



HONORING THE FEMININE DIVINE
 IN OUR OWN
 DEEP BEINGS,
 IN EACH OTHER,
 AND IN THE
 WORLD

MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS



COCO NEWS, SEASONAL REFLECTIONS, EVENT ANNOUNCEMENTS, NEW MEMBER WELCOMES

Unitarian Universalist Womenspirit Newsletter

SHE SPEAKS



Photo by Shauna Ireland

From the Editor

Each weekend prior to May Day, our local community college holds an annual plant sale. Students cultivate seeds from every gardenable I can imagine, and then sell seedlings and young plants at a discounted price. Greenhouses are filled with rows of vibrating green shoots perched to leap into verdure and productivity.

The life force is so forward and present that it permeates me, and I forget darkness can even exist.

Imagine just how much life can come from this *one* plant sale. Hundreds and hundreds of plants eager to produce hundreds and hundreds of trees, flowers, fruits, vegetables, and seeds. Hundreds and hundreds of wildlife habitats. Thousands and thousands of seeds that will produce millions more seeds in future generations. Can you feel this potential at its peak?

You are called now to celebrate the eternal promise of fresh life and to make your magic potent and saturated with your own uniqueness and gifts. It's time to revive, sisters! Let us ride waves of joy and potential and dive deep into the manifestation of our goals, desires, and pleasures.

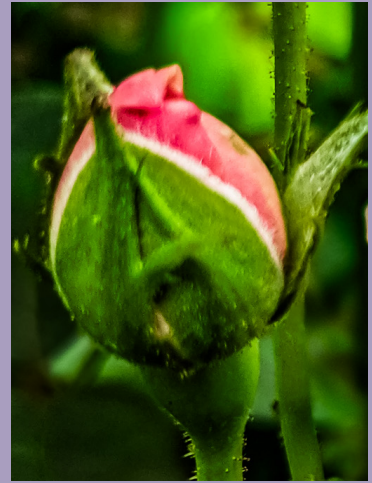
I look forward to reuniting with you very soon at the Spring event.

In loving community,
Iris Padgett



Photos by Iris Padgett

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*Photography by
UUWomenspirit women
throughout.*

Welcome New Members

The following are new members of UUWomenspirit since our last issue, and they are being recognized with their permission:

- Aimee Bovara - Asheville, NC**
- Susanna Harris - Oak Ridge, TN**
- Elyse Harvey - Oak Ridge, TN**
- Nyx Firebourn - Chicago, IL**
- Libby Morgan - Boiling Springs, SC**
- Sallie McAllister - Gate City, VA**
- Ashley Wells - Travelers Rest, SC**
- Jay Woodard - Harrisonburg, VA**



Exuberant clover! Photo by Penny Featherstone

WELCOME and a warm thank you to these women for connecting with and supporting UUWomenspirit!

Many of these new members will be coming to the Spring event. We look forward to meeting them and welcoming them to our community. Please let us know if you're interested in carpooling with them!

Save the Dates Next In-Person Events

May 15-19, 2024
Oct 2-6, 2024

The Mountain Retreat and
Learning Center
Highlands, NC



Photo Submitted by Melody LeBaron

News from the CoCo

The Coordinating Council, or CoCo, is the governing body of UUWomenspirit. The current members are Victoria Fredrick (Marketing and Outreach Coordinator), Volunteer Coordinator (Shauna Ireland), Christine Grewcock (Registrar), Judy Padgett (Membership Coordinator and Treasurer), Rev. Maggie Lovins (Program Resource Liaison), and Melissa Christopher (Scribe).

Wishing all of you a merry (and perhaps slightly wicked) Beltane as we celebrate the wheel turning! Lisa Sherman and the Spring PC have been working hard to bring us a wonderful event – we look forward to being together soon at **Gather at the Crossroads**, May 15-19, 2024.

Before sharing the general updates below, the CoCo would like to thank Melissa Christopher for stepping in to finish Beth Flanagan's term as Scribe while Beth deals with some health issues; thanks to Beth for the work she did up to this point.



Photo by Iris Padgett

With sorrow and gratitude we share that Barbara Green, founding member of UUWomenspirit, passed away on March 24. Barbara led the "Cakes for the Queen of Heaven" curriculum many times, including once as a track at one of our events. She will be missed by many, but her influence will be felt by all of us who come together at The Mountain. The PC will be creating an altar in her honor at the Spring event.

From the Volunteer Coordinator (Shauna Ireland):

Hello Sisters! We are looking forward to seeing you all next month for the Spring 2024 event! I know that for many of us, coming to Womenspirit in the spring or fall is a large part of what feeds our soul until the next event. As of right now, we do not have a Spring 2025 Planning Committee in place. This presents a unique opportunity for sisters who would love to work together to form an entire committee together. Reach out to Shauna, the Volunteer Coordinator, by May 20 if you're interested.

From the Treasurer and Membership Coordinator (Judy Padgett):

At this time, we are "fiscally fit" (pun intended!). I'd like to give a shout out and big kudos to our Web Goddess, Christine Grewcock, for her years of hard work in making our online registration system, "She Meets," a reality and for the constant tweaking to incorporate the inevitable changes that come up. If you've been around UUWomenspirit for as long as I have, you will remember the days when registrations were done by mail and payments for events were made by check or money order. Serving as the current Treasurer, I can hardly imagine dealing with that now. (Kudos again to past Registrars and Treasurers!)

I am currently negotiating with The Mountain on our 2025 and 2026 contracts. The contracts for 2024 took some time to finalize, and The Mountain has been very generous with UUWomenspirit due to our long-standing (37 years!) relationship.

Please, if you have an opportunity, express your gratitude to Director Steph Anderson and Booking Coordinator James Williamson for their willingness to work with us on a number of contract issues. 2025 and 2026 contracts should be easy to complete. As a way of showing appreciation, if you are able and interested, you can become a member of The Mountain. Check their website, www.themountainrlc.org, for more information.

As of publication time, we have 75 members who have paid dues for the 2024 calendar year. Of those, ten are brand new members and are listed elsewhere in this and the Imbolc newsletter. Many of those ten will also be joining us at the upcoming event, so be sure to reach out to them with welcome arms.

With Love,
The Coordinating Council

The Children of Spring

By Scarlet Haven

Spinning and twirling, faster and faster
A dizzying sight of sunlight and laughter
A spell has begun, under Hawks' watchful gaze
Spring's Children are waking and chasing sunrays

Weavers of stories, of songs, and of dreams
Dashing through meadows, the forests, the streams
Flowers and dirt adorning Their skin
Spring's Children race forward, there's magik to spin

Creeping and climbing, vines touch the sky
Trees bending and waving as the Children run by
Legend tells of Their story, a story so old
Of the wild Children who are haloed in gold

The Children of Spring, all smiles and light
The Children who play from day until night
And when the Children of Spring are forced to depart,
A Child of Spring resides in your heart

Cross Quarter Days

Beltane

May 1, 2024 or Cross Quarter Day May 4, 2024

Reflections on Bealtaine

From Melody LeBaron's Wheel of the Year Course

Bealtaine is the cross quarter holy day between the Spring Equinox and Summer Solstice. Pronounced be-*al-tin-nah*, Bealtaine literally means “bright fire.” More recently known in England as Beltane, and diluted down for the US as May Day.

Mabdh (pronounced Maeve) is the earth goddess who rules this sacred timing. She is Sovereign, known both as a love goddess and a warrior goddess. Her worship goes back 5000 years. Her sensual prowess was legendary; she was known to have 32 men in one night and still be found wanting.

At Bealtaine, Mabdh offers us the gifts of awakening to the seed of our own desire, feeding and fueling it, and budding, blossoming to our own passion and purpose.

The symbol is the flower or the chalice, which represents the womb of passion. This is the time of the sacred union... aka sacred marriage! A child conceived now will be born at Imbolc.

Celtic legends as far back as 600 BC tell that in ancient Ireland, all the hearth fires all over the land were put out on Bealtaine. A new fire was created in Uisneach (pronounced Ishnook) in the mythical center of Ireland – and runners were sent out all over to light all the new fires. Recent archeology has discovered the remains of huge ancient bonfires confirming the truth of these old stories, and magnificent Bealtaine festivals are being held here again.

Bealtaine was celebrated in three-day fire festivals when entire tribes came together to receive and revel in the newly lit fires. These festivals also honored water, as there was usually a sacred well near the entrance to the stone circles. As people entered the ceremonial space, strips of cloth, called clouties, were dipped into the holy water and then tied to faery trees nearby as visual representations of prayers or intentions.

During the three-day revelry, there was drumming and dancing, singing, feasting and more dancing, bare feet hitting the ground, awakening the land and re-wilding the bodies of the dancers.

Often a tall May pole was erected, connecting earth and sky, acknowledging the divine masculine, and perhaps symbolizing the world tree. Bright ribbons strung from the top of the pole were woven by the dancers, in and out, creating chevron designs on the pole replicating the desire to bring down the light of the sun to warm the earth and make the land fertile.

Very often, two large bonfires were lit close together and the cattle were driven between them as a method of purification. I've participated in ritual Bealtaine dances where the dancers move between two fires as a blessing of purification.

After dark, in the romantic glow of the Bealtaine bonfires, the adult members of the community were expected to activate (within themselves and for the land) the sacred fertility of springtime.



Photo by Shauna Ireland

Bealtaine was a time of coupling, the time of the **ban feis** or sacred marriage. Handfastings were traditional at and after Bealtaine.

Bealtaine signals the return of fecundity and fertility of land, animals, seeds. It is now time for planting the food and flowers that will nourish family and community through the year. (Summer solstice will be the first harvest, Lughnasadh the grain harvest, and Autumn Equinox the 3rd harvest.)

Developmental Task of Bealtaine: Sovereignty and Sacred Union

Each of us holds certain of the active, yang, outward-moving gifts (also known as gifts of the Divine Masculine) and certain receptive, yin, inward-moving gifts (also known as the gifts of the Divine Feminine). At Bealtaine, it's time to review how your yin and yang gifts are supporting you in manifesting your yearly intentions.

Are you yang-ing your way through the days and weeks, feeling exhausted and depleted? This is not ideal, and Bealtaine is the perfect time to course-correct. Connect deeply with the yin energy of the land, warmed by the sun. Lie outside in the sunshine and receive warmth and light. Feel the earth under your feet or body. Lie there until your body herself wants to get up and move. Walk barefoot on the earth, feeling the hum of Mother Earth's vibration and love in every cell of your body.

It's said that if you wash your face with the dew of early May, you'll have youthful inner beauty even into old age.

If you're feeling depressed and unmotivated, maybe your body and life are too yin. Check in with yourself. What would make you feel more vital, vibrant, fertile, alive? Do you need more movement? Pranayama? Dancing? Lovemaking? Bealtaine is the time of year we re-wild our bodies, minds and hearts.

This is a good time to bring out colorful scarves and clothing and dress yourself ceremonially, with care and attention to what evokes your own sensuality. Consider wearing a flower in your hair, or wearing your favorite floral scent.

Create Bealtaine Altars

Bring fresh flowers and greens into your home, as a sensual Bealtaine gift to enliven your space. Create altars in your home or workspace that represent Sacred Union to you. They can be simple or ornate. You can use items that represent fertility on your altars: seeds or seed packets, horns, flowers, fruits. Symbols of Mother Gaia, and photos of your land or gardens remind you to offer your prayers of gratitude and blessing to the land on which you live and the farmers who grow your food. At Bealtaine, Mabdh is the culmination of the gifts of the Maiden: she is the sensual sovereign who is as capable of going to battle, to save and serve, as she is of making passionate love to her partner/s.

Mabdh teaches us that we are not ready for sacred union until we claim our own sovereignty, until we can no longer be manipulated by others or seduced by our own fantasies and projections.

So check yourself:

- Do you care too much about other people's opinions?
- Do you need approval from others, or are you content to be human, imperfect, offering yourself the love all humans need?

Allow Mabdh to teach you how to love and nurture and fight for yourself.

**Claim your sovereignty.
Without sovereignty, true Sacred Union is impossible.**



Three Beautiful Crones: Amber Grey, Toni Stephenson, and Betty Brown.

Green Seasons in Suburbia

A color meditation by Judy Robison

Suburban summers ripen into fresh mown lawns, cut in swaths,
grass clippings raked and bagged,
or strewn in the woods, along the boggy paths
under bowers of oak branches.

In the quiet shade, ferns spring from leafy beds.
Azaleas, green and bare of blossoms, clump in hedgerows,
and beneath nandina and viburnum,
dandelions and crabgrass vie for space.

Summer's lush abundance ends when ripe leaves
explode in orange, red or yellow,
then wither and fall in drifts.

By the stream, fringes of olive gray lichen eat into stumps
and autumn rains feed emerald moss
that clings to rocks like velvet caps.

Now the evergreens take shape along the skyline,
amid the skeletons of oak and poplar branches.

Spruce, fir and juniper stand tall.
Glossy holly branches adorn our holiday tables
and doorways are draped in festive pine boughs.

Winter's white may shroud our view in dreary sameness,
but the interlude is brief
until spring's crocus buds and daffodils awake
to tiptoe through my flower beds
and whisper promises of spring.

Spring Event - May 15-19, 2024

Gather at the Crossroads

Coming soon! 2024 Spring Event



Logo by Kathy Kemerait

...a confluence of intention and happenstance...

...where the ancient and the contemporary intertwine...

...and the path forward is ours to choose...

The Crossroads...the ancient symbol of intersectionality, a place of contemplating known paths and unknowable consequences. A blending of the tangible with the intuitive connection to the ethereal and the unrevealed. A place to pause, a place to rest along your current life path before taking the first step down a new one.

Sometimes you find yourself at The Crossroads intentionally, traveling your chosen path and arriving at a place with new options and choices. Other times, The Crossroads presents itself and you didn't see it coming...yet here you are, looking out from a place you did not choose to be, and presented with choices you didn't think you would have to make.

Wherever you are on your life's path, join us at The Crossroads as you consider where you are, how you got there, the decisions you must make, and how you move forward. Through tracks, workshops, worship services and other activities, we will explore The Crossroads and the opportunities it presents for reflection and choice. We hope to see you there!

UUWomenspirit Fall Event -
October 2-6, 2024

**Fire and Feather, Stone and Bone:
Welcome to the Cave**

Welcome! Enter, come and gather with us around the fire as we take a step back to the origins of humanity and experience our deeper connection to lifeforce. Our ancestors around the world evolved their own spiritual practices that also transcend cultural differences and touch upon our shared human experience.



Join us in our quest to learn, explore, and rediscover the universal thread running through ancient spiritual practices, as we connect with divine energy, raise our power, and reconnect with our own primal nature.

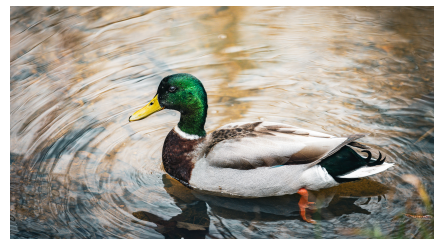
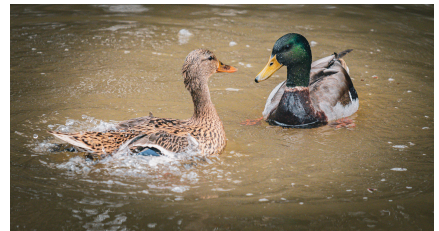
We are still looking for a few tracks and workshop leaders with skills and knowledge that focus on fundamental and universal aspects of spirituality. We welcome suggestions and ideas for facilitators and proposals. Please go to the website to submit a proposal: <https://www.uuwomenspirit.org/volunteer>.

Fall 2024 Planning Committee is Nina Brewer-Davis (Event Coordinator), Beth Butterfield (Scribe), Kallie LeFever (Worship), Shannon Browning-Mullis (Worship), Donna Carson (Sales & Activities), and Iris Padgett (Tracks & Workshops).

2024 Fall Event



Photos by Shauna Ireland



SHARE YOUR CREATIVITY

Interested in contributing original poetry, prose, ads, photography, art, tribute, gratitude, healing support requests, rituals, news, announcements, or other original content?

Send your
submissions to:
[newsletter@
uuwomenspirit.org](mailto:newsletter@uuwomenspirit.org)

Please include your full name and a brief, sentence-long bio with your original submissions - let's get to know each other even better! If you submit work by another, please attribute it accordingly. Send names when submitting photos with faces, please. Submissions should be no more than two pages or about 500-600 words.

Your work makes the newsletter more vibrant and is appreciated greatly.

Ode to a Tree

by Mary L. Carlin

O mighty Oak
Stretching your limbs to the sky,
Do you remember the soldiers marching by
To join Washington's army?
Do you recognize the children,
Over many generations,
Who played in your boughs?
Do you curse the ones
Who carved
names in your flesh?
Do you curse the dogs who pee on your feet?
Do you miss your siblings,
Cut down in their prime
To make way for green lawns?
Do you miss your most beautiful leaves
As they fall, year after year?
What do you remember more: beauty, or
sadness?

How does our world look to you?
Doomed, or just in a down cycle?
Do you think like an Ent
In the Lord of the Rings?
Slowly and deliberately—"Don't be hasty!"
Do you savor your own *sloooow* time
puzzled by us scurrying around you?

When you see our wooden homes, our books,
our furniture,
Do you see the bones of your brethren?
Is a Christmas tree a skeleton with baubles?
I hope you know that many of us, despite our
faults,
Love you to the depths of our bones.
And couldn't bear to imagine
Life without You.



Unitarian Universalist Women and Religion

<https://www.uuwr.org>
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Networking * Resources * Herstory
 Our online store offers UU feminist books and gifts, all by UU women artists!

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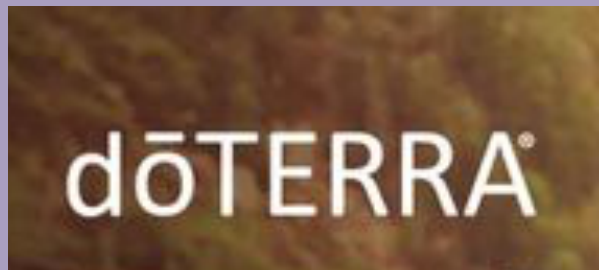


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