

October/November 2024 President's Report

I am writing this on an early December afternoon when the sky is gray, and the air is cold. Winter is on the way. But as I look back on October and November, I think of the warm and sunny days we enjoyed in what was surely one of our most colorful and prolonged autumns. It seemed as if summer would never end and that our first frost would never arrive.

This reminded me of a wonderful children's book, "The Stranger" written and illustrated by Chris Van Allsburg. One late summer day, Farmer Bailey accidentally hits an oddly dressed man while driving his truck home. The man appears uninjured but is stunned and confused. The doctor explains he has temporarily lost his memory but should be fine in a few days. The stranger stays with the Baileys helping with chores on the farm. While he is with them, however, the weather remains warm and the leaves on the trees of the farm stay green unlike the colorful autumn trees in the hills to the north. Then, one day the stranger pulls a green leaf from a tree and blows on it. At once it turns orange. Suddenly, the stranger remembers who he is—Jack Frost. He dresses in his old clothes and says goodbye to the Baileys. When he goes, the Baileys notice that the leaves have all turned and the air is cold and crisp. Written in the frost on the Bailey farmhouse windows are the words "See you next fall."



Remembering reading this wonderful book to our sons reminds me of the joyful magic of seasonal changes in the natural world around us. As each season passes and the next one begins to arrive, we eagerly anticipate what will happen and celebrate the transition that we know will come.

Events and Recognition:

October and November were busy months at CUF. In addition to our many regular activities, October saw our annual Congregational Retreat, a Special Congregational Meeting, and a presentation about the history of native women in Illinois. In November we held a holiday arts and crafts fair fundraiser and joined in the UUA's Climate Justice Revival. Details about these events and others are set out below. Read on.

- CUF held its **Annual Congregational Retreat** on Saturday, October 5 at the **Touch of Nature Outdoor Education Center**. CUF folks of all ages gathered for an interactive program presented by the Healthy Congregations Team as well as for guided hikes, a shared meal, and sing-along. This event, which returned just last year after the pandemic, is always a great time for CUF members and friends to come together. Thanks to members of the Healthy Congregations Team for the fun and insightful "Are You a Kite String or a Clothesline?" session, to all those who helped organize the retreat, and to all who attended.
- A regular activity coordinated by CUF's **Social Action Team** are food drives. With these drives, we help support various food pantries throughout our area. Our **October food drive** collected non-perishable food items such as cereal, soups, canned fruits and vegetables, muffin mixes, peanut butter, tuna etc. for the **Marion Ministerial Alliance**. Thanks to **Jess Jobe** and the rest of the Social Action Team for this effort—and to all who donated items.
- Another important group at CUF is the **Caring & Sharing Team**. Team volunteers offer help for CUF folks in need, such as essential shopping, delivering a few meals, or providing a ride to pharmacies or medical appointments. **Ashley Herd** has taken over as the Team coordinator from **Sage Banks**. Thanks to Sage for her service and thanks to Ashley for stepping up. If you would like to join this Team or if you need short term help, please contact Ashley Herd.
- Speaking of stepping up to help out, CUF has a new **Religious Education Coordinator**. Long-time CUF member **Rhonda Kosmicki** has been hired as CUF's RE Coordinator after having been our RE Committee Chair. As you will see as you read on in this report, Rhonda has already begun an array of great RE activities.
- On Friday, October 25 CUF's **Welcoming Congregation Committee** hosted a screening of the film "The Death and Life of Martha P. Johnson" in recognition of LGBTQ History Month. Thanks to the Rainbow

Cafe attendees got to enjoy refreshments and snacks, including goodies from Cristaudo's. Organized by **Alex Waller**, the film screening prompted lots of thoughtful discussion.

- In addition to our annual Generosity Campaign, financial support for CUF comes other ways, including various fundraising events during the year. Lead by **Miriam Link-Mullison**, CUF held a **Holiday Art and Craft Sale**. The main sale was on Sunday, November 10 right after the service. With over 10 artists contributing a wide array of goods, including jewelry, cards, stitchery, knit items and all sorts of other gifts, the sale was a real success. Coupled with a follow-up sale on Sunday, November 17, CUF raised over \$3000. Thanks to Miriam for all her work on this project, to all who contributed their creations to the sale, and to those who supported CUF with their purchases.

- On Saturday November 16 from 11 am to 1 pm **CUF's Green Team** hosted a **Climate Change Justice Revival** session as part of the UUA's nationwide program. Congregations around the country are hosting UU Climate Justice Revivals during 2024 and early 2025 "to collectively reimagine a spirit-filled and liberatory future. Through conversations, worship, and advocacy, congregations will work together to realize climate justice and collective liberation in our communities." The CUF Green Team session began with a showing of "The Story of Stuff" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GorqroigqM&t=12s>) over lunch. Then the participants broke into three groups and discussed three questions from a climate change/environmental perspective—What does the community need? What do I have to offer? What brings me joy? The groups then came together and shared responses to develop ideas about collective action we could take and a timeline. It was a great session of brainstorming, reflections, and reactions. Thanks to Benieta Powell, Susan Lutton, Laura Basanta, Joni Bailey, Rev. Sarah, and all the Green Team members for putting together this program.

The service the next Sunday morning, November 17 highlighted our congregation's involvement in the UUA's nationwide "Reimagine Together: From an Extractive Age to a New Era" climate justice event.

- The **Reproductive Justice Group** has been active throughout the fall. On November 19, the Group hosted a discussion of ***Fighting Mad: Resisting the End of Roe v. Wade*** by Krystale E. Littlejohn and Rickie Solinger, a book about what "reproductive justice" means and what it looks like to fight for it. Additionally, the Group continues to assemble "comfort bags" for women coming to the Carbondale area for abortion care. On November 24, after the service, the Group put together 300 bags!! What a great way to live out our value of love.

- The RE program led by our new coordinator **Rhonda Kosmicki** held a **Family Fun Night** on Friday, November 11. The group shared pizza and veggies and enjoyed puzzles, games and an autumn themed craft. It was a really fun time for our youth and their parents.
- The RE kids also spent the afternoon on Saturday November 23 **baking bread!** They made multiple loaves of two kinds of bread. One loaf was shared during our Bread Service on Sunday morning. The other loaves were given to local shelters. This annual activity is another expression of our value of love by our young people. Thanks to Rhonda Kosmicki for coordinating this year's bread baking.

Special Congregational Meeting, Sunday, Oct. 13

A special congregational meeting was held after the service on Sunday October 13. At this meeting two important proposals were considered and voted on by CUF members. The first was the **2025-29 Strategic Plan—Creating Our Future**. After a presentation by **Miriam Link-Mullison**, the chair of the team that facilitated and guided the congregation in developing the plan, the membership unanimously adopted it. Thanks to Miriam and the others on the team including **Roy Sumner, Nan Sorrels, Bill Kline, Bethann Seibold and Rev. Sarah Richards** for all their great work. Using the new UUA values as an overall structure, our 2025-29 Strategic Plan will guide us in the coming years as we pursue our revised Vision and Mission. The Strategic Plan can be found at CUF's website. To celebrate the adoption of our Plan, we shared a specially decorated cake made by **Laura Basanta**.

The other proposal adopted at this meeting was to use a portion of the CUF endowment fund income to augment the Rose/Hayward Bequest money to pay for **rooftop solar panels** for CUF. The Endowment Committee and the CUF Board had both reviewed and recommended this proposal to the congregation. **Laura Basanta** reviewed the proposal as explained in the meeting materials. She noted in doing so that solar panel installations are eligible for incentive funding from both the State of Illinois and the federal government. And that these two programs could reduce the net project cost by about 74%. Any incentive monies received by CUF would then go back into the endowment fund account. After discussion, the members voted to adopt this proposal. Thanks to Laura and to **Bill Sasso** for all their work on this project.

Singing Bird and the Importance of Native American Women in Illinois History, Saturday, October 26

On Saturday evening, October 26 CUF hosted a great evening with Kim Sigafus McIver! Dressed in her native regalia, Kim presented a history of Native Americans in Illinois with a focus on Native women-- what was considered "The Hidden Half." The interactive program allowed the audience to see into the day-to-day lives of Native women, including courting, marriage, and child-rearing. Kim also talked about their role in their husbands' lives, and how those lives affected Illinois history. Open to the public, the audience was able to pick up and view items used in daily life, learn Native language and music, and get the chance to play the drums.

This program was organized by CUF's Outreach Team, a group that seeks to heighten CUF's public profile to promote our congregation and its Vision and Mission. Thanks to team member Laura Basanta for all her work in planning and coordinating this event.

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October and November Services and Attendance:

The service theme for October was "The Practice of Deep Listening." For November, the theme was "The Practice of Repair." Our Sunday services continue to be well attended both in person and on Zoom.

Service highlights our annual **Thanksgiving Bread Service** on Sunday, November 24. In this intergenerational service, we celebrated the harvest, nourishing our minds, bodies, and spirits as we share bread brought by participants and hear stories of the bread's significance.

Another service of note was the **Special Post-Election Vespers Service** on Wednesday, November 6. As we all dealt with the outcome of the recent election, we gathered in community for a time to calm our minds and bodies with music, reflection, and sharing. In this wonderful service we shared with and supported each other.

October

<u>Date</u>	<u>Adults in Person</u>	<u>Children</u>	<u>Zoom</u>
Oct. 6	34	11	7
Oct. 13	56	7	10
Oct. 20	37	9	14
Oct. 27	51	7	12

November

<u>Date</u>	<u>Adults in Person</u>	<u>Children</u>	<u>Zoom</u>
Nov. 3	45	5	10
Nov. 10	64	15	14
Nov. 17	51	10	7
Nov. 24	55	18	9

Upcoming Events:

As we move through the holiday season, many events are coming up that should be marked on your calendars. Here are a few to note down. Also, be sure to check the weekly CUF Bulletin for information about everything happening at the Fellowship.

- Our annual **Kids Party/Parents Night Out** will be held on **Saturday December 14**. Part of our RE program, children get to enjoy an evening of fun activities including supper and our ever-popular Children's Christmas Shop where they can shop for gifts for family members for a dollar or less as well as other activities like crafts, games and more. While kids get to have fun at CUF, parents get some time to themselves to shop, have a dinner out, or just relax.
- Our seasonal celebration begins on Sunday **December 22** with our **Happy Yule!** 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, and the Yule log. This service will include music from the CUF choir and more.

- On Tuesday, **December 24 at 6:00 pm** we will celebrate Christmas with candlelight, carols, and story at this 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).
- Our annual “**Burning Bowl**” **Fire Service** will be on Sunday, **December 29** at 10:30 a.m. In this unique multigenerational service, we will once again bid farewell to the old year and welcome the new year with the fire ceremony. We’ll burn our outdated habits and thoughts and enter into a new year full of promise. The service will include music by Pat York.