Covenant of the Goddess
Newsletter

Picture by Valerie Johnstone

Beltane 2021
Volume 46
Number 4
As is consistent with the values and beliefs of our religion, the Covenant affirms our belief in the spiritual and social wisdom of peace in the world. We aspire to stand in fellowship with the people of all religions, cultures, and ethnicities in our shared desire for peace. We do this for the sake of our shared love of the Earth and all living things that dwell upon it.
MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS due at LITHA

Litha renewals are due on **June 21, 2021**. The Drop-dead date is **July 1, 2021** after which your membership will lapse and you will need to reapply. Renewal forms are emailed to the email address on file from your last renewal. If you have NOT received this form, please contact the National Membership Officer immediately (membership@cog.org).

**CALAFIA LOCAL COUNCIL:** None

**CHAMISA LOCAL COUNCIL:**
- Circle of the Winter Moon
- Coven of the Silver Moon

**EVERGLADES MOON LOCAL COUNCIL:**
- Dragonwhisper Coven
- Lord Gwydion
- Silver Sanctuary Coven
- Spiraling Heart Coven

**HILLS AND RIVERS LOCAL COUNCIL:**
- Circle of Diana
- Grove of the Ancient River

**NORTHERN CALIFORNIA LOCAL COUNCIL:** None

**ORANGE COUNTY LOCAL COUNCIL:** None

**SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA LOCAL COUNCIL:** None

**TEXAS LOCAL COUNCIL:**
- Circle of the Wild Wood

**TOUCHSTONE LOCAL COUNCIL:** None

**NATIONAL COVENS:**
- Temple of the Amethyst Moon

**NATIONAL INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS:**
- Frodo
- Scott Rhodes
- Susannah Faith

**FRIENDS OF CoG:** None

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Our Governing Board

- National First Officer – Lord Verderius
- National Purse Warden – Manny
- Calafia Representative – Catherine
- Chamisa – Tiffany B.
- Everglades Moon – Raven
- Hills & Rivers – Lauren T.
- Northern California – Thea Bristlebroom
- Orange County – Janine
- Southern California – Monica / Lady Mariah
- Texas – Orin
- Touchstone – Lord Soec
- National Covens – Lord Solandrin
- National Individual Members – Grace Moonhawk

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Letter from The First Officer

Joyous greetings dear CoG Members,

Here we are once more celebrating the joyous reunion of the Goddess and God. We mark this sacred time of year with the Balefires that help rekindle our hearts and usher in the warmth of the Summer Season. As the May Queen covers the earth in her mantle of greenery and new growth, we look forward to the time we can safely gather together, as the pandemic slowly comes to an end.

I am pleased to report that the Governing and Executive boards have met and discussed things of importance to the Covenant as we plan to host another Virtual Grand Council this year, due to Covid restriction in California. Additionally, we feel that this is in the best interest of the membership of the Covenant as well. We believe that it is far safer to host another virtual Grand Council this year, versus our members are required to travel to an area still dealing with issues related to this pandemic.

We will be releasing more information on our plans for the virtual Grand Council in the coming weeks. Additionally, we will be seeking the candidacy of several national officer positions for the coming year. Many current national officers will be finishing up their terms, so if you are interested in fulfilling one of these important positions, please let your intentions be known to the Executive board and the overall membership.

One final note, since travel and many other forms of gathering have temporarily ceased, I am happy to acknowledge the continued efforts of our Interfaith Reps, who are still working on maintaining the Covenant’s presence and relevance amongst other notable religions. We are blessed to have this dedicated group of Interfaith Reps working diligently on CoG’s behalf during these challenging times. Special thanks goes out to Don, Macha, Rachel and Rowan for the continued work on behalf of the Covenant for the yearly appointed term of 2020-2021.
As we proceed through the balance of this year, may the coming months grow brighter and healthier, so we may all come together for future ritual celebrations and fellowship. Be safe and well my dear friends until we gather together again....

I am wishing you all Bright and Joyous Beltane Blessings!!!

Most Merrily,
Lord Verderius

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

FIRST OFFICER

See Board minutes below.

SECOND OFFICER

At the March COG-OCLC meeting, we discussed the pros and cons of doing a virtual MerryMeet in August. The consensus was that we will not host a virtual MerryMeet this year, but will instead propose to host a social event the evening before Grand Council. More details will be forthcoming. OCLC will submit an updated proposal to host MerryMeet in a future year.

Morgana RavenTree

PURSEWARDEN

CURRENT ASSETS

- Chase Main Account: $89,047.08
- Wells Fargo Interfaith Checking: $5,585.62
- PayPal Account: $2,459.11
- Synchrony: $33,102.60 (as of 12/31/2020)

CURRENT ISSUES/UPDATES

- Federal and State Tax returns were submitted on 3/12/2021.
- IRS still shows no updates since November 2020
- Note: We will owe payment to our accountant ($1,000).
- PO Box Renewed on Manny’ Amex.
- PayPal reported a possible fraud by non-US verified account. Jordan Lewans (jordan.c.lewans@tutanota.de) for US$25.
- These must be addressed immediately to avoid fees. I refunded the transaction and noted “We explained this was a donation to our religious organization. It seems that was unintended so issuing a refund.”

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

Our Marketing & Outreach team continues its promotion of CoG, our activities, and making strides their communities using their digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and others. Thank you to all those digital members and their PIOs. Great job!

Monthly Mail Chimp email promotes events and activities taking place around CoG. As an email it is sent to all members who have provided emails to the Membership Officer. Thank you Brandon for making sure to post the Mail Chimp Calendar the first of each month.

The first Wednesday with Witches in March was held on March 3rd as a public event. We discussed Goddess worship and what that means to those in attendance.

Our next Wednesday with Witches was Members Only, held March 17th. Those that attended were energized and engaged in our discussions for the evening. We began the evening with reflections of Ostara and its meaning to each of us. We also reached out to the Members in attendance to suggest Magickal and Occult books so we could begin our update of CoG’s [existing] Book List.

As one of M&O Team’s identified projects, CoG Members and Friends provided a list of over 20 current books and shared their comments and reflections on each book. We identified initial categories: Basic Craft, Sabots & Estates, Rites of Passage, Divination, Clergy, Herbs, Crystals, Traditions and Biographies that we will use to categorize the books suggested by our members. We will continue to compile current books and provide reviews throughout 2021; even post some of our suggested titles on social media. Our next list will be YouTube videos, music, chants, and podcasts from our Magickal community that our members have enjoyed and follow monthly.

At the end of March a statement was written on the Atlanta shooting of Asian Americans. It can be found on the CoG website.

Two graphics have been created for “Save the Date” for CoG’s Grand Council Virtual Meeting in August. Once we have finalized the images, one or both can be used throughout membership websites and in Mail Chimp to remind members of our upcoming event.

We are reviewing options for placing ads in Witches & Pagans e-zine and hard copy as well as other Pagan and Wiccan widely published magazines. Any fees will be paid through using our Marketing budget.
Beltane 2021

PUBLICATIONS OFFICER

Beltane is here. That wonderful time between Spring and Summer when the grass is just turning green and everything is getting ready to sprout forth. This is the time we celebrate anew that we are here and alive. We are looking forward to the year. Especially with Covid on the decline, we can start to look at seeing one another again physically. The chance to physically touch once again thrills us all, and yet we are still tentative about it for the fear is still there. Let us embrace the coming of normalcy as we embrace each other this Beltane.

As always, please send any articles, poetry or minutes to newsletter@cog.org. If you have an obituary for Beyond the Veil, training material, or past MerryMeet rituals for the website (or anything else really) please send it to cogweb@cog.org.

CORRESPONDENCE OFFICER

See Board minutes below.

NATIONAL RECORDER

See Board minutes below.

NATIONAL OUTREACH OFFICER

Happy April everyone! We are planning a Next Generation Summit so that we can learn from young adult Pagans about their journey and the future of Paganism. Our theme is “keeping the flame alive.” Blaine Proctor and I have begun planning this, and so far we are looking for a guest speaker to present an hour long workshop of some kind on this subject, and we would have about an hour long panel of young adult Pagans that we talked about if we can find enough that are a part of CoG for young adult Pagans interested in sharing their experiences about finding their way to this path. We also want to plan to do a ritual of some kind, as this will be near the Summer Solstice, and this can be facilitated by our guest speaker. So far, we have a young adult guest speaker/Pagan author named Gede Parma who may be interested in speaking at our event and is pending approval from our marketing and outreach team.

I would like to request our governing board representatives to bring this information to their local councils to see if any of their young adult members and friends would be interested in being on the panel discussion, or interested in presenting a workshop on the subject. The discussion topics will revolve around: How you found your way on your path, successful ways to grow your Pagan/CoG communities, what your community is doing to “keep the flame alive,” ways to improve CoG, and other topics related to our theme.

I want to give a big thank you to our marketing and outreach team for your support. You can also view Janine’s PIO report for more specifics and trends on our marketing and outreach campaign. Blessed be.

WELCOME TO COG

Please welcome:

- Ryan Coe, Chamisa AoIM
- Breila, Texas AoIM
- Kela Datura, Texas AoIM

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE & GOVERNING BOARD MINUTES

~April 4, 2021~

Meeting was called to order at 7 after the hour. Verderius invoked Coventina.

Roll Call – (Quorum is two-thirds present): The Recorder announced we have Quorum. 6 of 9 National Officers and 7 of 11 Local Councils are represented by Governing Board Reps.

National Officers:
- First Officer: Lord Verderius – Present
- Second Officer: Morgana – Present
- Membership Officer: Lady K – Absent
- Publications Officer: Lord Soec – Absent
- Pursewarden: Qabal – Present
- Public Information Officer: Janine N. – Present
- Outreach Officer: Brandon Proctor – Present
- Correspondence Officer: Grace Moonhawk – Absent
- Recorder: Faelind – Present

Governing Board Representatives:
- Calafia LC – Catherine – Absent
- Chamisa LC – Polaris / Alt: Lady K – Present
- Everglades Moon LC – Raven (Debby) / Alt: Lord Rieken – Present
- Hills & Rivers LC – Lauren / Alt: Jamie D. – Absent
- Northern California LC – Thea / Alt: Deborah B.
- Orange County LC – Janine / Alt: Morgana – Present
- Southern California LC – Lady Mariah / Alt: Lisa M. – Present
- Texas LC – Orin / Alt: Willow McKenna – Present
- Touchstone LC – Lord Soec – Absent
- National Covens – Lord Solandrin – Present
- National Individual Members – Grace Moonhawk – Absent
- Linnea from NCLC attending for Thea and Deborah
Officer Reports:

First Officer (Lord Verderius): Had just finished reports for the Ostara newsletter so did not submit another one.

Second Officer (Morgana): Please see full report on page 3. As noted in her report, OCLC had their LC meeting and decided not to do a Virtual MerryMeet this year but will host a COGtail party on the Friday before Grand Council weekend to kick off GC. It will most likely begin at 4:00 PM Pacific time/7:00 PM Eastern time. More to come.

Membership Officer (Dee): No Report.


Pursewarden (Qabal): Please see full report on page 3. Qabal added information about the alleged fraud on the PayPal account. PayPal was the one who reached out and wondered if it was fraud, so the money was refunded as there was no note on the donation received. Qabal sent a note to the email address (from Germany) and cc’d PayPal to ensure that both the sender and PayPal know that we are a religious organization so would not know if a donation were fraudulent or not.

The PO Box with USPS does not do well with the CoG Debit Card, so Qabal must pay with his own Credit Card. He just wants to make sure that the incoming Pursewarden/Accountant and incoming Boards understand this. The CoG Debit card fails when trying to pay the USPS PO Box.

Public Information Officer (Janine): Please see full report on page 3. Janine added a summary of the Marketing and Outreach Meeting and discussed the great discussions on our Wednesday with Witches meetings. She has sent out the recommended book list to get member reviews. The theme for the public Wednesday with Witches is Restore Our Earth in preparation for Earth Day. She also published a statement against the shooting of and hatred toward Asian Americans. She has also published a statement against the shooting of and hatred toward Asian Americans. She has provided to the Webweaver but does not know if it is on the website yet.

Outreach Officer (Brandon): Please see full report on page 4. Brandon spoke about the Next Generation Summit with the theme, “Keeping the Flame Alive” to be held on June 19th. He has reached out to a young adult author but has not heard back yet. Verderius asked whether the author was through Llewellyn as he could reach out to Heather for recommendations too if Brandon doesn’t hear back soon.

Brandon requested the GB Reps communicate with their constituencies to find young members who would like to be on a Panel. The discussion topics will revolve around: How you found your way on your path, successful ways to grow your Pagan/CoG communities, what your community is doing to “keep the flame alive”, ways to improve CoG, and other topics related to our theme.

Lord Solandrin asked what ages and or qualifications for the Panel and Brandon suggested anyone under the age of 35 or 40 and there were no qualifications. They do not need to be Priests or Priestesses or even members of CoG, though that is preferred. Faelind asked how we should put forward someone for the panel. We can send an email to the candidate and Brandon to introduce them and let Brandon take it from there.

Verderius asked about how we planned to market the Summit. Brandon said he would be working with Janine to create some “Save the Date” marketing ads for Social Media to start getting the word out and could begin firming up ads once a guest speaker has been identified.

Brandon says everyone is invited. You don’t have to be a young adult to attend, and he hoped that we would all attend.

Correspondence Officer (Grace Moonhawk): No Report.

Recorder (Faelind): These minutes are my report.

Governing Board Rep Reports:

Calafia LC: No report.

Chamisa LC: Polaris noted that a local Coven had such a large response from all over the country to a Wicca 101 outreach call that the Local Council is seeking for contacts to help the seekers find Covens or study in their areas. Polaris will provide a list of folks who need connections. Verderius is hoping that Brandon and he can connect with them at the least to encourage them to attend the Summit and perhaps find LCs they can connect with.

Magical Mountain Mabon will be virtual this year.

Everglades Moon LC: They are hoping that the December Turning the Tide will be in person this year. As of June 1st, the location for Turning the Tide will be taking reservations. Florida is opening up the vaccinations to all over 18.

Hills and Rivers LC: No report.

Northern California LC: Linnea reported that though Thea has not thoroughly tested Groups IO, she has set up a separate account and they use it in NCLC. Thea feels very comfortable with it.

Orange County LC: Janine noted that they had their first virtual workshop on “Candle Magic” and learned some technical things to improve on. Their next virtual workshop will be in May on “Magic in the Mundane” and they may even schedule the “Candle Magic” class again as they had some technical glitches. Morgana added that they will have their VIRTUAL Psychic Faire the first weekend in June.
so anyone across the country can attend and get a reading. They will provide the information to Brandon for the "What's Happening in CoG" email blast that goes out each month.

**Southern California LC:** SCLC had their last meeting in February. Lady Mariah has reached out to SoCal members regarding the survey but has not had any response yet.

**Texas LC:** Orin asked about an email a Local Council member sent about the Panera Bread employee getting fired for being Pagan. CoG would not comment on a legal case but once the facts are out, we might consider joining Lady Liberty League and Circle Sanctuary to write an Amicus Brief (Latin for "friend of the court," a party or an organization interested in an issue which files a brief or participates in the argument in a case in which that party or organization is not one of the litigants).

**Touchstone LC:** No report.

**National Covens:** Still waiting to work with Verderius and Lady K to work with the National Covens. Verderius will connect with Lady K to schedule.

**National Individual Members:** No Report.

**Old Business:**

**Groups IO:** Since Thea is out, the testing for a new way to communicate using Groups.IO will be delayed. Thea asked for a list of names of those who wanted to be in the testing group. Janine and Lord Verderius will help. Faelind remembers that Grace Moonhawk said she might help as well but Grace is not present to confirm.

Thea suggested, if anyone has strong preferences for or against a specific type of service they would (or would not) want to see in our email services, please feel free to send her an email. That way she can see to it that she specifically looks at it during the review.

Officers raised concerns about using a Third Party:

- Privacy
- Data Breaches
- Lack of Control

**Verderius will call a meeting** with Canu, Faelind, and Orin to discuss the following items:

- Assistant NetCo
- Email forward lists for the National Officers and Governing Board Reps
- Some kind of email service – either forwards, groups, a service, or something that we control so it is not a third party – Services such as A Small Orange brought up by Manny. Orin mentioned that the backend for the site supports email with CPanel. Need to discuss and determine cost. We may want to bring a proposal to forward to Grand Council.
- Create new email to be directed/forwarded to Deborah named MilitaryLComm@cog.org

**New Business:**

**Lack of Communication:** Several Officers noted the lack of communication among the Covenant membership and do not think Groups.IO is the answer for the Covenant. Many of us realize the Forums are also not the answer for the membership either. Many are feeling disconnected. We need to look into an email service on our own server to be able to control it. Will determine cost after meeting with Canu and hopefully have a solution to present at Grand Council.

Verderius made a plea that to help us communicate with each other, please attend the Wednesday with Witches as it is a way to get to see each other and meet new people. He encouraged the Governing Board Reps to please attend and tell their constituencies as well. We’ve had a lot of new people join the public meetings and it helps to have more CoG members on the call. Janine mentioned the events are on facebook so please share these. Raven shared to her LC and her own page. These are held on the First and Third Wednesdays of each month.

**Discuss Grand Council/MerryMeet – August 14 and 15, 2021:** OCLC does not want to do a virtual MerryMeet and wondered if any other LC would be submitting a proposal for upcoming years. They do want to do a LIVE MerryMeet in some upcoming year. The VIRTUAL CoGTail Party to kick off Grand Council will be held on the Friday the 13th before GC this year. OCLC hopes to keep the CoGTail Party loose and unstructured and have been discussing things they could do. Platforms like Kahoot where members can play games were discussed and they plan to have an opening statement from the First Officer with an Invocation and then time to network. When we did the Virtual 45th Anniversary Party, Lady K had set up questions with give-aways and perhaps we could do that again. Morgana asked if anyone had any other ideas for the CoGTail Party to please send them to her.

Many attendees noted that lots of folks have Zoom fatigue so a virtual MerryMeet and/or Leadership Institute is just not desirable. GC on Zoom will be enough.

Chamisa hopes to see GC occur on a weekend instead of a weekday. Verderius noted that in the Ostara newsletter (Lord Solandrin confirmed the Ostara newsletter is on the website), he states that we are planning to hold GC over two days on the weekend (Saturday and Sunday) for just 6 hours a day in his Sabbat Letter to the Covenant.

Qabal mentioned that we might need to begin thinking about never holding GC as an in-
person meeting again. Physical GC is not cost effective. MerryMeet should be in person, but not GC. Many businesses have learned over this Pandemic year that business can be done differently. Virtual is the easiest, fastest, and least expensive way to conduct business.

We will begin planning for Grand Council management and roles in upcoming meetings.

Call for Additions to the Agenda:

Questions from Oberon: Can another 'couple' in one household write the letter for another couple in one household.

Or do I / we need to write separate ones? I guess we, the Banshee and me, are sorta one vote/voice.

Any other tips would be nice. It’s been a long time since I had the opportunity to write (Moonfire coven in Michigan about 5 or 6 years ago.)

Officers and GB Reps agreed that Oberon and Banshee could each provide letters for the other couple. Oberon could write one for “Jane” and one for “Bob”, and Banshee could write one for “Jane” and one for “Bob” if “Jane” and “Bob” are both joining as Individuals.

Officer Reports

First Officer: Alpandia- Things have been in upheaval in my life personally and work-wise (thus the lateness of our first 2021 meeting) Other than coordinating the vote of our new Pursewarden, I have extended offers of assistance to our CoGKin in TX hit by their massive winter storm.

Second Officer: Marla Roberson - Covid obviously hit our plans to do any kind of retreat in 2020. My proposal for 2021 is that we do 3 to 4 mini retreats / gatherings cumulating in our annual meeting in the fall. For the gatherings of less than 10 people....so we can still socially distance... I would propose hikes in the Everglades, Bok Tower, and Devils Millhopper. With these spread around the state, different Moonies could gather and fellowship. If we like this idea, I will start a list of dates to see who wanted to do what group. The intention is not that you do ALL the gatherings but rather have some time with fellow Moonies.

Third Officer: Diana - Public Information Officer, Assembly of Solitaries, Devya - Assembly of Solitaries, Kasha - Assembly of Solitaries, Rayna - BeachFyre Coven

Group opened with prayer to Coventina.

Board Discussion & Vote on new Pursewarden: Rayna advised the board that she needed to step down as Pursewarden and suggested Raven take over in her place. Due to this mid-term resignation, the board discussed her recommendation and approved Raven as our new Pursewarden by unanimous consensus.

Action Items:

Verderius will call a meeting with Canu, Faelind, and Orin to discuss items under Old Business.

Meeting Adjourned: Meeting adjourned after 90 minutes, our shortest one yet!

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

~ No report

Last published minutes in the Ostara 2021 edition.

LOCAL COUNCILS

CALAFIA

~ No report

Last published minutes in the Yule 2020 edition.

CHAMISA

~ No report

Last published minutes in the Ostara 2021 edition.
end up as a Friend of COG once she mails in a Statement of Practice. She is also going to try to get a letter of recommendation from someone “known to COG” as Lady K explained it to her, and then she has a year to get her second letter from someone in EMLC. It’s a bit backwards from how people usually apply, but we are working with her. She’s in Bonita Springs and I’ve asked Lady Tanit if she can assist her in finding contacts in her area. I will also invite her to our meetings so we can get to know her.

At this time we have 7 member covens, and 12 individual members, and 1 friend of COG [woman who writes for Patheos] and 1 pending Friend of COG.

Remember if anyone needs any help with membership renewals, credentials, or applications, please contact me. I’m happy to help!

Blessings of Spring,
Lady Bridget

Publications Officer: Cat- No Report
Public Information Officer: Diana- No Report, however discussion about the duties of PIO and how each PIO approaches this position differently. Diana will potentially solicit content for the EMLC website from Witches & Wiccans, though they do not have to be EMLC members.

Pursewarden: Raven.....newly elected PW. - have access to the Paypal account, and am working with Rayna and Manny to be added as a signatory on the PNC account. There is currently $3650.65 in the Paypal account, with $5839.61 in the PNC account.

Recorder: Ceos - Last minutes submitted by Recorder were for the 10/18/20 meeting.

Old Business
What EMLC ers are doing:

- Ceos, no update. Still has 27 cats, 1 dog. Arts & Services Page...send info to Alpandia. If anyone is offering services, send to us....Tarot reading, astrology, handfasting, passings, Reiki....counseling.

- Cat: I’m still centrally located. New move to Deerfield Beach, FL.

- Rayna: I am working / overseeing with Faery Overseership. This work was one factor of why I stepped down from PW. I will send to Arts & Services Page.

Report from LC representatives to National Board: Raven & Lord Riekin as 2nd.

Raven: Last meeting was missed due to scheduling (neither Raven nor Riekin attended). Term is up September, 2021. CoG has an active Facebook, and is coordinating “Wednesday with Witches” weekly zooms.

Turning the Tide 2021? 2020 TTT was virtual and well received. All videos have been added to our YouTube channel for anyone who missed them. (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFQTtd1JUCCjeceWBHILAyA)

Uncertainty with Covid as to when Greynolds may start accepting reservations, or if we want to continue at Greynolds or look at other locations.

Rayna will follow-up with Greynolds to see what their current status is. Ceos will reach out to the Phoenix Center for Healing (Miami Dade/Redlands) to see if they are a possible alternative site.

Discussion about covid concerns, including implementing mask requirements, temperature checks, etc. at events to ensure safety of everyone who attends.

Request from Ceos (seconded by Kasha and agreed to by all) that the next in-person TTT needs to be a royal, over the top event.

Fundraising and Outreach
Suggestion to look into Masks with either the EMLC logo or witchy themes. Beachfyre has gaiters they made with the BeachFyre logo. Marla will put out to the EMLC list to see about artists who may be able to create graphics for these items. Rayna will send Marla the source BeachFyre used for their gaiters.

Alpandia suggested using Zoom to host a virtual psychic house party, and will research this idea to bring it to the board by the next meeting.

Local Council timeline
Anyone with dates, ideas, blurbs, pictures about the EMLC timeline please send to Alpandia via email: pandie@gmail.com

New Business - None
Next meeting: Saturday, April 24, 2021. Gather: 12:30 pm, Start @ 1 pm.
Meeting adjourned at 11:45am with Prayer to Coventina.

HILLS AND RIVERS
~ No report
Last published minutes in the Lammas 2020 edition.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA
~ No report
Last published minutes in the Ostara 2021 edition.
Invocation: Mary opened the meeting with the invocation.

Roll Call:

Covens/Solitaries:
*Bran Faol Reannag (BFR) – represented by Janine
*Celtic Circle of Wisdom – represented by Mary and Lilith
*Dream Walkers of Delos – represented by Ravenhawk
*Ghostwheel – represented by Morgana RavenTree
*Greenwood Glen – represented by Pam and Camille
*Rev. Dee – Solitary

Approval of Minutes: Minutes of February meeting were approved by consensus.

Officer Reports:

First Officer – Pam: no report.

Second Officer – Camille: After looking into various fundraising possibilities it looks like our best option is the proposed workshops. Further discussion under Old Business below.

Membership Officer - (Pam Acting): Rev. Dee is interested in renewing as a coven (Lyceum of Isis of Auset Hauhet) instead of remaining a solitary. Pam advised Dee to send in a new application as a coven.

Pursewarden – Mary (Lilith trainee): Our bank account has a balance of $4,764.94. We have $95.00 in petty cash and our Paypal account has a balance of $287.64 for a total of $5,147.61.

Public Information Officer – Ravenhawk: since last month, our Twitter account has had a net loss of 7 (from 128) because the PIO blocked 15 bots. Our Facebook reach remains the same (2,511). The Candle Magic workshop has been posted to the OCLC website.

Recorder – Morgana: Morgana will send the January and February minutes to the Newsletter together for the Ostara issue. (note: newsletter deadline is 10 days before the Sabbat, so March minutes will go into the next issue).

Governing Board Representative Report: Representative – Janine: At the National Board meeting we discussed looking into Group IOs for email since we no longer use lists. We should check with our members to make sure everyone is able to access forums. If not, please contact Janine or Canu. Janine can also forward emails to Orin or Faelind who are helping with the back-end. There is now a military committee.

Old Business:

Fundraising: Lilith is unable to continue looking into this issue and Camille agreed to take it forward. The classes appear to be our best bet.

MerryMeet in 2021: Hosting a virtual MerryMeet was one of the main subjects of discussion at the most recent National Board meeting. As explained in Morgana’s National Second Officer report to the National Board, holding a virtual event in 2021 is problematic because a) the technical issues will place an undue burden on the few people who can put together such an event, b) we are planning to invite some distinguished individuals to present at MerryMeet and doing so this year may diminish the value of doing the same when we hold a live event, and c) vendor promotion will be problematic and require much extra work. Therefore, we need to make a decision now if we want to have a virtual event or not. After further discussion, OCLC decided by consensus that we will not have a virtual event in 2021, but will present an updated proposal at MerryMeet 2021 (regardless of whatever other local councils also submit proposals).

New Business:

Opening night get-together before Grand Council: Janine proposed an online social meeting the Friday night before Grand Council. It will be casual and people can come and go. It will be an occasion for people to connect with each other socially. Possibly we could still use break out rooms if groups form. We could have music, maybe some entertainment. It would be promoted on member sites only. We may consider having a registration link (so we can screen and track the attendees).

- Psychic Faire: Virtual Psychic Faire – June 5th & 6th
  - Mostly the same line up as the December 2020 Virtual Psychic Faire
  - We should post a “save the date” announcement soon
  - Promote event on website and social media no later than May 1st
  - Janine suggested Ravenhawk keep in mind the Mailchimp that goes out every month and post the event to the COG Calendar; he should contact Stachia about that
  - Janine suggested some of the readers should join Wednesday with Witches June 2nd to promote the event, and
  - We should encourage people who want to set up multiple sessions to use PayPal instead of credit cards to avoid some of the problems we had last time

Zoom workshop: The schedule for the upcoming workshops is:
• Wednesday March 31st 7:00pm - 9:00pm PT
  Candle Magick with Janine
• May Magic in the Mundane with Mary
• July Magical Salts with Janine
• Sept Witches Pantry with Lilith
• Nov Gris Gris, Mojo Bags, & Medicine Bags with Rev. Dee

Meeting Adjourned: There being no further business Mary gave the closing blessing and the meeting was adjourned. Next meeting: Thursday April 8th 7:00pm

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

~February 3, 2021~

Covens Attending:
• The Circle of The Dragon & the Phoenix: Tom; Monica
• Ashesh Hekat: Linda B.
• Dragon’s Weyr Circle: Lisa; Stone; Jenna

OFFICERS REPORTS

First Officer (Tom): The Council would like to extend our condolences and prayers of solace to Paula of Ashesh Hekat and to her family upon the death of her stepfather yesterday. Normally she and Doug would both be at this meeting. Thanks to Linda for stepping up in their stead tonight.

Membership (Doug): Absent due to bereavement; no report. Lisa needs to connect with Doug regarding credentials for an initiate of hers.

Pursewarden (Monica): All Pursewarden reports have been completed and submitted in a timely manner to date.

There was no financial activity during the past quarter. Monica was supposed to spend a few dollars on office supplies to reactivate the checking account so that it wouldn’t be escheated. She hasn’t done that yet, but she will soon. She reminded everyone that they can a copy of the bank statement from her just for the asking.

PIO/Correspondence (Lisa): Nothing much to report. Likes on the Facebook page continue to grow. Lisa asked who the sclc@cog.org email address gets directed to. Nobody is sure, but Monica will find out who to ask so that we can make Lisa the focal point of that email. Lisa said she thinks she will need to contact the Netco.

Recorder (Monica): These Minutes are my report. They will be sent to the National Newsletter Editor for publication in the Ostara newsletter.

OLD BUSINESS

Discussion of the Forums and whether everyone is signed up, have they used them, etc. Lisa reiterated that anyone having trouble with Forum issues should contact the Netco, or go through your coven leader to fix it. Lisa asked if there is a specific forum for SoCal. Monica said yes there is. Lisa checked it and there has been no activity yet. We should begin using it. Lisa said that people need to subscribe to the forum in order to read it, so that is encouraged. If you don’t know your password, email netco@cog.org. If they can’t help, then contact membership@cog.org because the NMO is the one who can confirm who you are. You will have to provide your email address and coven affiliation.

Discussion of website usage. We are encouraging our members to seek information on the website and in the newsletters. Many of their questions will be answered there. Linda says that she has sent people to the webpage and the feedback is that people “out there” do look at the website, but she doesn’t know how much of a presence it has out in the greater pagan universe. She thinks the Facebook page has a larger presence for a larger number of people.

Linda said could we do a livestream event through the SoCal Facebook page? Lisa said yes you can, and she would be happy to host a Zoom for such purposes, but that it would be open and public. We could put something together on a more private level too, if someone would like. Linda says she’s more familiar with Google Breakouts and Zoom, but public Facebook events might be a good thing.

Report of the Governing Board Rep (Monica): Monica is tasked with developing a survey of COG members. We want to find out what people are already involved with and what they would like to get involved with, as well as what they would like to see COG support on a national level. The GB would like to encourage the development of national teams of individuals from all across the Covenant who are interested in particular issues and causes, similar to what we have with Interfaith.

Monica was working with Paula to develop survey questions and would like more input from SoCal members on that subject. Paula provided a summary of topics she and Monica discussed, and Monica is working off of that summary tonight.

Discussion of the Survey:  Summary of topics:

  Liaison work with inmates, military and law enforcement. Jenna interjected that we haven’t included hospital and hospice chaplaincy, and she feels that COG should be addressing that. Lisa said the term we should be using is volunteer chaplaincy, not liaison. Linda reinforced that fact and Stone would like to emphasize to the Governing Board and the Military Liaison Committee that we should be using the terms chaplains and chaplaincy rather than liaison. Monica said it is the intention of the GB to develop policies regarding lay leaders and chaplains. Military chaplain training was a thing we were doing (Patrick McCollum was active in that, for one) and we...
need the GB to make sure these things don’t drop off the radar when an individual leaves the Covenant, loses interest, or becomes unable to continue with some program or other. We need to establish panels, so to speak, of grassroots members who are known to the Board and to each other so that we can ensure continuity in our activities. Lisa and Stone have joined the Military Liaison Committee.

Monica said she knows we have people involved in inmate ministry, but we don’t have anything official on the national level. Could not the Military Liaison Committee be expanded to deal with chaplaincy as a whole: military, inmate, law enforcement, and hospital/hospice?

The Earth: Climate change, endangered species, wildlife preservation, designation and preservation of natural areas. Monica wants to spearhead a committee on Endangered Species, Wildlife and Wild Lands Preservation and has been doing research but there are way more organizations involved in these efforts that she realized. It’s going to take a lot more research to determine where to put our attention. Hopefully, questions on the survey will find out who is already supporting such efforts in their communities and what is the degree of support for national involvement, as well as yield a few members who would like to work on a committee to concentrate on this subject. If we have an active committee dealing with climate change we need to get in touch with them so we know what they’re doing.

Education: Support, programs and book lists for seekers. On a national level so that people contacting COG for this information won’t run into the “who can we refer them to?” conundrum. We would have a panel of folks up to speed, developing materials, and able to communicate.

Social Justice issues: Homelessness; domestic violence. Linda felt that sexual violence should be a part of this issue. It affects children and adults, LGBTQ communities. She is concerned about consensual sex vs. abusive sex as a real issue and nobody wants to talk about it within the Craft and within COG. She mentioned sexual abuse as part of ritual. Jenna said absolutely that is another thing that keeps getting pushed as part of the narrative and that is not okay. While it does happen it is not something that is normalized in Wicca/paganism and it needs to be addressed because it is not a part of the normal Wiccan/pagan experience. Monica asked for ideas how to address that. Stone said what we do is we put out an announcement, put information out on Facebook, and on the webpage. Lisa said we cannot make a broad statement that sex is never a part of ritual because it does occur in some traditions.

Jenna said that we should focus on Wiccan/pagan specific issues. She observed that there is an increasing amount of negative representation and images of Wiccans and witches in television programs such as “Sabrina” that makes Wicca into a bunch of Satan worshippers putting men into caves and forcing them to sodomize each other. Jenna said she knows from experience with her 15-year-old sister that there’s a whole generation of kids that are watching stuff like this and they think that’s what Wicca is, and they’re interested because that’s the representations they’re getting. She thinks that COG ought to be out there confronting and addressing these types of negative representations because they are very damaging to us. Many things have come out over the last few years using Wicca and pagan religions as a theme and using such things as human sacrifice, which are just not part of us.

Stone agreed that the media is attacking us. Monica mentioned DD conversations of a few years ago wherein it was the feeling that we ought to ignore these types of TV shows and movies because they weren’t meant to be taken seriously. Jenna said that if it were Christianity being portrayed this way it would definitely be taken seriously. People can brush it off as a stupid TV show but there are people who are going to take it as this is the way Wicca is, this is the way paganism is. If we don’t speak up that this is not how we are and this is not how we want to be represented, this is going to continue to be perpetuated.

Monica said we need to develop the ability to make a nimble response to media like this, quickly and immediately, making our position very clear, and if we have to do it for every movie, that’s what we should do. Lisa brought up the fact that our national public information officer is the person who has the responsibility to put out statements like this and that person has to get the agreement of the Board and sometimes the entire Covenant, so the result is not very timely at all. She said that we could move more quickly as a local council and cited Chamisa as an example of a council that does that. Monica felt that we ought to develop a boilerplate statement both local and national that could be used, with names or details slightly tailored, and the PIO could then issue that statement without having to go through a long process of approval.

Jenna thought maybe we need a committee that deals specifically with media stuff, maybe even writing to the studios and suggesting a disclaimer or including a link for more information. She suggested a link on our website to try to counteract this problem. Stone said we need a group that works on the public image of Wicca/witchcraft/paganism. Lisa said the committee would have to work with the national PIO. Linda mentioned a time when we had a technical advisor on the film The Craft who was able to have input and was able to make a difference. The idea of having a media group that could serve as a resource to the TV and
film industry, i.e., we have someone who can be an expert for you, who has been a witch for xx years and can talk you through what it is to be a witch, and you might consider using us as a resource to have more factual information represented. She said that the industry does like to have such resources. Lisa asked if Jenna would be willing to work on such a thing and Jenna said yes. Linda said she would as well. Linda said that is something she’s very passionate about. She said we probably have quite a few people who have contacts in the entertainment industry who could help develop a network of people to promulgate more accurate representations or at least a disclaimer.

Jenna is concerned about the new membership coming in having access to more accurate information. Lisa said with Witchvox gone there is a void of networking and information; she said our website does have a lot of good information on it but websites can be an old-fashioned method of communicating in a world where everybody wants pretty pictures and fast TikToks and things like that. We need to engage younger members to help produce things like this so that we can engage people who might want to become members. Stone mentioned that YouTube videos are huge and if we even had some of our people speaking to the articles that are posted, even that would be useful.

Monica said this is exactly the kind of thing that she wants to see – finding out what the actual members of COG want to see us taking on. She said that getting more COG members involved is her goal – to get people who are willing to put in some time, draft statements, write letters, volunteer to consult with things like film companies. Monica thanked the members for this discussion tonight and said she was originally developing line items for the survey but wanted as well to bring these things to the attention of COG on the national level. Lisa said we need to ask people who are filling out the survey what types of social media they use. How did you find out about COG, but also, what outlets do you watch to find out about witchcraft. We need to know that. We need to identify these social media sites.

Tom asked if there was anything else that anyone wanted to bring up. Lisa said she was trying to figure out why the local council membership officer needs to sign off on a credential application. Why is it that way, because it seems like just an extra step. It doesn’t seem like we ought to need it. Monica opined that perhaps more active councils want more control, and that the national membership officer wanted to be able to contact only the local membership officer to find out what was going on. Lisa needs to get a credential for one of her coven members and it’s no longer the case that communication takes months, so we need to find a way to streamline some of these processes. She made the point that a local membership officer has no say over who is qualified to hold a credential in somebody else’s coven or tradition, that if her coven was a national coven she would not need to go through this extra step, so why is it necessary in a local council. Linda mentioned that it has taken three months for her to get her credential due to the need for the LCMO signature. Lisa and Linda will remain on the Zoom after the meeting is concluded so that some information can be shared.

Monica said she agreed and said that this is the kind of thing she needs to bring to the national level. She reiterated that problems like this can now be dropped in her lap as GB rep and it is her intention to take these things to the Board and make things happen. She said we need to start actually doing things rather than talking about things.

Tom moved forward to setting a date for the next meeting. The feeling is that we should meet before Grand Council in order to discuss proposals. Linda feels that Grand Council is going to have to be virtual again. Jenna can’t meet on Tuesdays and Stone can’t meet on Thursdays. The date chosen is Wednesday, July 21st at 7 p.m. Lisa will set up the Zoom meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

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**Covens**

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<tr>
<th>X</th>
<th>Circle of Danu – Bonnie, Orin</th>
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<td>Circle of the Unicorn – Chuck, Christal</td>
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<td>P w/Gaelen</td>
<td>Circle of Shadow and Light – 9/21</td>
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<td>Circle of the Wild Wood – 6/21</td>
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<td>P w/Gaelen</td>
<td>Circle of the Blood Moon – 12/21</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Coven Firemoon – Bastion, Michael</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>Circle of the Moon and Sun – Ruby, Dragan, Rowan</td>
<td>P w/Bonnie</td>
<td>Coven of Diana’s Moon – 3/21</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>Circle of the Serpent – Gaelen, Guinevere, Kenny, Dusty</td>
<td>P w/Chuck</td>
<td>Tree of Knowledge Coven – 5/1</td>
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**Solitaires**

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<td>Dallas, TX</td>
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Guests – Breila, Keala – they were both published in the Ostara Newsletter and should be full members by next meeting.

Invocation to Coventina by Gaelen

Quorum determined by Recorder

Quorum is determined by at least 25% of the membership is present (virtual included) and at least 50% represented (present or proxy). Ruby has taken Roll Call and has determined we have Quorum.

Call for additions to the agenda and nominees

Officer Reports

First Officer: Gaelen

- Check in
- Gaelen brought up the release of an article on medium.com entitled "With Increasing Popularity of Witchcraft, Wider Adoption of Seeker's Bill of Rights Becomes Critical" written by Alea Foxx. Gaelen consulted on the writing of the article to clear up misinformation and misrepresentation that was previously written into it. Medium Article: https://medium.com/@alea.nfoxx/with-increasing-popularity-of-witchcraft-wider-adoption-of-seekers-bill-of-rights-becomes-ecc864fd0263
- Keala stated she had not been added to the local TXCOG Members list. Gaelen said she would add her today.

Public Information Officers: Kenny and Dusty

- Current insights place us at 3450 Facebook "Likes" and 198 Instagram "Followers"
- Our last Facebook post (for Chuck’s class) reached 498 people.
- We have had a slight downtick in trending but are looking to remedy that in the coming months with more social media presence.
- Latest tweet had 322 impressions which is up from 100-150 for previous posts average and we Currently 508 followers on Twitter.
- While we were in Texarkana for our second COVID shot, we stopped by a local metaphysical shop. Talked to them about COG and what we do as an organization. Gave the shop owner our contact information and let her know to reach out if there is anything that we might be able to help with.

Member 101 Classes Online: Breila, Faelind, & Ruby

- From Faelind:
  - We have confirmed teachers through the end of the year. In a few months, she will be reaching out for sign-ups to begin our new series next year. If you are interested in teaching a class, even if we have not offered it before, reach out to me at webweaver@txcog.org or linda_m8@swbell.net. She is also waiting on word for a new virtual summer series and should know by the end of May. Here is our current schedule:

Purse Warden: Michael L.
Bank: $2,439.49
PayPal: $2074.95
Cash App: $93.00
Cash: $50.00
Total: $4657.44

In the last 90 days we have taken in $152 in donations from classes.

Membership Officer: Dragan

- Breila and Keala were published in the Ostara Newsletter. Have been unable to get in touch with the National Membership Officer and we need updates on several renewals and credentials. We understand that her family has been badly affected by Covid per the Ostara newsletter.
  - The membership names in bold were listed in the Ostara newsletter as needing to renew.
  - The membership names that are italicized are listed in the Ostara newsletter; however, renewal was not received locally.

Recorder: Ruby

- Our previous minutes made it into the Imbolc Newsletter.
- Newsletter deadlines for the remainder of the year are:
  - Beltane ~ April 21, 2021
  - Litha ~ June 10, 2021
  - Lammas ~ July 21, 2021
  - Mabon ~ September 12, 2021
  - Samhain ~ October 21, 2021

email. We are continuing to stay on top of that to best address any needs or issues that come up.

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It has been brought to our attention that people attending the online classes were not seeing the rules. The rules for class attendance are now going to be read at the beginning of each class to correct this concern.

**Online Discussion Group:** Gaelen

Gaelen spoke on the Discussion Group and how well they are going. Breila was able to help by hosting the last one and said they had about 8 and was very lively.

**Web weaver:** Faelind & Freya Luna

- **From Faelind:**
  - Freya Luna is currently building a website on Google Sites and will be scheduling a call with the First Officer and Web weaver to reveal the site when she is further along.
  - The current website is updated with the latest classes and Sabbat links.

- **From Freya Luna:**
  - New website status. Debi asked for the PIO's to get with her so they could do some extra things on the website to attach class descriptions and teacher bios to the website. She also gave some great new ideas for the website that sounded awesome for helping us to be able to reach out more to farther out than just Texas. Example is a chat box for people to ask questions. Guinevere asked if we could somehow add the Moon School videos to the website. Debi says yes there is a way to add that as well as the Sabbats videos.

**Online Sabbats: Gaelen**

- **Autumn Equinox:** Circle of Shadow and Light
- **Samhain:** Sunna's Dance
- **Winter Solstice:** Circle of the Serpent

**Imbolc:** Coven Firemoon

**Spring Equinox:** Circle of the Serpent

**Beltane:** Circle of the Ancient Mother

**Summer Solstice:** *Gaelen said she would take care of it if no one else does.

**Lammas:** Circle of Shadow and Light

**Autumn Equinox:** Circle of the Moon and Sun

**Samhain:** Circle of Danu

**Winter Solstice:** Debi & Other Solitaires

Gaelen stated that she would be happy to help anyone with the tech side of the sabbat videos if they needed it. She also stated until the CDC says large group gatherings are allowed, we will remain virtual. At this time, only 1/3 of the U.S. population is vaccinated and Covid is currently on the rise.

**Moon School – Guinevere - Online Version**

Virtual Moon School is progressing well. Beltane is near completion. Midsummer is the only new Sabbat left to be developed. Over the summer, the Lammas books will be updated to reflect the style and flow that we have been following since Mabon, and the video redone as well. The Samhain video will be re-recorded as there is an issue with the large black border on this one.

There was a small issue on YouTube. Although we did have written permission from Reclaiming to use their chants for virtual moon school, we did get a flag for copyright infringement. She reached out to Reclaiming and confirmed they had no issue with us, and they stated it had similar issues when posting their own chants on YouTube; however, since we are not monetizing our videos, nothing was deleted from them.

Many of us spoke on how much these Virtual Moon School as well as the Virtual Sabbats are being appreciated by so many locally as well as farther. The Ostara video reached 1200 views.

**Governing Board Liaison:** Orin

Orin missed the Governing board meeting so nothing to report from that. He did make the combined board meeting this month. Nothing was mentioned about the credentialing, but it has been brought up now and is on the agenda for the next Governing Board meeting. Orin has also attempted to contact Dee and Lord Verderius but have not heard anything back yet. The outreach officer asked everyone to reach out to the local groups to see if there were any that would like to be on a panel for the Next Generation Summit on June 19th. They are looking for people mainly between the ages of 35 – 40 or under. We have 2 people in our community that have been suggested to Brandon to join the panel. The theme for the summit is *Keeping the Flame Alive*. Janine also wanted everyone to remind local councils about the "Wednesdays with Witches". It was mentioned that they conflict with our classes and discussions but if anyone would like to go to it, please feel free.

Gaelen asked that Orin see if he can find out about the membership status of the bolded and italicized members listed above.


**Od Business**
- Boy Scouts - Lone Star Council – Gaelen will resend the email to Anastasia and she will reach out to them.

**New Business**
A request was made for clergy to lead a handfasting in June. Gaelen said that if anyone wanted to help with this to let her know.
- Military committee – Anastasia has been in contact with them. They are looking for lay leaders for Wiccan’s. We are trying to help them get leaders that can lead as well as have Credentials. Debi has offered some assistance. Bastion offered to help with attending the Zoom meetings. Anastasia says they are coming close to coming up with a proposal to present. Gaelen asked if they had been in contact with Circle Sanctuary as she thought there had been some inroads made there with the military.
- In person class sites in North Dallas – we no longer have a site in this area. She asked if anyone knows anywhere that might be a good place to meet to let her know.
- CCDS – Carol is selling to a Vietnamese Buddhist Temple and is going to get us their information for us to talk with them about still using the location for our public sabbats. It was brought up if this is not an option then maybe moving the public sabbats to the Arlington UU and moving it from Sundays to Saturdays. Gaelen will keep on top of this and will let us know what she finds out after speaking with the Buddhist. Bonnie offered to also speak with Jefferson UU to see if it could be a possibility for being another option.
- Proxies for Grand Council – Gaelen reminded that everyone will need to get in your proxy when they come available. If for any reason you do not get them turned in, then it moves your membership in COG to provisional. Grand Council will still be virtual this year. Gaelen encouraged everyone if they can please take this opportunity to join the Grand Council to know what is happening on the national level.
- Upcoming Meeting Dates:
  - June 13
  - September 12

Gaelen thanks Coventina.
Adjourned at 11:41am.

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**Announcements:** Postings from Jeffery Albaugh regarding Ventura events, and please check the COG website for other community announcements such as information about Ardantane, Wednesday with Witches, and Texas Local Council, etc.

**Officer Reports:**
- **First Officer (Val):** No report. However, the only things that I’ve recently seen are postings from Jeffery Albaugh regarding Ventura events.
- **2nd Officer (Lari):** No report.
- **Membership Officer (Joanne):** No report.
- **PIO (Chad):** No report.
- **Pursewarden (Jack):** The $50 donation to TLC in honor of Dennis is still pending. Other than that there have been no changes to report.
- **Recorder (Val):** Will send minutes to National ASAP.
- **Governing Board Rep (Jack):** Still working on military liaison and it will be ongoing. Regarding the minutes, they’re (National) is asking everyone within the community for new and younger members to attend a get together that’s being arranged to discuss how you became involved in the craft, how we can get more people involved in COG which is being spear-headed by our Out-Reach Officer and PIO for National.

**Old Business:**
- Jack is still considering an idea for a future Merry Meet 2022. Perhaps a cruise, or camping in Sequoia National Forest, or maybe even a trip to Yellowstone and those ideas along with other ones are still pending. WOW!!! Still very exciting to hear about.

**New Business:**
- Possible physical meeting in the future because COVID-19 vaccination shots are now becoming more readily available to the public.

**Closing:**
- Was made by Val, and it was very short and sweet but nice.

**Next Meeting:**
- Monday, May 3rd, 2021

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**Touchstone**

~April 12, 2021~

Phone meeting

In attendance: Ecclesian Fellowship (Stachia, Jack, Val), Circle of the Emerald Forest (Joanne), Circle of the Obsidian Oak (Joanne by proxy).

Quorum – Yes
The Church of all Worlds were saying “this isn’t our address itself to how we could deal with the media. We read the article and asked our ecumenical body to talk to the press about correcting these false impressions of Witches in the press. At this point all of us, the major Pagan organizations on the scene in Northern California, were talking together to see if there were things we all had in common in spite of our different traditions, and whether those similarities could serve to create an organization to serve the needs of Witches and of the Craft.

It stemmed from something called a Pagan ecumenical movement in Northern California. The major Pagan organizations on the scene in Northern California in the early ’70s were primarily Church of all Worlds, out of St. Louis (they published the Green Egg which was a forum in which Witches, as well as other Pagans and Neo-Pagans could communicate), and groups in Los Angeles such as the Church of the Eternal Source (a recreation of Egyptian religion), and groups like Feraferia by Fred Adams (a recreation of the Minoan-Cretan religion). In addition, there were Norse Groups and other kinds of groups too numerous to mention.

Out of all this came a very informal organization that met twice a year, once in Northern California, and once in Southern California (we would just spend a weekend together doing rituals, sharing insights, partying and so forth). And we tried, without a whole lot of success, to see if we could create some kind of permanent structure that everyone could agree on. Then in early 1975, there was a meeting at my home in Oakland (which I shared with Gwydion Pendderwen and his then Lady Cynthia). This was a very ecumenical meeting of many different traditions, and one Witch there, Aiden Kelly, had read an article in the newspaper by a columnist who was mentioning in passing some of the usual derogatory remarks about Witches. Aiden read the article and asked us to address itself to how we could deal with the media or talk to the press about correcting these false impressions of Witches in the press. At this point all the people from the Egyptian and Minoan groups and the Church of all Worlds were saying “this isn’t our problem, we’re not the ones being defamed, you Wiccans have the problem.”

That’s what gave Aiden Kelly the idea that the time had come for Witches to create their own organization across traditions of Witches to focus on the fact that we do have this problem in common and we are not ancient Egyptians or Minoans or any of these other traditions. Aiden and Gwydion thought this was a good idea, and they started talking about it with me. We called another meeting which took place in March of 1975. We invited all the covens that we knew about, people who had identified themselves as Craft or Wiccan, and representatives of about 13 covens from Northern and Southern California turned up at our house. It was very interesting what people did at that meeting ~ they eyed each other suspiciously. They did not come to that meeting to create a great fellowship of love and trust. They came to that meeting to make sure nobody tried to pull any fast ones on them. “What is everybody here up to? I’ve got to make sure that nobody tries to set himself or herself up as Haragano would put it, the “High Pooptihah of the Infinite Invisibility.”

It was interesting that after about a half hour of this kind of cautious stuff, we realized that if were that cautious and that protective of our autonomy, maybe we had a basis for actually working together once we recognized that no coven was going to give up its individual autonomy, and no group was going to delegate to some higher group any power over them. So we could work out something here and we agreed that there were some things we would like to see happen, some on a very mundane level: to get credentials for our clergy that would be recognized, as the credentials of other clergy are recognized; to gain recognition as a legitimate religion in a nation that has a first amendment that says we have the freedom to choose our spiritual path; and to gain some of the tax benefits for those of us who are employed, benefits that people of other religions already have. If people wanted to make financial contributions to their covens they would have an easy channel for writing it off their income taxes (just as Christians do when they donate money to put a new roof on their church and write it off their income tax).

These were the kind of mundane considerations that inspired us. There were also some spiritual considerations that we were beginning to recognize. Even though we were of different traditions, what we had in common outweighed our differences. And as long as we could accept that another Witch’s path was as valid to them as ours was to us, we could work together. If you could have an organization to inspire Witches with a desire to trust traditional boundaries and to learn to trust each other and work in a larger context you’d indeed serve the needs of the Craft and 20th century Witches. So out of this we formed a committee and the committee went off to draw up some bylaws.
An interesting historical note is that the inspiration for the bylaws of CoG were drawn from the bylaws of the Congregationalist Churches of America, because the Congregationalist Churches are run by their own congregations. Their bylaws provide a very interesting model of cooperative structure where each congregation is autonomous, so we used that as a model for CoG where each coven keeps its autonomy, each coven controls their own tradition, decides who and when they initiate, who they elevate, how they practice our religion, and how they perpetuate it. None of that is anything that CoG has any say over, but from this, each coven can send covens to a larger body that can collectively work on those areas all members agree are of concern to us as Witches. Therefore we set up our bylaws and they were ratified on June 21, 1975, by 13 covens, (7 from Northern California, 6 from Southern California) and we proceeded to find a lawyer to help us incorporate. He was a cowan lawyer who was experienced in non-profit corporations. I remember him calling me in mid October of 1975 (I was named First Officer to get this whole thing going) and he said “I’m going up to Sacramento in the next few days because the fastest way to get you incorporated is to personally walk it through all the steps. I know all the officials, so I can do that for you. I could go up any day, but it seemed to me that if I picked October 31st, you might prefer that day, am I right?”

So we were incorporated in California as the church “Covenant of the Goddess” on October 31, 1975. We elected Starhawk as our First Officer.

We grew in membership, we shrank in membership, but there we were, stuck in California, and we realized that CoG could be a useful tool to people outside of California. But our membership was set up so that to get into CoG, you had to know people who were already in CoG who were willing to vouch for you. That was because we wanted to stay real and we wanted to stay Witches. (What can you tell about people’s real magickal energy from paperwork?)

So getting to know people was where it was at, but how do you get to know people if they don’t come west and we don’t go east? We’d created a little impasse for ourselves. This impasse was broken when we managed to lure Ginny Brubaker and Dave Norman to come to our Grand Council in California in 1981. We very cleverly elected them Co-First Officers because in those days the First Officer’s job included putting on the next Grand Council (that’s now changed, we now have a separate office called Second Officer who’s job it is to put on the Grand Council, and the First Officers now do a lot of other stuff.) But in those days, we didn’t have that system yet, so Ginny and Dave had to put on the Grand Council at a place handy to them, mainly here at Circle Pines. So in 1982 we had the first MerryMeet Festival and CoG Grand Council outside of California.

At that Grand Council we elected Orenda as First Officer. Orenda is from Milwaukee, so she elected to have the 1983 Grand Council here at Circle Pines. That was our second Grand Council at Circle Pines. The Midwest was good of course, because people came from the East Coast and the West Coast, but we had been hoping to have a Grand Council on the East Coast, we were now admitting more members and starting more local councils. We started one in Texas, and one in Florida, and one in Wisconsin and things really were zooming along. We wanted to have a local council on the East Coast, but it took time for the East Coast to get itself really organized.

**Wednesday With Witches**

Come and join us for Wednesday with Witches that meets the first Wednesday of the month for the public and every third Wednesday for CoG members only. BYOB (bring your own brew) and snacks and join us for a spell!

**Blast from the Past**

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**Beltane Dreams** by Jules

I have touched your golden body, in the firelight, in the starlight, at midnight in my dreams. It is sweet like wine to me, while your scent is more sacred, more erotic, than amber.

The pleasure I see on your face at each hungry caress, each secret touch, the hunger of your hands and lips, If I close my yes, I can taste you, I can feel you.

In my fantasy I see you, loving an antlered god, as dark as you are golden. I rejoice in your joining, at the ecstasy of your face and the hungry arching of your pleasure. Our names, our hunger, the pleasure we take passionate are each of us, contained within the same.