

*This next piece is a freebie. Feel free to copy it, steal it, adhere to it, whatever. This seiðman is personally tired of all the organizations, the petty bickering, and the constant flaming that one gets to see between members of the Ásatrú community. The upshot is the same as what my dad always said, "If you really wanna see how important you are, just go to someone else's house and try ordering HIS dog around."*

## The Ásatrú Folk Manifesto

### Preamble

Who are we? The neo-pagan world has heard of the Ásatrú for easily two decades with all the comings and goings, the arguments, the accusations of Nazism, satanic connections, and what often appears to be petty infighting and backbiting, but Ásatrú Folk is a new word. A new word for a new concept.

The reconstructed religion of Ásatrú got its start in the early 1970's by Steve McNallen and was originally called the Ásatrú Free Assembly and since that time has undergone several different incarnations, variously as the Ring of Troth, the Ásatrú Alliance and a variety of less well known variations. Always the theme and rationale were the same: this organization is to preserve and protect the practice of the religion of the ancient northern Germanic peoples. In some organizations literary and archeological research was stressed, and in others, the practical side. In any case, protection of the religion from outside and foreign influence is usually maintained by the organizations through their writings which is often negatively directed at those groups perceived to be the most harmful to tradition, i.e., Christianity and neo-paganism: Christianity because it had almost completely replaced the northern Germanic heathen religion, and neo-paganism because of its willingness to mix religions.

All current and past organizations also have several other things in common with one another:

1. All have an established hierarchy;
2. All recognize leaders both at the local level and at the national or international level;
3. All borrow heavily from the neo-pagan community (whether they admit it or not);

4. All have some internal form of top-down political structure with a primary leader such as Allherjarsgoði (named after the leader of the reigning Icelandic organization) or steersman.

All these organizations borrow their internal structuring from different sources such as the Catholic Church, favorite political systems, and modern neo-paganism and while this is workable in some ways, it does, at times, become a source of contention and contest with individuals vying for the largest collection of the most prestigious titles, and, as a consequence, infighting, group-split-offs, and rumor-spreading have become the most popular form of Viking Games with spirituality and religious practice often falling far behind in 2nd place.

On a personal level, the general attitude of folks belonging to these organizations varies greatly. The individual is encouraged to maintain allegiance to the organization's political or religious ideologies, and if the organization's ideology is to maintain the "purity" of the religion against all foreign influence, individuals may (and often do) find themselves seriously at odds with their geographical communities (the communities they physically live in) and may feel threatened enough to engage in acts which are clearly against common modern social mores. Because of this issue and the several mentioned above a new movement of those who hold their heritage dear and of those individuals sympathetic to such a cause is launched.

The Ásatrú Folk, the People of the Æsir and Vanir (the two tribes of the northern Germanic Gods), are a collective of like-minded individuals who accept that the spirituality of the ancient Germanic heathen leads to a complete, and fulfilling life. We utilize this spirituality to gauge and to take responsibility for all our actions so that the greatest numbers of our families and communities benefit. Having no leaders and disregarding politico-religious or economically based hierarchies, we are not at odds with anyone. We recognize that the differences between people are as important as the similarities and that these differences whether of opinion, belief, faith, life-style, or physical differences are worthy of celebration.

We are best described as a *Movement* who look to the northern Germanic pantheon of Gods, demi-gods, and ancestors (heroes or otherwise) as a source for spiritual fulfillment, and who work towards the acceptance of this spirituality within the geographical communities by participating in that community rather than by engaging in negative or punitive action. We recognize that no individual, group of individuals, or organization has the authority to stand between man and his personal religion, and we demonstrate this through our actions. We exist only to celebrate the religion of the

ancient Germanic peoples and to serve as guides to those who wish to follow this spiritual path.

## Manifesto

We, the Ásatrú Folk, accept and hold sacred the following:

1. **We hold the Gods and demi-gods of the ancient Germanic peoples, and personal ancestry holy while at the same time maintaining that all other religions, and the right to practice those religions, is worthy of respect.**

*Commentary: All individuals have the right under the American Bill of Rights to the freedom of religion. To engage in active maliciousness against others' right to practice their own religions as they see fit according to their traditions is to engage in a personal battle of a political nature and to demonstrate disregard for the well-being and integrity of family as well as community. This movement holds no opinion in this regard with the exception that our role in maintaining the well-being and integrity of family and community is clearly related personal responsibility and respect of this Midgard.*

*Personal responsibility to both family and community takes into regard that social customs and social mores of a community may vary. At times, differences may occur between a family and a community which may require negotiation to bring the differences into harmony; however, the well-being and integrity of family and community are held in highest regard as opposed to personal ambitions.*

2. **We define our spirituality as being that which allows the individual to most comfortably interact with the inhabitants of Yggdrasil; our most holy duty is to the integrity of the household and its members, and their role in maintaining the well-being of the geographical community, on out to the regional, then national levels.**

*Commentary: While the rights of the individual are highly valued, and proper respect is paid to both community and government, it is the family which must be kept, protected, and molded for proper function within the larger whole. Personal responsibility for action (in this case, for bringing the family together, maintenance of the individual's role*

*within the family, and maintenance of the family's role within the community) is regarded as the greatest of virtues as expressed in both eddaic and sagaic literature.*

*We adhere to the idea that personal responsibility is to ourselves first, but that the purpose behind personal responsibility is always to play a role in the maintenance of the well-being of all inhabitants of Yggdrasil, beginning with the individual and moving outwards in ever widening circles to eventually encompass the whole. We recognize that our effectiveness is always greatest at the local level.*

3. **We recognize ‘the household’ as being the only central organization for our purpose. ‘Household’ is defined here as the household members (all beings residing within the household unit), the physical living quarters of the group living together as a unit, the lands upon which the household resides, and the rules of conduct to which the members of the household adhere.**

*Commentary: The household is the only recognizable organization by the Ásatrú Folk. There are many organizations around the world proclaiming to have true understanding of Ásatrú and how it should be practiced, and while many of these lay claim to respectable research in the area of Germanic Studies (and therefore are worthy of respect for the work they have done), they are not regarded as an authority over any household of Ásatrú Folk. The household is regarded as the center of its own realm, completely sovereign and independent of any organization. Crossing into the householdings of another automatically means that the rules of conduct of that household supersede all others. If an individual cannot, for some reason, abide by the rules of conduct in the household of another, he is obligated to leave.*

*The exception to the above is that household members visiting another household as a group are expected to adhere to the rules of conduct of their own, household as well as those of the host (usually enforced by an elder) as in the case of one family visiting another. If the rules of the 2 households conflict, the visiting family is obligated to leave. Guests causing strife in a host's household is to be avoided.*

4. **We recognize that each human being is either the head or a member of a household and as a representative of a household is worthy of respect.**

Commentary: *We accept that each individual human being regardless of his or her background, religious or political affiliation, or personal philosophy/ practices retains the right to run or participate in a household of his or her choosing and regardless of whether we agree with their personal/ household philosophy. The member of any one household may set guidelines, rules, etc. for the household of which he or she is a member and is respected in that right, but no one household holds dominion over another.*

5. **The Frið-yard is considered either a temporary or permanent household. If the Frið-yard is on the property of an Ásatrú household, the rules of conduct of the host's household apply; if the Frið-yard is on public lands or lands obtained for the purpose of celebration, the guests may either determine the rules of conduct among themselves or the procurer of the temporary site may set the rules of conduct prior. In either case, the temporary rules of conduct are added to any existing rules, laws or regulations which are part and parcel to the land itself and do not supersede them.**

Commentary: *Ásatrú Folk enjoy 'moots' as they are called in common Ásatrú parlance and will join them up to several times per year. There must be common agreements to the rules of conduct which may be set by the hosting household (as is often the case even if it is on public lands) or by a committee of elders prior to the date of the feast. All members must agree on the terms of conduct and on the set fines for infractions. Banishment (outlawry) is the commonest fine although monetary fines may also be imposed. In any case, the rules of conduct must be known to all partakers prior to or at the beginning of the event.*

*In the case of events occurring on public lands, rules, regulations, and laws regarding the use of alcohol, drugs, nudity, minor participants, and fires (or any other area of concern) must be taken into account.*

6. **Each individual member is responsible for learning and practicing the heathen religion of the Germanic peoples in a fashion consistent with tradition as it has been passed on to us through the sagaic and eddaic literature of the ancient northern Europeans, and through the traditions of folklore as it relates to this heathen religion.**

Commentary: *Respect is paid to the heritage of the heathen Germanic peoples through maintaining a personal religious practice unadulter-*

ated by obvious foreign influence although it is recognized that some practices bear resemblance to practices from other religions. Although respect may be paid to other, non-Germanic, spiritual presences, especially as they relate to geographical locations, non-Ásatrú Folk familial lineages, and other religions, it is expected that such respect will be paid as a representative of the Ásatrú Folk.

7. (a) **No individual, household, or committee speaks with an authoritative voice for households of Ásatrú Folk.**

Commentary: *There are recognized authorities among Ásatrú Folk but these are always in various areas of research. Since the Ásatrú Folk as a whole do not recognize any authorities over their individual households, there are no speakers for us except at the level of the household. No group, individual or committee may make a pretense of speaking for any household of Ásatrú Folk; each household is sovereign.*

*On the other hand, there are elders among the Ásatrú Folk who are deserving of high respect by virtue of merit, deeds performed, or by their generosity. Respect, among us, cannot be demanded by title or rank since none are recognized; it must be given by individuals on a personal level only. In other words, respected elders are only respected elders because individuals offer them respect not because they were voted into an office or had elected themselves.*

(b) **Any one desiring to publish newsletters or books, to speak publicly regarding his or her spiritual practices, or in any way disseminate knowledge or information about the Way of the Ásatrú Folk is free to do so providing that all information presented is given only as personal opinion. No individual can speak for the the collective of Ásatrú Folk.**

Commentary: *Every individual and every group of individuals calling itself Ásatrú Folk is responsible only to the maintenance of the religious practice as practiced by the ancient Germanic heathens. Each, whether individual or group, is expected to 'police the practice' by purge of 'foreign elements' as much as is reasonably possible. This will be necessary on a regular basis since those coming from other traditions such as Wicca or some form of Christianity will often unknowingly bring dogmatic practices with them. Examples of purgeable elements are reincarnation, karma,*

*three-fold law, Hammer-rite (imitation of the ‘magick circle’), sacred tools/ clothes, 8-fold year, etc. All of the afore mentioned can be dropped.*

*Individuals will profess many of these ideas for several reasons:*

- i. they are comfortable elements of their former belief system;*
- ii. they have not studied the lore long enough to realize the elements to be unnecessary;*
- iii. they are blind to their own retention of such beliefs.*

*A tendency is to ‘search the lore’ to find events/ things which resemble a similar practice by the ancients. Searching the lore for justification can usually be replaced by the practice of purging with little effort.*

- 8. Our membership is free to all who wish to accept the traditions of the Ásatrú Folk without reservation provided they have no other religious affiliation; we recognize that no organization stands between an individual and his concept of the religion of the ancient Germanic peoples.**

*Commentary: Anyone wishing to call him or herself a member of the Ásatrú Folk may do so without fees, registration of name, and without contact from any other member of this religious movement. Since the movement polices its own maintenance of tradition by following above points of tradition, no one need fear reprisal from any other. Anyone who wishes to deviate from the above points simply allows himself to be considered a non-member.*

- 9. Any group of Ásatrú Folk may gather and call itself as such as long as the group itself maintains the singleness of mind that the tradition of the Ásatrú Folk is a religion only and holds no opinion on outside interests either at a personal or a group level.**

*Commentary: Religious and spiritual practice is the only purpose recognized by the Ásatrú Folk. Gatherings for any other purpose are not recognized as part of this movement.*

*Problems with political, financial, or authority issues serve only to redirect folks away from their spiritual course, and since the tradition of the Ásatrú Folk is a spiritual practice and a religion only, it holds no interest in any other arena.*

## Appendix

The concept behind the Movement is more foreign to modern tastes than what is usually presented as a set of *by-laws*. Its action of governing is by *inclusion* rather than *exclusion*. We moderns are much more used to the “thou shalt nots . . . .” We generally govern by excluding those we don’t like and whoever is left over we keep. While such laws may be good for a nation (although this may be questionable), such also do not promote personal responsibility nor are they in keeping with a spiritual way of life.

The ancient Teutons in many communities allowed the *community* to decide who was or was not suitable to live there. If a crime was committed by an individual against a community, the community expected that the individual would make things right again. If a man committed murder, wergild to the worth of the dead person was expected, and the value was set by the community. Refusal to pay was a personal decision, and the community’s response was that the man was no longer a person who wished to remain a part of that community. He was free to go but was no longer protected by the community. His value to that community was set at zero and whether he lived or died was of no consequence. The ultimate choice was left in the hands of the individual who was expected to be completely responsible for his decisions.

To set up a movement according to this ancient tradition is not difficult. It is, however, very uncomfortable-feeling to moderns, who have grown accustomed to allowing organizations above them rule their behaviors. In the latter half of the 20th century, we cheat on our taxes, we lie about other people, we drive illegally (by breaking laws such as running stop signs, invalid plates, no brake-lights, intoxicated, etc.) as long as we don’t get caught by the *authorities*. This Movement has no authorities to get caught by. We are expected either to buy into the Movement *or* we don’t belong to it.

The question will arise: “How do we protect ourselves?” The answer is simple: We don’t. We don’t have to. We define ourselves by what we are and what we do. If we wish to follow points #2 - #9, but we cannot accept Point #1, we are not Ásatrú Folk.

Much of our culture is defined by inconsistent behavior. “Today I don’t feel like living in a spiritual manner; I’ll do it tomorrow.” The question which needs to be reviewed by any prospective member of this Movement must be: “Can I afford to lead my life according to the Way of the Ásatrú Folk all the time?” If the answer is “Well, maybe” then one is simply not part of this Movement. If one can act in a manner consistent with Points #1 - #9, then one is a part of the Movement; if not, then one is something else. We have

defined ourselves. If one fits the definition, then one *is*.

We are not accustomed to living our lives within an organization that is *self-policing*. We rather expect that some authority figure is skulking out there who can catch us, and we lead our lives to stay somewhat out-of-sight of the law. We are not used to watching our own behavior rather than someone else's. However, this Movement demands self-honesty rather *honesty-for-the-cops*. Paying attention to our own behavior rather than someone else's is uncomfortable for us; we are often better trained to gossip than to engage in self-examination, and, additionally, we often seek to gain from others rather than trying to figure out ways to *add to that which others are doing*.

Egotism (masquerading as the "fierce individuality" of modern Ásatrú) really doesn't play much of a role either here or in historical heathen communities. It is and was recognized that each individual has important skills, but that those skills are only important within the context of a community. A carpenter may be very good, but without a house to build, he is not a carpenter. A thread by itself is of little value; so it is with the "fierce individual."

"What is to keep another *group* from coming in and taking over?" Nothing. We have nothing to protect. We define ourselves by what we are and what we do. Another philosophy cannot *move in and take the name Ásatrú Folk* because it is **not** a name; it is a definition. One is either Ásatrú Folk, or one is not, but the name needs no protection. A follower of the Way of the Ásatrú Folk can only be recognized by *action* not by whether he or she has paid the annual dues. A follower's actions are defined in Points #1 - #9. Someone who belongs to a hate-group or another religion falls outside the definition. Someone who incorporates New Age with the Northern Way falls outside the definition. Someone who mistreats his or her family, or places themselves above or outside the geographical community through acting outside the community's accepted code of conduct and makes no attempt at reconciliation falls outside the definition. Someone who attempts by force or coercion to judge another by his or her own personal ethics is extending his or her own personal laws beyond the borders of the household, and, therefore, falls outside the definition. We are self-defining, and, therefore, self-policing.

The Movement defines only parameters within which a person acts. If necessary that something within a community needs modification, we are fully within our rights to bring that to the community's attention. If cars, for example, are speeding in a designated school zone, and that clearly represents a threat to the children in the area, we are right to act according to the standards of the community by presenting the problem to the community.

We are not within our right to throw nails into the roadway or shoot at the cars. If a hate-group springs up in town, we are within our rights as followers to 1) voice our opinion of the *philosophy* (*not* of the individuals), 2) exclude them (as followers of that philosophy) from any invitations into our household, 3) exclude ourselves from community activities which support such philosophies, or 4) leave the community, if it tends to support such a philosophy, in search of another. We are not to take offense, however, against that community. We are allowed to defend ourselves within the acceptable code of conduct of that community. Much too often the *M-16-from-the-rooftop-of-the-nearest-McDonald's-mentality* reigns. So what happens if one of the followers breaks such a rule? By definition, he or she falls outside the definition of the Movement. Such a one is not Ásatrú Folk.

Governing by definition is not something that will be easy for a lot of folks. These folks feel the need for policing. That is fine. There are plenty of groups and organizations out there to do that, but, by definition we take responsibility for our own actions, and we know that our power ends at the thresholds of our homes. We do not (no can we, by definition) engage in unilateral decisions for our communities; we do not govern their behavior. Our measure of worth is value to others and is not determined by us; we are valued by others as companions, good guests, good researchers, good hosts, good carpenters. We realize that there is no point in standing up and *demanding* that we be recognized. We are either recognized or not. One of the kennings for a king was *gold-hater*. Good leadership is a by-product of how much one can give not by how loudly someone yells.

Governing by definition is remarkable in that we do not need to judge individuals but only their words and actions. If one claims to be a follower but demonstrates hate either in word or action against ethnic groups or people with particular sexual preferences, he or she falls outside the definition, and, therefore, is not a follower as demonstrated by behavior. In such a case, none of us need to judge anyone; we need only maintain the definition. We see the demonstration of behavior as falling outside the definition, and, by that, know that the individual by having engaged in the act is not Ásatrú Folk. If a particular household chooses not to *invite* an individual perhaps secretly because of color, ethnicity, or whatever, neither action nor word has been placed against anyone. In this case, however, the individual may need to question his or her own motives for belonging to the Movement. This, after all, is a spiritual quest not a contest for the most money, fame or power.

The Points as outlined in the Manifesto present themselves as a Code of Behavior which manifests as a Movement. A follower of the Movement is one who manages his or her life according to the entire constellation of

Points. No voting on membership is necessary; membership defines itself. Personal feelings are left behind, and responsibility for one's behavior is entirely in the hands of the individual. Recognition by other members of the Movement is by how much is given, not by names, titles, or other forms of transient power. As a consequence, there can be no *striving to reach the top*, or *blackballing*. The Points demand that a follower police his or her own behavior, take personal responsibility for his or her own life, winnings and failures, and participate in a spiritual way of life where the only recognition is by how much one is valued by others.