

The Covenant of the Goddess establishes an educational Abuse Advisory Committee

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ATLANTA, Georgia - On Aug. 23, the **Covenant of the Goddess (CoG)**, a 39-year-old national organization representing Witches and Wiccans, established an Abuse Advisory Committee to "advise, educate, and support the Covenant on issues of physical and sexual violence." The new committee will consist of members who have professional expertise and training in this field.

Proposed by Lady Aradia and Lady Emrys, two Pennsylvania-based members with field experience, the Abuse Advisory Committee was presented to the membership at the organization's national meeting held in Atlanta, Aug. 22 and 23. Lady Aradia, a psychotherapist and licensed social worker, stood before CoG delegates from across the country and spoke about the pressing need for such a committee. She said:

Sexual offenses and family violence happen in every community including the Wiccan and larger Pagan community. Although we pride ourselves in not being a religion with a large institution, this places us at a disadvantage when issues of abuse arise. We believe it is our responsibility to offer support, education and guidance to people in our community that are facing these issues no matter if they are a victim of abuse, those who offended, or the family or coveners who are confused about how to handle a particular situation.

The primary duties of the committee "include the provision of education to COG members on issues of abuse, consultation to the National Board when needed, and consultation to COG coven and solitary members when their community is impacted by physical or sexual violence."

Lady Emrys, who co-developed the idea for this new committee, is also a licensed clinical social worker. She hopes that her own professional experience and that of others can be used to assist CoG members and the greater Pagan community in this area. She says:

I hope [the committee] will educate and empower our community: for leaders to feel confident in their ability to ethically respond when abuse happens, for communities to learn strategies of prevention, and for victims (and perpetrators) to feel safe enough to seek support through their spiritual communities.

After some discussion on specifics, CoG delegates overwhelmingly approved, through consensus, the establishment of the Abuse Advisory Committee. Over the next few months, the two women will be bringing together committee members and establishing official processes. Aradia says:

We hope to be a resource for anyone affected by sexual abuse and or family violence in the Wiccan and larger Pagan community. We are not offering legal service, or to make a judgment on someone or a particular event. We hope to provide education to the larger community through classes and media. We also seek to offer guidance to individuals and communities so they can make the most informed decision possible for themselves and their community when faced with difficult situations. We know we may not have all the answers but it's a beginning, a way to keep talking about the issue from an educated and knowledgeable perspective.

For more information about the **Abuse Advisory Committee** or **Covenant of the Goddess**, contact Heather Greene, pio@cog.org