

# The Three Principles of the Pagan Federation

(an interpretation)

## What they are:

The three principles of the Pagan Federation are not intended to provide a doctrinally definitive Pagan creed. They **do** provide a general outline of some key, mainstream, Pagan attitudes and beliefs concerned with how we relate to the Earth, how we relate to other living beings, and how we relate to the divine (our Goddesses or Gods or a more abstract spirit of life). Each is open to a range of honourable and reasonable interpretations.

### i. **“Love for and Kinship with Nature. Reverence for the life force and its ever-renewing cycles of life and death.”**

*The first principle of the Pagan Federation emphasises the importance of love and respect for nature in Paganism. It recognises that human beings are part of nature and that our lives are intimately interwoven with the web of life and death.*

### ii. **“A positive morality, in which the individual is responsible for the discovery and development of their true nature in harmony with the outer world and community. This is often expressed as “Do what you will, as long as it harms none”.”**

*The second principle of the Pagan Federation puts forward a broadly humanistic approach to ethics which seeks to maximise both **individual freedom** and **personal responsibility**. It recognises our place as human beings within the web of life wherein everything we do, or refrain from doing, has consequences for ourselves and for others. It encourages working towards peaceful outcomes while acknowledging the legitimacy of both self-defence and justice. This is compatible with all Pagan paths, and essential for a tolerant, diverse and humane society. The Wiccan Rede is given as an illustrative, but not definitive, example of this general approach to ethics - this does not insist that we harm none under any or all circumstances. It does encourage us to be aware of the context in which our actions operate, to consider the probable consequences of the choices we make, to choose those which are reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances and thus minimise such harm as cannot be prevented, and take responsibility for our contribution, by either action or inaction, to the outcome. Hard ethical decisions are not about whether harm will happen, but about where it will fall.*

### iii. **“Recognition of the Divine, which transcends gender, acknowledging both the female and male aspect of Deity.”**

*This principle encompasses a range of Pagan understandings of **divinity** including, but not restricted to, pantheism, all forms of polytheism including duotheism, Goddess-recognisant monotheism, and animism. It requires us to acknowledge that where the divine is understood as deity or deities having gender, it must include a Goddess or Goddesses as well as a God or Gods. It also recognises that there are Pagan understandings of divinity which cannot be thus categorised. Modern Paganism tends to approach theology through a synergy of multiple understandings of the divine or Divinity in the abstract, and modern Pagans tend to regard the **honouring** of the Gods, of the divine as it is manifest within this living world, as of greater importance than theological speculation as to its or their precise nature.*

## Why the Pagan Federation has them:

These principles (or minor variations of them) have been part of the criteria for membership of the Pagan Federation for over 30 years. They offer a clear, short statement of belief or attitude by members. Folk joining the organisation or meeting other members for the first time, have at least some assurance that they are meeting people who share broadly similar views of what the Pagan Federation stands for.

They also provide a short, clear, description for presenting Paganism in the broadest sense, and the membership of the Pagan Federation in particular, to those outside the Pagan community (the Government, various NGOs, the media, local interest groups, other religious groups, interfaith organisations, etc). They provide the Pagan Federation with a rather greater degree of cohesion than the Pagan community as a whole, which makes it a much more effective campaigning organisation on issues which benefit all Pagans, whether they are members or not. The Pagan Federation has gained significantly greater institutional credibility than any other Pagan organisation in large part by having these broad, consistent, principles of belief and attitude throughout its membership.

## How the Principles affect you:

The principles are not meant to dictate every detail of your Pagan path, for each is open to a range of reasonable and honourable interpretations. They give all members a shared understanding of the ethical and philosophical basis of the organisation. Having them gives the membership assurance that those elected or appointed officers acting on their behalf, share a broadly similar ethical and philosophical perspective with the members they are representing or serving.