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COVENANT OF UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST PAGANS

PAGAN NUUS

Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans; P.O. Box 422, Boyes Hot Springs, CA 95416; (707) 939-7559
Spring/Beltane Issue 1996

Pagans Among Us

Sermon, UU Church of Columbia
Presented by R. Tom Dixon III on March 3, 1996

I remember the first time I stepped into this church. It was last April. I had just moved to town from Little Rock, AK. It was a beautiful spring day. I remember flowers blooming, song birds practicing a choral arrangement, squirrels playing hide-and-go-seek, and sun on my face and wind in my hair.

I had the usual jitters of being in a new place, but everyone was friendly. Folks were chatting about local politics, discussing freedom of religion, and somewhere in the background was the smell of freshly brewed coffee. I knew I had found a new home.

I opened up a little, and asked around about a local CUUPs chapter. One young lady I asked informed me that she was on the Worship Committee and that Pagans had no place in this church or the UU denomination. Being a co-founder and past president of the Little Rock CUUPs chapter, I had heard the comment before, and was not surprised at her attitude. For some UU's, Pagans in the church can be a scary thought.

This morning I will explore Pagan attitudes and beliefs. I will compare this to UU attitudes and beliefs, with an occasional quote from Emerson. If Unitarian Universalism has a saint, it is Ralph Waldo Emerson. We will find, I think, that there have been Pagans among us for quite some time.

Let's start with basic definitions. The word

pagan is taken from the Latin *paganus*, which means country-dweller. Early Christianity was primarily a religion of the cities. The country folk, the *pagani* of the Roman Empire, still practiced older religions, tied closely to the seasonal and agricultural cycles. The word *paganus* was associated with the religious practices of those rural peoples.

As Christianity decided that it was the One True Religion (R), anything else was considered a deception of the Evil One. Thus the Pagan faiths became linked with Satan, as were Judaism and, still later, Islam, the Eastern spiritualities, and (some would hold) the Democratic party.



Artwork ©1996 Walking Stick/ Tom Dixon

Members & Friends – A Community of Unitarian Universalist Pagans

The accomplishments of our Coordinating Committee during the last year foretell good things for CUUPS members. It's become clear that we have outgrown our bylaws, and many of our old procedures. Like children outgrowing our old clothes and old ways, our organization must develop as a mature force in our worlds: the UU world and the Pagan world.

Our bylaws served for a fledgeling organization, but they no longer support our goals. At an all-day meeting of the Coordinating Committee, we formed a committee to rewrite the bylaws. These proposed bylaws will be presented and voted on at the Annual Business Meeting, during General Assembly (GA) in Indianapolis in June.

As our organization grew, the work also grew. It's time to broaden our base by appointing committees to facilitate work that would overwhelm one person. We can take advantage of our numbers, and our varied skills and strengths.

The Coordinating Committee created the Nominating Committee, who will nominate candidates for the board election at GA. We've established a Finance Committee, Publications Committee, and Convo Committee – you can see who's who on the side-bar on the first page. This newsletter is the first visible product of our new look.

Blue Moon Ritual

This Blue Moon ritual was celebrated by the women of the Rochester, NY CUUPS chapter recently. It was well received -- another is in the works for June!

Why a Blue Moon? A "blue moon" is a second full moon in the same calendar month. Most folks have heard the saying, "Once in a blue moon," but only as a vague reference to something that almost never comes. In actuality, a blue moon happens often enough for us all to take our erisian tendencies out, as in this ritual:

Pre-Ritual Request everyone wear something they would only wear 'once in a blue moon' or never. Also request they bring something to the circle that they do, or see or have 'once in a blue moon'. Some suggestions are records you love but never play anymore, special foods you don't usually indulge in, or a needlework project you've been working on for three years and are really going to finish this time.

Casting the Rectangle From hand to hand the circle is cast
THINK TO EDGE OF ROOM!!

We invite you all to participate in this process! All of this is in hope of better serving our members.

Margot Adler has sent a short membership feedback survey to everyone on our address list -- we hope you will take a moment to complete and return it. A Chapter Handbook is being written to help new chapters and to inspire existing chapters. We want to encourage your participation – in on-going projects such as producing newsletters and maintaining web pages, and one-time efforts such as staffing the display table at GA.

You can help by communicating with the CUUPS office to let us know your preferences and skills. A new continental office has been established in California, at (707)939-7559. Through participation in the many activities of CUUPS we will get to know one another, and by knowing one another we will build community. Community is what we're all about.

Brydie Palmore / Editor in Chief, Pagan Nuus

Opinions in signed articles are those of the authors, and do not necessarily express the opinion of the Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans or the Unitarian Universalist Association.
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Cindy Glaze, Susan Shaw, and friends, Rochester, NY

Call Quarters *East/* Hail Mothra, Spirit of Air. May your protective winds embolden us to go ever on. *South/* Hail Godzilla, Spirit of Fire. May your elemental breath enliven us with your passion. *West/* Hail Nessie, Spirit of Water. May the murky waters and willingness to survive be an inspiration for us. *North/* Hail Audrey of Little Shop. May your rootedness in the important things in life remind us of what is.

Welcome Goddesses *Maiden-* Pinocchio's Blue Fairy- "When you wish upon a star, it makes no difference who you are" *Mother-* Glinda the Good- "You have to find out for yourself" *Crone-* Cinderella's Fairy godmother "Bibbity Bobbity Boo"

Working -- the ultimate fantasy Leaders think of starter fuel (sex goddess, able to fly, opera singer, etc.) to show how its done, and then go around the circle with a talking stick. The tacky glitter and starry ones work great.

To each participant in turn: Maiden says "When you wish upon a star, it makes no difference who you are" Mother says

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Pagans Among Us/ continued on page 3

In general, Pagan beliefs are nature-based. We believe that all of creation, and not just humans, are offspring of the divine; humans are simply another part of nature. As such, we owe nature the respect we owe a brother or sister. Nature is the manifestation of the Divine. That feeling has been present in UU traditions for some time now. Thoreau writes,

"The most alive is the wilderness ... Hope and the future for me are not in lawns and cultivated fields, not in towns and cities, but in the impervious and quaking swamps."

Emerson echoes these sentiments:

"In the woods, we return to reason and faith ... Standing on the bare ground, my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space, ... I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part and parcel of God"

... I am the lover of uncontained and immortal beauty. In the wilderness, I find something more dear and connate than in streets or villages."

Pagan rituals and celebrations tend to be centered around the cycles of the seasons and of the moon; they celebrate our connections to and dependence on the natural world.

Pagans see Life and Death as two sides to the same coin. Neither is good or evil, both just are. And, like the cycles of the seasons, the most basic aspects of the human life-cycle are marked with rites of passage which aid us in these transitions and reaffirm our links with all of humanity. Birth, the coming into adulthood, menopause or old age, and death all have their special ceremonies.

Pagans, like UU's, tend toward multi-valued logic systems, though Pagans come by this for a slightly different reason. Pagans may hold to an entire Pantheon of Goddesses and Gods; they may understand that Isis and Astarte may be most meaningful to one as Jungian aspects of the unconscious; while another may value Bride and Cerridwen as actual Entities. Any of these approaches are equally valid -- they may be simultaneous. And yes, there are agnostics and atheists within the Pagan movement.

This understanding carries over into the Pagan attitude toward religion and life as a whole: everyone has their own truth, and that is to be respected. Proselytizing, or attempting to convert others, is a breach of respect. Pagans will talk you to death about their practices if you ask them to, but they won't leave tracts on your car insisting you have to join them.

Religious freedom is perhaps even more of an issue with Pagans than it is with UUs. I know that's saying a lot, but stop and consider: you have, within Paganism, religions that have gone through a thousand years or more of often malign

disinformation: their Gods associated with Ultimate Evil, their practices exaggerated and characterized as perverse, and their followers promised torture and death if they did not convert to the mainstream. Now, finally, a country says that will not happen here -- though it in fact still does. Pagans have very personal reasons for wanting to see religious freedom become a true reality.

Like UU's, Pagans see the female and male as equally divine. Both men and women are found in the clergy; in some cases, this has been true for thousands of years. The Goddess-centered religions have been particularly healing to many women coming out of more recently mainstream faiths.

As with Unitarian Universalism, Paganism has been a haven for the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual community. In olden times, it was thought that human gender and sexuality had a power all their own. The homosexual and bisexual, then, had within them a unique balance of that power that brought to the community valuable gifts and insights. The spirit behind this idea is still a part of modern Paganism: people of all orientations are finding great healing within the Pagan movement.

Most Pagans, like most Unitarian Universalists, tend to be voracious readers. Pagans take their inspiration from any source at all. Not only are stories, songs, poems, and mythologies revered, but nature and modern science are sources of inspiration as well.

Like UU's, Pagans have little problem with modern science. Consider that Astronomy was invented to more accurately predict the seasonal celebrations that were already in place. For the most part, science only says in one way what Pagans have already said in another.

Like UUs, most Pagans attempt to raise their children in their own faith while teaching them as much about others. The parent's job is helping the child unfold her or his own path; when the child is old enough, he or she decides what religion, if any, to follow. To quote a friend, "the goal ... of raising a child without dogma is to allow them to accept the ineffable as a proper idiom of belief."

Consider UU RE programs. Most contain some, if not all, of the following: the worship circle, the circle dance, the chant, the song, the seasonal celebration, and the amalgam of religious ideas from every country and every age. These are also the heart of Paganism. For us, worship is a fluid thing it is the art form which braids our beliefs, our aesthetics, our heritage, our knowledge of symbology, and our very sense of community into a sort of performance art. If you come to a purely Pagan worship service, you are likely to see singing, dancing, chanting, drumming, and even shouting. It is celebratory, and multi-sensual. For people who are more accustomed to an academic setting, this can be very disorienting.

FAMILY TIME

By Jerrie Hildebrand, NSCUUPS, Salem, MA

The anticipation of Beltane in our community begins the moment we finish our Spring Equinox ritual. Part of this is because we are a group that celebrates the fertility and abundance of the Earth -- and of course we love the notion of celebrating our more sensual sides.

In planning, we wonder how to include our children in celebrating a sabbat that, according to today's societal standards, is about "adult" topics?

I have come to see that keeping things simple and celebrating those things which make sense to children is best. The children have begun to look forward now to many traditions of their own, celebrating the awakening of the Great Mother!

While the adults go to look for the Maypole in the woods, a group of children go with an adult to look for their own. Those who have stayed behind dig a hole for planting the poles into the ground.

We start the hole with a shovel and soon many join in with their bare hands! Children love to help because they can legitimately play in the dirt and have fun!

Chanting and drumming can be heard as folks come back from the woods with the poles and we plant them into the ground. A small group of adults will teach the May dance to the children while other adults are dancing and weaving. The laughter and squeals of delighted young children spinning around holding brightly colored ribbons is a glorious sacred sound!

We gather together in circle after weaving the ribbons. Community members are invited to step into the circle, to share some threshold or passage that has happened since the last time we danced on Beltane. Children readily line up to share their stories -- lost teeth, starting school, graduating, learning to drive, a new love, a loss of a beloved pet, the celebration of a new sibling -- the list is endless. Our children remind us of our everyday rites of passage and of the future of our community.

Each year the number of children participating grows. It is like watching divinity in action. Seeing an expectant mother at the gathering leaves me with a sense of the same anticipation as the season. I begin to wonder what her child's sacred sound will be at the May dance, singing the songs of the Earth!



INCORPORATING RITUAL INTO SUNDAY SERVICE

By Phaedra Oorbeck, Kernsville, NC

The ecstasy of ritual stands in sharp contrast to staid Protestant-style worship, or the stereotypical dry-as-dust Unitarian Universalist "book report" Sunday service. Many Pagans, old and new, struggle with how to reconcile these extremes in order to create satisfying worship services foreveryone.

But, one must have realistic goals. Pagan might celebrate in the woods around a bonfire under the full moon with three (or perhaps three hundred) howling co-religionists. This cannot be duplicated in the average, day-lit sanctuary or meeting hall in the company of a few score Humanists, atheists, Buddhists, mystical Christians, and garden-variety UUs, each of whom are carrying very different expectations of what their Sunday morning should be! UU Sunday services serve different needs than high-energy rituals do.

Once you recognize that a Sunday service will never be the same kind of experience as a full-out ritual, you can accept the fact that the two kinds of liturgical expressions are not in competition, but rather complement each other. Exploit the special virtues of each; save your attempts at Pagan High Church for times when all the participants are ready for it. But that is not to say that some of the "juice" of ritual experience cannot be added to the Sunday morning buffet.

Ritual planning requires consideration of some basic questions: What is the purpose? How many people will attend? How much experience have the participants had in ritual? How much time is available? How much space?

Similar questions can be applied to your Sunday objectives. What is your intention, your overall goal? Do you wish to make permanent changes or additions to your church's usual order of service? Do you wish occasional services to incorporate more ritual?

Congregations have widely varying comfort levels with ceremony. Changes at churches whose services are very set, or very deliberately un-churchy, must be handled more delicately than at churches whose service format varies widely week to week. Being respectful of the groups' need for continuity and familiarity will help gain acceptance for changes you wish to make.

A good strategy is to exploit what ritual or ceremony is already part of your worship services. Do you have a formal chalice lighting, or light candles for Joys and Concerns? Does your congregation do an annual Flower Communion or a Water-sharing service? Look for ways to expand on these

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UU PAGAN E-MAIL CONTACTS

By Dave Pollard, Online Liason

As online liaison for CUUPs Continental, I am compiling an email contact list for chapters and other UU pagan groups. If you have additions or corrections to this list, please contact me as dpollard@VNET.IBM.COM -- Thanks!

• *designates active chapter/ Spring 1996 Edition*

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• Jacksonville, Joyce Johnson, adj@gate.net

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• Columbia, Melissa Creighton, aa101142@midnet.csd.sc.edu

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CUUPS IN CANADA

by Qennefer Browne, NUUMOON chapter

Greetings from "NUUMOON," the CUUPs chapter of Lakehead Unitarian Fellowship in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada! "NUUMOON" was formed in 1994 through application to CUUPs, and as a subcommittee of our congregation's adult R.E. We are answerable to the fellowship board, and have a clear identity and credibility. Our members include women and men; we contribute colour, resonance, playfulness and ardour to our fellowship's programs.

About three times a year we produce a bulletin, "IDYLL THOUGHTS", which is tucked into the Fellowship's monthly newsletter. In the past year we have promoted: special outdoor excursions; a drumming workshop; a congregational meeting on the "Sixth Source" question; the "Rise Up and Call Her Name" curriculum series (we all take turns as session leaders). NUUMOON adds a pagan dimension to the usual seasonal worship services. We note that a fair percentage of the inflow of newcomers to our fellowship is attracted as a result of our activities.

In some UU societies, while there is no "chapter" of CUUPs, there will typically be a significant individual or couple who are pagan-identified, and contribute this perspective to programs in their church. They may or may not be individual CUUPs members.

If there is a "Pagan Circle" it may or may not be affiliated with CUUPS, or the affiliation may have been allowed to lapse because many of the members came from outside the church and don't understand or support the UUA/CUUPs context.

In many congregations I observe an intriguing (yet incomplete) overlap among three spheres of Pagan activity: CUUPs members, UUWF members, and pagans from the larger Wiccan/New Age community who feel at home in UU settings (such as renting the church space for rituals, or sharing sponsorship of visiting pagan celebrations). Some churches may have a "women's spirituality" group which is quite active, and pagan -- but relates to feminist interests only and draws on resources from the UU Women's Federation, rather than CUUPs.

This leads me to wonder how much of the loyalties and energies of pagan-identified individuals can be stretched among these three different paths. A CUUPs chapter can fall apart, if most of the members are not part of the host congregation. And if the chapter is doing its own thing while appearing, in the public eye, to represent the congregation, there can be repercussions for the congregation and the entire denomination.

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This is one aspect of Paganism that causes more confusion for Unitarian Universalists of other paths. Paganism is an experiential-based religion. It is not what one says or abstractly believes, but what one does or experiences, what works, that is considered important. This right-brained aspect of the Pagan movement often makes it hard to talk about these spiritualities adequately, if at all. What can you say about a group of religions where a dance can be a prayer of thanksgiving, or a simple act like cleaning house can put one in communion with ones Gods? I think Thoreau had a good grasp of it when he said, "Many go fishing all their lives without knowing that it is not fish they are after."

I believe it is this disparity, this uncomfortableness with the ineffable within Unitarian Universalism that is the reason I was told a year ago that Pagans had no place here. People join UUism forgetting that it will force them to stretch their own personal boundaries.

The same pain was here for the gay/lesbian movement a few years ago. It was here during the UU participation in the anti-slavery movement. It will be here every time a new group finds its spirit able to soar in UUism. Being a "UU whatever" puts a person on the fringe of any spiritual path one may walk whether it is Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism or Paganism. We are a people who say we welcome diversity with that comes learning to stretch ones own mind and being. Change means opening the unknown, and it is rarely a planned journey.

I am Pagan, and I am UU.

I am the son of the Transcendentalists, the son of Emerson and Thoreau. I see the stars at night with the same respect, the same awe, and the same wonder. I reject no true heart. I value and count as a friend those who dance to the beat of a different drummer. I am also the son of Channing, of Hosea Ballou, and of Thomas Starr King. I am the Ba'al Shem Tov calling my elders to come dance in the woods, but they can't see that I am the child they raised. They are stuck on words, staring at books in small, poorly lit rooms, in uncomfortable chairs, and they think it is me that makes them uncomfortable.

All I ask is that you take the time to ask me what it is that I believe, and why I do the things I do. And then I ask that you listen. And if there is room for me to dance in this sanctuary, I will leave you room to sit. And if there is no room for me to dance, then you are welcome to walk with me in the woods, anytime.

Blessed be, my friends

CREDITS: Much of the preceding text was taken from the works of Jen Dixon, Shava Nerad and Jerrie Hildebrand ❀❀

E-Mail addresses/ continued from page 5

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• Newport News, Chris Prendergast, phoenix@gc.net
• Richmond, Bill Jones, wmjones@gems.vcu.edu

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• Olympia, Neil Marsh, neilm@halcyon.com
• Seattle, Mary Ellen Zippel, mzippel@spl.lib.wa.us

WISCONSIN

Madison, Penny Andrews, (forming),
pandrews@students.wisc.edu

ONTARIO

Ottawa, Marc Thornton, (forming), thormar@capitalnet.com

Blue Moon Ritual/ continued from page 2

"You have to find out for yourself." participant does fantasy
Crone hits on head with flower or some such (we used twisty
wands from a toy store) & says "Bibbity Bobbity Boo" till
end of circle The leaders take on the persona of the
Goddesses to give the goddesses a chance to dream.

Show and Tell "What did you bring for once in a blue moon?"

If you need a grounding meditation do- "Heyokah" p 179
number 22 in *The Sacred Path Cards* by Jamie Sams (Harper
San Francisco ISBN 0-06-250762-1) or a Sacred Trickster
story. Sacred Tricksters include Coyote, Bre'r Rabbit, Anazi,
Loki, etc.

Simple Feast Oreos and milk

Closing Get back in circle of sorts. Play or sing a song about
humor or a funny song most people in the circle will know.

THANK THE GODDESSES. THANK THE QUARTERS.

UN-CAST THE CIRCLE from hand to hand (widdershins)

Celebrants: see ya later alligator

Responsa: in a while crocodile ❀

CUUPS on the Internet

Dave Pollard, Online Liaison

Technopagans – pagans involved in the fields of modern technology – are a large slice of Neopagan culture, as documented in Margot Adler's *Drawing Down the Moon*. They may, perhaps, form an even larger slice of the UU Pagan "pie." Here are some online resources for UU Pagans:

cuups-usa@efn.org Paul Cass (aka Liath Mactire), a member of the Eugene, Oregon CUUPS Chapter, started an Internet email list called *cuups-usa* in October of 1994.

cuups-usa brings over 100 CUUPSters and friends of CUUPS from all across the United States and Canada together, to discuss ritual construction, single gender celebrations, Coming of Age ceremonies, "community," and everything between. For more information on *cuups-usa* write to Liath at *lmctire@efn.org*

cuups-l@uua.org This past summer when the UUA installed an Internet server at 25 Beacon Street. Affiliates from all over the Association started setting up mail lists at the new *uua.org*. CUUPS-L, the "official" CUUPS Email list, was launched in September 1995, drawing its original membership largely from the "unofficial" list on *efn.org*. About 125 people subscribe, including several members of the CUUPS Board. The discussion here covers many of the same topics as CUUPS-USA, but also explores theology, and discuss sermons on Pagan topics. This list is moderated by David Pollard. For more information on the CUUPS-L list write to *CUUPS@aol.com*

uther+cuups@drycas.CLUB.CC.CMU.EDU An email list to discuss CUUPS continental board business and administrative issues is separately maintained, for members interested in participating in those processes. For more information on that list, contact *uther@drycas.CLUB.CC.CMU.EDU*

The Unofficial Web Site There is currently an "unofficial" CUUPS webpage at <http://world.std.com/~notelrac/cuups.dir/>. This webpage is maintained by Notelrac Starshine. You can contact him at *notelrac@world.std.com*

The Official Web Site (to come) CUUPS Co-Chair Rev. Lesley Phillips is coordinating an effort to create an official CUUPS Web Page. For more information on this email her at *cuupscon@efn.org* or call (617)547-6465.



CUUPS in Canada/ Continued from page 5

A society which has both a CUUPS chapter and a UUWF chapter may find they are offering similar activities and resources and paying two memberships.

I should mention that for Canadians, the CUUPS membership fee can be a hurdle. To send in the \$30.00 annual individual fee, plus 10%, plus exchange rate, plus postal money order fee, costs \$50.00 Can. Then there is the chapter fee; plus support of one's own Church or Fellowship, plus possibly a separate contribution to the Canadian Unitarian Council. Many of us are much too far away geographically to attend a GA or annual CUUPS convocation. So it will be vitally important for CUUPS leaders to promote supportive contact far and wide in the future! We have much to contribute to one another, as well as the denomination.

NUUMOON was invited to contribute to this issue of Pagan Nuus just a couple of days before the deadline. This motivated me to try to pull together as overview of CUUPS members and chapters in Canadian UU societies. I have been telephoning all across our time zones to make contact with rumoured chapters.

Up to now, contributing to publications has been difficult to do, and I am really glad to hear that the CUUPS board and volunteers are re-structuring and delegating activities more widely. During the last several years it seemed that all the energy was absorbed in establishing CUUPS in the UUA at General Assembly time, and in planning the yearly CUUPS convocations. The outer strands of the web weren't linked with each other or the centre.

New Listings for Canada

Susan and Zeke Eaton Brookfield
Unitarian Fellowship of P.E.I.

Jenny Blaine

Universalist Unitarian Church of Halifax
<http://www.ccn.dal.ca/religion/erce/cuups-home.html>

Laurie Foster

First Unitarian Church, Ottawa

Joyce and Karl Meyer

Calgary, A small emerging Fellowship

Katie Steinsather

Westwood Unitarian Fellowship



Incorporating Ritual / continued from page 4

ceremonies that are already in place. Tie your innovations to some part of the standard order of service with which the congregation is already comfortable.

Are you planning an entire service as ritual? Different questions need to be asked. Do you have a large or small congregation? Large groups require more planning for any ritual, congregations with ministers will likely expect a more structured presentation, while small fellowships and lay-led groups may be more open to innovation or on-the-spot improvisation. Do you have fixed seating? The energy dynamic of people sitting in rows is very different than that of people in a circle; your plan must take that into account.

Have you included participatory actions, as well as observer actions? Good ritual grabs us the way it does because we become united in its energy. Unison activities, even those as conventional as hymn-singing and responsive readings, help create a group gestalt. It is much more effective, for example, if the congregation can co-participate in calling quarters by using unison readings, special gestures, or songs rather than just watch someone do it. Try, especially, to make your primary ritual action one in which everyone can participate.

Plan within an acceptable "comfort zone" for the congregants. Most people don't like surprises on Sunday morning. Explain, explain, explain! Explain what the circle means. Explain why you are invoking the four directions. Explain why you are smudging, or sprinkling or lighting candles. This helps dispel any mumbo-jumbo atmosphere and helps the congregants participate more intelligently, even if at times they are just observing.

And don't be afraid to repeat your efforts. Something unfamiliar and suspicious to the group the first time it's presented, will be old-hat and taken in stride the third or fourth time!

Here's some other strategies:

Piggy-back ritual action onto a more predictable part of the service. Give them something they expect, then segue into something more unusual. For example, deliver a shortened sermon, then have the congregation participate in an action that expands on the theme of the sermon.

We used this technique at a mid-sized midwestern church. I delivered a brief talk on the four elements, then led the congregants in a responsive reading. Congregants were asked to repeat a line from the reading to each other as they passed tangible symbols of the elements -- incense, candles, water and potting soil -- from hand to hand. The service was well received at that church and worked equally well later at a small, start-up congregation.

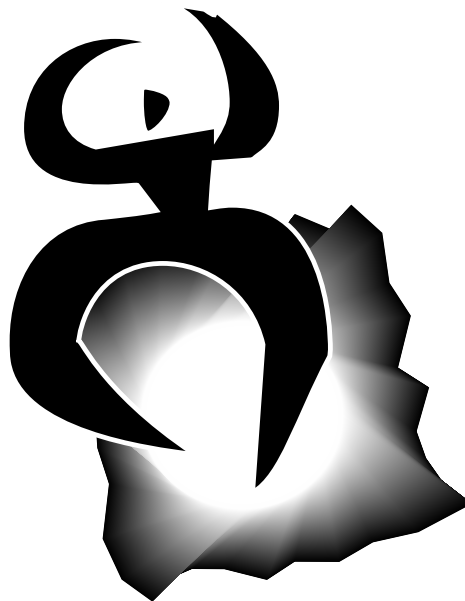
Use your church's standard order of service as a frame around the ritual content. Rather than start out the morning rattling congregant's expectations by casting circles or calling quarters, use your church's standard openings and closings, compress your ritual actions and substitute them for where a sermon would go.

For example, our order of service for last Winter Solstice reads:

Call to Worship
Responsive Reading
Welcome and Announcements
Offertory
What is Winter Solstice?
A Ritual for the Return of the Sun
Creation of Ritual Space
Meditation on the Darkness
Mystery of the Return
Celebration of the Light
Joys and Concerns
Closing Ritual Space
Closing Hymn

The best strategy? Keep it fun and keep it simple.

One of the strengths that we Pagans have to offer the larger UU community is our liturgical skills. With a little thoughtfulness, courtesy and respect for the traditions already in place in your church, it will be possible to make Sunday mornings a positive experience for both you and the rest of your congregation.



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May Carols are Where You Find Them

By Shava Nerad

In my reading, I often come upon works which, while not overtly pagan, fit well with the pagan viewpoint. There's some overlap between fans of the Grateful Dead, and pagan circles, and here's a verse from Robert Hunter's "Terrapin Station" cycle to prove it. You can find more of his often pagan-flavored lyrics in A Box of Rain (ISBN 0-670-83412-2).

RECOGNITION

Trusting inspiration is
more often right than wrong
Raise again the drinking horn
And pass the meat around.

Light uh guide us
Raise us and lead us
Make certain our seed
has seed of its own
and seed of its seed
in turn, by the
grace of grace
who will shine
a good long time
and not fade away

Familiar stranger,
fates conjoined in
ways we cannot see,
I know you -- come
with a lover's hope,
a lover's demand and
a lover's dream in mind
as long as the light shines,
as long as the words define
a space between you and I
to be measured in time,
until the day this station
closes forevermore
and no train runs from glory
to this godforsaken shore

Inspiration move me brightly
Light the song with sense and color
Hold away despair
More than this I will not ask,
faced with mysteries dark and vast --
statements just seem vain at last
Some climb, some fall, some rise
to get to Terrapin

Counting stars by candlelight
all are dim but one is bright:
the piral light of Venus
rising first and shining best,
from the northwest corner
of a brad-new crescent moon
while crickets and cicadas sing
a rare and different tune

Terrapin Station

CUUPS Statement of Purpose:

The Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans (CUUPS) was chartered by the Unitarian Universalist Association at the General Assembly in 1987 "for purposes of enabling networking among Pagan Identified UUs; providing outreach of Unitarian Universalism to the broader Pagan community; providing educational materials on Paganism for Unitarian Universalist congregations and the general public; promoting Pagan/Judeo - Christian dialogue; encouraging the development of theo/alological and liturgical materials based on earth and nature centered religious and spiritual perspectives; encouraging greater use of music, dance, visual arts, poetry, story, and creative ritual in Unitarian Universalist worship and celebration; providing support for Pagan- identified UU religious professionals and ministerial students; and fostering healing relationships with our mother the Earth and all her children."

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Are you missing any issues of PAGAN NUUS? The mail does usually get through, but with each mailing being larger than ever, we see more and more newsletters returned by the Post Office as undeliverable. If you think that there are issues of PAGAN NUUS that you should have received but did not, do please let us know! (And if you know that you are going to be moving, please let us know your new address as soon as possible - it now costs 50 cents a piece to get address corrections form the Post Office.)

Membership Information

✍ Basic membership is \$25-\$ 35 sliding scale with \$30 as standard (add \$15 for a second membership at the same address). A year include membership to CUUPS with a subscription to Pagan NUUS.

✍ There are also limited income/retired/student) memberships available on request at a reduced rate of \$15/yr. individual or \$30/yr. for couples.

✍ Subscription information and address of the national newsletter: Pagan NUUS Subscription are \$8/yr.; make check to CUUPS and mail to the Continental CUUPS Office.

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