



Mobile Chapter

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Mobile
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Mobile Chapter

Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans

General Information

- What is Paganism?
- Women and Paganism
- Men and Paganism
- What is CUUPS?
- Become a member of CUUPS
- Minor Release Form



General Information

What is Paganism?

Paganism is not new or unusual in our modern life. For many people it exists less as an active religion than as parts of our popular culture. Halloween costumes and treats, Christmas trees and mistletoe, Easter bunnies and eggs, maypole dances and hundreds of other folkways began as Pagan practices. Modern-day Pagans seek to restore the religious context of these practices.

Defining Paganism

The origin of the word pagan is from the Latin *paganus*, meaning a country dweller. When cities were Christianized the people in the country continued to practice the old religions. The word pagan took on the meaning of "those folks out there in the sticks who still do all that old-fashioned stuff." Later it came to mean any member of indigenous folk or tribal religion or anyone who was not "of the book" (i.e., the *Koran*, *Bible*, *Torah*).

Pagan religions originated in a time when people lived close to the land. Pagan theologies reflect an awareness of nature with its cycles of the seasons, as well as the cycles and seasons of human life. Such awareness is a common thread among Pagans today. Few modern Pagans can

fully know or follow how our ancestors worshipped. Instead we invent and reinvent our religious practices, and even our beliefs, as we determine how they resonate with our contemporary lives. Some people prefer to use the word "Neopagan" to describe this form of modern Paganism.

We capitalize the words Pagan and Paganism in accordance with standard practices for religious names, e.g., Buddhist and Buddhism, Muslim and Islam. Paganism is a vital, genuine -- and growing! -- spiritual path.

What Pagans Believe

Modern Pagan theology is like a great tapestry with strands originating in many distinct religious traditions. Contemporary Pagans may embrace all or part of the Pagan tapestry. Some Pagans explore their ethnic roots and discover the indigenous practices of their ancestors. Others incorporate indigenous practices that belong to a wide variety of cultures. Still other Pagans follow newly created practices. Common among these Pagans is their tie to nature in a way that resonates with their inner spiritual voice.

Some Pagans believe in the Goddesses and Gods of the old religions and others do not. Many Pagans understand deity as immanent, in everything, and believe revelation is found in nature instead of written in

If you are under the age of 18 we are delighted to have you as a member and participant to our group. Our church has decided that parents have the right to direct their children's religious education. We don't wish to get either you or ourselves in trouble, so in order to protect you, our CUUPS group and UUFM, we ask that before you participate in our meetings you have a parent or guardian sign this form.

Dear Parent:

Your minor child has requested permission to participate in the activities of the Mobile CUUPS Chapter. In an effort to avoid conflict between parents of one religious tradition and children who may be exploring another, the members of Mobile CUUPS would like to offer the following information and request your agreement to the statement below before we invite your minor child to participate in our group. If you have any questions or would like more information about our group, the church, Unitarian Universalism, or Paganism please don't hesitate to call the church and leave a message. An officer of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Mobile or of Mobile CUUPS will be glad to talk with you.

- **Purpose** - Mobile CUUPS is a social and religious organization founded by and for Pagans in Mobile and surrounding areas to provide a safe environment for people dedicated to earth-centered spirituality to share their ideas, experiences, knowledge and ritual.
- **Affiliation** - Mobile CUUPS is a part of a larger network of well-respected national organizations as a local chapter of the Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans (CUUPS), an organization within the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). Please note, however that the UUA is not a "Pagan church." This organization is open to individuals from a wide variety of religious and philosophical backgrounds.
- **Meetings** - Mobile CUUPS meets regularly on the third Friday of every month at 7:00 p.m. Meetings and activities of the group include, but are not limited to discussion of the Pagan and neo-Pagan traditions of this and other countries, discussions and workshops on various magical skills, arts and crafts workshops, and both public and private rituals to celebrate seasonal changes and events of personal significance (i.e. hand-fastings, blessings).
- **Information** - Mobile CUUPS offers literature describing the ideology of Unitarian Universalism, CUUPS, and general information about Paganism.

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Mobile - <http://www.uufm.org>
CUUPS Inc - <http://www.cuups.org>
UUA - <http://www.uua.org>

Please return this part to Mobile CUUPS, 6345 Old Shell Road * Mobile, AL 36608

Permission to Allow Participation by Unaccompanied Minor

I, _____ (print name of parent or guardian) have read and understand the above information and give my full permission to minor child _____ (print name of child) to participate in the activities of Mobile Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans.

SIGNATURE of parent or legal guardian: _____

PHONE number of parent or legal guardian: _____

Still, opinions vary on the inclusion of a Pagan theology within the UUA. Individual congregations can be supportive or skeptical. Most congrega-

tions are tolerant, and many are even accepting, of Paganism as a spiritual expression within Unitarian Universalism.

To the Attention of the CUUPS Secretary:

I would like to be a member of the Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans. I am sympathetic with the Principles and Purposes of the Unitarian Universalist Association and I affirm the Purposes of CUUPS as stated in the CUUPS Bylaws.

Name _____

Address _____

Day Phone / Evening Phone / Email _____

- Individual Membership \$30.00
- Family Membership (2 Adults + Children) \$45.00
- Other Donation \$25.00
- \$50.00
- \$75.00
- \$ _____

Signature _____

Make Check or Money Order Payable to CUUPS:

Mail Dues and Order form to:

CUUPS
8190A Beechmont Avenue #335
Cincinnati, OH 45255-3154
Phone 817-557-3949
Email: CUUPS@aol.com

scriptures. Some believe in an afterlife and that their actions in this life will determine their place in the next. Others believe only in this life and that their actions here are all that matters. Still others believe in reincarnation. Some Pagans believe in an active Spirit World while others do not. Because Paganism is a non-creedal religion such divergent beliefs can exist together under one religious name – just like in Unitarian Universalism!

Many modern Pagans find their beliefs are very much in harmony with Unitarian Universalist Principles, especially the reverence for “the interdependent web of which we are part.”

Women and Paganism

Contemporary Paganism entered the consciousness of the Unitarian Universalist community mostly through its women members and their explorations of Women’s Spirituality. Their ground-breaking work paved the way for contemporary Paganism as an active spiritual path for men and women in the UUA.

Through UUA Religious Education

The Goddess is a potent image in contemporary Paganism. Many Unitarian Universalist women were introduced to the Goddess through the religious education classes “*Cakes for the Queen of Heaven.*”

Some women have chosen to focus exclusively on images of the Goddess who may be maiden, mother, crone, teacher, lover, healer or death bringer.

The Diversity We Celebrate

God images, male faces of Divinity, are also very much present and a part of modern Pagan culture. Some women embrace the complement in a polytheistic view of male Gods, who might be young, old, wise, tricky, strong, or physically challenged. This multifaceted view of Gods provides an insight many women seek in their relationships with men.

Although a significant minority of women on the Pagan path choose to explore their spirituality by worshipping exclusively with other women, the majority of contemporary Pagans commonly worship in mixed gender groups. Many Pagan groups explore the partnership of Goddess and God, using governance models of equality and shared leadership.

Women who Inspire and Teach Us

The modern Pagan movement owes much to the women who shaped its direction and brought it to public notice. Women like Starhawk, author of the best selling book *Spiral Dance*, founder of Reclaiming Collective and the Compost coven, teacher; Margot Adler, National Public Radio reporter, author of the pioneering book

Drawing Down the Moon, board member of CUUPS; Z Budapest, founder of Dianic Wicca, author, teacher; Margaret Murray, anthropologist, archaeologist, Egyptologist; Doreen Valiente, poet, teacher, author, considered one of the most influential modern witches.

In addition to Margot Adler, two other Unitarian Universalist women who greatly influenced this movement are Rev. Shirley Ranck, author of *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven*, and Elisabeth Fisher, author of *Rise Up and Call Her Name*.

Men and Paganism

Contemporary Paganism is an active spiritual path for men as well as women.

The Diversity We Celebrate

Men, too, have a rich history of leadership and participation in the Pagan movement. Men who have made significant and ongoing contributions include: Gerald B. Gardner, founder of Gardnerian Witchcraft; Raymond Buckland, prolific author and bringer of Gardnerian Witchcraft to America; Isaac Bonewits, writer, teacher, and founder of the Druidic Ar nDraiocht Fein: A Druid Fellowship (ADF); Aidan Kelly, controversial scholar and poet, and co-founder of Covenant of the Goddess (CoG) and the New Reformed Orthodox Order of the Golden Dawn (NROGD); Tim (Oberon) Zell, founder of the Church of All Worlds (CAW) and publisher of the influential magazine, *Green Egg*.

UU figures include Theodore Parker, who spoke of “mother God and Father God,” and the Transcendentalist poets.

Faces of Divinity

God images, male faces to Divinity, are very present and very much a part of modern Pagan culture. Many men find a reflection of the Divine spark in themselves, in a polytheistic view of a male God who might be young, old, wise, tricky, strong, or physically challenged.

In Goddess, Pagan men salute the divinity of mother, lover, teacher, healer, planet, and the feminine shadow within themselves. Although a significant minority of women on the Pagan path choose to explore the feminine side of their spirituality by worshipping exclusively with other women, the majority of contemporary Pagans commonly worship in mixed-gender groups. Many Pagan groups celebrate the partnership of Goddess and God, and use governance models of equality and shared leadership.

What is CUUPS?

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.

How can I join CUUPS?

Active membership is \$30 a year for personal membership, \$45 a year for a family membership at the same address. This includes voting membership to CUUPS: a subscription to the CUUPS Newsletter; and one free classified ad per year plus discounts on paid ads. Make your check payable to CUUPS and mail to address on the back.

Continental Activities

CUUPS sponsors events at the annual UUA General Assembly to educate UUs about UU-Paganism. The CUUPS Annual Meeting occurs concurrently with the UUA General Assembly. The CUUPS annual Convocation offers speakers, workshops, rituals, camping and other activities. CUUPS committees work on areas of interest to members, for example, Religious Education. CUUPS supports networking for UU Pagans through CUUPS-L, an electronic mailing list. For more information contact CUUPS via e-mail.

Local Chapter Activities

CUUPS chapters are connected to existing UU congregations. Chapter activities include discussion groups, ritual groups, teaching circles, and worship services for UU congregations. Chapters are autonomous in deciding their own levels and types of activity. There are currently close to 70 officially recognized chapters.

Contact CUUPS for a current chapter listing or information on how to start a new chapter.

The Mobile Chapter meets on the third Friday of every month beginning at 7pm in the fellowship hall of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Mobile.

UU Pagan Ministry?

Many UU clergy have responded spiritually to nature for a long time. In recent years an increasing number of UU ministers have identified themselves as Pagan or Earth-centered in their spirituality. This is part of a recent general increase in spiritual interests among UUs.

Paganism in the UUA?

One of the sources of Unitarian Universalism is *“Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.”*

For some UUs this means a Pagan spirituality. For other UUs it means a Humanist, Native American, or other nature honoring spirituality. UUs are dedicated to the right of conscience, the personal search for spiritual truth and freedom from dogmatism. UUs are also dedicated to *“Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.”* Many UUs understand Paganism within this context while not accepting Paganism as their personal spiritual truth.