January 2020

CUFLINKS
Monthly newsletter of the Carbondale Unitarian Fellowship- a welcoming congregation —

January 5 – “Our High Resolve” This “experiment in spaciousness” service marks the new year with more music, more silence, more meditation, and fewer distractions (hymnals, printed order of service) than usual. Join Rev. Sarah for a simple yet deep exploration of integrity.

January 12- “UU the Vote/#Vote Love” Rev. Sarah introduces the UU-wide initiative, UU the Vote, as it kicks off today. UU the Vote is electoral engagement work, and it is spiritual practice of our first (inherent worth and dignity of all people), second (justice, equity, and compassion in human relations) and fifth (right of conscience and the use of the democratic process) principles which we have covenanted to affirm and promote. For more information about UU the Vote, see the Denominational Affairs and related articles in this issue of CUF Links.

January 19 - "Leaders for Our Times" On this MLK Sunday, Rev. Sarah will profile contemporary leaders – national, local, UU and other faiths – who are living out Rev. Dr. King’s legacy. How do/can we answer the call of today’s civil and human rights leaders?

January 26- “Dying With Integrity”* Unitarian Universalists strive to live their lives guided by our seven principles, and founded on our core personal beliefs and values. Making decisions about what we want for the end of our lives - and making those decisions understood to others – is just as important. Rev. Sarah and CUF folks share their personal stories of end-of-life conversations and choices.

*This service will be followed by a workshop, “My End-of-Life Decisions” led by Amy Sherman, from Compassion & Choices, a national education and advocacy organization for end of life planning, and Karen Retzer, aUU from Springfield who is involved in the local Compassion & Choices group.
The Minister’s Column

Rev Sarah Richards

Dear CUF folks,

With the holiday season over, we’re facing a new year, and a new decade, of possibility. I wonder if you feel the way I do at this momentous threshold: caught between impulses to rush headlong into social and environmental justice efforts, or to curl up under the covers and go back to sleep. Because of these dueling feelings, I am grateful that the theme we’ll be exploring together this month is “what does it mean to be a people of integrity?” It is worth pausing, and staying awake, to deeply consider the concept of integrity, and to look inside ourselves at how we express or cover our personal integrity.

This month, we have an opportunity to identify our core values, and think about how we demonstrate them in our daily lives. This isn't about making a resolution to be a “better person”, but to be clear in our own minds and hearts who we truly are. The Soul Matters small group packet suggests that memory, particularly memories of life’s lessons learned, are an important part of that clarity. Remembering and meditating on, talking or writing about those moments and people who helped shape our core values (and the actions you take to express them) help us to be people of integrity. That can get us out of bed with a sense of purpose, give us direction and focus in our justice work, and help us balance our needs for work, play, and rest.

It’s much the same for us as a faith community: as we face an uncertain future together, it’s a good idea to pause and remember what our core values are as Unitarian Universalists, and as Carbondale Unitarian Fellowship folks. We can glean them from the seven principles UU congregations covenant to affirm and promote. We can glimpse them in our CUF Covenants, Vision and Mission Statements. We can also look back in our history to see how the integrity of our UU movement and our congregation have been shaped - weakened in some areas, strengthened in others. We can discuss them in covenant groups and in coffee hour. Most importantly, we can be mindful that our integrity is demonstrated in our behavior, in our relationships within the congregation and in the world.

From this month of exploration, we might gain clarity on who we have been, and who we are as a congregation, as a part of a larger living tradition. I look forward to beginning this new year and decade together, finding out who we can and will be as a people of integrity.

Peace,

President’s Report

Miriam Link-Mullison

President’s Column for January 2020

Welcome to 2020! As we begin this new year we will explore what it means to be a people of integrity. What does it mean to be a people who act in alignment with their values? This theme seems core to helping us each walk the talk but it can also be applied to us as a Fellowship. As a congregation, how do we find ways to more effectively act on our values? One way is to work to implement our strategic plan which lays out a path to focusing our efforts on our mission and therefore our values. It shares ideas on how we can support each other and be more connected. The plan also provides guidance on how to focus our efforts in social justice and
helps us focus on being better environmental stewards.

The Board of Trustees is currently attending a webinar series on Small Congregations. The latest in this series encourages congregations to be mission focused by looking for ways to be innovative, simplify, partner more with others in their communities and focus more on connection. Just like the university and community, this Fellowship is smaller than it once was. Fewer people means fewer hands to do our mission-driven work. As we focus on our values we also need to assess activities, structures and traditions to determine whether they align with our values and help us bring our mission to life. Are there activities or traditions within the Fellowship that no longer connect us to our mission?

With fewer hands we need to actively look for ways to simplify. In December we traditionally had an RE Holiday Sunday Service and an evening Carol Sing, both of which took significant time to plan, coordinate, and implement. This year we combined and simplified, holding a RE coordinated Carol Sing during Sunday Services followed by a Cookie and Cocoa Smorgasbord. With this combination we have hopefully formed a new tradition that is less work overall but maintains a sense of connection and holiday spirit. Are there other activities within the Fellowship that could be simplified?

In recent years we have also increased our partnerships focused on social justice and environmental stewardship. We have joined forces with the UUANI, seeking training for leaders and supporting UUANI campaigns for advocacy. Our current focus on immigrant justice stems from this partnership. We are also partnering with Faith in Place which has provided training and direction for our revitalized Green Team. We also continue with our longest standing partnership with the Interfaith Council which supports a wide variety of activities that bring different faiths together to enhance social justice. These partnerships are an effective way to make a difference in our community and world. In what ways can we work even more effectively with our current partnerships and are there others we should be partnering with?

A major part of our mission is to provide ways to support each other. Being more intentional about making and nurturing connections needs to be a priority. We have started some initiatives this year to better facilitate connection. The blue welcome cards serve to connect newcomers with Fellowship activities but can also be used to share new contact information or comments. We are developing a directory of Friends of the Fellowship, these are people who consider us “home” but who have not yet chosen to be members. By sharing their contact information we hope to increase the ways we connect with this group. If this describes you, please let us know if you are ok with being added to the list. Another connection we are nurturing is to increase our collective sense of connection/ownership for the Fellowship. We Are CUF. To this end we held a window washing competition in the fall and are planning some fun group cleaning for the winter. For social connection we are hosting an evening of fun on January 31 at 6:30, Bawdy Bingo & Saucy Songs with the Fine & Bawdy Wenches. Mark this on your calendar, you won’t want to miss this one. We are looking for volunteers to coordinate social events/outing for the Fellowship. Would you be willing to plan a night of board games, a walk in the woods, a movie night or a trip to a museum? If so, talk to Linda Linsin or myself.

Being a congregation of integrity means focusing on our mission and being intentional in our connections and working on social and environmental justice. Ponder the questions asked here and share your ideas on how to use innovation, simplification, and partnerships to be more mission driven. Let’s make 2020 a year to remember for CUF!

**Sunday Services Committee: Upcoming Sabbatical**
Laraine Wright
The Fellowship is just three months away from becoming totally relying on us, the laity, during the four months that Rev. Sarah will be on sabbatical and vacation (April 1-July 29). CUF committees are stepping up to ensure we will do well while she is gone. We also recognize it will take many of us to fill her shoes—make that her dozens of pairs of shoes.

For instance, she wears big work boots for our Sunday services, tennis shoes for running to the community and CUF meetings, ballet shoes for her creative ideas and pirouettes, sneakers for Time for All Ages, safety shoes for handling the technical equipment during services—and of course the etceteras.

You will be hearing from other committees with requests on how you can slip on one or more of those shoes for a brief walk-around. But the Sunday Services Committee is in special need of your attention. We have already been discussing with Rev. Sarah the 17 services we need to arrange in her absence—great progress so far, and none of us is nervous (yet). For instance, as of early December we had six speakers lined up and eight topics picked out, as well as three monthly themes: Liberation (April), Thresholds (May), and Play (June).

Here’s where we hope you will help out. Taking on even a small, one-time responsibility will be so important in our Fellowship:

— Are you comfortable setting up the audio and recording equipment or willing to learn the technical steps for Sunday services? Rev. Sarah will train you in pushing the right buttons. Our services are recorded and are copied to our website, which non-attenders really do listen to and appreciate.

— Will you help with the services as a facilitator (service leader) or speaker or reader? We would so appreciate your calm, welcoming, friendly selves to settle us into the community we become during our services.

— Do you have topic ideas that mesh with the monthly themes listed above? Want to put on a mini play reading during June? (Ahem: calling all emeritus theater professors among us!) What comes to mind when you think of “liberation”? Are you on the threshold of stepping into a new physical location or career or definition of family? Perhaps you have already crossed a threshold that you want to share with us, your loving CUF community.

While the Sunday Services Committee is working on the service content, so much else is going on to line us up for pastoral care, greeters, counters, Social Action Sunday donations, religious education, building maintenance, and music, music, music! Please join all of us in that mutual dance, holding us together, until we welcome Rev. Sarah back on July 29. We do wish her well, but we also need to stay well together until we can greet her back at her home—us—again.

Ready to participate or give us your suggestions? Please contact Rhonda Kosmicki, Sunday Services Committee chair, rlpk63@hotmail.com. Our grateful thanks go to all of you!

**Welcoming Congregation: What’s Next?**

Maggie Degen

As most of you know, the Welcoming Congregation Committee has been hard at work. There have been several services, all of the activities around the Pride Festival, and a movie screening. The application for recertification as a Welcoming Congregation was submitted and approved - we achieved that major goal. But remember that CUF must renew this status every year now. So the WCC’s work is never really going to be done.

Indeed, now we must look to our plans for next year. The WCC needs your help with the planning. We need input from CUF’s friends and members about the challenges and issues particular to our congregation. We especially need to know what we can do better to make LGBTQ+ folks feel more welcome in our particular spiritual home.

One example is the issue of gendered bathrooms. Though it seems that change is inevitable in light of what is happening in the rest of the world, the WCC wants to know what this congregation needs in order to be comfortable with that change. For some, doors on every bathroom stall and elimination of urinals in the
former men’s room will suffice. For others, more may be needed. We need everyone to give these issues real thought and to respond with complete honesty.

CUF’s current method of addressing the bathroom issue is either 1) Do nothing; or 2) Tape a paper sign over the gendered sign whenever CUF hosts an event likely to draw attendees who will be offended or excluded. Neither approach is a solution to the problem. Neither approach truly demonstrates CUF’s commitment to being inclusive and welcoming to all. The WCC believes that we can do better, with your help.

So, please share your thoughts with the WCC. You can do so in any of the following ways. First, have a conversation with any member of the WCC. (Therese Thien, Rev. Sarah, Maggie Degen, Mary Campbell, Tasha Youngblood, Kathy O’Laughlin) Second, you can send us an email at WCCCUF@gmail.com. Third, you can leave us a completely anonymous note in the bright green suggestion box sitting back of the sanctuary by the blank forms for announcements.

Religious Education Update
Jodi Ruffner

It’s been a productive first half of the church year in the RE wing here at CUF! Many of our members may not realize that we have changed the rhythm of the RE calendar to align better with our volunteer capacity and monthly theme approach. Generally speaking, the first Sunday of the month ages 5 and older gather together for a “Multi-Age Chapel”. The middle two Sundays are spent in age specific classrooms with their teachers and classmates. The last Sunday is our “Social Action Sunday” where all ages work together to complete that month’s social action project.

Each month’s 1st Sunday Chapel is structured around that month’s theme, and mirrors, to a large extent, the adult service. We have a chalice lightening, a meditation, joys and sorrows, a story and message, a question and answer time, sometimes a craft that goes along with the theme. And an extinguishing of the chalice flame that puts a closure on our time together. This chapel experience has been more successful than anticipated and has helped children and youth, as well as the adults in RE, to feel more connected to the larger fellowship. It has also alleviated a bit of the burden on our volunteer teachers as there are a few less classroom times to oversee. During Chapel Sundays, the youth are called to assist by leading meditation, reading the story, or assisting with other activities or crafts. I think they enjoy this bit of shift in responsibility and the younger children are learning to look to them as mentors and guides on how to “be” during more structured RE times.

During classroom Sundays, RE is using a theme
inspired curriculum from a resource called “Soul Matters,” (which also creates Covenant Group and Worship resources used at CUF). All the teachers seem to be appreciative of both the structure and accessibility of the classes and the variation of activities to choose from within this resource. These thoughtfully crafted lesson plans and activities are a welcome resource for volunteer teachers with little background in teaching or classroom management.

We have been busy in the social action arena as well! On the 4th Sunday the children and youth of RE have been part of numerous social action activities including helping to make holiday luminaries with Laura and Gene Basanta. These were later sold at several events including the alternative gift fair! We also took part in the time-honored trick or treat Sunday. This year the RE children and youth donated their collection to Su Casa, a migrant Head Start Program located in Cobden.

RE also made multiple loaves of pumpkin-apple bread, which we donated to both The Women’s Center and Good Samaritan House, and we also shared them with our CUF family during the Thanksgiving Bread Service. To top it off, the RE youth have begun a regular sale of baked goods during CUF coffee hour with proceeds going to support future youth adventures to conferences and maybe even… General Assembly! We all thank our members who have generously supported the youth’s endeavors to raise money for all these causes. It is greatly appreciated! There are so many deserving organizations and worthy social actions projects to take part in, RE feels really social actions projects.

CUF Immigration Justice Campaign Update

Bill Sasso

As you probably recall, at our May congregational meeting we voted to adopt “‘Immigration Justice in Southern Illinois’ as our congregation-wide social justice campaign over the period June, 2019, through May, 2020.” Here’s a more complete description of what means: between June, 2019, and May, 2020, the Fellowship will act in solidarity with immigrants and speak on behalf of immigration justice in our community and region in collaboration with the UU Advocacy Network of Illinois (UUANI) and the UU Service Committee (UUSC). This work will help change attitudes
and policies in our community, region, and beyond. We will acknowledge the intersections between immigration and other dimensions of social justice and eco-justice. Our intention is to work where the need is greatest and where our involvement can have the largest impact.

**How are we doing?**

We’re doing very well! To date, 76 members have participated in one or more Immigration Justice Campaign activities; that’s 52% of our membership. In addition, at least 34 non-members with Fellowship connections have also been active in the campaign. The following activities have generated the highest levels of participation: July 14th Sunday service (58 participants); October 13th Sunday service (44); June 9th Online Petition Signing after service (38); and July 14th Southern Illinois Immigrant Rights Project (SIIRP) Jericho Walk (20). The average participant has been involved in about 3.5 activities.

**How can folks support the campaign?**

Become part of the Timeline (see photo)! Nineteen CUF members have already shared the stories of how they or their ancestors came to this country as part of our Immigration Timeline on display in the Fellowship Commons. If you haven’t already done so, we invite you to share your immigration experiences (to the extent that you know them, of course). It doesn’t need to be complete; we’re glad to have whatever information you have. Approximate dates are fine; if you don’t know an immigrant’s name, simply put “unknown.” There are green sheets for this purpose on the table below the display!

In addition, for those artistically inclined, including anyone who wants to explore their artistic side, please consider submitting your immigration-based artwork (whatever that means to you) for our CUF spring exhibit. If you are a Picasso, you can just draw on a napkin at a bar and have a masterpiece for display. If you are less talented, you might do something with more detail: painting, fiber, photography, clay. Work should be completed by March 15. For more information, please contact Laura Basanta (lauraqueenofall@hotmail.com).

Our Immigration Justice Leadership team is also working with the Carbondale Interfaith Council and the Southern Illinois Immigrant Rights Project, and we expect that there will be immigration-related events planned for January and February! Please watch for announcements about more ways that we can fulfill our collective commitment!

**Photo: Miriam Link-Mullison**

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**Denominational Connections:**

**Some Opportunities to Connect in 2020!**

Bill Sasso

As you consider your new year’s resolutions for 2020, why not think about connecting yourself with Unitarian Universalism beyond the walls of our southern Illinois congregation? There are many possible ways to do so! Here are a few suggestions, with pointers to places where you can find more information.

The **2020 General Assembly (GA)** of our **Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA)** will **take place in Providence, Rhode Island**, from **June 24th to 28th**. **Rooted, Inspired, & Ready!** is the theme – we are in touch with our theological roots, we are engaged in transforming our faith, and we are fired up to take action in the world around us. Online registration is already open, with an early

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registration discount available through March 15th – visit https://www.uua.org/ga/ for more information about GA programs, registration, lodging options, and more!

If Rhode Island seems a bit far, or if you don’t want to wait until June, you can connect with UUs from across the Midwest at the MidAmerica Regional Assembly (RA) in Rockford, Illinois, on Saturday, April 18th. RA’s keynote speaker will be Taquiena Boston, Special Advisor to the UUA President for Institutional Inclusion, Equity, and Change. In addition to her presentation, the day will include worship, workshops, the Regional Business meeting, and lunch. More information about RA can be found at https://www.uua.org/midamerica/ra – keep an eye out for notices in the CUF Bulletin when registration opens!

And in conjunction with RA, the UU Advocacy Network of Illinois (UUANI) is planning a gathering of social justice leaders in Rockford on Friday, April 17th (probably lunchtime through late afternoon). In 2020, UUANI will focus its efforts on our national voter engagement campaign, known as "UUtheVote!" nationally and "VoteLove Illinois" within our state. In the UUA's words, "Our UU values of interdependence, democracy, and the inherent worth and dignity of all people are direct antidotes to the fear, bigotry, and inequity that define our world. In this political moment, UUs are called to join forces with all people who want to organize our communities and our nation to #VoteLove and #DefeatHate." The UUANI gathering in Rockford will include leadership training as well as the opportunity to share ideas and experiences with folks from other congregations. Watch for more details about this event! In the meantime, you can learn more about "UUtheVote!" at https://www.uua.org/justice/vote2020

And you can connect with "UUtheVote!" and VoteLove Illinois right here at CUF on Sunday, January 12th at 2:30 pm. Please join us for the UUtheVote Kickoff Party! Together, we’ll learn more about the national campaign and brainstorm how we might best be part of it here in southern Illinois!

And if 2020 might not be your year to connect, the 2021 General Assembly will be held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin from June 23rd to 27th. For more information about any of these ways to connect, or any other questions about the larger "UUniverse," please contact CUF Denominational Connections coordinator, Bill Sasso!

Denominational Connections (part 2): What is UU the Vote?

Submitted by Bill Sasso

Please note: This article is an excerpt from the “UU the Vote Team Building Toolkit” (preliminary edition) available on the UUA website (www.uua.org) where The Real Rules and the Bolder Advocacy links can be accessed.

If you have attended a rally, written a letter to an elected official, registered a voter, or supported a partner organization, you have already been doing the work of UU the Vote. It is a collaborative and distributed effort by individual Unitarian Universalists, committees in our congregations, our ministers, State Action Networks, advocacy groups, the national association, Love Resists, Side with Love, and multiple partner organizations representing and organizing frontline communities.

UU the Vote is not about abandoning the justice ministries you’ve been doing and switching to work on voting rights and democracy defense. Nor is it only facilitating voter registration drives or get-out-the-vote campaigns in our congregations or broader communities. UU the Vote is about integrating electoral engagement into our strategies for change so that we are advancing our vision of a just world and beloved community in every arena available to us.

UU the Vote is convincing our neighbors to #VoteLove because no one should ever be fired for coming out. It is recruiting climate activists to become climate voters. It is bringing electrical cords to the precincts where registrars will purposefully leave voting machines unplugged. It is offering our buildings to community groups...
in need of a space to launch their canvassing operations. It is being a faithful and courageous presence to counter white supremacists who intend to intimidate. It is hosting candidate forums, phone banks, fundraisers, cross-state mobilization week-ends, and much more. Starting January 12, 2020, and beyond, UU the Vote will be supporting congregations to form volunteer teams (or empower current justice leaders) to lead the work in ways that make sense for your community. We will specifically be supporting these teams to lead in the following areas of electoral engagement work: mobilizing voters; challenging voter suppression; holding values-based conversations to persuade our neighbors on the issues that matter; opening the doors of our congregations to the activities of frontline communities and justice partners; providing the spiritual sustenance and movement chaplaincy to ground our faith and respond to the injustices we confront through the work.

The UU the Vote team at the UUA will roll out tools, trainings, and support to equip each of us with the skills and analysis to participate, to amplify the good work happening on the ground, to connect UUs to each other and to partners, and to coordinate moments of convergence. As a distributed effort, we’ll establish online and on-the-ground communities of practice for UUs to coordinate with each other to unleash our potential and to scale up in strategic locations across the country.

A Note on 501(c)3 Status: How We Can Be Powerful and Prophetic Without Being Partisan

UU the Vote encourages Unitarian Universalists to boldly engage our values in the electoral cycle in ways that are appropriate for churches and nonprofits. Nonprofit organizations can engage in issue-based advocacy, promote local ballot measures, and perform voter education and mobilization, as long as it is not doing so for a specific political party, as an endorsement of a specific candidate, or to impact whether or not a particular candidate wins an election.

In many states, other nonprofits and frontline community organizations have already organized to collaborate and coordinate non-partisan voter engagement activities and can be a ready partner and resource. You can find many of them in the State Voices network, for example.

Because we know many of you have questions or concerns, we’ll be updating and providing clear guidance to the most frequently asked questions by mid-January 2020, including online trainings where you can ask questions about the opportunities and limitations of doing electoral work as a 501(c)3 organization. In the meantime, the UUA publication The Real Rules is a terrific go-to source for any questions that arise, as are the summaries provided by Bolder Advocacy.

Join Us!

Tabitha Ayers

Join us Friday, January 31, 2020 for a night of Saucy Songs & Bawdy Bingo with the Fine & Bawdy Wenches!

This event, to support CUF, will be a night of song, games and humor. Doors open at 6:30pm, and the show starts at 7:00pm. Admission is $10.00 in advance/$15 at the door and includes 1 Bawdy Bingo Card (extra cards just $2 each). Wanna bring your friends? Tables of 6 pay just $50 when they book in advance.

On sight childcare available WITH ADVANCE NOTICE (RSVP before Jan 25). $5 for first child, $2 additional kiddos. Light snacks provided.

Prizes and games throughout the night, along with performances by the Wenches and tons of interactive fun. Photo booth opportunities with your favorite Wench (or all of them) throughout the night.

Guests are invited to bring snacks or refreshments for their table. Tea, water and lemonade will be provided.

Wench Disclaimer: The Fine & Bawdy Wenches is a risqué comedy troupe of bodice-wearing bandoliers. This show is 18+ (parents wishing to bring older teens may, but are responsible for ensuring content is suitable). Comedy AND songs contain references to alcohol and highly specific adult activities (that rhyme). We want all
our guests to enjoy themselves, so please consider this when deciding if we're your idea of a fun Friday night. We know we aren't everyone's cup of tea, but will settle for being somebody's shot of Rum!

Tickets may be purchased from Tabitha Ayres (618-713-1700), online at fineandbawdywenches.eventsmart.com or at the CUF office during regular office hours (Tues-Fri 2:30-5:30pm).

**CUF Covenant**

We are the Carbondale Unitarian Fellowship

With compassion we honor our whole selves, each other and our beloved community. With intention, we choose to walk together in fellowship.

We seek truth and growth together, nurturing each other’s spirit and sense of reverence.

We respect all individuals and strive to create a world where all are treated with love and dignity.

We believe all people have strengths and wisdom, and are able to contribute to our faith community.

We give action to our faith through service and the pursuit of justice in the wider world. Every act of service, lovingly performed, matters.

We value diversity in its many forms and welcome with open minds and hearts, all those who come among us.