



Triquetra
symbol



Equality Policy Unit

'everyone included, everyone involved'

Briefing note: **Paganism**

What is Paganism?

Paganism is the ancestral religion of the whole of humanity. This ancient religious outlook remains active throughout much of the world today, both in complex civilisations and in less complex tribal societies worldwide. Paganism is also a term used to describe those contemporary religions which are said to revere nature. The cycle of the natural year, with the different emphasis brought by its different seasons, is seen by most Pagans as a model of spiritual growth and renewal, and as a sequence marked by festivals which offer access to different divinities according to their affinity with different times of year. Many Pagans see the Earth itself as sacred.

Beliefs – Nature, the recognition that nature is divine and a deep awareness and respect for the natural world. Most pagans are environmentally aware, trying at all times to live in a way that causes as little damage to the natural environment.

The Concept of the Divine

Pagans worship the divine (God) in different ways: masculine, feminine or without gender. But Gods and Goddesses are the Common form of worship.

Holy days and festivals

Pagans have a seasonal cycle that is usually called the 'Wheel of the year'. Almost all pagans celebrate a cycle of 8 festivals spaced throughout the year:

- **Imbolic** – marks the start of the farming season and the celebrations are centred on fire.
- **Spring Equinox** – celebrates the renewal of the Earth's life after the arrival of spring.
- **Beltane** – This is the fire festival that celebrates the fertility of the coming year, and occurs between spring and summer.
- **Summer Solstice** – at midsummer, pagans honour the strength of the sun and the powers of the divine to create life.
- **Lughnasadh** – is traditionally a harvest festival and is dominated by symbols connected with the reaping of corn.
- **Autumn Equinox** – This is a time for pagans to reflect on the past season.
- **Samhain** – this festival comes between autumn and winter, marking the day of the dead; this is a time for honouring dead spirits and for pagans to reflect on the changes in their lives.
- **Winter Solstice** – this is one of the oldest festivals in the world and involves decorations, lighting candles and giving presents. It is also called Yule.



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🔍 For further information on faith dates and religious festivals follow this link: <http://www.equality.leeds.ac.uk/for-staff/good-practice-guidance/faith-calendar-and-dates-of-religious-festivals/>

✦ This information sheet was produced using the 'Faith Communities Navigator' published in 2007 by the Faith Regen Foundation, information about the Foundation is available here <http://www.thefrf.org/work/archive>.

