



Covenant of the Goddess - Bylaws 2017-2018

As Amended at Grand Council 2017

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Article 1. Definitions

A. Definitions

The definitions stated or referred to here shall apply wherever a defined term appears in these Bylaws.

1. ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT: at least a year and a day of sustained, face-to-face involvement and in-person training with a teacher or a Coven and its members, including becoming initiated or otherwise considered a "full Member" of the Coven by that Coven's tenets of our religion.
2. ASSOCIATE: There shall be a class of non-voting Associates of the Covenant of the Goddess as provided for under *Article 2. K. Non-Voting Associates*, which shall include individuals, Covens and student groups.
3. BOARD: The officers of the Covenant when acting in their official capacity as a body.
4. CLERGY CREDENTIALS: The term "Ministerial Credentials" has the same meaning as the newer term "Priest/ess Credentials," and the term "Elder Credentials" has the same meaning as the more recent term "High Priest/ess" or "Elder Priest/ess credentials."
5. COVENANT: The Covenant of the Goddess.
6. COG NEWSLETTER: The official medium for Covenant communication among Members.
7. COVEN CONTACT: The individual designated by a Member Coven to receive Covenant communications on behalf of that Coven.
8. COUNCIL: The Membership of the Covenant acting as a body.
9. CHARTER: The Charter of the Covenant of the Goddess.
10. DISTANCE COVENERS: Persons meeting the active involvement guideline may be considered Distance Convoeners of a CoG Member Coven, and are eligible to receive Member benefits.
11. ELDER PRIEST/ESS: An individual eligible to receive Elder Priest/ess credentials, as defined in *Article 7, Section B. 2. Elder Priest/ess Credentials*; roughly equivalent to High Priestess or High Priest.
12. ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE PRIEST/ESS CREDENTIALS: Defined in *Article 7, Section B.1. Criteria for Priest/ess Credentials*, roughly equivalent to Witch.
13. FORMALLY ACCEPTED INTO TRAINING FOR THE CLERGY: Roughly equivalent to initiate.
14. GERRYMANDERING: To divide an area into political units to give special advantage to one group (as per Merriam-Webster Dictionary).
15. GRAND COUNCIL: The annual meeting. Also known as "Great Council" in the Charter. Covenant of the Goddess' annual business meeting.
16. HOLD HARMLESS: An agreement not to sue in any court, or bring any action of any kind against the Covenant, any Board or Committee of the Covenant or any member of a Board or Committee of the Covenant for actions taken in their official capacities.
17. IN GOOD STANDING: A Member's tithes are paid, Proxy-Attendance forms are filed, and membership privileges or credentials are not suspended or under disciplinary action.
18. LOCAL BOARD: The officers of a Local Council when acting in their official capacity as a body.
19. LOCAL COUNCIL: A group of geographically proximate Covens, chartered by the Board pursuant to *Article 6, Local Councils*, of these Bylaws.
20. LOCAL COUNCIL ASSEMBLY OF SOLITARIES: All Solitary Practitioners within that Local Council regardless of number.
21. MEMBER: A Coven, individual member of a Member Coven, or Solitary Practitioner of Our Religion who has been admitted to the Covenant, pursuant to *Article 2, Membership and Affiliation* of these Bylaws.
22. MEMBER BENEFITS: include, but are not limited to, access to the electronic listserves, credentials, representing a coven in meetings, or carrying one or more proxies.
23. MERRYMEET: The annual festival of the Covenant, which includes the Grand Council annual meeting.
24. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF SOLITARIES: All Members, regardless of number, who are Solitary Practitioners and who are not Members of a Local Council.
25. OUR RELIGION: The Craft.

26. **PROVISIONAL LOCAL COUNCIL:** A local council of the Covenant at risk of being disbanded/dissolved. A Provisional Local Council is not in compliance with the requirements of the Covenant. A provisional local council may not promote themselves in the name of the Covenant or as a local council of CoG, cannot handle funds as a local council of CoG, and cannot earn funds as a local council of CoG, and are not considered a local council in good standing. Members of a provisional local council can retain membership in the Covenant by becoming members at the national level.
27. **PROVISIONAL MEMBER:** A membership status restriction applied when a member does not file an annual Proxy-Attendance Form, or receives a restriction as punishment for an infraction. A Provisional Local Council is a Local Council that has dropped below the required membership, or has been restricted by action of Grand Council or the National Board.
28. **PROXY:** A written authorization signed by a Member or the Member's representative in fact giving another person or persons power to vote on behalf of said Member and to represent the Member in any other decision-making processes, including the consensus process. "Signed" for the purpose of this section means the placing of the Member's name on the proxy (whether by manual signature, typewriting, email, facsimile or telegraphic transmission, or otherwise) by the Member or such Member's representative.
29. **PROXY HOLDER:** The individual to whom a proxy is given.
30. **SOLITARY PRACTITIONER:** Any individual Member of our religion. For purposes of these Bylaws, this includes practitioners who are members of a coven but choose to hold or apply for membership as part of an Assembly of Solitaries. The term Solitaire is equivalent to Solitary.
31. **TRADITION:** A particular denomination of Witchcraft/Wicca/The Craft. When forming a local council a minimum of three Covens of at least two different traditions is mandated by these Bylaws. For the purposes of ensuring diversity within a new Local Council, the two traditions must not be founded by any single living source in common.
32. **TRIAL MEMBER:** A Coven or Solitary admitted with only one Letter of Recommendation. A Trial Member has a year and a day as a member of the Covenant to receive the second Letter of Recommendation. During that time, they have all the rights and responsibilities of a Regular or Solitary member, except that they may not cast a veto in Grand Council or Local Council decision-making.
33. **TWO-THIRDS VOTE:** Where CoG bylaws, policies and/or procedures call for a two-thirds vote, this shall be interpreted to mean the requirement is a vote of two-thirds or greater from the total number of possible votes in order for the motion to be passed.
34. **VOTING MEMBERS:** Both Member Covens and Solitaries (formed in temporary associations known as Solitary Caucuses) are eligible to vote at Grand Council, represented by proxy or in person, as described under *Article 4, Meetings*, of these Bylaws. Solitary Caucuses, while not a category of membership, shall be considered to be Voting Members for purposes of Grand Council ONLY, and not for local council functions. Although the word "voting" is used, consensus decision-making is mandated by the Charter, Section III., Governance, Subsection C. for most decision-making. Actual voting is used for contested elections and the Budget as a whole.
35. **VIRTUAL ATTENDEES:** Members attending Grand Council through authorized electronic means will be considered physically present for the purpose of quorum, discussion of proposals, voting on the budget, and election of officers.

B. Relation To Covenant

These Bylaws shall be understood in terms of, and in interpretations of, the Charter of the Covenant.

C. Covenant Definitions

Any term that is defined, whether explicitly or implicitly, in the Charter shall be understood as having the same meaning in these Bylaws.

D. Relation To Usual Vocabulary

The terminology of the Charter and of these Bylaws shall be understood as substituting for the more usual vocabulary of Our Religion.

Article 2. Membership and Affiliation

A. Classes of Membership

There shall be four classes of membership in the Covenant: Regular, Trial, Provisional, and Members of Assemblies of Solitaries. These Membership categories shall be conferred, and have associated rights as is provided for in this Article of these Bylaws. Once duly admitted, all Members shall have equal rights, including

voting, according to procedures determined by *Article 4, Meetings*; holding office, according to procedures determined by *Article 3, Section A. 4. Eligibility for Office*; and on all other matters. The Council may also create classes of non-voting Associates of the Covenant.

B. Criteria for Membership

1. Criteria for Covens

In order for the Covenant to be viable as an instrument of the joint will of its Members, a Coven, to be eligible for membership in the Covenant, must meet the following criteria, which must be addressed in each applicant's Statement of Practice:

- a. be recognized as being in fact a Coven of members of Our Religion by whichever Regular Members are already familiar with it and its members; and proclaim themselves as Witches or Wiccans in the Statement of Practice;
- b. be a cohesive, self-perpetuating group fully able to practice and preserve its Tradition of Our Religion;
- c. subscribe to a code of ethics compatible with that in *Article 9, Section B. Code of Ethics*, of these Bylaws,
- d. generally focus its liturgy, theology, and so on around the worship of the Goddess or the Goddess and the Old Gods;
- e. have three or more members who have been formally accepted into training for the Clergy;
- f. have at least one member who is eligible to receive Elder Priest/ess Credentials according to the provisions of *Article 7, Section B.2.b.,c, and d, Elder Priestess Credentials* of these Bylaws.
- g. have been meeting monthly or more often for at least six months in order to conduct worship services;
- h. pledge to abide by all the provisions of the Charter, these Bylaws, and all policy decisions of the Council; and
- i. agree that the Coven and all its members will hold harmless any Committee of the Covenant and all Committee members acting in their official capacities.

2. Criteria for Membership in an Assembly of Solitaries

In order to be eligible for membership as a member of an Assembly of Solitaries, a solitary practitioner of Our Religion must meet the following criteria which must be addressed in each applicant's Statement of Practice.

- a. be recognized as being in fact a member of Our Religion by whichever members in good standing are already familiar with the practitioner and proclaim her or himself as a Witch or Wiccan in the Statement of Practice;
- b. subscribe to a code of ethics which is compatible with those in *Article 9, Section B., Code of Ethics*, of these Bylaws;
- c. generally focus her or his liturgy, theology, and practice around the worship of the Goddess or the Goddess and the Old Gods;
- d. be eligible to receive Priest/ess Credentials according to the provisions of *Article 7, Section B.1. b., c., and d., Priestess Credentials*, of these Bylaws; or as admitted by the judgment of a Local Council acting as a body according to *Article 4, Section H., Voting Rights and Voting Members*, and *Article 2, Section A., Classes of Membership*, if applying through a Local Council. For the National Assembly of Solitaries, the applicant must be eligible for Elder Priest/ess Credentials according to the provisions of *Article 7, Section B.2., Elder Priest/ess Credentials*, of these Bylaws.
- e. pledge to abide by all provisions of the Charter, these Bylaws, and all policy decisions of the Council; and
- f. agree to hold harmless any committee of the Covenant and all committee members acting in their official capacities.

C. National Application Procedures

In areas where no Local Council exists, the procedures for application for membership in the Covenant shall be as follows:

1. The Coven or Solitary Practitioner shall submit an application and a signed statement of practice to the Membership Officer specifying that it meets the criteria in *Article 2, Section B., Criteria for Membership*, and must include two letters of recommendation. The letters of recommendation shall be from members of two different Covens or Solitaries that are known to the Covenant.
2. If a Coven or Solitary practitioner has obtained only one recommendation, that Coven or solitary practitioner may apply as a Trial Member. Trial Members have one year and one day to complete the process of application for Regular Membership or membership in the Assembly of Solitaries. If that

application process is not completed within one year and one day, the Trial membership shall lapse.

3. A copy of all pertinent documents, including the Membership Application, shall be forwarded to the Publications Officer by the Membership Officer. All Statements of Practice and recommendations shall be published in the next issue of the CoG Newsletter.
4. If, at the termination of a 90-day review period after publication of the documents as specified above in *Article 2, Section C. 2., National Application Procedures*, no objections to the application have been received, the Membership Officer shall approve the application no longer than 15 days after the termination of the review period. If there are any objections, the Membership Officer shall take whatever action she or he deems in the best interest of the Covenant. Decisions of the Membership Officer may be appealed to the Council.
5. Final action on the application shall be announced to the Covenant in the next issue of the CoG Newsletter.

D. Local Council Application Procedures

In areas where a Local Council exists, the procedures for application for membership in the Covenant shall be as follows:

1. A Local Council may establish its own procedures for application for membership in the Covenant. Such procedures shall not violate these Bylaws. In addition to any established procedures for application for membership in the Covenant, each Local Council shall also comply with the provisions of *Article 2, Section C., National Application Procedures*.
 - a. A Local Council which has established its own procedures for application for membership in the Covenant shall publish those procedures in the Samhain issue of the CoG Newsletter each year.
 - b. Any Local Council which does not publish procedures in the Samhain issue of the CoG Newsletter will be deemed to have accepted the procedures established in *Article 2, Section C., National Application Procedures*, until Samhain of the following year. A Local Council which does not comply with this provision may be made Provisional by the Board.
 - c. A Local Council may amend its published procedures for application for membership in the Covenant by publishing such amendments in the next issue of the CoG Newsletter. No amendment shall be valid until published in the CoG Newsletter.
 - d. Any Member who feels a variance from National Application Procedures is in violation of the Bylaws, or is potentially discriminatory, can submit a statement to the National Board requesting formal review. The Board will request that the Local Council rewrite or remove the variance and republish in the Yule newsletter.
2. The Membership Officer or the Board of the Local Council shall, after receipt, act on each application for membership in the Covenant. They may accept the application for publication and further processing, or if the Membership Officer or the Board of the Local Council has doubts or reservations about the applicant they may recommend the applicant for Trial Membership, refer the application to the National level, delay or decline to accept the application, or take whatever action on the application they believe to be in the best in interests of the Covenant and the Local Council. Should the Membership decline to accept the application, a short note to that effect shall enter the Local Council minutes.
3. After the application has received the final approval of the Local Council Membership, the Local Council Membership Officer shall forward one set of the completed application materials as specified in *Article 2, Section C.1., National Application Procedures*, to the National Membership Officer. Statements of Practice and Letters of Recommendation for an applicant shall be published in the next issue of the CoG Newsletter, and a 90-day review period for receipt of any possible objections shall begin for the applicant.
4. If any Member has any objection to this application, that Member may communicate such objections to the National Membership Officer who will immediately refer the matter to the Membership Officer of the Local Council. Receipt of an objection will cause the Local Council Membership Officer to refer the application for reconsideration by the Local Council Membership.
5. If, after the termination of the 90-day Review Period following publication as specified in *Article 2, Section C.3, National Application Procedures*, no objections to the application have been made, the National Membership Officer shall approve the application.
6. A National Solitary or National Coven in good standing wishing to transfer into a Local Council may do so with approval of that Local Council. Local Council application procedures will be followed. The Local Council Membership Officer must notify the National Membership Officer of the transfer. If the Local Council does not accept the transfer, the Member's status remains at the National level.
7. Final action on the application shall be announced in the next issue of the CoG Newsletter.

E. Responsibilities of the Membership Officer

1. Regarding Applications

The Membership Officer shall be responsible for ascertaining, as best she or he can, whether applicants that apply for membership in the Covenant meet the criteria in *Article 2, Section B., Criteria for Membership*. Evidence concerning the qualifications of any applicant for membership may be submitted to the appropriate Membership Officer by any person who has first-hand information concerning such qualifications. In applying the criteria provided in this Article, each Membership Officer shall exercise her or his discretion in the most holistic and intuitive manner possible, in order to arrive at better decisions than mere logic would allow. In such decision-making, each Membership Officer should also beware of establishing precedents or creating trends that might at some future time lead to results that could disrupt the ordinary functioning of Covens or the Covenant, or which could lead to potential ethics conflicts. The Covenant affirms the right of member Covens to admit to membership whomever they choose and the Covenant shall not exclude applicants solely because of the age, race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or country of origin, residence, or citizenship of Coven members. The Covenant shall not exclude applicants solely because their Traditions of Our Religion differ from those of current Members.

2. Regarding New Members

Upon acceptance of new Members into the Covenant, the Membership Officer shall:

- a. obtain from the new Member the name, mailing address, telephone number, and confidentiality level(s) of the new Member's contact person; and
- b. cause a Certificate of Membership to be forwarded to the new Member. In order for a Certificate of Membership to confer any legal status on the Coven or person who receives it, certain information may have to be filed with the state or local government. The Membership Officer will undertake such filing only when requested to do so in writing by the Coven or person in question.

F. Renewal of Membership

1. Renewal of Coven Membership

In order to renew Membership, Members shall certify that they continue to meet the Membership requirements in *Article 2, Section B., Criteria for Membership*. Although covens in an area where a Local Council exists must apply through the Local Council, they may renew their memberships either through the Local Council or may instruct the National Membership Officer to convert their memberships to National Coven status.

2. Renewal of Solitary Membership

Solitary practitioners who hold credentials as Elder Priestesses or Priests and were admitted to membership through a Local Council may similarly renew either through the Local Council or may convert their memberships to membership in the National Assembly of Solitaries.

Before the National Membership Officer moves the Coven or Solitary to National Membership, notification must be made to the National Board and to the Local Council that the Member is leaving. The notification to the Local Council shall be made via letter (either regular mail or e-mail). The Local Council Membership Officer must reply to the National Membership Officer that it has received the information. The notification to the National Board can be made either via letter or via the regular business meeting. This gives all parties notification that the move is taking place.

3. Change of Membership Status from Coven to Solitary

A person who has been a member of a CoG member coven during the current membership year and currently holds, or is eligible to hold, Elder Priest/ess Credentials, or has previously held Elder Priest/ess credentials which lapsed without being revoked, may apply to leave the member coven and join a Local or National Assembly of Solitaries in the following way:

- (1) The applicant will send a form or statement to the NMO declaring that s/he has been a member of a CoG coven during all or part of the current membership year, proof that s/he is eligible to hold Elder Credentials, or currently holds Elder Credentials, in accordance with the provisions of Article 7, Section B.2., Elder Priest/ess Credentials of these Bylaws, and wishes to join the National Assembly of Solitaries, or the AoS of the Local Council to which her or his coven belongs. The applicant will provide the National Membership Officer with contact information, coven name and charter number, Local Council, if appropriate, current credential number, if held, or other information to verify that the Elder credential was issued, or the applicant is eligible for Elder credentials. If the applicant is eligible to join either a local or national Assembly of Solitaries, s/he will state her or his preference.

(2) The NMO will verify the applicant's coven membership and eligibility for Elder Credentials, requesting additional information from the applicant, coven, or Local Council if necessary.

(3) Once the coven membership and issuance or eligibility to hold Elder Credentials are verified, the National Membership Officer will forward the application for change of membership to an Assembly of Solitaries to the Newsletter for publication, and an announcement of intent of change of membership will also be sent to the AIR list. If no objections to the application are received within 90 days, the applicant will be admitted to CoG membership as a member of the AoS.

(4) If the National Membership Officer cannot verify the applicant was a member of a CoG member coven during the current membership year, or cannot verify the applicant's eligibility to hold Elder Credentials, or receives any objection to the application, the applicant must reapply for membership in CoG in accordance with the criteria in Article 2. B.2. and the usual procedure in Article 2.C National Application Procedures or Article 2.D. Local Council Application Procedures.

G. Revocation of Membership

Membership is revocable by:

- (1) the National Complaint Process, according to the provisions of *Article 2, Section H., National Complaint Process*;
- (2) Votes of No Confidence, according to the provisions of *Article 2, Section I., Confidence Vote Instructions*,
- (3) not sending a Grand Council Proxy-Attendance Form two years in succession according to the provisions of *Article 4, Section E., Requirement to Attend Meetings and Send Proxies, Paragraph 1*,
- (4) non-payment of tithes annually, according to the provisions of *Article 8, Section B., Tithes, or*
- (5) action of the National Board, according to the provisions of *Article 3, Section B.1., Powers*.

A Member Coven or Solitary whose membership is revoked immediately loses all credentials, and any and all benefits of membership. A Member, whose membership is revoked due to non-payment of tithes, or failure to send a proxy twice in succession, must reapply for membership in the Covenant and must also reapply for credentials. Such a revoked Member may reapply immediately after the revocation becomes effective.

A Member Coven whose membership is suspended by action of the Board or revoked by Grand Council immediately loses any and all benefits of membership, as described in these Bylaws. These benefits can only be reauthorized by action of the Board or Grand Council, and if authorized, can only be reinstated by a new application for membership and/or credentials, as appropriate. A Member whose membership is revoked by a Vote of No Confidence may not reapply for membership in the Covenant for one year and one day from the date of revocation, and must reapply for credentials that were lost as a result of the revocation.

H. National Complaint Process

Any Member in good standing may file a complaint with any member of the National Board. All complaints must:

1. be submitted in writing,
2. enumerate the specific Charter provision, Bylaw or Policy that has been violated,
3. identify when and where the violation was committed and by whom.

The National Board shall review all complaints and determine if the complaint:

1. is of national or local concern,
2. constitutes a threat to the viability of the Covenant.

Complaints that are determined to be of local concern shall be referred to the Local Council in the area where the violation occurred. Local Councils are encouraged to utilize the resources of their Board Contact or other Elder resources to prevent escalation of local problems. A complaint shall be considered of national concern if the violation:

1. occurred in an area not serviced by a Local Council,
2. involves National Members of the Covenant,
3. involves more than one Local Council,
4. involves the conduct of members of the National Board or their appointed assistants,
5. directly threatens the function, perception or legal status of the Covenant as a whole,

6. or if repeated efforts at the local level have failed to achieve resolution.

A complaint shall be considered a threat to the viability of the Covenant only if:

1. it threatens the legal existence and/or financial solvency of the organization; and/or
2. it involves extreme negative public relations for the Covenant at the national level both within the Pagan community as a whole and/or the general population.

If a complaint is determined to be both of national concern and a threat to the viability of the Covenant the National Board shall convene a Council of Elders in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Policy Manual to investigate the complaint and offer a recommendation of action to the National Board.

If any individual refuses to participate in the complaint process, the Board may apply restrictive actions to the Member Coven or Solitary, up to and including forfeiture of membership.

I. Confidence Vote Instructions

1. Local Councils

A confidence vote is limited to Local Councils and is taken in the following manner:

- a. Any Member of a Local Council in good standing may request a confidence vote regarding the membership of another Coven or Solitary within the Local Council by informing the Local Council Membership Officer or another Local Council Board Officer. The request shall:
 - i. be submitted in writing,
 - ii. enumerate the specific Charter provision, Bylaw or Policy that has been violated, and
 - iii. identify when and where and by whom the violation was committed.
- b. Upon receipt, the Local Council Board Officers shall review the Vote of No Confidence request(s) and determine via consensus (minus any Officers who are a party to the Vote of No Confidence) if the request:
 - i. is of local concern, and
 - ii. violates any of the Covenant's governing documents
- c. Within ten (10) calendar days of receipt of the request for Vote of No Confidence, the LC Board shall take the following action(s):
 - i. If the Vote of No Confidence request is determined to be invalid, the Local Council Board shall return the request with a written explanation as to how this request did not meet the standard, or
 - ii. If the Vote of No Confidence request is determined to be valid:
 - 1) the Local Council Membership Officer shall immediately notify all Members by letter and/or email that a confidence vote has been called,
 - 2) cite by whom and against whom the allegations have been made.
 - 3) A copy of the Vote of No Confidence request(s) along with all allegations and supporting documentation shall be provided to every Member Coven and Assembly of Solitaries (including all parties to the Vote of No Confidence) and to the National Board. The National Board is notified for informational purposes only and no action is required by the National Board.
- d. The Local Council Board shall schedule a meeting of the Local Council to be held within 45 days of receipt of the Vote of No Confidence request. At this meeting, the Coven or Solitary against whom the Vote of No Confidence has been called shall be provided an opportunity to respond to the allegations and for Local Council Members to question all involved parties.
- e. The Local Council Board shall make certain that the date selected will ensure the greatest attendance of Local Council Members, and specifically the Member(s) who brought the Vote of No Confidence and against whom the Vote of No Confidence was called.
- f. A second meeting to conduct the Confidence Vote shall be held no more than 60 days from the date that the Vote of No Confidence notification was sent by the Local Council Board to all Local Council Members. A ballot shall be distributed at this meeting and used to determine the outcome of the vote.
- g. The ballot shall call for a vote of "Confidence," "No Confidence" or "Abstain" in the party calling the confidence vote and also call for a vote of "Confidence," "No Confidence," or "Abstain" in the party against whom the confidence vote has been called. No other information shall be on or with the ballot.

- h. A vote of "No Confidence" by two-thirds (2/3) of all possible votes in the Local Council shall be required to revoke a Member's Charter.
 - i. A call for a confidence vote may be withdrawn any time prior to the distribution of ballots.
2. *General Provisions of Confidence Votes*
- a. No veto may be cast in a confidence vote.
 - b. No proxies may be used in a confidence vote. All votes must be cast in the same manner whether in person or by mail. Meeting and voting should follow the Bylaw procedures of *Article 4, Meetings*.
 - c. each Member Coven and each Assembly of Solitaries shall have one vote. Each Coven and Assembly of Solitaries vote shall be cast in person by an individual designated by each Coven or Assembly of Solitaries.
 - d. The outcome of the confidence vote shall be forwarded to the National Membership Officer and the National Board. The Publications Officer shall publish the results of the Vote of No Confidence in the next issue of the CoG Newsletter.
 - e. The National Membership Officer, upon notification that a Local Council Coven or Solitary Member has received a two-thirds (2/3) majority to revoke membership, shall amend all records and send notification to said Member within seven (7) calendar days that their Charter has been revoked by this procedure and they have lost all credentials, and any and all benefits of membership. The Local Council Member (to include all persons in an affected Coven) shall be removed from all Covenant electronic listserves.
 - f. Members who have had their membership revoked through a Local Council confidence vote may appeal their revocation to the National Board. Decisions made by the National Board may be appealed at the next Grand Council.
 - g. Between the time a Member requests a confidence vote and the time a vote is either taken or withdrawn, neither the Member who calls a confidence vote, nor any Member against whom a confidence vote is called, may transfer membership from a Local Council to National status, or have her, his, or its membership transferred by action of a Local or National Board.

J. Restrictive Actions

Restrictive Actions against individuals in which membership in the Covenant is retained can include: (1) revocation of credentials, and therefore the eligibility to hold them, (2) ineligibility to represent a Member in Council, (3) prohibition from attendance at CoG functions, and (4) ineligibility to hold office and (5) restriction of access to CoG Member-only electronic listserves. These benefits can only be reauthorized by the action of the Board or Grand Council. If reauthorized, revoked Credentials may only be reinstated by a new application for credentials.

K. Non-Voting Associates

There shall be a class of non-voting Associates of the Covenant as provided for under *Article 2 A., Classes of Membership*, which shall include individuals, covens, and student groups. Association with the Covenant shall not confer the right to vote, hold office, or any other rights of membership. The Covenant reserves the right to decline the acceptance of or renewal of an Associate.

1. Criteria for Association with the Covenant

- a. An Associate of the Covenant shall be an individual, coven, or student group, which does not otherwise meet the requirements of membership in the Covenant as stated in *Article 2, Membership and Affiliation*, of the Bylaws of the Covenant.
- b. In order that Associates of the Covenant meet basic criteria for association with the Covenant that is in accord with the membership of the Covenant, all Associates must meet the following criteria that shall be attested to on the application for association.
- c. An Associate must self-identify as a Witch or Wiccan.
- d. An Associate must be at least 18 years of age.
- e. An Associate's beliefs and practices must be compatible with the statements "I worship the Goddess" or "I worship the Goddess and the old Gods."
- f. An Associate must agree to subscribe to the Code of Ethics as defined in *Article 9, Ethics*, of the Bylaws of the Covenant.
- g. An Associate must provide a letter of introduction and statement of eligibility, which will be published in the newsletter. A Letter of Recommendation from a Member of the Covenant is strongly encouraged but not required.
- h. Associate status shall be pending until publication of the following newsletter.

- i. Associates shall receive the newsletter in pdf format upon request, membership prices at all Covenant events, contact with willing elders, and access to an electronic listserve for Associates and willing CoG members. No confidential Covenant information shall be available to Associates.
 - j. Administration of the Associate program shall be the responsibility of the Membership Officer who will send a letter of welcome to the Associate outlining their status and rules, provide Associate Identification cards, and any other necessary information.
 - k. Associates are encouraged to participate in Local Council activities and may be subject to Local Council tithes.
 - l. Annual Associate tithes shall be determined at the same time as Member tithes at Grand Council.
 - m. Associates admitted under Local Council procedures established before the formalization of the current process are grandfathered Associates and retain their Associate status so long as they renew through their Local Council.
2. *Application Procedures*
 Associates apply just as members apply; through Local Councils if they are in the area served by a Local Council or through National if they are not.
3. *Renewal of Participation*
- a. Associate participation is for a specified period of 12 months.
 - b. Renewals shall be handled in the same manner as the original application:
 - (1) Through the Local Council if the original application was through a Local Council.
 - (2) Through the National Membership Officer if the original application was through National.

Article 3. The Officers and the Board

A. Officers of the Covenant

1. Elected Officers

The elected officers of the Covenant shall be as follows: First Officer, Second Officer, Pursewarden, Publications Officer, Public Information Officer, Membership Officer, Recorder, and Correspondence Officer. Two or more offices may be performed by one individual. More than one individual may fill a single office. At least five individuals must be elected.

2. Duties

All Officers' materials shall be promptly forwarded to the succeeding Officers at the end of the term, which is October 31st. Materials not received by the succeeding Officer by November 30th will result in restrictive actions taken against the outgoing Officer by the National Board according to *Article 2, J., Restrictive Actions*, of the Bylaws of the Covenant. These actions shall remain in effect until the newly elected Officer notifies the National Board that all materials have been received.

In addition to complying with all provisions of the Charter, these Bylaws, and all policy decisions of the Council, attending all meetings of the Board as described in *Article 3, Section B., The Board of the Covenant*, and assuring the continued and effective operations of the Covenant, the elected Officers of the Covenant shall perform the following specific functions:

a. First Officer

The First Officer shall coordinate the activities of the national officers, chair all meetings of the Council and the Board, and may speak for the membership of the Covenant within the parameters provided by the Charter, these Bylaws and policy decisions of the Council. She or he may act as a voting Member of any committee. The First Officer may use the title President when dealing with the public. Should the First Officer be unable to serve, and in the absence of a co-First Officer, the Board shall elect a First Officer pro tem from among their number.

b. Second Officer

The Second Officer shall be responsible for organizing the next Annual Meeting and MerryMeet. Any Local Council, group, or set of individuals who has been given the responsibility of organizing Grand Council and/or MerryMeet by the Covenant shall have a designated Pursewarden for the event(s). The Event Pursewarden shall submit to the National Pursewarden a monthly accounting report that includes itemized listing of expenditures and revenues. The report shall also include any and all financial commitments made with regards to Grand Council/MerryMeet even if funds have not yet been expended for the commitment. The monthly accounting reports shall begin upon receipt of any money from the Covenant or six (6) months before the scheduled date of Grand Council and/or MerryMeet, whichever comes first. The National Pursewarden shall review these reports monthly and

share any and all concerns both with the Second Officers for that Grand Council/MerryMeet and with the National Board. By the end of her or his term of office, the Second Officer shall provide to the Board a full accounting of all finances and material assets involved in organizing and producing the Annual Meeting and MerryMeet.

c. Pursewarden

The Pursewarden shall keep and be responsible for all the accounts and funds of the Covenant, shall maintain the financial books of the Covenant in compliance with the law and Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, and shall have general supervisory powers over all financial concerns of the Covenant. She or he shall collect and promptly deposit in the Covenant's bank account(s) all items of income to the Covenant, including those from any fund-raising activities, and shall make payments from these monies as authorized by the Council or the Board. The Pursewarden shall prepare and present a financial statement at the Annual Meeting of the Council and at each meeting of the Board, and shall prepare an annual budget for the following year to be presented for approval at the Annual Meeting of the Council. She or he shall also submit to the Publications Officer a summary of the Covenant's financial activity for the previous fiscal year by December 1st of each year, for publication in the Yule issue of the CoG Newsletter. As supervisor of the financial concerns of the Covenant, the Pursewarden may close the checking account and confiscate the funds contained in such an account of any Local Council which fails to submit timely financial reports two quarters in a row; the National Pursewarden shall handle the finances of that Local Council until Grand Council, in consultation with the Local Council, and determines that the Local Council is able to comply with *Article 6, Section C., Required Activities of a Local Council* of these Bylaws. Local Councils may choose to have the National Pursewarden handle their finances for them. The Pursewarden may use the title Treasurer or Treasurer/Secretary when dealing with the public and financial institutions.

i. Assistant Pursewarden

A newly elected Pursewarden will immediately take office as assistant to the current Pursewarden for the remainder of the current fiscal year to become familiar with the duties and responsibilities of the office and the Covenant's accounting system.

ii. Pursewarden Emerita

The term of an outgoing Pursewarden will extend through the first quarter of the ensuing fiscal year. The Pursewarden Emerita will have the following responsibilities:

- Complete the financial paperwork for the previous fiscal year in requisite format for the COG accountant to prepare the tax filing for that fiscal year.
- Conduct the recruitment of candidates for Internal Auditors for the previous fiscal year and present the candidates to the National Board for approval.

d. Publications Officer

The Publications Officer shall be responsible for publishing the CoG Newsletter as directed by the Council. The Publications Officer shall take editorial responsibility for the content of the newsletter, including compliance with Members' confidentiality levels. She or he shall publish notification of business conducted by the Council or the Board. She or he shall be responsible for maintaining the mailing list of all who are entitled to receive Covenant publications. The Publications Officer shall comply with the confidentiality provisions of *Article 10, Section B., Covenant Mailing List*, and shall arrange special mailings or notifications as required by the Council or the Board.

e. Public Information Officer

The Public Information Officer shall develop and disseminate general information regarding the Covenant and Our Religion where appropriate, within the guidelines set by the Council and the Board. She or he shall work under the regular supervision of the First Officer, and shall coordinate her or his efforts with those performing the public information function in each Local Council.

f. Membership Officer

The Membership Officer shall disseminate information on membership requirements to those who request it, process the applications for membership in the Covenant, issue membership documents, maintain a record of the names, addresses, telephone numbers and confidentiality levels of each Coven Contact, maintain a record of all Members of the Covenant, and submit an annually updated list of newsletter subscribers to the Publications Officer and provide other contact information as required by Board Officers. She or he shall maintain all membership records in strictest confidentiality, releasing information only to members of the Board or others authorized by the Members affected. She or he shall supervise the Local Council Membership Officers or those fulfilling that function in each Local Council. The National Membership Officer shall be responsible for ascertaining, as best she or he can, whether any ad hoc or established association of covens that applies for a Charter as a Local

Council is in fact entitled to receive it. The Charter, if issued, shall be subject to the provision that the local covens which receive it shall promptly determine which covens and persons meet the criteria for the various classes of membership or affiliation established in *Article 2, Membership and Affiliation*, and shall promptly begin to comply with all provisions of the Charter and these Bylaws. The Membership Officer shall handle all functions relating to non-voting Associates as required in *Article 2, Section K., Non-Voting Associates, Paragraph 1.j*. The Membership Officer shall authorize and issue credentials, upon receipt of requests from the contact persons of Member Covens in good standing, and from Local and National Assemblies of Solitaries, certifying that the requirements listed in *Article 7, Credentials*, of these Bylaws have been met. However, it is NOT the task of the Membership Officer to investigate or judge the qualifications of an applicant for credentials when such applicant is vouched for by an Elder Priest/ess of that Coven and/or the Local Membership Officer. The Membership Officer shall maintain a record of all those who hold credentials from the Covenant.

g. Recorder

The Recorder shall prepare and maintain records of all business conducted at all meetings of the Council and the Board, and shall be prepared to read from such records concerning past meetings if asked to do so by the Council or the Board. The Recorder shall supply minutes of all meetings to the Publications Officer in a timely manner. The Recorder shall make the final determination regarding the official minutes after taking into account the policies and procedures of the Covenant as well as any corrections or comments of Members, but subject to the approval of the Board for Board meetings, and Grand Council with regard to the minutes of Grand Council. The Recorder shall issue revised copies of the Bylaws to all Members whenever the Council approves changes in these Bylaws. The Recorder shall also revise the Policy Manual annually to include such policy changes as were made by the Grand Council at the most recent annual meeting. The incoming National Recorder will assist in completing Grand Council minutes, Bylaws and Policy Manuals for the Covenant, by November 1st.

h. Correspondence Officer

The Correspondence Officer shall promptly answer inquiries not directly related to the functions of the other officers.

3. *Officer Assistants*

Officers of the Covenant may, with the advice and consent of the Board, appoint assistants, who are themselves CoG Members, or a part of a Member Coven, to help them carry out their duties in a timely and efficient manner.

4. *Eligibility for Office*

Eligibility for national office shall be membership in good standing in Covenant of the Goddess, active participation in its affairs and projects, and eligibility for Elder Priest/ess credentials. Eligibility for local office shall be membership in good standing in a Local Council of CoG, active participation in its affairs and projects, and eligibility for clergy Priest/ess credentials.

5. *Election*

Officers of the Covenant shall be elected at the Annual Meeting by a simple majority of Voting Members. Second Officers may be elected one year in advance to facilitate the planning of MerryMeet. The veto may not be used in the election of officers.

B. The Board of the Covenant

1. *Powers*

The Board shall be empowered to provide continuing oversight of the affairs of the Covenant between Council meetings, to carry out the proposals adopted by the Council, to carry on all routine business of the Covenant, and at all times to act in what it deems to be the best interests of the Covenant.

2. *Composition*

The Board shall be comprised of the Officers elected by the Council at the Annual Meeting. Any Second Officers elected one year in advance are not members of the Board until the beginning of the regular term of office for which they were elected. At no time may the Board exceed thirteen persons. The Board of a Local Council shall consist of at least three officers.

3. *Remuneration*

The members of the Board shall serve without pay. They may jointly or severally acquire office equipment and appoint whatever assistants they deem necessary, and may arrange such financial remuneration of these assistants as may be approved by the Council or the Board.

4. *Board Meetings*

a. Calling a Meeting

A meeting of the Board may be called by the First Officer or by one-third (1/3) of its members. Whenever possible, an agenda for each meeting will be circulated to the entire board and posted to the Covenant Announcements, Information and Reports (AIR) email list at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting.

b. Quorum

The quorum needed for an official meeting of the Board shall be two-thirds (2/3) of its members. However, a document circulated by mail, of which copies are read and signed by every member of the Board, shall be considered to have been voted upon at an official meeting of the Board.

c. Procedural Rules

The Board shall adopt whatever procedural rules it deems necessary for the proper conduct of its meetings.

d. Decision-Making

The Board shall strive for unanimity in its decisions; when consensus is not possible, an affirmative vote of a majority of the Board shall be required for the adoption of a proposal by the Board.

e. Minutes

Minutes of all board meetings will be published in the newsletter and Announcements, Information and Reports (AIR) email list.

5. *Filling Vacancies*

If a vacancy occurs on the Board, the First Officer shall appoint a person who is eligible for office to fill the vacant post, subject to confirmation by the Board. This person shall serve until the new Board is elected at the next Annual Meeting of the Council.

6. *Council Meetings*

Members of the Board are required to attend Council meetings.

7. *Consecutive Terms*

No member of the Board may serve for more than four consecutive years without a two-year rest. Within these four years, no member of the Board may serve for more than two consecutive terms in the same office.

8. *Continuing Qualification*

If a member of the Board leaves membership in the Coven or Assembly of Solitaries which qualified the person for election to the Board, that person may serve out the term for which she or he was elected subject to vote of consensus-minus one (the officer in question) of the Board. If at the end of that term the person has not become eligible to hold office, the person may not be re-elected. In case of any question, the Membership Officer shall investigate and recommend action.

C. Resignation and Removal

1. *Resignation*

If an Officer determines that she or he is unable to perform the functions of the office to which she or he was elected, the Officer shall be allowed to resign that Office, without prejudice to that person's eligibility to later serve as an Officer of the Covenant.

2. *Removal*

If an officer is unable or refuses to perform the duties of the office to which she or he was elected, and the Board determines that the failure of this Officer to act is having a serious and detrimental effect upon the Covenant, that Officer may be removed from Office. The Board may remove such an Officer by a vote of consensus-minus one (the Officer in question) of the Board, and the Officer in question will be recused.

Article 4: Meetings

A. Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Council shall take place once each year, prior to the end of the fiscal year at Samhain. The Board shall select the date, time, and place for the meeting and the Publications Officer shall publish these particulars in the CoG Newsletter at least four months before the date chosen.

B. Special Meeting

A meeting of the Council may be called at any time by the Board, but such a meeting shall not be considered a regular Annual Meeting. No meeting of the Council shall be held without 60 days written notice to each Member of a Special Council Meeting. Notice shall be sent to the address on file for each Member.

C. Meeting by Mail

The Board may, on its own initiative, or shall upon written request from 20% of the Member Covens, circulate any proposal, including a proposal to amend the Charter or these Bylaws, to be voted upon by the Members, by the following procedure:

1. The Publications Officer shall send a copy of all necessary documents to each Member, including a blank Ballot regarding the proposal. Members shall promptly return their votes on the proposal to the Publications Officer.
2. When every Member has been heard from, or after a predetermined deadline, allowing at least six weeks for decision, the Publications Officer shall tabulate the votes and report to the Board.
3. A proposal voted upon by this procedure shall be deemed to have been voted upon at a meeting of the Council, and so a veto may be cast concerning it.
4. Records of such a procedure shall be maintained and reported to the Covenant as the proceedings of any Council meeting are reported.

D. Quorum

No meeting of the Council may be held unless a quorum is present. A quorum will be determined in the following manner:

1. First, at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the Member Covens and registered Solitary Caucuses from the Continental United States must be physically or virtually represented at the meeting; and
2. At least fifty percent (50%) of all Member Covens and registered Solitary Caucuses must either be physically/virtually represented, or represented by proxy at the Meeting.
3. If a Member Coven notifies the National Board that they do not intend to renew their membership, and such notification is received in advance of Grand Council, said Member Coven shall not count toward quorum, even if their membership expires after Grand Council. If said Member Coven(s) is/are represented in person or by proxy at Grand Council, they retain their membership rights for the purposes of Grand Council.
4. Once quorum for the Council has been established, quorum will be deemed to continue. If delegates or representatives absent themselves and do not declare otherwise, they are presumed to have given their proxy to the Council as a whole, unless:
 - a. Fewer than 25% of the delegates/representatives are physically/virtually present, or a vote is called and quorum is questioned from the floor.

E. Requirement to Attend Meetings and Appoint Proxies

1. Each registered Coven, Solitary and Solitary Caucus shall send a representative or a proxy to the annual Grand Council. Any Coven or Solitary failing to do so shall become a Provisional Member. Any Coven or Solitary failing to send a representative or a proxy two years in a row shall lose its, her or his membership and can only be reinstated by a new application for membership.
2. Solitary Members may choose to appoint Grand Council as a whole to carry a proxy, or may form a Solitary Caucus with at least two other Solitary Members
3. A Coven or Solitary Caucus may appoint as its proxy any Member of the Covenant who is both eligible to vote at a Meeting of the Council and physically represented at such a Meeting. Alternatively, a Coven may appoint the Council as a whole as proxy.
 - a. A proxy may be general or specific.
 - b. A proxy for a Regular, Trial, or Provisional Member Coven must be signed by that Coven's Contact. A proxy for a Solitary Caucus must be signed by all members of the Solitary Caucus. At least one member of the Solitary Caucus must be eligible for Elder Priest/ess credentials.
 - c. An individual may physically represent more than one coven, provided she or he is a member of that coven. No individual may act as proxy for more than five Covens, Solitary Caucuses, or any combination thereof. No individual may cast more than six votes.
 - d. When individuals hold dual memberships in an Assembly of Solitaries and in a Member Coven, their voting rights as a Solitary are suspended for as long as they retain their membership in the member Coven.

- e. Virtual attendees cannot carry proxies.
- f. When a member is attending both physically and by electronic means, their physical presence takes precedence over virtual participation.

F. Procedures for Meetings

The First Officer shall chair all meetings of the Council and the Board. The individual appointed to chair any committee of the Council or Board shall chair all meetings of that committee.

1. At any meeting of the Council, the Board, or a Committee, the Chair shall recognize speakers, decide whether comments are relevant to the topic under discussion, decide the order in which topics are to be discussed, and make whatever other decisions are needed to enable the meeting to proceed effectively.
2. At any meeting of the Council, decisions shall be made by the following process: each issue raised shall be thoroughly discussed by all present who wish to discuss it. All points of view, suggestions, and objections shall be taken into account in shaping a proposal about how to deal with the issue, until official representatives are agreed that the best possible proposal for the moment has been arrived at. Only if such unanimity cannot be reached shall the Council vote on a proposal.
3. Members of the Local and National Assemblies of Solitaries or members of any Member Coven shall be entitled to attend and speak at any meeting of the Council. Only a voting member may place a proposal before the Council for a decision. Any challenge to a decision by the Membership Officer concerning such entitlement shall be heard and adjudicated by the Council before the meeting begins. Non-members of the Covenant who satisfy the Membership Officer that they are bona fide members of Our Religion may be allowed to observe Council Meetings. In rare instances, attendance at particular discussions of Grand Council may be limited solely to Members.
4. Any person who is a Voting Member of the body that is meeting may challenge any ruling of the Chair. Such a challenge shall be voted upon immediately. A majority of the Voting Members shall be able to uphold or overturn the ruling of the Chair; a tied vote shall be considered to uphold the ruling of the Chair. When Grand Council calls for a review of the Board's actions, Board members may not veto during the review or the call for review.

G. Solitary Caucuses

For the sole purpose of participating in the Annual Meeting (Grand Council) Solitaries may form Solitary Caucuses and send either their representative(s) or their proxy to Grand Council.

1. A Solitary Caucus may have more than, but must not have fewer than three members. One of these members must be eligible for Elder Priest/ess Credentials. Solitary Caucuses may consist of Local Council Solitaries, National Solitaries, or both.
2. A Solitary Caucus shall enjoy the same rights, privileges and responsibilities as any Member Coven for the duration of the specific Grand Council for which it was formed, including but not limited to:
 - a. inclusion in the quorum count for Grand Council,
 - b. the ability to cast a veto as part of the consensus process at Grand Council,
 - c. the ability to vote in the election of National Officers and budget with one vote per Solitary Caucus.
3. Solitaries shall have the ability to belong to different Solitary Caucuses in different years, but no Solitary may belong to more than one Solitary Caucus at a given Grand Council.
4. All Covens, Solitaries and Solitary Caucuses must be formed and registered with the National Membership Officer by the Attendance/Proxy Form deadline set by the National Membership Officer.
5. A Solitary Caucus that has submitted a Solitary Caucus Proxy/Attendance form, but whose representative or proxy holder does not attend Grand Council will not be counted for purposes of establishing quorum.
6. A Solitary Caucus automatically dissolves at the official conclusion of Grand Council. If the same three Solitaries wish to form a Solitary Caucus for a future Grand Council, they must submit a new Grand Council Proxy/Attendance Form notifying the National Membership Officer.

H. Voting Rights and Voting Members

Each Regular Member, Trial Member, Provisional Member, and Solitary Caucus shall have one vote at the Annual Meeting. Only Regular Members and Solitary Caucuses may cast a veto.

1. For the Annual Meeting, the term Voting Members is hereby defined as representatives of Regular Members, Trial Members, Provisional Members, or Solitary Caucuses of the Covenant who are physically/virtually present at a Council meeting.
2. For meetings of a Local Council, the term Voting Members is hereby defined as representatives of Regular Members, Trial Members, Provisional Members, or Assembly of Solitaries of the Covenant who are

physically/virtually present at a Local Council meeting.

3. When a quorum (as defined in *Article 4, Section D., Quorum*, of these bylaws) of the Council is present, Members of the Covenant who are represented by proxy shall also be Voting Members.

I. Representation

1. A Coven or Solitary Caucus shall be free to designate whichever of its members it pleases, or a Proxy, to exercise its vote at any one meeting of Grand Council. In the case of a Local Council, a Coven or Assembly of Solitaries shall be free to designate whichever of its members it pleases, or a Proxy, to exercise its vote at any one meeting of the Council. All persons thus chosen as representatives must be members in good standing.
2. The Local Council Board will encourage and assist members of its Local Council Assembly of Solitaries in contacting each other to form Solitary Caucuses, share concerns, pick representatives to the Annual Grand Council meeting, and/or prepare a proxy. The National Membership Officer will fulfill this responsibility for the National Assembly of Solitaries.

J. Types of Votes

When a vote of the Council is necessary, there shall be four types of votes possible: affirmative, abstention, negative, and veto.

1. A veto which is cast shall immediately defeat the proposal under consideration. A veto may be cast only in the case of such extreme dissent regarding the proposal coming under question that, were there no veto, the dissenting Member would leave the Covenant. A veto may not be cast under any other circumstances. A veto may not be cast by proxy or by a virtual attendee. A veto may be cast at a meeting of the Council only by a Voting Member (i.e., Regular Coven Member or Solitary Caucus Member) who is physically present and entitled to cast one.
2. The phrase "subject to unanimous consent" in the Charter and these Bylaws shall be understood as referring to the veto power.

K. Results of Veto

At all times the Council should aim to make decisions by consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, other methods should be explored, such as continuing discussion by referral to a committee, or by trial of method for a period of time, followed by reassessment. If the matter is pressing, the bylaws allow for a vote to be taken. A proposal can be adopted by the Council only by a Passing Vote, which shall consist of affirmative votes cast by at least fifty percent (50%) of the Voting Members, with no veto cast.

Article 5: Committees

To provide for the proper governance and functioning of the Covenant, the Council or the Board shall establish, maintain, and disband Committees as it sees fit, and shall establish such procedural rules as may be necessary to augment the rules provided in these Bylaws.

Article 6: Local Councils

A. Composition

Local Councils shall be comprised of Covens which are geographically proximate. Only one Local Council shall be chartered in a geographic area, which shall be defined by the Board working with geographically proximate Member Covens. The extent of the geographical area covered by a Local Council shall be determined by the ability of that Local Council to serve all of the covens within that Local Council. In special circumstances, as described below in this Article, when recommended by the affected Local Council(s) and the National Board, the Council may make or allow more than one Local Council in a geographic area.

1. Any three or more Covens, of at least two Traditions of Our Religion, which are qualified to hold Regular Membership in the Covenant, may be chartered as a Local Council of the Covenant. Grand Council may make exceptions to this rule in special circumstances.
2. If two or more Covens wish to form a Local Council but are unable, for good reasons which have been investigated by the Membership Officer, to fulfill the requirements of *Article 6, Section A., Composition*, they may be admitted as a Provisional Local Council, with the understanding that they will complete the requirements for membership within one year. A Provisional Local Council may exist for a period of one year and one day, after which they will either be admitted as a full Local Council or the Local Council will be deemed not to exist.
3. Ideally, Local Councils should form around the members they serve, should be reasonably sized to afford easy transit to meetings, and should meet frequently enough, (at least quarterly is recommended) to offer ready and practical service and response to members. It is practical, but not required, to include local ~~councils within state boundaries, which may reflect local regulations applied to religious groups within a~~

particular jurisdiction.

4. Any established Local Council that drops below the membership threshold shall maintain active status in Covenant of the Goddess, as long as they retain two covens in different traditions and one assembly of solitaries with at least three members. This bylaw shall in no way change the process of establishing a Local Council.

B. Effect of Covenant, Bylaws, and Policies

Except where it is provided otherwise, all provisions of the Charter, these Bylaws, or policy decisions of the Council which concern the Council, its Board, or its Committees, shall be interpreted in reasonable ways as applying to the Local Council, its Board, and its Committees. Each Local Council shall be structured and shall function as the Covenant as a whole is structured and functions. Each Local Council shall be otherwise autonomous and free to conduct its affairs as it sees fit, including the election of its Board.

C. Required Activities

1. All Local Councils must:
 - a. Meet at least once a year;
 - b. Elect at least three individuals as local officers and notify the National First Officer of the names of the local officers by December 15 annually;
 - c. Promptly act on all membership applications from their area;
 - d. Submit quarterly Financial Reports to the National Pursewarden; and
 - e. Send concise copies of the minutes of all general Local Council meetings to the CoG Newsletter for publication, within 45 days of the meeting recorded, or within 45 days of the meeting where the previous minutes are approved.
2. If a Local Council fails to comply with the provisions of this section, the National Board may change the status of the Local Council to that of Provisional Local Council until they comply. If compliance is not obtained in a year and a day, the Board may revoke the Provisional Local Council's charter.

D. Affinity Groups

Within a Local Council, Affinity Groups may be established to further the interests and aims of two or more Local Council Members who share common interests and aims other than their tradition of Our Religion. Covens may, at their discretion, join one or more Affinity Groups. Affinity Groups will approve Affinity Group membership, determine the frequency and purpose of their meetings and select and follow through on their own projects and activities. Affinity Groups shall keep the Local Council First Officer and other appropriate officers informed of their activities. Affinity Groups are encouraged to invite membership by CoG Members beyond Local Council boundaries.

E. Overlapping Local Council Boundaries

1. Except in special circumstances, overlapping Local Council boundaries should be avoided. Division of a Local Council should aim to divide the former area so that the boundaries of the resulting Local Councils do not overlap and are as discrete as possible. In the process of setting boundaries, the Board and the affected Local Councils are urged to avoid gerrymandering. If overlaps are unavoidable, the overlapping area should constitute a minimal area of the resulting Local Councils.
2. Overlapping Local Councils' boundaries may be visualized in a manner analogous to the way several covensteads may coexist in a given town, with coven members residing within the whole area. It must be permissible for member covens and solitaries of overlapping Local Councils to transfer between Local Councils if they wish, according to established membership procedures. The overlapping Local Councils must adopt communication procedures to allow ease in transferring, and to avoid any unfair advantage accruing to one Local Council. Members of either Local Council may renew at the national level if they wish. Overlapping or adjoining Local Councils may collaborate on projects such as fundraising, festivals, clerical concerns, or other issues of mutual interest. It may be possible for members who wish to join both Local Councils to do so if they can be active in the projects of both.

F. Dividing an Existing Local Council

Ideally, decisions about dividing a Local Council are best reached by the Local Council members directly affected. The decision to divide a Local Council represents a critical stage for the Local Council and must be approached with serious consideration. Within an area already covered by an existing Local Council, a potential Local Council—defined in this instance as at least three covens of two traditions—may follow the procedures below to register their desire to form a new Local Council. If fewer than three covens wish to secede, they should instead renew at the National level.

1. *Registering the Issue*

A potential new Local Council must first make a good faith effort to discuss the issue with the membership of the original Local Council, and the members of the original Local Council must be informed about the proposal to form a new Local Council before the issue can be registered with the National Board or Grand Council. The proposal may not be registered unless it can be demonstrated that (a) the initial effort to discuss the issue has been made, and that (b) informed representatives of both groups are ready and able to present their issues to the Board or the membership.

2. *Negotiation*

After the issue is registered with the Board or Grand Council, the parties have up to six months to reach a reasonable compromise through local negotiations. If the parties wish for national intervention prior to the end of the six-month local discussion period, all affected factions must make the request. A separation may not be authorized by the Board or Grand Council prior to the end of the six (6) month period unless it can be demonstrated that (a) a local effort to discuss the issue has been made, (b) and a reasonable and workable compromise has been reached.

3. *Intervention*

If no workable compromise can be reached after six months, the Board or Grand Council may intervene directly, may appoint a mediator who will report to the Board on the progress of mediation, or may set deadlines for further action on the process. As a result of this process, the Board or Grand Council may authorize the creation of a new Local Council. When a division occurs, members of the previous Local Council shall have until the next renewal period to decide if they wish to join one or the other Local Council, or to renew at the National level.

G. Process of Creating a New Local Council

1. Covens which feel that they satisfy the criteria of *Article 6 A., Local Council Composition* and wish to form a new Local Council, should notify the National Membership Officer of their intent to attempt to form a Local Council in their area, by sending the National Membership Officer a Notice of Intent, which at the minimum details the membership and geographic area which their Local Council shall comprise. Upon this notification, the National Membership Officer shall contact all parties that would make up the proposed new Local Council, as well as all other geographically proximate Covenant of the Goddess Members, regarding their wishes with respect to the new Local Council. The National Membership Officer will consider all other relevant factors, including relevant Bylaws, history, and opinions of nearby Local Councils, regarding establishment of this proposed new Local Council.

It is recommended, though not required, that covens which would wish to form a new Local Council first form an Affinity Group for as long a time as possible prior to the establishment of the new Local Council.

2. Notification of the general Covenant of the intent to form a proposed new Local Council, or the completion of the process of Dividing an Existing Local Council as detailed in *Article 6, Section F.,* of these Bylaws, shall be published in the CoG Newsletter.
3. After undertaking a review of the proposed new Local Council, including soliciting input from nearby Local Councils possibly affected by the change, the National Membership Officer shall take all relevant facts to the National Board. After deliberation the National Board shall decide either to support the establishment of the new Local Council, to deny the new Local Council's formation, or to recommend changes to the new Local Council's proposed structure. The full details of the decision shall be published in the CoG Newsletter in the next issue following this decision.
4. Denial by the National Board of a request to form a new Local Council may be appealed at Grand Council. If an appeal is requested, publication of the grounds for the appeal should likewise be published in the Newsletter at least one issue prior to Grand Council. Unanimous consent of Grand Council for the formation of the proposed new Local Council must still be obtained in the case of an appeal.

Article 7: Credentials

A. Credentials Available from the Covenant

The following credentials are available from the Covenant: Priest/ess Credentials, Elder Priest/ess Credentials, and Handfasting Certificates. In order for any credentials or Charter of Membership issued by the Covenant to confer any legal status on the individual or Coven who receives it, certain information may have to be filed with the appropriate state or local government.

B. Criteria for Obtaining Credentials

1. *Priest/ess Credentials*

In order to be eligible to receive Priest/ess Credentials, a person shall:

- a. be an active Member of a Coven that is a Member in good standing; or be a Member in good standing of a Local Council Assembly of Solitaries;
- b. have been Formally Accepted into Training for the Clergy in a coven in a manner that entails taking on the full commitment to the requirements of that coven's Tradition of Our Religion;
- c. have undergone at least a full year of active training for the priesthood of Our Religion; and
- d. pledge to abide by all provisions of the Charter, these Bylaws, and all policy decisions of the Council.

2. *Elder Priest/ess Credentials*

In order to be eligible to receive Elder Priest/ess Credentials, clergy of Our Religion shall:

- a. Be an active Member of a Coven that is a Member in good standing; or be a Member in good standing of either a Local Council Assembly of Solitaries or the National Assembly of Solitaries.
- b. Satisfy the criteria b, c, and d of *Article 7 Section B.1., Priest/ess Credentials*,
- c. Have undergone at least one additional full year of active training for the ministry, after the year specified in Section B.1., Priest/ess Credentials of this Article and
- d. Be in fact fully able to establish a coven, admit members to it, and train them in all the tenets and practices of her or his tradition of Our Religion.

In order to actually receive Priest/ess Credentials, a person shall, in addition to the requirements listed in Paragraph 1 above:

- a. Attest to a competent knowledge of the duties of clergy members as mandated reporters under the laws of the jurisdiction(s) in which they practice.

In order to actually receive Elder Priest/ess Credentials, a person shall in addition to the requirements listed in Paragraph 2 above:

- a. attest to a competent knowledge of the duties of clergy members as mandated reporters under the laws of the jurisdiction(s) in which they practice.
- b. Be in fact able to educate coven members who are applying for Priest/ess Credentials in their responsibilities as mandated reporters under the laws of the jurisdictions(s) in which they practice. To this end, the Covenant provides educational resources on this and other responsibilities of the clergy.

3. *Handfasting Certificates*

When individuals, of whatever gender or number, wish to bond together in a loving and lasting relationship, their relationship may be solemnized in a handfasting, or rite of joining. If the rite is performed under the auspices of a Covenant Member and by an individual empowered to perform such rites by that Member's Tradition of Our Religion, the Member may apply for Credentials and Certificates available from the Covenant, thus registering the rite in the Covenant records.

4. *Other Certificates*

Grand Council may approve the creation and issuance of other types of certificates.

C. Procedures for Obtaining Credentials

In requesting Credentials from the Covenant, these procedures shall be followed:

1. the appropriate form shall be completed and signed by the individual requesting the Credentials and by the Coven Contact, if the credentials applicant is a Coven Member.
2. the appropriate fee, as set by the Council each year, shall accompany the form; and
3. the form and the fee shall be forwarded to the Local Council Membership Officer, in areas where a Local Council exists; or
4. this form shall be forwarded to the National Membership Officer, where no Local Council exists.

D. Responsibilities of the Local Council

The Local Council shall decide which individuals within the Local Assembly of Solitaries are eligible to receive Priest/ess Credentials or Elder Priest/ess Credentials.

E. Responsibilities of the Membership Officers

1. In areas where a Local Council exists, the Local Membership Officer shall ascertain, as best as she or he can, whether the request for Credentials has been properly executed, and shall also forward all documents and fees to the National Membership Officer.
2. In areas where a Local Council does not exist, the National Membership Officer shall ascertain, as best as she or he can, whether the request for Credentials has been properly executed. The National Membership Officer shall also forward any fees received to the Purswarden. Finally, the National Membership Officer

shall forward Credentials to individuals who apply and who meet the criteria and follow the procedures set forth for those Credentials.

3. Confirmation of the status within the Covenant of an individual holding credentials from the Covenant shall be made by the appropriate Membership Officer upon written request, which identifies the name and address of the entity to be informed, by the individual holding credentials.

F. Maintenance and Revocation of Credentials

1. Maintenance

All persons holding Credentials shall be required to report any changes in their status affecting their eligibility to hold those Credentials to the appropriate Membership Officer, and are also expected to keep the Membership Officer informed concerning their whereabouts as long as their Credentials are valid. Credentials must be renewed annually.

- a. Priest/ess Credentials shall remain valid only so long as the person remains an active Member of a Coven which remains a Member in good standing of the Covenant or is a Member in good standing of a Local Council's Assembly of Solitaries and is an active participant in the Local Council's affairs.
- b. Elder Priest/ess Credentials shall remain valid as long as:
 - i. the Elder Priest/ess is an active Elder of a Member Coven in good standing; or
 - ii. the Elder Priest/ess is a Member in good standing of a Local Council's Assembly of Solitaries and is an active participant in the Local Council's affairs; or
 - iii. the Elder Priest/ess is a Member in good standing of the National Assembly of Solitaries.
 - iv. if the Elder Priest/ess's membership status changes, she or he has one year and one day to establish a new status without losing the Elder Priest/ess Credentials.

2. Reinstatement of Credentials

Any Credentials that are revoked, suspended, or otherwise expired can be reinstated only by reapplication to, and recertification by, the National Membership Officer.

G. Fees for Credentials

The Covenant shall charge reasonable fees to cover all expenses involved in the issuing of credentials. Individuals requesting more than one credential shall pay a separate fee for each credential.

Article 8: Finances

A. Budget

At each Annual Meeting, the Pursewarden shall present a budget which includes the projected operating expenses of the Covenant for the next year, and the means to meet those expenses. This budget shall note all investments or other financial holdings in the name of or for the benefit of the Covenant. The budget shall also include all projected income from such investments or holdings. Approval of the budget as a whole shall be based on a simple majority vote. Approval of the budget as a whole or the vote thereon shall not be subject to veto. The Pursewarden shall estimate the amount of the projected expenses which will not be met. The Council shall then, by a passing vote, establish the amount of the tithe that each class of Member shall pay to the Covenant for that year, sufficient to cover projected operating expenses and maintain a reserve. The Board shall also have the authority to raise money in any way that does not involve further assessments of the members.

B. Tithes

[CoG will continue the current staggered system for national renewals for another two years (until GC 2013), at which time, Grand Council will revisit this process for further discussion.

In addition, those local councils that have local council tithes will have the option to, in consultation with the National Membership Officer, choose a single date on which all members within that local council will renew. This date should be based on the date on which the majority of that local council's members currently renew.

We note this proposal will require prorating for new members of those local councils, and the National Membership Officer, National Pursewarden and the Local Council Membership Officer representing those local councils are willing to work this out.]

1. Annual tithes are due on the Sabbath that the Member was approved, with a grace period of ten (10) days following that Sabbath (see schedule). The tithe shall be paid by each Member to the Pursewarden or a designated representative. A Member who is in arrears in paying the annual tithe shall automatically have all voting rights and other privileges suspended. If the tithe has not been paid before the final deadline, the membership shall be revoked, and can only be reinstated by a new application for membership.

Renewal Date List

Renewal Date	Final deadline	Notification Date
Yule – 12/21	December 31st	Samhain – 10/31
Imbolg – 2/2	February 12th	Yule – 12/21
Ostara – 3/21	March 31st	Imbolg – 2/2
Beltaine – 5/1	May 11th	Ostara – 3/21
Litha – 6/21	June 30th	Beltaine – 5/1
Lammas – 7/31	August 10th	Litha – 6/21
Mabon – 9/21	September 30th	Lammas – 7/31
Samhain – 10/31	November 10th	Mabon – 9/21

2. Solitary tithes in the same household. Two or more Solitaries living in one household may elect to pay membership tithes at a discounted rate of the full minimum tithe for the first Solitary Member and one half the minimum tithe for the second or any subsequent Solitary Members, but must be renewed simultaneously.
3. The NMO shall send out renewal forms (electronically) no later than the Sabbat prior to the Sabbat on which the tithe is due (see Renewal Date List).
4. All credentials will expire on the membership renewal date; therefore will need to be renewed at the same time as the membership to prevent lapsing and the need for reapplication.

The Renewal Date List shall be included in the “Members of the Covenant” section of the CoG Newsletter and home page of the website. This new policy will supercede the current Bylaws pertaining to renewals, and shall be attempted on a trial basis for two years, at which time [Grand Council 2011] a committee of past and current Membership Officers (Local and National), and all other interested parties will review it.

C. Accounting

All individuals responsible for handling Covenant funds and the records of those funds shall follow Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. A Pursewarden may only disburse funds on the authority of the Council or the Board. At least two signatories are required on the National Checking Account: one is the National Pursewarden and the second is one of the current National Board of Officers.

Article 9: Ethics

A. Policy and Purpose

The Covenant strongly encourages its Members to comply with the Code of Ethics described in *Article 9, Section B, Code of Ethics*. The Covenant recognizes that ultimately questions of ethics violations are between individuals and their Gods.

B. Code of Ethics

The following shall constitute the Code of Ethics of the Covenant:

1. An ye harm none, do as ye will.
2. Since Our Religion and the arts and practices peculiar to it are the gift of the Goddess, membership and training in a Coven of members of Our Religion are bestowed free, as gifts, and only on those persons who are deemed worthy to receive them; nevertheless, a Coven may expect each of its members to bear a fair share of its ordinary operating expenses.
3. 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.
4. 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 in its own way, and shall exercise reasonable caution against infringing upon that right in any way.
5. All persons associated with the Covenant shall respect the traditional secrecy of Our Religion.
6. Members of Our Religion should ever keep in mind both its underlying unity and the diversity of its manifestations, and should make clear on any communications just whom they are speaking for or about.

7. These ethics shall be understood and interpreted in light of one another, and especially in light of traditional laws of Our Religion.
8. Board Officers or appointees are morally obligated to recuse themselves from any adjudicatory decision in which there is a perceived problem of partiality.

C. Ethics Violations

The Covenant recognizes the following to be ethical violations:

1. Knowingly and willfully making a false statement to any Council, Board, Committee, or other duly constituted agency of the Covenant; also knowingly and willfully making a false statement about the Covenant to non-members.
2. Theft of Covenant property, commission of fraud upon the Covenant, or the intent to defraud the Covenant;
3. Persistent refusal to abide by the provisions of the Charter, these Bylaws, or such decisions of the Council as are necessary for the continued viability and usefulness of the Covenant as an instrument of the joint will of the Members;
4. Willful violation of the confidentiality provisions of *Article 10, Confidentiality*, of these Bylaws;
5. Such persistent use of the veto power that the usefulness or viability of the Covenant is seriously threatened;
6. Misrepresentation by an individual or a Coven of that individual's or that Coven's status within the Covenant; or
7. Deliberate intimidation, coercion, or manipulation of any individual, against that individual's will, at any business function of the Covenant.

Article 10: Confidentiality

A. Responsibilities of the Membership Officer

In processing an application for membership in the Covenant, the Membership Officer shall ask persons and groups for only such information as she or he needs to decide whether a person or group meets the criteria in *Article 2, Membership*, of these Bylaws, and such information shall be considered strictly confidential. Concerning any specific person or group, the Membership Officer shall communicate to other persons in the Covenant only the results of its decisions, as, in effect, a simple "yes" or "no." However, the Membership Officer may, at her or his discretion, communicate such information to the current members of the Board. The Membership Officer may also base general statements (such as about how many members the Covenant has) on such information, and communicate such statements to the Publications Officer.

B. Covenant Mailing List

The mailing list of Covenant of the Goddess shall be in the keeping of the Publications Officer who will be charged with guarding its confidentiality. The National Board may grant access to the mailing list to other Officers or their assistants as defined in *Article 3, Section A.3, Officer Assistants*. Members who wish to mail communications to other members may do so at their own expense through the Publications Officer according to procedures established by the Council.

C. MerryMeet

1. The mailing list used to publicize MerryMeet shall be in the keeping of the Second Officer, who will be charged with guarding its confidentiality. Access to this mailing list may be granted to other Officers by the National Board.
2. No information about the exact location of MerryMeet shall be released to the media without the express prior consent of the Second Officer. It is understood that media inquiries concerning MerryMeet shall be referred directly to the Second Officer.

Article 11: Amendments

These Bylaws shall be amended only in the same way that the Charter can be amended. These Bylaws may be amended only by the Council. These Bylaws shall not be amended by any Local Council or by any other body within the Covenant.