



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



From the Editor

I am still savoring winter’s quiet and darkness. I’m reluctant to let go, although I can feel frenetic energy growing in and around me. Usually by this time of year, I am ready to be done with the cold. This year, I can’t get enough downtime. I had a bad cold for a month. Caregiving responsibilities at home, bills, and deadlines don’t come to a halt when winter arrives.

My rhythm is out of tune with nature. I am still longing to rest and re-attune. Alas, nature is unstoppable, and what better time to replenish and realign than Imbolc?

The seeds I'm planting this year are different from former years. I turned 40 in August. Looking back to younger years, my intentions were so concrete and goal-oriented: "Start my own business." "Get accepted to a graduate program." "Have a child." A significant change, whether from age or circumstance or both, is that my heart's deepest desires at this point are largely out of my control. Whether or not my husband recovers from cancer. Whether or not my stepchildren succeed in their upcoming early adulthood. Whether or not my missing kitty comes home.

Control is a recurring theme in my life (perhaps for all of us?). What can I really control? How much can I control it? When should I try to manifest and when should I let go? These questions matter at a time like Imbolc when I am dreaming up my intentions.

What I do have some control over is my internal world. At Imbolc I am reminded that when I feel helpless, I can always plant seeds of hope. I have learned that hope is a practice that needs intentional daily tending. It is always there to be tapped, even when we forget. I am also planting seeds for finding time to take a positive perspective every day, even if only for a moment.

Even though my goals now are more subtle, I think they have the potential for deeper peace than my grandiose goals of the past. Ways of being and living that help me feel comforted, rather than waiting for life to take a certain path in order for me to find joy.

In sisterhood and with hope for a magical year for us all,

Iris Padgett

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Welcome New Members

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

**Rachel Daigle -
Hendersonville, NC**

Diane Saarinen - Athens, GA

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



Photo by Shauna Ireland

QUICK SAVE THE DATES

Next in-person events

May 15-19, 2024

Oct 2-6, 2024

Next virtual Book Club

Tuesday, Feb 13 at 7:30pm

Dear Child

Awake, dear child
Your embers are glowing
It's time to rekindle your flame

Hear, dear child
Hold your breath and listen
The world around you is stirring

Rise, dear child
Follow the beat of drums
They're guiding your feet forward

Laugh, dear child
Dancing with the trees
Remember how it feels to be wild

Sing, dear child
Feel the air in your lungs
Celebrate the life within you

Smile, dear child
Others gather with you
Wishing the darkness farewell

Be, dear child
Betwixt the shadow and flame
A joyful observer of the shift in realms

Dear child,
You have slumbered your fill
It's time to rise and awaken
For there's a world awaiting your return

- Scarlet Haven

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), Shauna Ireland (Volunteer Coordinator), Christine Grewcock (Registrar), Judy Padgett (Membership Coordinator and Treasurer), Rev. Maggie Lovins (Program Resource Liaison or PRL), and Beth Flanagan (Scribe and Keeper of the Sacred Text).

Greetings from the CoCo!

We now have a flyer for [Gather at the Crossroads](#), our spring 2024 event. Registration will open in early March, please share the informational flyer with your communities and help increase attendance for what is sure to be an amazing event. I'm particularly excited about the theme as I feel that I am at my own crossroads at this moment, so welcoming this energy of decision, intuition, possibilities, and potential change!

I'm going to be a little more personal in this update than will likely be the case in the future, as I am new in my role of Marketing and Outreach Coordinator. I appreciate the organization's patience as I learn about and settle into this new role. I can tell from reviewing the various shared drives with various documents (so many documents!) that a lot of work has been done in recent years to get our group organized and plan for the future while preserving our history. So, in short, there's a lot for me to learn.

One open question for all of you is about our book club and whether this is something that we want to continue. The last three book club meetings have not been well-attended (although thank you Jen Evans for holding the space); January's meeting was just Jen and myself. For February's meeting, we are going to bring the current book – *Cycles of Belonging* by Stella Tomlinson – to a close, and discuss any feedback received from the membership about whether we want to try again with a new book or let this chapter close. If you've participated in book club in the past, stay tuned as I may be reaching out; if you would like to proactively share thoughts or suggestions, please email them to marketing@uuwomenspirit.org.

The CoCo has scheduled our first meeting for February 4, so the Ostara newsletter will have more official notes and updates. In the meantime, keep your flames burning bright while still enjoying the night!

Blessed Be,
Victoria (on behalf of the
Coordinating Council)



Blast from the past - an event prior to the construction of the Treehouse. The Rec Hall only had shutters in its windows, no glass yet.

From the Treasurer/Membership Coordinator

You should have recently received the letter reminding you to renew your annual membership or join UUWomenspirit for the first time. As a reminder, dues are \$45 for the 2024 calendar year and are used to pay for all the background expenses of the organization. These expenses include The Mountain membership, insurance, technology, bank processing fees, marketing, meetings, and Coordinating Council expenses. These are expenses that occur throughout the year, so it's important to pay dues early each year. Paying dues also allows you the reduced member's rate for attending events.

We ended 2023 on a positive financial standing and hope to remain that way into the future, ensuring that we can offer our wonderful retreats for many years to come. Even if you can't always attend all the retreats, please consider joining or renewing your membership at this time. In that way you are supporting the foundational activities that keep us going from year to year.

The easiest way to pay your \$45 membership dues is to go to the website, uuwomenspirit.org, and click on "Join." Be sure to fill out the membership form so we can have the most accurate contact information for you. Your payment will be processed through Square. You can also mail a check made out to UUWomenspirit to Judy Padgett, Treasurer, 241 Pheasant Creek Rd., Casar, NC 28020.



Tara Lopez, Mylissa Buttram, and Toni Stephenson. Maiden, Mother, and Crone from Fall Event.



Katie Bloedau at a past event prior to the Treehouse being built!

Cross Quarter Days

IMBOLC

February 1-2, 2024

The roots of Imbolc grow from the birthing season of livestock when rich nourishment (read: milk and dairy) were in abundance after the more dormant time of winter. Imbolc is a deeply feminine holiday when we re-nourish and cleanse after our period of rest and begin again to create and embody life. A time of remembering and reawakening to our power and preparing our creative force to take hold again. We often plant seeds of intention at Imbolc, but perhaps even more important is simply attuning to the subtle readiness for life to spring forth. The energy of nature is stirring and our inner eyes are sleepily opening to welcome the growing solar light. Feel the anticipation and allow it to build within you.

Here is a simple ritual bath for nourishment and self-love. May you tend your fire and keep it burning brightly through the early spring as we welcome back the light.

(Please stay away from any ingredient listed below if you know you are sensitive or allergic to it. Consume and use these with knowledge that you take full responsibility for your body - i.e. at your own risk.)

Prepare ahead:

-A drink of warm milk (or alternate non-dairy milk) and honey with your favorite Imbolc herbs or flowers: chamomile, lavender, rose, cinnamon, and vanilla are great options. Extra fun to froth this if you have a frother.

-A warm milk bath with a combination of dried powdered milk or whole milk, epsom salt, baking soda, and essential oil of your choice (good Imbolc examples are orange, frankincense, or Rosemary) mixed in a carrier oil (like coconut, sesame, or olive oil). You might also like powdered oatmeal or sesame oil in place of or in addition to milk.

Surround your bathing area with white candles and/or early spring flowers if you have them. Call the directions and cast your circle. Luxuriate in the rich water and sip your luscious beverage. Focus on allowing yourself to feel nourished, feminine, ready, and connected to Spirit and life. Stay for as long as you want! Open the circle and release the directions with gratitude.



Coming soon! 2024 Spring Event



UUWomenspirit Spring Event - May 15-19, 2024

Gather at the Crossroads

A confluence of intention and
happenstance...
Where the ancient and the contemporary
intertwine...
And the path forward is ours to choose

The Crossroads is an ancient symbol that conjures up many images...a dark, dusty, and desolate place where Hecate presides under the faint promise of the new moon. A place where roads come together, where thoughtful contemplation occurs, and the first step down one's chosen path is taken. A magical and dynamic place where travelers from all over the world come together, stay for a time, and leave somehow transformed by the experience. For me personally, I feel like I've been living at the intersection of science, logic, and reason on one hand, and on the other... the metaphysical realm of crystals, intuition, and the ancestors. There are many more images and meanings of the Crossroads, and each is as individual and unique as a woman's life experience and imagination.

Please join us in May at The Mountain as we come together and explore the Crossroads through tracks, workshops, worship services, and community with one another. As our individual paths intertwine at The Mountain, may our experiences together enrich our lives and open our hearts and stay with us as we depart on our chosen paths transformed by the experience.

Our phenomenal logo was created by longtime UUWomenspirit sister Kathy Kemerait, and merchandise with the logo will be available for purchase during registration for the event. The brochure with details about the event will be available in late February/early March, and registration will begin in early March. Please visit our website www.uuwomenspirit.org for more information. We can't wait to see you at the Crossroads!

*Spring 2024 Planning Committee,
clockwise from left rear: Magi King (Tracks
and Workshops), Claire Lending (Scribe)
Arianna Bara (Sales and Activities) Helen
Rogers (Worship), Alice Carnes (Worship),
Lisa Sherman (Event Coordinator)*



**UWomenspirit 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 life force. 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 looking for tracks and workshop leaders with skills and knowledge that focus on fundamental and universal aspects of spirituality. Examples might include fire starting or making; craft with bone, stone, feather, or wood; foraging for or storing food; storytelling; ceramics or pottery; dream work; reading the stars; re-wilding; making natural dyes; drumming. 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

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.



Full Moon Pine

Floating on my back
Full Moon Pine
Cicadas sing
Every shooting star
Is your name sake tonight

*-Poem and photo
by Maria Ramos*



"The bad new is time flies. The good news is you're the pilot." - Michael Altshuler



"The only way to have a friend is to be one." - Ralph Waldo Emerson

Photos of Parker and River by Shauna Ireland

Time as a Circle

by Kathryn Kyker

I was sitting in a dentist chair. There was an emergency, my dentist was delayed. Across the hall, I heard suction and quick exchanges between staff. What to do with this unexpected time? I decided to sit in stillness, to resist the compulsion to fill unclaimed moments with activity. I sat and sat. Without a way to measure time, how could I feel proud of my patience? I lunged over the chair's restraining arm and grabbed my phone.

In Pause for Beauty, an email newsletter created by Ron MacIver, I found this quote: “For a Dene, (a subarctic Canadian indigenous tribe), the true reality of time is too precious and too important to be used as a reference for insignificant things. Time meant the rhythm of the earth and human growth; the seasons, the families, the sun, and the cycle of life. They didn't break time into different chunks. They just lived.” -Rene Fumoleau

I was using time as a reference for something insignificant. This appointment was not going according to plan, and my inability to control time made me fidget.

What would it take to unhitch myself from the timekeeping of our civilization, even for a day or two? We've harnessed time into a structure that dictates our lives, minute by minute. When I am in nature, I seek the wild—inside myself as well as outside. Loosening the grip of time is essential. I silence my phone. I don't check it, but not taking a picture is more difficult. I don't wear a watch or track my activity. I can sink a bit into the Now, but I'd like to lengthen the experience, which consequently, lengthens the perception of time.

To leave typical human timekeeping I'd have to leave typical humans. There'd have to be no clocks, no devices, no reminders.

My dental appointment resumed. Then I went to the Y to swim.

It was a gray day, but a ray of sun shot down the lap lane from the long row of windows. I swam in and out of the light over and over, delighting at the play of water shadows on the ceiling. Time could almost slip away here. But the big clock on the wall faced me after each turn, and I counted my laps, as I swam above painted lines. How entrenched and committed we are to this artifice of our creation.

I thought again of the Dene and others who tracked time as a circle of seasons instead of grid. I've seen the spiral petroglyphs of the Hohokam in Arizona, and of Ireland's Neolithic people. “Deep within the human mind, there is a fascination with the circle because it satisfies some longing within us,” writes John O'Donohue.

To belong to a community is to live within its accepted concepts. But awareness itself allows growth beyond straight lines.

We can choose to swim in a circle of light even if our bodies follow painted lines.

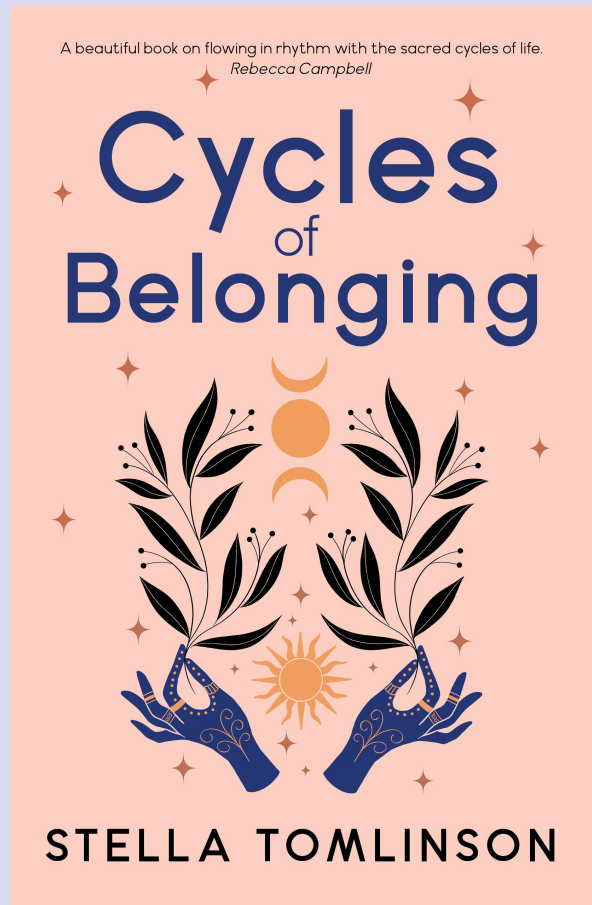
Cycles of Belonging

Our online **monthly book club** for members continues with the new book *Cycles of Belonging* by Stella Tomlinson. All members are invited to attend whether they have done the reading or not.

Meetings are the second Tuesday of the month on Zoom at 7:30pm EST. The link is emailed to active members, and members are welcome regardless of whether you have read the book.

The January meeting focused on the first three chapters. The February meeting will focus on the rest of the book with a discussion of whether or not to continue the book club.

Cycles of Belonging helps readers awaken from the trance of unworthiness and tend to the longings of their soul so they can feel a greater sense of peace, purpose, and fulfillment.



Nude Reaching for Something

Painting by Diana Paradise

Oil on Canvas

*Merry meet and
merry part
and merry meet again!*

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Hand-dyed yarn and clothing, embroidered items including towels, tarot bags, and UUWomenspirit logo items, chainmaille jewelry, and various other shiny things.



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