I am Jerry Molumby and have been a member of the Carbondale Unitarian Fellowship since 1980.

I went to high school in a seminary in Minnesota. It was a very good place for me to be. It was a safe place to be. It was a place where I matured and grew. There was a conscious effort to build community. When I joined this Fellowship, I was looking for that feeling of community. Unfortunately, I did not experience it at the Sunday Service, but I did get a taste through participation in the Supper Club. When I committed to come regularly, I was asked to be on the board, as President. The Fellowship was at a critical juncture, needing to find a new building. The UUA (Unitarian Universalist Association) provided a guide for creating community. This was the foundation on which to call a minister and build a building. I knew we could do this, and I felt privileged to have a part in the effort.

Today, I would like to take a look at the state of the CUF community. I borrowed a book from Rev. Sarah, Growing A Beloved Community. It lists the 12 Hallmarks of a healthy congregation. Like one of those magazine quizzes, I sat down and took a look at how well we are doing. You be the judge!
1. OCCUPY HOLY LAND

When we acquired this land in 1996, it was in a swap with the Presbyterian church. They initially wanted our old building for expansion and had a deed to land they were willing to sell. This land had a provision that it could only be used for church purposes, a provision made when the surrounding land was being developed. It was offered to us at a critical point in CUF’s journey at a very affordable price. It coincided with a bequest from one of the founding members of the Fellowship. This is special land, holy ground.

This building is holy. It was designed by the CUF community 18 years ago most of whom have passed on. We had over 40 congregational meetings about everything from selecting an architect to the color of the stonework. We had a committee that was the liaison between the architect and builder and the congregation. The information, and arguments, were presented clearly and most votes were unanimous, but everyone was encouraged to state their opinion, and they did. This building was built with love by a previous generation.

We are sitting in a holy place. It is unlike other places we frequent - like the library or the Co-Op. We enter with certain expectations. On Sundays, we come to spend an hour as a large group, looking for inspiration, communion, information, connection to something greater than our selves. Other days of the week, there are smaller groups doing the work of this community - connecting, learning, sharing, making music, planning, cleaning.

When we enter this space we are giving and receiving on many levels. The community grows stronger with all this activity within these walls.

2. WELCOME ALL SOULS

We have worked hard to welcome visitors. We greet members and visitors as they arrive. Members then seek out visitors to give a second greeting, attempting to make our visitors comfortable. We engage them, and are engaged by them. As they are checking us out, we take the opportunity to introduce them to a very caring community. When you first came to CUF, I hope you felt welcomed. If you are comfortable here, I hope you are extending a welcome hand to others.
3. CARE FOR YOUR OWN

In 1994, at the old building, we got the boiler warmed up, had a Sunday Service, had coffee and then shut down until the next Sunday. Now, it is a different story. There are many activities going on to meet so many needs. I counted 22 activities in a recent seven day period. This community is alive!

We care for ourselves. We have Rev. Sarah available 24/7. We have the Pastoral Friends who keep track of our members in need, and fill in for Rev. Sarah when she is away. For more immediate needs, we have Caring and Sharing which can activate volunteers for food, transportation, and even dog walking.

We care for the children. Connie Payne oversees classrooms of children and teachers each Sunday morning. We saw the children this morning. Many parents are attracted to CUF for the religious education for their children. We try to encourage them to come down the hall to care for themselves as well.

Joys and Sorrows on Sunday morning feels like taking the pulse of the congregation. We are listened to as we share. The whole community listens and feels the joy or the sorrow of our members or visitors. This binds us in community.

4. GIVE EVERYONE A VOICE

Talk about democracy! This is one of the Seven Principles we live. Everyone here has a voice and is encouraged to participate. When we started to grow in 1996, we started having workshops and congregational meetings and our newest members were empowered to speak and were listened to. Everyone started to own the Fellowship, not just a few leaders and respected elders. Everyone is empowered. Our current process of gathering member input for our Vision and Mission is a good example. I hope you participate, vigorously!
5. ENCOURAGE UNITY AMONG DIVERSITY

Our members come from a wide variety of backgrounds and religious traditions, or none! We share the value of pursuing truth, on our own and with others. We affirm the Seven Principles and use multiple sources in our search for truth. For all our differences in beliefs, we are a community of searchers. That is our bond. We are listened to, accepted and challenged to grow - by others and by ourselves!

6. BALANCE JUSTICE AND JOY

The pursuit of Social Justice is a strong theme in this community. It was strong in the 60's and is just as strong now. We support those members who are acting on their values and come together in support. We participate in groups in the larger community. We have Social Action Sunday on the second Sunday of the month. This allows those who want to donate to the specific charity to do so, with a buck or a check, or not! All donations to other social action or causes come from individual donations or fundraisers. They do not come from the budget, with the exception of Church Women United.

We host social justice discussions, support the women and children in Zambia and cook for the homeless at Feed My Sheep.

There is joy in giving. Personally, I find the satisfaction derived from giving is much greater than the money or time given. I heard from one of our consultants that a Rockefeller had a guideline for giving: Save 10% of everything you make for when you are not working; Give away 10% of what you make so that you feel like an active participant in supporting the common good. That piece of advice had a profound impact on me!

7. LOOK BACK, AROUND AND AHEAD

In 1954, I was 6 years old. There were people here who laid the foundation for this Fellowship. In the 60's, many members participated in the social change taking place in the larger community – school integration, civil rights, women’s movement. One generation ago, in 1996, this Fellowship experienced a revitalization. This led to our first time minister and to this beautiful building. But it also led to an intentional community.
We built community before the minister and the building. We have worked hard to maintain that, and with some degree of success. Now it is time for us to prepare for the next generation who will benefit from this community.

8. SPREAD OUR GOOD NEWS

We have something pretty special here. Why not share it? How many lives would be enriched if they only knew the Good News we have.

We currently have a discussion about how to spread the Good News. It started in January with a large group discussion and is now in committee to flesh out an action plan. There were many ideas shared and positions stated. In true democratic process, we will ask the congregation which direction we will go.

I can't tell you the number of times I hear statements of appreciation from those who “found” the Fellowship. We need to be a beacon for those who have not yet found us.

9. PRACTICE RESPECT

Conflict is inevitable. Conflict is the price of growth and an opportunity for growth. It is how we respond to conflict that makes the difference. I once heard, "Be hard on the problem; be easy on the people." CUF has vehicles for dealing with conflict: Right Relations Policy; Safe Congregation policy. If we live the 7 Principles, we will not just survive, but thrive and grow. RESPECT: How empowering it is, when genuinely given.

10. NURTURE STEWARDS

From the book, Growing a Beloved Community, I read:

“Stewards always remember that their position as stakeholders is temporary. They co-shepherd a parish for a while, while they have it on loan. Stewards are not possessors; they don't own a church any more than they own a piece of land. They are simply the blessed recipients of a singular period in history. Stewards have been assigned a watch. They are entrusted with our Unitarian Universalist legacy in the place where it comes to them, to handle it with exceeding reverence and care, to shape it while allowing it to shape them, and then keep the gift moving. Stewards keep vows, keep the books, keep resources
flowing and maintain historical records. Stewards are steadfast servants through thick and thin, through personal regrets, even through dislikes and defeats, because their loyalty is never to eras or trends or personalities alone.”

CUF hires competent staff for our critical functions - to minister, to administrate, to care for our children, to lead us in music. However, CUF members freely give their time and talent to fill in the rest, which is considerable. We need to show our support and appreciation to all who minister to this community in so many ways. I personally have received ample support and appreciation for what I do. I hope that is true for everyone in this room.

11. **KEEP JOURNEYING**

We are on a journey started by others. Unitarian Universalism started over 400 years ago and is still moving forward. Our Fellowship started its journey in 1954. In 1996, we picked up from the previous generations and added a minister and a building. It is now our mission to continue the journey and lay the foundation for those to come.

12. **KNOW THAT YOU ARE NOT ALONE**

In community, we ask, "Who am I?" and discover we are part of something larger. In community, we are the beneficiaries of those who came before, co-workers with those standing beside us and creators of a loving community for those yet to come.

**SUMMARY**

I think we measure up pretty well to these 12 Hallmarks. We have a loving community. It is here for all to use for personal growth. The challenge for each member is how much to participate in community. Using a phrase from the Marines, are we "Being all we can be."

I was in a meeting for Covenant Group leaders last week and was struck by the depth that some of the newer members were experiencing in this community. I am also struck by the number of members who give so freely of their time talent and resources. I am also struck by the generosity of CUF members making their pledge each year.
This is a loving community that is present to help us develop a deeper commitment to ourselves and others. Let us engage - “To be all that we can be.”