

# Unichord

DECEMBER 2014



THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF ELGIN

## Focus Group and Survey Results



Hello. It's me again. And, for a complete change of pace, this month, the Pulpit Posse is not asking you for anything. (Don't expect that to continue.) This month, I thought it's time to share what we've heard just as a sanity check. Plus, we enter our Congregational Record and our proposed Letter of Call which is our attempt to attract ministerial interest. Last month, I gave a brief summary of the Beyond Categorical Thinking workshop and what we'd heard from that.

First of all, I am sharing the [Summary of the Focus Group meetings](#). In this document, we summarize what we heard in 5 different focus groups which were each asked what each person individually was looking for in a minister and, if different, what was the congregation as a whole looking for in a minister. Not surprisingly, the answers centered around certain common themes.

Secondly, we learned a lot from the survey responses. I know that there are a significant number of you who want to see and derive your own conclusions from the survey itself. For those who do, [here are the survey responses](#).

For those of you who like the Cliff's notes, here's what I think you said (without specific percentages):

Who are we?

Most of us want to attend our Sunday services at least twice a month for community and celebration of our common values. We attend for the fellowship and intellectual stimulation. We see ourselves as a loving, caring community which values the UU principles, the music program, and the spiritual diversity of our service and our members. Our educational programs are also a draw. We derive further value from our focus on environmental and social justice issues as well as spiritual growth. We employ a wide range of spiritual practices and attend a wide range of church activities, with 2 hours or less per week at the church being the average for most of us. In worship services, beyond the intellectual stimulation and the music, we also celebrate common values and the sense of belonging the services provide. We are a very talented lay group, providing leadership and participating in programs and responding to congregational concerns. The large majority of us want to see growth, especially in membership, in the near term. We are concerned about the management of our finances. We bring 60 of our children to our Religious Education programs and about 40 more of us participate in the adult RE classes.

We live close to the church, with most of us living within 30 minutes. We are a mature group, half of whom are over sixty. On the other hand, we have very few members under thirty. We are members generally of long

*Continued on page 6*

# Lise's Letter

It appears the holidays are upon us. By the time you read this you hopefully will have had the good fortune to have a nice Thanksgiving meal with loved ones and perhaps even have thought about a master plan for the rest of the holidays. Whether you have or haven't (or perhaps never will) made a master plan there are a few ideas I'd like you to consider during this annual time of giving:

- Donate to the Minister's Discretionary Fund at the Christmas Eve service
- Watch one of the videos at <http://www.uua.org/re/adults/militaryministry/index.shtml> and think about how we can be intentionally welcoming to veterans at UUCE
- Volunteer to organize Hospitality or the Greeter/Welcoming Crew at UUCE

Here's a little more information about each of these items.

**Minister's Discretionary Fund:** Last year, with the Executive Team's and Board's blessings, we received an offering for the Minister's Discretionary Fund at the Christmas Eve service. UUCE members generously gave over \$500 and this money helped other UUCE members with doctor's bills and other important life costs. Often, people will come to a minister when they are in financial need because they feel too embarrassed to go to a friend or family member. There are also times when people in the larger community need help, too. Providing the minister with this kind of resource is a way the entire congregation can help those in need. Please consider giving.

**Military Ministry:** There's a misconception out there that all people in the military have conservative religious beliefs, but do you remember a few years back when a family member was fighting the US military to have a Wiccan Pentagram engraved on their fallen soldier's headstone? Another misconception

is that military folks won't be welcome in our peace loving, liberal congregations, yet many of us have family members or friends who served or are serving in the military; we know how deeply their experiences have affected them and how much they need a supportive and loving community—someplace like UUCE. How can we explicitly let these folks who have served our nation so well know they are welcome here?

**Hospitality or Greeter/Welcoming Crew:** We all know how important it is to see a smiling face when we walk in the doors of a new place for the first time. It's even better if we have a chance to talk informally with folks to ask questions about the place we're visiting and learn about another's life over a low stress cup of coffee or tea. That warm greeting and inviting atmosphere lets us know we're truly welcome and wanted. Unfortunately, for the last several months we haven't had anyone to head up these two important functions at UUCE—folks are often left to find their own way upstairs and I think many of us besides newcomers are missing our regular coffee time. Please consider taking on one of these organizational tasks, alone or with a friend. For more information you can speak to a member of the Executive Team.

I hope you all have wonderful holidays!

Love,  
—Lise

Reverend Lise Adams Sherry,  
Interim Minister

## Need a Hand?

The Care Team coordinates the church's efforts in caring for members and friends at significant and/or vulnerable times in their lives. Contact [Leslie Yoshitani](#) or [Rev. Lise Adams Sherry](#) with such concerns.

# A Month of Sundays: December

12/7: Enlightenment Day

December 8 is known as Bodhi Day, the annual observance of when the Buddha reached enlightenment. We'll look at this tradition and consider how we might find enlightenment of our own. Service led by Reverend Lise Adams Sherry.

12/14: The Trees of the Dancing Goats

We'll celebrate the traditions of Hanukkah and Christmas in this multigenerational service. Service led by Kathy Underwood.

12/21: Yule!

We'll celebrate Yule and discuss how this holiday has influenced other winter celebrations. Service led by Reverend Lise Adams Sherry.

12/24: Christmas Eve Service

It's the annual time of year when we consider the ancient Christmas myths. Come join this candlelight service and bring some finger foods to share with each other after worship as well. Service led by Reverend Lise Adams Sherry.

12/28: Didja Hear The One About The Unitarian Universalist?

As we prepare for the new year, let's look at what denominational humor reveals about us from both sides of the coin. Service led by Susan Anderson and Elizabeth Closson.

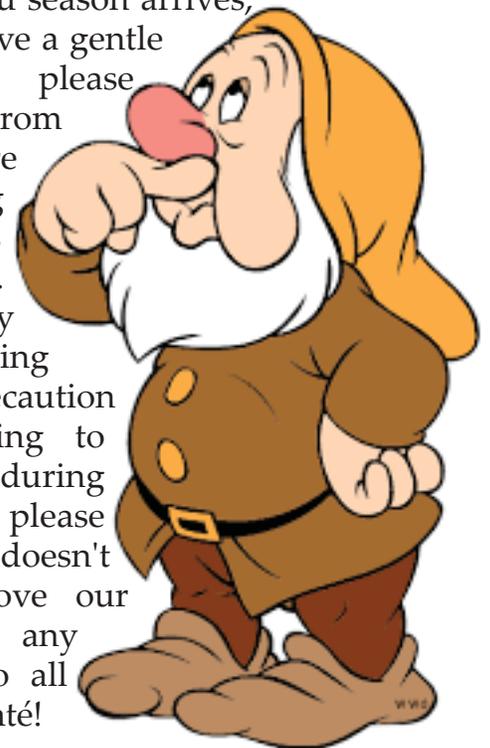
*Services begin at 10:30*

## CD Fundraiser

Gordon James, UUCE's Sunday morning pianist, is a professional musician with over 20 years of experience playing, producing and teaching music. Several years ago, Gordon produced an album of Christmas songs which some members of our congregation are lucky to already have in their collection. For those of you who didn't get one of Gordon's CDs the first time around, you now have the opportunity! Gordon is offering these discs for sale for \$5 each, with all proceeds going to UUCE. The CD is filled with 14 instrumental pieces, including Angels We Have Heard on High, Carol of the Bells, Winter Wonderland and The Little Drummer Boy. These make great stocking stuffers—get yours now! Look for the CDs near the piano. Questions can be addressed to Gordon James or [Andrea Schmidlin](#).

## Feelin' Sneezzy?

As cold and flu season arrives, we'd like to give a gentle reminder to please stay home from church if you're exhibiting contagious symptoms. Some folks may also be taking the extra precaution of not wanting to shake hands during greeting time; please know this doesn't mean they love our community any less. Here's to all our health. Santé!



# Lifespan Religious Exploration and Education



The holiday season is upon us, and for many, it is a stressful or even a sad time. For those with younger children, this can be magnified by their enthusiasm for the season.

You feel tired or depressed yet need to meet your child's needs and try to not to be a "downer" to their holiday spirit.

I had a long stretch of holiday blues—for an unknown reason. With time, I grew to realize that I was in control of what I took on, and to borrow from the popular movie "Frozen", was able to "let it go". I let go of the guilt I put upon myself for trying to make the holidays the most special for everyone. Trying to create an awesome holiday usually backfired so that it was the least special for me. And as they say, "If mama ain't happy, no one's happy".

Luckily, my family survived these years. "Balance" is slowly becoming my mantra. Of course, what that means to me will not be the same for you. It is a process of trial and error. I find that being honest with my family about my needs and feelings helps. If I had been smarter when my children were young, I would have included them in helping the family to balance what they wanted from the holidays – other than presents. Perhaps engaging them in a short conversation about what one or two things make the holiday fun and special to them, and have the family vote on a few of them, or pick one from each person's list to do.

Of course, hindsight is 20-20. If only I could go back and do it over!

## Family Event

We will have a family event on December 28 after the service. Depending on the weather, we will either go sledding or watch a movie. Look for announcements on the e-list and in the order of service later in the month.

Here is what is happening this month:

Adult Spirituality will take a holiday break and return on January 4.

### DECEMBER 7

- Preschool "Hanukkah"
- K-2 "Christianity: Las Posadas"
- 3-5 "Game Day"
- 6-8 "Intro to Judaism"
- High School "We Need Not Think Alike"

### DECEMBER 14

Winter Multigenerational Service – no classes

### DECEMBER 21

- Preschool "Christmas Is a Time to Share Our Love"
- K-2 "Wicca: Drumming"
- 3-5 "Intro to Hinduism"
- 6-8 "Judaism and UUism"
- High School "Beloved Community"

### DECEMBER 28

Children's Chapel – preschool through 8th grades at 10:30am

- Preschool "Kwanzaa"
- K-2 "Our New Year"
- 3-5 "How Ganesh Got His Elephant Head"
- 6-8 "Visiting a Synagogue"
- High School "Beloved Community Part 2"
- Family Event at noon

In Faith,  
– **Kathy Underwood**  
Director of Religious  
Exploration and Education

# President's Reflections



I am realizing this will be my last column as BoT President as my term ends 12/31/14. Although I will still be an active member of the Board till the end of next June, Jun Yoshitani will take over the helm for the next six months.

He will do a great job leading our next steps forward and I will be happy to work with and support him. I know you will too.

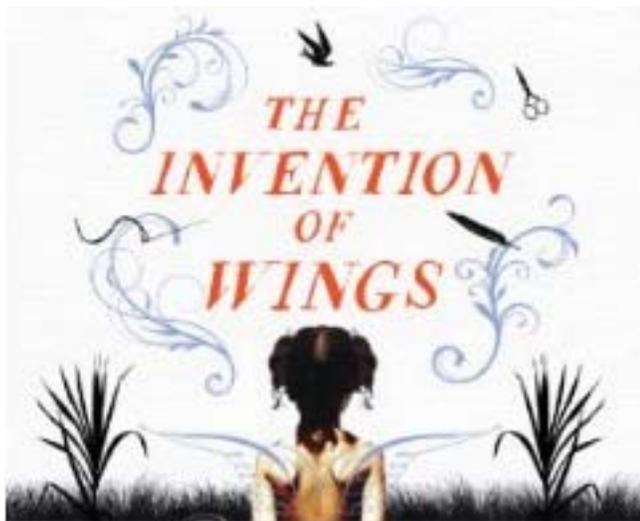
I imagine many of you are thinking I will be thrilled to relieved of this responsibility. I have to say that I move on with mixed feelings. It has been a true honor to be in this position for this moment in our church life together and I thank you so much for your trust and confidence as we worked through many questions and decisions.

I am also grateful for all the times I have been pushed to grow, to think through situations, to work with various groups, individuals or all of you to find our way in times when we have not known what we were doing or quite where we wanted to go. I have learned a lot about myself. I have also learned much about the rest of you, about your caring, your passion for what you believe in and your desires for our life together.

The path we are on is good for us, opening our eyes to things that are possible, which we may not have even considered before. We need to continue our open conversations. I know we will find the best choices as we encourage each other along our collective and individual paths. Together we will identify how to reach beyond our congregation to touch the greater wonderful world in which we live. I will be a part of that. I'll just be wearing a different hat.

— Elizabeth Closson

President,  
UUCE Board of Trustees



## Book Group Gets Its Wings

The Afternoon Book Group will meet at 12:30 on Monday, December 29, to discuss "[The Orphan Master's Son](#)" by Adam Johnson. Place TBD. On January 26 they will discuss "[The Invention of Wings](#)" by Sue Monk Kidd. Contact [Alice Macy](#).

## Deck the Halls

The Worship and Aesthetics Committees have been working together to finalize plans for the decorating of the church for the holiday season. The decorating will take place after the December 7 service and should take approximately an hour or so. Please consider sticking around and lending a hand—especially those among us comfortable with climbing a bit to hang some of the wreaths and garlands. If you have any questions, please contact [Henny DuBois](#), the chair of the Aesthetics Committee. (Also, feel free to bring a snack or beverage to share!)

Thanks,

Stephen Day  
Worship Committee

# Survey and Focus Group Results

*Continued from page 1*

standing, over half with ten years membership and the vast majority over 5 years. We come from a variety of spiritual backgrounds, the largest being former Christians, but we are strengthened by the UU affiliation. Two thirds of us are female and almost all are white and heterosexual. We are a highly educated congregation with over three fourths having a Bachelor's Degree or higher. The average income of our membership was in the \$50 to \$125 thousand dollar grouping with our average pledge at approximately \$1600.

## Who are we looking for?

Regarding a new minister, most of us want the minister to lead Sunday service during the regular year at least three times a month with our own laity filling the pulpit for the remainder. Since we see the message as the centerpiece of the Sunday service, we are interested in sermons regarding philosophical ideas, spiritual growth, personal growth and coping with life's issues. We want help understanding who we are and what our role is in our communities. We want to be inspired and filled with a sense of reverence and awe and encouraged to find fulfillment in social justice. We want a minister primarily to be a spiritual leader and an intellectual leader, a person who stimulates and challenges us out of complacency while fostering and enhancing our sense of fellowship and community. We want a minister who brings a high sense of professional competence, exhibits true empathy for others and, of course, has a strong moral character. We have very few reservations about the person who meets those requirements, regarding race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. In terms of a church staff leader, we want someone who is collaborative and cooperative, who leads by influencing, not by dictates. We desire a facilitator and

a supporter of expansion of small group ministries as well as individual spiritual and personal growth.

Of course, those are the highlights I derived from the survey. There is a whole lot more you said but the *Unichord* staff is pretty stingy with space for articles, so you'll have to look at the survey results themselves if you're interested. Anyway, the Search Committee will be presenting this information (dressed up a little bit) as our summary of who we are and what we are looking for. I hope we got it right because if we did, it's pretty clear that UUCE is a pretty fantastic group of UUs that any minister with an ounce of sense is going to want to serve. But don't believe me, read the survey. It's all there.

So until next month,

**Dan Hislip**

Chief Constable for the Pulpit Posse

## Pledges Short By 9%



Here are the numbers:

Total Pledge Income Budgeted:  
57,818.56

Actual Pledge Income Received:  
52,699.82

Short Fall:  
5,118.74 (9% down)

# Go 100% Renewable

Join the movement to 100% renewable energy from the wind and sun!

Moving beyond coal is a passion for Ethical Electric's founder, Tom Matzzie. After his father passed away from cancer related to coal-burning power plants in his hometown of Pittsburgh, PA, Matzzie needed to stop his own use of dirty energy. He installed solar panels on his home, but found that many homeowners and renters didn't have the resources or option to do the same. Matzzie wanted to find a simple way for people to switch from dirty energy, which also often funded corrupt politics in Washington, to clean energy.

Drawing on his experience with online organizing as the Director of MoveOn.org, he founded Ethical Electric. A licensed retail supplier of only clean energy, Ethical Electric works to transform the U.S. electrical market to 100% renewable energy. Ethical Electric has worked to make local solar and wind power available to as many homes and businesses as possible. Drawing upon veteran environmental advocates and a data team from the Obama campaign, Matzzie has signed up tens of thousands of members.

The average Ethical Electric member redirects \$1,000 of an electric bill per year from dirty energy, preventing the burning of thousands of pounds of coal. Ethical Electric is financially supporting wind and solar installations local to members' homes, from wind farms in Pennsylvania and upstate New York to cornfields in Illinois and solar panels on community supported organic farms in Virginia.

—excerpted from  
*The Conservationist*

You can make the switch yourself at <https://ethicalelectric.com>. Members of UUCE who have joined Ethical Electric include Alice Macy, the Clossons, the Schmidlins, Susan Stillinger, and the Masonicks.



*Abby Anderson performing at last month's Music Sunday*



Even though the All Peoples Inter-Faith Pantry gets an abundance of donations during the holiday season, they still have a need for one-pound bags of pinto beans, packages of spaghetti, jars of spaghetti sauce, and, you guessed it, cereal, peanut butter, and jelly.

Try to bring your donations on our Pantry Sunday, December 7, but, as always, your contributions are welcome anytime during the month.

# Happy Birthday!

3	Bob Sandidge	15	Meg Laflin
4	Tim King	19	Ethan Fincher
6	Rusty Winchel	20	Roberta Nauman
7	Linda Porter	20	Barbara Sugden
7	Mike Moutrie	23	Hannah Day
8	Ryan Flanagan	23	Leslie Yoshitani
8	Jun Yoshitani	24	Teresa Stultz
9	Barbara Iverson	24	David Nunes (Caruso)
10	Kole Talaga	27	Marilyn Hendry
11	Paul Hanifl	28	Benjamin Sharani (Swain)
11	Jim Bottino	30	Doug Pratt
12	Kurt Wachholder		
14	Jennifer Day		
15	Kassia Lesiewicz		

*If we missed your birthday this month, we apologize.  
Please let us know and we will add it to the list.*

## Last qUUilt Is Up For Grabs

The UUCE qUUilters have finished the raffle quilt and are selling tickets. The raffle tickets cost \$1 or 6 tickets for \$5. The drawing will be held December 7th. We are hoping that some people will help us sell tickets. We will have packets of tickets and a picture of the quilt to assist with sales. You can buy tickets or pick up tickets to sell at church after the service. The proceeds



from the raffle will be donated to the church. See [Darla Musson](#) for tickets.

The qUUilters have dispersed, so this is your last chance to win one of these beautiful quilts.



## Kudos!

- From Rev. Lise: Kudos to Andrea and Elizabeth Olson for leading our recent adult spirituality class, the Board for leading us during this challenging time of transition, Donna Askins and Elizabeth Closson for truly fabulous bread for our Thanksgiving service, Sheena John for learning and fulfilling our administrator position so well, all the musicians who contributed to Music Sunday, and the Search Committee for all the time and devotion they are giving to finding UUCE a new minister.



## Did You Know?

UUCE has been certified as a Conservation@Work site by The Conservation Foundation! Thanks, Green Sanctuary!

# UUCE Board of Trustees Minutes

Board of Trustees

October 15, 2014

Members present:

Elizabeth Closson, Jamie Yucuis, Jason Engel, Jun Yoshitani, Mary Knapp, Rev. Lise Adams Sherry, Stephen Day, Steve Stultz, Tim Davis.

Others attending: Andrea Schmidlin

## I. OPENING

a. Centering

b. Approval of Agenda

c. Appointment of Time Keeper and Observers

d. One Minute Check-ins

II. BOOK DISCUSSION – Jason reviewed chapter two of “Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times” by Peter L. Steinke.

## III. APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER MEETING MINUTES

## IV. REPORTS

a. Financial/Earmarked Funds Report: discussed Bookkeeper position.

b. Minister’s Report and Q & A

i. Elizabeth will be researching how other UU congregations handle supervision of church employees.

ii. Discussed how to respond to CAUUC billing. UUCE is active in the Western Crescent UU Group. Lise will write a

letter explaining why we aren’t paying a bill they sent.

iii. Jun will look into CAUUC activities.

c. Executive Team Report: Andrea is representing ET this evening.

i. Revising the Rental and Use policies. Last revision was in 2002.

ii. Children’s Chapel every fourth Sunday.

iii. Working on finding a facilitator for Hospitality.

iv. Recommends that BoT review the Gift Policy.

d. Transition Team Report

i. Participated in the Interim Ministry Review and the Preliminary Ministry Review.

ii. Still monitoring transition issues.

iii. Tim will put together a summary Interim Ministry Appraisal Document

e. Personnel Task Force Report – Lise

i. Received an update on committee work.

f. SMSC Report

## V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Policy Governance – final vote. Final document will be ready in November.

b. Notebook Updates – suggest BoT binder be moved to Google Docs, physical binder available by request.

i. Stephen and Jason have met and are reviewing materials that will be placed on Google Docs.

ii. Need to work out details on how revisions will be tracked.

c. Compensation package for settled minister

i. Dan Hislip has asked for a salary range to work with.

ii. Jamie sent the BoT the UUA Compensation Calculator. She also put together a five year average for UUCE minister salary.

iii. Discussed Settled Minister compensation package.

iv. BoT discussed ranges to provide to negotiating team.

d. Bulletin Board Maintenance: Tim will send Sheena the September BoT minutes for printing and posting.

e. Review of electronic votes during last month: None.

f. November Calendar items: self-assessment of governance process, review draft of employee handbook, finalize policy governance, touch base with stewardship committee, monitor treatment of staff, Endowment Committee report, Transition Team Report. (may appear elsewhere on agenda also)

g. Discuss possible solutions for deficit budget. Tabled until November.

## Ways to Get in Touch

### WEBSITE

[www.uuce.org](http://www.uuce.org)

### E-MAIL

[minister@uuce.org](mailto:minister@uuce.org)

[administrator@uuce.org](mailto:administrator@uuce.org)

[newsletter@uuce.org](mailto:newsletter@uuce.org)

### PHONE

847-888-0668

### POSTAL MAIL

P. O. Box 1032

Elgin, IL 60121

### PHYSICAL LOCATION

39W830 Highland Avenue

*three miles west of Randall Rd.*

## VI. NEW BUSINESS

a. Policies: resolution of staff difference. Posting of varying viewpoints.

b. Replacement of Bookkeeper: Done.

c. Remove mural of church at entrance

d. Reconsider membership: Done.

CAUUC

e. Reeducate congregation on how to schedule fundraising events, eg: Service Auction, Quilt Raffle

Motion made by Tim Davis to extend the meeting by ten minutes at 9:10. Seconded by Jun Yoshitani. Motion passed.

UPCOMING DATES: next BoT meeting 11/19

Respectfully submitted,  
—Tim Davis, Secretary



The Unitarian Universalist  
Church of Elgin

P. O. Box 1032 • Elgin, IL 60121



*Sunday morning services begin at 10:30*