



CORRELIAN NATIVIST CHURCH INTERNATIONAL, INC.

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A registered 501(c)(3), EIN: 20-1598770

MEMO

To: All Members
From: Davron Michaels
Date: October 1, 2006
Subject: CNCI Status Update

Greetings, everyone. I am writing to provide you with an update on the status of the Correllian Nativist Church International, Inc. (CNCI), to clarify a few issues, and to reassure you that your status with the Church remains largely unaffected by these changes.

Let me first begin by apologizing for the unexpected and confusing manner in which these changes were announced and, in advance, for the length of this long overdue update.

As you have probably by now heard, Rev. Don Lewis has resigned his positions with CNCI in order to focus on work with his home Temple, which will now operate independently of CNCI. His resignation was accepted by the Board with deepest regrets. It is indeed true, however, that differences in vision had drawn us further apart in recent months, so this change may prove to be for the best.

Please be assured that this in no way affects the operation of the Church or your status within it.

Background

There have been ongoing issues among Church leadership regarding the structural, financial, and compliance issues inherent in running a formally organized 501(c)(3) Church.

When incorporating the Correllian Nativist Church International, Inc. we adopted a Board structure, policies, and internal control standards as required by religious corporations law and 501(c)(3) regulations.

Prior to incorporation, the Tradition's Bylaws vested sole authority for all aspects of administration and operation in the single position of "Chancellor". All other positions and bodies referenced in the original Bylaws operated in a strictly advisory capacity and had no actual authority within the Church. There were no checks or balances or internal control systems in place to ensure sound and ethical operation.

This system may have once seemed acceptable in the early days of our operation, but it was a structure really more in keeping with a monarchy or a cult than with a modern church. In order to comply with Not-for-Profit corporation law and 501(c)(3) regulations, however, we were required to adopt a more traditional system of corporate governance.

These new policies and structures, while perhaps inconvenient to some, are designed to help preserve your rights as a member of the Congregation and/or as a financial contributor to the Church.

There have, however, been difficulties in achieving uniform compliance with the policies and procedures established by the Church. The primary areas of concern involve financial accounting and conflicts of interest between the Church, a Not-for-Profit 501(c)(3), and WitchSchool.com, a private For-Profit corporation.

Churches are not owned by individuals, but, rather, collectively by their Congregations. Church assets and funds must always be properly accounted for and must never serve to directly benefit individual officers or members. Financial records must be carefully maintained in order to properly document and substantiate all organizational activities, donations, and financial transactions.

Financial Issues

Church policy dictates that bank accounts and financial records are to be maintained by the Chief Financial Officer at the Church's corporate offices in Albany, NY. Such records have been carefully maintained since our incorporation and are available for inspection by members of the Church at our corporate offices upon advance request. Accordingly, all donations are to be sent directly through the corporate office where they are recorded, deposited, and allocated in accordance with the purpose for which they are collected. All expenditures from Church accounts must be authorized in advance and must be carefully recorded.

As a tax exempt organization, the Church must be extremely cautious with all financial transactions. In the case of donations, our records must also match the records of individual contributors who report these donations to the IRS on their personal income tax returns.

Unfortunately, however, no donations or other funds intended for the Church received in the former Hoopeston office have ever been forwarded to the Chief Financial Officer for recording and deposit to the Church's account. This has resulted in inaccurate financial records, loss of earnings, and jeopardizes our tax-exempt status. This is unacceptable to the majority of the Board of Directors.

We have worked diligently behind the scenes trying to resolve these issues peacefully, and hopefully without the need for external legal action, to minimize disruption within the Church. We have had to struggle to maintain silence as these issues have continued and even grow. It now appears, however, that these attempts at diplomacy were to no avail.

Questions about the whereabouts of Church funds have gone unanswered. The Board of Directors recently passed a Resolution demanding a full accounting including unaltered copies of all financial records and the surrender of all Church funds held. The deadline for compliance with this resolution was yesterday, September 30th. We waited until then to respond, but have received no further reply.

Interestingly, however, at the height of this dispute the Church's records systems were moved without authorization from Albany to Hoopeston, which made audit and reconciliation of records after that period impossible.

Now, mere days before the compliance deadline for this Resolution, an announcement was suddenly made suggesting unauthorized changes to the Church's leadership and administrative structure.

Coincidence? You be the judge.

This unfortunate matter remains under investigation and we are consulting with our attorneys regarding next steps. We remain optimistic, however, that a suitable resolution can still be achieved.

Conflict of Interest and Corporate Veil Issues

When Not-for-Profit organizations work closely with For-Profit corporations, great care must be taken to avoid the commingling of corporate assets, inurement of private benefit, or blurring of the "corporate veil".

Steps must be taken to avoid creating the reality or perception that the private organization controls the assets and/or administration of the Not-for-Profit organization.

Blurring these lines can subject both organizations and their respective Officers to potential additional liability and/or excise taxation and can lead to the loss of tax-exempt status for the Not-for-Profit organization.

There have been severe and persistent issues between the Church and WitchSchool.com over organizational control, finances, and commingling of corporate assets. Despite repeated discussions between the leadership of both organizations, many of these conditions continue to exist.

Until recently, nearly all Correllian clerical training services had been provided through WitchSchool.com and all related Correllian merchandise has been distributed almost exclusively by Witch School on their site and through EBay.

Despite repeatedly promised and published contributions, however, the Church has never received a single donation from WitchSchool.com. Proceeds from all sources have always been retained by Witch School exclusively.

The www.correllian.com web site, chat room, and message board are all housed on Witch School servers and the primary source of Correllian information has been the Daily Spell, a Witch School owned and controlled publication. Church administrators have no access to or control over these systems and are at the sole mercy of Witch School for all content, information, and opinions presented.

Control of Church's membership applications process and records systems were recently seized in contradiction to established policy and moved to Witch School servers where they have since been handled by Witch School staff.

Several of our Distance Formal Shrines have recently disappeared only to be simultaneously replaced by "Witch School Clubs" of the same name.

Domain names similar to those to be used for the Church's New Aeon College and Seminary have been purchased and directed back to WitchSchool.com to confuse seekers and further subvert the Church (See www.newaeon.org vs. www.newaeoncollege.org).

These are just a few examples of conflict of interest issues involving WitchSchool.com with which we have been faced recently.

Unfortunately, Rev. Lewis' affairs and interests have become inextricably intertwined with those of Witch School and its CEO, Ed Hubbard. Don derives his sole support from this affiliation and cannot even be contacted by phone, save through the offices of Witch School. This places him in an unfortunate position of conflict of interest and had begun to seriously compromise his ability to exercise the independent judgment necessary to effectively lead the Church.

Despite numerous discussions and agreements spanning the course of nearly two years, these situations continue to exist. This leaves critical aspects of our educational, communications, financial, and information management systems uncomfortably outside of the control of the Church and increases our corporate and fiduciary liability many fold.

This also places our tax-exempt status and our existing assets in grave jeopardy and hinders our ability to move forward on more productive ventures that will benefit the Church and all of its members more directly.

Current Status of Correllian Nativist Church International, Inc.

This brings us back to the current state of affairs, about which we have been receiving many questions. What is the current status of the Church? What is my status as a member of the Clergy or the Outer Court? What about my Temple or Shrine? Where is the Church headed in the future? I will try to address many of these questions here briefly.

I am pleased to report that the Correllian Nativist Church International Inc. remains in tact and fully operational. As a 501(c)(3) Church and Public Charity the status of the Church is unaffected by the resignation of a single Officer.

Contradictory statements have recently been made attempting to assert that the "Tradition" is really merely an "unincorporated association" of "voluntarily affiliated independent churches" and is actually more of a concept than an organization and always has been. These statements are incorrect and this is not the organizational structure approved for the Church by its Board of Directors.

We continue to favor the unified church model that was used when incorporating the Correllian Nativist Church International, Inc. and that has made us one of the largest and strongest Wiccan churches in history.

That said, there is really no way to stop others from claiming to be “Correllian”. Some groups have decided to leave CNCI to form independent churches. That is certainly an option that everyone has, but these splinter churches are in no way affiliated with CNCI and are not be subject to the same rigorous standards, quality controls, and professional oversight. Please be advised that if you elect to join one of these churches your membership and ordination status will be supported strictly by that church and cannot be substantiated or supported by CNCI.

Although this will invariably lead to some degree of confusion and frustration, we will simply have to make the best of it and hope that these independent offshoot organizations do not portray themselves in any way as affiliated with or representative of CNCI.

Regrettable though these circumstances may be, this may ultimately all prove to be for the best as it will allow us to finally move beyond some of the issues with which we have been struggling and free us to begin work on many of the other exciting projects we have planned.

Membership and Clergy Status

Please rest assured that all Outer Court membership registrations and Clerical Ordinations remain in full effect and will continue to be honored and acknowledged by the Church unless relinquished or terminated.

Unfortunately, however, Outer Court and Clergy applications submitted after June 1st to the former Chancellor’s Office in Hoopeston cannot be acknowledged at this time as they have never been properly transmitted to the Church administration as required. If this applies to you, please contact records@correllian.org for further assistance.

Similarly, Clergy application fees or donations sent to the former Chancellor’s Office cannot be acknowledged by CNCI at this time, as they have also never been received by the Church. If this applies to you, please contact admin@correllian.org as soon as possible for assistance.

All future applications for Outer Court or Clergy membership must be submitted using the applications available at www.correllian.org under the “Membership” link. *Please be advised that applications or donations submitted through any other avenue cannot be acknowledged or accepted by the Correllian Nativist Church International, Inc.* We greatly apologize for this inconvenience.

Current Clerical Studies Status

Recent announcements on WitchSchool.com and in the Daily Spell have indicated that the Church’s New Aeon College and Seminary will not be accepting transcripts from Witch School.

Please be advised that this is simply not true and that all prior learning will be considered under the new system. Additional requirements will continue to apply to those seeking clerical ordination, as has been the case for several years now.

The Church's new college and seminary will employ an Assessment of Prior Learning program which will seek to evaluate the previous learning and life experience of students in order to determine areas where advance credit may be granted.

Through this program, we will analyze transcripts from other schools, certification programs, verification of learning from other sources, and practical life experience and will assign appropriate credit towards our courses and programs.

We are very excited at the potential of the Assessment of Prior Learning program and will be introducing the process during the upcoming Clerical Leadership and Education Residency next month.

Temples and Shrines

The status of all existing Temples, Shrines, and Orders of the Church will continue to be recognized and will operate in accordance with the currently established policies of CNCI.

You may receive a "revised charter" from a source other than CNCI. If you wish to remain affiliated with CNCI, however, please disregard this and retain your original documents. If you have already discarded these please contact records@correllian.org for assistance.

We are pleased to report that with the removal of some of the aforementioned obstacles we are now in a position to offer extension of 501(c)(3) status to qualified and approved Temples and other Church bodies operating in the United States, as originally envisioned. If you have any questions about qualifying for this status, please contact admin@correllian.org.

The online groups for several of our popular Distance Formal Shines have been mysteriously deleted. The Shrines of Healers, Magick, Seers and Psychics, and Pantheons were all affected. Please rest assured that these Shrines have not suspended operation, however.

We are currently working with Yahoo to determine the origins of this issue and to explore restoration feasibility, but in all likelihood, the groups will need to be re-created and their archives have been irretrievably lost. Please be patient as this is accomplished. Shrine Guides are advised to check in at the Shrine Guide group for forthcoming guidance and instructions.

Communications

The official website for CNCI is www.correllian.org. Please note that the web page at www.correllian.com is no longer affiliated with CNCI.

We can be reached by email at admin@correllian.org and by phone at 518-489-7119.

The general membership list for communications and discussion remains at: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Correllian_Wicca. This list is for members of the Inner and Outer Court as well as Friends-of-the-Tradition. If you are not already a member you may receive an invitation to join this list in the near future. You may also manually request to join at the above link.

Because we no longer have control over the original Clergy list, we have been forced to establish a new list for members of the CNCI Clergy. During the next few days you should receive an invitation to join this list. If you do not receive an invitation, you may have an invalid email address or there may be an issue with your Clergy status. If this happens you can also manually request to join this list at: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/CNCI_Clergy.

Special General Membership Meeting

We will be holding a special general membership meeting during the upcoming Clerical Leadership and Education Intensive next Saturday, October 7th at 2:00 p.m. at the Albany campus.

We will be discussing the current status and future projects of the Church and will strive to answer all of your questions. This meeting will be open to all interested members of our Clergy or Outer Court.

Directions are available at: <http://www.correllian.org/LeadershipandEducation.html>.

Future general membership meetings are also planned for those unable to attend on such short notice.

New Programs and Future Projects

New Aeon College and Seminary

We are working on an exciting project to form a College and Seminary to provide Wiccan clerical training, certification programs, and other courses with the eventual goal of becoming a full degree-granting institution.

Unlike its predecessor, however, the College is a division of the Church itself and all proceeds, donations, and volunteer services will benefit its operation directly, rather than the directors of a for-profit corporation.

If you are interested in developing courses, teaching, mentoring, administration, marketing, fundraising, computer programming, web design, or any other aspect of College or Seminary operation, please contact newaeon@correllian.org.

The College and Seminary will soon be starting live training courses for the First through Third Degrees at the Albany campus. We hope to be able to also launch a concurrent Independent Study Group to allow for interaction and sharing between the live and distant students. Stay tuned for further details!

We are offering the first in a four-part series of weekend intensive residencies dedicated to Advanced Wiccan Clerical training in Albany, NY on October 6-8.

This residency will focus on Wiccan Clerical Leadership and Education and will satisfy a portion of the live training requirements of the Third Degree High Priesthood. Limited space is still available. Visit: <http://www.newaeon.org/LeadershipandEducation.html> for more information and registration.

If you have additional specific questions about your current status or studies, or if you would like to assist with this exciting project, please contact newaeon@correllian.org or call 518-489-7119.

The Correllian Herald

Planning is underway for a new publication called the Correllian Herald, the journal of the Correllian Nativist Church International, Inc.

This publication will serve to inform, educate, and entertain our members and interested subscribers.

We are currently seeking volunteers to assist with research, writing, design, editing, artwork, graphic design, administration, and more.

If you would like to assist with this project please send a resume or brief outline of your skills and experience and your ideas to herald@correllian.org.

New Church Orders

We are pleased to announce the formation of three new Church Orders.

The Order of Hearth Keepers is dedicated to issues of hearth, home, family, and kitchen and to maintaining these qualities within the Church and our Temples and Shrines.

The Order of Earth Walkers is dedicated to outdoor adventure, awareness, conservation, and exploration of the natural world.

The Order of Guardians is dedicated to health and safety issues and to providing assistance, support, and safety services to members of the Church and to the greater community.

More information about these new Orders will soon be available on the www.correllian.org web site.

Clergy and Membership Associations

We continue to work on developing Clergy and Membership Association programs to capitalize on our organizational size and structure in securing discounts on goods and services and other benefits for our members.

Those seeking to make a vocation of their practice as Clergy may find that access to the quality and type of benefit programs typically offered by an employer are difficult to obtain as an individual.

Through a professional Clergy association we hope to be able to offer benefits like health, dental, and vision insurance; life, accident, and disability insurances; professional and officers liability plans; homeowners, renters, and auto insurances; retirement programs; credit union memberships, cellular phone plans, movie tickets, discounts on books and ritual supplies, or other group discount programs.

We are a fairly large and well organized church and can use this to our advantage in securing benefits and discounts that we would not be able to achieve individually or as smaller groups.

CNCI Joins Wiccan Military Headstone Suit Filed in Federal Courts

On Friday the American Civil Liberties Union today filed suit in Washington, D.C. on behalf of the Aquarian Tabernacle Church, the Correllian Nativist Church International, Inc., Scott Stearns, and the survivors of deceased veterans Abraham Kooiman and James W. Price.

This suit will seek to compel the VA to act on applications to approve the Wiccan pentacle, which have been pending since as far back as 1997, to include the Wiccan pentacle emblem among the nearly 40 faith symbols that may be requested on the headstone or markers of deceased U.S. military veterans.

The litigation in the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims in Washington, D.C. will be in the rare and unusual form of a request for the issuance of a Writ of Mandamus, an order of the court directing the VA to act on the nine year old pending request and summarily approve the symbol. Mandamus relief has only been used three times in the history of the court. The petition requests the court direct the VA to do its duty by granting this petition without further delays.

We will be issuing a press release about this shortly and will keep you posted, as permitted by our attorneys, on the progress on this important case.

Summary

To recap, here is a brief summary of some of the key points:

- CNCI remains fully operational and has not been affected by recent leadership changes
- Your membership and Ordination status has not been affected
- Temple/Shrine status has not been affected, though 501(c)(3) extension may now be available
- To remain a member of the Church no action is required, please ignore any conflicting reports
- There will be a Special General Membership meeting on 10/7 in Albany for those interested
- Official web page is at www.correllian.org, lists are “Correllian_Wicca” and “CNCI_Clergy”
- New Aeon College and Seminary, owned and operated exclusively by the Church, is now open
- The College is seeking courses, faculty, mentors, administrators, programmers and more
- The College will accept Witch School and other transcripts and will evaluate life experience
- The Correllian Herald Newsletter is seeking content, writers, editors, and more
- New Church Orders of Hearth Keepers, Earth Walkers, and Guardians have been announced
- Clergy and Membership Association is under development
- CNCI announces participation in a joint Wiccan Military Headstone suit in Federal Courts.

In closing, please allow me to once again reiterate that the Church remains fully operational and that your status within it has not been affected. We deeply apologize for conflicting reports that you may have received.

The Correllian Nativist Church International, Inc. was founded to provide a flexible structure and legal framework through which our world-wide congregation, can worship, learn, and grow.

We strive to provide high quality worship opportunities, clerical services, and religious education to our members regardless of background, geographic location, or life circumstances.

We are a highly diverse church, whose members come from all around the world, all backgrounds, and all walks of life. Our flexible “Nativist” approach allows us to bridge our differences by focusing on those areas where we can all work together for the common good while still retaining our own unique styles, customs, and practices.

Anyone here in the United States can found an independent church at any time. This is protected by our Constitution. There are hundreds if not thousands of such independent churches around the country. The Correllian Nativist Church International, Inc., however, was founded as a unified church system.

Our members from around the world join together as a single unified Church. This model allows us to present a united front to the world while capitalizing on our size and structure to provide greater support and advocacy and to achieve economy of scale benefits and savings for our members. Together we are always stronger than we are alone.

This is an important and historic project and we have been truly blessed to have such wonderfully talented, dedicated, and hard working people come together at this time in service of the Greater Good.

Together we have built one of the first congregational Pagan churches of the modern era and have a great deal to be proud of.

In working with all of you these past several years I have had some wonderful experiences, seen some amazing things, and have made many new life-long friends.

There have been many tears as well as tremendous joy, as is often the case with those things worth working for, but together we have truly built a church for all of us, a church for the New Aeon.

Through unity and perseverance the church will grow and to thrive for many years to come. As we continue to develop we will be able to increase the services that we are able to provide to our members, to our communities, and to the entire world. Join with us in imagining the possibilities...

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Correllian Nativist Church, thank you for your continued support and Brightest Blessings.