



CUUPS

July 2019- June 2020

Annual Report

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President's Report for July 2019-June 2020

by Jerrie Hildebrand

I am filled with gratitude for the CUUPS board, members, ministers, and friends. It has been a tough year for all of us, and from what I am awake to we are working together, supporting our congregations, chapters, communities and most of all, one another.

As President, it has been challenging to lead during the pandemic, loose dear ones to the disease and sides of it I did not even consider. The one thing I am clear about however is that when digging into our hearts and souls, much of humanity takes one another's hand.

In speaking to many of you this year during the pandemic I am inspired by the new thinking and at the same time hold your sorrows. In my office I have a candle I light time and time again when I hear from members.

Key Accomplishments this Year:

- Officer Elections and onboarding 3 new board members
- Supporting Organization during Covid-19 Pandemic
- Reinventing and sending newsletter to 96 incarcerated UU Pagans
- Eradicating Racism Statement
- Virtual General Assembly Summer Solstice Ritual
- Supporting new chapters & those dissolving
- 356 Members
- Updating Website
- New organizational mailing address

Board Meetings These have occurred monthly. We moved from the second Tuesdays to the last Wednesday of the month. We have had an average of 100% participation by all board members for our meetings even if someone missed one. This is an active and engaged board creating and reinventing what defines their "job". In November 2019, we added new board members Erica Shadowsong to take on Curriculum Development, Glenn Morrison for Membership, and Cat Rigby as Secretary. They joined already sitting board members Debra Gilbert, our VP of Membership, Ron Zorn as Treasurer, Om Prakash (Rev. Dr. John Gilmore) as Ministerial Liaison/Right Relations, and myself.

Financial & Business Changes: We are now complete with the move out of Wells Fargo and settled in with Fifth Third in Ohio. We have a new mailing address with the capacity to have physical mail sent to use periodically.

Resolutions & Statements: The CUUPS board voted to craft a statement after the killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbury, and the countless men and women of color killed senselessly. This statement was to further solidify our commitment to eradicating racism. Om Prakash (Rev. Dr. John Gllmore) and myself crafted the statement and the board accepted it with a unanimous vote.

General Assembly – Providence, RI to Online: This year CUUPS had one program on the schedule at the General Assembly. The CUUPS board took on creating the **Annual Summer Solstice Ritual** for our online General Assembly. The ritual celebrated the “Rooted and Inspired” theme of the event. The ritual ran for the length of the General Assembly in the on-demand library and is now running for the next several months for participants who attended the event. To date approximately 300 last count watched it via the General Assembly Portal and on our CUUPS YouTube channel close to 150 have watched it. That gives us to date approximately 450 participants at the ritual!

The board crafted the via from our own homes in our own regions. Chapters from around the country send pictures for us to show off what is happening and the diversity of worship we bring to our congregations.

The talented Cat Rigby took all of the pieces and wove them together into a video for the General Assembly Program Team within a very tight time frame. There were limited live sessions this year, so this was the best way to put it in the mix. Those of us in attendance at GA send simple text invitations to participants letting them know where to find us on the GA platform. It almost reminded me of running around the GA Hall letting members and folks know where the service was going to be in years past.

Next year we hope to see many of you in Milwaukee, WI for the 2021 General Assembly!

Calling for Volunteers: Like any non-profit religious organization, volunteers are needed. The level of work our membership, chapters, congregations and denomination need from CUUPS is larger than what our small board can produce.

Curriculum Development’s Team is working to create materials we have heard were needed. This year they teamed up with Membership to produce newsletters to approximately 90 incarcerated UU Pagan in conjunction with Church of the Larger Fellowship. The plan is for these to be created and sent four times per year. They are simple, meditative pieces people can use for a quarter of the agricultural season.

Membership and Chapter Team is in need of creating materials to support chapters. Communications would love support with creating more of a presence on YouTube, and social media outlets with UU Pagan content. Writers are needed for the CUUPS blog Nature’s Sacred Journey. Are you interested? Write the board at info@cuups.org.

E-Newsletters: Six email newsletters have gone out since last July to approximately 3,668 people. The results of the past of newsletters have been beating industry averages for open rates at 30-32%.

Website Development: The website was moved to Wild Apricot with a mobile site. Membership registration can be done there via online or downloading a form, printing it and sending it via US Mail. Online you receive mechanized membership cards.

We are developing chapter dues. It is a bit more complex and in the meantime we have a new chapter form to download and fill in online to email to us.

Links to pdfs have been fixed and are now operational as far as we can see. If you find something let us know.

This coming year the hope is we can get a chapters only section for chapters to have space to have discussions, share events and more on the website.

Social Media: Many thanks to the beloved David Pollard for continuing to manage the blog and our social media outreach. David will be retiring from this position this year and will be incredibly missed. We so appreciated him. Currently, other board members are familiarizing themselves with the social media platforms. See David's Social Media and blog report in this document.

Inter- and Intra- Faith Relations: Many of us on the board work with other organizations in the earth spirituality and Pagan communities. This year has been challenging for many due to the pandemic also. I have been working to learn more about how they are creating their gatherings in hopes of creating an online CUUPS Convocation or event. There are some interesting large events happening bridging both the indigenous world traditions that include many elders from all over the world that are incredibly interesting and uplifting. If you are interested in participating in this please email president@cuups.org.

What's Next:

Covid-19 adaption - Supporting chapters and members through the Covid-19 pandemic with innovative ways to create ritual and share with the organization.

Continuing to professionalize the board and communications - Creating and empowering team from volunteers to board. Reviewing board policies.

Chapter development: We will be working with chapters on renewals, getting their covenants created with the congregational leadership, and making sure the chapters are in alignment with the mission and vision of CUUPS. We want to support everyone in healthy relationships!

Communications: Strengthening the tools we use to share and hear from members. Social media development.

Creating beyond systemic language: creating a team to look at how to shift beyond Eurocentric languaging of earth traditions and Paganism. How does the current language in our own organization vision, mission, and covenant keep the doors closed to those who want to come in?

What Else Can We Create Together: Vibrant and active committees! This is so needed and wanted!

In Gratitude...

First of all, David Pollard our former Executive Director/ Social Media Guru/ Blog Manager/ and so much more and Rev. Joan VanBecelaere! They continue to be our guiding lights in maneuvering the world of the UUA, practices of the organization past and present, and just being there when a president is at a loss. Their wisdoms are so honored by the board members. It is a joy to work with them.

The board of CUUPS has been calm, centered, and feisty. They all bring a sense of humor and openness as well as an extreme love for the humanity around us. Our nominating committee are the quiet ones listening for who is ready to serve the organization and I love knowing their presence is there.

And...I want to thank all of our chapter organizers, members, home congregations, ministers and religious professionals, and so on in the denomination. It has not been an easy year for any of us. You are the reason for our work. I thank you on behalf of all of the entire board of CUUPS.

Submitted in Service,

Rev. Jerrie Hildebrand
President, CUUPS, Inc.
president@cuups.org

Membership Report for July 2019-June 2020

by Debra Gilbert and Glenn Morrison

The main focus for Membership is connection with CUUPs members and chapters. The Membership team worked to create and maintain relationships with CUUPs members including active members, potential members, lapsed members, chapter representatives and UU congregations. The most re-occurring inquiry was for the location of a CUUPs group for those who are seeking to explore Pagan Spirituality. Membership has been able to connect folks across the country to CUUPs groups. From the feedback Membership has received from our chapters, folks have taken the information we gave them and are attending a CUUPs group in their area.

The biggest transition for CUUPs in 2019-2020, was changing our payment platform for membership and chapter fees from PayPal to Wild Apricot. This new platform automates the process of new and renewal memberships. Membership has worked closely with the Treasurer to ensure that the process and transactions has gone as smoothly as possible. We are still in the process of this transition, so there may still be some minor bumps in the road.

Besides the payment platform, the CUUPs Board decided to go with Wild Apricot Membership Management software to assist us with our expanding membership needs. One of the major changes was our website was switched to Wild Apricot. Several members noticed this change because we experienced a few hiccups on our website with a few dead links and random contact info dropped. We are working to resolve these few issues, but if you notice something “not right”, please email us at membership@cuups.org.

Wild Apricot allows us to automate many functions that volunteers used to manage manually. For example, when you join CUUPs, you now will receive a membership card via email automatically. The CUUPs Board also chose Wild Apricot because of all the possibilities for the future. Membership is exploring new ideas for CUUPs members like Chapter forums and the “members only” library. Wild Apricot will make these and other options possible in the future.

Membership was in communication with CUUPs Board about membership or chapter issues and used a team approach for follow up. Sadly, we have had a few Chapter closing across the country due to inactivity of members and life transitions. It is our hope that as the seasons change, new energy and members will re-create a CUUPs chapter in those locations again.

Drum Roll Please... Membership is excited to announce that our newsletter project has a new committee brimming with energy and excitement. The newsletter team has members from a combination of Membership and Curriculum. The CUUPs newsletters will be created and sent to incarcerated UU members who identify with earth based spirituality. Besides our annual Samhain newsletter, a Midsummer issue was created and sent to 96 UU incarcerated members.

Special thanks to the Treasurer, who addressed each envelope by hand. This CUUPs project is in collaboration with the Church of the Larger Fellowship.

In closing, Membership would like to thank all of our members and chapters for your support, patience, guidance and membership. Connection is what Membership is about and we have been able to connect with so many of you this past year. Volunteering on the CUUPs Board is exciting and an honor that has enriched our personal spiritual journey.

There are many ways to volunteer for CUUPs. If you would like to be involved and possibly volunteer on a committee/team like our newsletter project, please let us know.

Contact us at membership@cuups.org.

Blessings,

Rev. Debra Gilbert

Glenn Morrison

Ministerial Relations Report for July 2019-June 2020

by Om Prakash (Rev. Dr. John Gilmore)

I began to formally serve on the CUUPS Board September of 2017 in the Ministerial and Right Relations position. I have worked to inform various groups within the UU Movement, via, Facebook and email, about who we are as an institution, what activities we are engaged in, what resources we have, and how they can plug into our activities.

I attended monthly meetings as well as others focusing on specific tasks like General Assembly Planning, GA Ritual Planning, and some Executive Committee meetings. No GA face to face this year, but I did register and worked with Don Plante to explore our options for presenting at the 2020 GA. During the virtual GA I took the opportunity to explore some of the offerings at GA and to at least virtually reconnect with some of the groups of which I was a part for many years during active ministry.

I have also been in contact with ministers, as necessary, who are at congregations that are interested in starting a CUUPS Chapter, offering any type of information they might need and in order for them to become more familiar with what a chapter would mean for the larger institution. Due to the CoronaVirus things have changed quite a bit and my activities have shifted a bit as the milieu of most of the association has shifted. These are troubling times. A lot of focus in many groups have shifted to self care as well as working to promote social justice in the world at large and maintain connections through social media and Zoom.

I have made myself available to various groups as needed, and am working within the CUUPS mission and goal to broaden our associations with other groups and to become more multicultural. In lieu of this, I am still working in that direction by posting some of our activities on various social media platforms to inform people that we are available to aid in their spiritual search for truth and meaning and having conversations when the opportunity arises to discuss what we are doing as a Board and affiliate of the UUA. I have been interacting with BLUU and beginning conversations with DRUUMM that I hope to extend in the future to help us enlarge the space in CUUPS for various forms of diversity of people and other forms of Earth Based Practices. In this way we can provide a home for many of the BIPOC community in our congregations or seekers in the larger community looking for a place where their belief system would be welcome. It would also provide DRUUMM and BLUU the opportunity to participate in the creation of Curricula and Practices that would be an authentic representation of the spiritual practices in the BIPOC community that both support, enhance the lives of, and promote healing for said communities.

Namaste,

John (Om Prakash) Gilmore

Treasurer Report for July 2019-June 2020

By Ron Zorn

Balance in accounts as of June 30, 2020:

PayPal	\$ 3,941.48
CUUPs Fifth/Third Bank Account	\$14,033.64
UUA Fund	\$12,881.65
TOTAL	\$30,856.77

CUUPs has moved the dues membership and donation transactions to Wild Apricot to eliminate most of the PayPal transactions and allow immediate transfer of monies into our bank account at Fifth/Third Bank. This will save our organization a 20% upcharge to our costs using Wild Apricot.

We have moved our funds from Wells Fargo to Fifth/Third Bank and can read more about this below.

Fiscal year (July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020) our expenses are outlined below:

Social Media – David Pollard 12 months FiscalYear 19/20	\$ 1200.00
General Assembly 2020	GA registration for four board members (\$600.00)
	GA photo fees (\$147.00)
	for publication of GA ritual = \$747.00
Constant Contact fees	\$ 588.00
Web Hosting – Go Daddy	\$ 105.85
Mailbox / Yearly fee	\$545.00

Wild Apricot Fees for the year 2019/20	\$972.00 - renews in October each year
UUA Fair share donation for 2019/20	\$500.00 To be paid in August 2020
Newsletter printing and postage for Earth Centered prison population -	\$153.13
Bank Fees during switchover to new account	\$40.47 (Fees no longer apply to account)

Non-Membership income and donations:

PayPal Annual Giving fund income	\$45.00
Donations through the Web site by individuals (3)	\$40.00

**Our Organization opened an Account at Fifth/Third Bank in order to transfer our Wells Fargo funds, into a more ethical financial institution.

Fifth Third Bank has been recognized by the Ethisphere® Institute, a global leader in defining and advancing the standards of ethical business practices, as one of the 2019 World’s Most Ethical Companies®.

Scores are generated and weighted in five key categories:

- ethics and compliance program (35 percent)
- culture of ethics (20 percent)
- corporate citizenship and responsibility (20 percent)
- governance (15 percent)
- leadership and reputation (10 percent)

Fifth Third Bancorp is a diversified financial services company headquartered in Cincinnati, Ohio and the indirect parent company of Fifth Third Bank, an Ohio-chartered bank. As of December 31, 2018, Fifth Third had \$146 billion in assets and operated 1,121 full-service Banking Centers and 2,419 ATMs with Fifth Third branding in Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Florida, Tennessee, West Virginia, Georgia and North Carolina.

Secretary Report for July 2019-June 2020

by Catherine Rigby

I have the honor and privilege of serving you as the current CUUPs Secretary. I was elected in mid November 2019 for a term of 2019- 2022. I began serving Dec 2019. This is my first year serving in this role. I moved over from serving on CUUPs curriculum team in 2018-2019. The first part of my year was spent “onboarding” and learning how the CUUPs Board works “behind the scenes.”

My main responsibilities lie in administration. My primary duties include

- Assisting the president in creating the monthly Board agenda
- Attending and taking the monthly CUUPs Board Meeting minutes
- Creating filing systems for the organization and managing the records and files in them
- Answering info@cuups.org and secretary@cuups.org
- Sending letters of condolence and congratulations to CUUPs members and chapters as their life events have become known to CUUPs
- Assisting the president and other officers as needed

Other tasks this year included

- Getting to know more of the CUUPs members by participating on Facebook groups
 - [Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans - CUUPS](#) (CUUPs members group)
 - [CUUPS Chapter Central](#) (CUUPs chapter Leaders groups)
- Collaborating and doing the video production work on the CUUPs Summer Solstice Ritual for Virtual General Assembly June 24-28, 2020. The video was offered in the “on demand” library and is now archived at the CUUPs YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6L2iyQa6mls&t=11s>
- Attending Virtual General Assembly
- Investigating Slack and groups.io for the Board to improve group communication and work flow

I would like to thank both CUUPs members and the CUUPs for welcoming me into this new role. I look forward to continuing to serve you in 2020-2021!

Warmest regards,

Cat Rigby

Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans Board Secretary

Curriculum and Liturgy Report for July 2019-June 2020

by Erica Shadowsong

I am honored to serve as a new member of the CUUPS Board as of December 2019, and this is my first year serving in this role. My primary duties on the Board are to pick up where my predecessor, Irene Glasse, left off as coordinator of the Curriculum Team. All of the original members of the team except Cat Rigby, who left to take the position of the Secretary, agreed to continue, and we have met twice. Our first task when we convened in May was identifying the needs of our members that the Curriculum Team can address. The biggest needs were determined to be the following:

- Ready made rituals for chapters to adapt and use
- Tools to develop leadership in chapters
- Guidance for ministers and worship committees to add pagan elements into regular
- Guidance for people writing rituals with little to no experience
- Identifying and lifting up the places where Unitarian Universalism and paganism intersect, to create a stronger sense of UU identity among UU pagans
- Writing new curriculum that is relevant, current, respectful, informative, inclusive, and diverse
- Increasing available religious education materials for every age level
- Information on mindfully and intentionally addressing cultural appropriation in UU pagan rituals, worship, and curriculum

At our first meeting, after identifying these areas of curriculum development, we began to work on a mission statement which will be presented to the Board to review. We determined that the first place to start in addressing the needs of curriculum development was to thoroughly examine already existing materials in the UUA and adjacent sources. Each of us took on a portfolio based on our personal interests and the areas most likely to be of interest to UU pagans:

- Religious education
- Elements of worship
- Pagan observances
- Daily and personal spiritual practices
- Cultural appropriation

At our second meeting, which convened on July 11, 2020, we presented and commented on our findings, noting where there were gaps or problematic areas in the materials we found, including in particular diverse pagan practices and belief systems, and seasonal and other observances outside of the assumed western and northern hemisphere orientation. These are very rich conversations, and our work now is to continue to explore these projects, moving toward creating new materials to address the gaps.

At our next meeting, we will present another report with each other and provide detailed feedback on our work. Moving on from this, we anticipate sharing our materials with the Board, to review them and to determine how best to distribute the final products. We also anticipate soliciting additional contributions from CUUPS members once we have created a body of initial materials and made them available for members to use, providing models and guidelines for submissions.

I'm especially grateful for the members of the Curriculum Team for their passion and interest in continuing: Piper Rowanoak, Regina Hutchison, Tanya Webster, and Sarah Tso, who bring a wealth and variety of backgrounds and experiences. I am also grateful to the members of the Board for their welcoming of and confidence in me, and for this opportunity to serve the greater UU Pagan community!

Sincerely,

Erica Shadowsong

CUUPS Social Media

I am currently monitoring CUUPS Social Media as a non-board volunteer. We have a page on Facebook, a discussion group there, also a Chapter leader discussion group. I have to admit that I am increasingly disenchanted with Facebook as a venue for our organization given the overall vitriol of the platform and the behaviour - but unfortunately there is no other venue which can reach (and hear back from) so many of our members at no cost to the organization.

We also have a profile on Twitter which does also contain some of the posts we make to our Facebook page. It has about one-twentieth the followers as our Facebook Page. You can find it at [@CUUPS_Media](#).

CUUPS had a podcast operating from 2010-2016, and all 32 episodes which include Earth-Centered Sermons and interviews with many interesting people are still available on the web. You can find them at <https://cuups.libsyn.com>

I help Jerrie Hildebrand with the technical setup for the CUUPS Bulletin / email Newsletter. She writes all the material. Each issue goes out to approximately 3,700 different email addresses.

Last, but certainly not least is the Nature's Sacred Journey which is a blog which is hosted on the Patheos Interfaith Website. We have published over 500 articles there since January 2015. During 2019 our blog received over 65,000 pageviews - primarily from articles written in the first few years of the blog. Only two articles written last year made the top ten (both by Irene Glasse.) We are actively seeking more authors to post on there. If you would be interested in writing there please contact me at blog@cuups.org

Here are some stats for you:

During 2019:

- Our Facebook Page "friends" grew from 18,122 to 18,707.
- Our Facebook discussion group grew from 4,238 to 4,570.
- Our Twitter followers grew from 899 to 934.
- 2,882 episodes of the CUUPS Podcast were downloaded.

2019's Top Ten Articles on Nature's Sacred Journey:

1. A Brief History of Ostara - DC McBride (4819)
2. Yule Story - Erica Baron (2567)
3. Beginning Ancestor Meditation - Erica Baron (2357)
4. Beyond the Veil - Connecting With The Ancestors - Irene Glasse (2095)
5. The Birth of Fire - A History of Imbolc Traditions - DC McBride (2045)
6. Spiraling Towards Shadow - Choosing Winter Work - Irene Glasse (1807)
7. Visiting the Temple of Sekmet Near Las Vegas - Amy Beltaine (1413)
8. The Story of the Labyrinth - Erica Baron (1390)
9. A Daily Pagan Practice for the Year - Allison Ehrman (1239)
10. The Gift of Bees: An Inclusive Beltane - Catharine Clarenbach (1196)

Best of Blessings,

David Pollard

Volunteering with CUUPS

We love all of our members and chapters and invite you to volunteer with us. Many hands make for lighter work they say. Contact Jerrie Hildebrand at president@cuups.org with ideas, and any interest you have in participating with us.

Many Thanks...

CUUPS exists because of a vision brought forth in 1986 to support UU's who honored the Earth and celebrated it. Today we are a covenanting community of the UUA.

Our vision and mission statement says:

The Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans (CUUPS) is an organization dedicated to networking Pagan-identified Unitarian Universalists (UUs), educating people about Paganism, promoting interfaith dialogue, developing Pagan liturgies and theologies, and supporting Pagan-identified UU religious professionals.

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 continentally.
- providing educational materials on Paganism for Unitarian Universalist congregations and the general public.
- promoting Pagan - Jewish & Christian dialogue; encouraging the development of theo/allogical 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.

Thank you members, supporters, ministers, board chairs, governing bodies in churches, and all who support CUUPS. We so appreciate you and honor you.

Here is to next year!