

Circle Sanctuary 2010 Annual Report

Celebrating 36 years
of Community.



Circle Sanctuary Church & Nature Preserve

Founded in 1974, Circle Sanctuary is a non-profit Wiccan church with federal 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. It is dedicated to networking, research, spiritual healing, nature celebrations, education and community service.

Circle Sanctuary, also known as Circle, is many things to many people. Circle is a community of people locally, nationally and internationally united by a belief in and commitment to honoring divinity through communion with the natural world. Circle is an educator, serving as a clearinghouse for thought and discussion of beliefs and practices, and an advocating voice for Nature religions in the broader culture. Circle, its ministers, staff, and volunteers provide spiritual services to individuals and the community. Circle is also a Nature Preserve dedicated to protecting the natural world and the sacred spaces therein.

This Annual Report describes a sampling of Circle Sanctuary's activities during the Pagan Year 2010, beginning Samhain (October 31, 2009 – October 31, 2010). For more information about Circle Sanctuary's activities and services, please visit our website at www.circlesanctuary.org.



Annual Community Gatherings

- Samhain Festival
- Winter Solstice Pageant
- Yule
- Imbolc
- Sacred Fire Circle February Intensive
- Welcome Spring
- Earth Day Celebration
- Beltane
- Sacred Fire Circle May Intensive
- Welcome Summer
- Green Spirit
- Sacred Fire Circle September Intensive
- Welcome Fall

A non-profit church dedicated to networking, research, spiritual healing, community celebrations, and education.



“ Circle Sanctuary has accomplished so very much, both in this past year and the 35 that have preceded it, but I’m confident there are even more opportunities ahead.”

Dear Friends,

This past year in the life of Circle Sanctuary has been a time for both reflection and rebirth, of honoring the many people and events that have shaped our community’s growth and of planting and nurturing more seeds for a brilliant and flourishing future.

At Samhain 2009 we celebrated birthdays, both Circle Sanctuary’s 35th and my 60th, with a sharing of memories and a toast of community pressed cider. In our Temple Room on Circle Sanctuary land we viewed photographs from our organization’s past. In those pictures we saw how the years have changed us, growing the children into young men and women, multiplying the grey hairs on the heads of our elders, and the addition of new generations. We raised a toast to those who used to stand with us and have since gone to join our ancestors. We also celebrated the prospect of a future where our faith is fully accepted into the fellowship of the religions that make up the spiritual fabric of the USA and the world as a whole. Just days previous I had delivered the opening invocation for a session of the Wisconsin State Assembly – a first for the state. Our Circle Cemetery now has seven, and at this Samhain, eight, US government-issued veteran grave markers bearing the pentacle, which resulted from the successful outcome of a decade of efforts by us and many others.

In the spring we had our best-attended Earth Day Festival yet, planting trees & doing environmental education for our community and the public as a whole. On Beltane we gathered to bless the babies born into our community, and also advance the quest to bury our dead on our sacred land. By Summer Solstice we were able to announce that Circle Cemetery had become the first national Pagan natural burial ground and the first Green cemetery to be established in Wisconsin.

Also at Summer Solstice, we honored the 30th anniversary of our Pagan Spirit Gathering (PSG) at Camp Zoe in Missouri. It was astounding and gratifying to see how much our community has grown, from 1980 and that first extended weekend festival on private land near Sparta, Wisconsin with several dozen participants, to a weeklong extravaganza with nearly nine hundred participants this year from across the USA plus five other countries. Members of the Pagan media were on hand by special arrangement, documenting memories of PSG’s past and coordinating discussion on the future of our faith. We honored all of the many ages and paths that make up our community in ceremonies for rites of passage, croning and transformation, and we ordained six new Circle Ministers, too. As a community we came together to send healing to our planet, including prayers for all impacted by this human-caused catastrophe unfolding in the Gulf of Mexico.

Now another Samhain is at hand and we have another opportunity to reflect and look forward. Circle Sanctuary has accomplished so very much, both in this past year and the 35 that preceded it, but I’m confident there are even more opportunities ahead. During the next year we will work as a community to safeguard the many accomplishments of the past decades and build a strong platform for future accomplishments. Through the work of the Lady Liberty League and our interfaith connections we will continue to protect our rights and secure allies that will help us combat intolerance and defamation. We are expanding our education and outreach efforts through *CIRCLE Magazine* and new technologies; so that even more people can participate in the spiritual community we’ve created together – regardless of where they live. We are also embarking on a process of planning and development to ensure that the institution of Circle Sanctuary will have the resources to continue to thrive for years to come.

Over the life of Circle Sanctuary thus far we’ve had challenges and successes. I invite you to join me as we reflect, renew and ready ourselves for another exciting year in the life of Circle Sanctuary and its community.

Blessed Be,

Selena Fox
Senior Minister
Samhain, 2010

Community

Circle Sanctuary sponsors several festivals and other gatherings throughout the year. The Circle Sanctuary community includes those who attend events as well as the larger Circle Network we serve.

Pagan Spirit Gathering

The Pagan Spirit Gathering (PSG) is one of America's oldest and largest Nature Spirituality festivals. Since its inception in 1980, PSG has been bringing together hundreds of people from throughout the United States and other countries to create community, celebrate Summer Solstice, and commune with Nature in a sacred environment. This year's Pagan Spirit Gathering, held at Camp Zoe in the Ozark Mountains of Missouri, gathered over 900 participants from across the United States and across the world for a week of music, magic, and camaraderie unlike any other. At this 30th anniversary of PSG, special retrospective events were held to let attendees share memories of gatherings past, and to build enthusiasm for the future.

Sacred Fire Circle

Sacred Fire Circle weekends are participatory events: they are co-created through the magick of each person making the commitment of service to the gathering. Together we prepare the space before ritual by creating visual beauty and places for healing, meditation, nurturance, and music. During the midnight to dawn rituals, we draw from Alchemical, Shamanic and other traditions to work together with the intention of releasing painful patterns and energies, gain access to our deep wells of creativity, build bonds of community, and find personal transformation. During this deeply transformative journey we drum, dance, chant, trance, act in service, and connect with each other to manifest our dreams and prayers, and turn our lead into gold. This year, three-night Sacred Fire Circles were held at the Circle Sanctuary Nature preserve in February, May and September - - and a one-night Fire Circle was held at PSG.

Rites of Passage

One of the important roles of a religious community and organization is to mark the transitions in life that individual members pass through during the course of their lives. These moments are honored by Rites of Passage to mark a change within the individual, and their role within the community. Circle Sanctuary provides a context and a venue for these events.

Some of the Rites performed this year include Baby Blessings/Wiccanings, Coming of Age ceremonies, Handfasting (weddings), Cronings/Sageings, and Funerals/Memorials. These Rites are performed by Circle Ministers at the Circle Sanctuary Nature preserve, at the Pagan Spirit Gathering and at other locations around the country for individuals and groups.

Community Days/ Volunteering

Every month, as weather permits, Circle Sanctuary hosts Community Days held at the Circle Sanctuary Nature Preserve. Members of the community gather to tend to the land, maintain Circle Sanctuary's buildings and equipment prepare and plan for upcoming events and festivals, and socialize with one another outside the context of a festival.

Volunteerism is critical to the workings of Circle Sanctuary, and during this past year community members have volunteered their skills in roof repair, computer technical support and maintenance, forestry and grounds management, botany, event planning, office administration, legal services, engineering, project management, gardening and much more. Community Days are an opportunity for Circle volunteers to work together and provide support, ideas and encouragement to one another. Dozens of fantastic volunteers supported the activities of Circle Sanctuary this year.



Education and Outreach

A key part of Circle Sanctuary is the cultivation and passing on of knowledge about our beliefs and practices, both within the community and to the wider world. As a home for religious traditions that have Nature as their holy book, plus an emphasis on direct experience, an open and vibrant exchange of ideas is vital to keeping our beliefs strong and educating the new generation. As practitioners of forms of Nature religion that are too often misunderstood and therefore maligned by the general public, Circle Sanctuary fills a critical role in the broader Pagan community by dispelling myths within the media and engaging with members of other faiths to work for inclusion and acceptance.

Lady Liberty League

Founded in 1985 by Selena Fox and others, Lady Liberty League (LLL) is the religious freedom and civil rights support organization sponsored by Circle Sanctuary. LLL provides information and networking assistance to individuals and organizations concerned with religious freedom issues pertaining to Wiccan ways, Paganism, and other forms of Nature religions.

LLL members include specialists in a variety of focus areas, including public relations, countering harassment, employment issues, child custody issues, military affairs, law enforcement relations, legal affairs, interfaith relations, scholars support, and others. This year the Lady Liberty League fielded over 100 requests from Pagans in need.

Interfaith Connections

Circle Sanctuary supports interfaith dialogue, networking, and collaboration through participation in regional and global projects and conferences. Last year Circle participated in the Wisconsin Interfaith Awareness Week and the Madison Interfaith Thanksgiving Celebration. In addition, several Circle Sanctuary ministers and other members participated in the international Parliament of the World's Religions, held in Sidney, Australia in December 2009.

Workshops & Classes

A variety of workshops and classes happen throughout the year at festivals and other occasions. In the last year Selena Fox taught over 20 classes at the Circle Sanctuary Nature Preserve on topics including seasonal traditions, communication with the natural world and the fundamentals of Pagan Practice. Over 250 people also attended discussions and tutorials presented by Selena and other Circle Ministers at events around the country; and in addition, several hundred people attended the 200+ workshops, rituals, and meetings that happen each year during the weeklong international Pagan Spirit Gathering.

Online Outreach

Circle Sanctuary maintains a vibrant online presence through the website www.circlesanctuary.org and social media. The Internet is fast becoming a critical tool for the dissemination of information and news through the Pagan community. For many in remote parts of the world who lack a strong local Pagan presence, the internet provides their most regular access to the Circle Community. Circle Sanctuary's website provides information on Circle Events and news, and general information on Pagan practices, beliefs and celebrations. This year the website averaged over 1,200 visits per day and had 28,000 recurring visitors. The Circle Sanctuary Facebook page has over 3,000 fans, and PSG's Twitter feed is followed by over 1,200 people.

Media Tracking

As part of ongoing efforts to make sure that the media accurately represents Pagan practices and beliefs, Circle Sanctuary actively tracks and responds to online and conventional media stories of interest to the Pagan community. Circle Ministers, including Selena Fox, regularly engage reporters to educate them about Pagan practices and ensure that coverage is fair and accurate. This year, Selena and other Circle Ministers were featured in dozens of articles on topics including Pagan rights, Circle's Cemetery expansion, being the first Pagan to give an opening blessing to the Wisconsin State Assembly, and countering inaccurate statements given by political figures.

Circle Magazine

CIRCLE Magazine is a 72 page journal, with each issue dedicated to a theme and filled with a variety of articles, rituals, meditations, illustrations, invocations, contacts, news, photos, herbal formulas, reviews, magical development exercises, chants and other material. This year two issues were published. *CIRCLE* Magazine now reaches over 10,000 people in 10 countries.

Circle Guide to Pagan Resource's

Circle Sanctuary is committed to helping individuals connect with the broader Pagan community regardless of where they live. This year Circle updated its long-running guide to Pagan stores, covens, churches, websites and other organizations. The new edition is the 15th, and comprises 122 pages of information on groups around the country.



Ministries

While Paganism and other forms of Nature Spirituality emphasize the individual's personal connection with divinity in the world around us, Circle Sanctuary recognizes that individuals or communities also may develop a need for trained counselors, comfort or leadership. The broader public also expects religions to have designated leaders. Circle Sanctuary's Ministry programs work to train leaders within our community, provide counseling to those in need, and provide support to Pagans within the military.

Circle Ministers

Circle Sanctuary Ministers are individuals who have studied, worked and dedicated themselves to Pagan community service. They are legally recognized ministers who provide a variety of spiritual services as part of their work through Circle Sanctuary. At this year's Pagan Spirit Gathering, Circle ordained six new ministers, each of whom had done several years of preparatory work and service.

PSG Leadership Institute

The Pagan Leadership Institute at Pagan Spirit Gathering includes workshops and training programs designed for Pagan ministers, elders, activists, and others in leadership roles within the broader Pagan community, regardless of tradition or group affiliation. This year 26 courses were offered at PSG by 14 faculty members including Circle Ministers. Over 100 people attended these classes, which included topics such as supporting people through life transitions, counseling, ethics, prison ministry and supporting communities affected by conflict.

Spiritual Healing

The Circle Sanctuary Healing Circle is a spiritual healing network that extends around the world. As the need arises, healing requests are sent out by email to those on our Healing Circle e-list. In 2010, Circle Sanctuary responded to over seventy healing requests by coordinating support with the community, conducting healing rituals and maintaining the Circle Sanctuary healing altar. In addition, Circle Ministers responded to numerous individual requests for counseling support.



Circle Military Ministries

Circle Sanctuary provides a variety of services free of charge to Pagan veterans, active duty military and their family members.

In 2010 services included:

- Endorsement and training for 10 Distinctive Faith Group Leaders
- Sponsorship for 11 Pagan Military Open Circles currently serving over 150 active duty military and their families
- The **Order of the Pentacle** Pagan veterans association which now includes over 500 members
- The Warrior Circle on-line discussion list
- Military Pagan prayer cards sent free and upon request to those serving and their families
- **Operation Circle Care**, which ships free spiritual items to Pagans serving in war zones
- The Military Support Altar in Circle Sanctuary's Temple room, which focuses spiritual effort toward Pagans in the military and their families
- Support rituals at Circle Sanctuary, Pagan Spirit Gathering and elsewhere
- Free spiritual telephone counseling support to members of the Fort Hood Open Circle in the aftermath of the Fort Hood tragedy in Fall 2009
- Remembrance at Veterans Ridge, which honors deceased Pagan veterans at Circle Sanctuary's national Pagan cemetery
- Initiated training for military chaplains beginning with a round table discussion conducted by Rev. Fox at Fort Gordon on October 2nd. Ten military chaplains were in attendance. Plans are to expand this type of education
- Continue work and support for the quest for the first Pagan military chaplain. In the past year, four interviews were conducted and one candidate was accepted into the Military Ministry Training Program



Circle Sanctuary, Inc. 2009 Financial Summary

INCOME

The majority of Circle Sanctuary's income in 2009 came from three sources: **Donations** (10%), **Contributions** (27%) related to CIRCLE Magazine and the Resource Shop, and **Event Registrations** (59%).

In 2009, Circle Sanctuary brought in a total of **\$210,748.53**.

Donations are divided into:

- **General:** funds given for general Circle use
- **Raffle/Silent Auction** proceeds
- **Targeted:** funds given for specific purposes



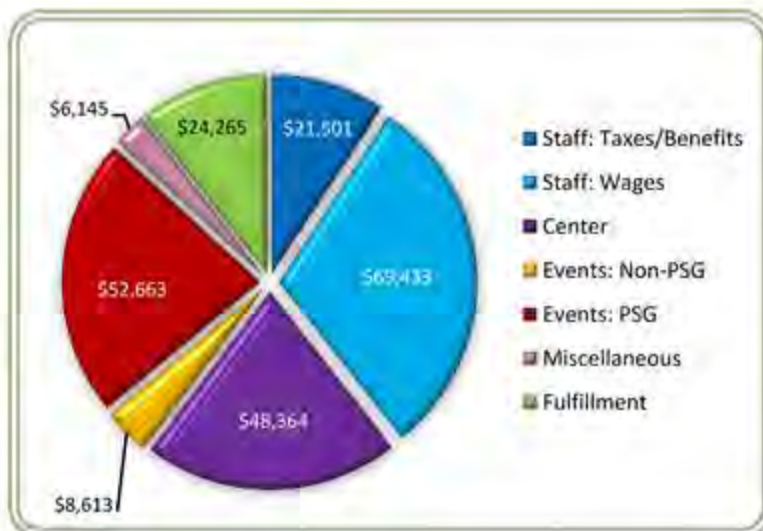
EXPENSES

In 2009, Circle spent a total of **\$230,984.68**, leaving a deficit of **\$20,236.15**. The deficit resulted from financial changes involved in moving PSG to Camp Zoe, and was covered by cash reserves.

Circle Sanctuary presently carries no debt.

Most of Circle's expenses went into four areas:

- **Fulfillment (10%):** Stocking the Resource Shop and printing & mailing CIRCLE Magazine
- **Center (21%):** Day-to-day operation of Circle Sanctuary's office and facilities, including: utilities, office supplies, equipment leases, bank & merchant fees, buildings & grounds maintenance, insurance and taxes.
- **Events (27%):** expenses of running festivals and other events organized by Circle Sanctuary
- **Staff (39%):** Wages, taxes and benefits associated with the four staff members (~2.5 FTE) employed in 2009.



NOTEWORTHY FIGURES

- The **Pagan Spirit Gathering (PSG)** is Circle Sanctuary's largest single revenue source, providing 44.3% of revenue while accounting for 22.8% of non-staff expenses.
- **CIRCLE Magazine** published 2 issues in 2009 with a gross profit of \$20,361. While subscriptions are slowly declining, it remains a profitable venture with important secondary effects on Circle's reputation and reach.
- **Targeted Donations** totaled **\$3,722** in 2009, with just over 50% to Operation Circle Care and the remainder spread across all other initiatives (Furnace Replacement, Temple Room Renovation, Lady Liberty League etc.)
- Circle's **Resource Shop** continues to be important to Circle's finances, providing a gross profit of \$13,575.
- Circle paid \$23,275.50 in **Payroll and Property Taxes** and \$6,122 for employees' **Health Insurance**.
- **Credit Card Merchant Fees** cost Circle \$4,960 in 2009: an expensive but necessary cost.
- If one considers only Staff and Center expenses, Circle requires **\$416/day** to finance operations at current levels.
- By contrast, **Donations** that aren't targeted for a specific purpose came in at a rate of **\$46/day**.

Nature Preserve

As part of the commitment to provide a spiritual home to followers of nature-based faiths, Circle Sanctuary maintains a 200 acre Nature preserve. It is located in a scenic and unique unglaciated area known as the Driftless bioregion in Southwest Wisconsin. Circle Sanctuary Nature Preserve includes forests, prairies, wetlands, springs, and sandstone rock outcroppings. Through the land runs a branch of the West Blue Mounds Creek. The preserve has many types of plants, songbirds, and other wildlife. The purpose of Circle Sanctuary Nature Preserve is to conserve and support ecological diversity in its ecosystems and to be a place where humans can deepen their understanding and relationships with the scientific and spiritual dimensions of Nature. Volunteers work year round to conserve and improve habitats, and provide education to those visiting the preserve.

Cemetery

Circle Cemetery, established in 1995, is the first exclusively Green cemetery to be established in Wisconsin and one of the first in the United States. As with other Green or Conservation cemeteries, Circle Cemetery combines environmental preservation with placement of cremains and non-embalmed full body burials. This year, after several years of preparation and effort, Circle Cemetery was expanded to 20 acres in size and is now able to accept green burials in addition to cremains. This year Circle Cemetery continued to add cremains to the old part of the cemetery, plus added some to the newly expanded part.

Sacred Land

The Circle Sanctuary Nature Preserve is sacred land, and offers visitors access to shrines and alters, four permanent circles and countless other sacred sites. Weather permitting, most rites are conducted out of doors, and attendees are encouraged to connect with the land. Classes and workshops encourage individuals to encounter and connect with the spirit of the land and its flora and fauna. Trails and equipment are maintained so as to allow access to sacred sites for individuals of all abilities.

Prairie Restoration: The preserve contains a remnant Oak savannah prairie. Circle Sanctuary has been actively working to expand the prairie and increase species diversity. In 2010 a controlled prairie burn was conducted as part of the public Earth Day celebration. The volunteer Garden Circle also began cultivation of the Prairie Nursery Garden which will cultivate native plants for eventual transplant to the prairie.

Bird Conservation: Volunteers maintain a bird species checklist for the property and conduct yearly bird counts and contribute to regional field studies. Circle Sanctuary also participates in conservation of the American Bluebird, including maintaining nest boxes. This year's Earth Day celebration included an educational lecture on bluebird conservation and folklore, and the addition of a new nest box to the trail. At least four clutches of bluebirds successfully fledged from Circle Sanctuary boxes in 2010.

Forest Management: Circle volunteers engage in forest regular preservation and management including participation in statewide and national efforts to protect forests from gypsy moth devastation.

Wetland Restoration: Circle Sanctuary works to restore the natural wetland habitat on the property, which had been largely destroyed when the land was used for farming. This year new tamarack trees were added to the wetland area near Brigid's Spring.

Environmental Education: In addition to providing sacred space, Circle Sanctuary works to educate the community about the natural environment and what humans can do to support it. Seasonal nature walks are offered as a part of most festivals, for both adults and children. This year, nature-based workshops included herbal education, bird and tree identification and tamarack tree ecology. Circle's 2010 Earth Day festival was open to the public and was very well attended.

Conservation Community Building

Circle Sanctuary Nature Preserve staff and volunteers engage in a variety of environmental networking and public education endeavors near and far, including:

- Networking with others engaged in Prairie restoration and preservation.
- Contributing to academic literature, research, and learning experiences
- Engaging in public eco-spirituality education and information dissemination through interviews in the media
- Speaking at and participation in conferences and other endeavors designed to increase dialogue and cooperation among diverse peoples and organizations for a healthier planet.



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