out a special thanks to Cody Mower and his wonderful family for making the trip. HAIL THE AFA!

NewGrange Walpurgisnacht / May Eve

Upcoming at Newgrange Hall, Brownsville, CA: Walpurgisnacht/May Eve, April 30 - May 1

Join us for a full day, beginning Saturday about 11, with an early feast at 5 p.m. We'll have

& Haypenny -- Midsummer 2014) will play original and traditional tunes on the hurdy-gurdy, banjo, whistle, mandola, bodhran, and string bass. Late that night, experience the mysteries of the Germanic dark-goddess - Walpurg, as Steve gives blot by firelight. For those who stay over, we'll plan a grand breakfast and tackle some chores around the hof before leaving late morning. Donation requested: \$10 - \$20, if possible.

Jim Erickson is calling for workers to come in on Friday, the 29th, to help him with some of the bigger hof projects. If you can help, contact Jim at papajbear@hotmail.com. Marc MacLeod is also planning on a work weekend between now and Midsummer - dates to follow. Stay in touch with Marc about this.

Shop and Help the AFA

RUNESTONE GIFTS: AFA Member Discount

AFA members save 5% on any order at checkout. Use promo code PXLKVV8 at <http://www.runestonegifts.com/>.

SHOP AMAZON and SUPPORT THE AFA

Support the AFA by shopping Amazon through our Amazon affiliate link! The AFA gets a small percentage of every Amazon sale made by starting your search from [this link](#). Bookmark the link for future shopping!

Upcoming Events for 2016

Ostara in the South, Fortsen 4-H Center, Hampton, GA, April 1-3

Event page <https://www.facebook.com/events/1539527876358606/>

Freyfaxi in the Northwest - late summer - details to come!

Harvest Festival at Camp Courage, Maple Lake, MN, Labor Day weekend, September 3-5 - our first major gathering in the Midwest!

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