

## Classes in "Feminist Magical Tradition" Held on New Mexican Church Property

by **Stephanie Block**

ALBUQUERQUE, NM Flyers distributed at the Harwood Center this autumn invited women and men to six Sunday classes at the Center for Action and Contemplation, which is situated on the property of Holy Family parish in southwest Albuquerque. The classes were on "Elements of Magic in the Reclaiming Tradition."

The flyer explained that "Reclaiming is a feminist magical tradition which reveres the earth



**Starhawk, born Miriam Simos in St. Paul, MN was the inspiration behind CAC classes in "Elements of Magic in the Reclaiming Tradition"**

and promotes justice – made famous by Starhawk's many books. The Spiral Dance will be used in this class."

One enthusiastic participant in a Gettysburg College workshop given by Starhawk describes the Spiral Dance:

...[S]he taught us a simple song and led us in the Spiral Dance:

*"Weave and spin, weave and spin  
this is how our work begins.  
Mend and heal, mend and heal,  
take the dream and make it real."*

The Spiral Dance is a blend of song and movement that gives every person a chance to look into the faces of the others. In a pattern both simple and complex, we were led dancing and singing into the center where we converged around the candle. There our voices and good intentions had created a cone of energy that was thick in the air. We were urged to draw some into our lives, and the rest was returned to the Earth to heal and replenish her. [Guy McCarthy,

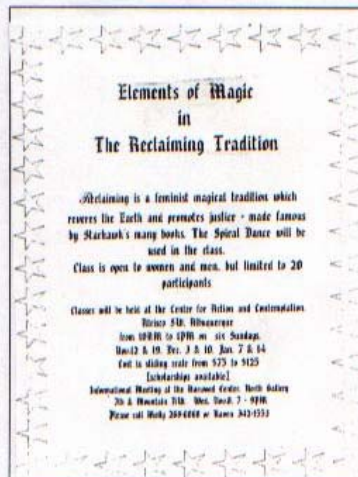
"Weaving the Spiral Dance," *earthlight! magazine*, issue #10, 1988]

The sense of magic behind this description is not accidental. Starhawk is a self-professed witch who spoke openly at the Gettysburg College workshop of "our wiccan heritage...lost through centuries of fear and persecution." Her books are suggested reading at the Celtic Connection's online page about Wicca and Witchcraft.

One website for the aspirant of the Gaia Tradition describes "five levels of recognition" and the ceremonies that mark it. The candidate for the first degree, that of "witch," undergoes three kinds of training: "First the student goes through a course of study that covers Paganism, Wicca in general, and the Gaia Tradition specifically. For the work of the first degree, the student reads books such as the public parts of this Book of Shadows and *The Spiral Dance* by Starhawk, and receives one on one instruction in Wiccan teachings." [[www.gaia-web.org/gaia-wicca/teaching/levels.html](http://www.gaia-web.org/gaia-wicca/teaching/levels.html)]

Fr. Mitchell Pacwa, S.J. provides additional detail about Starhawk and her thought. She is on the staff of Matthew Fox's Institute for Culture and Creation Spirituality (Fox is a Dominican priest who began a movement of "creation-centered spirituality" and established the Institute for

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**Flyer distributed at the Harwood Center in Albuquerque, advertising the CAC classes in "Elements of Magic"**

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**Crossroads Earth Religion Center, Virginia Beach, VA, holds a 1999 "Eostre" celebration that includes the Spiral Dance.**

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Culture and Creation Spirituality. The Vatican silenced Fox in 1988, but he has obstinately persisted in his work, operating through the Episcopal church). Pacwa writes that "...Starhawk's wiccan religion of the goddess is explicitly pantheistic (all is 'god') and monistic (all is 'one'). [Rev. Mitchell Pacwa, S.J., "Catholicism for the New Age: Matthew Fox and Creation-Centered Spirituality," *Christian Research Journal*, Fall 1992, p. 14, giving an analysis of Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Goddess*, 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition, revised and updated, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989) 10-11, 22, 23, 27.]

The Center for Action and Contemplation has conducted numerous workshops given by practitioners of "alternative" spiritualities. Several of these are

scheduled for 2001. Zen teacher Dr. Ruben Habito (S.J.) will be leading parts of a Center retreat in March that "will begin with three days instruction and practice in contemplative prayer, including both Eastern and Western spirituality..." The retreat will include a half day of "meditation and yoga." A "Women's Journey into Justice" Conference will be led by radical, dissident feminists Edwina Gateley and Megan McKenna in July. Interested participants in the conference, as well as Fr. Richard Rohr's May "Rite of Passage for Men," must complete "a simple application process...to discern if the candidate is ready for this experience." [Center for Action and Contemplation 2001 Calendar, *Radical Grace*, Nov-Dec 2000]



**Ecofeminist Starhawk addresses members of the Pagan Student Union at the University of Florida**



**Wiccan Goddess**

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