

January/February 2024 President's Report

It's February 2024—already well into the new year. The new year began with some cold temperatures—so cold in fact that our Sunday service on January 14 was on Zoom only because the temperature that morning was just 5 degrees. That was followed by a bit of freezing rain. But so far February has been warm—in fact the average high for February has been 12 degrees higher than normal. It feels good—but is this really ok? I'm not sure. In any case, with each passing day, we have a little more daylight as we edge towards spring. I'm looking forward to it.

I have always liked the name January for the first month of the new year—and not just because it is my birthday month. The name for this first month of the year comes from the Roman god Janus, the god of doors and gates, of threshold, of transitions, of beginnings and endings, of dualities. Janus is generally depicted with two faces, one looking back in reflection at the past, the other looking forward with hope to the future.

Our personal transition into a new year, a new spiritual beginning, is embodied for us at CUF in our annual Burning Bowl Ceremony held on the last Sunday of December each year. In this ceremony, we reflect on the past year and on what we want to let go of or leave behind as we move into a new year.

So, what about February—the shortest month with just 28 days—except in a “leap year” like 2024 when it has 29 days Where does its name come from? It derives from the Roman purification festival of Februalia that was celebrated in the middle of the month. This year, on February 14, we celebrate both Valentine's Day and Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, a season in the Christian calendar dedicated to purification and to preparation for Easter. February 1 also marks the halfway point between the Winter Solstice and the Spring Equinox, the midpoint of winter, the time when the ancient Celts celebrated Imbolc, the festival marking the beginning of spring.

Recognition:

- On Friday, January 12, the **Reproductive Justice Group** hosted a showing of *The Janes*, an award winning documentary film from HBO that tells the story of seven young women who called themselves “Jane” and built an underground service for women seeking safe, affordable, but illegal abortions. The well attended screening was followed by a discussion. Thanks to Laura Basanta and the RJG for such an interesting and informative evening.

- At the potluck after the Sunday service on January 21, the congregation celebrated the **2024 & 20 More** fundraising campaign with a cake provided by Roy Sumner. Thanks to everyone who donated to this campaign and thanks to the campaign team that has done such a great job--Miriam Link-Mullison, Roy Sumner, Jerry Molumby, Cheryl Robinson, Tom Robinson, and Jan Eisenhard.
- We are happy to see the return of the **Roundtable Readers** reading group after a pandemic-induced hiatus. The group met for the first time on Friday, January 26. Following its customary format, the group chooses both fiction and nonfiction books, and members select sessions they wish to lead. The group meets at CUF from 2-3 PM on the fourth Friday of the month. For more information about Round Table readers, contact **Arlene Pellow** or **Jan Eisenhard**.

Joining Round Table Readers or CUF's other current reading group, the **BYO Book Club** which meets at CUF on the third Tuesday of the month at noon, is a great way to meet people and engage at CUF. Those coming to the BYO Book Club are invited to bring a book they wish briefly to discuss and recommend, and also books for an exchange. For more information about this reading group contact **Laraine Wright** or **Astrid Norman**.

- On Saturday, February 3, CUF folks of all ages gathered together to create **Valentine Cards** at CUF. The result was that everyone in the CUF family received a handmade and personalized Valentine! Thanks to Miriam Link-Mullison for organizing this activity and to all who participated in it.

- Thanks to Nan Sorrels, Rob Gallegly and everyone who helped make CUF's **Eclipse Trivia Night** fundraiser so much fun and so successful. After expenses, we raised about \$1250 for the Fellowship! In addition to serving up a variety of tasty chilies, we enjoyed a great dessert auction, a festive table decorating contest, and a fun wine pull. Thanks to all who donated desserts and prizes including Sal's Bistro, La Unica Bakery, Cristaudo's, Quatro's, Harbaugh's, Larry's House of Cakes, Tequilas, the Thrift Shop, and Shawnee Trails, as well as Matt Sronkoski and Jan Eisenhard. Also, thanks to the following local wineries for their donations: Alto Vineyard, Hickory Ridge Winery, Honey Heist Mead Co., Honker Hill Winery, Kite Hill Winery, Peachbarn Winery, and Wichmann Vineyard.

- CUF folks continue to cook and serve meals at **Feed My Sheep** on the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th Thursdays of the month. Lead by Jerry Molumby, the group cooks and serves for those coming through

the soup line and cooks a hot meal for the Warming Center. They also prepare sandwiches for the evening meal at the Warming Center. Thanks to Jerry and all who work with him on this important CUF social action project including Laraine Wright, Jennifer Mandaville, Benita Powell, Lori Merrill-Fink, Laura Basanta, Jan Eisenhard, Jess Jobe, Bill Kline, Kathy O’Laughlin, and Rhonda Kosmicki. If you want to learn more or help out contact **Jerry Molumby**.

- Another important activity at CUF, spearheaded by the Social Action Team, involves food drives for various food pantries and other community charities in our area. On December 19, we delivered a wide variety of food products as well as personal hygiene items to Good Samaritan House in Carbondale. In February, the SAT is conducting a food drive for the **Saluki Food Pantry** which provides food assistance to SIU students in times of need, helping them to stay in school, and meet their educational goals. Bring your donations of foods and household/hygiene products to CUF during February.

CUF’s New Roof—Update:

In December the Congregation unanimously approved contracting with J & L Robinson as recommended by CUF’s Board of Trustees to replace CUF’s roof. As explained by me at our February 4 Congregational Meeting, since our December meeting, the contract with J & L Robinson was signed (on December 20) and bid solicitations have been sent out to various roofing contractors including Baine Roofing, Clover Roofing, and Geissler Roofing. Jerry Molumby and I met at CUF on February 6 with Leo Robinson and representatives from Baine and Clover to look at our building and the roof. Bids are due on February 20 and thereafter the roofing contractor will be selected, and the project will get underway. If you have any questions, contact me or Jerry Molumby.

Rose/Hayward Gift Proposal Selection Process:

Final revised proposals for funding through the Rose/Hayward gifts were submitted by January 15. Thereafter, a summary of each proposal, along with a link to access each group’s full proposal, was sent out to CUF members and posted at CUF’s website. If you need assistance in accessing these items, contact Rev. Sarah or me. Congregational Meetings to hear presentations of the proposals and to vote on the proposals will be scheduled in March and April. In between these meetings conversations to discuss the proposals will be held. Check CUF’s weekly Bulletin for information about these meetings.

Congregational Meeting, February 4

A Congregational Meeting was held after the Sunday service on February 4. As noted above, at this meeting, I provided a report to the congregation on CUF's new roof. Additionally, Miriam Link-Mullison updated us on the work of the Strategic Planning Committee on our **Strategic Plan 2024-29 "Creating Our Future."** After discussion, the congregation voted to approve revised Vision and Mission statements. Miriam also provided an update on the **Generosity Campaign "Giving Transforms."**

Treasurer Martha Shum presented a financial report as of December 31. Additionally, she explained to the congregation that, with the maturing of CUF's CD with Wells Fargo Advisors in January, the Board decided to place the CD funds, together with a portion of CUF's current bank deposits, in an FDIC-insured Wells Fargo Advisors money market account earning interest (currently) at 5.2%. This account allows for ready access to the funds as needed for the roof and other anticipated expenses.

There was considerable discussion of security options and activities at CUF. I reviewed what Jerry Molumby and I had done since the fall break-in including meeting with Carbondale Police to do a security review, as well as getting proposals from two security companies about various sorts of security systems CUF might install. I explained that at this point the Board had decided to install a "doorbell" camera and intercom as well as motion sensitive security lights at the back of the building. Additionally a "straw poll" of the congregation was taken as to whether CUF should invest between \$1900 and \$2700 in an interior motion detector alarm system. Unanimously, those at the meeting rejected that idea. Finally there was discussion about the Board's ongoing review of CUF's security and safe congregation policies.

December and January Services and Attendance:

The service theme for December was "The Gift of Mystery" while the January theme was "The Gifts of Justice & Equity." Attendance for both December's and January's Sunday services continued to be very strong with many attending both in person and online.

December

<u>Date</u>	<u>Adults in Person</u>	<u>Children</u>	<u>Zoom</u>
Dec. 3	52	8	12
Dec. 10	64	7	10

Dec. 17	50	3	14
Dec. 24	70	10	10
Dec. 31	40	8	18

January

<u>Date</u>	<u>Adults in Person</u>	<u>Children</u>	<u>Zoom</u>
Jan. 7	45	5	18
Jan. 14	Zoom only due to weather—no count recorded		
Jan. 21	47	8	16
Jan. 28	66	3	9

Things to Look Forward To:

There is lots going on at CUF in the next few weeks. Here are some events to mark on your calendar.

- The second annual **Coldest Night of the Year (CNOY)** fundraiser for the Carbondale Warming Center will be on February 24. Join or donate to CUF's team, the “Walk Ness Monsters” by going to <https://cnoy.com/location/carbondale>. Help us meet our goal of \$2,000! For more information, contact **Jeletta Brant**, team captain.
- Join CUF’s **Green Team for a hike on Saturday, March 2 at 1:00**. Gather at CUF and carpool from there to Fernlands which is a Green Earth trail and an easy hike. For more information about this family-friendly event, contact **Benieta Powell**.
- CUF member **Heather O'Malley** will lead two discussions of her novel, *Transitioning Home* on **Thursdays, February 22 & March 7, 7-8:30pm**. Thomas suffers a career-ending injury in Iraq, and during his long recovery, confronts his gender dysphoria. Through many obstacles greater than those Thomas experienced in combat, Emily is born. Sponsored by the LGBTQ+ Welcoming Congregation Team.
- CUF’s voter empowerment **2024 VoteLove** campaign is underway. A team of CUF members is again Deputy Registrars and will be registering new voters and answering questions at various locations

including the Carbondale Farmers Market. Additionally, CUF will host a **UUtheVote 2024 Watch Party** at **7 PM on March 14**. Check the weekly Bulletin for more information.

- The **Reproductive Justice Group** will host a discussion of *Killing the Black Body* by Dorothy Roberts. Meet in person at CUF in Room 6 to discuss the book on **February 29 from 5:00-6:30**. All are welcome to join the one-time discussion. For more information contact **Linda Linsin**.

- This year's **Generosity Campaign, "Giving Transforms"** has started! The theme focuses on how our pledges transform both the Fellowship and ourselves. Pledge information will be sent by email on February 26 with pledges due no later than **Generosity Sunday on March 24**. We want to hear from everyone! We will have "Generosity 101" meetings after the services on March 3 and 10. This is an opportunity for all, but especially newer members, to learn more about the pledging process and how we maintain the fiscal health of our Fellowship. Save the date for Generosity Sunday on March 24. It will be a special service and we will have our **Spring Frolic** after the service with music, children/family activities, and food.

