

***I explain why after decades of involvement in both the UU and Pagan movements why I still considers myself to be a UU Pagan.***

## **Why I am Still a UU Pagan**

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In my spiritual practice, I am drawn to creative expression that utilizes drama, psychology, symbols, art, music and philosophy. Identifying as a Unitarian Universalist Pagan involves me in a community with others who appreciate eclectic, passionate approaches to spiritual inquiry and practice. Here I can shape my spiritual orientation without being bound by required practices or dictated beliefs. The Unitarian Universalist Principles summarize my beliefs accurately without limiting my spiritual journey. This is why I am still a UU Pagan.

In UUism there is a flexibility of form that appeals to me. Over the last thirty plus years, I have taken leadership positions in several congregations, UU Pagan ritual groups, organizations concerned with issues related to feminist spiritual and social perspectives, and racial equality. Currently I primarily follow UU internet presentations, blogs and respond to calls to action. Each of these forms of relating has given me a sense of empowerment coupled with connection.

The chalice is the one religious symbol we share. Its artistic representations are many and varied, which enhances its meaning and usefulness for me.



Hans Deutsch, an Austrian artist, first brought together the chalice and the flame as a Unitarian symbol when he was working with the Unitarian Service Committee during World War II. For several years I served as a Regional Volunteer Coordinator for the UUSC in Northern California, which gives me a personal connection to this symbol. Also, *The Chalice and The Blade* by Riane Eisler pointed out the prominence of the chalice in pre-patriarchal Goddess traditions, one of the ancestral strands I incorporate

in my own Paganism. Other Unitarian Universalists see their own particular beliefs and practices in this symbol, making the chalice a unifying image.

Creative ritual is something that is prominent in UU Paganism. My theatrical side appreciates the opportunity to develop unique expressions using a variety of artistic

mediums. In *Rise Up & Call Her Name*, I crafted creative rituals for each session which invite participants to explore their own views of spirituality. Judging from the many groups that have used the course, there is a significant desire among contemporary Unitarian Universalists to fashion meaningful rituals that also honor earth-based traditions.

The thoroughly American philosophical movement known as Transcendentalism has been a part of my spiritual orientation since my high school English classes in Northern Ohio in the early 1960s. The perspectives articulated by these free thinkers for me are natural antecedents to modern UU Paganism. Ralph Waldo Emerson's comments about the *Oversoul* had a major impact on me. This concept suggests there is a spiritual presence that provides a web-like structure...an interconnectedness...which, when fully felt, dissolves the illusion of isolation. This is the "sacred circle of life" named in the sixth source of inspiration in the Unitarian Universalist Principles.

Incorporating women honoring religious imagery into both my individual and collective spiritual practices has been a central feature of my UU paganism, which I have been able to successfully share with others throughout the UU Spiritual community. I want to especially honor here the female deity Hecate (also spelled Hekate) because many traditions honor her on August 13<sup>th</sup> at the *Feast of Hecate*. I first met the female deity Hecate in 1971 in the book *Women's Mysteries: Ancient and Modern – A Psychological Interpretation of the Feminine Principle as Portrayed in Myth, Story, and Dreams* by M. Esther Harding. (See my earlier column [Honoring the Dark, Part 3](#))

I also knew Hekate as the Cosmic Soul which reminded me of Emerson's *Oversoul*. I consult Hekate when I need guidance. I experience this as my inner voice that speaks the truth accurately. I feel Her as protection allowing me to be my authentic self. I shape my own ways of honoring Her which can be simple, done anytime, anywhere.

Harding, a Jungian Psychologist, also made me aware that Hecate was especially honored at the times of the dark moon. She points out that love and healing are associated with the dark moon. On August 13<sup>th</sup>, Hecate is honored in Greece with offerings left at crossroads, places symbolizing several possible outcomes, asking Her to control devastating storms. This year, August 13 is a dark moon, making it an especially relevant time for all of us to remember the challenges that are facing Greece economically, a time to ask for Hecate's assistance.

My spiritual beliefs tell me that what happens in Greece will impact each of our own lives in some way. Those of us who feel the *common good* is a sacred trust, and who believe in interconnection, social suffering that can be averted is morally wrong. Wealth belongs to those who actively seek to assure the common good.

I am still a UU Pagan, then, because of the outlook expressed in the Purposes and Principles, which include:

- Individual search for truth and meaning
- Intellectual sharing and inquiry
- Emphasis on love, not dogma
- Interconnection and mutual appreciation

I honor this sense of a natural system that is interconnected (our Seventh Principle.) The other Principles inform my personal and social commitments. I use the symbols I choose to help me create: a psychological state of well-being; a philosophical outlook that supports social justice; a theatrically stimulating experience that gives me symbols I can reference; and artistic beauty that is nourishing to me. I also want to count myself as a participant in the spiritually and ethically motivated collective actions for equality, peace and interconnectedness that Unitarian Universalism is known for and that my Paganism features.

