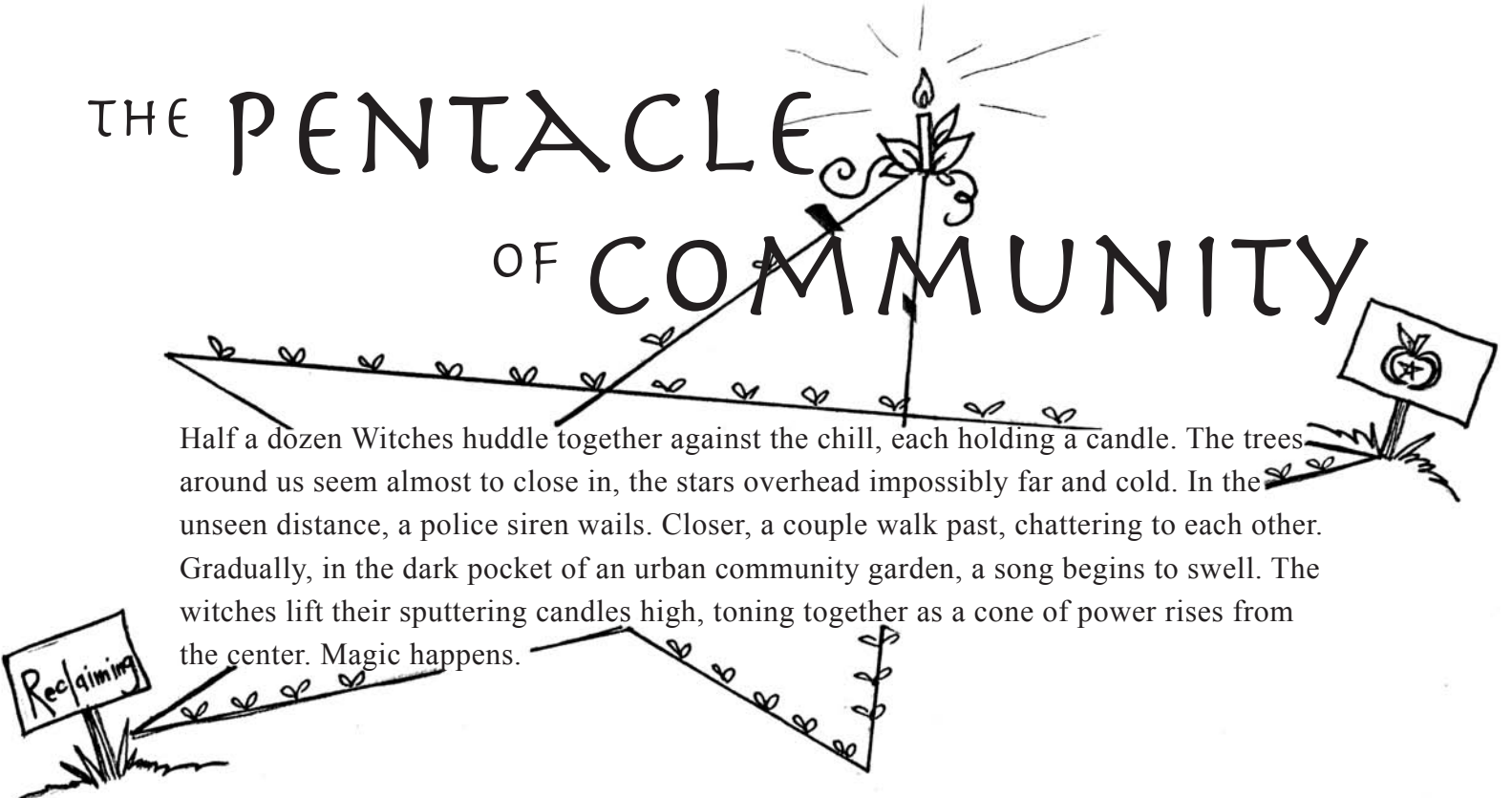


THE PENTACLE OF COMMUNITY



Half a dozen Witches huddle together against the chill, each holding a candle. The trees around us seem almost to close in, the stars overhead impossibly far and cold. In the unseen distance, a police siren wails. Closer, a couple walk past, chattering to each other. Gradually, in the dark pocket of an urban community garden, a song begins to swell. The witches lift their sputtering candles high, toning together as a cone of power rises from the center. Magic happens.

By Sierra Black

This is a typical new moon ritual hosted by Viriditas, my Boston-area Reclaiming group. The name means “Greening the Earth,” and our vision has been to grow a new Reclaiming community in the Boston area.

Like all magic, our wishes were granted, but here in the real world, where wishes are never simple. Viriditas is like a garden: a living thing that sometimes bears fruit and sometimes collapses in the face of drought or flood. It requires tending and freedom to grow.

Are you carrying the seeds of a Reclaiming community? Perhaps you’ve just come back from a Witchcamp, or an action with the Pagan Cluster. Maybe you just read *The Spiral Dance* for the first time. You’re hungry for that magic in your own campus or community, and ready to make it happen.

If so, I offer a Pentacle of Community, with tools for nourishing your seeds.

1. Create a Core – Consider forming a work group, circle or coven with a group of interested friends. The original Reclaiming Collective formed out of a coven, and the model has worked to create thriving communities

in Austin and Vermont. In Boston, the core members of Viriditas belong to Tapestry, a coven that has met regularly for over three years.

Being part of a coven with the other people leading rituals and teaching classes in Viriditas helps in many ways.

As covenmates, we see each other throughout the month. A lot of the logistical work of planning a ritual or event can happen while everyone is hanging around after ritual.

We know and trust each other deeply. I taught an Iron Pentacle class last month with a covenmate. We loved how easy it was to communicate and to raise energy with the group, drawing from years of shared experience.

Our coven gives us a place to grow as Witches. We try new skills, and take risks we wouldn’t take in a public circle. Tapestry recently created a curriculum for working with Energy Bodies. The coven worked through the material together, and a few of us may take it and teach it as a public class come fall.

2. Connect — Once you’ve established your core group, and built trust to deepen magic, it’s time to connect with the larger community.

When Viriditas started out, we contacted a long-time Reclaiming teacher who had offered herself through

RCRC to mentor groups or individuals. She helped us by teaching us basic magical skills, like how to lead a Spiral Dance, and by giving us pointers about organizing and advertising events.

We send people to classes or Witchcamps. Sometimes, we collect scholarships for individuals to go to a workshop in another area and bring back skills to teach locally. This lets our whole community continue to deepen our magical skills.

You can build connections with the larger community through:

- Reclaiming e-mail lists
- Reclaiming.org, Witchcamp.org and the Reclaiming Livejournal Community
- Attending Witchcamps
- Traveling to classes or workshops being offered in your region
- Using the RCRC list to find a local mentor

• reading and subscribing to RQ!

3. Share – You have your core group established, and you’ve made connections with the larger Reclaiming community. You’re learning new skills and growing as a Witch. The next stage in community building is to share these skills. Here are a few ways to share your new skills and grow community:

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Offer community Sabbat rituals. Organizing an event for Beltaine or Samhain is a great way to meet people, use new skills, and worship in community. Currently, Viriditas hosts Wheel of the Year rituals for Pagan families.

Create a public moon circle. Viriditas offered monthly new moon rituals for several years. The repetition gave a sense of consistency and community.

Organize a study group. There are many workbooks that serve well for this purpose: *The Spiral Dance*, *Twelve Wild Swans*, and *Evolutionary Witchcraft* are a few written by Reclaiming Witches. Or you can create your own curriculum as you go along.

Invite teachers from other communities to teach classes in your area. Many teachers are willing to travel. Organizing a workshop can draw energy into your local community and strengthen ties with the broader Reclaiming movement.

Work with an experienced teacher to learn Reclaiming's core course material and offer local classes yourself.

4. Act – When you have a growing community of Witches and activists, it's time to put your skills into action. Find ways to use what you've learned in service to your community and to those around you. Some examples:

- A Pearl Pentacle group in Austin met for some months to walk the Pearl Pentacle in the Texas state house as a prayer for peace.
- Viriditas hosts a monthly labyrinth walk at the community garden where we hold our New Moon rituals.
- We have worked with a local food pantry to organize volunteers for their food distribution.
- Viriditas has also sent groups to large anti-war protests as part of the Pagan Cluster.

5. Sustain – The work of growing community can be exhausting. It's key to feed yourself as much as you feed the group. Useful strategies include:

- Getting paid. Many Witches find that being rewarded for their efforts with money, even in small amounts, helps balance the energetic scales so that they can continue to offer their gifts.
- Setting a routine.
- Taking a break when you need one. If you've been offering the same series of rituals for too long and it's boring you, you can stop.
- Having some private space to do magic in. If you're at the center of a community in which people come and go, having a private working group or coven where you can relax, do magic, and not be on stage can be a powerful, nurturing experience.

Which leads us back to our core group, where we nurture and sustain deep relationships that in turn provide support to a larger, more flexible community.

Growing community is no different from growing a garden. You need seeds, fertile earth, a clean, clear flow of water, and the bright heat of the sun. It's probably a bit of magic that our rituals are often held in our local community garden, among the growing plants. Like them, our little Reclaiming community grows when it is tended and nourished.

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Graphics by Naeomi Castellano/RQ.

