



**CUUPS Fall Newsletter
September 2005**

Message From our President

As I write this column, I realize that this past summer has been filled with life changing events for both Mary Gelfand (our past co-president) and myself. Mine started in June with the high school graduation of my oldest son, Sean, and the upcoming move to college life and adulthood. Our local UU church (Unitarian Universalist Church of Boulder) held a moving Bridging ceremony for him filled with laughter and tears. Then on the actual day of graduation it rained buckets and 40 degree temperature (we had not had any rain for over a month and the next day it was clear and in the 70's). The 200+ graduates elected to go ahead and have the ceremony (even though it was outdoors) as they couldn't decide which 5 people to include if they moved it indoors. I must say that it was the shortest graduation on record – it started at 9:00 a.m. and we were home (totally drenched) by 10:30. The sea of umbrellas was moving, as were the totally soaked and freezing graduates. They enjoyed it and it will be remembered for many years to come, filled with stories embellished with each class reunion.

On July 14, Mary Gelfand's mother, Mary Prudence Kimball Fondren, passed through the veil on. She was 87 and had just celebrated her 65 wedding anniversary. On July 17, my mother, Norma Gene Graham, also passed through the veil at 79. Mary was in

England with her husband and was not able to be there for the passing. My mother, after 43 years as a medical guinea pig, passed quietly in her bed at home. We both had special bonds with our mothers and as much as we celebrate the circle of life in our religion, it still leaves a "hole". We both shall miss them terribly.

As we approach the fall and winter months, we become more aware of the changes around us, in nature, in ourselves and in society. In nature, we see it dramatically with the change in the weather and in the flora around us. It is a time for beginning to draw within ourselves, to take stock of what we have and to store away the summer memories, and to prepare ourselves and our larder for the coming winter months. In most places, school starts again, our children grow up and continue their move toward adulthood all too fast.

Within CUUPS, there too will be changes. Both Mary and I will both be stepping down as co-presidents--Mary to attend to her health and sanity (after many years of dedication to CUUPS) and I to dedicate more time to my local UU church as president of our Program Planning Council (our minister left for a new church in June and we do not have an interim minister). You, as members, will elect a new board to continue the works of CUUPS. I implore you to return the ballots as soon as possible and to continue to support CUUPS. Exciting things will be happening over the next couple of years. Make sure that you are a part of this. Change happens, it is up to you how you handle it.

Blessed Be, Shari Storm

CUUPS Chapters in the Twenty First Century

Part 2

Written by Mary Ann Somervill

[Editor's Note: CUUPS (the Covenant of UU Pagans) was founded in 1987 as an Independent Affiliate of The Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations. Initially, CUUPS was largely an organization of individuals within the UUA who held Pagan beliefs. Over the years, the number of CUUPS chapters affiliated with different congregations has increased. Chapter/congregation relations have developed and evolved and we have learned a great deal about how not to build strong chapter/congregation relationships. Fortunately, we have also learned a great deal about how to build strong and supportive relationships between chapters and home congregations. This document, provided by Mary Ann Somervill, Spelcastor of MoonPath CUUPS in Ft. Lauderdale, and Rev. Gail Tapscott of the UU Church in Ft. Lauderdale, is a tool to help chapters navigate the tricky waters of right relationship with their home congregations. Because of the length of this article, it will be published in two parts. Part one was published in the Summer Newsletter.]

Providing Religious Education Within the Home Congregation

A CUUPS chapter also has a responsibility to its church. It is a part of the chapter's responsibility to their home congregation to provide alternative worship services as often as is suitable for both groups. CUUPS led services might include a traditional seasonal ritual, a teaching ritual which is

interspersed with explanations of its various aspects, or a service which is closer to the model used by their home congregation with the addition of pagan elements such as chants, visualizations, poetry and dance. Some chapters are regularly responsible for certain Sunday worship services, such as a Samhain service for remembrance or an Ostara service for Spring. (See BCUUPS Worship Guide.) Education is another responsibility of CUUPS chapters to their home congregations. We can make ourselves available for both adult and child religious education. Every Sunday School needs volunteers. CUUPS members can meet that need by volunteering a few Sundays in the children's RE classes to talk about Paganism. Circle Round, by Starhawk, etc. is an excellent resource for stories and activities you might you with a Sunday School group. Volunteering to lead an adult RE series for several weeks should also be well received. CUUPS chapters might want to offer two established UU adult programs—Cakes for the Queen of Heaven (now out of print, but available in most district libraries) or Rise Up and Call Her Name. Many churches already own these curricula. In addition, CUUPS has an adult RE class titled Exploring Paganism, which is designed to help the non-Pagan decide if this spiritual path merits deeper exploration. Paganism: An Introduction to Earth Centered Religions by Joyce and River Higginbotham is the text for this class, and an excellent resource for every CUUPS library. CUUPS also has several pamphlets on Paganism available

on the web site that can be printed and shared. (<http://www.cuups.org>)

Finance

If we want the support of our home congregations, it is essential that we support them as well. Chapter members should be encouraged to become active in the church by attending Sunday services, joining the church, pledging, and participating in church events and fund raisers.

Chapters may also want to give back, financially, to their home congregation in some way. Some chapters take a collection at every ritual, and donate the proceeds to the church. Other chapters make sure that all church fund raising events are supported by one or two CUUPS volunteers. A chapter may decide to support their home church by identifying a specific church fund raiser they wish to run every year. One exceedingly well organized chapter conducts the church's annual canvass. There are a wide variety of creative ways in which your chapter can give back, financially, to your home congregation.

Our financial contributions as a chapter not only demonstrate our support, they also put our name in the church account books, forming an additional bond. Some chapters run their accounts through church books in order to be on record, but prefer that their actual contributions to the congregation be in the form of gifts that will be of value to both. For example, we expect to clean up our own mess, and that is certainly expected of us. It's part of being a considerate guest. But if the church

vacuum cleaner was manufactured in the late 1940s, we might give them a new one. Our clean up is made easier and they see us as a contributing organization. A gift might also take the form of a donation in their name as well as ours to a service agency. Admission to an appropriate festival, for example, might be nonperishable foods for a local food bank. The bags and boxes collected at the Saturday festival are arranged on the podium for all to see at the Sunday service. Then on Monday they are taken to the food bank as a donation credited to both the chapter and the church.

Chapters and their Members

Pagans come together in CUUPS for various benefits to themselves, both as a collective and as individuals, from belonging to a recognized Pagan organization. When the karma is right, and all are willing to do the necessary work, a community may be created.

UU Paganism brings together individuals from various traditions. In so doing, we become a unique tradition of our own. We accept that there is no single path or right way to implement a ritual. Instead, we honor the individuality and creativity of our members and the traditions which they represent, viewing our diversity as an opportunity for learning and sharing. Our rituals should demonstrate aspects of the various traditions within our membership. Regularly scheduled study groups and classes are another positive venue for spiritual and intellectual growth through diversity.

A worthy goal for a chapter is to celebrate each of the eight holidays on the Wheel of the Year. One or more of these celebrations should be an open ritual with invitations to members of the

home congregations and even to the local community. An open ritual would provide an opportunity for our home congregation to experience who we are and what we're about. A broad invitation may bring in spiritual searchers and solitaries seeking group affiliation as well as enlightening the merely curious. Networking among individual Pagans and non-UU Pagan groups is often a positive result of our open rituals. Bringing in large numbers of people at open rituals also adds to the energy that we raise. In places where there are several chapters within driving distance of each other, multiple chapters may come together to plan and celebrate some or all of the Sabbats. This would, of course, require cooperation, planning, and sharing among the chapters involved—all valuable skills in and of themselves.

CUUPS is not an initiatory tradition. However, a chapter may create a dedication ritual for someone beginning a course of serious study of Paganism. By the same token a ritual honoring an individual's completion of their year and a day of study might be undertaken. Rituals which are observed within a CUUPS chapter will vary with the needs and desires of the members. Rites of passage celebrating birth and acknowledging death, recognition of pubescence, honoring of the crone and sage, handfastings are all among the rituals which may be requested by chapter members.

A regular newsletter is an excellent means of keeping members in touch with each other, but the mailing list must be in the hands of only one or two trusted members. Better still is an e-mail newsletter (no expense for stamps and no destruction of trees) but it must be

sent out as a blind copy and the mailing list must be protected. A well-maintained and regularly updated web page is a further protection of privacy, as individuals may access the site anonymously. Privacy extends also to the use of cameras at rituals and other CUUPS events. No photography should be allowed without prior consent. Press photographers and reporters should not be allowed to attend CUUPS events unless they have been granted permission, the minister and board have been informed, and then they must be accompanied by a knowledgeable escort from the chapter.

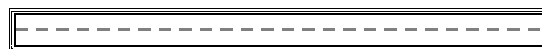
Role of CUUPS, Inc.

In order to establish and maintain a CUUPS chapter, it is required that there be three people in it who are members of both CUUPS, Inc. and the home congregation. Please understand that this is a minimum requirement. Ideally, all members of a chapter would be members of CUUPS, Inc. and actively involved as congregation members. Joining the church is of benefit to both the congregation and the individual. Membership provides to Pagans a way to gain a public expression of their private religion. It allows their children an affiliation which may be more comfortable to explain to peers than Paganism. UU membership means belonging not just to a local congregation, but to a vast network which extends around the world. From time to time, problems will erupt in any established group. Most CUUPS chapters have had their share of experiences with difficult church boards and toxic chapter members. When such situations arise, chapters should be aware that the home congregation is only one of their sources of support. CUUPS,

Inc. board members are also available to be called upon if difficulties arise. In addition, there are close to seventy other chapters who have made their way through the ups and downs of functioning as part of a UU home congregation. There are CUUPS e-mail group to connect chapters and individuals. (

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/cuups-chapcontact/join>) Don't hesitate to reach out when in need. There are resources available. You are a part of a larger whole and you are not alone.

CUUPS, Inc. membership, both chapter and individual, is what keeps our UUA affiliate alive. All board members are volunteers. Dues and donations to CUUPS provide paper and postage for our newsletter and other communications and for our journal, Sacred Cosmos, expenses related to General Assembly where our annual meeting is held and our bi-annual Convocation, and pay the phone bill for communication among our board members who are scattered across the nation. Active membership in our home congregation will do a great deal to ensure not only acceptance of the chapter, but embracing it. As chapter members regularly attend services, serve on committees, participate in work projects, contribute time and energy to service projects and dollars to the pledge drive, we will be recognized for our sincerity and for being a part of Unitarian Universalism.



GA 2005

Monique Posa, Co-Secretary, CUUPS

Temperatures in the 90s greeted visitors to Fort Worth, Texas for General

Assembly 2005. In the air-conditioned comfort of the Tarrant County Convention Center, CUUPS members, and UU's of all traditions from all over the country stopped by our booth in the exhibit hall to peruse books, clothing and other items. Memberships were renewed and old friends were greeted.

The exhibit hall was not the only CUUPS presence at GA this year. There were 25 attendees at our annual meeting, with five board members present. Nominees were taken for Board elections coming up in the Fall and for the Nominating Committee. A polling committee was named and possibilities for a future CUUPS Convo were discussed.



CUUPS members from around the nation meet for fellowship

After a sandwich tray luncheon, Fort Worth Circle of Life CUUPS chapter presented the annual Summer Solstice ritual. Native American traditions were incorporated into a delightful, energy-raising event. Chanting filled the meeting room as we celebrated the sun! Participants were presented with clay sun medallions as a special remembrance of the ritual. Many thanks to the Fort Worth Circle of Life CUUPS Chapter for their hard work and wonderful ritual!



CUUPS Board Member, Niko ,enjoys
bountiful buffet (pictures submitted by David
Pollard)

Song of the Seasons

By Steve Storm (Co-Leader Boulder
CUUPS)

Every time we hold ritual, or even just gather together to mark the Sabbats and the turning of the Wheel of the Year, we add one more note to the continuing song that is all around us and comes from within us. Calling it the “Song of the Seasons” is my own visualization. You probably have your own. However you view it, it often happens that you get the responsibility for arranging a ritual or a celebration. Sometimes, you get a lot of time to prepare carefully crafted events with special items and beautiful words and maybe even (radical idea here!!!) a rehearsal or two.

Other times you don’t get a warning. What do you do when suddenly pressed into the duty of arranging the event for your group for the holiday coming next week? Or tomorrow? It is a similar situation to being asked to write a piece for a newsletter at the last moment. You wing it as best as you can. Sometimes, all you need, all you can work with, is a single idea or concept. You can then expand from

there, using the words and formats and traditions you are comfortable with. Later, when everyone is complimenting you how wonderful and inspiring the occasion was, whatever you do, please don’t tell them it was something you just cobbled together. Modest as you may be, as much as you don’t want to claim credit you feel belongs to the Gods and Goddesses, don’t tell your admiring participant it was thrown together in panic. If you do that, and you are watching carefully, you may see the dimming of the wonder in their eyes. All holy celebrations are special and sacred and need to be cherished and stay cherishable. Don’t bad mouth your own successes. Let those people think it is a special process that lead to their sense of wonder. They will find out differently soon enough once they become responsible for writing their own rituals at the last moment. (Insert wry and experienced smile here J.)

But where do you get that one little idea or concept on which you hang a suddenly inspired word? Some of us do get inspiration directly from our Deities, however we visualize those Deities. On the other hand, while I have found such inspiration to be exciting when it does happen, sometimes the Deities leave us to our own devices, sometimes all too often. When that happens to me, I do not hesitate to “borrow” from anyone I have talked to or anything I have seen. The least little idea or twist of ritual can be the basis of what then becomes my own creation. My wife keeps copies of rituals we have gotten from friends and all sorts of sources. Even a

phrase from one of those old rituals can be enough to expand upon. For me, this is the foundation of my idea of what "Eclectic" can mean. I will even share a small piece I came up with to describe my own view of Eclecticism.

Nine words the Eclectic Rede attests to: Steal what works. Fix what's broke. Fake the rest.

Here are a couple suggestions that you may not have heard of for upcoming holidays. "Steal" or "Fix" them as you feel appropriate.

Fall Equinox

It's a harvest holiday. The abundance of Nature is in full force. Feasting is appropriate. One idea we have used in several variations is to make the Feast itself become the actual ritual. Not everyone is Wiccan, but I am, and I will have to put this part in Wicca terms. Adjust accordingly for yourselves. We have made the Feast table itself the actual altar and circle. On the table will be the four Elements. Three are very natural: a salt shaker is Earth; a pitcher contains Water; a candle is Fire. For Air, we added an incense stick. It produces a small amount of smoke and doesn't overpower the actual food flavors. Also, it can be safely handled during the ritual part of the event.

Open up the event by gathering people together and getting them to sit around the table. Make the number of chairs match the number of people so there are no gaps between people. Ground people by telling them that the table and the people will be the sacred space.

Casting circle by having people join hands one by one will add to this notion. The element blessing and quarter calls are done by whoever is sitting in the chair in the appropriate direction. One key "ingredient" we have found that adds to the "flavor" of the event is to make sure that all things at the table are passed around deosil, even if a widdershins pass would be shorter, especially if a widdershins pass would be shorter. The more people involved in any one part of the ritual, the more you consciously and subconsciously reinforce the "community" aspect of feasting together. Start by teaching people that old phrases ring out to the deepest part of ourselves. Give the example of "Please, pass the salt." Since that is often the first element blessed, it provides a good precedent for the rest of the ritual and meal. When salt and water are combined in a small glass that just happened to be sitting next to the pitcher, have the person cleanse the person to their left. Then that second person takes the glass and cleanses the next person. The same goes for the stick of incense. (You see, isn't that stick a lot easier to handle than a hot little cauldron full of charcoal and resin incense?) God and Goddess can be extra candles on the table. Adapt to your traditions and table size. And be sure to pass everything Deosil. Bardic groups can impose a penalty of an improvised poem for passing widdershins. Whatever.

One time, we made it a Feast of Thanks and Giving. Everyone was required to speak about what they were thankful for and also what they felt they had given during the last

harvest cycle. And it was not just a word or two. It was a description of what it was and why it was important.

Samhain

There are many aspects to Samhain. (It is my favorite holiday because I am already in costume as a witch, but none of my co-workers seem to get that joke.) One appropriate action is scrying. Here is a wonderful notion for creating a special “black mirror”.

Obtain a small black cast iron frying pan. If you don't have one, you now have an excuse to prowlflea markets or yard sales. Consider it recycling. I believe the technical term is an 8 inch frying pan. Just don't get a big one or the trick won't work. If it is old and crusty, clean it up until it is nice and black. Arrange black votive candles so you get as many as possible in the pan. If you have extra black wax, put chips of it between the votive candles. Light all the candles and wait. (This part can take a while, so you might want to start it before ritual.) Eventually, all the votive candles will melt down and create a single pool of wax across the whole pan. The surface will be perfectly flat, suitable for black mirror work, but it will also have an arrangement of little flames coming out of the black surface. Dim the lights and you will see the reflections of the flames in the smooth and seemingly deep black surface. The combination of dark and flame can take you and your visions as far as you might want to go. Afterwards, put out the candles and keep the pan for another time. It's cheating, but

you can speed up the preparation by putting the pan in an oven that has been warmed and than turned off. This is especially true when you are re-using the scrying pan and the wax is one solid piece. Be careful. You don't want the flavor of a wax fire in your oven!!

If you have ideas or experiences like these, be sure to tell others about them. Sooner or later, someone will use them. The Deities do provide inspirations, but they sometimes do it second-hand, and all of us are those hands.

Blessed Be.

Upcoming Events

GA 2006 – St. Louis, Missouri

2006 will be the 20th Anniversary of the Religious Education material known as “Cakes for the Queen of Heaven” published by Shirley Ranck. A coalition of women's groups within the UUA are putting together a celebration of this work and the impact that it has had within the UUA. The theme chosen for this celebration is “Liberating UUs With Feminist Ethics, Theologies and Voices.” Our slogan will be “She Changes!” At this time, we have the possibility of Margo Adler as a special guest speaker.

The UU women's groups involved are CUUPS, UUWF, MSUU, UUWHS and UU W&R.

Start planning now for this incredible event of celebration of women (and men, too).

GA 2007-Portland, Oregon

Another anniversary celebration!!!
CUUPS will turn 20 this year. Plan on
joining us for this celebration of US and
our impact on Unitarian Universalism!

<http://www.reclaimingquarterly.org/web/paganfest05/paganfest3.html> (3rd photo
down)

GA 2006

St. Louis, Missouri

20th Anniversary Celebration of "Cakes for
the Queen of Heaven"

Theme: Liberating UUs with Feminist Ethics,
Theologies and Voices.

Plan Now to Attend!!!!

The winner for "Best Float" was a friend
who tagged along, pulling a nine foot tall
yoni.

<http://www.reclaimingquarterly.org/web/paganfest05/paganfest2.html> (5th and
6th photos down. Click upper right
photo to enlarge our "We've Tranceport"
image:

<http://www.lunabelly.com/paganpride/paganpride.html>).

Chapter News

*[Editor's Note: Submitted by Unitarian
Universalists CUUPS chapter of
Berkeley]* Ten were in the contingent of
the recently formed CUUPS chapter,
Mist Tree Moon Circle, in the Pagan
Fest March in Berkeley in May. Two
members were quoted in the Oakland
Tribune. It was a glorious, blessed,
healing and celebratory day. This is the
Pagan Fest's 4th year. This year's theme
was "Weaving Traditions."

<http://thepaganalliance.org/festival.asp>

Our "float" was an all electric global
neighborhood vehicle ("We've
Tranceport") covered with all manner of
woven things and topped by big spiders
(earth weavers) on a wicker throne. The
spiders are healing folks from
arachnophobia through desensitization.

Deadline for CUUPS Winter Newsletter is October 1, 2005

Preferred submission of files is in Microsoft
Word without tabs or indents. Second
Option is PDF or hard copies.

Submit to Shari Storm at storm@indra.com

Theme for Winter Newsletter is:
Yule and Imbolc