

ADF Structure, Customs, and Policy

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Question #1: Explain why public, inclusive ritual is important to ADF. (200 words min.)

The ADF Constitution says in Article 1, no. 2:

Since one of the primary duties of the ancient Druids was to lead their tribes in magical and religious activities, ADF advocates and practices, as an integral part of our faith, open, inclusionary, and public ceremonies to worship the Earth Mother and the Old Gods and Goddesses, rites of passage to mark the cycles of our lives, and magical rituals to accomplish our other goals in an honest and ethical manner. (ADF Constitution)

Isaac Bonewits wrote that the primary duties of the Paleopagan Druids were threefold, to transmit knowledge across generations, to maintain the cosmic order through the correct performance of the sacrifices, and to guide their tribes towards physical and spiritual wholeness. (Bonewits, Law, Policy, Tradition, and Custom within ADF)

Unlike most of the Neopagan groups out there, ADF is not a collection of small, secretive magical groups, but rather is a real, public religion. Many times, ADF Groves are the only open groups, with open and inclusive rituals, available in a given area. ('Commonly Asked Questions' in the 'Grove Organizers Handbook') For folks who can't get into a local, closed coven, this is heaven-sent, as well as a wonderful opportunity for ADF to grow and thrive.

In Issac Bonewits' article, 'The Vision of ADF', he lays out what he believes ADF should be and why. As founder of our religion, he created a vision that we try to follow to this day. He assumes that ADF will one day become a mainstream religion, with hundreds of thousands of members. He points out that membership in the Neopagan community is growing very quickly, and,

All these Neopagans are going to need publically accessible worship, teaching, counseling, and healing. Within thirty years we expect to see indoor temples and/or sacred groves throughout North America and Europe.... (Bonewits, The Vision of ADF)

To support this vision, The ADF Subgroup Charter Manual, under Grove activities, mentions 'Public rituals on the High Days defined in the ADF Constitution.' In addition to this, The Council of Senior Druids Bylaws states that both Provisionally and Fully Chartered Groves must hold, at a minimum, eight open to the public ADF rites per year, on dates relevant to the cultural focus of the Grove, on or near the dates of the High Days listed in the ADF bylaws.

Question #2: Describe the duties and function of clergy in ADF. (100 words min.)

The Mission Statement of the Clergy Council Bylaws is primarily about the mission of that council, but from it can be gleaned the role of our clergy. Clergy help to formulate and articulate the theology and liturgy of ADF and act as spiritual advisors to the membership. They should be trained in ceremony and have various 'ministries' (such as to prisoners, children, etc.). (Clergy Council Bylaws).

Our clergy are primarily ritual specialists, folks who can create and perform effective, moving and spiritual rituals for the people. The clergy do not have a monopoly on access to the three Kindreds or other aspects of the divine, but rather have the ability to 'lead' those who have yet to develop those skills. This is especially important for large groups. In Grove settings, it is

inevitable that our clergy will be called upon to actively listen to members' problems, but the clergy are not counselors, per se. While some may get counseling degrees, it is not expected that most clergy will.

Question #3: Explain why ADF has an Indo-European focus, and why we use the term "Druid" in our name. (200 words min.)

When Isaac Bonewits founded ADF, he proclaimed that he had a new vision for Druidry, thanks to contributions from scholars such as Dumézil, Eliade, Ross, Pigget and others, who gave us real scholarship that we could draw upon, freeing us from the often inaccurate traditions of the Mesodruids and others in the past. Isaac said,

...and that's what I have in mind -- a brand new form of Druidism, not just Pan-Celtic, but Pan-European. (By this latter term, I mean to include any of the European branches of the Indo-European culture and language tree -- Celtic, Germanic, Slavic, Baltic, even the pre-Classical Greek & Roman.) Paradoxically, this would resemble the original Paleopagan Druidism far more than any efforts of the last thousand years. It would be based on the best scholarly research available, combined with what has been learned (about art, psychology, small group politics and economics) through the theory and practice of modern Neopaganism, and my own knowledge of the polytheological and practical details of magical and religious phenomena. (Bonewits, 'The Beginning of Ar nDriaocht Fein')

So from the beginning, Isaac had seen beyond the hearth culture of Ireland and saw fit to embrace the rest of the Indo-European spectrum (at least in Europe. The addition of the eastern strains of the Indo-Europeans would come later).

I believe that we continue to use the word 'Druid' in our name because while it is somewhat inaccurate (since we embrace the entire ancient IE spectrum), it is still a major part of our origins. Around the time that ADF was first founded, Neopaganism had a strong and growing strain of Celtic interest in it, and everyone assumed that we'd learn lots more about the ancient Celts over time, through scholarship. But there isn't that much information out there, and we don't know enough about the Celtic religions to be able to create a new one, so we've had to branch out using comparative mythology and religion to succeed. To drop 'druid' from our name or our consciousness now would be a major change, and while this may yet happen in the future, I doubt that our current membership would accept it. The word is enshrined in the ADF Constitution, and it could only be removed by a ¾ majority of votes cast by our members.

We'd also have to start over, as it were, in our public relations within the Neopagan (and mundane) world, possibly losing much of the ground we've gained over the years as a result.

Question #4: Describe the Guilds, SIGs, and Kins of ADF in general, their function within the organization, and the goal of the Guild, SIG and Kin systems. (150 words min. for each type of subgroup)

The ADF Constitution states in its first paragraph the goals of our church,

As we define it, Neopagan Druidism is a polytheistic, non-dualist, non-sexist, non-racist, scientific, holistic, and ecologically oriented faith. We are dedicated to the preservation of our Holy Mother Earth, the full achievement of human potential, the revival of the worship of the Old Gods in a modern context, and the creation of a world of peace, love, freedom, health, and prosperity for all intelligent beings.

And to achieve these goals, the Constitution continues to say, under Purposes, no. 1,

ADF advocates and practices, as an integral part of our faith, many sciences, arts, and disciplines, both mainstream and alternative, within a non-dogmatic, pluralistic context, in order to change ourselves, each other, and the world around us.

The Guilds, SIGs (Special Interest Groups) and Kins exist to further the practices of the above, to greater or lesser degrees.

Guilds

In the Subgroup Charter Manual, the purpose of the guilds is listed as 'Study, learning, and training in a particular focus area'. And to accomplish this, the Guilds are assigned the tasks of creating and administering study programs in their focus areas. A Preceptor is elected by each Guild to do this (usually in cooperation with the Guild Chief), though they occasionally delegate out specific duties to other people.

Examples of this would be the existing eleven guilds in ADF (though only seven of them have study programs up and running – the Bardic, Brewers, Liturgists, Magicians, Naturalists, Scholars and Warrior Guilds). The programs range from study and practice to creation and performance, depending on the guild. While some guilds never seem to be able to get a program together, at least one of the guilds, the Dance Guild, is close to submitting their new Study Program to the Council of Lore.

Kins

The Subgroup Charter Manual gives the purpose of the Kins as to 'Support ADF members worshipping in a particular Indo-European hearth culture context.' To accomplish this, the Kins must work to create culturally specific spiritual traditions within ADF (in other words, to figure out how the Gaels, or Norse, or Romans, etc., would worship in an ADF context), to network between folks in the same hearth culture, and to assist the Guilds in their educational missions.

Currently we have seven Kins: one supporting the Eastern IE traditions, as well as others such as the Norse, Welsh, Hellenic, Slavic, Roman and Gaelic hearth cultures. Many have been quite active in researching ritual phrases in the language of their culture, and in coming up with Deity lists and descriptions, mythology, resource lists, and even how each hearth culture fits into ADF ritual and cosmology. This certainly is an aid to anyone needing hearth culture information for any of the Guild study programs, as well as our Groves, Protogroves and solitaries.

Networking is accomplished through the Kin e-mail lists, and some of these discussions can be quite lively.

SIGs

The Subgroup Charter Manual describes the SIGs (Special Interest Groups) as existing to 'Support ADF members regarding an interest not otherwise in the scope of an existing subgroup'. This is a pretty broad mission, and the activities of a SIG are limited to this support and to facilitating the networking of the members of the SIG.

There are lots of folks out there with common interests that don't necessarily include a need for study programs or hearth culture spiritual traditions.

ADF currently has 10 SIGs supporting groups interested in Ancient Iberia; the Goddess Morrigan; children's education and parenting; the ADF gay, lesbian and transsexual community; folks with disabilities and mental health issues; the possibility of an American hearth culture; ADF's solitaries; folks interested in ecstatic trance; outreach to our members in the military; and technopagans. Some of these groups could one day become Kins or Guilds in their own right,

once they have attracted enough members and come up with plans for study programs, etc. But many of them will stay as special interest groups, because here they fit in best with ADF's goals.

Question #5: Describe ADF's official ceremonial calendar, and discuss why it was designed in this way. (200 words min.)

When ADF was founded, it was clear that we would be abandoning many of the practices of the other Neopagan groups of the time, and it seemed important that we still have something in common with those others. And since most new ADF members at that time came out of other traditions, and since most of the folks who would be coming to ADF rites were also familiar with those traditions, it was decided to keep the usual Neopagan 8 High Days for ADF ritual.

These High Days (or seasonal holy days) are the two solstices, the two equinoxes, and the dates roughly half way in between them (which correspond to the Irish festivals as described in the lore) and originally they kept the same names as used by the other Neopagan groups (in fact, there are still ADF groves that use all those names). In time, the general names for the solstices and equinoxes were dropped but the Irish names were retained for the other four in general usage. In the great Bylaw rewrite of 2006, however, a new ADF Constitution was created, and the High Days were officially given generic names (assuming that the various hearth cultures would give each High Day an appropriate name in their hearth culture language).

Currently, as seen in the ADF Constitution, the High Days are as follows. I have added in the old, official ADF name (or the current Neopagan name) of each holiday in parantheses:

1. Cross-Quarter = November 1st (old Samhain)
2. Solstice = December 21st (Neopagan Yule)
3. Cross-Quarter = February 1st (old Imbolc)
4. Equinox = March 21st (Neopagan Ostara)
5. Cross-Quarter = May 1st (old Beltane)
6. Solstice = June 21st (Neopagan Litha)
7. Cross-Quarter = August 1st (old Lughnasadh)
8. Equinox = September 21st (Neopagan Mabon)

The Constitution also states that, 'For ceremonial purposes, local congregations shall celebrate each of the eight High Days within one week prior to or after the aforementioned dates, or at some other time determined by Board-established policy.' Most groves observe this rule, though there can be friction between some folks of a more reconstructionist bent who would prefer dates closer to attested ancient festivals.

Question #6: Compare Isaac's original "Law, Policy, Tradition, and Customs in ADF" article with how you see ADF today. Describe what is still true and what is no longer accurate in that document. (300 words min.)

In general, much of what Isaac proposed in this document is still accurate. The section on Laws lists human sacrifice as forbidden, as well as the commission of felonies. Though it's interesting to see his distinction of "crimes-with-victims" as being beyond the pale – one can only assume that he was leaving out crimes without victims, such as (then outlawed) homosexual behavior and (still outlawed) recreational drug use.

Discrimination based upon race, color, national origin, language, gender, disability, affectional/sexual preferences or creed is forbidden, except in the case of ordinations, where he says membership in an inimical creed would be grounds for refusal. This is still true, but the ADF Constitution has added membership to the Board of Directors (BOD) and any position of responsibility and trust (as defined by the BOD) to this list. Isaac also lists swastikas and other hate symbols (including white robes with pointed hoods that cover the face) as forbidden, along

with membership in hate groups as grounds for expulsion. He also bans illegal drugs from ADF ceremonies and proscribes the distribution of alcohol, tobacco and drugs to minors (though they may sip the Waters of Life). All of this is basically true today.

Under Policies, Isaac states that official ADF ceremonies are either public or semi-public and open to participation by well-behaved visitors. Now days, however, many Groves hold an occasional event open only to Grove members, which is alright as long as the eight High Days are open to all. Ordinations may have some private sections as long as the end is public, and animal sacrifice is forbidden in all official ADF rites. All this is still true. He does mention that individuals may do self-bleeding rites for some purposes but only if symbolic drops are spilled, and this may not be done in official ADF rites. This is still true, if controversial. I, myself, cast a few drops of blood in my (private) Dedicant self-initiation rite.

The Main Traditions of ADF Isaac mentions include the use of the ADF logo and sigil. The logo is certainly used all over the place, but there is resistance in some quarters to the sigil, and while it is on an official ADF t-shirt, it isn't as common as it could be.

He lists our "Standard Liturgical Outline" which corresponds to the current Core Order of Ritual as something critical to be observed (though it is expected to evolve over time, which it has). This is still true. All the rest of the items in this section are still true, though under the overall system of Circles and Tracks (for the study program for clergy), things have changed quite a bit. At one time there was a list of absolute requirements for clergy (such as being Pagan, getting rid of addictions, etc.) and these appear to no longer be observed. I think it would be a good idea for the Clergy Council to once again draw up a list of things required by our clergy.

The section on the Customs of ADF is also pretty much current, except for the part about the all night vigil as part of self-dedications and initiations. While I'm sure some folks do these vigils, I suspect that most do not. The new Initiates' Program may bring these back, however.

Question #7: Describe ADF's utilization of Dumézil's "tripartition" and its effect on ADF's structure, study programs, and the religion of ADF members in general. (200 words min.)

Dumézil postulated that ancient Indo-European society (and sometimes even that of the Otherworlds) was divided into three main functions, that of the magico-religious functionaries, the martial sorts, and those who produce for the whole. The easiest way of understanding this is to see the three functions as the priests, the warriors and the farmers/traders.

Under the first function we have the priests who create and lead the rites, the Seers who interpret the omens, the magicians who work the magic of the rite (though these are often the priests in practice) and the Bards who bring music and poetry in praise of the Kindreds. All four of these groups have their own guilds in ADF.

The second function is represented by the Warriors Guild. These folks study and practice martial arts, physical fitness and basic emergency skills, such as first-aid. Some have argued that only first function folks should participate actively in our rites, but a growing number of groves are including warriors for the purposes of treating with the Outdwellers or the calling of guardian spirits, blurring the lines between functions here.

The remainder of the Guilds fall under the third function (Artisans, Brewers, Dancers, Healers, Naturalists and Scholars).

But other than ritual roles and the Guilds, the three functions are not all that apparent in ADF. In ancient times, the functions denoted the hierarchy of society, with some (first function) being

'better' and more powerful than those below them. Luckily, in ADF, we managed to not fall into that trap.

Question #8: Explain the difference between "orthopraxy" religions and "orthodoxy". Where do you feel ADF falls? (200 words min.)

The word, orthopraxy, means 'right practice' while 'orthodoxy' means 'right belief'. An orthodox religion, like Christianity or the other Abrahamic traditions, requires its adherents to share a common belief system, with statements of belief and standardized creeds that all profess to follow. Orthopraxic religions, on the other hand, such as those of the ancient polytheistic world, rather require that their adherents perform regular rituals in certain, prescribed ways. In these religions, while there is undoubtedly some commonality of belief, it's not the beliefs that count so much. But make a mistake in the ritual and the priest will be forced to either do it over again or at least make a rite or practice of expiation.

There are elements of orthopraxy and orthodoxy in all religions in the world today. The names of some Protestant groups, such as the Methodists, hint at differences in practice that caused schisms. Likewise in the Neopagan world, you hear of disputes between polytheists and those who 'believe' in duotheistic, monistic or other systems.

All these religions (and ADF is included here) fall somewhere along a scale with orthodoxy at one end and orthopraxy at the other. I would put ADF much closer to orthopraxy than orthodoxy because of our insistence on groups adhering to the Core Order of Ritual for public High Day rites, while at the same time allowing our members to do or believe as they please in their personal work. This stance can cause tension, but that's to be expected, and most of our schisms have occurred based on differences in practice (Keltria left ADF because we allowed non-Celts into the fold, for instance) rather than in belief.

Question #9: Describe why we make Praise Offerings, how they are made, when they are made, and who they are made to. Be sure to describe this in both solitary practice and in two or more Groves' practices. (300 words min.)

In the 'ADF Core Order of Ritual', item number 8., 'Key Offerings', it says that these offerings 'will commonly include' praise offerings. (ADF Core Order of Ritual) The explanation given in the document 'Core Order of Ritual Versus As Practiced' breaks up the Key Offerings section into two parts, 'Honoring the Deities of the Rite', and 'Personal Offerings'. It is under the latter that we find 'Praise Offerings: Performances by the folk in honor of the Powers'. (Core Order of Ritual Versus as Practiced)

In the early days of ADF, Praise Offerings were the most common form of sacrifice in our rites. Later the practice was extended to include physical offerings, but the praise offerings continued.

We make praise offerings so that the folks attending a rite may make sacrifice to the Kindreds in addition to the group sacrifices made by the ritual celebrants. These sacrifices are what we give to the Kindreds in hopes that they will give us blessings in return. *Do ut des* (I give that you may give) and reciprocity are the guiding ideas here.

Generally, praise offerings are made prior to the Prayer of Sacrifice. They may be poems, songs, chants, dance performances, or anything creative that can be given to the Kindreds. In some Groves, instead of artistic performances, members may get up and speak about their lives as they make a physical offering (though this only works well in small groups, in my opinion).

Some solitaries offer praise offerings in all their rites, and some don't offer them at all (or rarely). But it's in group practice where they come to the fore. Perhaps that's due to the performance aspect where the sacrificers can make their offerings in public.

Praise offerings may be made to any Spirit (Ancestor, Spirit of the Land, or Deity), but some Groves restrict them to the Deities of the Occasion (DotO) at High Days.

Currently, groves differ over where praise offerings should take place in a High Day rite. Some Groves, such as Stonecreed Grove, insist that praise offerings only be given to the specially invited deities of that rite, the Deities of the Occasion. They allow offerings to other Spirits at special blessing rites held on other days.

Other Groves, such as Awen's Breath Grove, allow participants to do praise offerings to any Spirit, and not just the DotO's on High Days. They claim that this is a service needed in their communities, and since they can't hold blessing rites, this is something they must allow.

Sonoran Sunrise Grove compromises by allowing folks to make praise offerings to any Spirit after the Kindred Offering section of the rite, but restricts them to the DotO's in another round of praise offerings after the Key Offerings section. They strongly recommend that offerings go to the DotO's, and since they have weekly blessing rites where anyone may offer to any Spirit, more folks are only offering to the DotO's at High Days.

Question #10: Describe ADF's administrative structure. (150 words min.)

The Board of Directors (BOD - also called the Mother Grove) is the governing body of ADF and is in charge of the general management of our church and is the supreme authority in the corporation and may overrule the decisions, policies and practices of all other groups in ADF. (ADF Bylaws, Article 5)

Members of the BOD include those elected directly by the membership, such as the Archdruid (AD - the President of the corporation), the Vice Archdruid (VAD - the Vice President of the corporation), the Secretary, the Members Advocate (who has no vote on the BOD), and three Non-Officer Directors (NOD). The ADF Treasurer is appointed by the BOD. Also on the BOD are the Chief of the Council of Regional Druids and the Chief of the Council of Senior Druids.

The BOD also has an Executive Committee (consisting of the Archdruid, Vice Archdruid and Secretary) which handles the day-to-day running of the BOD (though they may not amend the ADF Bylaws).

The BOD also appoints an Administrator who handles day-to-day affairs (including membership provision) and has an Administrative Committee to aid in fulfilling his/her duties.

The BOD also appoints the ADF Preceptor who oversees the creation and administration of ADF Study Programs, including the Dedicant Path. (ADF Bylaws, Articles 5, 6 & 7)

Various subgroups also exist below the level of the BOD. They are Guilds, Kins, Special Interest Groups (SIGs), Councils, Committees, and local Groves and Protogroves. For descriptions of the Guilds, Kins and SIGs, see question #4 above.

The Councils include the Clergy Council, which is chaired by the Archdruid and which is composed of the AD, former AD's who remain current ADF members, the VAD, and all Ordained and Dedicant ADF Clergy.

The Council of Lore is chaired by the ADF Preceptor and is composed of the Chiefs and Preceptors of the various Guilds. This council governs all the Guilds, Kins and SIGs and approves or revokes the various guild study programs.

The Council of Senior Druids consists of all past and sitting Senior Druids and Grove Organizers of our Groves and Protogroves, plus the Archdruid. They are responsible, through their two committees (the Grove Organizing Committee and the Grove Coordinating Committee) to issue, change and revoke grove charters, to determine requirements for grove leaders and to oversee grove activities.

The Council of Regional Druids is composed of people elected by the membership in each ADF region. They define membership regions and the duties of the Regional Druids.

The foundations of ADF, however, are the local Groves and Protogroves. These local congregations are the future of ADF and a pool of talent (including those of our solitaries) from which we can draw our leaders. These congregations are also the places where our religion becomes most real to the people, and they have great autonomy in operation, within the confines of the basic rules required by the taxation authorities and ADF's cosmology and Core Order of Ritual. (Subgroup Charter Manual)

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