



Circle Sanctuary

2012 Annual Report



A Letter from Selena Fox

Dear Friends,

Samhain is one of my favorite times of the year. I enjoy watching the leaves of the oak trees around Circle Sanctuary Nature Preserve change colors. I savor teas and cider produced from the land. I always look forward to the convergence of our community as we gather together to celebrate Circle Sanctuary's birthday and the turning of the year at our Samhain Festival.

I also appreciate Samhain as an occasion to look back, to reflect on the past, and to plan for the future. Earlier this year, at our Earth Day Festival, I and others were able to look way back, through a talk by one of our community members. He traced the history of Circle Sanctuary's land from the earliest geological evidence, down to the handwritten journals from some early European explorers, and then to early 20th century surveys with the first aerial photography. It was amazing to see how the land that I've known and cherished for over 30 years has evolved and changed through the ages.

The Circle Sanctuary community, too, has evolved with time. I think back to the origins of our Pagan Spirit Gathering (PSG) in 1980, with a few dozen people joining together for a few days -- in contrast to this year's PSG with over a thousand people living together for eight days in a joyful, magical, spiritual, tribal community. I look at the creative, inspiring people now leading various rituals, and think back about them raising their voices to call a sacred direction for the first time. I remember when we first sat down and decided to create and dedicate a cemetery for our community, and now see our Green cemetery continuing to grow as a place to honor the Dead and conserve Nature.

Samhain is also a time to look forward into the year to come -- to leave behind those things that no longer serve us and to become inspired for the future. I know that what we can accomplish in the future will be even more magnificent than what has come before. Already this year, we're using the latest in technology to bring teaching and news to Pagans around the world. We continue to move forward in the quest for equal rights, inclusion and understanding about Nature religion in society. We are tending to Planet Earth that tends to us -- helping to promote a 'Green' consciousness that will change our world for the better. Together, we are building a strong, vibrant, diverse community that will be here for generations to come.

There is so very much to be thankful for -- and ever so very much to look forward to.

I invite you to join with me in celebrating the past and creating possibilities in this exciting new year!

Blessed Be,

Selena Fox

Senior Minister & Executive Director
Circle Sanctuary
Samhain 2012



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Featured Program: Learning From and On the Land

The road to Circle Sanctuary Nature Preserve winds past fields of corn and pastures where cows graze. The sense that you are somewhere special starts long before you turn onto our rustic gravel driveway. The steep hills and valleys of this region are a relic of the last ice age, when the glaciers that rolled across North America parted and left untouched a bioregion known as the Driftless Area. The 200 acres of forest, fields, and restored prairie that make up Circle Sanctuary Nature Preserve are all sacred space, not just at the dozen or so ceremonial circles and shrines that dot the property. Each and every inch of the land has a story to tell and a lesson to give to those who listen.

At our Seasonal Festivals, Full Moon Circles, Sacred Fire Circle weekends, Memorials, other Passage rites, and all the other events we hold on the land throughout the year, we call not only to the sacred Directions and to the Divine as a whole, but to the Spirit of the Land. We work to foster a mutual relationship between the land and the people who spend time here, both spiritually and physically.

In the past year, Circle Cemetery, one of the first Green cemeteries in the USA and the first established in Wisconsin, has continued to evolve and to be a place of learning about Greening the End of Life. We have had individuals, families, and groups from near and far tour the cemetery. In the past year, we had two more natural burials of human bodies and three of cremains. People from many faiths came together to mourn and remember their loved ones, and to take comfort from the land itself. At one memorial service, the clouds parted to let the first clear ray of sun reach out through the trees and touch the new grave just as the ceremony was ending. Tears turned to wondering smiles as those gathered moved a step closer to healing.

This past year, Circle Sanctuary hosted one of our largest Earth Day celebrations yet. This free event

Yearly Gatherings on Sacred Land

Samhain: Last weekend in October

Community Yule: Mid December

Imbolc: First Saturday in February

Winter Sacred Fire Circle: February

Welcome Spring: Mid March

Spring Community Weekend: April

Earth Day: On or near April 22

Beltane: First weekend in May

Spring Sacred Fire Circle: May

Welcome Summer: June

Green Spirit: Last weekend in July

Fall Sacred Fire Circle: Labor Day weekend

Welcome Fall: Late September

Fall Community Weekend: October

was open to all, and featured workshops and activities both scientific and spiritual that were designed to increase people's understanding of and appreciation for the natural world. A local ABC Television affiliate covered the event and it was featured on the evening news. We planted native trees, discovered how to read a plant's age from its twigs, and delved into the history of the land itself. At the end of the day, we held our annual Earth Day ceremony, followed by a prescribed burn of our restored prairie. We saw the element of Fire in its most restorative form, scouring away invasive plants and clearing the way for a diversity of wildflowers later in Spring.

The Circle Sanctuary community lives by the motto 'Every Day is Earth Day.' We know we need to work hard to keep the land healthy, to restore the natural balance and seasonal rhythms disrupted by human activity, and to preserve our sacred space for the future. On most Wednesday evenings during the warmer months, a small team of devoted volunteers, facilitated by Circle Sanctuary minister Bob Paxton and naturalist Reed Cockrell, comes out to the land to do work projects, from clearing invasive species to cutting down trees. This is in addition to Sanctuary Days, held on the second Saturday of each month, when volunteers gather to maintain the land and programs at Circle Sanctuary.

The land is constantly changing, and the Circle Sanctuary community changes and adapts with it. Late Summer storms toppled massive trees at several places on the land, and volunteers have worked to render the fallen trees into firewood. On our land, where nearly every event features a bonfire, keeping a full supply of seasoned firewood is no easy task -- yet we manage to fuel all our fires with wood taken from fallen or dying trees on the land. The land teaches us that, while change can come suddenly, if we work together and search for the positive then life will go on and we will emerge stronger than ever before.



Featured Program: Expanding Teaching, Building Community

As part of a rapidly-growing spiritual movement in which seekers greatly outnumber teachers, Circle Sanctuary works to provide Pagans with educational opportunities and gatherings to help us develop individually and as a community. This past year Circle Sanctuary stepped into new frontiers to provide teaching and information to Pagans locally and globally through radio ministries.

For years, Circle Sanctuary's senior minister and high priestess, Selena Fox, has hosted classes at the Circle Sanctuary Nature Preserve. However, not everyone is able to make the journey out to Circle's sacred land for a weeknight class. To make teaching available to more people regardless of financial means or location, Selena partnered with the Pagans Tonight Radio Network to host and produce weekly live streaming Circle Craft classes, workshops, and rituals. In addition to being part of the network's archives, they are available at Circle Sanctuary's podcast archives at www.circlepodcasts.org. These programs feature a presentation followed by discussion with those listening live, and cover many aspects of celebration, theology and practice within the Circle Craft tradition. Topics have included dreamcraft, daily spiritual practice, moon magic, celebrating the seasons, and much more.

Selena has expanded her teaching online through articles and rituals at the Circle Sanctuary website and her Facebook page. She also continues to teach in person at festivals and at Full Moon Circles at Circle Sanctuary, as well as events across North America including PantheaCon in California, Heartland Festival in Kansas, ConVocation in Michigan, and Pagan Spirit Gathering in Illinois, among others. This year she presented workshops and classes on topics including the basics of Pagan practice, herbcraft, healing, ancestral rites, and handfasting facilitation. In addition, Circle Sanctuary Ministers in thirteen states

worked within their own communities as teachers, counselors, advocates and activists.

Festivals also provide a special environment for the spreading of information and ideas. This year's Pagan Spirit Gathering, held in Illinois, was the largest PSG ever with over a thousand participants. Leaders and teachers including Margot Adler of New York, Kathryn and Arthur Hinds of Georgia, Crystal Blanton of California, Damh the Bard of England, Ruth Barrett of Wisconsin, and many others presented a variety of workshops and rituals. This year's gathering had more than 250 program activities for adults, as well as dozens for youth.

Circle Sanctuary also hosts eight yearly seasonal festivals at the Circle Sanctuary Nature Preserve, as well as Full Moons, Earth Day, and other on-the-land events. These include rituals and workshops on everything from sacred dance to candle-making. This year, special guests included author Christopher Penczak at our Beltane festival, African Drum instructors Fode Camara from Guinea and Helen Bond at the Green Spirit festival, and the band Murphey's Midnight Rounders at Samhain. Additionally, Circle Sanctuary hosts three Sacred Fire Circle extended weekends; events which combine teaching with community-based transformational spiritual work.

Developing spiritual community is one of Circle Sanctuary's primary goals, and in addition to in-person opportunities we have expanded our work with social media and online publishing. Circle Sanctuary now has several active Facebook pages and groups, including one for the Pagan Spirit Gathering community. The educational portion of www.circlesanctuary.org has been expanded to include more articles and resources. *CIRCLE Magazine* and the *Circle Guide to Pagan Groups* are now also available as a digital download on e-readers.



Featured Program: Fighting for Those Serving America

For years, Circle Sanctuary has been at the forefront of efforts to honor and provide services for Pagan men and women within the US Armed Forces, as part of its services to Pagans worldwide. The Circle Sanctuary community is diverse in beliefs, political affiliations, and attitudes on war and peace; however, a widespread sentiment is that working for the well-being of American Military Service members goes beyond politics. Circle Sanctuary's efforts to obtain and uphold equal rights have benefited Pagan service men and women and their families, as well as created pathways to acceptance and understanding about Paganism and related forms of Nature religion throughout our government as well as society as a whole.

Circle Sanctuary created the Pagan Military Service Ribbon as a means of expressing appreciation and support to Pagans who have served and who are presently serving in the US Military. Circle Sanctuary ministers Dave Sassman and Selena Fox designed the ribbon with input from others on the Circle Sanctuary military ministries team. Since it debuted in 2011, Circle Sanctuary's military ministers have been awarding the ribbon in individual and group ceremonies to Pagan veterans and troops. Over 200 ribbons have been awarded in individual and group ceremonies across the USA, including at Pagan Spirit Gathering (Illinois), PantheaCon (California), ConVocation (Michigan), Heartland Pagan Festival (Kansas), and at various Pagan Pride Days and other events in Indiana, Virginia, Georgia, and elsewhere. Warrior Blessing Rituals, Pagan War Dead Honoring Circles, and other ceremonies are also being performed by Circle Sanctuary ministers across the country.

Circle Sanctuary also provides social networking support for military Pagans. Founded in 2011, the Pagan Military Association has grown to over 2,000 members. We also developed and expanded other Pagan military social networking sites including for the Order of the

Pentacle, a veterans' association for Pagans with over 600 members.

Circle Sanctuary minister Michelle Boshears coordinates training, development, and endorsement of Distinctive Faith Group Leaders (DFGLs) in the US Military. In 2012, we expanded our work by developing the DFGL News e-bulletin as an additional way to provide information and support to those who are serving as lay chaplaincy leaders of the Open Circles we sponsor. The first survey of more than 90 of our DFGLs, past and present, was conducted in the Summer of 2012. Circle Sanctuary now sponsors over two dozen active Pagan groups at US Military installations across the United States, on Navy ships and overseas, including in Afghanistan.

Operation Circle Care, founded in 2007 to send gifts and supplies to Pagan service members, expanded in scope and size in the past year. In addition to packages shipped to war zones at Yuletide, we now send packages to US troops deployed overseas in other locations. A new expanded page was created on Facebook in November of 2011 to solicit donations and reach service members.

On Veterans Day of 2011, Circle launched the weekly Pagan Warrior Radio program to serve Military Pagans, their families, and their supporters. The show is produced and sponsored by Circle Sanctuary, and hosted and engineered by Circle Sanctuary ministers David and Jeanet Ewing as well as Pamela Kelly, DFGL of the Pagan Circle at Sheppard Air Force Base in Texas.

Circle military ministers also ran an expanded Warrior Spirit Center at PSG 2012. These centers provide an opportunity for active-duty and veteran military Pagans as well as Pagan first responders and police officers to gather, connect, and support each other.



Samhain 2011- Samhain 2012

Highlights of the Year in the Circle Sanctuary Community

In a first for Circle Sanctuary, the Community ritual for our Imbolc Festival was coordinated entirely by students of the Northern Illinois University's Pagan Students Association, sponsored by Circle Sanctuary. Circle Sanctuary minister Ana Blechschmidt is the group's advisor, and participates in ongoing interfaith activities on campus.

Our 2012 Pagan Spirit Gathering was our largest ever, ably coordinated by MoonFeather and a team of dozens of volunteers. 1,025 people from the Midwest and across the United States, and other countries came together to celebrate and create community at Stonehouse Park in Illinois during the week of Summer Solstice.

Circle Sanctuary's senior minister and high priestess Selena Fox was the keynote speaker at the Milwaukee Pagan Unity Council's Ostara Festival, held at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She facilitated a ritual and taught about Spring magic and Ostara traditions.

This year, Circle Sanctuary participated in Pagan Pride Day events in the USA in Illinois, Florida, Indiana, Virginia, Wisconsin, and Georgia, and in Ontario, Canada. Pagan Pride Days are an important way for like-minded people to connect and to demonstrate that we are part of the broader civic community.

Over the past year, our free monthly Full Moon celebrations have been drawing a larger and more diverse community than ever to our sacred land.

In addition to our annual charitable activities, including Operation Circle Care and our Yuletide canned food drive, Circle Sanctuary took part in interfaith support for the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin in the aftermath of the August mass shootings. Community member Gabe Wollenburg represented Circle Sanctuary at the memorial, and Circle Sanctuary joined with other religious organizations of many faiths in contributing to the Sikh Temple Relief Fund.

Circle Sanctuary ordained Jeanet and David Ewing as ministers at Samhain 2011. Their work has focused on expanding Circle Sanctuary's military ministry program.

Five graves were added to Circle Cemetery over the past year. Memorials and remembrances were performed in connection with burials at Samhain and at other times. Circle Sanctuary's cemetery and work to Green the end of life were profiled in the October 31, 2011 edition of the *Chicago Tribune*. MoonFeather, Selena Fox, and Circle Sanctuary minister Nora Cedarwind Young presented talks and classes about end of life care and natural burials.

Circle Sanctuary minister Patrick McCollum, our International Interfaith Ambassador, continued his groundbreaking work with projects at home and abroad, and represented Circle Sanctuary at the interfaith

Awakened World Conference in Rome in October 2012. He co-chaired a section of the 2011 annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in San Francisco, where he helped train high-level government officials on issues of religious tolerance, promotion of diversity, and the appropriate accommodation of minority faiths in governmental institutions. He was also appointed as chair of the Minority Faith Issues Committee for the American Correctional Chaplains Association.

In April, as part of Circle Sanctuary's continuing work for interfaith understanding, Selena Fox joined with Catholic lay leader George Hinger for a two-part interfaith public dialogue hosted by Prairie Unitarian Church in Madison, Wisconsin.

Selena Fox was the keynote speaker at the celebration marking Wisconsin's December 2011 Interfaith Awareness Week. Her address, delivered in the rotunda of the State Capitol building, highlighted the importance of interfaith collaboration to Wisconsin's history and future.

In July, Selena Fox and Circle Sanctuary community members participated in an interfaith service to bless the Lake Monona Water Walk. This event was part of the broader international Water Walk movement begun by Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) grandmothers to raise awareness and appreciation for the role of water in our lives and in indigenous culture.

At festivals, Full Moon celebrations and through the Healing Circle Facebook page and e-list, Circle Sanctuary coordinated dozens of requests for healing and prayers to be sent to Pagans and other community members suffering physically and emotionally.

Circle Sanctuary's federal contract for providing chaplaincy support services in a federal prison in Michigan was renewed for another five years. PathWalker is involved in doing these prison ministry services with consultation support by Selena. Other Circle Sanctuary ministers continue to facilitate Pagan religious services for inmates in prisons in Indiana, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, Georgia, and California.

Circle Sanctuary continued to support fair and equal treatment for Pagans in all aspects of life. This past year Lady Liberty League, a Pagan civil rights network sponsored by Circle Sanctuary, developed an educational taskforce to address incidents of religious discrimination in public schools and successfully assisted in two separate cases in North Carolina and Georgia.

To learn more about the programs and activities of Circle Sanctuary, visit www.circlesanctuary.org or connect on Facebook to *CircleSanctuaryCommunity*.

Blessed Be!

Circle Sanctuary, Inc. 2011 Financial Summary

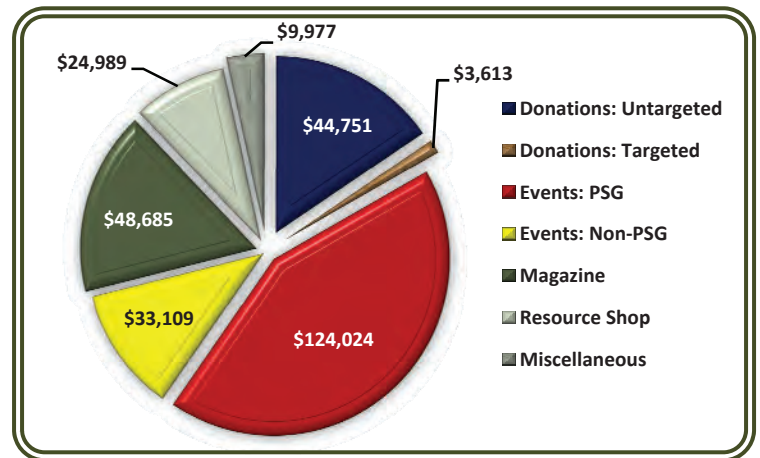
INCOME

The majority of Circle Sanctuary's income in 2011 came from three sources: **Donations** (17%), **Contributions** (25%) related to CIRCLE Magazine and the Resource Shop, and **Event Registrations** (44%).

In 2011, Circle Sanctuary brought in a total of **\$289,148**, which is an increase of **15.8%** over 2010 and **37.2%** over 2009.

Donations are divided into:

- **Untargeted:** funds given for general Circle use, and raffle/silent auction proceeds
- **Targeted:** funds given for specific purposes

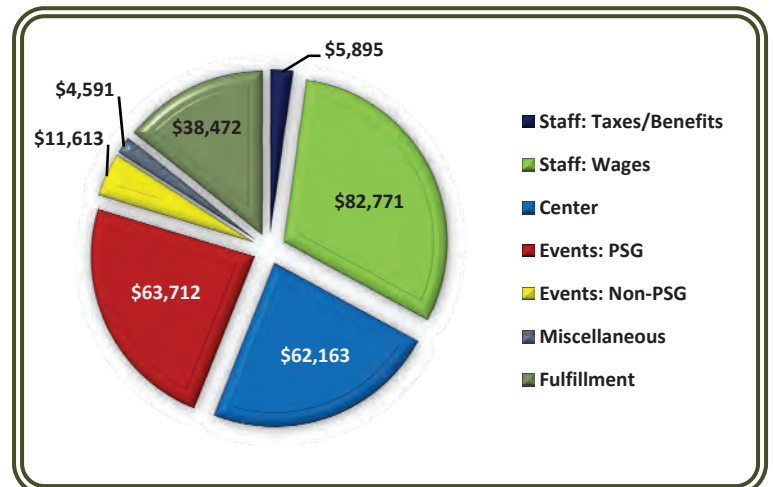


EXPENSES

In 2011, Circle spent a total of **\$269,217**, which is an increase of 0.6% over 2010 -- leaving a surplus of **\$19,931**. This is the first year since **2007** that Circle has ended the year with a surplus. Owing to careful management of cash reserves built up before the recession, Circle Sanctuary accumulated no debt during those lean years.

Most of Circle's expenses went into four areas:

- **Fulfillment** (9%): Stocking the Resource Shop and printing & mailing CIRCLE Magazine
- **Center** (20%): 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 property taxes.
- **Events** (28%): expenses of running festivals and other events organized by Circle Sanctuary
- **Staff** (33%): Wages, taxes and benefits associated with the staff members employed in 2011.



NOTEWORTHY FIGURES

- **Pagan Spirit Gathering** (PSG) is Circle Sanctuary's largest single revenue source, providing 43% of revenue.
- **CIRCLE Magazine** published three issues in 2011 at net gain of \$15,269. Subscriptions and payments from distributors went up 38% over 2010, but printing costs doubled.
- From 2010 to 2011, **Donations** increased **68%** -- and **108%** compared to 2009. However, Circle Sanctuary's funding model is still a long way from transforming into an on-going sustaining donation model.
- Circle paid \$14,967 in **Property Taxes**, which is up **11%** over 2010 and **72%** over 2009.
- **Credit Card Merchant Fees** cost Circle \$6,202 in 2011. Shifts in credit card processors brought the transaction fee down to 2.2%, but savings were offset by higher credit/debit card usage.
- If one considers only Staff and Center expenses, Circle requires **\$413/day** to finance operations at current levels. By contrast, **Donations** that aren't targeted for a specific purpose came in at a rate of **\$123/day**.
- In 2011, 50 sustaining donors contributed an average of **\$33/month** to give over **\$15,000** toward Circle's ongoing operations.

Celebrating 38 Years of Community, Spirit, and Magic

