

# Skylands Report



The e-newsletter of the Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship

No. 18

[www.skylandsasatru.org](http://www.skylandsasatru.org)

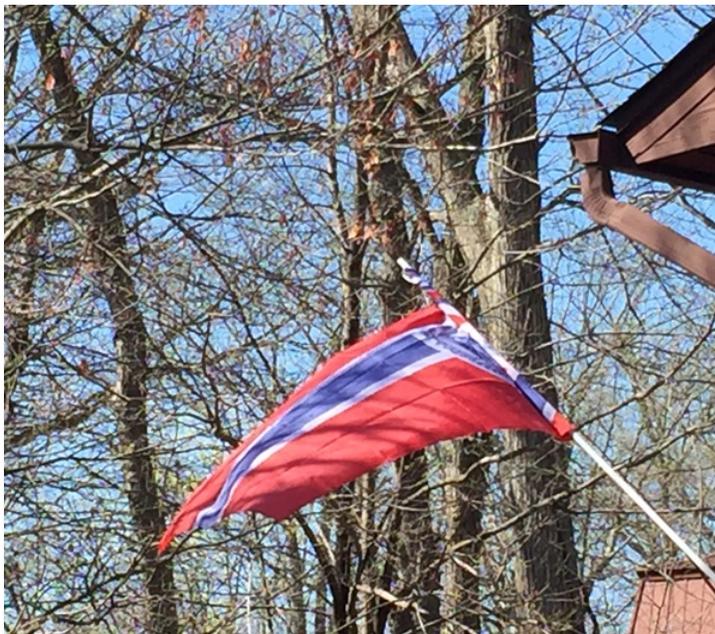
April 2018

## Skylands Prepares to Celebrate Sumarmál

Sumarmál is one of the three key heathen holidays mentioned in the *Ynglingasaga* and one of the four major holidays celebrated by Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship. Icelandic poet and historian Snorri Sturluson composed this work as the first chapter of his *Heimskringla* (*The Lives of the Norse Kings*). In the *Ynglingasaga* Snorri writes:

*“On winter day there should be blood-sacrifice for a good year, and in the middle of winter for a good crop; and the third sacrifice should be on summer day, for victory in battle.”*

As such, Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship will be holding a traditional *Sigrblót* (Victory blót) to Odin.



*The Skylands flag waves during Sumarmál 2016*

During our ritual, we will recall the story of the Winnili and how they sought victory over the Vandals.

Our jam-packed schedule includes conducting Thing and Sumbel as well as partaking in a feast of pulled pork – for it would not be Sumarmál without a grand Summer’s meal.

We have much business to take care of at this event as well as much to celebrate as the first signs of spring appear marking an end to the snowy days of winter. Celebrate with us as we welcome

spring and Hail Odin, the All-Father, the Wise Warrior, the One-Eyed Wanderer and ask him for victories and to witness our journey in the year ahead. 🏳️

## News from the Board

As you probably know by now, Joseph has decided to step down from his role as Goði and his position as President on the Board of Directors.

This message is to assure you that no changes will be made to the current leadership of Skylands until we have had an opportunity to conduct a Thing at our upcoming Sumarmál event. “Thing” if you're not aware was the governing assembly of the free people of the community in old Germanic society. Our Thing will allow all to voice any and all concerns about recent events as well as our vacant leadership roles.

We hope as many of you as possible will be able to attend this important event for our tribe.

Please note that we plan to go forward with our calendar of events as scheduled for the balance of the year.

It is important to remember that Ásatrú is a religion, but Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship is more than a church. We're a tribe -- literally an extended family, and everyone is there for everyone else. As such your voice and ideas are critical to our future. 🏳️



## Board Meeting to be Held

Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship will be holding its first Board of Directors meeting of the year on April 7. For those interested, here's how we plan to structure our meetings (going forward).

The Board of Directors meets in person / or on the phone if necessary to address matters of planning and governance. We will generally meet on a quarterly basis.

1. Read and review minutes (notes) from the last meeting and agree that they are accurate and complete.
2. Reports from the various key projects to review performance.
  - a. Financial Report is read aloud.
  - b. Discuss any fund-raising projects.

- c. Discuss membership – increase / decrease
  - d. Etc.
- 3. Review Unfinished Business (any incomplete items from prior meeting).
  - a. Progress should be discussed
  - b. Items may be closed or canceled as necessary
- 4. New Business
  - a. Motions are read aloud one by one.
  - b. Motions are followed by debate (pros and cons)
  - c. Vote is taken - which is recorded by Secretary.
  - d. After the first motion is voted on, we move to the next motion.
- 5. Close
  - a. Agree on date for next meeting
  - b. After all items are decided the meeting is dismissed.
  - c. Secretary compiles notes and makes “minutes” for our permanent record.
  - d. A summary of these notes will be published in *Skylands Report*.

If any members have “New Business” that you would like the Board to consider, please let us know.

And remember, we will be conducting Thing during Sumarmál - which will be an opportunity for all to voice any ideas or concerns.

We hope to see you at this important event! 

## Thing!

Thing, also known as *Althing* was the governing assembly of northern Germanic society. It was made up of the free men and women of the community and overseen by the lawspeaker. At the thing, disputes were solved and political decisions were made. The place for the thing was often also the place for public religious rites.

The thing met at regular intervals and legislated, elected chieftains and kings, and judged according to the law, which was memorized and recited by the lawspeaker. The thing's negotiations were presided over by the lawspeaker and the chieftain or the king.

While Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship has generally conducted Thing during Midsummer, we have many important decisions to make this year including selecting a new Goði or Gyðia.

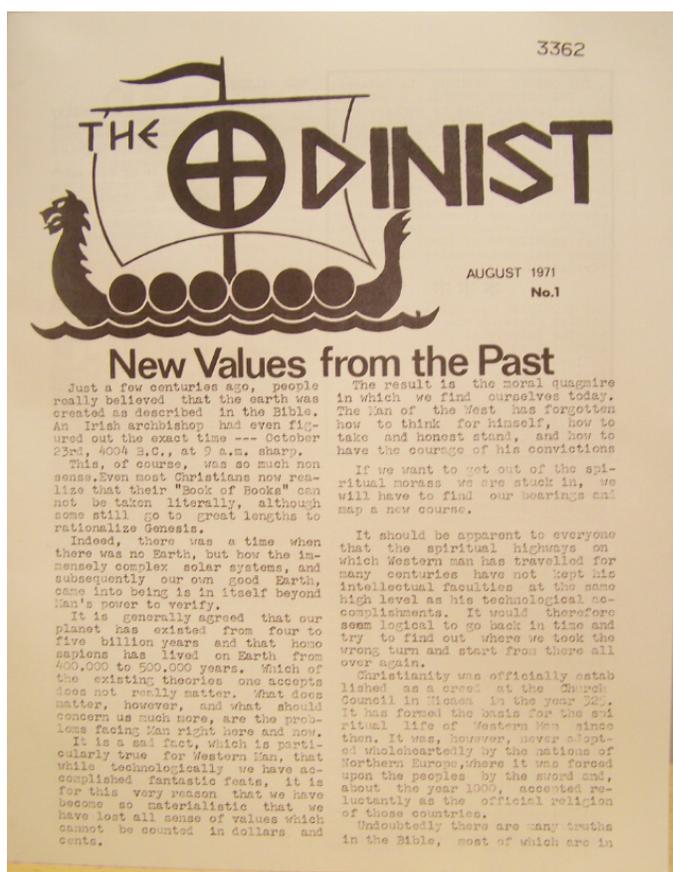
Thing is an opportunity to make your voice heard. 

## One Person's Cult

*This month's feature article comes from the blog Tales from the Iron Wood ([talesfromtheironwood.blogspot.com](http://talesfromtheironwood.blogspot.com)) written by Skylands member Don V. In this article Don provides another autobiographical episode in his spiritual path to Asatru. —Ed.*

The idea that someone could believe in the Norse Gods in the 21st Century is very strange indeed. While the tales of Thor and Odin were exciting reads throughout my childhood and the stuff of which Marvel comic books and movies are made, how could someone seriously believe that these Gods were —and in fact — remain real today?

Back in the late '90s I was the co-developer of a website that focused on historical topics. I did the basic editing and formatting while my friend David did the technical heavy lifting. I recall vividly the day that he told me that one of our readers was a very enthusiastic Odinitist. The guy reached out via email and mailed a few copies of a magazine called *The Odinitist* to David. Nothing came of this as Odinism was not at all in the scope of the work that we were doing. I



*The Odinitist No. 1 from August 1971*

never saw a copy of the magazine and could only surmise about its contents. But the thought of that communication has remained with me to this day.

Years later, after my own conversion to Ásatrú, I learned that *The Odinitist* was more of a right-wing political rather than theological magazine. It was work of Else Christensen — an early proponent of Odinism dating back to the early '70s.

At this time, my children were young and I felt the urge to expose them to spirituality. While I had been a staunch atheist for more than a decade, I did not want to prevent my children from having the opportunity to explore faith and spirituality. After some thought and consideration, my wife and I became members of a local Lutheran Church and enrolled the kids in Sunday school. I had been confirmed as a teenager, but my knowledge was limited. Throughout my childhood church attendance was sporadic at best. A friend of mine, who was a devout Baptist, used to joke about A&P Christians. They only came to church on Ash Wednesday and Palm Sunday because they wanted to get something from the visit. We were likely more like C&E Christians, those who came on Christmas and Easter — but then again we spent many a Christmas at home opening gifts and watching a Yule log “burn” on a the television

screen (a local channel broadcasted video of a burning Yule log on a loop accompanied by Christmas carols each Christmas eve). The “Yule log” was a tradition in my parent’s home.

The pastor in the church offered a class on “Cults.” As I was seeking all the information that I could gather on my newfound religion, I signed up. This topic seemed interesting and was not some sort of deep-dive into the Bible, something that I certainly wasn’t prepared for. The “cults” that were identified were not quite what I expected – no Manson family or Branch Davidians, but rather the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Mormons, and a few others that I don’t recall. I was immediately struck with the question – what made these religious groups cults while Christianity was not? Actor Philip Seymour Hoffman once quipped, “One person’s religion is another person’s cult.” I was sure that there must be a clear distinction – but what could it be?

After class one Sunday morning, I confronted the Pastor, “Did you know that there are people who still worship Odin?” He responded, “I haven’t heard of that. I imagine it must be a very small number of people.” I said, “I don’t know, but it may be many more than you think.”



*A 1960s tradition - a televised Yule log*

The thought of it thrilled me. Even though some fifteen years would pass before I oathed my loyalty to the Gods as part of a tribe that worshipped the Aesir, the idea captivated me. At first it seemed simply odd, then crazy, then foolish, but ultimately it emerged as both true and right.

Over time it became clear that to belittle the spirituality and heritage of the Europeans was a form of chauvinism. Just as the European people excelled in science, architecture, art, philosophy, and music, among other things, they had a rich system of belief as well. The European conception of the spiritual was decidedly polytheistic – whether it was the belief system of the Greeks or Romans, or of the Germanic tribes -- all had a common thread of many Gods and Goddesses --that is until the coming of Christianity.

Edred Thorsson explains in his *A Book of Troth*,

“This interference in our national self-determination came in the form of a bizarre “cult from the East” called Christianity. It is today highly amusing to hear the servants of the White Christ wail in horror as “our culture” is invaded by “eastern cults” – as they are one of those cults themselves. That they know this on some level is probably the reason for their hysteria. To compound the irony, many of the “cults” imported from India may indeed be more closely related to our own indigenous religious heritage than Christianity. After all, the Vedas and Eddas share a common origin. The

Torah and its heretical appendices (the so-called New Testament, the Koran, etc.) might as well come from another planet.” (p.7)

Applying what I had learned about “cults” as the Pastor taught the class, I thought I was contributing and expected a well-thought out response when I pointed out that Christianity would have appeared as a cult to the Jewish people of the 1st Century. The Pastor agreed with my comment with no real rebuttal. Another student indicated that the key that made all the difference was that Christianity was true. Clearly I had much more to learn.

Ásatrú, which means “true to the Aesir” or “true to the Gods,” is a modern-day term applied to an ancient belief system. That system of belief is rich and complex and appears to be hard-wired into the consciousness of the peoples of European heritage. Can there be any doubt that without the interference of that “cult” from the East that the people of Europe would still worship the Gods and Goddesses of our ancestors? How would our world be different had the cult of Christianity been held at bay?

My mind gushes with the thought and the possibilities. 🏳️

*By Don van den Andel 12 November 2017*

Copyright © 2017 *Tales from the Ironwood*

## **Tribal Milestones**

Sam B. celebrates his birthday 10 April. Happy Birthday Sam!

Steve L. celebrates his birthday 28 April. Happy Birthday Steve!

Allie W. celebrates one year since her oath of membership 22 April. Congratulations Allie!

Gene H. celebrates two years since his oath of membership 23 April. Congratulations Gene!



# Skylands April Calendar

## Sumarmál

Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship will be celebrating the start of Summer with the traditional Summer-meal. We will be making blót to Odin for victory and success in the coming year, feasting, Thing, sumbel, and more.

This event is limited to members of Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship and invited guests.

All are encouraged to bring items to be given as a sacrificial offering to Odin.

We are asking for a \$15 donation to help cover the cost of food and soft drinks. Please plan to BYOB.

Date: Saturday, 21 April 2018

Time: 02:00 PM to 10:00 PM

Location: Columbia Ve

## Ásatrú 101

*Ásatrú 101* classes are designed for both the beginner who wants to learn the very basics, to the advanced Ásatrúar who is interested in hearing new perspectives, and learning how we at the Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship do things.

The subject of this week's class is Eschatology - the end of the world. We will discuss what the lore says about how the world will end, the gods will be slain, and what will come afterwards.

Date: Sunday, 8 April 2018

Time: 02:00 PM to 03:30 PM

Location: Morris County Library, 30 E. Hanover Ave., Whippany, NJ

## Full Moon Offering

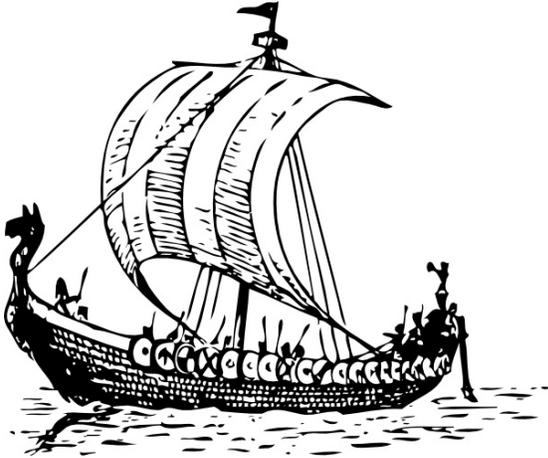
Date: 29 April 2018

## New Moon Offering

Date: 15 April 2018

Everyone is encouraged to make an offering to his or her local land-spirits. By making regular offerings, we increase our bonds of friendship with the spirits of the earth. Such offerings may be made on the Full Moon or the New Moon.

## Save the Date!



- **Sumarmál** – Sat., 21 Apr.
- **Columcille Hike** – Sat., 19 May
- **Midsummer** – Sat., 23 Jun.
- **Kutztown Folk Festival** – Sat., 30 Jun.
- **Haustblot** – Sat., 22 Sep.
- **Winter Nights** – Fri.-Sun., 12-14 Oct.
- **Krampusnacht** – Sat., 8 Dec.
- **Yule Celebration** – Sat., 5 Jan.

## Help Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship

Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship teaches a variety of classes including our popular *Ásatrú 101* series. We hold celebrations for the major holidays in the heathen calendar. We run several on-line sites and produce this newsletter. All of this is possible through donations from members and friends.

Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship.

Donate today! [http://www.skylandsasatru.org/?page\\_id=183](http://www.skylandsasatru.org/?page_id=183)

## Follow Skylands On-line!

For more information about our tribe and upcoming events, please visit our website at [www.skylandsasatru.org](http://www.skylandsasatru.org)

Don't forget to *friend* us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/skylandsasatru/>

Remember to sign up for our events on our Meetup page: <http://www.meetup.com/NJ-Asatru/>

Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship is also on Twitter. Follow us at: [https://twitter.com/Skylands\\_Asatru](https://twitter.com/Skylands_Asatru)

## About Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship

The Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship is a recognized 501(c)(3) religious organization based in northwest New Jersey. We practice the religion called Ásatrú, which is the modern expression of the ancient religion of the people of northern and western Europe before they converted to Christianity. We hold regular gatherings, some religious, some educational, and some social.

We encourage anyone whose ancestors once worshiped the Gods and Goddesses of the North to “come home” to Ásatrú. You're welcome here!

***Skylands Report*** is the official newsletter of the Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship (SAF). It is a celebration of the accomplishments, the activities, and the plans of the SAF.

Published by Sigurd Press  
Edited by Donald van den Anandel

We welcome submissions of essays, short stories, poetry, and artwork. Write to us at [fellowship@skylandsasatru.org](mailto:fellowship@skylandsasatru.org). We would love to hear from you.

Skylands Ásatrú Fellowship  
Post Office Box 471  
Mount Olive, NJ 07828

All rights reserved. No part of this newsletter, either in part or in whole may be reproduced, transmitted or utilized in any form or by means without the permission in writing from the publisher.

