

# A 2016 calendar celebrating natural cycles

## *Clocks are round; why aren't calendars?*

For as long as I can remember, my internal picture of the year has been a circle, with summer opposite winter, spring opposite autumn. The more I thought about it, the stranger it seemed that there were no calendars which depicted the year in its natural form, the shape of the Earth's orbit around the sun. (Technically it's not a circle, but an ellipse with a very small eccentricity; which, however, makes the northern hemisphere's summer four days longer than its winter).

Most calendars showed time as an infinite sequence of rectangular boxes, like the boxes classrooms, houses, offices, cars in which we spend so much of our lives. Eventually, since I couldn't find any round calendar designs that I liked, I decided to go ahead and make my own.

As well as a practical wall calendar and year planner for 2016, it's also meant as a mandala an object for meditation, featuring both radial and fourfold symmetry. And what better than a round calendar to help you meditate on the transitory and cyclical nature of all things?

## *Linear time vs. cyclical time*

One of the founding myths of our culture is the idea of linear time. Like the most powerful stories, it's one we are barely aware of. It's the basis for the notion of "progress" in moral, technological or economic terms.

The cyclical model of time is ancient and universal. Look at the Celtic wheel of the year, the Mayan calendar, the Taoist yin-yang symbol or the Dharma wheel in Buddhism. Yet it's been completely discarded by modern cosmology; though a recent book, *Cycles of Time* (2010) by Roger Penrose, inventor of the non-periodic Penrose tiling, suggests it may be coming back into fashion. Ironically.

## *Time for change?*

To avoid confusion, I should explain that I'm not proposing a new system of *organising* the year, just an alternative way of *visualising* it. We still use basically the same calendrical system introduced by Julius Caesar in 46 BC, despite reforms having been proposed by everyone from French revolutionaries to the Kodak company. It's not likely to change in a hurry.

(If I could make one change to our way of organising time, I would get rid of "daylight savings time", which only dates back to WWI and seems to me a total waste of time. As if by making everyone change their clocks, the politicians could somehow control time itself!)

## *About the calendar*

The calendar includes the days, weeks, months, and phases of the moon. You may notice that the moon symbols spiral around the calendar, gradually working their way from the outside into the middle. That's because a lunar month is 29.5 days, so each phase (new, waxing, full, waning) lasts on average 7.4 days, just over a week.

The calendar also shows the eight cardinal points of the solar year the solstices, equinoxes and quarter days (the midpoints of the four seasons, often known by their Celtic names: Imbolc, Beltane, Lammastide, Samhain). These are the basis of many holidays, such as Christmas (the winter solstice), Easter (the first full moon after the spring equinox), May Day (Beltane) and Hallowe'en (Samhain).

But holidays vary a great deal between (and within) countries and cultures, whereas the eight cardinal points are universal. For that reason I've omitted holidays from the calendar, leaving you free to add your own favourite celebrations.

The calendar is meant to be posted up on the wall, not viewed on a screen. It should be printed in colour and at least A3 size (A2 is highly recommended). It is free to download, print and share. And while you're at it why not print a dozen they make great Christmas (or Solstice) presents!

*Robert Alcock, November 2016*

**More information:** <http://abrazohouse.org/calendar>