



## **CUUPS Annual Report July 2021- June 2022**

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# President's Report for July 2021-July 2022

by Rev. Jerrie Hildebrand

Managing an organization during the pandemic continues to be a challenge despite the world looking like it is going back to what it considers normal. As the CUUPS board has moved through this year we are clear as Pagans, Earth-Centered, and UU persons that our world and our country are in a difficult place.

The impact of these challenges on our members, congregations, and chapters is always in our hearts and I am inspired watching and listening to how all are working to grow and contribute to the Covenant of UU Pagans.

As volunteerism dropped in our congregations, it also did with the organization. Our accomplishments this year remained stable and steady with a small but strong board.

## Key Organizational Accomplishments this Year:

- Two programs at General Assembly
  - Virtual General Assembly Summer Solstice Ritual
    - Supported by individual members, chapters, congregations and board members.
  - Circle of Sacred Song and Sound Presentation
    - Presentation moderated by Cat Rigby with the priestess and musician Abigail Spinner McBride of the Vegas Vortex.
- Sponsored General Assembly
  - Ruffled 3 one-year memberships
  - Hosted a virtual bardic bonfire circle
  - Hosted a more extensive virtual exhibit hall with information about CUUPS
  - Set up slides and advertising that promoted CUUPS in the UUA program book, banner ads to attendees about presentations in the online platform, developed video inviting participants to our events, and slides for the pre-plenary rotations.
- Joined as a sponsor of the Parliament of the World Religions
- Supporting new chapters & those dissolving
- Maintained Meetups on the second Saturday of the month for members and chapter leaders
- Supported chapters in creating ritual and meetings online during the pandemic.
- Created and compiled a more active and current list of chapters for the website
- Growth of membership went up to 462 Members
- Twelve (12) donors
- Maintained social media presence

**Board Meetings** These have occurred monthly on the last Wednesday of the month via Zoom. We have had an average of 90% participation by all board members. As a working board we get a fair amount of work done as a small team. Bill Thorpe has stepped to support the board and we are in conversation with current members of the organization who are interested in participating also.

**Financial & Business Changes:** We have worked to get all accounts that CUUPS owns under the organizational tracking systems. Please see the Treasurer's report.

**General Assembly Online – Portland, Oregon:** This year CUUPS had two programs on the schedule at the General Assembly. We maintained an online presence again due to travel restrictions and health situations for board members as well as a lack of volunteers to manage and create the endeavor.

**Annual Summer Solstice Ritual** for our online General Assembly. The ritual was set up for people to watch throughout the weekend and after in the on-demand library and is now running for the next several months for participants who attended the event.

Board member Cat R. organized a well-received Summer Solstice Celebration with a variety of board members, members, chapters, and UU congregations.

**Musicians:** Abigail Spinner McBride permitted us to use her music.

**Readings:** Rev. Jerrie Hildebrand, Abigail Spinner McBride, Lady Jai, Carie Mendyk, Ron Zorn, Om Prakash (Rev. Dr. John Gilmore), Sheri Berger, Stacia Sanders, Cat Rigby, Paul Burdette, Jim Delleur

**Images and Video Clips:** Denton CUUPS, Frederick CUUPS, Mystic Grove CUUPS, Heritage Church UU, Web and Wheel from UU Church of Lancaster (Heather Gehron-Rice), Nancy Plummer, Kurt Hoogstraat, Noel Von, Erika Rivertree

Thank you all for sending your participation and Cat Rigby for the creation of the final video. For those who wish to see the view it, please go to our [YouTube channel](#).

**Circle of Sacred Song and Sound** was presented in the same on-demand format. A one-hour presentation with priestess and Pagan musician Abigail Spinner McBride from the Vegas Vortex. Abigail has been incredibly generous in gifting us her music and pearls of wisdom through these new times of video presentations.

**2023 General Assembly Volunteers Needed:** Next year we hope to see many of you in Pittsburgh, PA for the 2023 General Assembly in person! We want to develop a team to support the exhibit booth and workshops. Please let us know if you are interested in participating.

**Calling for Volunteers:** Non-profit religious organizations needs volunteers. CUUPS is no different. The level of work our membership, chapters, congregations, and denomination need from CUUPS is larger than what our small board can produce. Volunteerism is low.

Currently, we are focusing on growing structures for the organization such as increasing volunteerism and paying attention to business.

**Nominating Committee:** A big thank you to Joan VanBecelaere for continuing in this role this year. We have empty seats we would love to fill. If you are interested write to us at [info@cuups.org](mailto:info@cuups.org). Her coaching to stay lean and focus on the simple items has been valuable.

**Inter- and Intra- Faith Relations:** The board continues to network with other organizations in the earth spirituality and Pagan communities. The board will be attending the Parliament of the World Religions next August 2023. We invite members to join us by going to [parliamentofreligions.org](http://parliamentofreligions.org) and registering as members of CUUPS. Let us know if you are attending. We are in conversation with Circle Sanctuary about sharing a booth at the event.

**E-Newsletters:** Five email newsletters have gone out since last Summer to approximately 3,750 people. The open rates are steady newsletters have been beating industry averages for open rates are up this year at 27-37%. There are many old lists that need to be updated and we continue to work to update email changes for recipients when they come in. Roughly 1000 emails are opened and read.

**Website Development:** We have added a FAQ with information about how to register as a member, how to renew your membership, and how to start a chapter. Updates are slow due to volunteer schedules.

**Social Media:** We have worked to keep up with Social media with a small team. The lists have a variety of people who post. It is an opportunity to educate about UU Paganism. Currently, we are not able to constantly manage Twitter. The statistics for our social media outlets as of August were:

<p><a href="#">Main Facebook public page</a></p>	<p>19,021 87% are from the US with the rest from Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, Brazil, Mexico, India, France, Italy, and South Africa. 76% identify as women and 24% as men. Facebook only breaks this statistic down in a binary fashion.</p>
<p><a href="#">Facebook Members Group</a></p>	<p>5,956 members Facebook recently changed how membership in groups works. They changed this group to a public one. The board needs to review the new guidelines. Currently, it appears we have less control over who joins.</p> <p>There are three questions that have been set up for those interested to answer. Are you a member of CUUPS or a Unitarian Universalist Congregation? Do you align earth-centered, indigenous, or Pagan thinking or traditions? How did you hear about this group?</p> <p>For now, this will let us know why people are joining.</p>
<p><a href="#">Facebook CUUPS Bulletin group</a></p>	<p>1,823 Followers This group is mostly for blog posts and media outreach. There is little traffic and no promotion since it contains the same as the two primary Facebook pages.</p>

<a href="#">Facebook Nature's Sacred Journey page</a>	457 Followers This is about the blog Nature's Sacred Journey. Little traffic. Remained steady since last year.
<a href="#">Twitter</a>	71 following. 1,002 Followers. This is our least used platform. We are considering checking into HootSuite so the post-activity to Twitter is the same as FB. HootSuite does this automatically.
<a href="#">CUUPS Chapter Facilitators</a>	Unused until facilitators are confirmed and verified by their congregations. If you are a facilitator and on Facebook please let us know.
<b>Instagram under consideration</b>	This reaches a younger demographic than FB. We are investigating this outlet to better serve young adults. To expand our reach we need a social media expert team.
<a href="#">CUUPS Podcast</a>	32 podcasts listed of past General Assembly presentations are hosted here.
<a href="#">YouTube</a>	Currently hosts Summer Solstice Celebrations from General Assembly and links to for chapter channels. If your chapter has a YouTube channel please let us know.

### What's Next:

**Copyright Issues with Social Media:** The organization like many congregations have been hit with demands for copyright fees due to posts by members from businesses who are representing artists and photographers.

CUUPS has worked tirelessly to be accountable for the copyrights of those in our creative communities. We pay stipends for use of music and materials used in our GA video presentations and were totally unaware that posts members and administrators made on social media would result in an infringement of copyright.

We are currently engaged in such an issue regarding posts made in 2013. The post in question was immediately removed. It pointed members to a website to purchase a specific artist's prints.

We are currently working to determine with the UUA and legal experts if this is a legitimate copyright issue under the Digital Millennium Copyright Act.

As a result the board will be developing even stronger rules around the sharing of posts on social media. Until we have the ground rules fully developed we ask that those posting to any of our social media and blogs note that they have permission to post

images that may go with your articles. Be aware that for now, we may not post your posts without permission.

**Chapter Updating:** Now that we have an accurate list of registered CUUPS chapters we will be updating the list online.

**Communications:** Strengthening the tools we use to share and hear from members. Social media development. The desire is to create a communications team with writers and social media content creators and experts.

**Bylaw Updates & Covenanting:** The pandemic has tested the organization as much as all of our congregations. After attending workshops at general assembly about covenanting, and infrastructure items like policies and bylaws it is time to review. As we take this on we will be looking through the eyes of where the best practices are in the UUA and look at the languaging we use that may be exclusive or not in alignment with being UU Pagans. If you are interested in being part of the conversation please let me know.

**Determining the need for an Executive Director or a larger board or committees with more volunteers:** Given the time of the board and their volunteer status, we will be looking at the possibility of recreating the part-time role of executive director. To do this we need to be sure to look at fair wage practices and what we want someone in this position to manage.

If we expand the board with more volunteers and create more volunteer opportunities, will this put us in a similar position as many of our congregations are facing with volunteer burnout and the possibility of projects dropping.

**Overall:** Continuing to support the membership of the organization and earth-centered and Pagan spirituality in the UUA.

### **In Gratitude...**

The volunteers who make up the board of directors for CUUPS are an incredible team of people who not only work hard for the organization, but for their congregations and in their personal lives. The past three years have been hard and at times exhausting. You the members empower us to be in service.

Many thanks to all of our chapter organizers, members, home congregations, ministers and religious professionals, and so on in the denomination. 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](mailto:president@cuups.org)

## Membership 2021-2022 Annual Report

By Membership Team

[membership@cuups.org](mailto:membership@cuups.org)

The Board would like to thank all of our members, new and renewals, who support CUUPs Continental through donations and membership in our organization. It is a goal of CUUPs to support our members and help them find educational materials as well as ideas on how local leadership can engage their church congregations in Earth-Centered Spiritualities.

Currently we have approximately 486 members. As our numbers grow we need to assess how to manage it on our current system with Wild Apricot. Their pricing is laid out for 500, 2,000, 5,000 and 15,000. There is no step for 1,000. We are excited about the opportunity..

Our chapters currently have grown to approximately 110 verified and about 32 unverified, closed, or inactive. Chapters who are verified will be uploaded to the website by the end of the summer. All chapters must have contact persons for the records. We also found during the verification process that there were groups using the CUUPS name but never applied. These groups will not be listed on our website.

It looks like our chapters are beginning to turn the page from mostly zoom based meetings, or not meeting at all, into live and in person meetings. Some chapters have begun more of a hybrid style where live and digital meetings happen together. Zoom style meetings knocked down the limits of geographic location and allowed members not close in proximity to join in fellowship.

An example of this is outlined in our secretary's report below. Special thanks to our Board Secretary Cat, who organized and led several membership groups in a variety of team exercises to strengthen our local chapters. Please see her report for additional information on these programs.

General Assembly was a success for us again this year with participation from many chapters and members in our "on-demand" Summer Solstice celebration video. We repeated our raffle give away of three, one-year memberships, which was held at our Bonfire Circle. Congratulations to our winners.

Membership would love to see a return to a quarterly newsletter for incarcerated Pagans. This program was coordinated with UU Church of the Larger Fellowship and ceased last year with the change in the membership leader. We need volunteers who are talented in writing solitary ritual or other educational pieces and would like to get involved in sending these newsletters out to incarcerated Pagans. Please send a note to [membership@cuups.org](mailto:membership@cuups.org) and let us know if you are interested in this important work.

Prior to her retirement from the board, Debra was able to work through chapter verification. As you can imagine, this was quite a project as membership in the local level changes quickly. We are still working to bring the Website current and would welcome chapters to help by checking

their listings and letting membership know of any changes that may need to be made. Send information on changes to [membership@cuups.org](mailto:membership@cuups.org). We welcome the chapters listed below who submitted paperwork and were accepted into CUUPS Continental this year. Welcome!!

Date Approved	Chapter Name
Oct 2021	Eno River CUUPs
Nov 2021	Pacific CUUPS Reston CUUPS
Dec 2021	Three Rivers CUUPs
May 2022	Dogwood Spirit CUUPs (renewing)
June 2022	Sacred Earth Circle CUUPs
<p>We currently have two chapters in process and are awaiting finalization of paperwork and formal acceptance by the board.</p>	

Thank you to all members and chapters for their patience as the Membership Team works through the transition in leadership. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have a desire to serve as a membership volunteer.



## Ministerial Relations Report for July 2021 - June 2022

by Rev., Dr. John (Om Prakash) Gilmore

Since my term on the board I have served in the position of Ministerial and Right Relations. We have worked together very well as a board. Along with several others, I have worked to inform various groups within the UU Movement, via, Facebook and email, about who we are as a major part of the larger movement, 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, as necessary, 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 2022 GA. I also helped pass on information to various members of the CUUPS Board who were working in the virtual exhibition hall.

I have been in contact with ministers, as necessary, 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. I have also made myself available to various groups as needed, and am working within the CUUPS mission and goal to broaden our interactions with other groups and 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 providing some interventions in little *bumps in the road*, so to speak, within a few of our chapters and have been studying methods of intervention and conflict resolution as part of a UUMA Committee that will work to promote good practices and healthy relations among ministers and religious professionals.

We are looking forward to becoming more inclusive, more diverse, multi-racial, and multicultural, and helping to support and provide space for those who approach the Unitarian Universalist Association with a more Earth Based Spirituality and Pagan perspective. We are an active board working to promote justice, equity, and compassion within our chapters, congregations, and the UUA at large. It is a pleasure serving.

Namaste,

Rev., Dr. John (Om Prakash) Gilmore  
CUUPS Right Relations  
[rightrelations@cuups.org](mailto:rightrelations@cuups.org)

## Secretary Report for July 2021 - June 2022

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. Once I complete my term as secretary I will be changing over to leadership development / volunteer development.

As your secretary, my main responsibilities were in administration. My primary duties included

- 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](mailto:info@cuups.org) and [secretary@cuups.org](mailto:secretary@cuups.org)
- Sending letters of condolence and congratulations to CUUPs members and chapters as their life events have become known to CUUPs
- Assembling the annual report after BOT members turn in their materials and then taking minutes at the Annual Meeting.
- Assisting the president and other officers as needed. This year it also included doing more CUUPs newsletter layouts.

Other weekly/monthly tasks this year included helping CUUPs chapter leaders and members connect. I did this by

- Getting to know more of the CUUPs members by participating on Facebook groups regularly
  - [Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans - CUUPS](#) (CUUPs members group)
  - [CUUPS Chapter Central](#) (CUUPs chapter Leaders groups)
- Hosting eleven 2nd Saturday “Brainstorm and Fellowship” gatherings over Zoom from 7 PM - 9 PM Eastern Time where attendees can talk about how the last ritual went on their own or with their chapter, brainstorm ideas for next ritual, then talk about what is on their minds and give opportunity to share wisdom, connect, and collaborate with others. The sessions were from July 10, 2021 to May 14, 2021 with June off for General Assembly. This event will continue.
- Beginning the development of a discussion guide for “[Pagan and Earth Centered Voices in Unitarian Universalism](#)” with the help of many volunteers. Organizing a “team teach” book group held once a month on 3rd Sunday at 7 PM EDT over Zoom for a series of 6 sessions. (Feb - July 2022). The last class was July 17, 2022. The first test group seemed to enjoy the class and was able to share feedback for formatting the guide. I hope we can complete the project by fall term.
- Collecting dates for the CUUPs Worship List (<https://tinyurl.com/CUUPsWorshipList>) and sharing it online. Later archiving old ritual dates and updating the document to be the

current one.

- Less frequent tasks were writing articles for the CUUPs Blog [“Nature’s Sacred Journey.”](#)
- I also wrote [“New UU Pagan Study Group Checklist”](#) for the [CUUPs Chapter Materials](#) page.

My annual tasks included work for General Assembly:

- Collaborating with the participating CUUPs chapters and members and helping them to organize photos or make their video clips as needed. Producing the GA 2022 CUUPs Summer Solstice Celebration as an on demand worship.
- Collaborating with Abigail Spinner McBride, our special musical presenter this year, on recording and producing “Circle of Sacred Sound” which was offered as an on demand chant workshop.
- Working with the treasurer on costs associated with GA presentations.
- Attending the Virtual General Assembly and participating in workshops helpful to my work with CUUPS National. Being present when possible in the Virtual Exhibit booth from CUUPs and answering any CUUPs related questions posted on the GA Boards.
- Hosting a “Virtual Bonfire / Bardic Circle Lite” social at General Assembly June 25, 2022 at 7 PM Pacific where attendees could share stories, songs, readings, and more. This was also the spot for the raffle winners to be pulled from the bowl and announced.
- Hosting the GA Summer Solstice watch party on July 9, 2022 at 7 PM EDT for those who did not attend GA that wanted to watch it.

I would like to thank both CUUPs members and the CUUPs BOT for a wonderful year! It’s been a pleasure serving you as your secretary. I look forward to continuing to serve you in a new way in the coming program year for 2022-2023.

Warmest regards,

Catherine Rigby  
CUUPs Secretary  
[secretary@cuups.org](mailto:secretary@cuups.org)

## Treasurer Report for July 2021-June 2022

By Ron Zorn

Here is where we are at the end of the fiscal year.

### Balance in accounts as of June 30, 2022:

5/3 bank	\$23,389.16
PayPal	\$ 0.00
UUCEF	\$10.69 x 1393.319 shares =\$14,894.58
TOTAL	\$38,283.74

### Fiscal year (July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022) expenses are outlined below:

Liberated Syndication Podcast Fees Yearly	\$84.00
Inffinipay fees	\$364.67
Re-mail Services	\$167.99
Zoom Fees - Yearly	\$161.59
Constant Contact Yearly	\$705.04
UUA Dues Yearly	\$500.00
Wild Apricot Fees Yearly for website/membership portal	\$1223.64

<b>UUA – General Assembly Expenses In Detail</b>	
Gold Registration for CUUPs	\$2400.00
Board Registrations	\$750.00
Speaker registrations	\$250.00
Donations to Musicians for use of their music on Ritual for GA	\$200.00
<b>Parliament of World Religions Expenses In Detail</b>	
Parliament of World's Religions Membership	\$1250.00
Board Registrations for Parliament	\$225.00
Total Expenses	\$9469.93

**Non-Membership income and donations:**

PayPal Annual Giving fund income	\$19.00
Donations from Members	\$90.00
BN Media Patheos	\$54.17
Total	\$163.17

It has been a pleasure serving as your Treasurer this year!

Ron Zorn

CUUPs Treasurer

[treasurer@cuups.org](mailto:treasurer@cuups.org)

## 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](mailto: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/aological 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!