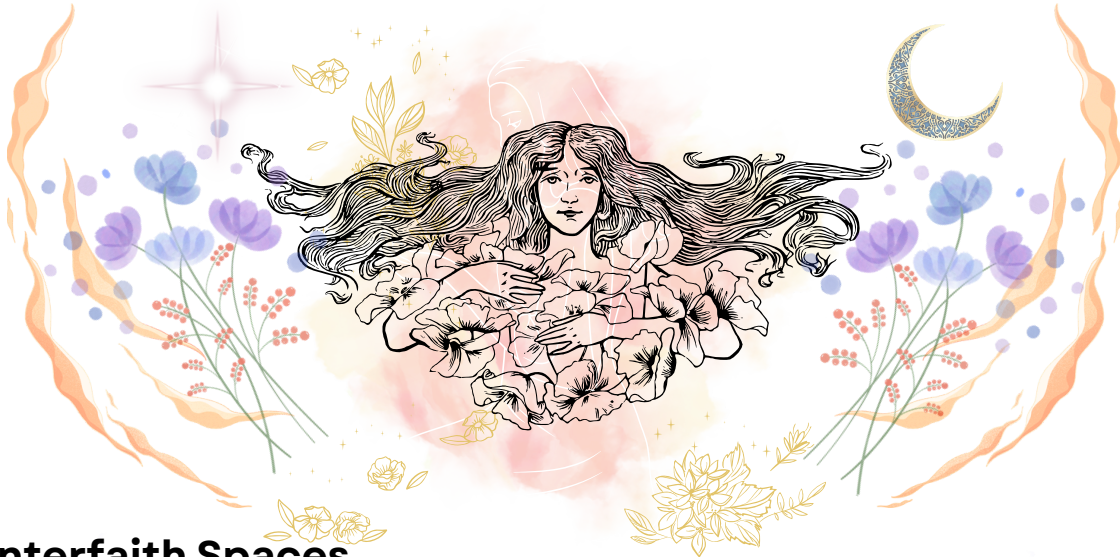


METRO VALLEY PAGAN PRESS

Summer Traditions



Why Interfaith Spaces Matter: A Hoodoo Practitioner's Experience at Countering Hate, Cultivating Joy

By Autumn Sky of The Coven of the Red Ember

Attending Countering Hate, Cultivating Joy as a Hoodoo practitioner was honestly a powerful experience for me.

Dottie and I were invited as the only Pagans in attendance, and walking into an interfaith space like that, I genuinely did not know what to expect. Many Pagans, witches, and practitioners of traditional spiritual paths are accustomed to being misunderstood, overlooked, or treated as if we exist outside the

conversation. Too often we find ourselves explaining our beliefs before we can even participate.

That was not what happened here.

From the moment we arrived, we were welcomed warmly. People engaged with us respectfully, asked thoughtful questions, and made room for us to simply
(con't on page 2)

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...be present as ourselves. We were not expected to defend our spirituality or justify our place in the room. We were treated as valued participants in the conversation, and that mattered more than I can adequately express.

The event centered around community, religious freedom, resisting hate, and building stronger relationships across different faith traditions and backgrounds. Christians, Muslims, Jewish voices, activists, organizers, artists, and community leaders gathered together to discuss how we move forward as a community without allowing fear and division to define us.

Being part of those conversations reminded me that Pagans belong in interfaith spaces too.

As a practitioner of Hoodoo, many of the themes discussed throughout the event felt deeply familiar. Hoodoo is a spiritual tradition rooted in resilience, liberation, ancestral wisdom, protection, healing, and community care. It emerged from people who learned how to survive impossible circumstances while preserving their humanity, dignity, and spiritual power.

Because of that, conversations about mutual aid, justice, protecting vulnerable communities, and standing against hatred did not feel foreign to me. They felt like conversations I have been hearing my

entire life.

I also believe Pagans bring something valuable to gatherings like this. Many of us know what it feels like to be misunderstood because of our beliefs. We know what it means to live outside the religious mainstream. Those experiences often teach us how to sit with difference without fear. We become comfortable with mystery, diversity, and the understanding that meaningful relationships do not require identical beliefs.

There was also something deeply Appalachian about the entire experience.

The conversations around community care, storytelling, resistance, music, neighbor helping neighbor, and preserving culture felt familiar to me as someone rooted in Appalachian Hoodoo and ancestral spirituality. It reminded me that Pagans are not outsiders to these communities. We have always been here. We are part of Appalachia's story too.

What stayed with me most was the sincerity of the welcome.

Dottie and I were not invited simply to check a box or create the appearance of diversity. People genuinely wanted us there. They wanted to hear our experiences, our perspectives, and our thoughts about building stronger communities. They listened. They engaged. They treated our voices as worthy of being heard.

That kind of inclusion cannot be faked.

I left feeling hopeful.

Not because everyone believed the same things. In fact, we didn't. What gave me hope was watching people with very different spiritual paths choose conversation over suspicion, curiosity over fear, and community over division.

In a world that often feels increasingly polarized, there is something powerful about people sitting together and recognizing one another's humanity despite their differences.

I believe more Pagans should step into these conversations.

We belong here.

Our voices matter. Our traditions matter. Our experiences matter.

Whether our paths are rooted in Hoodoo, Witchcraft, Heathenry, Druidry, Hellenism, Kemetic spirituality, or any number of other traditions, we have wisdom, insight, and lived experiences worth bringing to the table.

Interfaith work is not about agreeing on everything. It is about learning how to live together with respect, dignity, and mutual care.

At Countering Hate, Cultivating Joy, I saw that happen in real time.

And I am grateful that Dottie and I had the opportunity to be part of it.

A Poem

by Norman Barton

Druidic
Sleep and sickle
Time for soma to slumber
Little death to complete
Blood and trickle
Sky to reddish umber
Loom clouds to thunder
Sea and Triskele
Fire on water, all passion
I'll fade in fickle flames
Betwixt and not here
Foot on land, in sea, and air
Belly burns
Alive



Midsummer Musings

By Nicole Mayberry, Historian & Herbalist

The summer solstice is a magical turning point that is deeply immersed in ancient lore, rich history, and vibrant modern traditions. Known by many names—including Midsummer in Europe and Litha in pagan traditions—this year's solstice falls on June 20th in the Northern Hemisphere. This is also West Virginia Day! It brings our longest day and shortest night, marking the precise moment when the sun's power reaches its absolute peak.

Humanity's relationship with this day runs deep, with rituals traced back as far as 10,200 B.C

- The Celts lit towering bonfires to honor the sun god, Bel, hoping to boost the sun's energy for the harvest while inviting protection and fertility.

- The Ancient Romans celebrated Vesta, goddess of the hearth, around the solstice, a mystical time when the veil between the human world and the faerie realm was said to wear thin.

- In Ancient China, Midsummer honored the Earth, femininity, and yin energy—perfectly balancing the yang of the winter solstice with sacred offerings to ancestors.

- Ancient Egypt: Egyptians celebrated the summer solstice as the birthday of Ra, the sun god. It was believed Ra was at the absolute peak of his power on this day, so the period was marked by music, dancing, and grand processions.

- The Vikings used the thinning veil to communicate with spirits and divine the future, though they also used the

gathering to settle major political disputes.

- Slavic Cultures celebrated Kupala Night—a festival of fire and water where couples leaped over flames for good fortune and maidens floated flower garlands down rivers to find love.

Today, contemporary Wiccan and pagan practices keep the spirit of Litha alive by focusing on gratitude, nature's abundance, and preparing for the upcoming harvest. If you want to welcome the sun's magic without an elaborate ritual, you can embrace simpler, whimsical traditions:

1. Sun & Fire Rituals

Light it up: Host a backyard bonfire or light a bright yellow candle indoors to celebrate the fire element.

Greet the dawn: Watch the sunrise and visualize its golden light filling you with fresh energy and passion.

2. Kitchen Witchery & Feasting

Eat under the sun: Brew homemade sun tea on the porch, bake a honey or lemon treat, and cook dinner over an open flame (grill)

3. Nature Connection & Crafts

Get crafty: Weave a traditional flower crown using daisies or sunflowers or build a miniature faerie house.

4. Energy & Intention Setting

Manifest growth: Decorate your space with citrine crystals and sunflowers, then journal about the intentions you're ready to see bloom this summer.

(citations con't pg 5)

Works Cited:

History.com Staff. "How the Ancients Celebrated the Longest Day of the Year." History.com, A&E Television Networks, June 18, 2013, <https://www.history.com/articles/summer-solstice-traditions>.

Universal Life Church Staff. "What is Litha?" Universal Life Church, June 09, 2025, https://www.ulc.org/ulc-blog/what-is-litha?srsId=AfmBOorNzBC-MoPxAeQHHWdlKde1qQyEuLNRKhQeqZ5c_7kKPabgYZ7-.



Summer Traditions

by Dottie

I usually try to write something that will raise awareness and embolden people to social change, but one of my favorite Summer Traditions is just chilling out. There is something deeply replenishing about shaking up your routine and doing something for the joy of it. In this season of Fire, I enter the Water completely. I put my hands in the Earth like a child. I take a moment to breathe deep the sweet Air.

I'm not saying check out. Instead I'm saying schedule some real down time with the people sharing your struggles. There are so many things I want to see for the Pagan community, but all of them require the investment of time and energy by other people. Each person in this community has made an investment in building something unseen from the clay of the mountain. Everyone that is reading this is investing their time. Enjoy your reward and participate in your own experience.

The Gods forced me to take a real break this year. In a comically directed and embarrassing way I have been stripped of pretense. I'm not going to get into it, but I needed the break. I also went back to therapy. Both have reminded me I'm not alone.



Solstice Festivals

By Nicole Mayberry, Historian & Herbalist

If you'd like to witness the summer solstice at Stonehenge without the travel costs, check out English Heritage Facebook or YouTube for livestreams or their Skyscape at <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/stonehenge/things-to-do/stone-circle/skyscape/>, for a live view of the skies above the monument.

Looking for some summer solstice festivals? There are some within a few hours drive from Charleston:

- Wisteria Summer Solstice (June 18–21, 2026): Located at Wisteria (about a 2.5-hour drive from Charleston near Athens, OH), this long-running 30th-anniversary festival features live music, workshops, nightly fires, vendors, and community.
- 9th Annual Westvirjeni Summer Solstice (June 27, 2026): Held from 5:00 PM to 10:00 PM at Linden Spring/Westvirjeni Gardens in Shepherdstown, WV. This 21+ event features pop-ups, interactive activities, and live music, with all proceeds benefiting Breast Cancer Awareness.
- Serpent Mound Summer Solstice (June 19–21, 2026): Located in Peebles, OH (a scenic day trip from WV), this free, family-friendly indigenous and ecological festival centers around the Ancient Indigenous effigy's solstice alignment.

Summer Sips

By Nicole Mayberry, Historian & Herbalist

As the Appalachian humidity rolls in, look to a chilled cup of tea for the ultimate summer refreshment. Infusions like citrus, peppermint, and hibiscus are incredibly refreshing served over a tall glass of ice. If you prefer a sweeter brew, just remember to stir in your honey or sugar before adding the ice so it dissolves completely.

Some blends to make on your own:

Berry Mint Mojito: Mix spearmint, dried hibiscus, and dried raspberries. The mint provides a cooling sensation, while the hibiscus offers a tart, fruity punch similar to cranberry.

Citrus & Chamomile Cooler: Combine chamomile with lemon peel, lemongrass, and a pinch of lavender. It is a soothing, sweet, and cooling option that is perfect for hot evenings.

Tropical Rooibos: Blend rooibos with pineapple bits and dried coconut. Rooibos serves as a rich, smooth base that highlights the sweet tropical flavors without needing added sugar.

For each herb/flower, use a heaping teaspoonful. Steep the herbs in boiling water for 5 to 10 minutes, depending on your preferred strength of flavor



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The Crafty Chameleon



Inspiration from:
<https://blog.mountainroseherbs.com/iced-teas-for-summer>

If you prefer already mixed loose leaf or tea bags, consider these West Virginia-made shops:

<https://hillandhollerherbalco.com>

<https://smokecampcrafts.com>

<https://almostheaventea.com>

<https://www.ber teas.com>

Many Appalachians relish the summer heat to naturally brew sun tea. To add an herbal twist, you can:

1. Place a large quart-sized glass jar in a bright, sunny spot.
2. Add a handful of fresh garden herbs (e.g., mint, lemon balm, or basil) or dried herbal blends.
3. Fill with water and steep for 3 to 5 hours.
4. Strain the solids, pour over ice, and serve.



Announcements

July 15th 2026 Onward

We are going Quarterly! If you'd like to submit an article, send an inquiry on the website, or submit an article to mvpaganpride@gmail.com

The 2nd Wednesday of every month is the **MVPP Business Meeting**, we shoot for 7, but it can sometimes be delayed if waiting for key officers or planning leads to get in

The 3rd Wednesday of every month is the **MVPP Event Planning Meeting**, we shoot for 7, but it can sometimes be delayed if waiting for key officers or planning leads to get in.



In the community

Broom Not Vroom September 26th, 2026 at Teays Valley Park. The Big Shelter in the back, starts about 11. If you want to get involved, come to the meetings and see what you can do to help! Keep an eye out on the FB page for the form links for Vendors, Entertainment, Classes, and Volunteers!

Magickal Meet-Up of Teays Valley the 2nd Saturday of every month at Barnyard BBQ in Teays Valley. Tends to start around 11am, people have food, talk, and there is a group discussion after the meal. Watch the MVPP page or check out Phoenix's Event page for updates, topics, etc! This is not an MVPP meeting, but we love Phoenix, and he is a wonderful, dedicated member of our community.

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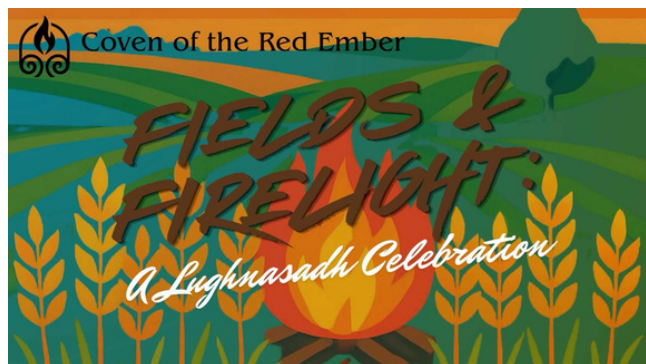
Events

Lughnasadh/Lammas observed August 1st 2026. Check your local groups to see if they are up to anything special! Coven of the Red Ember is hosting an event at Kanawha State Park!

Join us for a community Lughnasadh celebration honoring the first harvest, the skills we've cultivated this year, and those who cleared the way before us. Bring a small first-fruits offering for the ritual if you can (homemade bread, a handful of berries, some grain), or something that shows a skill you've worked on this year. Let's gather at the turn of the season to give thanks, remember, and celebrate together.

Camping is open to everyone both Friday, July 31, and Saturday, August 1st.

Pot Luck Feast after the ritual.

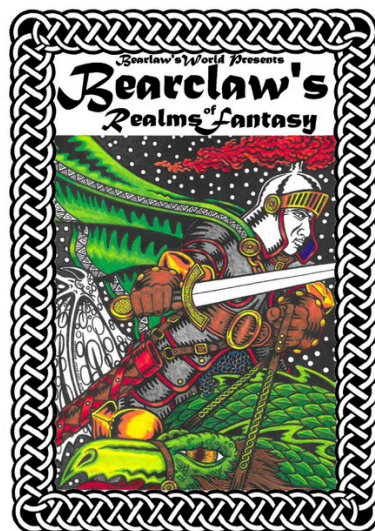


July is Disability Pride Month!

Pagansinrecovery.org

A 12-step fellowship virtual and online meetings every day of the week.

MVPP is putting together a small scholarship fund, and working on a book of Appalachian Essays, Poetry, and Art about being a pagan in Appalachia. If you'd like to participate, please check out the form on the FB page for details.



Some Childhood Tips to Beat the Heat

by Shannon Diaz

There are times that I have looked around me and thought that it would be just so-so-so wonderful to just wave a wand (or snap my fingers, or say some magical words that aren't "Hey Siri, can you please crank up the AC?") and be whatever temperature I am most comfortable at in that moment. It would be great!

However, that is not how the world works-even of magic. I'm not entirely sure that the price to pay in energy or whatever the equitable scales would demand would be needed for my comfort would be worth the overall price...Don't get me wrong...I wonder sometimes, but don't know for sure, so probably best to not risk it...

That being said, I thought some more mundane tips might be helpful.

Put your feet in the water. My grandma always would explain it like "your heart is a furnace, and you can't breathe with your head being underwater, so put your feet in the damn creek or I'm gonna give you something to complain about." The running water really does wonders to help cool you off if you're not able to completely submerge. If you don't have a creek, use a big bowl or tub, and put some ice into it to help out.

Drink plenty of fluids...For my Mawmaw-I'd have to argue with her that while she did use water to make her coffee, it did not count fully as a hydration aide...(I am well aware of the danger my life was in with that statement, thank you.) Make sure you're having some non-diuretics in the form of liquid. Hibiscus tea can be delicious...Just have some other fluids in between the glasses or you'll end up flushing out all your electrolytes like me...Do not recommend going full bore, all in on only drinking that, but with moderation in mind, it's great.

Make some paper fans. The crinkle folding of a piece of paper, roll up one end for a hand, and have your own little breeze. You can let your kids decorate it with things they find around the yard, or drawings, etc for a fun summertime craft.

If you're on the go, we used to use old spray bottles of various kinds, that most people would probably think twice about today, but back then, we just washed them extra good, so they were probably fine--Some ice in the bottle if you have the kind that fit, or just keep the bottle in an ice filled cooler can help cool you down with a nice misting and a gentle breeze. Helps keep little ones cool in their strollers, too!

Open the windows up after sundown, and close them before sunrise, and close the curtains to try to trap some cool before the day starts! Of course, let's use some common sense with this suggestion- living in the woods is not the same as living in a not-safe area, so do not recommend if you have to worry about a stranger climbing in while you're sleeping.

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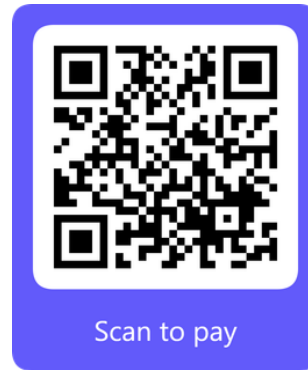
CHECK YOUR MEDS! SSRIs in particular can cause dangerous reactions to heat. They aren't the only ones, so be careful!

If you need to look for a cooling station, they operate in WV on an as-needed basis. You can call 211 to find out if there are any open near you.

I hope there's something here that helps you and your families stay cool! Make sure to check on your neighbors, too!



Would you like to help us put on Broom Not Vroom, but don't wish to be a monthly member? You can scan the code below and make a donation.



Would you like to help in establishing a scholarship for Pagans in the Appalachian area? There is already one project made by Shannon Diaz to help do that! It's a DIY-self-led study rune study journal. 75% of proceeds will go to the scholarship. You can find it on Amazon.

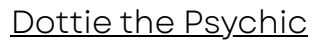
Shannon's Musical Vibe Recommendation for the Summer!

Mystic Woman by Ian Elliott

Ian is an ex-mormon and ex-evangelical that uses his music to explore his religious trauma and celebrate his new spiritual views that resonates with those of non-traditional and pagan paths.



If you'd like to get involved, come to our Discord meetings each month and learn how you can get involved.



Theme

We hope to have merchandise with the logo available soon! So keep an eye out for that!

