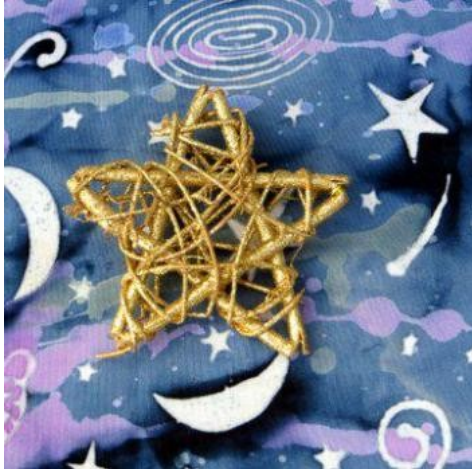


Winter Solstice Gifts: Pentacles and Galaxies

December 18, 2017 By [Liz Fisher](#)



An earth-honoring spiritual orientation can help to bring joy where there is little hope. [Read more](#)

Winter Solstice Gifts: Pentacles and Galaxies

December 18, 2017 by [Liz Fisher](#)
262 shares

At this time of year there are many conflicting feelings and demands that call to each of us. Emotions can run the gamut, depending on your social circle and your sensitivity to the larger goings on in the world. An earth-honoring spiritual orientation can help to bring joy where there is little hope.

The word Solstice comes from the Latin word ‘to stand still.’ For three days, the Sun appears to rise at the same place, before beginning to climb a little higher each day, until the next Solstice, six months later. I have found paying attention to my inner life, balancing stillness with my desires to participate in holiday activities stabilizes and invigorates me during this important natural turning point.

As we all know, giving of gifts is part of celebrations at this time. Here are two I have discovered and offer to you.

Power of the Pentacle



This time of year, pentacles are featured in decorations everywhere. I first began drawing stars when I was a child. I learned later that many children do, especially girls.

The pentacle is said to belong to the ancient Goddess-honoring religion tied to Venus. Every eight years Venus traces a five-pointed star shape across the sky, symbolizing the sacred female.

In many earth-centered belief systems the pentacle is integral, providing protection and the binding of the five elements. Education about the true meaning of the pentacle is urgently needed. Today, this sign shows up in horror films, thrillers, and crime dramas, reinforcing associations with evil intentions which were applied to this sacred symbol by some Christian sects. It is important to know that the pentacle was cleared of these implications in 2007 by achieving status, granted by the government (VA Administration), as an emblem of faith.*

The Five Points

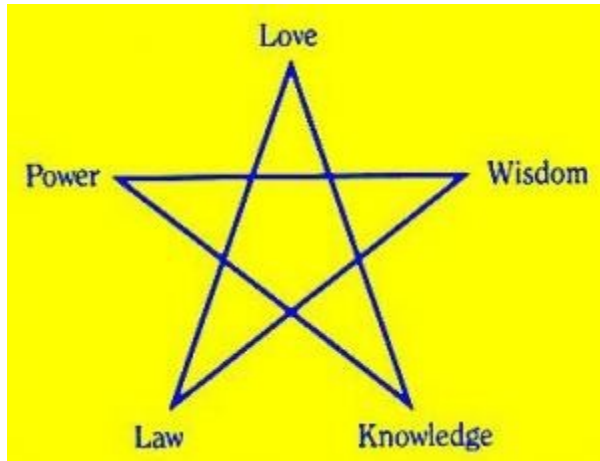
In some systems four points on the star represent the elements. I wrote a series of columns about these elements which are posted at [Four Elements, Their Meaning and Importance](#). In these I relate the meaning of elements and link them to contemporary social concerns. Spirit is the fifth point of this five-pointed star. In my own cosmology, Spirit is expressed as animism, or the indwelling of the sacred in everything. The pentacle represents 'all that is', a symbol that is wholistic and inclusive.



The Pearl Pentagram

During the 1980s, I participated in the first version of the UU curriculum *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven* by Shirley Ranck. We explored the psychological and philosophical meanings of cultural images. During the session on Witchcraft, we meditated on a

unique pentagram and shared our responses. I found this activity brought wider and deeper meanings to this well-known symbol.



The text tells us:

“The Pentagram of Pearl contains the points of love, wisdom, knowledge, law, and power. Love is the moving energy of life. It is blindly erotic and deeply personal, passionate, prideful, powerful caring for oneself and others. It is the law of the goddess and the essence of magic.

Wisdom and knowledge can best be understood together. Knowledge is learning, the power of mind to understand and describe the universe. Wisdom is knowing how to apply knowledge – and how not to apply it. Knowledge is knowing what to say; wisdom is knowing whether or not to say it. Knowledge gives answers; wisdom asks questions. Knowledge can be taught; wisdom grows out of experience, out of many mistakes.

Law is natural law, not human law. When we break natural laws, we suffer the consequences as a natural result of our actions, not as a punishment. If you break the law of gravity, you will fall. Magic functions within natural law, not outside of it. The natural law may be broader and more complex than we realize.

Power is the power that comes from within, when love, knowledge, wisdom, and law are united. Power rooted in love and tempered by knowledge, law, and wisdom, brings growth and healing.”

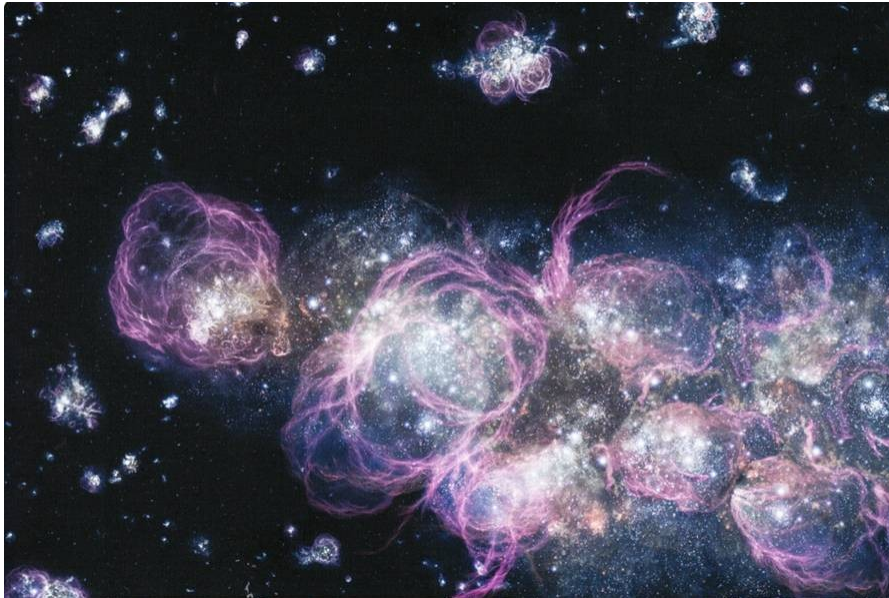
The Inspiration of the Milky Way

Mayans knew the center of our Milky Way galaxy as the Hunab Ku, or Mother Womb, a whirling disk which gave birth to the stars, planets, and all life. Yet because of light pollution, celestial bodies play less of a role in our lives than they did in pre-electrified times. If you live in the country or travel there, take advantage of the night sky. If not, use images to visualize the many points of light the night sky holds.

The galaxy has been an inspiration to many in their personal endeavors and social justice advocacy. This brings me to my second offering: the poetry and activism of Drew Dellinger who is a poet, spoken word artist, scholar, and activist. What is compelling about Drew’s contributions is that he combines multiple approaches.

For a special treat listen to Drew speak one of his most beloved poems, [Hymn to the Sacred Body of the Universe](#).

In his writing, lecturing and scholarship he features the concept of “a cosmology of connection.” He draws frequently on the speeches, sermons, and writings of Dr. King and is currently writing a book on the cosmology of Dr. Martin Luther King. He discovered that in the King Center’s online archives there are notecards, written in his hand, rhapsodizing about “all this galaxy of wonders.” On another card, King writes of “stars that guide sailors in storms; stars that enrapture astrologers as they ponder the Zodiac; stars of the Milky Way; stars that thrill the hearts of poets.” For an article outlining more of Drew’s discoveries about Dr. King’s thinking click here: [Dr. King as Ecological Thinker](#)



love letters to the milky way is a book of poems by Drew which has been endorsed by Alice Walker, Cornell West, Thomas Berry and Matthew Fox.

His poem by the same name begins:

I want to tell you about love

There are approximately 1 trillion galaxies

I want to tell you about

In the Milky Way there are about 100 billion stars

I want to tell you

Love is the breath of the cosmos

I want to write a love letter to the Milky Way

...

Later in the poem Drew advises:

The universe spills through our dreams

The future belongs to the most compelling story

As you travel this powerful portal of the darkest time of year which is gifting us the time to focus on inward exploration, may you enjoy this season by embracing and expressing your own visionary tale!

Art Credits:

Altar cloth and star ornament owned by author. Photo by Bob Fisher

Star drawing with number 5 created by Eta, 1998

Pentacle of elements is Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons

Pentagram of Pearl image from *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven*, first edition, 1986

Pentagram of Pearl — This description from the book *Changing of the Gods* (p. 111-114), © 1979 adapted by Shirley Ranck by permission of Beacon Press. *Changing of the Gods* by Naomi Goldenberg © 1979, Beacon Press, was included in the original *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven* kit

Galaxy photo is from the cover of Drew Dellinger's book *love letter to the milky way*. White Cloud Press, Ashland Oregon © 2011. Used by permission of the author. You can find more videos and articles by him at www.drewdellinger.com.

Recommended Resources:

The basics about several aspects of the pentacle and how to draw it can be found at: [Illuminating Article about Pentacles on Facebook](#)

[Understanding the Five Elemental Symbols](#) Interesting article on the meaning of the pentacle in various traditions.

Hekate Soteira: A Study of Hekate's Roles in the Chaldean Oracles and Related Literature by Sarah Iles Johnston, Scholars Press, Atlanta, Georgia, © 1990 American Philological Association and American Classical Studies. Especially notable is Chapter X "Hekate and Magic".

*The encircled pentacle was added to the list of 38 approved religious symbols to be placed on the tombstones of fallen service members at Arlington National Cemetery on April 24, 2007. The decision was made following ten applications from families of fallen soldiers who practiced Wicca. A settlement that was agreed on with the Veterans Administration approved the pentacle as an emblem of faith, an emblem that now graces nearly 80 markers and headstones. Read more at [Pentacles at Arlington Cemetery](#)