

# The Covenant of the Goddess

## Purpose

The Covenant of the Goddess was founded in 1975 to increase cooperation among Witches and to secure for Witches and covens the legal protection enjoyed by members of other religions.

## Functions

The Covenant publishes a newsletter; issues ministerial credentials to qualified persons; sponsors a national festival in conjunction with its annual meeting each summer; and encourages networking nationally and regionally through local councils, a website, and listserves for members.

## Structure

The Covenant is incorporated as a non-profit religious organization in California, though it has grown to be an international organization. It is a confederation of covens and solitaires of various traditions, who share in the worship of the Goddess and the Old Gods and subscribe to a common code of ethics. The Covenant holds an annual meeting, Grand Council, annually to decide matters which require deliberation by the full membership. Decisions are made by consensus, except for voting for officers.

## Code of Ethics

- An ye harm none, do as ye will.
- Since our religion and the arts and practices peculiar to it are the gift of the Goddess, membership and training in a local coven or tradition are bestowed free, as gifts, and only on those persons who are deemed worthy to receive them. However, a coven may expect each of its members to bear a fair share of its ordinary operating expenses.
- All persons have the right to charge reasonable fees for the services by which they earn a living, so long as our religion is not thereby exploited.
- Every person associated with this Covenant shall respect the autonomy and sovereignty of each coven, as well as the right of each coven to oversee the spiritual, mental, emotional and physical development of its members and students in its own way, and shall exercise reasonable caution against infringing upon that right in any way.
- All persons associated with this Covenant shall respect the traditional secrecy of our religion.
- Members of this Covenant should ever keep in mind the underlying unity of our religion as well as the diversity of its manifestations.
- These ethics shall be understood and interpreted in light of one another, and especially in light of the traditional laws of our religion.

## Confidentiality

All information given to the Covenant of the Goddess or any of its officials is considered strictly confidential, unless you indicate otherwise. No information about members is

published or given out without explicit written permission. Direct access to the Covenant's mailing list is limited to the Board of Directors. Maximum privacy is assured.

## Newsletter

At every Sabbat the Covenant publishes a newsletter of Craft and Pagan news, original articles, poetry, humor, rituals, and announcements. Circulation is limited to members and friends of the Covenant. One may opt for electronic or print copies. Electronic copies are encouraged for environmental reasons.

## Finances

An annual membership tithing is set every year at the Grand Council to cover expenses, based on the previous year's expenses and any projected cost increases. The annual financial statement is published in the newsletter. Other activities are supported by fund-raising. All contributions to the Covenant of the Goddess are greatly appreciated and are tax-deductible.

## Applying For Membership

Any Goddess-focused coven or solitary can be eligible for membership in the Covenant of the Goddess, if certain criteria and requirements are met. All membership inquiries should be sent to the National Membership Officer. If the coven or solitary is located in an area near a Local Council, the National Officer will forward the inquiry to the Local Council Membership Officer; if the applicant is not located near a Local Council, the applicant may apply for National membership.

## General Criteria for Coven Membership

- Generally focus theology and ritual around the worship of the Goddess and the Old Gods (or the Goddess alone).
- Believe and follow a code of ethics compatible with that of the Covenant.
- Have been meeting monthly or more often for at least six months.
- Have three or more members who have been formally accepted into the clergy.
- Be a cohesive, self-perpetuating group, identifying yourselves as "Witch" or "Wiccan".

For Full Membership, an applicant must be recommended without reservation by two Craft members known to the Covenant.

For Provisional Membership, an applicant may be recommended by one person known to the Covenant, and then has a year and a day to obtain the second required recommendation to achieve Full Membership status.

The appropriate Membership Officer (National or Local Council) shall verify information regarding the criteria and requirements. Each Local Council may devise its own standards for admission of members, including Solitaries, in harmony with national guidelines.

## Assembly of Solitaries

This is the term we use to collectively represent members who are Solitaries, or Witches practicing alone. Individuals who are members of a coven which does not wish to join COG may also apply as Solitaries. The National Assembly of Solitaries is open only to those eligible for Elder Credentials, which means those able to initiate and train others in their tradition of the Craft.

## Local Councils

A Local Council is a local branch of the Covenant, consisting of at least three member covens of at least two different traditions, in reasonably close geographic proximity to each other. Local Councils meet at least once a year and usually quarterly or more often. They may choose to initiate independent projects, sponsor local festivals and workshops, and generally work together for common goals close to home. As the Covenant continues to grow, we encourage new member covens close to one another to form their own Local Councils.

## Affinity Groups

Affinity Groups may be established to further the interests and aims of two or more Members who share common interests and aims. Affinity Groups determine the frequency and purpose of their meetings, and select and follow their own projects and activities. Affinity Groups are encouraged to invite membership by CoG Members beyond Local Council boundaries; one frequent method to do this is to sponsor e-lists for shared discussion. We have affinity groups for gardeners, brewers and bakers, solitaries, and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered members. Level of activity of each varies from year to year.

## Decision Making

When a matter requiring a decision is presented before the Covenant at Grand or Local Council meetings, it is discussed by the members in attendance until consensus is reached. If a consensus cannot be reached, and the matter cannot be tabled for further discussion, then a vote may be taken. Voting is also used to choose officers from a slate of candidates when an election is contested.

Coven members, either Full or Provisional, are entitled to one vote. Each Full Membership coven also holds the power to veto, though this is exercised only in extreme cases, and cannot be used against a candidate in elections. A coven with Provisional Membership may not veto. Since 2006, changes in the method of voting by solitary members have been developing. Three (or more) Solitaries may form themselves into a temporary decision-making group called an Ad Hoc Coven, which has one vote and may veto.

## Ministerial Credentials

In order to be eligible to receive Ministerial Credentials as a Priestess or Priest, a person shall:

- Be active in a Member Coven or a Local Council Assembly of Solitaries of COG
- Have been recognized as an initiate of our religion.

- Have undergone at least a full year of active training for the ministry of that Tradition.
- These credentials remain valid only as long as the person remains active in a member Coven or Assembly of Solitaries.

In order to be eligible to receive Ministerial Credentials as an Elder, a person shall:

- Be active in a COG Member Coven, a Local Council Assembly of Solitaries, or the National Assembly of Solitaries
- Have been recognized as an initiate of our religion.
- Have undergone at least two full years of active training for the ministry.
- Be fully able to form a coven, admit members, and train them in the tenets and practices of their Tradition.

Credentials must be renewed each year; the National Credentials Officer can provide more details.

### MerryMeet - The National Festival

The annual Grand Council or national business meeting is held as part of our annual national festival, which is open to the whole membership as well as Pagans and Witches who are not part of the Covenant. The festival is usually held at a secluded campground or resort, and moves to a different area of the country each summer. In addition to the Council meeting, the program includes workshops on aspects of the Craft, concerts, often a talent show, and the opportunity to purchase art, crafts, and ritual tools by Pagan artisans. Registration information is available from the Second Officer.

### For More Information

To learn more about COG, check the COG web page at <http://www.cog.org/>  
or write to: Covenant of the Goddess, Post Office Box 1226  
Berkeley, CA 94701 (U.S.A.)