



## First Stirrings and New Announcements

Merry Meet all...And Blessed Imbolc!

Ron Schaefer here (Astralaya), executive director of Sacred Well Congregation International. With new life beginning to stir in our world I feel it appropriate to share some great news and timely announcements. First, as my term of Exec Dir. comes to an end I am comforted to know we've accomplished some critical miles stones leading us to focus our identity and grow in capability to perform our mission of outreach, education and service. With growth comes change and, in our case, we've forged some partnerships and relationships with highly reputable institutions of higher learning in the nature based religious community. Partnership with this caliber of organizations require the upcoming director to possess qualifications matching our requirement. I am pleased to announce the International Ecumenical Council unanimously selected the Rev. Shane Nelson (soon to be the Rev. Dr.) as the incoming executive director. He has been an integral part of SWCI for the better part of a decade and currently fills one of the most important and challenging positions on the Board as Director of Military affairs.

It provides me with great comfort to know Shane is stepping in to "take the Con". He has the academic credentials, community experience and connectivity we need to move forward. Most importantly he has the temperament to lead an organization like ours to achieve our goals...and some credibility at "herding cats". We are currently working through an orderly transition with the goal of having Shane in the seat on Beltaine. As such, he will lead the board of Deacons Meeting in Mar and after that, formally assume duties as the New Executive Director. In the interim if you receive guidance or a missive from Shane, treat it as if it came from me.

In other good news, we added three new board members covering key chair positions. The first is Rev. Jennifer Chasse who is joining us as director of Prison Ministries. She is currently a Chaplain in Victorville CA and very active in advancing participation of Nature centered spiritualist/clerics in support of our incarcerated Pagan community.

Next is the Rev. Bryce Woyak, who is joining us as Director of Institutional Chaplaincy. He is a practicing hospital chaplain, completing his MDiv through Cherry Hill Seminary and ordination internship with SWCI. He will be instrumental in helping us learn how to interact with formal institutions from both public and private sector requiring chaplains.

Finally, we are very pleased to have Rev Dr. Pamela Hancock, from Starr King School of Ministry. She is currently the Assistant Professor of Spiritual Practice & Care for the Soul, Chaplaincy Program Director. She will be our Director of Community Ministry and our liaison with SKSM with whom we now collaborate to provide Ordination of their graduates.

To all the new members, hail and welcome!

As you can see, SWCI has come out of the racing gate pretty strongly in the past few years and taken on a new mission and services. I'm excited to see the rapid growth in the education and formal, credible training of nature based spiritualists and pulpit ministries and proud of the work SWCI is doing to support this endeavor.

Aman Nai,

Astralaya