

Nature, Structure and Status of the Sophianic Animism USA Church

Nature and Description of the Church

The nature of Sophianic Animism (SA) USA is that it is simply a church, which is defined by Webster's dictionary as "a body or organization of religious believers." Another definition might be, "an assembly of like-minded people who engage in coordinated education regarding the Divine and the supernatural, and who together seek a deeper relationship and deeper engagement with their deity."

Certain descriptions of Sophianic Animism USA are deemed more suitable for external use and others for internal use.

External: Church, assembly, religion, congregation

Internal: Collegium, COE (collective organic expression), assembly, religion

There are no hard-and-fast rules and all of the above expressions are acceptable.

Aligned with the preferred nomenclature for our religious assemblies, the recommended format for the name of a local collegium or COE is: **[Colloquial Place Name] Collegium of Sophianic Animism USA**, where the "colloquial place name" would be the name of a neighborhood or a small town. The national-level Collegium-entire is simply called **Sophianic Animism USA** – a name that is unlikely to change; however, the names of local collegiums may change over time in response to a variety of situations and circumstances.

Sophianic Animists prefer to avoid the term "organization" because "collective organic expression" is more accurate and appropriate. A COE may be thought of as a kind of animal body composed of various cells and organs that cooperate harmoniously in support of collective vitality and salubrity. Organic lifeforms are not generally described as "organizations," although they are very effectively organized and structured. Hence, the terms "religious organization" and "organized religion," although they will perhaps inevitably be applied by outsiders, will be infrequently applied to the COE by Sophianic Animists.

Structure and Status of the Church

The question might be asked, "What kind of entity is Sophianic Animism USA? Is it a corporation, an unincorporated association ... or what?" And the answer is, "It is simply a church." A church does not have to become any kind of legal entity in order to be a church, and in fact it is preferable for a number of reasons that it be nothing but a church and avoid becoming a legal entity.

A church that is simply a church maintains its orientation toward the human world in a way that has a very narrow, if not singular, focus – which is education in the supernatural and in human consciousness, and in how a person may optimally exercise and express the latter (although most religions have little if anything to say about human consciousness). A church may also involve itself in "good works" that

support local communities, that bring aid to humans within and without (outside of) the church, and that protect and beautify some part(s) of the earth.

Christian churches that have taken a similar approach (being simply a church) are often concerned about authority, keeping themselves under Christ's authority alone and not placing themselves under the authority of the state by incorporating, since (according to their view and understanding) incorporating makes a church a "creature of the state" and places it under state authority. While SA USA takes a different view of authority, especially "divine authority," if Christian churches can exist and function without the state's permission, aid, oversight or interference (unless a church should incite or engage in criminal activity...), Sophianic Animism can do so, as well. And SA USA prefers to remain simply a church without unnecessary, and in some ways burdensome, entanglement with the state or the related tax authority.

Speaking of taxation, the USA Constitution and subordinate federal and state laws treat churches as non-taxable by their very nature, and no registration with the IRS is required to obtain or maintain that situation.

The point that it may be usual and customary for churches to incorporate and file for 501(c)(3) status with the IRS is not a valid argument to the effect that a church must do such things in order to legitimize itself. Those who make strenuous efforts to persuade churches and clergy that such actions are "necessary" usually have a vested financial interest in their doing them; but in fact, careful study of information freely available on the Internet reveals that there are good reasons to avoid such steps and no compelling reasons to take them.

Sophianic Animism USA has been duly created as a church via a **Declaration of Formation**, which is available for perusal by the general public, including all interested parties; and that action is all that is required for SA USA to exist and function as a church.

Functional Details

Money and other assets contributed to SA USA are viewed as contributed to the Goddess, to whom all such material things in the earthy realm, and ideas in the minds of humans (including the perceived value attached to money and other assets) inherently belong anyway, but She permits humans to "own" them and make use of them by Her grace. Such contributions are protected and managed by a human trustee duly appointed via a private **Declaration of Trust**. That trustee is the Minister of Assets (for the national level Collegium-entire or for a local collegium) duly appointed according to defined SA USA procedures.

Governance of the church (national and local levels following the same broad pattern) is handled via the structure, and in the manner, described in the document **Sophianic Animism USA Ministerial Roles**. Ten distinct principal ministerial roles are defined that cover the governance functions perceived as essential and highly advantageous, and individual ministers are appointed to fulfill them; in general, a single individual may fulfill multiple roles. Other related roles – deputies, assistants and auditors – are also defined, and it is preferable that they be filled by qualified individuals as needed. All roles are filled by volunteers who are paid neither wages nor salaries. However, most of the roles can be expected to provide excellent leadership training, the beneficial effects of which may "spill over" into a minister's secular work and other activities of life.