



CUUPS NEWS

In this issue:

Full Moon Ritual for Peace – p.1

Chapter Highlights – p. 2

Next Convo? – p. 5

Election News – p. 5

Do Not Lose Heart – a message from Rev. Melanie Morel-Ensminger – p. 6

2004 Annual Meeting Report – p. 7

President's Message – p. 12

General Assembly 2005 – Fort Worth, TX – p.

May 1 Deadline for next edition of CUUPS News—

If you know of any Pagan-friendly opportunities for leadership training or have a favorite Pagan festival you'd like the CUUPS community to know about, send the information to Shari Storm by May 1 at storm@indra.com so it can be listed in our next edition.

Full Moon Ritual for Peace

By Mary Gelfand (aka Mary Moonfox)

This ritual was written in the months immediately following September 11 and represents my response to the war that, at that point, was so visible on the horizon. Now, as the war enters its third year, the focus of this ritual remains a valuable concept to project globally.

This ritual is written in the standard format used in my circle. You are welcome to make modifications that are necessary for your circle and eliminate any pieces that are not traditional with your group. I do ask that you do the Quarter Calls and the working itself more or less as written, as they are the core of this ritual.

Preparation

Purify participants with smudging, salt water or sound.

Teach the chant (words are at the end of the ritual).

Ground & Center, using whatever technique works well for your group.

Beginning Ritual

Cast, using whatever method feels right at the time.

Bless participants into circle with sacred oil on their forehead.

Calling Quarters East

We call upon the spirit of the peoples of the East—the peoples of China and Japan and Korea—of India and Tibet and Viet-Nam and all other peoples from the East. We call upon warriors and bards—those who walk the edges with both words and deeds. We invite them to join our circle, and to bring with them the gifts of Air. Air—teach us to use our words to speak with clarity of what we need. Teach us to use our silences to listen thoughtfully to what others need. Help us use our intelligence and insight to find a peaceful solution for all. Welcome peoples of the East—welcome Air.

All: Welcome peoples of the East—welcome Air.

South

We call upon the spirit of the peoples of the South—the peoples of Africa and Brazil, of Argentina and Australia and all other peoples from the South. We call upon artists, dancers, healers, activists, and creators. We invite them to join our circle, and to bring with them the gifts of Fire. Fire—grant us the inspiration to envision a world of peace. Strengthen our will for the difficult work ahead. May the transformative energy of Fire bless us as we strive to make our vision of peace manifest in

the world. Welcome peoples of the South—welcome Fire.

All: Welcome peoples of the South—welcome Fire.
Continued on p. 3

Chapter Highlights

By Niko Tarini,
CUUPS Chapter
Coordinator

In the last newsletter, I put out a request for news of activities from our chapters across the country. To date I have not received any updates, so again I am putting out the call to our chapters and members for news of what you are doing out there in the UU hinterlands. Someone must be engaging the public or coordinating good works with and within their host congregations. Please let us know how you are contributing to your congregational and greater communities.

Speaking of congregational communities, I would like to devote the rest of this column to chapter-church relations. Recently the conversation on the CUUPS Chapter Contact email list has revolved around this very topic. An emerging chapter has run into some resistance from its congregation and I found the situation to be cause for concern. Rather than

embracing the new chapter as another aspect of the church community, the church was treating the emerging chapter as if it were an outside group and there was a sense of the chapter being in competition for church members and resources.

There were three aspects of the new chapter that seemed to worry this particular church's governing board. First was the issue of the chapter's finances. Those of you who are new to CUUPS may not be aware of the variations present in our chapters. How finances are handled can vary greatly amongst these groups. Some chapters are included in their church's budget and the church handles their funds. Others have their own bank accounts. Some chapters may not deal with money at all and collect donations only when needed for supplies or membership renewal. I'm sure there are other variations I have not included. The accounting method a chapter chooses is determined by the group and the culture of their host church.

In this particular case, the board is insisting that the chapter be included as a line-item in the church budget. It seems that the congregation is afraid that if the chapter handled money, it would take away from the church's income. This may seem silly

for those of us on the outside looking in but we have to accept the congregation's right to govern itself as it sees fit. If you are part of a group that has decided to form a CUUPS chapter at your church, you need to understand the culture of your congregation and how it governs itself. This will be important when it comes time to decide on how to handle money. When in doubt, ask the board and do what they request.

The second issue was this chapter's meetings and how they described them. Their meetings are held on Sundays after the regular church service and were being referred to as *services*. I can definitely understand why this would raise eyebrows. Many churches are afraid the CUUPS chapter will become a 'church within a church' and calling your meetings services will be confusing to some and alarming to many. It doesn't matter what day you meet, my advice for this and all CUUPS chapters is to use a different word. Have a circle, ritual, fellowship, prayer group, potluck, RE class, etc., never a service.

Finally, the third issue concerned liability. This is the first case I have heard of where a congregation wanted to be absolved of liability from a CUUPS Chapter's events. Since I have been a member of

a CUUPS chapter, my understanding is that chapters are like any other group that might exist within a church. Don't all churches assume liability for the activities of other groups that might be a part of the congregation (i.e. Women's Club, Tai Chi or Bridge Group)? Don't they have to be responsible for any part of the congregation that uses the church? If there are other CUUPS Chapters that have dealt with this particular issue, please let us know about it and how the situation was resolved.

All this leads me to recommend that everyone in our organization take the time to read or reread David Burwasser's essay "The Well Grounded CUUPS Chapter." It can be found at the CUUPS web-site at this address: <http://cuups.org/content/chapters/wellgrounded.html>. If you are planning on forming a chapter, it will provide you with a strong foundation. If you experiencing strained congregational relations, you may want to have your church board read it as well. It should answer any questions they may have and help pave the way for a healthy chapter-church relationship.

Full Moon Ritual for Peace
Continued from p. 1

West

We call upon the spirit of the peoples of the West—the indigenous peoples from around the world. We call upon travelers, musicians, midwives, therapists, and seers. We invite them to join our circle, and to bring with them the gifts of Water. Water—help us to cleanse ourselves of the pain and suffering caused in the name of our security. Teach us how to act with compassion for those bearing the brunt of war. May water's intuitive gift help us dream a solution to this conflict. Welcome peoples of the West—welcome Water.

All: Welcome peoples of the West—welcome Water.

North

We call upon the spirit of the peoples of the North—the peoples of England and France, Germany and Russia--Europe as a whole—the peoples of the United States and Canada and all other peoples from the North. We call upon parents and farmers, teachers, builders, cooks and craftspersons. We invite them to join our circle, and to bring with them the gifts of Earth. Earth—the foundation and core of all—the one single planet we must share. Earth--great mother from whence all life comes. May Earth's energy inspire us as we seek ways to peacefully share this home we

love with all. Welcome peoples of the North—welcome Earth.

All: Welcome peoples of the North—welcome Earth.

Center

We call upon the spirit of the peoples of the Center—the peoples of Iraq and Iran—Israel and Jordan, those who dwell in the cradle of western civilization. We upon the shamans and priests, the presidents and prime ministers. We invite them to join our circle, and to bring with them the gifts of Spirit. Spirit—the crux, the nub, the divine that manifests in all of us. We are united in the center—united by that which we share, and by that which we desire. May the gifts of Spirit remind us of our connections with the divine, and each other. Welcome peoples of the Center—welcome Spirit.

Invoking Goddess & God

We invoke the spirit of Gaia herself—the spirit of Mother Earth. Great Mother, we know that our constant conflict and warring sadden and harm you. Teach us to use your abundant gifts to learn to live in peace and harmony, sharing your resources with all your children, and rejoicing together in your love. Welcome Gaia.

All: Welcome Gaia

We invoke the spirit of Hermes, messenger of the gods and patron of travelers. Great Hermes—we are all travelers—present on this fragile planet for a brief span of time. Give us your gift of communication, that we may learn from each other, become compassionate towards each other, and work together for peace and harmony.

All: Welcome Hermes

Working

Statement of Intention:

This ritual is designed as a spell for peace. I don't have to tell any of you that our beloved nation has spent the last few years focused on war. And talk of war makes us focus on our differences—on the things that separate us. As pagans, we know what other people know as well, and have perhaps forgotten. We know that all living things on earth are united—are one—because we all come from the goddess. We are one people, sharing the same resources, united in our humanness. Tonight we will focus on that which unites us as human beings around the world. Tonight we will focus of the things that we share with all other humans, regardless of homeland or religion or skin color or gender preference.

Here's how we going to do this. Everyone should think of

something that unites us with our brothers and sisters around the world. That something can be as simple as food or shelter, or something equally universal but perhaps more ephemeral, such as music and myth. Think of something you'd like to speak aloud when the time comes, and hold it in your mind. You may think of more than one thing. You may contribute more than one thing.

I'm going to stand in the center of the circle, and as you think of something that unites us, please call it out. I will repeat what you say, adding the words "unites us." Then the circle will echo back my words.

Example:

—someone calls out "hope"
—leader says "hope unites us"
—circle repeats "hope unites us"

We will keep building this litany until we run out of things to say. Please remember that we are united by both good and bad things—by both hope and fear. And if your mind is bursting with things to contribute, please be sure to allow others their turn.

When our litany is complete, we will move into our chant and dancing. [NB to leaders—this can move into a spiral dance, or any kind of energy building movement you desire.

When you have raised a cone of power, direct the energy towards Washington DC and the Middle East.]

Build litany, chant and dance, send energy, ground.

Closing the Circle

Release Gaia

We release the spirit of Gaia, great goddess of the Earth herself, with thanks for her presence at our ritual, and the manifold blessings she shares with us every day. Great Gaia, go if you must, stay if you will. Blessed be.

Release Hermes

We release the spirit of Hermes, messenger of the gods, with thanks for his presence at our ritual. May He carry our words to where they will fall on fertile soil. Great Hermes, go if you must, stay if you will. Blessed be.

Release Quarters

Center:

We release the spirit and peoples of the Center, with thanks for their support in our work. Go if you must, stay if you will. Blessed be.

North:

We release the spirit and peoples of the North, with thanks for their support in our work. Go if you must, stay if you will. Blessed be.

Continued on p. 5

Summer Solstice Ritual, GA
2004 hosted by Ace of
CUUPS



Ritual for Peace
Continued from p. 4

West:

We release the spirit and peoples of the West, with thanks for their support in our work. Go if you must, stay if you will. Blessed be.

South:

We release the spirit and peoples of the South, with thanks for their support in our work. Go if you must, stay if you will. Blessed be.

Devote circle

Chant--to tune of We All
Come From the Goddess

We all come from the Goddess
Deep inside we all are One
United by our Humanness
Our wish for peace we're
making known.

We all come from the Goddess
Deep inside we all are One
Living, loving, laughing
Peace will make her children
whole.

The Next Convo?

By Monique Posa

Last March, CUUPS Convo at
The Mountain was a time of

renewal, reconnection and restoration. CUUPS members from near and far came to celebrate and worship together. We enjoyed each other's company and had the opportunity to learn from each other.

Convo doesn't "just happen". A small group of dedicated individuals had the rewarding job of planning and organizing the event so that the rest of us could come to The Mountain and enjoy the weekend. To those who worked hard to make Convo '04 happen, we thank you.

When is the next Convo, you ask? When another group of dedicated individuals steps up to the plate and undertakes the task of hosting. Convo can be hosted by YOUR chapter! There are experienced folks out there who are more than willing to help you and your group put together an event.

Convo is due to be held somewhere west of the Mississippi (as recent past Convos have been held in the East). Talk to the people in your group – see if there is some interest in helping to host a wonderful weekend event.

If you think your chapter has what it takes to host Convo contact a member of the Board of Trustees.

OOOPS!

Our Failed Election

By Judy Craft

On June 26, 2004 the CUUPS annual meeting nominated three candidates--Monique Posa, Lydia Smith, and Judy Craft--for the three open three year terms for Trustees. Per Section 9.5, Trustees are elected by mail ballot, therefore the annual meeting called for a mail ballot on that date.

Per Section 7.10, Conduct of Mail Ballot:

Upon demand by the Polling Committee, the Secretary shall enumerate the names and addresses of all the voting members as of the date the mail ballot was called. Ballots shall be sent to all the members thus enumerated, by first-class mail at least forty-five (45) days in advance of counting, or by another class of mail at least sixty (60) days in advance of counting. Ballots shall be deemed to be sent upon being deposited in the mail. Ballots shall be counted within one hundred twenty (120) days of the date the mail ballot was called.

Therefore, based upon our by-laws, the latest counting date for a valid Trustee election was 10/24/04, and the last day to mail ballots by first class mail was 9/9/04.

Our Failed Election Continued from p. 5

Unfortunately, the CUUPS board did not make this deadline. This is not the fault of the Polling Committee, but rather of the trustees who did not ensure that there was an acting secretary to coordinate with the Polling Committee to ensure that the proper election procedures were followed.

The months following General Assembly were a difficult time for many of the Trustees of CUUPS. Many of us are in the sandwich generation, caring for both our children and our parents and in-laws. A combination of health problems among both Trustees and those they care for and an over active Atlantic Hurricane season led to scheduling difficulties, and we did not make quorum for a board meeting from July through September.

On Oct 19, 2004, Judy Kay Craft informed the board that we had missed the deadline for conducting a valid election. We discussed having a straw poll and then appointing the nominated slate, but the majority of the trustees felt that, since the election was uncontested, i.e., three candidates for three positions, spending approximately \$500 for a straw poll was not the

best stewardship of our limited funds.

Per Section 9.6:

Each Trustee in each Group shall hold office from election until the third subsequent Annual Meeting of members, and thereafter until ballots for the election of Trustees have been counted and new Trustees have qualified.

There having been no election to count, Judy Kay Craft, Lydia Smith, and Rebekah Benner were still Trustees. They resigned as trustees, and the remaining trustees elected Monique Posa, Judy Kay Craft, and Lydia Smith to serve as Trustees for three years, with one abstention and no dissent. On Nov 16, the board elected Mary Gelfand and Shari Storm to serve as Co-Presidents, Judy Kay Craft and Monique Posa to serve as Co-Secretaries, and Shannon Cocheo to serve as Treasurer.

=====

A Personal Apology

As the prior secretary, I feel that I am the most at fault with this election failure, for I have overseen two successful elections. I had a very heavy work load this summer, plus serious health incidents for myself, my daughter, and my mother. I apologize. I will be writing a procedures manual to help my Co-Secretary, Monique Posa, properly

conduct a valid election next cycle.

Judy Kay Craft

Do Not Lose Hope!

By Rev. Melanie Morel-Ensminger

As we enter the Springtime, a season of new beginnings, so many of us in the UU pagan community are still feeling disheartened, frightened, sad, angry, perhaps even a bit despairing, over the results of the recent election in November. It may be hard to keep in mind that one of the strengths of our democratic system in our UU congregations, as in our country is that, whether by a large or by a small margin, the majority of voters win. One of the drawbacks of our democratic system is that the minority loses. Let me tell you from my own painful experience, folks on the losing end of anything generally feel rooked, cheated, hard-done by; they often feel betrayed and alone, no matter how many other folks are in the same boat.

Being in a democracy, like being in a UU congregation or being in a CUUPS group, does not mean everyone will agree with each other, that everyone will see things in the same way, that everyone believes the same things, or that

everyone will use the same criteria for making important decisions. It always feels more comfortable to be on the winning side, and should refrain from both despondency and triumphalism. We should remember that there is always something we can do with our gifts and talents to make our small part of the world a better place, however much we may feel that things are not right nationally or globally.

The call of the divine to us is first and foremost "Fear not." In this excerpt from *Women Who Run With the Wolves*, entitled "Do Not Lose Heart," Clarissa Pinkola-Estes writes:

"Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach. Any small, calm thing that one soul can do to help another soul, to assist some portion of this poor suffering world, will help immensely. It is not given to us to know which acts or by whom will cause the critical mass to tip toward an enduring good. What is needed for dramatic change is an accumulation of acts, adding, adding to, adding more, continuing. We know that it does not take 'everyone on Earth' to bring justice and peace, but only a small, determined group who will not let it's always a challenge to keep from

crowding when one's team or candidate or idea turns out to be the winner. To remain in loving community, we give up during the first, second or 100th gale.

One of the most calming and powerful actions you can do to intervene in a stormy world is to stand and show your soul. Soul on deck shines like gold in dark times. The light of the soul throws sparks, can send up flares, builds signal fires, causes proper matters to catch fire. To display the lantern of soul in shadowy times like these -- to be fierce and to show mercy toward others, both, are acts of immense bravery and greatest necessity. Struggling souls catch light from other souls who are fully lit and willing to show it. If you would help to catch the tumult, this is one of the strongest things you can do."

Whatever side you were, or are, on in the last election, let us lay down our arms and our fears. Let us be our best selves, let us embody the peace and love and healing power of the Goddess and the God, and let our light shine forth in the world. There is work to be done right where you are; there is change that can be brought about by our united efforts. Do not lose heart: let us join our strengths and talents together and do what must be done.

Blessed be! MELANIE
Annual Meeting
Report
General Assembly
2004
By Judy Kay Craft

CUUPS Annual Meeting June 26, 2004

The annual meeting of the Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans, is held each year at the General Assembly of the UUA. Mary Gelfand, CUUPS board president, called the meeting to order. Carole Eagleheart took time from her booth to lead the group in song, one that she wrote for the CUUPS Convocation. The song is reminiscent of the Phoenix rising from the ashes and is reborn, as CUUPS rises from its past and moves through its revisioning process.

The agenda was:

- Report from last year's Annual Meeting
- Treasurer's report
- Nominating Committee Report
- Chapter & Membership Report
- Work at Convocation from last year and the upcoming year's plan
- Religious Education plans
- Revisioning CUUPS

- Finally, regarding the UUA and what is going

on with the independent affiliates. The report from last year's annual meeting will be posted on the cuups-L email list. A nearby chapter, the Ace of CUUPS, will hold a Summer Solstice ritual, and provided directions. Many felt that a nice tradition would be for a local chapter to do the ritual at each GA. The Denton and Fort Worth chapters of CUUPS are already at work to plan a ritual for next year and to find a place for next year. One of CUUPS' two workshop slots was used for the Annual Meeting, and the other as ritual, as suggested by the members at the 2003 annual meeting. Scheduling the meeting as a workshop helped attendance and participation. However, not enough speaker passes were available to allow all members of Ace of CUUPS into the General Assembly, and the assigned space was small for dancing, so ritual will be moved outside to the plaza in front of the convention center.

Nominating Committee

Report:

No members of the nominating committee were present, so Judy Kay Craft, acting secretary reported the following:

Polling Committee:

That the Greensboro, NC CUUPS chapter will serve as the Polling Committee, with three members to be named.

No members of the Greensboro NC chapter can be nominees and so there is no conflict. They will conduct the election by polling those who are members as of June 30th, 2004. They will assemble the ballot, mail the ballots out, receive the cast ballots, report election results to the board, and keep the physical ballots for a year. Even though this is to be an uncontested election, it is important that fair procedures are followed. A procedural question was raised about people having the ability to write in candidates on the ballot, to which the answer was no, write-ins are not permitted. Nominations from the floor are made at the Annual Meeting when there are enough members. The motion was made to accept the Polling Committee; it was seconded and, without any votes against, was voted in.

Board of Trustees:

The following members are up for election and/or reelection to the Board of Trustees:

- o Lydia Smith, incumbent general board member. She is also resurrecting the newsletter.
- o Judy Kay Craft, incumbent membership coordinator and keeper of the database.
- o Monique Posa is the new candidate. She is a member of the Denton, TX, UU church, where

she has been involved in the leadership of the church. (She will set aside those duties, depending on the result of this election.)

Mary Gelfand, CUUPS board president, said that, "It's a wonderful opportunity to serve," in regards to being on the CUUPS board. There were no nominations from the floor. A motion was made to accept the nominations; it was seconded and accepted with no opposing votes.

Nominating Committee:

Prior to the meeting, only two members, Susan Moonshadow Shaw and Heidi Bear Tompkins had accepted nomination to the Nominating Committee. According to the bylaws, the Nominating Committee needs three more people. The board can appoint people to the Nominating Committee, yet it is a courtesy to ask first. It is also anyone's privilege to decline the nomination to the Nominating Committee. Someone asked about the workload of Nominating Committee members. The task is to find nominees for the board. An audience member pointed out that Convocation is a good source of leadership potential. The workload for the committee is concentrated from December until May. A high estimate is that during those months it takes about three hours a week.

Mary Gelfand said that we need males on the board as well as on the Nominating Committee. She nominated Bob Sunde for the Nominating Committee and will ask him if he will accept. Lance Brown volunteered to be on the committee. Mary will ask members of Ace of CUUPS, the local chapter, for nominees. The motion was made, seconded, and approved to accept this nominating committee.

Treasurer's Report:

The treasurer's report was presented and accepted. CUUPS is operating in the black. All bills have been paid, including GA expenses, except for merchandise. This is a huge relief after years of operating in the red. At the bottom of the financial report, Treasurer Shannon Cocheo said: "Please note that the fiscal year for CUUPS runs from January 1 to December 31. Therefore, this report comes to you at the midpoint of our fiscal year."

Mary Gelfand generously purchased merchandise for GA and Convocation. She also paid several honoraria for Convocation. She has been reimbursed \$900 and is still owed \$3,903.79. CUUPS will reimburse her from proceeds from GA and from revenue. The General Assembly expense line includes advertisements in UU World and in the GA Program,

workshop fees and exhibit hall fees.

Two chapter coordinators in a row have had to resign early, which resulted in loss of chapter information. The board decided to simplify chapter dues so that they all expire on October 31st, prorated for others that have already paid this year. Currently there are 477 memberships, 74 chapters, and the Pagan presence is pretty strong in the UUA.

Lance Brown commented that it appears that CUUPS have repeatedly suffered losses of database information. He is looking at solutions, including paid ones, for other nonprofit groups with which he is affiliated. Online providers are available including management systems. There is a need to explore these options. In response it was mentioned that there are now backups being made both to CD Rom and to another server, and that the chapter database is now in the same Access database as the membership database, and is being backed up regularly.

Convocation:

Mary says that Convocation, which was over Oestara weekend, was wonderful. Isaac Bonewits was there, Carole Eagleheart sang, and the weekend was tightly scheduled. They learned a

number of important things at Convocation. One was that even without programming anything for adolescents, three showed up. CUUPS needs to outreach to youth. Shari mentioned that you need permission for those who are under 18 to attend.

Convocation XIII had 70 attendees. Someone from the audience said that if convocation is over a Sabbat weekend again it might be a bad thing as it would take people away from their regularly scheduled group rituals and events. Mary responded she hopes that the next Convocation will be planned for the weekend following Oestara, 2005. Mary would like musicians and artisans to have a presence at Convocation. A hope is to grow enough to have Convocation twice a year, one on the east coast and one on the west coasts.

Religious Education:

Shari Storm, the CUUPS RE Coordinator, spoke of Religious Education and Revisioning. She is working on a youth pagan curriculum. Last year, the book Paganism was introduced. It is for adults, but it is adaptable to high school age youth also. A teacher's guide is also available. The book is available from Amazon.com and CUUPS gets a kickback on it. The teacher's guide is

available for free for CUUPS chapters. CUUPS is trying to find someone to write the curriculum for men, as "Cakes for the Queen of Heaven" was written for women. Sparrow spoke up from the floor and said that the UUCARDS booth carries a really good curriculum for a bridging ceremony for men.

The UU Church in Kent, OH, in response to bible camps of other denominations, created a curriculum for a workshop called Hogwarts Kent. A DVD and teacher's guide are available.

A liturgy guide is available, suitable for UU churches. Shari's group is in a receptive UU church, the UU Church of Boulder, Colorado. At first it there were misunderstandings, then they slowly introduced pagan concepts. She compiled Sunday morning resources for all ages. CUUPS encourages other chapters to do the same as a lot of churches don't understand what CUUPS and paganism are about. Members are urged to take the Boulder Liturgy book, use it, copy it, and give acknowledgement of the source.

Revisoning:

The group talked about revisoning. Networking with more UU Pagan-identified clergy is needed and happening. CUUPS should be a clearinghouse for wheels, not a reinventor of wheels. The

board is setting goals. Revamping and updating of the web page is a high priority. At the next GA, we should be able to ask, "Have you seen the new web page?" Judy is trying to get Macromedia to give a copy of Dreamweaver to CUUPS as they give a limited number of copies to nonprofit organizations every year.

Mary Gelfand said, "We've talked about chapters. We're also working on individual memberships. However, chapter relations are most important thing as they are growing the most. District meetings also need to have workshops." Mary will go any place where her expenses are paid. She is able to help chapters in development and many other situations.

Affiliate Status:

Mary mentioned that she has had a couple of meetings with the UUA about the affiliate status. Some other groups may be causing this inquiry into affiliate status, including the Seventh Principle project and the UUPA. None of these concerns are verified, they are just speculation.

The meeting was then adjourned.

Submitted by Judy Kay Craft – acting secretary

A Message from Our Co-President

My Dear Friends,

On behalf of the entire Board of Trustees, I'd like to apologize to our membership for our failure to both conduct a proper election and to deliver the promised newsletter to your mailboxes in a timely fashion this autumn. As Judy mentioned, many of us are caught between the care needs of our parents and the care needs of our children, which often means that we don't attend to our own care needs. This, of course, ultimately leads to our own health issues, which makes life even more complicated. My husband and I have primary responsibility for three parents, ranging in age from 87 to 94. None of them live in the same town as us, so I am often on the road, driving to northern and central Florida to coordinate medical appointments, meet with on-site care-givers, etc. Other Board members carry similar burdens, and we all strive to fit our CUUPS work into lives already filled with jobs, family, and other volunteer responsibilities, often with our local CUUPS chapter. Add to that the stresses of the autumn that just passed—both electoral and meteorological—and you can, perhaps, appreciate how our failures as a Board came about. I am

pleased to say that we have regrouped, recommitted ourselves to this work, and are moving ahead with our plans for the future.

Speaking of the future, our next CUUPS election is just around the corner. The Nominating Committee is currently working on the task of filling the three spaces that will open on the board this fall. The Nominating Committee will present a slate of candidates at our Annual Meeting at General Assembly this year, and the election will be conducted during the late summer and early fall. If you have any interest in serving on the Board of Trustees, please contact me and I will pass your name along to the NC. Board members serve a three year term, and most are expected to be responsible for some aspect of the overall operation. We are especially in need of Board members who would like to work with the newsletter, updating the web page, and doing some financial planning, both long and short term.

Now that these events of 2004's wild and wondrous autumn are more or less over, I find myself wondering what happens next. I experienced the same depression most of you felt upon learning of the election results. I wondered how I could continue to live in this country under the current conditions, and briefly

contemplated escape. I'm still here, however, and still engaging with life, despite my disappointments. Truly, I can do no other.

There are many aspects of life in this United States right now that I do not like. Nevertheless, this is still a wonderful country. The rights and freedoms we fear losing are not guaranteed elsewhere in the world. The breadth and beauty of this country, as represented by both the land and the people, is astonishing. True, we have not yet mastered the art of living in peaceful community with each other. That means we have to work more diligently at constructing that interdependent web of life--or at least at making the web more visible to others.

I live in a blue city in a red state, surrounded by other red states. Certainly there are times when I feel isolated. But I know as surely as I know that the sun will rise every day that more things unite my neighbors and I than divide us.

Do I fear for my religious freedom? Indeed I do. Do I fear for the future of my country? Indeed I do. But that fear motivates me to continue to press the issues that are important to me all the more industriously and effectively. America is my home. I was born in the

U.S.A. and will not be intimidated into relinquishing my freedoms by those of my fellow citizens who live in fear. So I'm going to identify the issues for which I care the most, carefully watch what is going on in Washington D.C. and make sure my voice is heard. I invite you to do the same.

In that vein, last month the CUUPS Board of Trustees voted to add our institutional name to an amicus brief being filed in the Supreme Court voicing our opinion on the issue of posting the Ten Commandments on state property. Our name joins many other organizations including the American Humanist Association, the American Ethical Union, HUManists, Sikh Mediawatch, the Skeptics Society, and the Society for Humanistic Judaism. Oral argument on this important issue was held recently and a decision will likely be rendered by June of 2005.

New at the CUUPS booth at General Assembly 2004 was a worship guide published by BCUUPS, from Boulder, Colorado. CUUPS co-president Shari Storm and Steve Storm, her husband, pulled together a collection of Sunday worship services that have been used at the Boulder UU church by their CUUPS chapter. There is a wonderful

liturgy for water communion, a moving Samhain service, a service for Earth Day and many others. I've used two of the services at my home church to rave reviews. The book is available for \$15.00 from Storm@indra.com. Proceeds are split between CUUPS and BCUUPS.

The CUUPS board is experimenting with a new policy for General Assembly—planning ahead! To that end, we have begun working with a group of other UUA organizations to plan events and activities at GA2006 to honor Rev. Shirley Ranck and the 20th Anniversary of the publication of *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven*. We are working with the Women & Religion Committee, the UU Women's Federation, MsUU, and other groups in planning what we hope will be some fabulous and inspirational programs. If your life was changed by *Cakes*, as the lives of so many of us were, you might want to plan to attend GA2006, which is in St. Louis. The steering committee could use some more worker bees, so if you are interested, let me know and I'll pass your name along.

I had fun this fall, adapting the Elements Path from *The Twelve Wild Swans*, by Starhawk and Hilary Valentine, into a Wicca 101 class for my local CUUPS

group. We had a great time learning basic skills such as casting and calling, working with energy, exploring the elements, and creating a ritual. I'm preparing a teacher's guide for chapter use. It should be available at the CUUPS booth at GA this year.

I'm also pleased to report that I recently ran into River Higginbotham, author, with his wife Joyce, of *Paganism: An Introduction to Earth-centered Religions*, the text we use in our Exploring Paganism classes. River reports that he and Joyce have finished their second book for Llewellyn, an exploration of spiritual growth and personal development as it applies to Paganism. The book should be available in early 2006 and they are hoping to develop a teaching guide for our use as well. I've seen it in draft form and it look great—a real tool for deepening one's spiritual focus and work, something CUUPS has needed for a while. We will be featuring their new book at GA 2006 and may even invite them for a book signing at the booth, since they live near St. Louis.

My husband and I recently returned from one of our many trips to visit his mother at her assisted living facility. Lately, these visits with my mother-in-law, a wonderful crone 94 years of age, have been a

mixed blessing. Her memory is fading and I accept that the day will likely come when she no longer recognizes us. But today she is on—all systems flashing brilliance. We take her for a brief drive around the neighborhood and she notices every flower and tree we pass. Everything is beautiful. We are beautiful. The dog is beautiful. The sky is beautiful. The water is beautiful. She walks in beauty. I ask her how she manages to stay so positive, given the difficult life I know she has lived. "Every day I am alive is a blessings," she says. "It doesn't matter if it is a good day or a bad day. Just to be alive is a blessing."

I take my responsibilities to care for the elders of my family quite seriously. Although such care is often a burden, it is also a privilege and an honor to be able to do so. Such work is as much a part of my life as a witch and a priestess as is my work for CUUPS. I try to learn from the wisdom of my elders—to learn and store their wisdom for the future generations also in my care. And so today and every day, I wish you the blessings of simply being alive. May Air fill your lungs with joy, may Fire keep you warm when the bitter winds blow, may Water heal you from mental and physical despair, may Earth nurture you with her good food, and may your Spirit be supported by the

far-flung community of
CUUPS, of which we all are a
part. Blessed Be!

Namaste,
Mary
Mary Gelfand, Co-President,
Board of Trustees
MaryCUUPS@aol.com

General Assembly 2005
Fort Worth, TX

Plans are in the works for our
Annual Meeting in Fort
Worth, Saturday June 25th.
Currently we are planning a
light luncheon at
approximately 11:30 am, with
the Annual Meeting scheduled
for 12:00. The meeting will be
immediately followed by our
Summer Solstice Ritual, which
will be led by the Denton,
Texas CUUPS chapter. All
events will be held at a site
within walking distance from
the Convention Center.

If you will be attending GA
this year, please be sure to stop
by our booth in the exhibit hall
to find out location details for
the meeting and ritual.

We look forward to meeting
you in Fort Worth!

CUUPS, Inc.
PMB 335
8190A Beechmont Avenue
Cincinnati, OH 45255-3154