



# Earth Healer



A Unitarian Universalist Congregation



The Official Newsletter of the friends and members of Gaia Community November 2003

## TO LOVE ALIKE By Barbara Griggs

Some months ago in this space I mentioned that one of the things I cherish about being a Unitarian Universalist is the precept that "We need not believe alike to love alike." Recently, I have been forcefully reminded of what a challenge it can be to live up to that maxim. I have been—for the first time in many years—briefly tempted by imagining what it might be like to be part of a community where many people believed alike. I began realizing that I did not believe the same things as those around me when I was eight years old, so this was not a yearning for a rose-tinted past but rather for a hypothetical utopia. What if, for example, everyone in Gaia Community believed exactly the same way I do about all religious issues? Wouldn't that be pleasant and comfortable?

However, weeds immediately sprang up in my theoretical theological rose garden. If everyone believed exactly what I believe... would they believe it at exactly the same time? If I were having a moment of that lowering despair when I am sure the Universe is not merely chaos, but actively malignant—would everyone else be there too? Surely that way poisoned kool-aid lies! And what about the evolution of belief? I do not believe today what I believed last week, or last year; nor am I planning to quit the journey of self-discovery, inquiry, and learning any time soon.

In fact, as I contemplated the idea for awhile I rediscovered an insight I had first had years ago, while attempting to find my religious home in what some might call a non-minority religion. Inquiring among my Protestant and Catholic friends, I found that many

including—with varying degrees of *angst* over the matter—their minister. I also frequently learned that many happily belonged to congregations and denominations where they knowingly and cheerfully disagreed with central tenets of their espoused faith; while others disagreed with published tenets of their denomination without knowing there was a disagreement. Just in the last year a man I know as quietly devout told me that what he likes about being Catholic is that you don't have to believe anything the church says, if you don't want to. Which—no small accomplishment!—left me speechless.

I concluded that the community that believes alike remains beyond my scope for the foreseeable future. Thus I return, refreshed and far less jaded, to the issue of the community that *need not believe alike to love alike*. Where do the pitfalls and the mines of this landscape hide? Can we create a map to help navigate them?

It seems to me that recognizing what I do believe—and that these *are* beliefs—is the first step. The framers of the Declaration of Independence set a shining example, beginning: "We hold these truths to be self-evident..." The writers *did* hold their precepts to be self-evident Truths, yet they recognized the need to put them out there, define them clearly, before reasoning *from* them. In logic, these are postulates. In my discipline (Applied Behavioral Analysis) we term them "Given:" and it is necessary to *state* the "givens" before going on. As a responsible citizen of a religious community, I suspect I have an obligation to recognize what my "givens," my underlying assumptions are. Under ordinary circumstances, I may be under no obligation to state these assumptions out loud. It may be enough to know that they are there. It seems to me that assumptions may underlie almost anything that I may say or do religiously. I think that our year of exploration of varied traditions has probably enhanced my awareness of this issue.

For example, during my first years in Gaia, we spoke of *continued on page 4*

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knowingly held quite different beliefs than other members of their own congregations,

### PAGAN TRADITIONS OF THE WORLD: A JOURNEY OF AUTHENTICITY—DRUID PAGANISM

Sunday, September 28th–November 2nd (Samhain)—Druid Chapter  
Sunday, November 9th–December 21st (Winter Solstice)—Gaia Traditional

All Sunday activities take place at Shawnee Mission UU Church; 7725 W. 87th St.; Overland Park, KS (near 87th & Metcalf) and begin at 4 P.M. unless otherwise noted.

## SUNDAY SCHEDULE

With the new year, we'll be trying something new at Gaia Community—in the weeks leading up to each Sabbat, we'll be examining and learning from different pagan traditions. All of the classes and rituals in the “Chapter” leading up to that Sabbat will relate to that tradition. In this way, we hope to make your ritual experiences more meaningful every week, and especially on the High Holidays.

### **Sunday, November 2nd**

#### **Sabbat—Ar nDraiocht Samhuinn—A Druid Samhain**

Samhain, Samhuinn, Sauin...(but never SOM-HAIN), the very word conjures up pictures of jack-o-lanterns, ghosts, witches, and things that go \*bump\* in the night. This will be a costumed ritual, where you will be given the opportunity to dress as a favorite godden (god or goddess) or aspect of some power, in order to give praise offerings and honor to them and ask their blessing for the coming year in return. Start planning now what you will do for the start of the new year!

*As with all Sabbats, there will be a potluck meal following the ritual. Please bring enough to feed eight hungry people and remember to label your ingredients for those with dietary restrictions. Also, for the Earth's sake and in pursuit of our Green Sanctuary pledge, we ask that you not bring disposable dishes. There will be some few extra dishes for those who forget theirs; we could always use more to have in reserve, though!*

## GAIA TRADITIONAL RITUAL RETURNS

### **Sunday, November 9**

#### **Ritual—Coming Home**

We are returning to our traditions, returning after our long journey across many cultures. Let's unpack our 'bags' and share the gifts from our travels! For some new people, this will be as alien as the other Chapters, but believe us..."we've come home." A full Gaian ritual in all its grace and simplicity.

### **Sunday, November 16**

#### **Class—Excellence in Participation**

This class is a complement to our ritual teams' class, "Excellence in Ritual". This class is designed to give you further insight into how things work in ritual, and how to get the most out of any ritual experience—and how to help others, too!

### **Sunday, November 23**

#### **Ritual—The Flaming Chalice**

The symbol of the Unitarian Universalist Association has an amazing history and many beautiful meanings. Join us on the journey of the flaming chalice, not just in UUism, but in world mythology and Paganism as well!

### **Sunday, November 30**

#### **SOS—Commercial Break**

Holiday fever is kicking into high gear, and the pressure is on to Shop! Buy! Sell! It's time for a "Commercial Break"—meaning a break from the commercialism! Bring your stories, songs, ideas, tools, or just yourself as we take some time together to find our spiritual center in this busy time of year.

**MAY YOU NEVER HUNGER,  
MAY YOU NEVER THIRST.**

## WEAVE AND SPIN



### Splinters from the Board

From Nicole Turner, Secretary

Items of general interest from the October Ritual for Business included:



- *KidSpace*—Andrew announced that, due to increasing academic pressures, this will be his last year as Director of Children’s Programming (the December 2004 Children’s Dedication Ritual will be his “last hurrah”). He’s looking to beef up the KidSpace Committee in preparation for their increasing leadership role.
- *Winter Bazaar*—Planning is in full swing now, with vendors actually calling us to reserve their spots! The date is confirmed for Sunday, December 14th. Get in touch with Heather Ventura at wolfskitchen@sbcglobal.net or Nicole Turner (contact information below) if you’d like to be involved.

Rituals for Business are not simply board meetings. They’re open to all members and friends - the more, the merrier. Although actual voting is restricted to active membership, everyone’s voice is important. Please join us at SMUUC, downstairs in the Franklin/Jefferson Room for our next meeting: 9:30–11:30 A.M., Saturday, November 9th. Barbara Griggs will be facilitating, so get in touch (contact information below) if you want to add an item to the agenda. *Minutes from any Ritual for Business are available upon request.*



### Childcare Position:

We are looking for someone who likes kids. Quiet kids, rowdy kids all types of kids up to 4-years-old to provide childcare every Sunday and some Tuesdays evenings and Saturday Mornings as needed and as you are available. Experience with infants and toddlers is highly desired, as is infant/toddler CPR. A background check will be made. The pay is \$10/hr. contact Andrew Turner at agrnmn@kc.rr.com or 913-7069167.

### Gaia Community Board Members

President—Barbara Griggs bpmg@earthlink.net or 816-587-2350	<b>Members at Large</b> Collene Newby oedipus_the_doomed@yahoo.com or 913-221-3278
VP—Caroline Baughman carolineo@earthlink.net or 816-729-7112	Jacki Kelley opaljax@aol.com or 816-228-0018
Treasurer—David Reynolds naeblis@kc.rr.com or 816-941-7626	Jeff Park jpark2@kc.rr.com or 816-361-0465
Secretary—Nicole Turner saffronhare@kc.rr.com or 913-706-9159	

## WINTER BAZAAR!

It’s that time again. Yeah, it seems WAY too early to talk about Christmas—but here we are, gearing up for the return of Gaia Community’s annual Winter Bazaar. Mark your calendars for Sunday, December 14th for what promises to be another fabulous day of socializing and shopping (and fundraising too)! Last year’s extravaganza raised about \$1,500 for Gaia Community’s general fund, and we aim to do even better this year.

We’re already getting calls from vendors who want to be sure to reserve their spots. You won’t want to miss a minute of the jewelry (ooh! sparkly!), food (yummy yummy yummy) and assortment of Wonderful Other Stuff (mmmmassage?).

What’s that? You’re so excited about the Winter Bazaar that you want to help make it happen? Do we want to talk to you? You bet! Give Nicole Turner a call at 913-706-9159 or email her at saffronhare@kc.rr.com to get yourself on the volunteer list. (she’s bossy, but she’s good).

### Hear the roar! Feel the mist! See the mighty Falls! July 18-21, 2004

Come experience the wonder of Niagara Falls including some great educational opportunities while being taken care of like royalty. The UU Church of Niagara is conducting a four day UU Niagara Experience which is a lifetime opportunity to encounter the Falls up close from every prospective, even safely riding beneath a tethered balloon. Spend four days with us exploring the rich historical and natural wonders around the Falls. For information visit our web site :

<http://www.uunex.net/>  
Email : info@uunex.net  
Telephone : (716) 791-4453



### Vacation with UUs in South Florida!

S.W.I.M., the Southeast Unitarian Universalist Winter Institute, Inc., in Miami, is all about having fun in the warm Miami sunshine!

S.W.I.M.'s annual intergenerational retreat for UUs and like-minded kids of all ages happens every year from Dec 26th through Jan 1st. Play, laugh, sing, and celebrate New Year's Eve at S.W.I.M.!

S.W.I.M. offers outdoor adventures (including tours, hikes, rides, hot tubbing, and sailing), workshops (including crafts, spirituality, and personal growth), programming for youth, teens, and young adults, fantastic food, and a close-knit community of friends.

Join UUs from all over North America for a week of fun in the sun!

For more information, please visit us online at <http://www.swimuu.org>

S.W.I.M. is a member in good standing of CU2C2, the Council of Unitarian Universalist Camps & Conferences, an affiliate of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA).

Pepi Acebo  
Director-Elect of S.W.I.M. email to: info@swimuu.org  
(also Secretary of the Board of Trustees of UUCSV/  
Black Mountain)  
Black Mountain, NC 28711 USA  
cell phone (828) 776-7288

continued from page 1—To Love Alike

“creating sacred space,” at the beginning of almost every religious endeavor. Recently, I notice a shift to “acknowledging sacred space,” a phrase that seems to recognize a potential point of disagreement. When elements are involved, of course there is a question of which elements. And if I address Deity, am I invoking? Inviting? Or merely talking about?

I have the urge to seek some special verbal conventions—a sort of Pagan Political Correctness (PPC), if you will. Then I contemplate the mental specter of the diverse, lively, salty, self-expressed group that Gaia is, shackled into political correctness—and it seems highly unlikely. Yet of course, this is exactly how what is traditionally termed Political Correctness got its start—caring people seeking to refine their language so it would not inadvertently offend someone else. Is there an alternative?

I believe the answer starts with the words, “I believe.” If I recognize that the assumptions underlying my practices represent beliefs that others may or may not share, I am empowered to start any statement with “I believe...” “In my practice,” “the way I learned it,” or “In my tradition,” are other useful disclaimers to introduce an idea, suggestion, recommendation, request, or comment. It seems to me that by issuing this sort of disclaimer, I can both acknowledge to the listener that he or she may not agree with me about what I am about to say—and that’s okay with me—while I am simultaneously giving that person information about me that may be useful in future.

I can also see a compelling need for us within the community to *define our terms*. When consulting Webster’s, one notes that there are often many different definitions for the same word; and while they may have appended a designation such as “archaic” or “colloquial” one rarely sees a definition noted as “wrong.” A common language, or jargon, is one of the defining hallmarks of a group. There is a definite Gaia-ese that is our very own: “RfB” “EiR” and “Kidspace” are examples. Then there is another, broader language comprised of UU-ese and various pagan subgroups jargon. On the Gaiauu Listserv, recently people began tossing around the term “UPGs.” I was completely at sea until someone defined the term as “Unverified Personal Gnosticism.” It then emerged that not all of the people who had been using the term UPG agreed that it meant the same thing. There is clearly a huge potential for misunderstanding there. As a result, at the last Ritual for Business, the Ritual Teams were charged with creating a list of terms used in our ritual practice, with definitions. Our own dictionary will certainly be a start toward understanding each other better.

There are surely other appropriate “rules of etiquette” for creating an inclusive community, but perhaps the most important one would be that of listening to each other generously—also known as “thinking well of the group.” I refer to assuming, when someone speaks, that they have goodwill and good intentions. If what the person says seems to be hurtful, I have the option of assuming they did not mean it the way it sounded. If someone, for instance, refers to a belief or practice as being wrong or silly or whatever, and I personally hold that belief or use that practice, I can choose my reaction. I can become upset, feel hurt that they have disregarded me/my beliefs/my feelings, and then experience all the suffering that follows this train of thought. However, there are other options. I can choose to assume that they did not

actually mean it; that they have not given it thought; that they meant some slightly different belief or practice; or even that intelligent people are bound to disagree from time to time. (How many of us have friends or family members who are wonderful people whose religious beliefs are significantly different than ours, after all?) I can then choose to ignore or forget about it, or to ask the person to clarify what they meant; or explain where I stand.

We can help each other in this. You can remind me, when I am all upset about what “*he* said” or “*she* said,” that I have other choices of reactions. You can ask me if I feel strongly enough to speak—generously—to the other person; or if don’t care that much and would prefer to let it go. I can promise to do the same for you.

I firmly believe that it is in the listening that we can truly make ours a community where we need not believe alike to love alike.



## COMMUNITY CARES

### Joys and Concerns

Compiled with YOUR input.



Congratulations to . . .

- Terry and Nola on moving in together, and their new place. (yes...they are an item)
- Yeah for Vickie, the tumor in her breast is benign.

Heart felt wishes and healing to . . .

- Greta’s father in the hospital having heart problems.
- Debbie could use lots of hugs and support right now.

Peace & strength to . . .

- Friends who are rolling with the punches of unemployment and job searches.
- Those struggling with substance abuse and addiction.
- Those in our community experiencing the pain of divorce or separation.
- All of those people who are just running into some bad luck—have some good, positive energy.
- Lastly, kudos to the best Family Support Group ever!!! (no pun intended)

Happy Solar Return to people celebrating their birthday this month: ♃ & ♄

10–12: Sami Dozier (missed birthday...sorry)

11–29: David Reynolds

*Thanks Miki for providing birthdays. If we’ve missed you, clue us in again! Let Earth Healer know—earthhealer@gaiacommunity.org or 816-361-0465 or just sort of let the people at the greeter’s table know.*

And a special welcome to the folks who visited us for the first time recently:

Meri & Kat Fry; Beam boy-Nick

## GAIA AROUND TOWN—EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

### Family Support Night

[editor's note: Family Support Group may be evolving into a differently structured format...stay tuned for updates in weekly announcements and the yahoo e-list.]

**Voices of Gaia** We meet downstairs at SMUCh in the classroom with the keyboard from 7–8:30. Our primary focus will be preparation for our December 21st Winter Solstice carol sing, with some Samhain related music thrown in for good measure. If you have music selections for either of those holidays, please bring copies to share. We'll also continue to create sacred space in song.

Future meeting dates include November 20th and December 11th. Our normal meeting day will be the second Thursday of the month, but occasionally I have a staff meeting conflict and have to adjust the date. I would expect we'll schedule a few extra rehearsals in December to be ready for the carol sing.

Everyone who likes to sing is welcome to come to Voices of Gaia. We always welcome instrumentalists and drummers as well. If you have questions or comments, please contact me, Kitty Degler, at (913)469-8779 or songbird@kc.rr.com for more information.

### KidSpace Committee Meeting

Friday, November 14th, 7:00 P.M.

The KidSpace Committee Meeting is a place for all parents, kids at heart, and KidSpace volunteers to come together and discuss the future of our children. Plans for future activities, volunteer opportunities, dinner, and the direction of the future of KidSpace could all be on the agenda.

Come to the meeting or contact Andrew Turner, our Director of KidSpace Programming, for more information at agrmmn@kc.rr.com or (913) 706-9167.

### Games Night/Sacred Dance

Friday, November 21st, 7:00–10:00 P.M. at SMUCh

Games Night is a chance for gaians to get together for fun, frivolity, and food, and NO OFFICIAL BUSINESS allowed! (We're not kidding—the Games Guru has spoken on this.) Bring a game (or ten), bring a friend (or ten), or just bring yourself and a willingness to play and visit. Snacks are welcomed but not required, to help the gaming crowds keep up their strength!

Games Night now alternates with Sacred Dance on the 3rd Friday of the month. Sacred Dance is generally held downstairs and/or in the Barn Chapel, weather and activities permitting.

### Friday Night Supper Club

The fourth Friday of the month

Join your fellow Gaians for food, friendship, and frivolity. Kick back and stuff yourself silly! November's FNCS will not meet due to the fourth Friday is the day after Thanksgiving, but that doesn't mean we can't get together on another night. Check the weekly announcements and the e-list for possible spontaneous details. For more information contact Jeff Park at jpark2@kc.rr.com or 816-361-0465.

### Tuesday Night Adult Education

Join us this month on Tuesday nights from 7:00 to 8:30 for classes and trances! Our schedule for the month is:

#### WATER

- 11/4 Dwellers of the Deep Class
- 11/11 Sea Priestess; Stella Maris Trance
- 11/18 Isis; the Night Temple Class

#### WILL

- 11/25 Kindling the Vision Trance

Please RSVP to Caroline or Kimberly (adulted@gaiacommunity.com) if you are planning on attending any of these sessions—There is a requested fee of \$5 per week for non-members, \$3 for members to cover supplies and handouts.

Child care is available with advance notice—the fee for childcare is \$3 per child.

### From The Caring Committee

Starting the week after Samhain (November 9th), we will start the **Caring Committee Connection Circle**. We will meet every Sunday before Ritual. We will start at 2:30 P.M. This is a place to meet and talk. If you've had a bad week, and you need to talk about it, come on by. If you've had a good week, and need to shout it from the rooftops, come on by. If you just need to be with people, or whatever, come on by. We'll have coffee and tea, and if you'd like bring some food. Bring enough to share!

## THE JOURNEY TO ALANTIS RIDE

A real life experience  
by Mercedes MacDonald (age 8)

*The Journey to Alantis a harmless ride or terrifying? You decide.*

It was a nice, sunny day in Florida. My family and I went to Sea World. We were minding our own business when something caught our eye. It looked like a harmless ride. At first it was. We were floating along, having a good time when it happened. The mermaid's eyes glowed bright red. She said, "Now you've done it! You've made me angry! You and your friends are no longer welcome here!!" We felt the cold wind shiver down our backs. It got dark. It got fast. Then we saw her! When I saw her I felt a cold shiver down my back. All of a sudden it got colder, it got darker, we started to climb up, up, up! Then we stopped. I could see we were in trouble. Then whoosh!! We went flying down the hill, Splash! We hit the water. By this time I was really, really scared. It got even darker and colder. The wind started to howl, whoosh... Then we saw her again. She said, "Leaving so soon? I think not." It got really, really dark, we couldn't see a thing! We started to rock back and forth! Then WOOSH!!!! Down we flew! Down, down, down! Then SPLASH!!!! Finally the ride was over. I'll never ride that ride again!

So, Journey to Alantis, a harmless ride or terrifying? What did you decide



P.O. Box 45307  
 Kansas City, MO 64171-8303

*Address Correction Requested*

**SACRED RHYTHMS**  
 Sundays 3 pm  
 Bring your drums; Bring your shakers  
 Bring your heart, your feet and your hands  
 No previous experience needed

**CONNECTION CIRCLE**  
 Sundays 2:30 pm  
 Sponsored by the Caring Committee  
 Coffee, tea and a compassionate ear

**Contact Earth Healer**  
 Send letters, articles, poetry or prose, borrowed wisdom, comments and suggestions to: earthhealer@gaiiacommunity.org or by phone (number inside) no later than the 15th of each month.

**Save the Snails**  
 Please tell us if you are receiving duplicate copies of *Earth Healer*, if we're getting your name/address wrong or if you prefer to receive the newsletter by email. Let us hear from you before the December *Earth Healer*.



November 2003						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
SR 3 pm Ritual Samhain Potluck-4 pm 2	3	Adult RE— 7-8:30 4	5	Ritual Teams Meeting 6:45 pm 6	7	Ritual of Business 9:30 am 8
SR 3 pm Ritual Coming Home 4 pm 9	Deadline for EH submissions 10	Trance— 7-8:30 p.m. 11	12	13	KidSpace 7 pm 14	15
SR 3 pm Class Excellence in Participation 4 pm 16	17	Adult RE— 7-8:30 18	19	Voices of Gaia 7 pm 20	Sacred Dance/Games Night 7 pm 21	22
Ritual Flaming Chalice SOS Commercial Break 4 pm 23	24	Trance— 7-8:30 p.m. 25	26	Thanksgiving 27	FNSC 7 pm Not Meeting 28	29