

## December 2023 President's Report

The winter holidays are upon us. Thanksgiving has come and gone. We spent our Thanksgiving among the redwoods in Forestville, California in a mountainside cabin along the Russian River. It was just the two of us—along with Syrah, our older son Will's sweet young and very energetic Catahoula hound. Will was away shooting a documentary in Europe. He'll return to California on December 18 and we'll join him and his partner Chenoa there on Christmas Eve. While we were in California for Thanksgiving, our younger son Rob traveled from his home in Everett, Washington to join us for a long weekend. It was great to see him.

The age-old spirit of this season is well expressed in the poem "The Shortest Day" by Susan Cooper.

So the shortest day came, and the year died,  
And everywhere down the centuries of the snow-white world  
Came people singing, dancing,  
To drive the dark away.  
They lighted candles in the winter trees;  
They hung their homes with evergreen;  
They burned beseeching fires all night long  
To keep the year alive,  
And when the new year's sunshine blazed awake  
They shouted, reveling.  
Through all the frosty ages you can hear them  
Echoing behind us—Listen!!  
All the long echoes sing the same delight,  
This shortest day,  
As promise wakens in the sleeping land:  
They carol, feast, give thanks,  
And dearly love their friends,  
And hope for peace.  
And so do we, here, now,  
This year and every year.  
Welcome Yule!



As I thought about this poem, I happened to read the December 13 *Carbondale Times* column by CUF member Bob DeFilippis: “Symbols of the Season.” In his column, Bob notes writings of James Baldwin in which Baldwin reflected on the human struggle to find light in times of darkness. In doing so, Bob highlights for us the “enduring power of hope and resilience” that is found in our seasonal symbols and celebrations such as Yule. In these ancient seasonal symbols and celebrations, we are reminded of “light’s triumph over darkness” even in a world that seems to overwhelm us.

**Recognition:**

- On Saturday October 21 CUF held its first post-COVID **Congregational Retreat** at SIU’s Touch of Nature Outdoor Education Center. On a beautiful fall day CUF members and friends came together to discuss and help develop our **2024-2029 Strategic Plan “Creating Our Future.”** As we all enjoyed the food and drinks provided, we re-examined our Vision and Mission statements and then, in small groups, offered our individual perspectives as to CUF’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. After sharing the work of each of the small groups, the morning work session ended and we enjoyed a lunch time cook out, hiking and other outdoor activities, a campfire and sing-along.

Thanks to Miriam Link-Mullison and the other members of the Strategic Planning Team including Roy Sumner, Bethann Siebold, Nan Sorrels, Bill Kline, and Rev. Sarah for their work on this project.

Also, thanks to all who helped organize and put on the Retreat including Linda Linsin, Rhonda Kosmicki, Mary Campbell, Susan Lutton, Janet Harris, and grill master Charles Rufner. And thanks to our sing-along leaders Waren Bush and Jackie Masei. And finally thanks to Rev. Sarah for overseeing and coordinating the entire day.

- A watch party for the **UUANI 10th Anniversary Celebration: Building Community, Bending the Arc!** was joined by about a dozen CUF members on Saturday, November 4 along with other Illinois UUs. Nicole Presley from *Side with Love/UUtheVote* was the keynote speaker. Along with those attending via Zoom at CUF, Bill Sasso, Kathy O’Laughlin, and Jeletta Brant attended the celebration in person at the Abraham Lincoln UU Congregation in Springfield.

And this is a good place to thank Jeletta Brant for her work this year as our **UUANI Congregational Catalyst**. Thanks to her efforts this pilot project got off to a great start. Although Jeletta has now stepped down from this position, the CUF Board voted in November to continue with our participation in this project. If you are interested in learning more about the Congregational Catalyst program feel free to contact Jeletta or Rev. Sarah.

- The 2024 & 20 More Campaign hosted an **Art and Craft Sale** at CUF on both November 5 and 19 in the Commons to help raise money for CUF’s new roof. Thanks to all the artists who contributed such a wide array of items for the sale which raised over \$3,500! Miriam Link-Mullison and the other members of the 2024 & 20 More Campaign Team, including Roy Sumner, Jerry Molumby, Cheryl Robinson, Tom Robinson, and Jan Eisenhard have done such a great job—THANKS!

- CUF’s Office Administrator **Amber Young** moved on in November to a new full-time position at SIU. It was great to have her with us as a valued staff member and CUF friend. We wish her all the best.

With Amber’s departure, we also welcome **Monique Riley** as our new Office Administrator. Monique recently moved to Carbondale from Missouri. She indicated that things are going well as she acclimates to her new position. If you are at CUF during office hours (10:00 am to 1:00 pm each workday) be sure to say hello to Monique.

- On Saturday morning, November 18 a team of CUF members and friends, led by Jerry Molumby, came together at CUF for a **Fall Work Party**. Under a bright morning sky, the group worked to trim hedges and trees, and to do other much-needed yard work on our grounds. Thanks to Jerry and to all those who came to help, things look much better around our building.

- Also on November 18, under the guidance of Chef Chris Ortolano, high school and middle school youth, along with adults came together at CUF to bake pumpkin bread. The bread was blessed during Thanksgiving Bread Service on Sunday, and then delivered to the Survivor Empowerment Center. Thanks to all who helped to organize this event and to all who participated in it.

- The 18th Annual **Southern Illinois Alternative Gift Fair** was held at the Carbondale Civic Center on Sunday December 3. Over 30 local non-profit organizations offered a wide variety of gifts and sponsorships for sale. Attendees also enjoyed music and refreshments. This annual event is sponsored by CUF's Social Action Team. Thanks to Jess Jobe for her leadership and dedication to this wonderful community activity! Here's what one person had to say on Facebook about this year's Fair:

I have so much appreciation for the Social Justice Committee of the Carbondale Unitarian Fellowship and particularly for Jess Jobe for putting this wonderful event together. . . This was truly an opportunity for the whole community to come together to support the many not for profits that do so much important work in our community.

- CUF once again hosted "Parents' Night Out" on Friday, December 8. This holiday event brought 20 CUF youth to the Fellowship for an evening of games, a photo booth, singing, cookie decorating, shopping for family presents and pizza. And while the kids celebrated at the Fellowship, their parents got to enjoy themselves for a few hours doing anything they wanted to do!! Organized by Miriam Link-Mullison this was a real holiday treat for kids and parents alike. Thanks to Miriam and all the adults who helped out.

- On December 10, Rev. Sarah, Choir Director Michael Thompson, and CUF choir members together with other CUF folks joined up with members of Carbondale's First Christian Church for an afternoon of caroling at Liberty Village, and Prairie Living assisted living facilities. The adults were joined by youth from both the Fellowship and First Christian. CUF members JoAnn Nelson and Carolyn Moe were among those who enjoyed the caroling. After the singing, the group gathered at First Christian Church for cocoa and cookies. What a great way to come together to celebrate the holidays and bring some joy to seniors and others in assisted living facilities.

- Throughout the year, CUF's Social Action Team holds food drives for various food pantries and other community charities in our area. In December, the Team hosted a food drive for the Good Samaritan House. Once again CUF members responded generously donating a wide array of food products as well as personal hygiene items for Good Sam. Thank you to all who donated to this effort.

**A New Roof for CUF:**

At a Special Congregational Meeting held a CUF on Sunday, December 10, the Congregation unanimously approved contracting with J & L Robinson as recommended by CUF’s Board of Trustees to replace CUF’s roof. Under the contract J & L Robinson will solicit bids, oversee the roofing work, and assure compliance with the quality of materials and work as specified for a guaranteed maximum price of \$102,800. All the hard work put in by Jerry Molumby, Miriam Link-Mullison, Tom Robinson, and Bob Swensen on this project is much appreciated. We will keep you updated on this project.

**Rose/Hayward Gift Proposal Selection Process:**

At its November 19 meeting the CUF Board approved the process to be used as the Congregation determines what proposed projects to fund with the Rose/Hayward bequests which currently total about \$65,000. The process approved by the Board was developed collaboratively by representatives of each of the groups making proposals along with Board members and Rev. Sarah. An explanation of the proposal selection process can be found at the Member page of CUF’s website under the Current Fellowship Year tab. A link to the explanation also is included in CUF’s weekly Bulletin.

**November Services and Attendance:**

The service theme for November was “Generosity.” Among the month’s Sunday services was our annual Thanksgiving Bread Service on November 19. In this multigenerational service, CUF members and friends who have made bread share that bread and the stories behind it with the congregation as we celebrate the harvest and give thanks for being together.

Attendance for November’s Sunday services was again very good with many attending both in person and online.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Adults in Person</u>	<u>Children</u>	<u>Zoom</u>
Nov. 5	51	6	8
Nov. 12	55	6	12
Nov. 19	59	7	7
Nov. 26	35	8	17

## Things to Look Forward To:

December is a time for special services at CUF. Plan to come in person or on Zoom to these seasonal services.

- Our seasonal celebration begins on Sunday **December 17** with our **Yuletide Cheer** service at 10:30 am. This multigenerational service celebrates and explores the magic and mystery of Yule traditions, the Winter Solstice and the turning of the Wheel of the Year with music, readings, bringing of the green and the Yule log. This service will include music by Elana Floyd-Kennett and the CUF choir
- On Sunday, **December 24, 2023 at 6:00 pm**, CUF will celebrate Christmas with candlelight, carols, and story at its special family-friendly evening service. The service will be both in person and on Zoom. Music by Ginivra Herr (cello), Joe Palermo (guitar), and Stephanie Reece (vocal). The service will also include a special appearance by the Hughes sisters (Emily, Eleanor, Esther).
- CUF's annual **Burning Bowl Ceremony** will be on Sunday, **December 31, 2023**, 10:30 a.m. In this unique intergenerational service, we reflect on what we would like to let go of or leave behind as we move into a new year. With music by Curt Wilson and thoughtful meditation, this promises to be a special service.