

Organized Modern Polytheism

Polytheist Leadership Conference
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Rev. Tamara L. Siuda

Polytheism

- * From Greek *polu* “many” and *theos* “gods”
- * The belief in, and worship of, many gods
- * Gods as actual, individualized beings within the created universe
- * Gods possessing their own identity, integrity, and agency within that created universe
- * Many forms of polytheism exist throughout human history; most were once limited to indigenous world regions

Leadership

- * The action of leading a group of people or an organization
- * The state or position of being a leader
- * The leaders of an organization or country

Polytheist Leadership

- * Being a leader in one's own polytheist community (if one possesses one)
- * Being a leader of the larger polytheist community (if there is one)
- * **Implication:** one cannot be a leader if one does not lead, and one cannot be a leader if one does not have a community to lead. Leadership is only necessary when there is more than one person involved.

So you want to lead a cult[ic practice]?

- * Cult: from Latin *cultus*, “worship”
- * “A system of religious veneration and devotion directed toward a particular figure or object”
- * Again, leadership of a cultic practice implies:
 - * Possessing a cultic practice in the first place
 - * Having a community that requires such leadership
- * Solitary? Then you don’t need leadership or a system.

Why incorporate?

- * You do not want to be liable for security or insurance risks on your private property
- * You wish to gain the rights and protections granted by your country of residence to recognized religious groups
- * You want to raise public funds or offer your members a tax exemption on their donations
- * You want to establish an independent bank account for your organization, purchase property or land in its name, or open charities, schools, or nonprofits affiliated with it
- * You want to ordain clergy who will be legally recognized as clergy
- * You want to pay your clergy a salary/wage, or hire and pay other employees to work for the organization

USA: How to incorporate

- * State Incorporation
 - * Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws
- * Federal IRS 501c3 Incorporation
 - * The 501c3 application process
- * Two methods:
 - * State first, federal 5 years later (no federal audit)
 - * State and federal at the same time (federal audit)
- * When to do it yourself and when to hire help

Ongoing Corporate Details

- * IRS Form 990 (50K rule, subsets, etc.)
- * State and/or federal annual or periodic audits
- * Bylaws and Board Meetings
- * Registering with local governments
- * Clergy registration where required
- * Insurance, Taxes (or no taxes), Bank Accounts, Annual Reports and Organizational Transparency
- * Learning how to do it vs. hiring professionals

Inside the Organization

- * Education

- * Formal training for members
- * Formal training for clergy
- * Religious-oriented schooling?

- * Outreach

- * Ministry as modernly understood vs. the antique polytheist model – what does your organization want and/or need?
- * Pastoral counseling
- * Prison ministry
- * Interreligious work
- * To proselytize or not to proselytize?

The Internet

- * Internet presence
 - * Websites and content management portals
 - * Social media: organization wide, clergy, laity
- * Internet ministry and education
- * “Virtual church”
- * Drawbacks of the Internet
 - * Social media effect
 - * A lack of “ownership” from members who are only on the Net
 - * Inability to equal face to face interaction
 - * Technological limitations and pitfalls

Keeping it all balanced

- * Community balance: transparency, honesty, shared expectations and values, responsibility
- * Clergy balance: education and training, navigating power imbalances and personal boundaries, clergy formation, chain of command
- * Unforeseen events: abuse, antagonists, interpersonal relations breakdowns, crisis management, clergy burnout

Further Reading

- * IRS website on nonprofits/501c3s (www.irs.gov) as well as your state's Secretary of State page on nonprofit/religious organizations
- * Powerchurch.com – church management software (for donations, taxes, membership management, etc.)
- * Faithtrustinstitute.org – interreligious resource for combating rape and other forms of sexual abuse inside religious communities (by clergy or laity)
- * Churchlawandtax.com – Christian resource, but useful information
- * Antagonism resources:
 - * “Antagonists in the Church: How to Identify and Deal with Destructive Conflict” by Kenneth Haugk
 - * “Well-Intentioned Dragons: Ministering to Problem People in the Church” by Marshall Shelley
 - * “The Wounded Minister: Healing From and Preventing Personal Attacks” by Guy Greenfield and Brooks Faulkner