

UNITARIANS IN RIDGEWOOD

100 YEARS OF FREEDOM,
COMMUNITY, AND CONCERN

Doris B. Armstrong



The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, New Jersey

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DEDICATED
to the past, present, and future
creators and supporters
of the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood.

—Doris B. Armstrong



The original building as it appeared circa 1912.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As prime author and editor, I acknowledge with deep gratitude the many who helped inspire, research, write, edit, print and distribute this book.

Were it not for the Centennial Celebration Committee's motivation and support, it would never have been written. Chair Marion Jones and the committee members provided advice and support while I learned that the process of producing a book entails far more than simply sitting down to write. Bob Chandler, Chair of the History and Archives Committee, and other members of that committee put the Society's old documents in accessible order, and recorded and transcribed interviews with past and present members of this society.

Bob Lindsay's legacy to this volume, his 1986 Historical Setting, begins the story. Barbara Goldberg researched and wrote much of the chapter Love Made Manifest, and my husband, Wayne Armstrong, edited Changing Times, Changing Minds: The Constitution. Bob Chandler compiled and interpreted the Unitarian Society's financial records and wrote the chapter The Foundation of Good Works. Ruth Lusky's and Tony Leto's essays on the Fellowship Feast performances and Roberta Svarre's description of the Medieval Feast and a New Year's Eve party help to exemplify the kind of merriment members invent while pursuing serious purposes. Researchers Eric Davies and Nancy Petrie on The Cottage Place Gallery, and June Shaw and Diane Hipkins on The Spirit of Music, made possible the chapters on the contribution of the arts to the Society's life.

Minister Terry Ellen provided a great deal of help on the history of Unitarian Universalism, lending books and engaging in lengthy and enlightening conversations.

Many, including Wayne Armstrong, Jane Diepeveen, Anita di Giulio, Nancy Mack, and Maggie Shoemaker, transcribed audiotapes of interviews with past and current members. And to all those who gave their memories through interviews, personal letters, and conversations, I offer deepest gratitude for making this a living history, not a mere compilation of facts.

Ellen Anderson, Don Anderson, Marion Arenas, Harriett Aschoff, Sid Babcock, Barbara Barry, Caroline Bolton, Kirsten Brainard, Gaia Brown, Jane Diepeveen, Delight Dodyk, Terry Ellen, John Handley, Sue Handley, Winnie Hawkins, Rosa Lee Holstein, Jim Hyatt, Pat Hyatt, Ginny Jones, Roger Jones, Vera Knapp, Barbara Koffel, Janet Lane, Tony Leto, Irene Lindemann, Helen Lindsay, Eileen Mohan, Roberta Moore, Carl Petrie, Nancy Petrie, Elaine Petrowski, Joe Petrowski, Evelyn Schneider, Thalia Sudnik, Ruth Uscher, Naomi Yanis, and Bob Zappa all had at least one hand in

the work, whether via interviews, research, editing, managing, printing, and/or distributing this volume.

Nancy Petrie, a member since the 1950s, and in charge of the office and editor of the *Newsletter* since 1971, deserves a special thanks for mining her good memory of the past and for keeping the old records safe during the many years when the Society had no system for preserving its history.

If I have missed anyone, forgive me. It takes a large team to produce a history. More than one hundred people have participated in the production of this book: truly a community work of love.

I have sometimes felt like a cross between a community gossip and a group psychologist as I chased down “the facts” and by asking pointed questions, re-opened old wounds. If in the researching and writing I have hurt someone by sins of omission or commission, my sorrow is genuine, and my apologies sincere.

There are sure to be errors in, and needed additions to, this volume. I urge all who have corrections and additions to send them to me in writing, so that addenda can be written at a later date.

—D.B.A.

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March 1957: Seven past presidents of the Society, 1926-58. Seated: William Deans, Jeanette Olson (Mrs. Robert L. Olson), Charles T. Greene. Standing: Malcolm B. Lees, Robert L. Olson (Mayor of Ridgewood), Nelson Park, Howard Crane.



June, 1986: Twelve past presidents of the Society, 1960-87, with minister Kenneth Leo Patton before his farewell dinner. From left: Bill Rosenquest, Russ Miller, Delight Dodyk, Don Anderson, Helen Lindsay, Bob Lindsay, Ken Patton, Sy Friedman, Bob Chandler, Kirsten Brainard (now Henrickson), Jack Ritter, Jim Hyatt, Naomi Yanis.

PRESIDENTS AND MINISTERS
of the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, New Jersey

PRESIDENTS:

Elmer Rodrigo	1896-99
James Warren	1899-1901
Elmer Rodrigo	1901-08
Frank Knothe	1908-09
Robert Weeks	1909-11
Harry S. Vincent	1911-14
Elmer Rodrigo	1914-20
Gertrude White	1920-22
Daniel B. Hayward	1922-24
Richard Wheelock	1924-26
Charles T. Greene	1926-30
William Deans	1930-31
Charles T. Greene	1931-38
George C. Porter	1938-40
Malcolm B. Lees	1940-47
Howard G. Crane	1947-50
Robert L. Olson	1950-53
Nelson Park	1953-56
Jeanette Olson	1956-58
John Manley	1958-60
R. William Rosenquest	1960-62
Howard Royslance	1962-64
C. Russell Miller	1964-66
Donald Anderson	1966-68
Robert Lindsay	1968-70
Seymour Friedman	1970-72
Robert Chandler	1972-73
Delight Dodyk	1973-75
Joseph Moore	1975-77
Jack Ritter	1977-79
Kirsten Brainard	1979-81
Naomi Yanis	1981-83
James Hyatt	1983-85
Helen Lindsay	1985-87
Wayne F. Armstrong	1987-89
George Arenas	1989-90
Robert Nash	1990-91
June Ritter	1991-93
Robert Jones	1993-95
Carol Patterson	1995-

MINISTERS:

George Henry Badger	
(Shared with Rutherford)	1896-99
Harry Jeschke	
(Shared with Hackensack)	1899-1902
Arthur Bryant Whitney	
(Shared with Passaic)	1902-04
George Henry Badger	
(Secretary, Middle States Conf.)	1904-07
Charles Graves	
(Shared with Passaic)	1907-11
Reuben Shaw Barrow	
First Full-time minister	1911-13
(Shared with Hackensack)	1913-14
Arthur G. Singsen	
(Shared with Hackensack)	1914-18
Wilson Marvin Backus	April to Nov.1918
"Supply" ministers	1918-20
Estella Elizabeth Padgham	
(Shared with Rutherford)	1920-21
Valentine G. Hartman	1921-24
(Shared with Hackensack)	1921-23
Joseph Loughran; (Full-time)	1924-25
Hubert A. Wright; (Part-time)	
(Hackensack High School English teacher)	1925-31
Milton Ernest Muder; (Full-time)	1931-39
Homer Lewis Sheffer; (Full-time)	1939-64
Kenneth Leo Patton; (Full-time)	1964-86
Josiah Bartlett; interim, (Full-time)	1986-87
Terence Holliday Ellen; (Full-time)	1987-

PROLOGUE

We have to do with the past only as we can make it useful to the present and to the future.

— *Frederick Douglass*

Jack Arnt gave the Buildings and Grounds report. He indicated the new custodians were getting settled in spite of difficulty in comprehending what the Society is all about. When they find out, please have them communicate their findings to the Board, as there may be members of the Society who could benefit from such knowledge.

— *Fred Burns, Secretary, in Minutes of Board of Trustees meeting, June 11, 1978*

Here it is: a progress report on the search for what the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, New Jersey, is all about.

In 1986 the seeds of this book were planted during the search for materials for the Society's 90th anniversary service. As an amateur with a great curiosity about those who founded and nourished this Society, I snooped—together with Delight Dodyk, Winnie Hawkins, Rosa Lee Holstein, Elaine Petrowski, and Betty Velonis—into the long-stored, never-used, disordered, musty records in the basements and closets of the Society's buildings. I never suspected that I was beginning the research for a history of this Society.

Both those documents and personal experiences give this history its basis. Special thanks are due to people who contributed their spoken memories. These oral histories are a treasury of personal views of the past fifty years. In addition, correspondence with former members who moved away has enriched this account.

Important sources for this history are the many Woman's Alliance Secretary's Books, 1896-1965; Rebecca Hawes' history, 1907, amended by George Badger and Rebecca Hawes, 1923; President Harry Vincent's history, 1914; President Charles T. Greene's histories, 1941, 1957; the original Membership Book; the minutes of Board meetings; reports and minutes of Congregational Meetings; the *Free Church News Letter* and the more recent *Newsletter*; addresses and writings by ministers Homer Sheffer, Kenneth Patton, and Terry Ellen; and correspondence between some of the ministers and "Boston"—i.e. the officers of the American Unitarian Association or, later, the Unitarian Universalist Association, obtained from the Andover-Harvard Theological Library. All were invaluable in making this account as true as possible. The personal experiences and recollections of former and present Society members

were another important resource—in conversations, letters and interviews.

In burrowing through minutes of the Board of Trustees, I often wanted to shake the secretary by the shoulders: “Hey, you, what really happened? What was the discussion really about? What were the points made? Did anyone become angry? Was everyone bored and tired?” But no: the secretaries often wrote such stunningly uninformative sentences as “There was a discussion of the minister,” or simply recorded motions made and their outcome. Much truth is lost to darkness when no record is made of human reactions. There were a few secretaries of the historical past whose minutes had human touches—notably, Jean ten Hove (late 1950s) and Fred Burns (late 1970s).

Although this Society has preserved many records, there are some gaps. The early years of the Society itself (as an entity separate from the Alliance) are the most sparsely documented. And most records for the early 1970s are missing.

There are many instances where, if time permitted, further research might have filled in the background. One very important example: Many leaders of this Society have not yet been interviewed for the oral history project. And the Hawes family history could be studied. How did the Hawes family first become Unitarian? How, at age 60, did Rebecca Hawes have the financial resources to contribute so generously to the Alliance and to the Society?

Presidents Elmer Rodrigo and Charles T. Greene deserve our attention.

Also, DeWitt Clinton, Jr., was the organist from 1900 to 1925. Was he a descendant of the famous New York Governor who built the Erie Canal? It would take time and persistence to research his genealogy, but the question is intriguing.

This book is partly organized on a chronological basis, and partly by topic. The chapters *THE EARLY YEARS OF THE SOCIETY, 1870-1931*, *A RADICAL IN THE PULPIT, 1931-1939*, *THE OUTRAGEOUS INTELLECTUAL, 1939-1964*, and *THE FREE VOICE, 1964-1986*, essentially chronological, focus on the ministers, and their relations with the congregation, to the end of Kenneth Patton’s ministry in 1986.

Later chapters are organized by topic, and cover approximately the years 1964 through 1986. The chapter *THE RECENT DECADE*, intended to show “how it all turned out” outlines only the major events of 1986-1996. And finally, the *EPILOGUE* is not a summing up, but instead attempts to suggest some of my thoughts about this passage through a century of Unitarian activity.

This book does not include a history of the Unitarian Universalist Association or its predecessors. A brief summary would, I believe, be too superficial; and an adequate treatment would be a book in itself. A good introduction to the denomination can be found in *The Unitarian Universalist Pocket Guide* published by Skinner House Books in Boston. Other sources treating the history of Unitarianism and Universalism are these:

Challenge of a Liberal Faith by George N. Marshall (Keats Publishing, Inc., New Canaan, Connecticut, 1970)

The Unitarians and the Universalists, by David Robinson (Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, 1985)

The Epic of Unitarianism by David B. Parke (Starr King Press, Boston, 1957).

The following statements were adopted as Bylaws by the 1984, 1985, and 1995 General Assemblies of the UUA:

PRINCIPLES AND PURPOSES

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

The living tradition we share draws from many sources:

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life. Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life
- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves
- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit
- Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support.

The Unitarian Universalist Association shall devote its resources to and exercise its corporate powers for religious, educational and humanitarian purposes. The primary purpose of the Association is to serve the needs of its member congregations, organize new congregations, extend and strengthen Unitarian Universalist institutions, and implement its principles.

The journey to discover truth through science, art, philosophy, or other paths; the helping and caring for people and the shaping of social structures; and the awareness of the mystery behind the ordinariness of life—these threads are braided together in the community of fellow seekers.

The century has not been without controversies and power struggles among Ridgewood Unitarians. Unitarian Universalists share the human dilemmas and weak-

nesses of all individuals and organizations. Good — that is, accurate and useful — history demands that such conflicts be recorded, along with the drama of the Unitarians' pursuit of their vision: creating and maintaining a warm community of religious free-thinkers, and furthering love and justice in the wider world.

I am grateful to the founders for incorporating the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood one hundred years ago, for it is my religious home.

Jack Arnt, please report these preliminary findings to the Board of Trustees.

— *D.B.A.*
March, 1996

HISTORICAL SETTING

*by Bob Lindsay (1925-1992) for the 90th Anniversary
of the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, October, 1986*

Looking back at 1896 from this distance, it is tempting to think of it as a time of innocence.

It was, for example, a time of bicycles. The automobile was barely born. Henry Ford drove a car for the first time in 1896. Only years later would we begin to insist on roads and highways that ate up the landscape and liberated the young to new kinds of licentiousness. Meanwhile, in 1896, something like four million people rode bicycles regularly. More than 300 factories in the country turned out more than a million new bikes a year. The New York Times index for the first six months of 1896 has five full columns on bicycle affairs and clubs and meets.

It was also a time of the early telephone. There had already been one phone in Ridgewood, back in the 1880's, in the home of the postmaster. He soon had it taken out, because he got fed up with so many calls from Paterson undertakers. But in 1895, a 10-line switchboard was set up in Tice's drugstore, corner of East Ridgewood and Chestnut. By 1896, the switchboard had 100 lines and a directory had 25 listings. Some other new things that year:

Idaho granted full suffrage to women.

Utah was admitted into the union, after promising to give up polygamy.

Gold was discovered in the Klondike.

A first moving picture, Edison's vitascope, was shown in a music hall in New York City.

A Professor Langley twice flew his steam-driven aircraft across the Potomac River.

The big tunes were: *Sweet Rosie O'Grady*, *There'll Be A Hot Time In the Old Town Tonight* and *My Mother Was A Lady*.

But not everything was innocent, nor all that different from now. Some American sea captains were brought to trial for running men and ammunition into Cuba, to help the contras of that day. Two years later, it became an official American war. In Nicaragua, there was also a revolt, and there both we and the British sent in marines – "to protect property," we said.

It was a time also of intense debate about international trade and the value of the dollar. The Republicans nominated William McKinley for president, on a platform of the protective tariff and the gold standard. At the Democratic convention, William

Jennings Bryan made his famous “crown of thorns” and “cross of gold” speech, and was nominated on a platform favoring the free and unlimited coinage of silver. Probably as few people understood these things as do now, but they talked about them with great certainty—as they do now.

The New York Times index for 1896 makes no mention of Unitarians anywhere. In four columns, under *Religious Intelligence*, there are entries for every other denomination you can think of, including Moravians and Theosophists. And also for a devil hoax in New York City schools that caused a panic, a big uproar in the Salvation Army over the firing of its American commander, and a court case on barber shops that opened for Sunday shaving.

But if the world—or anyhow *The New York Times*—took little note of us Unitarians that year, the people of this town and vicinity learned to pay attention early on. And who better to tell that story than ourselves? Which we now proceed to do.

THE EARLY YEARS OF THE SOCIETY 1874-1931

The first Unitarian movement in Ridgewood, N.J., was made late in the winter of 1874, when two ladies, of whom the writer was one, started from there in a sleigh one Sunday morning to find a Unitarian church in New Jersey. Both were old members of the Unitarian church of Buffalo, N.Y., and had been for four years without any liberal fellowship, except that of Mr. and Mrs. B. F. Robinson of Ridgewood, old members of Dr. Dewey's church in New York.

They had been told by Dr. Bellows that there was one Unitarian church in New Jersey, at Montclair, in charge of Rev. Mr. Harrison. The drive of fifteen miles was made in time for the morning services, and after dining with a hospitable member they returned home the same afternoon. They afterwards attended a Unitarian Conference held in Montclair the next summer turning from it with the firm intention of finding more "liberals" in northern New Jersey, if possible. . . .

—Rebecca Williams Hawes

Rebecca Hawes was a leading founder and life-long supporter of the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood. The second lady she mentions was most likely her mother, Lucy Williams Hawes. Thus begins a tale that spans the years from early lay services in the homes of Benjamin Franklin Robinson and others, to the formal founding of a Unitarian Society in Ridgewood in 1896, and its growth for a century thereafter.

The Ridgewood, New Jersey, area began changing from farming country to an area of suburban dwellings during the period following the coming of the railroad in 1848. Robinson came to Ridgewood in the 1850s. The Haweses arrived much later, in 1870.

Samuel W. Hawes, (1810-1882), his wife Lucy Williams Hawes (1812-1894) and Richard Hawes (1837-1926), came from Buffalo, New York in 1870, where they had been members of the Unitarian Church. Samuel Hawes' business was oil: whale oil, and later oil from wells in Canada. Their son Richard was employed by the Erie Railroad. Following Samuel Hawes' death in 1882, Lucy Williams Hawes lived with their children until her own death in 1894.

A small dedicated group held lay Unitarian services (ca. 1879-81) at the Benjamin Franklin Robinson home in Ridgewood during the cold winter, but in warm weather met in the unheated Ho-Ho-Kus Valley Schoolhouse, at that time part of St. Bartholomew's Mission, which later became St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church. The religious liberals sang and read from the Unitarian hymnal, and read sermons by well-known ministers of the time.

Unitarian ministers known to Samuel and Lucy Hawes – the Rev. Stephen Camp,



Rebecca Willams Hawes,
1836-1924

from Brooklyn, and a minister named Russell Bellows – came occasionally to lead services in Ho-Ho-Kus for as many as thirty people.

Benjamin Franklin Robinson bought a portion of the Van Emburgh Estate in Ridgewood in 1853. His property may have fronted Maple Avenue near Robinson Lane, near what is now called Cottage Place. The story handed down is that this gently curved street was the original carriage drive to their home. Robinson was one of the Village leaders who planted shade trees along Village “highways” (as a 1916 history states it) in 1860 and again in 1880. In 1865 he was offered the position of Ridgewood’s first postmaster at \$10 a year. Whether he actually served is doubtful, because as a government worker for the Internal Revenue Service, he could not hold another government job simultaneously.

The Episcopalians benefitted from the Robinson’s concern for religion. He gave to Christ Episcopal Church the part of the Robinson estate upon which it still stands. In 1883 Christ Church moved its wooden building, which had been located elsewhere in Ridgewood, to the present Cottage Place location of the newer stone structure. In 1900, some time after the Robinsons died, the Unitarians purchased a bit of the estate next door to the Episcopal Church from the developers of the Robinson land.

Charles Greene's 1957 history tells the story this way:

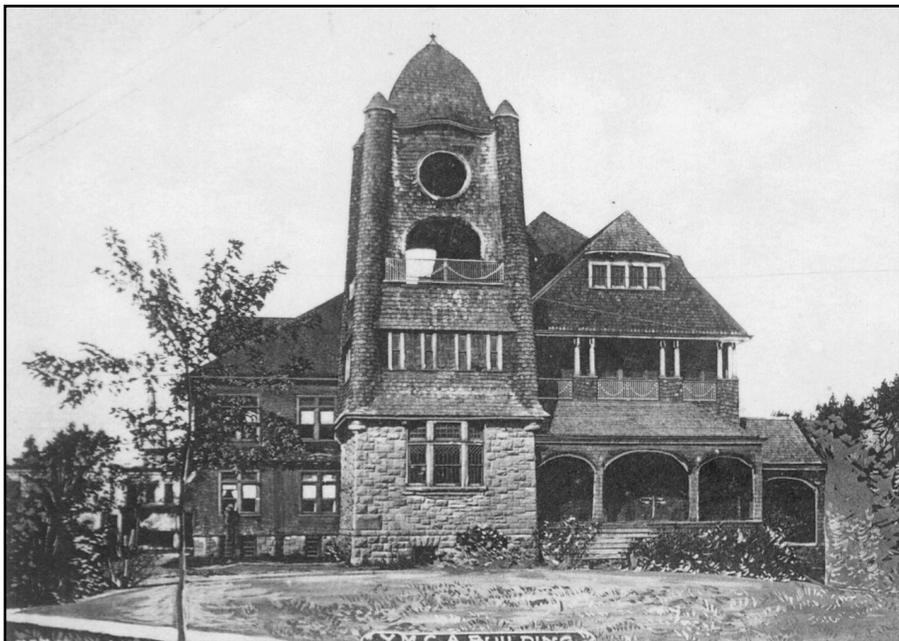
The site which . . . the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood finally selected for their church home had also been a part of the Robinson estate; but the Robinsons were dead, and what the Episcopalians got for nothing, the Unitarians had to buy—consecrated Unitarian ground!

The original Robinson mansion, after the decease of the owners, and while in the possession of others, burned down, and the whole estate later became a real estate subdivi-

George Henry Badger, first minister of the Society



The Opera House where the first lectures and organizing meetings were held, 1895-96



sion. Yet to this day [1941], many fine specimen trees and shrubs survive as reminders of what was once a handsomely landscaped estate.

After Robinson died, probably about 1880, no Unitarian services took place for the next fifteen years. By the last decade of the 19th century, the village was burgeoning, and many new businesses and houses of worship were established.

Rev. Stephen Camp of Brooklyn visited the group in Ho-Ho-Kus and Ridgewood several times. According to an account by Hawes' daughter, Rebecca, Camp urged Rev. Frank S.C. Wicks of the new Passaic congregation and Rev. George H. Badger of Rutherford to arrange a series of six public meetings in the Ridgewood Opera House in the fall of 1895. This large building stood on the site of the present (1996) bus station and parking lot, between Prospect Street and Van Neste Square.

Seven persons came to the first meeting, which was led by Frank Wicks. Another was led by social reformer and Unitarian minister Edward Everett Hale (best remembered as the author of "The Man Without a Country"). By the sixth meeting, an audience of twenty appeared, fourteen of whom rented a basement room at the Opera House for Sunday afternoon services. Rev. Badger led these meetings, beginning January 5, 1896. His only compensation was his train fare between Rutherford and Ridgewood. The group also paid \$1 a week for a janitor, and \$5 a month for a Vocalian reed "pump organ"—probably the same one that the Unitarian Woman's Alliance finally purchased in 1900. Thirteen Sunday meetings were held in the four months preceding April 2, 1896, when the band of fourteen took steps toward incorporation by appointing a committee to draft a constitution.

At a subsequent meeting May 7, 1896, the following were present: Mr. Elmer Rodrigo, Mrs. Anna Rodrigo, Miss Rebecca Hawes, Mr. Hugh Levick, Mrs. Agnes B. Levick, Mr. Richard W. Hawes, Mrs. Sophia Blauvelt, Mr. H. D. Hartley, Mrs. Grace Hartley, Mr. Thomas F. Stoddard, Mr. Badgley [sic; this appears to be a misspelling of Rev. George Badger's name.] They unanimously adopted the draft of the constitution, and elected the following officers and trustees: Mr. Elmer Rodrigo, President; Mr. Thomas F. Stoddard, Secretary; Miss Rebecca W. Hawes, Treasurer; Dr. W. B. Williamson, Trustee; Mr. W. F. Catterfield, Trustee; Mr. C. Stearns, Trustee; and Mr. William Traver, Trustee.

Apparently none of the four trustees was present on that historic May 7. The Society applied for incorporation in Bergen County May 20, 1896. Their application was reviewed and recorded May 23.

The original *Roll of Membership* lists twenty-one founding members, but only 16 surnames. Elmer Rodrigo was president for a total of 16 of the 24 years from 1896-1920.

Two "platform meetings" were held to introduce the Society to the wider community, with the help of the American Unitarian Association (AUA), at the Opera House on Tuesday and Wednesday, October 13 and 14, 1896. Six Unitarian clergymen spoke, attracting an audience of two hundred.

Badger was still recompensed only with a railroad ticket for commuting between Rutherford and Ridgewood, but later the AUA began to send him \$37.50 a month for his work in Ridgewood.

The group held its first religious service Sunday, December 3, 1896, probably at the Opera House with George Badger as minister. A Miss Warren was the “voluntary organist,” playing the Vocalion.

Later Rebecca Hawes and George Badger would record differing views of the Society’s origins. Badger felt the organization resulted from “missionary” activity on his part, with the help of fledgling Passaic minister Frank S. C. Wicks, supported by a general missionary effort in northern New Jersey by the AUA. Badger denied any initiative on Stephen Camp’s part:

The genial and inspiring influence of Rev. Stephen H. Camp of Brooklyn was a most helpful factor in the development of the New Jersey churches—but . . . the Ridgewood church [did not] receive its initial impulse . . . from Mr. Camp.

To keep the record straight, in 1923, the year before her death, Rebecca Hawes rebutted Badger’s interpretation:

The first Unitarian movement in Ridgewood, New Jersey, was started in 1874 in Ho-ho-kus by Mrs. Lucy W. Hawes who was the founder of the present Unitarian Society of Ridgewood. She enlisted the help of Mr. and Mrs. B. F. Robinson and others of Ridgewood and Reverend Stephen Camp of Brooklyn. . . Mr. Camp often conducting the services. . . Mr. Badger knew nothing of this movement. . . When Mr. Badger began his missionary work in 1895 it was Mr. Camp who reported to him the needs of the few Unitarians left in Ridgewood, but it was not until 1896 that Mr. Badger began services there. . .

Rebecca Hawes was passionately devoted to liberal religion and to the little Ridgewood group that had first gathered 20 years before Badger’s appearance. In spite of their rivalry, Hawes and Badger, together with President Elmer Rodrigo, kept the little Unitarian Society of Ridgewood alive in those early years. The energy behind formal organization of Unitarians in Ridgewood, Rebecca Williams Hawes was 60 years old when the Unitarian Society was founded.

Rebecca Hawes was a community activist, a teacher of sewing and music, a musical performer, and a woman suffragist. Her contributions made up a good portion of the funds raised by the Woman’s Alliance for the benefit of the Society. Rebecca Hawes, her mother Lucy Hawes, and her sister-in-law, Amanda Hawes, organized a Saturday sewing school in Ho-Ho-Kus when the family lived there in the 1870s. The Ramapo Valley Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution was founded in 1900 by Amanda Hawes, with Rebecca Hawes as a charter member.

In 1877 Rebecca Hawes opened a private school which she ran for two years. Two of her pupils were her niece and nephew, Elizabeth and John Hawes. From 1871 until 1894, she was “the only music teacher in the district extending from Allendale to Hawthorne. . . and during that time took part in the first public concert ever given in Ridgewood, and also furnished the music for the first kindergarten class and the first dancing class,” according to a 1916 Ridgewood history book.

Rebecca Hawes had been organist at the Paramus Reformed Church, and her brother Richard Hawes the choirmaster there. Both of them enjoyed participating in staged musical entertainments as early as 1878.

In 1895, Elizabeth Cady Stanton published *The Woman’s Bible*, in which she expli-

cated sexist aspects of Bible-based theology. It is not surprising that the Unitarian Society had among its members women who worked actively for suffrage. As the only member in northwest Bergen County of the New Jersey Woman Suffrage Association, Rebecca Hawes petitioned for the “restoration of full school suffrage for women and obtained a hundred signatures in Ridgewood and Ho-Ho-Kus” in 1894. When women of the town insisted on brick construction for the new school, Rebecca Hawes took the opportunity to ask the board to support the cause of extending suffrage in school elections to women.

The new Woman’s Political Union, a more militant suffrage organization than the Woman Suffrage Association, met for the first time at the Hawes’ home in 1913, electing Unitarian Maria Knothe as one of the officers.

In May, 1899, Badger’s leadership ended, and Rev. Harry Jeschke was ordained and installed as minister at \$450 a year. Jeschke also served the Unitarian Congregational Church, on Park Street in Hackensack. It was he who served the Ridgewood congregation during the period of buying a site and erecting a building, a process that had begun in 1897, when the Unitarian Society made a deposit and offered to buy a lot on Godwin Avenue. The lot belonged to the Houston (pronounced *HOW-stun*) family, and the price was \$650, half of which the Unitarian Woman’s Alliance pledged. An anonymous historian wrote eloquently:

The trustees having acted with celerity in accordance with the authority given them to close for the Houston lot on Godwin Avenue, and having paid a deposit to bind the bargain, discovered that title thereto was subject to litigation. Being human, like all of us, and law suits being usually interminable, as immortalized by Dickens in his Bleak House, the trustees confessed that they couldn’t see the end of the case, hence recommended that the Society empower them to get back the deposit and look elsewhere.

The group, meantime, had moved its Sunday services to Hutton Hall, on Godwin Avenue. That location near the railroad proved to be too noisy, and in the fall of 1899 the Society rented Mrs. Buck’s Schoolhouse at the rear of her residence on Cottage Place.

The search for a permanent location was delayed by the president, Elmer Rodrigo, who had counted on the availability of the Houston lot.

At the annual meeting held May 4, 1899 . . . the president—Mr. Rodrigo—explained that he had not pushed the matter of the cancellation of the contract because he had been led to expect a momentary favorable termination of the suit. Mr. Rodrigo may be pardoned for his optimism, which seems to be shared by most lawyers who are wont to regard as a brief settlement any that can be effected within one generation.

Trustee Hugh Levick objected to the delay and insisted on demanding the deposit immediately, and establishing a separate building fund for which subscribers would be solicited. The Board of Trustees was reorganized, with James Warren chosen as president, and Elmer Rodrigo as treasurer. President Warren suggested four specific locations at a July, 1899, meeting after the deposit of \$250 for the Houston property on

Godwin had finally been returned. Levick's demand for a building fund had already materialized: \$775 was already subscribed, and \$370 received. The rest was assured at the rate of \$8.60 a week.

James Warren was re-elected president for another year, but Rodrigo was not even chosen as a trustee. Warren resigned from membership in the Society in October, 1901, and Rodrigo was then reinstated as president that same year.

Two women, a Miss Hawes (both Rebecca Hawes and her niece Elizabeth Hawes could rightfully be called "Miss Hawes") and Belle F. Stevens were voted as members of the building committee. It was uncommon in other religious organizations for women to hold such influential positions. A high proportion of the woman suffrage movement leadership was made up of Unitarian and Quaker women.

On February 3, 1900, three lots in the Franklin Avenue-Cottage Place-Maple Avenue area were available at prices ranging from \$638 to \$1,000. Of 23 members at that special meeting, 14, in a voice vote, preferred the Cottage Place site at \$700, "with the refusal of 55 additional feet at the same price of \$10 per front foot." Rodrigo demanded a "rising vote," but President Warren ruled him out of order, and the majority sustained the ruling, despite C. H. Lomax Mitchell's request that there be discussion of Rodrigo's appeal.

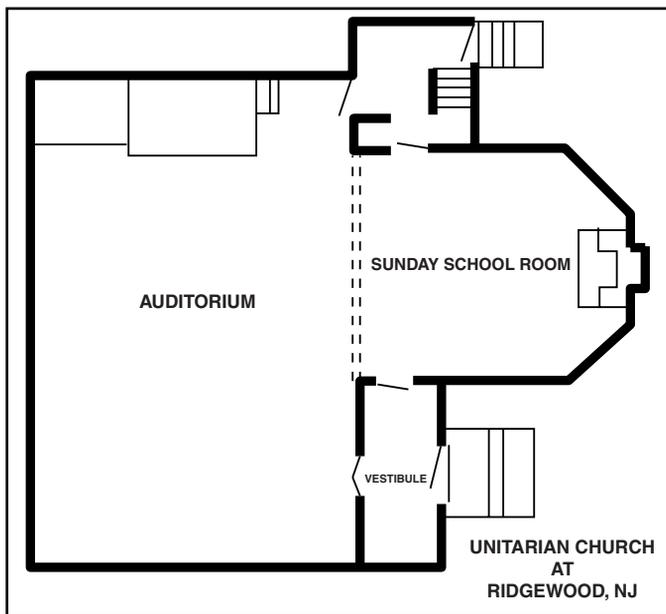
In May 1900 the Cottage Place lot, which had originally been part of Benjamin F. Robinson's estate, cost \$700, the equivalent now of about \$11,000. \$300 came from the Woman's Alliance, \$75 from the New York League of Unitarian Women (the equivalent of today's Metropolitan District of the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation) and the rest from individual contributors, including \$38 from Rebecca Hawes and \$25 from her niece, Elizabeth Hawes, who was working for the Treasurer's Department at Standard Oil at the time. Elizabeth Hawes' employer, H. H. Rogers, "made possible the acquisition of the lot on which our church stands." One might suspect this is an exaggeration, but very likely he did make some contribution.

On May 3, 1900, the purchase was completed. Unfortunately, having neither a crystal ball nor unlimited funds, the Society did not pursue the right of refusal on the extra 55 feet of property. The building was designed by architect Raymond Weeks and constructed by Peter Zabriskie, Jr., starting in August 1900, at a cost of \$2700. It was completed and first occupied by Society members on December 2, 1900, at a special meeting.

The operating fund as shown in the Treasurer's Record Book reveals that in 1900 members contributed as much as \$1 a week, and by 1901, when the building was completed and furnished for use, 34 individuals were subscribing.

The AUA held an interest-free mortgage of \$1400, which the Woman's Alliance agreed to repay at \$140 annually for ten years, and actually paid off in nine. When in 1909 the Alliance made the double and final payment of \$280, they voted to name their organization after their founder. It remained "The Rebecca Williams Hawes Alliance" during the rest of the organization's existence.

When the Robinson home was lost to a fire, legends say that someone saved the carriage stepping stone with "BFR" or "GAR" carved on it, which became the corner stone of the church building, in recognition of Robinson's role in furthering liberal religion.



Floor plan of original building

Searches in recent years for the cornerstone have been unsuccessful, probably because additions to the building have covered it.

The Unitarian Women's Alliance of Buffalo, New York, contributed the first pulpit, made of oak. It is still in the possession of the Society (at present, 1996, in the basement of the main building). An attached silver plate is inscribed as a memorial to Lucy Williams Hawes, the mother of Rebecca and Richard Hawes:

*In remembrance
Lucy W. Hawes
1812-1894
Given Jan. 1901 by
Women's Unitarian Alliance
Buffalo, N.Y.*

Other gifts came from friends in Boston, Ho-Ho-Kus, and Ridgewood. The New York League of Unitarian Women sent \$75. The Women's Alliance raised \$201.96 for seats and carpet. The chimney was given by Boston and Ho-Ho-Kus friends, and the platform chairs by Mrs. Harold D. Bartley of Ridgewood.

The building was dedicated February 10, 1901, with the well-known Rev. Minot J. Savage, D.D., of Church of the Messiah in New York, preaching the sermon. The Vocalion organ again provided music. It was in use until 1924, when the pipe organ was installed.

The anonymous author of a history of the years 1896-1901 wrote:

A letter was received from Mr. Badger, offering to present the Society with a bible [sic] a large one or a smaller one. Upon motion, the President was requested to write Mr. Badger accepting the gift of the larger bible [sic] mentioned! We have it with us today quite the largest, or at least as large as any now in use in Ridgewood!

On the preceding evening [before the May 2, 1901 annual meeting], the building committee had decided to suggest to the Society to use the money which would probably be in the Treasury by Fall (chiefly unpaid subscriptions) to erect sheds for horses. The minutes read: "They think an arrangement can be made with the builder of the Church to put up sheds during the summer at his convenience, same to be paid for in the Fall."

The large Bible is still in the Society's possession. Obviously, the shed for horses no longer exists.

With at last a proper meeting house, the Society advertised the Sunday services in local papers. One of Jeschke's sermon topics was "Is the World Essentially Better Today Than in the Past?"

Rev. Jeschke resigned in May, 1902, because of ill health, and was succeeded in October by Rev. Arthur Whitney.

The harsh winter of 1903-4 caused a serious problem for those who lived a distance from Ridgewood. On occasion only two people attended services. Services were often held in the afternoon, because Whitney held morning services at the Passaic Unitarian church.

Audiences and membership began to increase when George Badger left his Rutherford pastorate and returned to Ridgewood as acting minister (1904-07). At the same time, Badger undertook new responsibilities as Secretary of the Middle States Conference of the AUA.

In 1912, a parsonage behind the main building was built and rented to the minister, Rev. R. Shaw Barrow, who was Ridgewood's first full-time minister. After two years, the Society shared Barrow's ministry with Hackensack in 1913-14. Hackensack's agreement



The 1912 parsonage, later known as Sheffer House, as it appeared in 1984.

to this arrangement was vital to the Ridgewood Society, because it could not afford to pay the full-time salary for one more year.

President Harry Vincent said that Rev. R.S. Barrow had “strengthened the Sunday School.” Indeed, the Society had begun a church school under Barrow’s leadership in 1911. At that time the Unitarian Sunday School Society in Boston was pleading for funds, claiming that it received only three cents of every dollar given to the AUA. Rebecca Vincent served as Sunday School head, and possibly the only teacher. Her husband was president of the Society.

Helen Knothe Nearing, daughter of members Frank and Maria Knothe, remembered her childhood in the Unitarian Sunday School in a recent interview:

Ten to 12 children from four or five families went to Sunday School. Mrs. Vincent, a tiny woman who lived across from our family on Cottage Place . . . taught Sunday School the entire time I attended. Mrs. Vincent was a shy woman, and it must have been a real contribution for her to get up and teach the children each week. We were given 5 cents each week to give to the collection. We gave a nickel, and as a ritual we got tiny white, gold-trimmed cards (about 1 x 1/2 inches) with a passage from the Bible such as a Psalm.

SAVING LIBERAL RELIGION

Early this century, evangelist Billy Sunday held huge crowds spellbound with his fundamentalist message which included vigorous attacks on liberal religion, including Unitarians, whose religious stance was far from his.

Unitarians in the New York area, outraged by Sunday’s doctrine of hell and damnation, decided to fight. They called for money and volunteers from local groups to set up colorfully decorated Unitarian “bookrooms,” where publications about Unitarianism were distributed, next door, if possible, to locations where Billy Sunday preached.

In the spring of 1915. . . Billy Sunday swept into Paterson, and in the interest of sound morality, revived the old theology—or should I call it demonology?—with a jealous God. . . He didn’t much like the Unitarians or the Universalists or the Christian Scientists. Their respective creeds seemed to him too happy. . . He took a good many shots at the above-mentioned sects, some very clever ones, at which the tense excited multitude that thronged the tabernacle burst into a roar of releasing laughter and went away hardened and intolerant. . . People began to ask Unitarians if they were Christians. . . and to suspect them of being downright heathen. . .

Was it strange then, that mysteriously, over-night, as it were, there blossomed out in the vicinity of Sunday’s great wooden tabernacle, insultingly near it, a Unitarian booth bright with banners and slogans of the faith. . .? That the young minister [Arthur Singesen] in Ridgewood announced a course of sermons explaining the Unitarian faith. . .?

The New Jersey Associate Alliance made a booth, and the Ridgewood Woman’s Alliance, on April 12, 1915, voted to supply three members to take charge of the Unitarian “book room” in Paterson on April 19. A Miss Hawes [probably Elizabeth Hawes], Hattie Hall, and “Mrs. H. S.” [i.e. Rebecca] Vincent agreed to serve “for the day only,” perhaps in order to set limits on their commitment, or possibly because they were not needed for longer duty to the anti-Billy Sunday cause.

Efforts to counteract Billy Sunday's preaching continued in Trenton in 1916 and in New York City in 1917. Area Alliances funded lectures by New York Unitarian clergy to speak in halls located near Sunday's campaign, to provide a liberal religious presence, and to present the public with an alternative view of religion.

THE WOMAN'S ALLIANCE

President of the Ridgewood congregation Harry Vincent wrote in 1914:

The Woman's Alliance, an auxiliary organization. . . has devoted its energies to rebuilding the church as well as in the wider field of home missions, particularly in the relief of special cases of destitution which have been brought to its attention.

Contrary to Vincent's description, the Alliance was not an auxiliary. It was an organization separate from the formal polity of the denomination.

Women of the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood formed a Branch Alliance immediately after the Society was incorporated, in June of 1896. Women from the Woman's Alliance of Passaic and a Mrs. Catlin of Brooklyn came to Ridgewood to organize nine members. Its purpose was:

To quicken the religious life of the church; to bring the women interested in the church into closer acquaintance, cooperation, and fellowship; to disseminate information concerning the meaning and purpose of the Unitarian fellowship of churches; to devise ways and means of assisting the local church financially; and to cooperate as far as possible with benevolent and social welfare projects of church and community.

The Alliance did not consider itself a "committee" of the Society. It was run by women, and the agenda was decided by women. It functioned as a vehicle for social action for like-minded women, some non-Unitarians, meeting in the church building and in each other's homes.

The Ridgewood Branch Woman's Alliance was a part of a state division, the New Jersey Associate Alliance; and of a national organization, the General Alliance of Unitarian and Other Liberal Christian Women; and in addition, the New Jersey branches worked, with the New York League of Unitarian and Other Liberal Women, a regional association. These Alliances had a wide network of charitable, political, and denominational projects and helped each other accomplish work beyond the needs of their local congregations.

The first President was Rebecca Williams Hawes, with Mrs. Charles Parigot, Vice President, Mrs. H. D. Hartley, Secretary and Mrs. Charles Zeilley, Treasurer. Rebecca Hawes was Secretary of the Alliance from about 1905 to 1917. Her niece Elizabeth Hawes, and later Fredericka Wadsworth, were among the subsequent secretaries. Most meetings in the early years were attended by six or eight members and guests; later, in the 1920s, sometimes as many as 15 or 20 women attended. Meetings were held on Monday or Tuesday afternoons, twice a month.

Women, although they had no right to vote in United States elections, were not disenfranchised in the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood. They not only voted, they also served on the Board of Trustees—a departure, surely, from the custom in other churches. The Alliance minutes of May 7, 1908, show the women's self-effacing formality felt to be good manners when accepting office:

The Alliance gave the Annual supper to the members of the Unitarian So'cy and their families. In spite of a record-breaking storm of wind & rain, undaunted "liberals" gathered at the table & enjoyed a very satisfying & social hour together. The tables were removed, & after a short social talk, the members were called to order for the Annual Election of Officers of the Society. The result is a matter of Church record, but it should be also recorded here, that the three members of the Alliance, already serving as Church Trustees, were unanimously re-elected, an indorsement of their services which they vainly tried to decline. [Emphasis added]

— *R. W. Hawes, Sec'y*

The Alliance put women in close touch with other Unitarian women throughout the country. The systematic communications among Alliances included invitations to "guest meetings," and "appeals" for money or items to sell at rummage sales and fairs.

The Alliance served its members as a social and intellectual fellowship. A typical meeting opened with a hymn, and readings ranged from the "Lord's Prayer" to "The Poetry of Housework" to the unorthodox religious views of the politician and lecturer on agnostic thinking, Robert Ingersoll. Sewing, quilting, bandage-making for hospitals, rug-making, or "fancy work" such as embroidery and crocheting, always followed the business meeting. Members made handkerchiefs, aprons, dusting caps, infant layettes, quilts, and rag rugs to sell at the next fair, or to send to other Alliances across the nation. Every meeting ended with tea. On February 6, 1905, the secretary humorously wrote:

The meeting then adjourned to spend a pleasant half hour over the tea cups, every one enjoyed that part of the afternoon but the Sec who was on a diet and so could only look on while the others enjoyed themselves.

— *Cynthia B. Mitchell, Sec.*

The Alliance organized ice cream socials and dinners as fund-raisers. The women had decision-making power: When they earned money, they chose which charity to give it to—often the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood.

The Alliance's various committees were housekeeping, social service, international work, devotional service, "friendly links" (correspondence with other women) "open table" (an on-going sale of baked goods, sewing, and other items) and Associate Alliance, which was the New Jersey umbrella group of local Branch Alliances. With a total membership of only 10 or 12 during the early decades, Alliance committees organized dinners, fairs, sewing, lectures and readings, parties and even housecleaning of the premises. The Alliance organized the first Church School under the leadership of Mildred Fogg, probably in 1911.

In 1903, someone read aloud "The Life of Patrick Henry" while members tufted quilts. In 1904, the Alliance decided to read great religious teachers, and write essays on their readings. They spent \$2 for materials to make a quilt as a Christmas gift to Alice Badger, the wife of the first minister of the Society. The Badgers had recently returned to serve again in Ridgewood (1904-07).

In November 1906, the Alliance held a Japanese Tea and Thanksgiving sale, which netted \$128.58 (about \$2,000 in 1990s dollars). On another occasion the Alliance sponsored a lawn party with platform dancing.

A literary committee of the Women's Alliance began a series of lectures open to the

public in 1904-5. The readings were a source of income as well as of intellectual stimulation.

Rev. Elizabeth Padgham from the Unitarian Church of Our Father in Rutherford was a frequent visitor, joining the Alliance's 1907 "Readings" series to discuss Robert Browning's 1841 narrative poem, *Pippa Passes*, which ends:

*The year's at the spring,
The day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hill-side's dew-pearl'd;
The lark's on the wing;
God's in His heaven—
All's right with the world!*

Padgham's discussion is not summarized in the Alliance minutes. In *Pippa Passes*, the silkworker Pippa, singing as she passes by on her only work-free day of the year, unknowingly converts evil-doers to better ways by the sweetness of her songs. Her innocent faith—"God's in his heaven—/ All's right with the world!"—is in ironic contrast to the narrative's depiction of sweatshop labor, prostitution, adultery and murder. That same year, the new minister, Rev. Charles Graves, read works by Hoosier poet James Whitcomb Riley. It is tempting to infer that he may have discussed "Little Orphan Annie's Come to Our House to Stay", in which the little girl is kept as household help.

In these poems by Browning and Riley, the cheerful goodness of the girl worker is the most evident theme for a casual reader, but there was opportunity for the minister to criticize a society that exploits powerless workers.

The "silver offering" (collection plate) at these meetings paid for water pipes into the church, water bills, and the expenses of a sewer connection. Building repairs and the minister's salary were also funded in part by Alliance contributions.

From its inception in 1896, and until the mid-1960s, the Woman's Branch Alliance initiated most of the Society's social outreach. The 1896 Alliance started "The Women's Exchange," known today as the Community Thrift Shop. Rebecca Hawes ran the Exchange for two years. Maria Knothe also took a turn as head. Proceeds paid \$1,200 annually to women who were in need of work.

The early Alliance supported several AUA committees. One was the Southern Schools Committee: The Alliance sent donations to the Snow Hill, Alabama School for Colored Girls (\$5 in 1905); a barrel of clothes in 1906 to Kowaliga, Alabama; and money for a well, and clothing, to a school in Swansboro, North Carolina. The Alliance supported Southern Circuit work, pledging \$20 in 1924, increasing to \$30 in 1926, and \$50 later in 1926.

In studying the Alliance minutes, current member and past president Delight Dodyk, an instructor of history at Drew University, Madison, NJ, discovered that:

Our women were constantly sending money and sale items to other Alliances for fund-raising projects. And other Alliances were doing the same for us. In fact, Alliances in West Newton and New Bedford, Massachusetts (Rebecca Hawes' birthplace) sent money for many years through our Alliance to help support the Society in its infant years.

Her research describes a special project—aiding a particular family in the South over a period of years:

In 1909 women of the Alliance began correspondence with a family named Brown in Spencer, Virginia, thus participating in a Progressive Era interest and concern with conditions in the rural South. They corresponded with the Browns for years, sent them barrels of clothing and household items, financed the nursing education of one of the daughters, and sent funds for the family to buy a cow. In 1915 the Alliance received a letter from the Browns describing an “astonishing state of affairs” [the nature of] which unfortunately Hawes never reveals in her minutes. There are suggestions in later minutes that the father was taken from or left the family. Keeping abreast of what was happening, the Alliance finally in 1917 called upon the Child Labor Committee of New York (a non-governmental agency) to look into the plight of the family.

From 1909 on, requests for books from a Mrs. Searle in Trenton were answered with books or magazines sent to Minetota, Trenton, Branchville and Chester, New Jersey; and Statesville, North Carolina. In addition, the Alliance shipped magazines to schools in Panama.

In Ridgewood, the Alliance donated books to a storefront library, sent contributions to the Home for Incurables in Ridgewood, sewed for the Paterson General Hospital, and sent \$10 and the pledge of \$5 annually to Passaic Hospital to help endow “The Ridgewood Room.”

In 1910, the Alliance voted to contribute \$1.50 toward the Village’s Safe and Sane Fourth of July celebration. The community-wide committee was initiated by the civic section of the Woman’s Club, and Maria Knothe became vice-president of the new Independence Day Association. The Knothes and other Ridgewood residents designed, directed and produced this celebration, including a parade and fireworks display, which attracted nationwide attention.

In 1915, the Alliance pledged to give an annual subscription to the Fund of the Social Service Association of Ridgewood, the forerunner of the Ridgewood’s Family Counseling Service.

After the outbreak of hostilities in Europe, Maria Knothe attended the first meeting of the newly founded Women’s Peace Party, a feminist pacifist group. She presented the party platform to the Alliance in February, 1915, and urged that “The Unitarian Church stand in back of the Peace Party in Ridgewood.” Her position was unanimously endorsed by the Alliance. Delight Dodyk explains:

The Women’s Peace Party was a counterpart of similar European women’s anti-war groups of the time. It counted among its leaders women such as Jane Addams of Hull House in Chicago, Crystal Eastman, the radical sister of equally radical Maximum Eastman, Carrie Chapman Catt, the President of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, prominent feminist writer and lecturer. Our women’s support of the Party places them decidedly at the liberal edges of respectable womanhood and also makes it clear to me that they would have been supporting woman suffrage (another major issue for women of their day) without the blink of an eye.

The AUA was not that radical, however. It refused to offer any assistance to congregations whose minister endorsed pacifism. In New York City, Rev. John Haynes Holmes

and his congregation, appalled that the AUA was not living up to its ideals of freedom of the pulpit, withdrew from the AUA altogether and took the name Community Church. It is now reaffiliated, however, with the AUA's successor, the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA).

There is no record, except for the Alliance minutes quoted above, of the stand taken on pacifism by the early ministers and members of the Ridgewood Society.

During World War I, the Alliance held all-day meetings to produce bandages for the Red Cross and Paterson General Hospital, and joined other church women of Ridgewood in making more for World War I relief in Europe from the winter of 1915 on. The Unitarian women received special commendation in the local newspaper of April, 1917, for their "T" bandages, probably those designed for head wounds. That same year, the Alliance formally joined the newly organized Ridgewood branch of the Red Cross, a natural step. The founder of the Red Cross, Clara Barton, was a Universalist; the Alliance women could not know, then, that Universalism and Unitarianism would merge in 1961.

Although November 11, 1918, was Armistice Day, Alliance minutes for that date tell only of the possibility of buying Canadian postcards to benefit blinded Canadian and American soldiers in England.

An emergency call from the Red Cross for "warm garments for destitute French and Belgians" led to three successive all-day meetings to prepare a shipment. When the Washington, D.C. Alliance established a fund for "rehabilitating a wrecked French village," the Hawes Alliance promised \$10.

THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY DURING WORLD WAR I

Elmer Rodrigo, the first president of the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, a founding father and trusted supporter through the difficult formative and war years, served as president for 16 of the 24 years between 1896 and 1920, when he moved to Newark for business reasons. During his last term, from 1914-20, World War I and the influenza epidemic took their toll of members' energies, and attendance was poor. Charles T. Greene wrote that the Society "almost collapsed" between 1915-1920.

During the war, services were reduced to one Sunday per month. At Rev. Barrow's departure in 1914, he was replaced at both Hackensack and Ridgewood by Rev. Arthur Singsen. The records contain little information about Singsen, but the Alliance Annual Report of April, 1915, has an appended note:

In November a meeting of the Society was called to vote on retaining Mr. Singsen permanently, or close during the winter. The Alliance members opposed [closing], and have paid for coal and repairs, in addition to their usual contributions.

A visitor described this scene at the Ridgewood Unitarian Society in 1916:

If you had dropped in there of a Sunday afternoon at four, you would have seen a tiny group of people, ten or fifteen, two or three of them elderly, listening to an earnest young man. . . . You might have thought the young man to be a lecturer on social reform, for he seemed to have something vital to say on the great torturing problems of the day and of social as opposed to merely personal righteousness. As a matter of fact, he was the Unitarian minister shared with Ridgewood by the neighboring town of Hackensack.

Singsen remained as minister in Ridgewood until 1917.

In April, 1918, Rev. Wilson Backus came, but he left Ridgewood only three months later.

THE 1920s

The 1920s were a period of substantial suburban growth and real estate development in Ridgewood. The Unitarian Society, however, was still unstable, with a succession of short-term, shared ministers. The Society could not afford to pay a full-time minister.

Ridgewood and Hackensack's next shared minister had left the Reformed Church for Unitarianism. Rev. V. G. Hartman was described to the AUA officials in glowing terms:

. . . a great sermon builder . . . considerable ability as an artist in drawing. . . artistic sense of proportion in relationship . . . rich figurative language . . . suggestive rather than a didactic style. . . His general background of tradition is not New England but he is a keen student, and I believe with a general sense of the fitness of things. But his library shows a good line of reading. . . very hard worker . . . On grounds of heresy he may be asked to quit [his Reformed Church pulpit] at any time. . .

Hartman came in 1921 with his wife and a growing brood of youngsters. He displayed special musical ability: "His basso profundo vied with Mr. Clinton at the Vocalion in maintaining the tempo." The two churches alternated the time of services: the Hackensack church had morning service, and the Ridgewood church afternoon service, for a while; then he switched the schedule for another period.

Prices were high during this inflationary period. The cost of living in 1919 was 79% above the 1914 rate. In 1921, the Woman's Alliance wanted to give the Hartman family the traditional gift of a turkey for Thanksgiving. However, they were unable to give anything better than a gift of potatoes. Turning price inflation into humor, one of the women penned the following:

*In olden days, now far away,
It used to be the fashion
To give, upon Thanksgiving Day
A turkey to the Parson.
From farmer kind or "Ladies Aid"
The welcome gift was always paid.
The proverb says "New days, new ways"
And years of trying war-time days
Of meatless, sweetless, wheatless days,
Followed by urgent Red Cross days
And "starving European" days
And "starving children's" days
And far and near East days,
And Social Service days,*

*And countless other days,
Have trained us in more thrifty ways.
Now in present post-war days
The turkey soars on wings of gold
And leaves most of us in the cold!
Trained by these years of saving days,
And keeping still the frugal ways,
In place of turkey for your fare,
Dear Parson, we, your humble flock,
Can only add unto your stock
This bag of 'taters, "not too good
For human nature's daily food."
Still hoping that some wealthier friend
May, yet, a big, fat gobbler send.*

By the fall of 1923, Hartman was no longer minister at Hackensack, but in addition to his full-time ministry in Ridgewood, he was selling life insurance to school teachers.

In February, having difficulty making ends meet, he asked the Board of Trustees for more money. The Trustees, however, could grant him only an immediate bonus of \$50, the maximum constitutionally allowed without congregational approval. His \$1000 salary was the same as it had been previously when Hackensack had shared the expense of his salary. The Ridgewood Society, paying double what it had previously, could not give him more, and he resigned.

One difficulty of a small budget and a small congregation is that the power of the few big givers is literally over-powering. With the best intentions, one person with a passionate interest may control the group unwisely. Hartman resigned when the Society was improving the building with a kitchen and bathroom, a pipe organ, and a memorial window. The pipe organ and window expenses were only partly defrayed by Rebecca Hawes' trust fund. The kitchen addition mortgage was guaranteed by the Alliance, with generous amounts from the Haweses. Yet the group could not—or at any rate did not—pay its minister enough to live on.

In May, 1924, Hartman wrote in desperation to the Board of Trustees:

Having finally come to the conclusion that I can no longer endure the mental strain that sermonizing has always placed upon my mind, I wish to inform you that I cannot be with you next year. Indeed, my state of mind now is such that I should greatly appreciate having the church relieve me of any further necessity of appearing in its pulpit. I wish that I might be able to complete the church year, but knowing that my sermons can no longer be any inspiration to you nor any satisfaction to me, because of the reasons stated, I believe it would be to the best interests of all to bring our relationship to an end with May rather than June.

The Annual Report of May 1925 states:

At the time of the last May meeting, V. G. Hartman was minister of the church. He found it impossible, however, to divide his time between business and the ministry and was impelled to hand in his resignation, which was accepted with regret.

REV. ELIZABETH PADGHAM AND WOMEN AS LEADERS

Unitarians in Rutherford strengthened women's leadership by choosing as minister Rev. Elizabeth Padgham. Padgham grew up in a Unitarian family in Syracuse, New York, and graduated from Smith College with the ambition to become a Unitarian minister. Her parents and her college friends heartily disapproved, but she persisted and studied at Meadville Seminary in Pennsylvania; Harvard's theological school, although Unitarian, was unwilling to admit women. After graduation, she headed West to Iowa as one of a group of female Unitarian ministers who had studied at Meadville.

Padgham came to the Church of Our Father in Rutherford in 1905. While there, she was much sought after for her warmth and wisdom as a counselor.

Elizabeth Padgham performed the marriage ceremony for the parents of the Ridgewood Society's Betty Amidon Velonis (1916-1993). Padgham christened Betty, and then in 1924, christened another Rutherford baby, Tom Franklin, a future, long-time member of the Ridgewood Society. Years later, Betty Velonis, recalled with pleasure feeling free to drop in at her "Aunt Betty's" neighboring home in Rutherford.

Of course she lived right back of the church (in Rutherford) just two houses from where we did, and I always felt privileged to go there. She was nice to me, let me in, and gave me a crayon—

Padgham marched in a big suffrage parade in New York City, even though some of the women in the [Rutherford] church "had come to her all up in arms . . . [fearing] she would disgrace the church . . ."

It has been the custom to list Padgham as minister in Ridgewood for the years 1918 to 1921. One must suspect that she may have been a reliable and willing volunteer, coming to Ridgewood to perform an afternoon service on many a Sunday when the Ridgewood Society would be without a minister. Financial records show that from April 1920 to June 1921, Elizabeth Padgham was paid thirteen times, in amounts varying from \$15 to \$30. Perhaps she was in charge in Ridgewood, but not expected to make the trip from Rutherford, where she lived behind the church, to Ridgewood every Sunday. She may have arranged for other ministers when she could not attend. Fifteen other ministers occupied the pulpit at least once each that year, including Rev. W. R. Hunt, who spoke on eleven Sundays.

Ridgewood offered Padgham \$800 for a 40-week year in 1921: \$20 for each week she occupied the pulpit, and \$5 a week for "all other times," but there is no record of a salary having been paid.

Padgham retired after 22 years in Rutherford and returned to Syracuse. She was a member of the May Memorial Church there, and died December 4, 1952. Her obituary in *The Christian Century* reads, in part:

She would quickly demur any eulogy on this day, because the whole interest of her life lay in a different dimension.

That which she possessed in her life, she gave back to the lives of others, a quiet strength of cheerful living and a ready service of devotion working a kind of invisible chemistry of encouragement. Call it faith! Call it love! Call it what you will and if you knew her



Elizabeth Padgham, minister
1920-21

at all you will know it is not the thing you call it. And one hour knows it as well as a lifetime. She had discovered the contagious process of goodness which is the soul of ministry.

The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood had female leadership in the president's chair as well. Gertrude White, wife of G. Derby White, was a Regent of the Ramapo Valley Daughters of the American Revolution, of which Rebecca Hawes was a founding member. The Whites, who had been very active in their Unitarian church in Flatbush, moved to Ridgewood about 1917 with their son and daughter, becoming members of the Ridgewood Society in 1918. In 1920, the year women gained the right to vote, the Society elected Gertrude White to the office of president, which she held until 1922. (The next woman president was Jeanette Olson, 1956-58.)

G. Derby White's avocation was horticulture. He was a founding member of the Ridgewood Garden Club, an all-male organization fostered by Unitarians Claudius, Henry, and Fred Wadsworth. The Garden Club met and held shows in the Unitarian building in the 1920s and 1930s. White specialized in iris, and in alpine plants for rock gardens. His garden on South Irving in Ridgewood featured a large sloping rock garden with a summer house in the hollow at the bottom, the setting for his daughter Florence's wedding to Walter Myers.

Many present members of the Unitarian Society gratefully remember Florence White Myers, for providing garden flowers or graceful sheaves of "weeds" and grasses every single Sunday morning, from the garden she maintained long after her father died. She didn't stop until about 1985, when she grew too frail to ride her bike to Sunday morning services. She now (1996) lives with her daughter, Kathryn Bugbee, in Maine.

THE ALLIANCE IN THE 1920s

In the 1920's, through the single-handed work of Francis Hale Wheelock, the Alliance supported the AUA's Post Office Mission, an earlier version of the UUA's Church of the Larger Fellowship. Wheelock mailed reading material obtained from Boston to isolated, unchurched, religious liberals.

In 1921, in response to an appeal, the Alliance sent \$15 to help children of the Unitarian Church in Hungary.

In 1920-21, The [Alliance] Annual Report states:

Two all-day meetings have been held during the summer for special work for the "Red Cross." At our regular meetings for sewing, 12 layettes, 100 caps were made, and 150 garments were repaired to be sent abroad to the needy.

And in a similar report for 1922-23:

We made six doz. caps for Red Cross, donated two sheets, four bath towels, two hand towels, six wash cloths and made one layette for our town Social Service. Other sewing at our meetings consisted of forty various articles for sales. We made Christmas Tree stockings for the Church School entertainment.

In November of 1922, Trustees and members of the Unitarian Society borrowed money to add a kitchen to the building. The Women's Alliance guaranteed the mortgage.

In 1927 a large window commemorating Rebecca Hawes' mother, Lucy Williams Hawes was installed above the chancel, in accordance with Rebecca Hawes' bequest. At the same time the building was expanded with a foyer, and at the southwest corner, another social room, separated from adjoining spaces by wooden folding walls.

Charles Greene's account of the original building's primitive nature is illustrative:

The original church building was heated by a coal-burning, hand-fired furnace only on week-ends. Often the president of the Society doubled in the role of stoker; often the minister after we had retained one on a full time basis. During the chilly autumn and cold winter days . . . the Alliance could not meet in the church building. Besides, there were no other facilities available—no "powder room", no cookstove—in fact no kitchen!

So, one of the first projects undertaken by the women of the Alliance was to raise funds towards the cost of adding a kitchen to the main building, and installing therein - first in their thoughts - a kitchen range! The Rev. Edward S. Carson, then our neighbor and rector of Christ Episcopal Church, testified that the first cook stove and kitchen he ever saw in a church was in our Germantown Church in Philadelphia, the one founded by Joseph Priestly, English Unitarian clergyman and scientist, who was driven out of England because of his heretical religious opinions.

We are not here suggesting that the kitchen which the women of our Alliance financed was the first culinary department incorporated within one of the Ridgewood churches; but it probably was one of the first.

At a meeting in March 1924, the Alliance entertained a speaker and participated in a group working for Law Observance and Law Enforcement, contributing \$5. In 1925, the Chairman on International Relations of the Ridgewood Woman's Club called for a joint meeting of the women's organizations to endorse the World Court.

On January 20, 1925, Alliance members discussed ideas obtained from other

Alliances—various “how to” topics, such as how to raise money with an “open table,” and how to conduct a business meeting. On housekeeping:

. . .that the housekeeping should be in the hands of one lady each month. Her duty is to see that the Church is in order for service on Sunday, especially the dusting; also to see that those who serve the refreshments do their work thoroughly, burning any garbage in furnace or fireplace, rinsing dish towels. . .

And especially on “program:”

. . .a change in program, i.e., to have Alliance members who belong to other denominations read us something characteristic of their religious thought. As we are liberal Christian women, we can enjoy the beliefs of others.

The explicit mention of non-Unitarian members of the Ridgewood Alliance is in accord with membership policies of the General (i.e. national) Alliance, offering an organization for all liberal religious women, Unitarian or not. The title of the national and regional organizations included the words “Unitarian and other Liberal Religious Women.” Many women active in the suffrage movement from other religious traditions belonged to the Alliance.

Unitarians and Christian Scientists in Ridgewood were on very friendly terms. The Ridgewood Society organist, Percy Wheeler, was Christian Scientist; early Sunday School teacher Mildred Fogg left the Unitarian Society in a friendly move to the Christian Scientists.

The readings at the Woman’s Alliance meetings in early 1925 were in tune with Unitarian principles, omitting any creed as a condition of membership. Maria Knothe spoke to Alliance members on “Theosophy” January 20 and March 17, 1925. The February 17 reading by Mrs. Linden was of selections from the Christian Science authority Science & Health. And on March 3, the minutes read, “Mrs. Fernstrom, one of our guests, read a paper she had prepared on New Thought.”

The Women’s Alliance in 1924-25 had about 20 members, and raised more than \$700 for the Society. At their March 17 meeting in 1925, Elizabeth Hawes, niece of Rebecca Hawes, reported what each member had done to raise money. One member gave up two hair treatments; Mrs. Rodrigo did cooking; Mrs. Vincent gave \$10 “saving in wages;” Mrs. H. Wadsworth made doughnuts; Mrs. Knothe washed windows; Mrs. Hanks made a bag and sold it; Mrs. Montgomery and Mrs. Bollinger taught bridge; Mrs. Hayward and Mrs. Abbott gave parties at their home and turned in the proceeds.

Less than a year later the Laymen’s League offered the Alliance \$25 to defray the expenses of a Sunday School Christmas party. “Mrs. Knothe mentioned that the Laymen’s League (unlike the Alliance) has no treasury and no way of making money except to assess its members or beg of them,” the secretary recorded. A later historian wrote, in 1957,

In the early years of the life of the Laymen’s League, as a national organization, it enjoyed a substantial revenue gathered during an annual drive for funds. In those days the League was the principal agency for the collection of funds for all the agencies of the American Unitarian Association, including those for the Association itself.

In 1926, the women gave attention to improving motion pictures for children, and passing legislation to control automobile driving at night by minors. The issue of

minors' driving was so important that the women recommended that "Mrs. Hanks' paper on the subject be condensed and sent to the newspaper."

THE KNOTHE FAMILY IN THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY

Maria and Frank Knothe first met at a Theosophist gathering. About 1908, they moved from New York City to Ridgewood, where they built the India-colonial-style bungalow on Cottage Place, now number 152 (1996). They became members of the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, and Maria joined the Woman's Alliance. They had three children: a son, Alec; a daughter, Helen (who married Scott Nearing); and another daughter, Alice (who married Charles Vaughan).

The Knothes were community leaders, instrumental in organizing Ridgewood's "Safe Fourth" campaign, including the first July Fourth parade and celebration in 1911.

Maria Knothe and the Women's Alliance are credited with beginning Ridgewood's annual Community Christmas tree lighting. This event was a part of the childhood of Helen Knothe Nearing that she still remembered in 1995:

We had wonderful Christmas parties and celebrations that included everyone, not just the Unitarians. It [all] took place on the Stevens' front lawn, who lived next door. They had a huge evergreen on their lawn near the curve in the street. There would be music and singing around the tree and hot drinks at our house.

The following account from a 1916 history of the Village of Ridgewood describes December 23, 1916:

[S]everal hundred school children and as many adults assembled on Cottage Place around a towering evergreen, beautifully illuminated by hundreds of colored lights. Festoons of lights also illuminated the street. The children, under the direction of the Supervisor of Music of the Public Schools, sang a number of Christmas carols, after which the entire assemblage sang several closing hymns. Refreshments were served at the Unitarian Church. . .

Frank Knothe was a member of the Ridgewood Board of Education from 1910 to 1913 and served as its president; he was also a board member of the newly organized Ridgewood Red Cross chapter from 1917 to 1922, serving as the chair of "military relief" during World War I. He had a fine tenor voice, and was a founding member of Ridgewood's still-active Orpheus Club, whose first conductor was the organist at the Unitarian Society, DeWitt Clinton.

Maria Knothe was president of the Woman's Club of Ridgewood in 1918 and 1919 and was active in the local Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. She was president of the Woman's Alliance 1909-12, 1915-18, and 1926-27. She is described by her daughter Helen:

My mother belonged to every club and association but the Republican. She took us children to poor homes, delivering food and clothes to them.

THE LAYMEN'S LEAGUE

In 1912, the men established at the Unitarian Society a Men's Liberal Club, which at first was interdenominational in its scope, providing a platform for speakers on current topics of interest. It soon became affiliated with the Federated Men's Club of the

Churches of Ridgewood, founded in 1910. President of the Unitarian Society Harry S. Vincent became secretary of this interdenominational group, which operated a camp for boys, improved conditions “for the colored population of our Village,” worked to “curtail the liquor evil,” and organized Big Brother activities.

Gradually other churches in the area formed men’s clubs of their own. The Men’s Liberal Club became a distinctly Unitarian group, whose bowling team competed against those of other churches in Ridgewood’s Church Bowling League.

The Men’s Liberal Club in 1924 invited “Joseph T. Cashman, of the New York bar, and member of the National Security League’s ‘Flying Squadron’” to speak at the new Pease Memorial Library. Cashman spoke against “the radicals”:

The years 1919-21 witnessed an amazing increase in labor troubles over previous years . . . We can prevent the spread of Bolshevism, Socialism and Communism by knowledge of their real character. . .

The Unitarian Laymen’s League was first organized nationally in 1920 as a service organization, similar to the Woman’s Alliance in its purposes. The Men’s Liberal Club affiliated with the national Laymen’s League in 1923, and eventually changed its name. In 1926, under its President Charles T. Greene, Vice-president Frank F. Knothe, and Secretary-treasurer Halsey T. Newkirk, the League sponsored an address at the Pease Library by a representative of the Security League on the national Child Labor Amendment.

In 1925, the Ridgewood Laymen’s League joined with the national organization to support hiring special counsel Clarence Darrow for the defense in the Scopes’ “monkey” trial.

In April, 1924, the Woman’s Alliance gave the Laymen’s League some hands-on work to do:

The subject was brought up of securing long tables for suppers & luncheons and a motion was made & carried to ask the Men’s Liberal Club if they would construct four tables during the summer, the women of the Alliance to pay for lumber & nails.

The men responded energetically, constructing the tables designed by church organist DeWitt Clinton, who was also an architect. The men spent many an hour with saws and hammers working on the tables, which were in use for many years.

To educate the public and encourage the growth of Unitarianism, in May, 1924, the Men’s Liberal Club sponsored a week-long “mission” financed by the national Unitarian Laymen’s League, led by Rev. Horace Westwood. He came with special hymnals and brochures for each evening’s meeting.

Years later, President of the Men’s Liberal Club Charles Greene recalled:

The question box turned out to be a fitting climax to each night’s meeting, for many of our orthodox brethren . . . seized the opportunity to deposit in the box what they considered to be thoroughly devastating questions all, of course, based upon the supreme authority of the Bible.

REBECCA HAWES’ FINAL YEARS

Rebecca Hawes claimed that credit for founding the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood belonged to her mother, Lucy Williams Hawes, who died in 1894, two years before the

group formally incorporated. When Rebecca Hawes was invited to participate in the 1925 100th anniversary of the AUA, she honored her parents and grandparents in her reply:

I accept the honor on behalf of my Unitarian birthright, inherited from my parents and grandparents, all loyal pioneers in the faith, each in their generation, and—also—in behalf of the brave little Unitarian Church of Ridgewood which for 25 years, has followed my lead as Senior Charter-member and Trustee, in “holding the Fort” here, against heavy odds.

Whether I live to join in the Anniversary Celebration, or not, I can now confidently assure you that, when the ‘hard work’ comes, to the local Committees, the Church will do its full share. . .

Alas, she did not live to see the American Unitarian Association’s 100th Anniversary.

Rebecca Hawes wrote her last letter to the congregation in May, 1924, declining the honor of continuing to serve as a trustee, a position which she had probably held since 1896. She recognized that, at 88, she would never again be able to attend meetings.

The year before, she had created a trust fund with specific purposes: a pipe organ, and a memorial window to commemorate her mother, Lucy Williams Hawes.

The pipe organ (used until early 1996) was installed in the northeast corner of the building in. DeWitt Clinton, Jr., organist since 1896, played at the dedication musicale, Oct. 26, 1924, and Rebecca Williams Hawes was present to see and hear the fulfillment of her dream. She died a few weeks later, December 8, 1924.

1925-31

In an effort to show the public what Unitarians stand for, in 1924-25 the Woman’s Alliance paid for, and the Laymen’s League constructed, a “Wayside Pulpit” signboard in front of the building, where it still stands, although at this time wise sayings are no longer posted there. The local papers ran advertisements and church news, and “the lectures [by visiting clergy, on Wednesday evenings] have been admirably reported by Mr. Greene.”

Harry L. Hershey directed the 1924-25 Church School, with 24 pupils.

On January 11, 1925, having welcomed him the previous fall, the Society installed Rev. Joseph S. Loughran as minister. As a student at Catholic University, Loughran had been the protege of the Rev. Dr. William L. Sullivan, who left the Roman Catholic faith to become a Unitarian.

Loughran apparently was full-time, not shared with Hackensack or any other congregation. Ridgewood was his first Unitarian parish.

Many clergy were present at his installation, including Rev. Elizabeth D. Padgham, who was still leading the Rutherford Church. The speaker was Dr. Sullivan, Loughran’s former teacher. Present were the General Field Secretary of the AUA, Unitarian clergy from Brooklyn and Plainfield, and Rev. Albert G. Butzer from West Side (Presbyterian) Church in Ridgewood. Rev. Butzer’s presence, a sign of recognition from an influential and more orthodox Ridgewood church, mitigated the feeling of disapproval some Unitarians felt emanated from the Ridgewood community.

The Christian roots of American Unitarianism and the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood – and the theistic beliefs from which Loughran never turned away – are clear in a statement on the Installation Program:

The Unitarian Covenant: In the love of truth and the spirit of Jesus we unite for the worship of God and the service of man.

The *Ridgewood Herald* remarked in its editorial columns at the time of Loughran's installation,

The signs indicate that the Unitarian organization has taken a new lease of life and is in a position to make a decided contribution to the religious thought and life of the community.

One senses in these words an ardent publicity chairman—possibly Charles T. Greene.

When Loughran visited an Alliance meeting, he urged members to adopt the motto of the Third U. S. Cavalry (of which he was formerly Chaplain): “Forward!”

The Centenary of the American Unitarian Association and also that of a similar organization in England occurred in 1925. Many clergymen from Britain and Europe, as well as American dignitaries, came to Boston in the year 1924-25 and visited Unitarian churches in America. The Ridgewood Society held twelve Wednesday evening lectures; six were speakers from the United States, and six were speakers from abroad, including men from Ireland, Hungary, England, and Czecho-Slovakia.

One visitor, Rev. Jabez T. Sunderland, the author of *Evolution and Religion*, denied the infallibility of the Bible.

It is a collection of 66 books, representing different lands, different languages, different ages, some of them a thousand years apart, different degrees of civilization, different stages of life, different stages of religious development, and made up of legend, myth, history, biography, laws, predictions, proverbs, poetry in various forms, ecclesiastical rituals, didactic teachings, indeed almost every form of literature. . .

Is it not high time an appeal were being made, loud and long, to honest and thoughtful people everywhere, to rise above all the strange un wisdom, the folly of speech, the intemperance of claim and begin treating the Bible with the same honesty, candor and intelligence with which we treat other books?

Loughran stayed in Ridgewood only one year. Much later, he left the Unitarians entirely, to join the Episcopalian priesthood, because it had “become increasingly plain to him that Unitarianism was out of touch with historic Christianity. . .”

Rev. Hubert A. Wright, an English teacher at Hackensack High School, was Ridgewood's next minister. He was a member of the Unitarian Congregational Church in Hackensack, and had served as temporary pulpit “supply” minister at the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood in the fall of 1925. He preached on two Sundays in November (“Pure Religion and Unde filed Before God,” and “What Unitarianism Stands For”), and was called immediately to be permanent minister.

Wright had an A.B. degree from the University of Michigan, and a B.D. from Newton Theological Institution (Baptist). He had never been ordained, but in the spirit of the free pulpit, the Unitarian Society chose someone they considered suitable. He had served a Baptist Church in Groton, Massachusetts 1912-13 and a Congregational Church in East Providence, Rhode Island, 1914-1916. He applied for admission into the

Fellowship of the Unitarian Ministry in January, 1924. The General Field Secretary of the AUA, Dr. Walter Reid Hunt, gave the welcome at Wright's installation on January 23, 1927. Wright moved into the parsonage with his wife, Edith Leslie Wright, and children, and stayed as part-time minister in Ridgewood until 1931.

Of the charter members, it seems that only the Rodrigos and Richard Hawes were still among the congregation in 1925-26, and Hawes was to die December 16, 1926. Charles T. Greene, who became a member of the Society in 1923, was elected president May, 1926.

These were the flush years, before the stock market crashed. Wright's salary in 1926-27 was \$1,500 (less rent), up from Hartman's \$1,000 four years earlier. The Society's membership was up to 70, from 49 in 1923.

At the Society's 30th anniversary celebration, a local newspaper reported on the celebration "this Eastertide:"

On April 2, 1896 a small band of devoted, liberal-minded Christians banded themselves together in the determination to set up in Ridgewood a beacon light that would radiate the fundamental truths of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man and of freedom and reason in religion, under the leadership of Jesus whose divinity they readily admitted but whose deity they could not accept. . . While the present membership is not large, it is enthusiastic, and maintains a greater percentage of attendance upon all the church activities than most other church memberships.

In 1927, Wright recommended a Mr. Shields of Hackensack as supervisor for the Sunday School, to be paid \$50 a month. The Society, instead of choosing Shields, appointed a Ridgewood member (also a school teacher), Frederick Woelfle, as Superintendent, offering him \$400 for the year 1927-28. He actually received only \$360, but even at that rate Woelfle's salary was 11% of the Society's \$3,200 annual budget and 67% of the minister's net of \$540. (Wright paid \$960 of his \$1,500 salary back to the Society for rental of the parsonage!)

Sunday School was discontinued, possibly for three years, but certainly during the year 1929-30. (The next record of Sunday School is 1931-32.) At the Annual Meeting in 1930, President Deans asked for a revived Sunday School and youth program. Charles T. Greene reported,

We did try out the plan to the extent of hiring a superintendent . . . but it proved a failure, for what could a paid superintendent do without a teaching staff on whom he could depend?"

Wright's preaching was reported in the newspaper:

Liberty! Laughter! Love! These were the ruling passions of Abraham Lincoln as epitomized last Sunday morning by Rev. Hubert A. Wright, in the course of a Lincoln memorial service in the Unitarian Church.

Sermon titles and other data about the Sunday morning service were recorded in the Society's minute book from 1924 to 1929:

"Tolerance in Religion" 10-11-25, weather fair, 15 men and 21 women present, & 3 children.

"What is True in the Christmas Story," 12-20-25 and 12-27-25; weather fair and very cold; 19 men, 36 women, 2 children 12-20; 15 men, 21 women, 13 children, 12-27.

Easter 1928 brought 79 people, including 24 children. The usual attendance was 30 or 40. On Nov. 11, 1928, the ten-year anniversary of the end of World War I, Wright spoke on “The Peace Pact of Paris”.

In 1929 there were 66 members. At the Annual Meeting, Edna Woelfle reported for the Rebecca Hawes Branch Woman’s Alliance that they had raised \$600 for the church and for outside organizations. In 1930 the Society made the final \$600 payment to the AUA on the 1923 loan of \$1,500 for the organ housing and other improvements.

There is no evidence of what led Hubert Wright to resign in 1931. His letter to President William Deans may understate the friction between him and the membership:

I realize there is some disaffection in the church due to personal disapproval of me as minister. A high degree of morale is necessary in a small church, and I am sorry this condition has arisen.

I also find this condition has affected my approach somewhat to prospects who might have become members of the organization at Easter and influenced my contacts with others who have recently come into the society. Moreover it will be a good thing for the church to have the matter settled in that it will relieve the tension and remove the uncertainty that exist in the minds of some people.

He ended the letter with great appreciation for past courtesies, and high hopes for this Society’s future progress. A memo in the AUA files says “he had not proved to be very diplomatic in his parish relations,” and a letter from President Charles T. Greene relates that “he evidences a spirit of bitterness towards some of our people.” Greene admits that “many of our members [have] given unreasoning and wholly unchristian hospitality to groundless reports and rumors concerning him.”

Hubert Wright became the minister of the Rutherford church after he left Ridgewood. His six-year ministry in Ridgewood was the longest the Unitarian Society had experienced in its 35 years.

A RADICAL IN THE PULPIT

1931 – 1939

Liberalism, religious and otherwise, is on trial today. It is being everywhere challenged. It has many enemies who would throttle it to death. Yet it has never been more needed. Only in a thoughtful atmosphere such as liberal religion fosters can solutions be found for the world's perplexing problems. Liberal churches may be as barometers indicating what is to come. Centers of liberal influence ought to be many more and stronger. As goes liberalism, up or down, so goes civilization. We call upon all who believe with us to throw the weight of their influence into the liberal movement of which our churches form the core.

— Milton E. Muder, *Free Church Newsletter*, Feb. 1936

The world was in a deep economic depression when Rev. Milton Muder arrived in Ridgewood in 1931.

Internationally, dictators in Germany, Italy, Spain, the USSR, and China were abusing their power and threatening their neighbors. The portents of World War II were frighteningly visible to all. Extremes of drought and wind turned the great plains into dust bowls. Factories were closing; unemployment was increasing. There were long lines of applicants for few jobs, breadlines of hungry people, and “hobos” riding the rails, seeking work in distant places. Fifteen thousand World War I veterans, the “Bonus Army,” were driven from their encampment of tents and shacks near the Capitol by Federal troops commanded by General Douglas MacArthur.

In 1931, progressives from both political parties conferred in Washington, D.C., passing resolutions calling for increased public works and for unemployment insurance. When Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected the following year, he initiated programs to mitigate poverty: the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the National Recovery Act (NRA), the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), and other social programs helped some people. The Tennessee Valley Authority created electric power—and jobs—for the rural South. The Social Security system was instituted. It was in this atmosphere of widespread financial and social upheaval that Milton Muder spent his 8-year ministry in the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, a small group of people liberal in their thinking about religion, but rather conservative in matters of social and political theory. The Village of Ridgewood was then, and is now, an upper-middle-class community with a politically conservative majority. Imagine the atmosphere: Milton Muder's radical ministry in a conservative community largely sheltered from poverty, food riots and labor strife, at a time when Roosevelt's socially progressive programs were being promoted.

During almost the entire decade of the 1930s Rev. Milton Muder was minister and Charles T. Greene was President.

MILTON MUDER

Following Rev. Hubert Wright's resignation in 1931, the Society called Rev. Milton E. Muder as full time minister, sharing his time and energy with neither another church, a school, nor a business.

Milton Muder was born in 1882, grew up in Pennsylvania in German Lutheran and Evangelical churches, and became a Methodist minister in his youth. In 1915, he entered the Unitarian ministry, having spent a year at the Meadville Theological School in preparation. His wife, Alice Jane (Stepp) Muder studied at Meadville, too, in a Parish Workers course. Their first Unitarian parish had been a small church in Castine, Maine. After two years there, Muder became minister in Westwood, Massachusetts, for eleven years.

In June, 1931, Charles T. Greene, as president, wrote to Muder to describe the parish and invite him to consider coming to Ridgewood. Greene reported that there were 50 "contributing members," and a "constituency" of about 90. He counted 12 other churches in Ridgewood, and admitted "It was only recently that our minister was invited to join the local ministers' organization." Also, "both the Country Club and the Woman's Club extend free membership to all the ministers and their wives."

After visiting Ridgewood, Muder wrote to George Patterson of the American Unitarian Association (AUA) enthusiastically:

I was amazed at the beauty and quality of the city of Ridgewood, and very much surprised at the interest and enthusiasm of the people of the church. They are of a very high type culturally and many of them are of considerable prominence. The prospect for the future of the church is very promising. . . The church plant is excellent, though small, with a very fine parsonage.

He asked, since the salary would be low, for \$300 in "sustentation"—i.e., aid to underpaid ministers – from the AUA, and offered to go to Passaic to hold Sunday afternoon services there if the AUA could financially support that effort. The church he had just left delayed paying for his last month or two there.

Ridgewood was his third Unitarian pastorate. His salary was small, \$1,000, plus free parsonage and garage. Moreover, he was expected to spend \$120 of his salary on heating the parsonage. However, he did receive sustentation of an additional \$200 - \$300 annually from the AUA.

But the salary wasn't sufficient for a minister to maintain appearances. Muder asked for material help in a poignant letter to the AUA—a request quickly responded to:

As you know, I took this job with the prospect of a very small salary. As about one half of our men have had to take very great cuts in salaries and others are out of work, I can not expect any increase for a long time to come. Consequently I must "cut corners" in all ways possible.

Some time ago Paul [Muder's Unitarian minister son] informed me that at 25 Beacon Street you have an old clothes room to which various individuals send good used clothing for distribution among "worthy poor clergymen." I wish to inquire whether you have anything on hands to fit me. Anything acceptable but an old fashioned frock coat. My chest size is 38-40, but I could have garments too large altered. . .

My situation is this. Ridgewood people dress well, particularly the clergy. Most of the latter receive many times what I do, and I must not suffer too much by comparison in

matters of appearance. The rector of Christ Church, my next door neighbor, receives \$12,000. . . .

He received three suits promptly and, one hopes, in time for his formal installation, described in the [*Unitarian*] *Christian Register*:

Dr. Minot Simons of All Souls' Church of New York City delivered the sermon, Rev. George Howard of the Unitarian church of Hackensack, N.J., gave the invocation and Rev. Hubert A. Wright of Ridgewood, Muder's predecessor, read the Scripture lesson. . . .

Seven other Unitarian and two Ridgewood Protestant clergymen participated: Rev. LeRoy J. Hess of the Upper Ridgewood Community Church, and Rev. Edwin S. Carson of Christ Episcopal Church.

In a later letter, Muder made it clear that his was the smallest salary among Ridgewood clergy, "\$400 less than what the colored Baptist minister here receives." He was optimistically hoping for new members. He had 100 liberal Presbyterians to call upon, in view of the expectation that their new minister will be very conservative. In addition, there were 25 Unitarian families in Paterson.

Quickly, new activities for various age and interest groups formed under Muder's full-time leadership. The *Free Church News Letter* began to appear monthly, evidently written by either Milton Muder himself or by his wife Alice Jane Muder. The depression had shaken the financial base of the nation and would cause severe financial problems for the Society. Yet there is no hint of turmoil from the *Free Church News Letter*. The news items reported were mundane and the masthead often offered a few lines of poetry:

EASTER [1934]

*Lo, the day of days is here,
Earth puts on her robes of cheer:
Day of hope and prophecy,
Feast of immortality.*

NOVEMBER [1936]

*I find sweet peace in depths of autumn woods,
Where grow the ragged ferns and roughened moss;
The naked, silent trees have taught me this,-
The loss of beauty is not always loss!*

— Elizabeth Stoddard

And these items in 1937:

MUSICAL VESPER SERVICE. A musical vesper service of unusual interest is in prospect for Sunday afternoon, January 24, 4:30 o'clock. The Totzauer String Quartet, the equal of any that has yet played in our church, will contribute two full length quartet numbers. During the pauses between the movements there will be appropriate readings poetical in character. This will be a service for meditation and spiritual healing and there will be no applause. This service should appeal to persons of every variety of religious faith. All of our people should plan to attend with invited friends. Collection.

As for theology, he announced his theological position in March, 1937, when he

described his attitude toward Easter. This sounds very much like Emerson's transcendentalism:

Easter is at hand. Age old symbol of spring time renewal and of triumphant life. Taken over by Christianity it was made to stand for the conquest of sheol, the dismal abode of the dead, and, through Jesus, a happy immortality. To the modern religious mind it may mean all this and more. The faith that beneath the surface of things life is essentially ineffable beauty and all conquering love; the faith that the supreme reality of our common human life is not matter, but mind, not body but soul; and further faith that all minds are inter-related, intertwined, in and through the All Mind, all bound together in a Living Communion of seen and unseen. As this faith is real in us we are by necessity driven to build in the world a social order that reveals and expresses the hidden glory at the heart of things.

In November 1937:

Born to Mr. and Mrs. Walter Myers, November 21st, a daughter. Mrs. Myers is the former Miss Florence White of our parish.

(Florence Myers is still living, in 1996, with her daughter Kathryn Bugbee, in Maine).

The number of people who were present on a Sunday morning varied from 15 to 25. The popular Sunday evening Fireside Forum drew an audience of from 20 to 150. The yearly operating costs were low, and the amount pledged dropped even lower, during those depression years. But there is no mention of Society members in financial need in the few records left to us.

Also, in May of 1933, the Society published a *Year Book and Directory* in which there is a clear statement of principles:

The emphasis in our fellowship of churches is upon Christianity as a way of life rather than as a form of belief. Therefore we stress character, human service, the sharing of a common purpose, fellowship in the quest of life's highest good, rather than uniformity of opinion. We do, however, expect each one in the fellowship with us to seek truth sincerely and to be true to the most divine vision that shines in his soul. Consequently we require no formal profession of faith. . . .

"Character, human service, the sharing of a common purpose . . ." as a way of life was not just wishful thinking in Muder's ministry. He set about organizing the Society into groups that could carry it out.

The 1933 Directory lists the following groups, organized in 1932:

The Lend-A-Hand Club — These junior high age children were affiliated with the national group headquartered in Boston and founded by Edward Everett Hale. The organization supplied a medicine chest to Dr. Wilfred Grenfell, a medical missionary who worked in Newfoundland; helped to furnish libraries in "neglected communities;" and assisted the National Red Cross in national emergencies.

The Open Guild, Y.P.R.U. — High school age youth, affiliated with the National Young People's Religious Union. It was open to all regardless of denominational affiliation.

The Unity Club, Y.P.R.U. — Young adult group. The Unity Club was part of the Metropolitan (Unitarian) Young People's Religious Union, affiliated with the national YPRU.

The Fireside Forum — Speakers and discussions, every Sunday evening, on political,

social, and economic issues. Many well-known civic, governmental, and scholarly experts were among the speakers.

The Rebecca Williams Hawes Branch Alliance – Met twice a month, Tuesdays, at 2:15 p.m. A major money-making arm of the Society's early years, especially for building fund campaigns, the Women's Alliance continued doing so during the depression. The Alliance's various committees, 37 years after its founding in 1896, seem designed as before to fulfill their stated purposes through the Post Office Mission, housekeeping, social service, international work, devotional service "Friendly Links," "Open Table," and Associate Alliance functioned both within the Society and in the wider surrounding world.

The Philomelic Society – A chorus led by Miss Isa McIlwraith, organist of the Pilgrim Congregational Church, (Unitarian), Brooklyn. The first concert was "a surprising success"! It met Monday evenings at the Society.

The Church School, run by Milton and Alice Jane Muder, met at 10:00 Sundays, and once a month at 11:00 with the rest of the congregation. In 1932 there were 33 children enrolled, and average church attendance rose to 42. Mr. Muder's salary was increased to \$1,100 by 1935, and stayed the same, with an extra \$200 sustentation from the AUA, until he left in 1939.

The 1930's was not only a time of economic turmoil, there were political forces at work in the country that threatened social and cultural upheaval. Charles Greene relates a dramatic non-event that took place "about this time—" (probably some time in the 1930s).

The Ku Klux Klan's influence was felt everywhere, not only in the South, but in many sections of the North, . . . specifically in Bergen County and other areas in New Jersey. . . The writer, who had been president of the Metropolitan Conference of Unitarian and Other Liberal Churches, had invited the Conference to hold its regular Spring meeting in our Church in Ridgewood. Between 150 and 200 Unitarians . . . attended. . . .

[T]he program committee had invited one of the two authors of a book entitled "Merchants of Death" to deliver the address. The book alleged to be an expose of the Duponts and others engaged in the manufacture of explosives, as being the prime instigators of war.

It was a highly controversial subject, for mothers and fathers who had seen their sons drafted into the military and naval forces, and sent overseas to risk their lives in combat, with many of them never to return, resented the implications contained in the book, that they and their sons were the victims of a bunch of money-mad capitalists.

The Police Appear to Prevent a Ruction [Sic]

As has been his custom these many years, the writer stood at the entrance to our church to greet all who came to the meeting. Among the early arrivals was a member of the local police force in "civvies." He quietly seated himself in one of the rear pews. A little later one or more of the members of the local constabulary arrived, including the Chief Fred Blackshaw, who was asked concerning the unexpected display of interest in our meeting. He informed us that he had received word that members of the local K.K.K. had threatened to burn a cross on our front lawn, and he and his men were to protect us against any such display of violence. We are happy to report that the Hooded Clan did not make an appearance.

To speak up publicly for causes unpopular with extremists was an act of courage then, even with a watchful and responsible police force in the community.

The Society's total expenditures for the year ending April 30, 1934, were only

\$3,090.25, and for the following year only \$2,644. Income from subscribers and plate collections declined as well, a 15% decline. By the summer of 1934 Muder was writing to Patterson of the AUA:

I am very happy here and have no desire to leave. . . However, the financial situation is very precarious as so many of our people have been hard hit by the so-called depression. Consequently, I may find it necessary to consider a change.

A hint of possible trouble is not quite hidden between the lines of a letter sent to members and friends of the Unitarian Society in March, 1935, by Treasurer E. Milton Lilly. In asking people to give money to the Society, he was also asking for an appraisal of the Society's program: "Do you believe that our Unitarian Church in Ridgewood adequately represents the basic ideals and faiths of the American Unitarian Fellowship?" he asked. He called for support for the "basic ideals and faith," and "important and needed service to the Community." He asked for suggestions on forms of worship, minister's preaching, and church activity; and asked, of course, for a pledge of money.

Even though funds were scarce, Muder's *Free Church News Letter* shows that the Alliance was active, the church school operating, the young people's Unity Club well attended, with 50 or more at a meeting.

A Ridgewood ecumenical custom had been to hold regular outdoor "union" religious services in the summer. In July, 1933, and again in 1935, Mr. Muder was the speaker at the Union Outdoor Service, held on the lawn of the Methodist church, conducted by the minister of the West Side Presbyterian Church. The address is quoted at length in what appears to be *The Ridgewood News*, July 11, 1935:

HOW EMPHASIS HAS SHIFTED

Ideals Rather Than Opinions In Religion Are Stressed

MAKE LIFE ALL IT SHOULD BE

Rev. M. E. Muder, of Unitarian Church,, Formerly a Methodist Minister,
Gives Thoughtful Message at Union Outdoor Service

For the first time since the summer union outdoor services were started by the Ridgewood Council of Churches several years ago, a Unitarian minister addressed the gathering last Sunday evening. The Rev. Milton E. Muder, pastor of the local 'Liberal Church' was the speaker, and gave an earnest, thoughtful address on "The Shift of Emphasis on Religion.

Mr. Muder expressed his belief that the unseen world, granting its existence, is somehow bound up with this one, and that we serve it and perhaps further it in all good ways, as we make the most of this; as we are not disobedient to the heavenly vision of the good life, and as we strive to make real in our personal lives and in the social order, those values which the heavenly vision makes bright.

That to me is the way, the process which leads forward into the best that life holds possible. And that is the emphasis I believe that religion will pursue.

Such a straightforward statement of social concerns, "to make real in our personal lives and in the social order, those values which the heavenly vision makes bright," announces a theme carried forward in Muder's plans for the Fireside Forum, as well as in the Unity Club and the Sunday school.

Milton Muder announced his sermon topics in *The Free Church News Letter*. In 1935, for instance, these:

October 13, Inward Peace in a World of Turmoil,—Is It Possible,—Is It Desirable?;

October 20, War Clouds Over the World, Watchman, What of the Night?;

October 27, Nature and Civilization, or Autumn Reflections.

The minister endeavors to keep an even balance between sermons dealing with social and practical applications of religion and those of a more personal religious emphasis. . .

His leadership in social activism brought about social change locally. The Ridgewood and Glen Rock Consumers' Cooperative Clubs came about in October of 1936, because of the Fireside Forum. Journalist Bertram Fowler's March 1 talk sparked the Co-op's genesis.

The Co-op movement during the Depression, based on bulk buying of groceries and unpaid hours of work by the members of the Cooperative, gave hard-pressed member families lower prices for groceries. Coincidentally, in November of the same year, the Social Relations Department of the AUA sent out a circular letter suggesting the advisability of studying the Consumer Cooperative Movement. The Ridgewood Society was able to respond to the AUA's letter that "the Ridgewood Consumer Cooperative Club has a meeting for study and discussion each week. . .It is a community club and a considerable number of our church members have already joined."

Eventually the group of interested people became the Ramapo Valley Co-operative and began to operate a grocery store between Godwin Avenue and the train tracks. It was the largest consumer co-operative in North Jersey with over 250 families as members. Muder later described the Co-op as "now (1955) doing a business of \$1,500,000 annually." That is about the time that member Octavius Pitzalis became an active supporter of the Co-operative.

The Co-op store on Godwin Avenue served both members and non-members for about forty years, not closing its doors until 1972.

Another instance of the Fireside Forum's effect: Frederick W. Ambuhl, a veteran worker on behalf of under-privileged boys, told the Fireside Forum about The Bergen Hamlet, his project, to care for neglected and problem boys of the county. "Persons of prominence, such as Mrs. Dwight Morrow, have become interested," reports an article in the *Christian Register* of March 17, 1938.

The Society's Unity Club for young people ages 18 to 25 drew from ten towns and from every religious affiliation, and heard some of the same lecturers the Fireside Forum engaged. Although many of the meetings were social, with ice skating, swimming and hiking, each month a speaker was on the schedule who reflected some of the same social issues discussed at the Fireside Forum. Of particular interest are a debate on government supported socialized medicine, and a talk by the rector of a "colored" church in Newark on race and progress. The Unity Club, with some 80 members, had the reputation of being the most successful young people's organization associated with any church in Ridgewood.

Despite such successful programs, the Society's financial condition remained troubled. In January, 1938, the Women's Alliance gave a Spaghetti Supper as a fund-raiser for a desperately needed new chimney. In the spring, the women came to the rescue once more and organized a "Chimney Fund Supper" for 75 cents per person. They promised entertainment, wit, and humor.

Muder was thinking of leaving. By the spring of 1936 Milton and Alice Jane Muder's Unitarian minister son Paul had entered the Methodist ministry. "As a matter of fact," Muder wrote to the AUA, "I may be compelled to go and do likewise:"

All has been going well and, as I supposed, agreeably to all concerned until very recently. Due to the fact that in our Fireside Forum program, we have included a number of quite radical and outspoken speakers, such as Loeb and Felix Frazer (on New Economy of Abundance) and others such as Allenger (Sec. of Liberal Clergy Club of N.Y.) and Webber of Union T[heological] S[chool]—and further because I once or twice in my Sunday sermons have called in question the infallibility of the status quo, etc., several of our members (quite large contributors) are disgruntled. One has resigned from the church and another threatens to withdraw his support.—Our annual meeting is Thurs. of this week. Do not be surprised to hear that I have been kicked out. The majority of the church would stand by me—but—in the end "money talks". If a considerable majority will stand by me, I am willing to remain even at a greatly curtailed salary—(now \$1,100 + sustentation grant)—and build up anew which I believe can be done.

He then went on to suggest other parishes which might be possibilities for his future employment. He continued to ask such exploratory questions until the end of his pastorate in Ridgewood in 1939.

Secretary of the Society Ruland Anderson wrote in the minutes of a Board meeting in September, 1936:

After a discussion of finances and the possibility of new contributions, it was generally agreed that there were not many prospects among the non-contributing members.

Under these unfavorable financial conditions the Society celebrated its 40th anniversary in October, 1936. The festivities included Miss Wylde Wood, who sang "Build Thee More Stately Mansions, O My Soul," with words by Unitarian Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr., poet and physician (1809-1894). Also, the Totzauer String Quartet played.

Contributing with short speeches was a former minister of the Society, Rev. V. G. Hartman (1921-24); Rev. George G. Howard, minister at the Hackensack Unitarian Church; old member and neighbor Frank F. Knothe (ca.1904), by then residing in Florida; and old members Albert Zabriskie (1917 or before) and Mrs. Georges Etesse (1920).

Ruland Anderson read congratulatory letters from Rev. George Badger, the Society's first minister; from founding member William Traver; and from William R. Hunt, Secretary of the AUA, who had often conducted services as "supply" minister during the Society's early years. Badger had intended to come to the celebration, but somehow dates and arrangements had become tangled and in the end he sent his regrets from his retirement home in Sandwich, Massachusetts.

It was not an entirely cheerful anniversary, however. President Charles Greene's speech referred to finance as the Society's battle-zone:

Friends and Fellow members: Another year has rolled around, and we are on the threshold of . . . another decade of our corporate and spiritual existence together.

Speaking of "ills of the moment, the issues of the day," he continued:

Often you have grown weary, as I have, and we have cried out: "Oh, what's the use," but that principle within us; the Pnuma of the New Testament; the In Dwelling Spirit, the

Breath of Life, or the Not Ourselves as Matthew Arnold called it in a non committal sort of way, urges us on.

At that point he noted that wars and depressions were happening in the 1890s just as they were in the 1930s; we can survive now, as we did then:

You . . . have a solemn responsibility towards your free church. . . If we are forced to a default . . . [on our mortgage payments to the AUA] there will be a stigma upon you But we shall not default; we shall not fail. We must not fail!

Greene called for:

. . . the reconsecration of your whole being in a cooperative effort . . . [because the Free Church should be] a shining beacon of spiritual freedom. May its light never be extinguished through our neglect!

Refreshments were served by the ladies under the direction of Alice Muder.

The following month, November, 1936, Greene's fears of defaulting almost came true. The \$650 annual mortgage payment to the AUA loan that financed a new social room and foyer in 1927 could not be made in full. The members had pledged only \$325 toward the payment. With advice from Dr. Charles R. Joy of the AUA, who promptly came to study the situation, the Trustees borrowed \$300 from the AUA and \$145 from Citizens First National Bank just to cover operating expenses, and made no payment on the mortgage. In the future, the Society would just send what it could to the AUA.

The Fireside Forum's contributions to the budget were \$25 to \$30 yearly. In 1936, the Board of Trustees asked the Forum to increase that amount to \$75. For two years the Forum was able to do so, but by the third year gave considerably less. The Depression hit at the same time that the financially most able members of the Society became disaffected with Milton Muder's social-action oriented Fireside Forum.

The Fireside Forum was the source of considerable controversy, although many of the topics and speakers were not politically or sociologically oriented. Just the same, to have both men and women as speakers on such subjects as "What is Religion," "Russia as Seen by a Personal Observer," "The Tax Problem," "Birth Control," and "Pacifism" in 1932-33 may have seemed inflammatory, even if both sides of the question were explored.

Many speakers were far from radical, discussing classic works of literature and science, for example. Muder had difficulty finding conservatives to speak, a problem he could not help.

The Free Church News Letter clearly reflected Muder's political and social leanings. For instance, a few items from February 1936:

THE FIRESIDE FORUM: . . . It is understood that the Forum does not stand sponsor to any one speaker or program.

Sunday, Feb. 9, 8:15 P.M. — Mr. Roy Wilkins (colored), editor of the leading magazine for colored people, "The Crisis", will discuss "The Present Black-White Situation". We have been most fortunate in securing this cultured and able negro speaker for the Sunday, appropriately, just previous to Lincoln's Birthday.

Sunday, Feb. 16, 8:15 P.M. — Mr. Felix J. Frazer, Director of Research of the National Survey of Potential Product Capacity, co-author of "The Chart of Plenty", will present the subject, "More About the New Economy of Abundance".

Dr. Robert C. Dexter of the AUA spoke at the Fireside Forum on December 29, 1936, on the topic “What Price Neutrality,” an urgent question as the rise of dictatorships in Europe, the persecution of the Jews under Nazi power in Germany, and the Spanish Civil War portended the coming World War. An audience of 50 was present. Dexter wrote,

One reason for the attendance and interest was that the local Commander of the American Legion Post has been attacking the Forum for some time past and he attacked me particularly as an active Pacifist since I was a member of the National Peace Conference.

Muder invited Dexter to return to address the Peace and Civil Rights League, to which Ruland Anderson, Secretary of the Board of Trustees, belonged.

In January, 1937, one of the speakers was Scott Nearing, the well-known left-wing economist whom no university would keep on the faculty, and whom the Communist party had “kicked out” for criticizing it. He spoke again in January, 1938. Helen Knothe, his future wife, and the daughter of Society members Frank and Maria Knothe of Cottage Place, accompanied him as his secretary.

Even though the Society’s financial woes were those of the economy generally, the real issue was opposition within the Society to Milton Muder’s liberalism. Greene himself reported, later, “During Mr. Muder’s ministry there were several storms in the church over his radical views on social issues,” particularly in the choice of speakers at the Fireside Forum. In Greene’s opinion, “[I]t was the dissension on social issues which finally caused Mr. Muder to resign the pulpit.”

Somehow Greene did not see himself as a contributor to dissension, although he was certainly one of those who disapproved of the radical speakers and Muder’s political stance. For instance, Greene asked Muder not to attend a congregational meeting in 1937, at which Muder’s policies would be discussed. And Greene was part of the coterie in 1939 who would call for a meeting to vote to dismiss Muder.

After a February, 1937, address to the Fireside Forum on the plight of the sharecroppers and after subsequent visits with Society leaders, Dr. Dexter reported to the AUA:

Mr. Muder has lost one or two of the very conservative members of the church but he has gained a number of young married people who are not only enthusiastic about the church and its leadership but contribute better than those whom he has lost. . . . Mr. Muder’s social interests have been the principal cause of the build-up in the church and he himself says he has taken a new lease of life since he has gone to Ridgewood. I think that things there are exceedingly hopeful.

Meantime, the AUA itself was in some upheaval over issues of its principles and practices. A Commission of Appraisal, led by Frederick May Eliot, had been charged with making a report on the denomination. Loosely, the issues involved could be called “liberal” vs. “conservative” in doctrine, and the definition of religion as a commitment to social responsibility. The report to the General Assembly in 1936 was finally accepted, and Eliot was elected president of the AUA in 1937. His candidacy was criticized, because of his having been chair of the Commission and virtual author of its report. Milton Muder, significantly, announced that his sermon topic on May 2, 1937, would be “Are we at the Parting of the Ways in Unitarianism?”

Other services in May 1937 are equally interesting:

May 9, Mother's and Peace Sunday Service with appropriate sermon. Following our custom an effort will be made to secure a mother to speak at this service.

May 16, "Religious Consolations in an Age of Social Disturbance."

Muder's thoughts on the denominational issues are not known, but the following fall his assessment of his own situation was less hopeful. He wrote to Dr. Patterson of the AUA on about candidating for a pulpit elsewhere, and said:

Two of our largest contributors have canceled their subscriptions because the minister, upon two or three occasions, has been quite outspoken on social issues. . . . Ninety per cent of the parish are all for me, but these folks are relatively poor and cannot contribute much.

President Charles Greene asked that the Muder's stay away from the semi-annual congregational meeting in October, 1937. Muder reported Greene even offered them tickets to the movies that night! To be asked not to attend was an ominous sign to Muder, who felt that the financial problems of the Society were a pretext for getting rid of him. Muder's estimation of Charles Greene's influence at that meeting:

From reports given me by friends, Mr. Greene tried very adroitly, to create an atmosphere of dissatisfaction, using as a basis our present financial situation. He was set upon by a number of my friends, and as it appears, 90% are solid backers of the present minister. However, a commission is to be appointed to survey the situation . . .

Mr. Greene, a fine man in many ways, is very tactless, and said many things which stirred up resentment, and there was considerable wrangling. There was much bitterness expressed. . . .

The trouble situation, as I informed you, has its roots in the withdrawal of two or three very conservative members because of statements made by me upon about three occasions, questioning the infallibility of the status-quo, economically speaking; and because of objections to about four speakers at our Sunday evening Forum gatherings (Dexter among others) in particular one who advocated public ownership of utilities.

Continuing what Mr. Muder suspected was, and which seems to have actually been, an effort to oust him, the Society's Board appointed a Special Committee which sent a letter in November, 1937, to "Dear Friends," citing inadequate funds and "a growing lack of interest in the cause of liberal religion. . . ." The committee asked whether "a change of minister would be advisable. . . ." and a brief questionnaire explored questions about possible changes in the Forum and the Unity Club. It also asked for suggestions "of change in sermons, activities, or policies of the society." The names of the Special Committee members were typed at the bottom of the letter:

Fred Woelfle, Mrs. Richard Wheelock, Fred Wadsworth, Elizabeth Hawes and Mrs. Ruland Anderson

The "signers'" names appeared without actual signatures; the questionnaire was mailed from the New York office of Greene's firm, Morrison and Townsend on Broadway. These facts seem to indicate that the letter was prepared in New York. It was sent not only to members, but also to those disaffected big givers who had earlier resigned from the Society. It was at best a suspect procedure, under the circumstances.

Muder said,

From my point of view it is not at all discouraging. Rather the reverse. The money has

not been coming in well, it is true, but no canvass of the parish for contributions has been made for some time. From the public at large in Ridgewood I have received quite extravagant praise for what I have tried to do through the Fireside Forum, the Unity Club, the Bergen Hamlet and other activities. I have been told that because of these things our church has a standing in and the respect of the community such as it never had before.

The AUA's Secretary Charles R. Joy promptly visited the Society in December, 1937, and pronounced it "not a large parish but for its size, one of the most vital that I have encountered." He wrote,

I discovered that there was in the church some criticism of the forum, but that the great majority of the church people were for it. It is the only regular forum in this region and has won the attention of the whole community, reporters from three papers being always present at the meetings. It seems that a few people have withdrawn from the church because of the views expressed by forum speakers, but a much larger number of people have been attracted to the church because of their vital interest in the forum discussions.

The "fact finding committee," as the Special Committee later called itself, expressed surprise that some recipients felt the letter and questionnaire to be an attempt to unseat the minister. The committee reported in January that it had had "no preconceived object to submit or to combat any activity of the church or to start a movement to discredit, to remove, or to support the minister." The questionnaire was sent to a list "based on the names submitted by the trustees." Of "about 100" questionnaires sent, 40 were returned, 37 of which were supportive of the church "regardless of their decisions regarding other parts of the questionnaire." The three opposed to supporting the church were "former members who were sufficiently against the minister and the activities of the church not to be willing to support the church." Thirty-one were in favor of the Forum without changes; and 30 were favorable to keeping Milton Muder as minister. Three strongly disapproved of his political concerns, and undoubtedly were the same who had given up their membership.

Despite some respondents' feeling that factionalism was the problem, and that there was not enough turnover in the leadership, a glowing report was later published in the AUA's own periodical, the *Christian Register*, March 17, 1938:

The results [of the questionnaire] were overwhelmingly in support of the minister, his sermons and type of preaching, and the activities and organizations which he is sponsoring. . .

Milton E. Muder stayed on, but the efforts to force him out did not cease.

In December, 1937, the Ridgewood Unitarian Men's Club, which had not met for some time, re-activated under the chairmanship of Fred Woelfle, with the encouragement of Charles Greene. Muder offered this group the opportunity to take charge of the Forums, possibly so that there would be fewer objections to the programming if the conservatives had a greater hand in it. The Board of Trustees, however, advised against this change, in apparent support of Muder's policies.

By April, 1938, the Men's Club had formally affiliated with the national Unitarian Laymen's League, and the group's name changed from Men's Club to Laymen's League. The topic at the April 11th meeting was "New Telephones for Old," discussed by member George C. Porter, who would become the Unitarian Society's next president. Hardly a

topic of political or social controversy—and possibly a sign of the kind of program the Laymen’s League preferred.

When George Porter became president of the Society that May, Greene became president of the Laymen’s League, which he had been instrumental in revitalizing; he thus maintained a power base.

After the years of harassment by the Greene faction, Muder’s departure from Ridgewood was made certain at a special official meeting of Society membership in January, 1939. The meeting was constitutionally mandatory because five members—Charles T. Greene and at least four others—had requested it.

The weather was extremely bad the night of the meeting, and many of Muder’s supporters were unable to be there. Others knew Muder intended to leave in any case and did not vote against his dismissal. Milton Muder wrote a letter to the Society to be read at that meeting, and which he sent to those who were not present:

I am sorry indeed that a representative of the Society did not confer with me before the meeting was called, as the trouble, anxiety and possible unpleasantness of this meeting could have been avoided. This meeting precipitates what I have determined to do for many months, that is, to terminate my pastorate here

After referring to the hard economic times, his letter dealt with the difficulty of gaining new members. He continued,

Many liberals moving into Ridgewood, while friendly to our church, either do not attend any church or go by preference to larger and more imposing churches. . . . I have visited. . . every possible prospect of whom I have learned. . . . I believe that no man could have done more. I have enjoyed my work here. I have no regrets, and only the kindest feelings toward all.

The Board of Trustees was undoubtedly aware, however, that Mr. Muder had been seeking another pastorate. As early as November 1937 he had written to Mr. DeWitt, saying “Personally I would like to move as I dislike friction in the parish.”

After the meeting, Muder wrote to DeWitt of the AUA:

Notwithstanding my efforts to forestall a “wrangle”, one developed any-way, due to Mr. Greene’s pugnacious attitude.

My friends have informed me that the doings of Mr. G. and his supporters were shamefully underhanded and bad spirited. In spite of all efforts by [President George C.] Porter to avoid it, a vote was taken as to whether the minister should be called for another year. This was at the insistence of Mr. Greene. Twenty-five members were present, barely a quorum, and by a slight majority it was voted not to call the minister for another year. . .

As you know, Mr. G. was not reelected last year to the office of president, because of his attitude towards me. Apparently he has ever since been waiting for an opportunity to “get even”. . .

As you know, Mr. Greene is of a queer ego-centered personality, and is slightly psychopathic.

Milton Muder’s solution to the economic crisis of the 1930s was called “Free America,” a movement that advised the dispersal of the population to rural areas to solve the country’s economic problems and free people to live with self reliance. It was expected that he

would live the “Free America” tenets when he moved to a Danbury, New Hampshire farm after leaving Ridgewood.

The Ridgewood News for January 26, 1939 displayed a photograph of Mr. Muder with the headline:

PLANS TO SEEK NEW PASTORATE

Rev. M. E. Muder of Unitarian Church

Hopes to Settle in New England

The article reported:

With the meeting next Sunday at the Unitarian Church the life of the Fireside Forum will come to an end after a most fruitful existence of seven years. The reason for the suspension is because the Reverend Milton E. Muder, pastor of the Church and founder and director of the Forum, has announced his intention of seeking a new pastorate in the very near future.

The article went on to say that Mr. and Mrs. Muder had “recently acquired a farm in New Hampshire” and that “Mr. Muder hoped to secure another pastorate” in the area, where all of their children lived, and where he could pursue his interests in the ‘Free America’ distributist movement encouraging subsistence homesteading, and in the Consumer Co-operative movement.

In February, Milton Muder announced his departure. While publicly putting a placid face on his departure, privately, he was disappointed and regretful:

During my 22 years in the Unitarian ministry I have tried most conscientiously to be all that a minister should be in the service of God and humanity, but now, at 57, never more vigorous and able,—well it’s a hell of a prospect. I am sorry now that I left the Methodist ministry. As I know now, I could have been just as liberal and with much greater results for my efforts. Furthermore I would be kept on the job until my retirement age. Our son Paul followed a very wise course I think.

Milton Muder thanked those members of the Society who contributed to a fund for financing his farm project:

For this very unusual and thoughtful parting gift we are deeply appreciative, and especially so of the motives which prompted it. As a matter of course we shall always have a warm place in our hearts for our friends in the Ridgewood Unitarian Society and we have many sweet memories to cherish of our fellowship with them

Being a lame-duck minister did not prevent Milton Muder from expressing himself against the hurtfulness of prejudice and the horrors of Naziism. In a lengthy Letter to the Editor he was eloquent in his denunciation of the persecution of the Jews under Hitler. He also denounced the illiberal prejudice against his own ethnic stock, the Germans, as a group.

First of all I wish to state that I am of German stock on my father’s side. My paternal grandfather, and one of the grandest men that I have ever known, came to America with the Roebing colony a little over one hundred years ago. My childhood environment was among German born Americans, most of whom I remember as gentle, warm-hearted, kindly folk. I would, now, be very much ashamed of my German ancestry, in view of the present horrible Hitler regime in Germany with its unbelievably cruel persecutions of the Jews, and others, if I did not know that this regime is in no sense an expression of the soul of the German people as a whole. . . .

I wish to say further that if every charge that has ever been made against the Jews were true, it would not justify the persecution of these people though that persecution be one tenth as severe as it now is. And as every careful student of human affairs knows these charges have no justification in fact. . . .

In the letter of last week it was suggested that Jews should practice the “Christian” doctrine of the Golden Rule. Does not the writer know that the so-called Golden Rule originated among the Jews and was a current teaching at the time that Jesus lived. . . .

[S]ocial welfare projects to the point of great sacrifice, are supported by Jews in proportion far beyond all other religious and racial groups. Humanitarian idealism (the application of the “Golden Rule” to specific human needs) is an outstanding characteristic of this race that has given us our Bible and Jesus. . . .

Unwilling or unable to live simply by subsistence farming, Muder’s future was filled with Unitarian pastorates in rural New England and North Carolina. He served for four years a Methodist church in Enfield, Connecticut. His wife Alice Jane (Stepp) Muder died April 8, 1957. He remarried a year later, went into full retirement in 1961, and died in 1968 at age 86.

CHARLES T. GREENE

Charles Greene, a stock broker, joined the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood on March 23, 1923, and served as President for most of the years of the Depression, 1925-30 and 1931-38, and all but one year of Milton Muder’s ministry here.

In 1967, a few years after Greene died, member Parton Keese wrote:

During the Depression, attendance dropped off so sharply there were serious doubts the Society could continue. It was during this distressing time that the strong hand of Charles T. Greene was responsible for holding the spirits of the Society together . . . [He], more than any other person, “saved” the group from disappearing altogether.

Those who now remember “Charlie” knew him only in his old age, long after his most active years. Al Webster described the Charlie Greene of the 1950s and early 1960s as he remembered him: “the one who counted the attendance, saw that things were ship-shape, turned out the lights and that sort of thing.”

Don Anderson remembers Greene as a very conservative and rather officious person, who greeted at the door every Sunday, and ushered people to seats which he chose for them. He once said, “Charlie Greene was the only man I felt afraid of.” and continued in quite another vein:

Charlie Greene was President for eleven years, and was a very conservative theist. And any time when we were considering the values of Unitarians and Universalists and talking about religion, Charlie would come along with a typed prepared paper with a strong theist approach. Charlie ran that church, really, you know? He was the greeter at the door. No one else greeted! And you sat where Charlie Greene told you to sit! He ran the place with a very firm hand.

It was a relatively small congregation at the time. . . Charlie had his own beliefs, yet he was a staunch supporter of the church. One of the few that continued year after year. Eleven years as President. . . one of the pillars.

Greene wrote poetry, and in 1955 published a booklet entitled *The Greene Years: Half a Century of Poems*. In addition, he wrote a short biography of Society member Herman Lemp, who invented the Diesel engine, and numerous essays, lectures, and press releases for the Unitarian Society.

Greene is particularly important to the history of the Society because he ceaselessly wrote and rewrote this Society's history. Much knowledge of the early years comes from his manuscripts. His last and most complete history of the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood is dated 1957, 45 double-spaced pages, almost ready for publication.

Greene has been described by those who remember him as a martinet, a loud-mouth, simpering, tall and gaunt, with an expression between prissy and disapproving. Others saw him as a real gentleman, with a boyish kind of haircut, a constant and true supporter of the Unitarian Society, and the helpful usher every Sunday.

MUDER'S LEGACY

When one views Milton Muder's liberalism and his energetic pursuit of social causes, it is no wonder that conservatives such as Charles Greene were perturbed. Muder persisted against opposition within the congregation, within Ridgewood, and within the Depression-era economy, to create a thought-provoking program focused on social issues. Employing the Unitarian principle of freedom of the pulpit, Muder stimulated both thought and action with his Fireside Forum, exposing ideas from both the right and the left to scrutiny. Present-day members of the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood have Muder to thank for establishing an atmosphere of social criticism and responsibility which still characterizes the Society. The mark Milton Muder made was indelible.

THE OUTRAGEOUS INTELLECTUAL 1939 – 1964

Let the universe, little known and unexplored, be your God. There are forces in the universe which give us strength and courage and work with us when we work with them. These forces are in man and in the atom.

Use also the language of poetry, and let God be love, truth, beauty, goodness, and the noblest things imaginable. Ultimately, if the word persists and is to have meaning, the language used to describe God will be bound up with the extent of man's understanding of his total environment.

– *Homer Sheffer*, November 2, 1952

THE MAN AND THE CONGREGATION

To be tried and condemned for heresy has medieval connotations, but for Homer Lewis Sheffer it was a necessary step in his growth as minister. Ordained in the Reformed Church (Dutch) in 1916, his first nine years as a minister were in that denomination. He himself initiated the heresy trial when he found that his personal theology, based on biblical criticism studied in seminary, was at odds with what he was expected to preach as a minister. Sheffer asked for the trial as a test. Could his beliefs be accepted by the Reformed Church? Could he honestly continue in that denomination? Although he knew other ministers with similar beliefs who apparently had little difficulty in preaching traditional Christian doctrine, Sheffer could not make that compromise. In 1925, Sheffer asked to be formally tried before the Classis of Ulster, Reformed Church in America. As a result, he was condemned for heresy. Thereupon, he applied for and was received into fellowship of the Unitarian ministry.

Born in 1890 in Linlithgo, New York, educated at Rutgers University, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, and New York University, Sheffer was a member of Phi Beta Kappa and won high honors in philosophy. He and Edith Louise Gibney were married in 1916, and in 1920 their son Dean Philip Sheffer was born.

Two of Sheffer's Unitarian pastorates, the First Unitarian Church of Oklahoma City (1928-34) and First Unitarian Society of Spokane (1935-38), were fraught with conflict between humanist and deist factions, and between the minister and big monetary givers.

After he left Spokane, hoping for another opening, he explained his failure to fit into any easy category:

... I have always had just as hard a time with dogmatic radicals as I have had with dogmatic conservatives. Only in the root meaning of the word radical am I a radical, and by the same token in the root meaning of the word conservative, I am probably a conservative. . .



Homer Sheffer, minister,
1939-64

His theological radicalism made headlines in the newspapers, and undoubtedly was not acceptable to some in the congregation in Oklahoma City. His sermons were humanist and social-action-oriented. On Mother's Day, he preached about birth control. (This was in the thirties.) And when he performed a wedding, he omitted the word "obey" and any reference to God.

In Oklahoma, when a new church building was going up at a cost of more than \$70,000 in 1928, Sheffer was in conflict with the city building inspector and with the church member who was the architect, because the builder failed to stick to specifications, resulting in what Sheffer judged to be unsafe construction.

Telling the story in 1938 to George Patterson of the American Unitarian Association (AUA) department of the ministry, he wrote:

Some day if you remind me I will tell you the story of a prominent Oklahoman who came to kill me at a church dinner. I never reported it, I think. Few know about it. And there is much more I didn't report because I value my reputation for veracity.

About Spokane he said:

... any minister you put there [should] be given a full measure of support. A little coterie made life hell for my two predecessors. Surely there should be a complete democratization of the church so that board members cannot nominate and practically elect themselves. This actually happened. Once they nominate themselves for re-election no one is going to protest at the risk of dividing the congregation.

He was forced to leave Spokane at the end of December, 1937. The Depression still gripped the world, and there was no pulpit for Homer Sheffer. He and Edith sold their furniture, and with Dean, drove across the continent that winter, back to New York, where they moved in with Sheffer's mother at Linlithgo. Dean enrolled in college at Rutgers, with financial aid from the AUA. Unemployed, Homer Sheffer gardened, and

ished. He corresponded with officials of the AUA, discussing his desperate hope for another church. He wrote: "I'll go *anywhere*. . ."

A year passed. Finally Sheffer learned the White Plains, and Ridgewood churches were each looking for a minister. When he preached two Sundays in May, 1939, in Ridgewood, Elizabeth Hawes, niece of Rebecca Hawes, said "I hope we can afford to hire him, for he is the first minister in recent years that I have been able to hear!"

Sheffer was called for a one year settlement by the Ridgewood congregation, at a salary of \$1,100 and parsonage, the minister to pay his own electric and heating. Gratefully, he wrote, "Not many churches these days will call a deaf, wifeless, 'aged' minister!"

Sheffer did have a hearing loss. He was an "elderly" 49 years old.

The one-year contract gave him a way to test the waters without drowning in another unhappy situation. He did not want to repeat the experiences of Oklahoma City or Spokane. His one-year-at-a-time contract was renewed yearly for 25 years.

At Sheffer's request, his installation on October 8 duplicated the service written by George Patterson, ministerial advisor at the AUA, for Sheffer's first Unitarian installation in 1926 at Athol, Massachusetts. Emphasizing ideals of justice and love, the service calls on the congregation and minister to make commitments:

To the congregation: "This church stands for the worship of God and the service of man in the spirit of Jesus. . .Mindful of this, are we ready to pledge ourselves anew to the high ideals for which this church stands?"

To the minister: "We offer you a free pulpit even as we are a free people. But that very freedom places upon you its own obligations, the obligation to speak the truth unfalteringly, yet in the spirit of love, that we may be established in righteousness toward God and Man."

Finally, the minister says: "May we so live and labor together that God may be glorified and His life revealed in us."

By January, Homer Sheffer was able to make an optimistic report to the members, showing that an average of 37 people came to services, with a maximum of 67 on December 24. In March, he was able to report:

We are still booming here. Fourteen new members and more in prospect. All good too!

In 1939, the 1929 mortgage had not yet been paid off. Money was short during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

In early 1940, the trustees asked the AUA to renegotiate the 1929 mortgage (which had helped to build, in 1927, the western-most social room and the vestibule), and reduce the monthly payments. The balance due in 1940 was \$1,900. The AUA lent the Society an additional \$1,100, making the total amount due \$3,000, with a repayment schedule of annual installments of \$300.

The Society paid only \$200 instead of the agreed-upon \$300 during two of the war years, probably 1943 and 1944. Howard Crane, treasurer, issued a special plea to members to send money, because there was still a \$1,700 debt. By 1948, that debt had been reduced to \$300.

George G. Davis of the AUA gave an account (1940) of success in Ridgewood:

Minister and congregation are happy with each other.

The parsonage has been reconditioned, the floors scraped and refinished, and the walls, woodwork and ceilings also re-painted and redecorated.

The same is true in the church. The men of the church started by themselves with only the expenditure of money for material, repainted one of the rooms, and . . . the redecoration of the church is now very nearly completed. One of the former active members of the church has come back into the fold under Mr. Sheffer and has been very generous in providing funds for special purposes. One of these has resulted in a distinct improvement in the appearance of the church auditorium; that of providing a frame for the middle window back of the pulpit, making it in keeping with the two Gothic windows on either side. . . . The heating plant at the church has failed nine or ten times during the past winter, and it has only been kept going by the mechanical ingenuity of Mr. Porter [the president of the Society] himself, who is an engineer with the telephone company.

Corroborating this general satisfaction, Sheffer reported to the congregation at the May, 1940 Annual Meeting. He praised the President, Mr. Porter, specifically:

He has given generously of his time on all occasions and exercised the skill of an engineer in coaxing our dilapidated furnaces to operate. I have called him seven times at all hours on the parsonage furnace alone. Besides he has done innumerable odd jobs about the house and church.

Also, the Women's Alliance received his thanks:

Mrs. Woelfle and her able assistants have born the burden of the usual activities of the Alliance in splendid spirit, and helped create a friendly social atmosphere while contributing largely to the finances of the church.

Thanks to the AUA loan, a new heating system could be installed and repairs made to the church and parsonage.

A new era of rapid growth in the Society's history had begun. Average adult attendance on Sunday morning was 32 in 1940-41, and shot up to 43 in 1944-45.

Among members' activities:

- In November of 1939, Bertha Wood, Fredericka Wadsworth and Mrs. Herman Lemp organized a fall fair, where they sold "fancy articles, food, and grabs." The Italian spaghetti dinner cost 75 cents. Later that month, the Ridgewood Society participated for the first time in the Union Thanksgiving service of the Ridgewood churches with Homer Sheffer preaching the sermon.
- Men in the Laymen's League heard Mr. Gilbert Fitzhugh of Ridgewood speak on November 15 about: ". . . researches fostered by life insurance companies in America for increasing longevity or life expectancy [and]. . . elimination. . . of conditions fostering disease & abuse of health."
- In April, 1940, the men heard Emmett Drew, Secretary of the public utilities commission of the State of New Jersey discuss problems of public utility regulation.
- In May of 1941, the Laymen's League and the new Unitarian Service Committee in collected clothing, footwear and bedding for shipment to Europe to be distributed among war refugees. (The end of the war did not end the need. In May 1946, member Ruland Anderson spoke of collecting food and clothes "for the poor people of Europe." He and Gertrude Bartlett were among the chief workers for refugee relief.)

The custom of frequent lay services did not begin until the mid 1950s. In the 1940s, the Layman's League took charge of the service only once a year.

Charles T. Greene, on Laymen's League Sunday, May 18, 1941, spoke "in celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the famous sermon by Theodore Parker on *The Transient and Permanent in Christianity*."

Unitarianism, in Parker's view, was a new definition of Christianity: "not a system of doctrines, but rather a method of attaining oneness with God." Parker refers to the command: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind—thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. . . ." Parker was shunned by his fellow Unitarian ministers for these radical views. Greene's address has not survived.

In a February, 1943, *Newsletter*, Homer Sheffer encouraged his readers to listen to a radio program in which humanist minister Rev. Charles Francis Potter debated with psychiatrist Dr. A. A. Brill: "Should Euthanasia Be Legalized?"

The Alliance was busy in 1940 with teas, bridge parties, sewing days, covered dish lunches and box lunches, bandage rolling, collecting "penny bags," and stimulating the mind with program meetings. On April 23, 1940, the program led by Katherine Wheelock and Elizabeth Hawes addressed "Jesus Christ and Mohammed."

When the United States declared war in 1941, average attendance began to drop to somewhere between 26 to 33, at least in part a result of gas rationing. In 1943, Sheffer pleaded in *The Free Church News Letter*:

[P]ersonally take upon yourself the obligation of keeping alive the churches of the free spirit.

He noted that liberal arts colleges were declining, too, possibly casualties of the war.

In 1943, the younger women formed the Evening Alliance. They found it difficult to go to daytime meetings because of small children or work outside the home. They raised money to support the Church School, to reduce the mortgage, and for other causes. Lavinia Cooke was president, and Edna Crane secretary-treasurer.

Sheffer wrote in 1943:

Now that I have a good mechanical aid for hearing, I should be in a larger church, a church that could support my wife too. Living alone gets lonesome after four or five years! However, I shall stick at it as long as it is necessary.

My congregation is easy to get along with. The only difficulty I have is that of getting along with myself.

It is not known where Edith Sheffer lived during those years. By August of 1944, however, she resided in the Ridgewood Unitarian parsonage and taught English at Ridgewood High School. Current member Sue Handley was one of her students, and reports that Edith Sheffer was a good teacher. Respected and demanding, she was perhaps not loved by all her students, but was sure to help them attain their best.

Though living in the parsonage, Edith Sheffer would not participate in her husband's ministry, not even to take a telephone message. She guarded her house against Unitarians because, Homer said, "if she so much as had a few to tea, they would be going through her bureau drawers to see how much she was buying." (In those days, if the minister's wife was thought to be buying too much, he was considered overpaid.)

Edith Sheffer's mother, Mrs. Gibney who had "paralysis agitans", lived in the parsonage too until her death—a difficult responsibility for the Sheffers.

By 1945, things had become less comfortable. Sheffer wrote to Dan H. Fenn of the AUA's ministerial department,

Would it be possible for you to recommend me for the Keene, N.H. church? I should like to have a hearing there. I know Keene and I like the town.

My situation is a peculiar one. I have been here over six years and have been re-elected for this year. But I see no hope for years to come of receiving an adequate salary. The church is now on its feet and pretty prosperous for a small church. The idea of closing had occurred to them before I came. Even as they grow more prosperous, I shall receive less from the Sustentation Fund. In consequence I shall be no better off for years than I am now. My cash salary is fifteen hundred and a hundred dollar bonus. I would like to be able to support my wife who now works and shouldn't work.

Mrs. Sheffer's home nursing in addition to teaching was double duty. He continued:

I am fifty-five and within a few years I shall have to face the fact that age will count overwhelmingly against me. I would be interested in any small town parish that paid \$2500 and house. My salary now is the poorest I have received since I entered the ministry. When I was thirty-one I was receiving \$2500 and house and perquisites. My salary has been as high as \$3600 and house and perquisites. My hearing undoubtedly brought to a halt my professional success. For years it was difficult to carry on a conversation, for there was no adequate hearing aid.

Within the past few years enormous strides have been made in hearing devices. I can now work without that handicap. It is a wonder they took me here six years ago, for I had no adequate hearing aid.

Please let me know whether you are able to do anything? I am definitely eager to try for Keene.

I hope things go well with you.

Faithfully yours, Homer

Fenn's reply is not on record. By 1945, Sheffer was getting \$1,500 from the Society, and \$400 annually from the Sustentation Fund of the AUA. If Sheffer's pay were to be increased by the Society, he would be taken off the Sustentation Fund, and as a result he would not gain anything. The question of salary was a constant problem for both the minister and the congregation.

In February, 1947, the AUA's regional director, Dale DeWitt, wrote to Malcolm B. Lees, the Society's President of seven years, to discuss means of raising Sheffer's salary. There was some juggling of bureaucratic semantics on the part of both AUA officials and those of the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, enabling a more gradual change. The result: in 1950, a big jump in Sheffer's salary to \$3,500 from 1949's \$1,900. Sheffer stayed 19 more years in Ridgewood, eventually receiving a salary of \$6,765 in 1963-64, when the Society's total income was \$21,539.

Homer Sheffer was politically and theologically liberal, but he evidently restricted radical statements to Sunday morning services and to religious questions, such as criticisms of the Bible. He was an absolute pacifist during World War II, but his views appeared not to have upset politically conservative members, or the community surrounding the Society.

The political climate of the 1930s had changed by the time Janet and Al Webster became active in the Society in the late 1940s. The Unitarian Society's public presence was no longer one of open social criticism. Janet Webster recalled:

I had been in the church many years before I even knew there had been Sunday evening forums put on by [Rev. Milton Muder at] the Unitarian Society, and that they were very significant, very meaty subjects, and rather radical speakers. . .

The war years, however, brought the question of the moral justification for war. On September 16, 1940, Congress passed the Selective Service Training and Service Act, the first peace-time draft in the United States. Theology students were among the first to suffer for pacifism, and Sheffer spoke about their protests in the Society's *Free Church News Letter*, December 8, 1940:

THE LUXURY OF HONESTY

Union Theological Seminary students who opposed the draft are now in jail because they simply followed what to them was the voice of conscience and of God. Honesty has now become a frightfully expensive luxury. What shall we do in these trying days with our consciences? Shall we decide that honesty is just too costly a luxury . . . ?

Sheffer's son Dean, graduated from Rutgers in 1942, had Conscientious Objector draft status. He wanted to enroll in Harvard Divinity School, but his appeal to change his status from C-O to Theological Student was denied. At the Citizens' Public Service Camp near Campton, New Hampshire, he and his fellow C-Os worked as foresters.

Homer Sheffer wrote:

The difficulties of the present situation are enhanced for me for I am trying to pay all Dean's expenses at camp in contributions to the American Friends Service Committee. I feel that is my obligation—a kind of debt of honor.

Russell Miller, Society president 1964-66, has commented on Sheffer's pacifism:

Homer was a pacifist, a pacifist to the nth degree. A story that I heard which makes me shudder was during the war. . . [O]ne of the women in the congregation was informed that their son had been killed in the war, and when the news came out and she was in church, Sheffer said, "Well, that's what you asked for."

If the story is correct (and more than one person recalls it) Sheffer took pacifism to an unsympathetic extreme. He was honest and intelligent, but often thought to be distant, even cold. He has been described as totally disapproving of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's policies, blaming Roosevelt for getting the United States involved in World War II.

June 6, 1944 was D-Day: the day that British and American troops invaded France from the Normandy beachheads, enduring enormous suffering and loss of life. Folded between the pages of the Woman's Alliance secretary's book (1935-44) is an undated paper showing how a pacifist minister reacted to the attack:

RESOLVED THAT:

Whereas—following a presidential request that all churches in the land be opened for religious services on D-day, our church was the only one in town with closed doors and

Whereas—several of our members wishing to participate in religious services were forced therefore to seek other churches for a service of prayer

We, the members of the Rebecca Williams Hawes Alliance respectfully request that hereafter on such occasions our church in cooperation with other churches in our community open its doors to those who wish to seek a moment of quiet prayer.

Near the end of the war, April 1945, when Roosevelt died, Sheffer did nothing to recognize the nation's loss.

Frederick and Mary Edna Woelfle, who had been members since 1922, presented a resolution of sorrow for FDR's death to the Board of Trustees in June:

Whereas, the death of our late President, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, was a severe loss to the peoples of this nation and all freedom-loving nations of the world, and

Whereas, his imagination, integrity, courage, relentless effort, and broad social vision have given hope and comfort to the citizens of the United States of America and to all humanity, and

Whereas, the great social causes for which he fought, the faith which he constantly showed in the common man's ability to govern himself, the regard which he had for the freedom of the individual, and his aspirations for peace throughout the world, will long live in the hearts of men; therefore, be it

Resolved that the Ridgewood Unitarian Society express its great sorrow upon the death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and dedicate itself to the responsibility of furthering the democratic principles for which he lived and died.

FREDERICK WOELFLE
MARY EDNA WOELFLE

Sheffer planned no formal recognition of VE Day, May 8, 1945; the USA's atomic bomb devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; VJ Day, August 14; nor the end of World War II. Such services might have been construed as honoring war itself.

Former President Charles Greene, president of the Laymen's League, the position he had assumed when he stepped down from the office of President of the Society in 1938, did what would ordinarily be expected of the minister or of the President of the Society. He quickly convened a *Special Service for Victory* for Sunday, August 19, declaiming two of his own lengthy patriotic poems: "The Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave", and "The World at Peace". His address on "The Responsibilities as Well as the Benefits of Peace" concluded with these words:

As for our defeated enemies: Let us be firm, but patient so that the victory we have just won may be a moral victory for all mankind and that means for Germans and Japs also! . . .

We cannot be thankful without at the same time being thoughtful.

His term "Japs" was common usage at the time. Greene made no reference to the horror of the atomic bomb.

The Board instructed the Secretary to write a letter to Greene expressing appreciation for the services he conducted. In October, 1945, at the Semi-annual Meeting, the entire membership expressed its disapproval of Sheffer's failure to mourn Roosevelt's death the previous April:

Mr. Greene moved that the President of the Society appoint a committee to draw up an appropriate set of resolutions on the death of President Roosevelt. . .

It was seconded and passed.

Mrs. Woelfle then moved to have an expression of opinion by a show of hands by those who felt that there should have been a reference made from the pulpit on the passing of the President of the United States. . . .

This, too, passed by a vote of 19-3, a defeat for Homer Sheffer by the same parishioners who had opposed Milton Muder only six years before. Notably, however, there was evidently no effort to oust Sheffer from the Ridgewood pulpit.

The spirit of international peace and cooperation was enacted in December at an elaborate pageant. Girls dressed in national costumes represented nine countries—two of them the USA's former enemies: Germany and Japan. Nathalia Crane (now Sudnik, a current member) was "Holland," and Florence Myers was Mother of the American child, Jean. Howard Crane, Thalia's brother, was the Peace Fairy.

Sheffer belonged to the Ridgewood Exchange Club, and talked twice there in 1946 on the subject "One World or None." His fear of an atomic war was accepted with seriousness. But at the Unitarian Society, he anguished; "I was astonished at the attitudes expressed. I call on people and I find people willing to involve scores of millions in death." In 1947 he wrote a scathing letter to President Truman, protesting foreign policies that would, in Sheffer's opinion, lead the world straight into another world war.

In October 1946, at the Semi-annual Meeting, the members, recognizing that the Society could not increase Sheffer's salary, passed a resolution to make a special gift to him of \$225 for a new hearing aid, which he very much wanted and needed. They made a special appeal for contributions, so that the hearing aid would arrive in time for the Society's celebration of its 50th anniversary in 1946.

THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY

The Society celebrated its 50th anniversary October 20, 1946, with a program planned by Charles Greene, starting with a mid-day dinner at the Ridgewood Country Club, with Dr. Frederick May Eliot, president of the AUA, as guest.

At the 4:00 service, led by Homer Sheffer as minister, Percy V. Wheeler played the organ, and Gladys Morey sang a solo, "Bless This Church" by Brahe. Messages from former ministers were read. Participants included Ruland Anderson, Gladys Johnson, and Howard and Edna Crane (the parents of Thalia Sudnik), and Ellen Johnson (the present Ellen Anderson).

Also present was Frank Wicks. George Badger, the Society's first minister, sent a letter:

Yes, It was fifty years ago when I invited my neighbor [the Reverend] Frank Wicks of Passaic to share with me the adventure of holding a series of six services in the Opera House in Ridgewood with the hope that a Unitarian Church in Ridgewood might be the outcome. Frank Wicks was privileged to conduct the first service.

Dr. Eliot delivered the sermon, *Liberal Religion and the Next Fifty Years*. A news report summarized his talk, which reflected the post-war fear of the Soviet Union:

Discussing what lies ahead, Dr. Eliot said the need is greater than ever for a liberal religion, and freedom of expression, for both are in danger at the present time. The position of liberalism is uncomfortable and under fire from the right and the left. He said one needs only to hold a stop-watch to find out how soon a discussion between any group

of men [sic] hits on the subject of Russia. “One should approach all problems without panic; we who believe in free speech know it is being challenged and it takes lots of courage to stand four-square for that and for freedom of thought,” he said. “In this respect we may even be facing persecution.” The need therefore for a liberal church is greater than ever. He cited views of Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and others showing that they might well have been Unitarians. . .

. . . [A] free religion must become well organized without destroying freedom and he hoped the next fifty years would show an improvement. He said the church has been hiding along violet paths but it intends to get into the public’s eye. It will get under fire, he said, but that will be a hopeful sign and he urged the people not to get disturbed for the experience will build up a certain toughness of fibre.

“Do not get panicky, for a liberal and reasonable religion will be one of the greatest things in history” concluded the speaker.

Charles Greene had presented his 50th anniversary talk the previous May 19 on Laymen’s Sunday. His final peroration from that address, titled “Profanation and Prophecy,” may be worth repeating this 100th anniversary of the Society:

It is fitting this day that we as laymen and laywomen rededicate our lives to the perpetuation of the movement which was bequeathed to us fifty years ago in this our village of Ridgewood—that our free and outshining religion—our reasonable approach to the mysteries of life as we experience them in our everyday living may be perpetuated in our community; that we may promote the practice of the profane virtues of sincerity and moderation and be true prophets of the ever unfolding truth!

CROWDED SPACE

The church building and parsonage were aging, and the list of repairs that Nelson Park and the Building Committee had to deal with in 1948-49 included organ repair at \$107, parsonage shingling needed but too expensive at \$600 (men of the Society would stain the present shingles, instead), installation of an automatic water heater in the parsonage, addition of an outside basement door to the parsonage (the space was used for pre-school children on Sundays), installation of a railing at the rear entrance steps to kitchen, varnishing of front and side door entrances, addition of clips to the pews to hold cards, and removal of the squeak in the pulpit floor.

Homer Sheffer suggested renting the theater downtown on Sunday mornings, relieving members of the expense of building up-keep. His view did not prevail.

Lack of space was also becoming a problem. In 1948-49 average attendance on Sunday morning doubled to more than 60 as new members came in. Sunday school classes in the post-war years eventually had to be held at the YM-YWCA, Octavius Pitzalis’s “Arthur’s House of Beauty,” and at Christ Episcopal Church next door, as the congregation and its children grew. In 1949, Sheffer wrote to the AUA’s George Davis,

If we only had more money for promotion! It looks now as if we may have to suffer from the impoverishment of expansion! There are so many places to put the money we have.

Already there is considerable sentiment for taking over the parsonage for the church school. This would mean buying a new house for me. I am thankful that our problems are the problems of growth.

The Unitarian church school in Ridgewood had been virtually non-existent except for child-care in the basement of the parsonage after 1939, but that changed with the post-war expansion and baby boom after 1945. A *Newsletter* item reads: “The church school has lost the services of Mrs. Schulze. But Mrs. Myers on her own initiative has temporarily stepped into the breach.”

Among the new young couples that came to the Ridgewood Unitarian Society in the late 1940s and 1950s were Janet and Albert Webster, Betty and Tony Velonis, Don and Mildred Anderson, Rosa Lee and Woodie Holstein, Jean and Jacob ten Hove, and Carl and Nancy Petrie. They found Florence Myers bravely meeting with an ever-growing handful of children, having no organized program or support of any kind. Thanks largely to her efforts, and those of Janet Webster and Betty Velonis, a Sunday School program began.

While searching for a Sunday school for their children, newcomers Zeno and Susan Wicks were astonished by Sheffer’s ability to thrill those gathered to hear him.

[My wife] Susan and I decided that the kids should go to Sunday School and that if they were going to Sunday School we should go to the church. Susan went out to “interview” churches by attending Sunday services at a variety of Protestant churches. Then Mary Fishler, a Quaker, suggested that she should try the Unitarian Church. Susan went and came back saying: “Zeno, this you have to hear.” I went and for five years we didn’t miss a Sunday (fortunately the church was closed during the summer). We really joined Homer Sheffer not the Unitarian church. He was an inspiring speaker, a deep thinking philosopher, and an outspoken believer in certain things. I have never heard a more entrancing minister in our many years in Unitarianism.

. . . The single thing that I remember best of all the things I heard from him was that instead of getting more conservative as one got older, one had an obligation to become more radical.

Homer was a wonderful speaker but when it came to some other ministerial functions he rather reluctantly carried them out if he had the time left from preparing his weekly sermon, and Edith was not a traditional minister’s wife. Many people felt that he should do more of the calling on the sick, talking to parishioners, raising funds for the church. . . .

DIGRESSION ON PUBLIC RELATIONS

In an effort to better publicize Unitarianism, the New York Metropolitan District of the AUA placed advertisements in the *New York Times* in 1946-47: *Are You a Unitarian and Don’t Know It?* Contributions toward the cost were requested from local churches. The Ridgewood Society Board of Trustees decided not to participate in this plan, but the idea gave them the impetus to place their own advertisements in the local papers, and the Laymen’s League did so.

By 1957, publicity became a concern locally. Perhaps the Laymen’s League grew weary of the responsibility of advertising; president John Manley said “We can’t expect the Laymen’s League to continue its campaign indefinitely.” As *NEWSLETTER* editor, Jean ten Hove keenly felt the limitations of a single mimeographed page published

only once a month. (She always spelled *NEWSLETTER* with capital letters.) She proposed a professionally printed paper with commentary from Sheffer on current affairs and other readable items in addition to the calendar of events; and that a professional printing, addressing and mailing service be used. Ten Hove had estimates of the costs from several firms, and figured it would cost \$120 annually, plus postage. Her hope was that newspapers would pick up some of the items, even if no special press release were written. It is likely that she herself had been writing the press releases.

In March, ten Hove sent a memorandum to the Board of Trustees: “To put it bluntly, we don’t toot our own horn enough!” she wrote:

According to figures made available to me, we are spending about \$500 annually on newspaper advertising, of which by far the largest part (almost \$400) is going to the Ridgewood News. Regardless of money available, I believe this to be too great a concentration of advertising in one area, for value received!

Although I cannot prove this, I have a feeling that we are not attracting \$400 worth of new members annually from the area served by this paper. . .

She was thoughtful about the Society’s values in the final paragraph of the memorandum:

I would like to offer one comment on the subject of advertising in general, the Society in particular. I think we should determine first what we expect from our advertising. If it’s more members, then what is the general feeling on the potential growth of the Society? In other words how big do we want to be? I am not entirely convinced that I for one want an intensive advertising campaign which will result in too much larger a congregation. This is not for me to decide, however.

Her plan for a professionally published Newsletter was never put into effect, although a professional mailing service was hired.

The Laymen’s League was still discussing publicity a year and a half later. Bill Shannon, a member of the Laymen’s League, proposed that the Society create the post of Co-ordinator of the various activities of the Society, with broad responsibility to attend meetings within the Society and in the surrounding communities, to publicize Unitarian Society activities, to coordinate the scheduling of events sponsored by various committees, to encourage committees to raise funds, and to campaign for increased membership.

At the next Board of Trustees meeting the proposal was discussed.

Point made by Mrs. ten Hove that we are a very small organization to be set up like General Motors. [President] Manley pointed out the very real need for a general coordinator of the various church activities. Following the discussion, it was moved by Mr. Rosenquest that the position of Public Relations Chairman be created. Unanimously approved. Mr. Manley then made his recommendation for the person to fill the new position - Mr. Rosenquest! Also unanimously approved, not without vehement protestations by Mr. Rosenquest that he had been politely trapped! . . .

— *Jean ten Hove, Secretary, pro-tem*

At the November 1958 Semi-Annual Meeting of the congregation, coffee and dessert were served before the business meeting began. Sixty members were present.

- Homer Sheffer reported that average Sunday attendance was 83 the first seven weeks of the year, about average for corresponding weeks for the past few years.
- A study of the possibility of merging with the Universalists could be expected within the year.
- William Rosenquest was expected to create a sustained publicity program in his new position as Public Relations Director.
- Christiana Shorey was *Newsletter* editor, Jean ten Hove having resigned during the past year.
- Gladys Johnson asked why this Society does not have a delegate to the Ridgewood Council of Churches.
- Ruland Anderson asked for more notices in the *Newsletter* concerning the Thrift Shop.

Another active year was well under way. The Laymen's League gave transportation to people in need, and urged people to contribute their eyes, after death, to the Eye Bank, a new technological possibility at that time.

In the *Newsletter*, League President Russ Miller issued a plea: "Men, why not come out of hiding and participate?" Although there were few planned meetings, the men called themselves "The Minute Men,"—ready when required.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Women's Alliance, as in the post-World-War-I period, gave assistance to refugees following World War II. In the Congregational Report of May, 1948, the Day Alliance (a.k.a. the Rebecca Hawes Alliance; there was also an Evening Alliance at this time) reported that they made over 200 garments for the poor children of Europe and adopted a plan to send a monthly box to a child for the coming year. (As late as 1949, the Unitarian Service Committee continued to request clothing for Europeans, particularly men's clothing.) The Sunday School reported that they sent boxes of shoes, mittens and socks to the poor children of Europe and gave a collection of crayons, pencils, buttons, and needles and thread. Shipments to Europe continued; Gertrude Bartlett, in charge of the collection, reported that she sent 13 boxes of clothing that year.

The main issue at the May meetings in 1959 of the AUA was the merger with the Universalists. In addition, however, Ridgewood's delegate Richard Long reported there was pressure from Rev. Homer Jack for political activism on social concerns.

Interest in peaceful international relations was another major concern in the immediate post-war era. At the Congregational Meeting in May of 1948, members authorized the adoption of a peace resolution based on "The Positive Program for Peace" authored by John Foster Dulles in his address to the World Council of Churches of Christ in America. On May 23, 1948, a congregational resolution was sent to the President of the United States, local representatives in Congress, the press and the churches of Ridgewood. It urged cooperation among nations to make the world a better place to live in, economically, politically, and culturally, and called for the creation of a Department

of Non-Military Defense, and for support of the United Nations to settle differences.

In 1949, the Laymen's League invited a Mrs. J. Murray Booth to speak on the United Nations. Later that year, the Board of Trustees gave the American Association for the United Nations (UNA) permission to meet at the Unitarian Society, as it has ever since.

Unitarians attended to local concerns, too. In 1949, eighteen families were threatened with losing their homes in three poorly heated and poorly wired buildings, numbers 216-222 on Broad Street in Ridgewood, in order for the landlord to renovate the sub-standard dwellings and raise the rents.

When teacher and Society member Ruland Anderson heard about this, he took the first steps to form the Broad Ridge Housing Corporation. The president of the corporation was Bennett H. Fishler Jr., son of the owner of the *Ridgewood News*, a young lawyer who represented the tenants. Robert Olson represented the Unitarian Society on the Broad Ridge Housing Corporation's steering committee. The General Chairman—and chief initiator and energizer—was Unitarian Ruland Anderson.

Other accounts name Anderson Chairman of the Finance Committee. In any case, the group risked \$2,000 donated by the tenants and interested citizens to purchase an option to buy the property. An additional \$38,000 was needed to complete the purchase; and \$35,000 would be needed for the repairs to turn the old dwellings, which had no central heating, into good housing. A full-page ad appeared in the local paper, with the headline

“SQUALOR” WITH A RIBBON AROUND IT—IS STILL “SQUALOR.”

The ad, which addressed the problem of Broad Street houses surrounded by a ribbon of fine homes, churches, and schools, was signed by the Broad Street neighbors and their supporters who had agreed to be captains in soliciting subscriptions, and by the Rev. Homer Sheffer.

Returning to Ridgewood after the school summer recess, Ruland Anderson began recruiting people by telephone to sell shares in the project. He mailed bond circulars to every home in the community.

The task wasn't easy. Racial prejudice got in the way. Some said they would contribute to charity, but not to a “do-gooder” scheme doomed to fail. At times the bond sellers found whole blocks arrayed against them. Some wealthy members of the community who had been counted on for large subscriptions bought one \$25 share just to be able to close the door. But in two weeks, the drive netted \$50,000. Then, after a lull to avoid conflict with the Community Chest annual drive for \$100,000 and an \$800,000 drive for Valley Hospital, the canvassers went out again and raised another \$13,000.

In the end, the project was broadly supported; one thousand Ridgewood families purchased stock. Almost sixty subscriptions were sold for one \$25 share; less than forty were for 10 shares or more. Twenty churches bought shares in their names and forty-two organizations voted to become shareholders. The Unitarian Society bought ten shares. Each tenant of the buildings bought \$300 worth of shares, the equivalent in 1995 prices of at least \$3,000.

With money in hand, the plan could go forward. The buildings were purchased and

the tenants, in the following 30 years, bought back the outstanding shares and became full owners.

Ridgewood's Village Commissioner and Consulting Engineer Richard D. Fine predicted, an associate of his said, that the buildings would last another 50 years or more. And at this writing the Broad Street buildings still stand.

Among the Unitarians who worked for this cause were Edna and Howard Crane, Charles Greene, Winnie and Jack Hawkins (Baptists at that time), Phyllis Kozma, Morris Miller, Nelson Park, Octavius Pitzalis, Arline Pujals, and Albert Webster, with a strong endorsement from Homer Sheffer.

Social, scientific and religious topics discussed at Wednesday night meetings of the Laymen's League in the mid to late 1950s and early 1960s were much the same concerns as in the 1990s. In 1954-55 a speaker from the Bergen County Ethical Culture Society discussed the Atomic Energy Commission. Other programs, most led by members of the Society, addressed:

- *The Tragedy of Federal Deficit Spending* by Rudolph Kuhlman
- *An Organization Man in the Affluent Society* by Elwood Holstein
- *The Peaceful Applications of Space* by Charles G. Sage
- *The Overseas American* by Elwood Holstein
- *World Federalism* by Cleon Johnson
- *Operation Suburbia*—a game by Albert Webster
- *Unitarian Teen-Agers*—by Elwood Holstein
- *What Do We Expect From Our Minister?*—Sidney Babcock

And Jacob Bakker, a well-known and beloved Dutch Reform resident of the area, spoke on *Why I am an Evangelist* in 1963.

The Evening Alliance "adopted" a Hiroshima boy in May, 1952. In 1955, the Alliance devoted several meetings to the subject of UN Charter revision, while Laymen's League devoted attention to the subject of the security methods of the Atomic Energy Commission. At the time of the 1956 Hungarian revolt against the USSR, the Society responded to a call from the Unitarian Service Committee for aid to Hungary.

Blaming adults for juvenile delinquency, 101 Ridgewood area business and professional men paid for a full-page advertisement, written by Sheffer, in the Ridgewood *Herald-News*, March 23, 1955:

Until adults show more sense, we can hardly expect young people to reach everywhere high moral standards. . . . If our young people are more violent today than yesterday, we have prepared them for that kind of life in church, in school, and in our social life generally.

The Quakers were doing something positive about bringing up non-violent children, and Unitarians were active in helping the Quakers start up the Friends' Neighborhood Nursery School on South Highwood Avenue in 1957, the first such school in the area to be racially integrated. Many Unitarian children passed through its program, which continues in the 1990s. In the 1960s, an era before publishers portrayed black children in story books, Society artist and member Linda Friedman and her team colored the available picture books to depict children of many colors. The Society donated \$150 to the Neighborhood Nursery School from the Social Responsibilities budget in 1969.

During the early 1950s when the Un-American Activities Committee was blacklisting suspected Communists, the leaders of the Ridgewood Unitarian Society were politically conservative, even though theologically liberal. The nation, the AUA, and the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, though, began to move toward liberalism when there was an easing of the nation's relations with the USSR, and desegregation of the schools was enforced by Federal troops in Little Rock, Arkansas in September, 1957. The 1958 May Meeting of the AUA formed a Fellowship for Social Justice to support social action.

During this national and denominational move toward liberalism, when religious freedom was endangered, John Manley, who became Society president in 1958, headed a committee to support the Committee for Religious Freedom in Berkeley, California, where the state was requiring churches to sign loyalty oaths or lose their tax-exempt status. Unitarian churches were in the forefront of the fight to bring the issue to the Supreme Court, and the individuals and groups in the Ridgewood Society contributed \$70.

In January, 1960 the Evening Alliance joined with the Laymen's League to sponsor an address on "The Effects of Fallout" by Dr. Edward Bevilacqua, a scientist who had worked on the Manhattan Project, which developed the atomic bomb. Edna Crane was the Society's first Unitarian Service Committee (USC) representative in the fall of 1961. In 1963, the Alliance chose the combined Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC), as beneficiary of future church fairs. Edna Crane and Lois Williams co-chaired the 1963 fair.

The Alliance became a charter member of the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation when it was formed in 1963, after the merger of the two denominations.

Alliance members participated in the Women Strike for Peace, (called "Women for Peace" in Society Board minutes) formed in 1961 and marched on the United Nations. Lynn Rosenquest describes her 1961 experiences:

I read a letter written by Gladys Herschel to the Ridgewood paper about [nuclear] testing, and strontium 90 in the milk. So I called her – I didn't know who she was – and got involved in the Women's Strike for Peace. . . I had never been assertive—[I was] a traditional type instead of the way women are now. . . We went to New York. . . I think there were 200 of us gathered from all over New Jersey. We walked around the UN, people stood in shop doors and stared at us as if we had two heads. "What is this? What's going on here?" They were dumbfounded to see us [marching] . . .

People who were members of the Society were very active in the community but the church as a church wasn't active. Individuals were doing their own things. Bill Rosenquest—president of the Society, 1960-1962—realized:

The women were the first to go out and really demonstrate. [They] went over to New York and marched down 42nd Street. . . . I remember the silent vigil, around the park, for a day-and-a-half. . . .

The Society didn't have a social concerns committee or anything of that nature. People just [acted] independently. The positions they took were not necessarily popular positions in Ridgewood. The Society was a happy little family. Bob Olson and everybody was against McCarthy, . . .

The Supreme Court ruling restricting religious observances in public schools came under attack in May, 1964. The Becker amendment threatened to override this freedom from religious indoctrination. The Unitarian Society's *Newsletter* published an appeal, calling for opposition to that amendment.

Cleon Johnson spoke on World Federalism on February 15, 1961; Al Webster, Chairman of the local United World Federalists, an organization dedicated to a world government, addressed the Liberal Religious Youth (LRY) that same month.

In response to an appeal from the UU World Services in January of 1964, the Alliance donated eight boxes of clothing to the International Rescue Committee in New York for Cuban refugees. The Board gave permission for the Women's Strike for Peace to collect petitions following church services.

Janet Webster recalled that it was not easy to be a liberal in a conservative community:

I was associated with a group of very Republican women. I wouldn't dare mention Women's Strike for Peace. I tried occasionally to get in a few Democratic jibes and I was just sneered at, definitely. And this other group, Ethical Culture, Quaker, Unitarian, was such a different group, in the same village, in the same church, really.

The congregation is [in the 1980s] far left of what it was in the 40's.

Notable activities of the Rebecca Williams Hawes ("Day") Alliance for 1962-63, reported by Gertrude Bartlett, show the mix of social concern and sociability typical of the Woman's Alliance:

- Selling copies of *American Women: The Changing Image* published by the General Alliance; Gladys Johnson, chair
- Organizing a fair for October 27, which netted \$1,100
- Screening Gladys and Cleon Johnson's travel photos, and those of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Templeton
- Giving Christmas gifts to patients at Bergen Pines hospital
- Hearing the Editor of the *Ridgewood Herald* and *Ridgewood Sunday News*, Robert Sands, speak on "inclusiveness in our relationships"
- Collecting clothing for "Cuban exiles in the vicinity of New York," Cal Lambert and Edna Crane, chairs

Gertrude Bartlett's minutes reveal the level of interest by the Alliance in fighting racial discrimination and injustice. Two representatives of The Order of the Lamp came to the January Alliance meeting. The minutes state:

We found that they were a small group of about twenty Negroes who had just one goal. That was raising funds for scholarships for pupils of their own race. The queen was crowned because she brought in the most contributions. Likewise awards of merit were made to white people who contributed generously. The name "Order of the Lamp" was chosen because light was a symbol of education. We enjoyed their talk and gave them a contribution of \$5. Incidentally I read that the Order of the Lamp raised \$1,000 this year. It was pleasing to know that some, though only a wee bit, came from our Alliance.

Janet Webster reviewed the book *Peaceable Lane* by Keith Wheeler, about a Negro fami-

ly trying to find a home in a white area. “It made a strong appeal. We are very grateful to Mrs. Webster. Many Ridgewood Unitarians are members of the Fair Housing Committee for Negroes. Mrs. Webster is.”

The thrill of this church year was having the Associate [i.e. state level of the organization] Alliance meet here with us. . . . Everyone seemed pleased with the luncheon at the Y. . .

That program centered in part on diabetic camps for children, and reports by the church groups about their activities. The Ridgewood Alliance evidently was on the cutting edge of social action, judging from one remark:

One person came to me at the end of the meeting to tell me she was impressed by the interest we had shown in the Negro situation. She was surprised that our group had been the only one to report such interest.

EXPANDING THE BUILDING

In 1950 the congregation decided to expand the church building again. The Society borrowed initially from a local bank for a major addition to the east end of the building at a cost of \$9,000—a mortgage later refinanced through the AUA. The addition gave five Sunday School rooms—some in the basement, some on the main floor.

By 1951, the Society owed only \$7,700 on the 1950 mortgage. Homer Sheffer and member Rosemary Dyer organized “Pill Packing”—a job the Society members did for General Packing Service, right in the church building, earning almost \$1,300 to help make the mortgage payments.

In 1952, the interior of the building was completely redecorated, resulting in fresh looking bleached oak woodwork to replace the dark brown finish. The dark paneling was removed, green carpeting was installed in the aisles, and new movable pews with green cushions were purchased. (One of the pews sits, at this writing, 1996, in the vestibule.) The social rooms were furnished with new rugs, couches, tables and lamps.

The total result of the \$1,300 redecoration—in the view of some—was “stiff” and “Protestant.” Others were relieved to have dark paneling and heavy fixed pews removed.

Membership in the 1950s grew to about 175; the minister’s salary, to \$4,500 in 1955. Space for Church School was again inadequate only five years after the expansion. The Society authorized the purchase of a new parsonage for the Sheffer family, so that the old parsonage to the rear of the main building could be used for classes. \$27,000 was pledged for a three-year period. Members Janet Webster and Howard A. Day, realtors, contributed their \$800 fee to reduce the cost of the new house.

In 1956 the Sheffers moved into the new parsonage at 391 Vesta Court; but Homer was not happy about it. Lynn and Bill Rosenquest told this story:

[The Vesta Court house] was bought by Jeanette Olson [President of the Society 1956-58]. . . Homer hated the [Vesta Court] house. Hated it. Didn’t like it from the moment he laid eyes on it. And Jeanette Olson insisted “we are going to buy that house and you’re going to live there.” And he did. That got to be a real tug of war between Jeanette and the minister. But he hated it with a passion. It was not a Homer Sheffer-type house. It was a very different person’s house.

Lynn Rosenquest added: “It was rather lacking in charm and attractiveness. A shelter, but . . .”

Her husband continued: “Sort of a box, a two-story square box.”

Such changes are not always easy and smooth, and Sheffer could be difficult at times. Zeno Wicks was to be the chair of the Long Range Planning Committee at the time Homer Sheffer’s retirement was being planned. In 1956 he had the job of convincing Homer to move:

Homer was irascible. When it became evident that we needed more space for the Sunday School, the expansion Committee looked at many alternatives but the one that seemed best was to buy a new “parsonage” and use the old parsonage where Homer and Edith lived for Sunday School. . . .

Homer was a philosopher devoted to the idea that mankind must not just accept change but look for it and seek for it; however, Homer liked the old parsonage and his office there and he didn’t want to move to Vesta Court. He felt strongly that the Sunday School facilities should be expanded and we were finally able to twist his arm into moving. But for years after the move he would complain about the “cookie cutter” house that we had put him in. Edith was pleased with the extra space and the better kitchen, furnace, etc., but Homer never really adjusted to not living in the old parsonage.

Albert Webster too described Sheffer as “irascible,” but fondly recalled Sheffer’s most moving and tender ceremony: christening, as it was called at that time:

Homer was somewhat embarrassed but he overcame it because he did love the kids. His handling of the rose and the name was a very tender moment not only for the parents, but for the whole parish. . . . It was really out of keeping with Homer’s irascible attitude on a number of other things.

Bill Rosenquest acknowledged that Sheffer “. . . didn’t have much to do with the Board. He lived his own life. “You run the church, I’ll do the sermons.”

Edith Sheffer reportedly said, “I listen to him all week. You listen to him on Sundays.”

Phyllis Kozma recalled:

When [the Sheffers] came to the church an agreement was made that she was not to be the usual minister’s wife and [she] was criticized by some for her not dabbling in church affairs. As Unitarians, many of us thought she had the right to choose.

I thought Homer was one of the most effective speakers I had heard. He was a brilliant man, but it was not beneath him to clean the church and fire the old furnace.

Homer and the minister of the Episcopal Church used to have friendly arguments about the Unitarian leaves blowing onto the Episcopal lawn in the fall!

(Dr. Miller, Rector of the Episcopalian Christ Church next door, wrote a letter in the fall of 1962 requesting the removal of leaves. Upon reading the letter at a Board of Trustees meeting, President Howard Roylance intoned: “His will be done.”)

Homer Sheffer paid little attention to the people in the congregation who were sick or dying. When a Society member had an auto accident at the corner of Robinson Lane and Cottage Place, Kelly Tolces and Rosa Lee Holstein were so upset about Homer’s failure to take any notice that they decided they would be the Society’s “sick visitors.”

Sheffer has been described as wonderful for a lecture series, but irrelevant to the life of the Society and its individual members. Yet, Mona Hollowell says:

I am lucky to have known Homer. He was a real hero. He didn't take part in social action; his function was to bring facts to people's attention, and they should become active.

1959 was Homer Sheffer's 20th anniversary in Ridgewood. President John Manley suggested that people send money, and a \$779 gift for Sheffer resulted. A dinner was served in the church building. Restaurateur Robert Olson provided the gourmet feast. Charles Greene was Toastmaster; Ruland Anderson and Robert Olson, speakers.

Unitarians still felt like outsiders in relation to the Christian churches in Ridgewood. In 1959, Bill Rosenquest, for the Board of Trustees, wrote to the local Council of Churches inquiring whether the Unitarian Society could become a member. In May, the reply came from W. E. McLean: a gentle "no", because of doctrinal issues. Unitarian freedom of belief was not acceptable, because the test for membership in the Council of Churches was, and is, acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

The lay leadership of the Society underwent some tension in the 1950s, described as a struggle between conservative and liberal members. Robert Olson was President of the Unitarian Society 1950-53 (and later Mayor of Ridgewood, 1955-60, a post he resigned to become a Republican Bergen County Freeholder). Nelson Park was President, 1953-56, and Jeanette Olson 1956-58. Richard Long was Vice-president during Jeanette Olson's term, and although it would have been expected that he would be elected the next president, he continued as Vice-president (1958-60) under new President John Manley.

It is said that Manley was a compromise candidate between two factions with differing views. Manley, a gentlemanly person, was thought able to negotiate and calm the waters. The story of the controversy is vague. Albert Webster said:

There was some disagreement [before John Manley was elected]. There was a very sudden rupture. . . . Bob Olson . . . was a strong Republican. The politics of the church was heavily conservative. We never really debated politics, but in discussing some issues that had a political tinge, those who were "liberal" were very much in the minority and uncomfortable in the atmosphere. That changed over a period as young people came and began to get on committees.

Rosa Lee Holstein has said, "It was always a wonder to me how so many people could be theologically liberal and at the same time politically conservative."

In the 1950s the United States was in political turmoil. Fear of Communism was the rationale behind accusations leveled against many Americans suspected of having ties to the Soviet system. People lost their jobs, and some were sent to prison, for having been members of organizations which Senator McCarthy and his UnAmerican Activities Committee said were Communist fronts. To declare oneself "liberal" was an act of courage.

In that oppressive atmosphere, in 1951 Homer Sheffer preached a sermon on "Self-Respect":

Governmental control of thought makes an individual lose his self-respect. It makes him fearful. It makes him an informer. It makes him a spineless creature of the state. . . .

When we can no longer express our inmost thoughts without fear of losing our jobs, our reputations, our livelihood, we have gone a long way toward creating the totalitarian state at home. When American intellectual life was healthy, all kinds of criticism and new ideas could be expressed fearlessly. We used to think that our neighbors had a right to think and express their thoughts whether we agreed with them or not. We didn't ask whether they were loyal or search their utterances to find out whether they were following some party line. We honored them for being independent of the crowd. . . .

The AUA, at the May 1958 Meeting in Boston, passed a resolution that the delegates cherish the historic Judeo-Christian heritage of Unitarianism; affirm the universal sources and inspiration of modern Unitarian faith; and express the hope that all religious truth seekers may come together in the spirit of freedom, each contributing the highest insights to the common universal quest for truth.

In 1936 the AUA's Commission on Appraisal had reaffirmed the principle of freedom of belief, a principle argued from time to time since the AUA's founding in 1825. This resolution, publicly supporting "freedom" in 1958, came when merger with the Universalists was close to reality, and when there were governmental threats to religious freedom. The Unitarian principle had, and still has, strong denominational and political implications.

MERGER WITH THE UNIVERSALISTS

The Unitarian and Universalist denominations had been discussing the possibility of merging since 1952. In Ridgewood, a preliminary vote totaled 51 for merger with the Universalists, and 1 against.

In 1959 a Board of Trustees letter to the congregation gave the background, history, and reasons for possible merger, and announced six workshops to discuss "If there is a merger, will the new group be one in which we wish to continue our membership?" The members were so interested in this issue that seven more workshops were added.

Vice-president Richard D. Long summarized the sense of these meetings: The majority felt merger was not practical at that time. Some feared losing the name "Unitarian"; others that Unitarians would pay more than their share of the expenses, or that local autonomy would be replaced by a hierarchical authority. Others felt the period of rapid growth after World War II was difficult enough to assimilate, without adding numbers of Universalists. The question was held open for further consideration, but in a Ridgewood postcard poll of the membership, 97 people voted against merger, with 4 in favor.

At the national May Meeting in Boston the merger process with the Universalists was adopted, and working toward consolidation was approved by the delegates of both groups at Syracuse, October 27 - November 1, 1959.

At that time, a majority of New Jersey Unitarian churches opposed the merger, and also opposed the inclusion of the words "Judeo-Christian heritage" in the plan. The independent Unitarian Fellowship for Social Justice opposed merger, too, while President Dana McLean Greeley and the AUA approved the plan and negotiation of details continued.

A group called "Universalists and Unitarians for Co-operation Without Consoli-

dation” and the First Parish Church in Dorchester, Massachusetts, sent letters urging opposition to merging. In February, 1960, word came that the merger would take effect May, 1961, if approved by a vote of individual congregations.

On March 6, 1960, a special congregational meeting in Ridgewood reversed the earlier poll: 29 voted for merger, and 9 against, with 45 members present. The ballot was sent to Boston marked “For.” Merger was approved by the majority of congregations, and in 1961 the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) was born.

At the 1963 May Meetings of the new organization, Ridgewood delegates Oscar Herzfeld and Lenore Kahn reported on the financial problems of merger. The Universalists handled money state-by-state, and the Unitarians nationally. The Ridgewood delegates, however, felt optimistic that such problems could be solved.

At a lay service in 1974, Gladys Johnson remarked:

People used to ask what was the difference between the Unitarians and the Universalists. The Universalists think God is too good to damn them; the Unitarians think they’re too good to be damned.

This old joke may have had a kernel of truth. Some differences may still exist, but the non-creedal Principles and Purposes statement finally hammered out, kept inclusive love and justice at the heart of religion.

SHEFFER’S MOST BELOVED SERMON

Homer Sheffer’s address for Christmas, 1960, will never be forgotten by Sheffer’s parishioners. Copies of his interpretation of the Christmas story as fairy tale are still in demand by members and friends who have moved from the Ridgewood area and who greatly respect the memory of Homer Sheffer. A few of the original mimeographed copies are still in the office files.

His language is simple, kind, and intended especially for children, but these excerpts demonstrate how iconoclastic Sheffer could be.

Today, I am going to talk to the children. Adults may transform themselves into children for the occasion or listen as adults, as they please. . . .

I warn you that there are a surprising number of people in the world today who believe the Christmas Story fairy tale is true.

In fact it will be celebrated in the churches of Ridgewood, and surrounding towns as a true story, although we know it couldn’t be true, however much enjoyment we get from it at Christmas time.

There is no accounting for adults who get all mixed up about what is true and what we simply pretend. . . .

You would be surprised to know how many people there are, whom we call grown ups, who think today that all you have to do to get things is to wish for them. They think that if they say the right word at the right time in the right way in the right places, they can get almost anything they want. Of course, there are many grown ups who are really more foolish than children are. . . .

He went on to describe god, angels, heaven, and hell as part of a fairy tale.

Then, Jehovah looked with a fond eye on a lovely Galilean peasant girl by the name of Mary. . . .

It was a secret marriage. . . .

The story of Joseph and Mary, the birth of Jesus, the shepherds and angels follows:

And the shepherds thought they heard clearly and plainly what these angels from the far off heavenly city among the stars said: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.”

Now that was a beautiful message that the shepherds thought they heard. There was much fighting in Palestine. The Jews were constantly fighting the soldiers of Rome. People were tired of it.

The shepherds welcomed a message of peace. It was wonderful to hear these words of hope from a multitude of gorgeous beings.

That is the Christmas story. That is the fairy tale. . . .

Most of the story was made up, and we think it was silly for people to believe it was true. Some people think that Jesus also was a part of the fairy tale, a make-believe person who never lived. . . .

We listen to this wonder tale from our past which tells us of a great longing in the hearts of men for peace and good will. Right down the centuries the hearts of men have been softened by it.

We still give way, however, to our rage and our hate and our greed.

Some day you will take our place, and perhaps you will keep the love and the kindness and the good will which we associate with Christmas forever in your hearts.

PARTING

Homer Sheffer grew more contentious in his last years. One conflict (in 1963) concerned his desire to let people enter the auditorium during a music performance, readings, or during the sermon. Others concerned the minister’s refusal to make announcements during the service, and his reluctance to have his sermons tape recorded. He strongly objected, in 1963, to Christmas carols, threatening to hold no service if traditional carols were to be sung.

He still knew how to make a dramatic presentation of his beliefs. Don Anderson once invited a neighborhood couple, young parents from mixed Jewish and Baptist backgrounds, to attend the Society to assess its Sunday School for their children. Sheffer preached that Sunday about the Bible. Full of his knowledge of biblical criticism and the Bible’s all-too-human sources, he eloquently made his point by picking up his Bible, and tearing it to shreds. The young couple did not return.

Sheffer breached common courtesy more seriously after Friday, November 22, 1963, when President John F. Kennedy was shot and killed in his motorcade in Dallas, Texas. Just as he had 18 years before, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt died, Sheffer offered no memorial service, no discussion of the tragedy. Rosa Lee Holstein remembers the Sunday service that followed two days later:

The church was full. People all needed a way to express the horror of this occasion. No matter what our politics, it was a horrible thing in our history. So Homer Sheffer gave the sermon he had been preparing all along, and there was no reference throughout to the

fact that our president had been assassinated, and that the whole country was in a turmoil. Woodie Holstein got up and walked out in the middle of the service, and at least half of the people were horrified.

Sheffer is remembered as having only remarked, “The chickens come home to roost.”

The story of Homer Sheffer’s plans to retire begins in 1958, when at a special Board of Trustees meeting President Jeanette Olson reported that she and Trustee Gordon Brown had met with Sheffer, and that he had no plans to retire, although he was in his 20th year in Ridgewood. In the trustees’ discussion, there was fear that the new Paramus church (moved from Hackensack) and the new Rockland County church could cause Ridgewood to lose members.

At the May 5th, 1958, Annual Meeting, Zeno Wicks, Chair of the Long Range Planning Committee, reported that Homer Sheffer “is anxious to continue his active ministry here” and that “this is in keeping with the desires of the members of the Society.”

In 1960 Wicks reported that the Ridgewood Unitarian Society underpaid its minister, in comparison to other Unitarian societies of similar size: \$8,000 with parsonage and automobile would be adequate, but Ridgewood budgeted for the following year only \$6,000, about 37% of the total Society budget, plus parsonage, Social Security, and expenses.

When the Long Range Planning Committee’s 1960 “Questionnaire for Members and Friends” asked which qualities and activities of a minister respondents considered important, most responses were for ethical, philosophical, and intellectual sermons. No evaluation of how satisfied they were with Sheffer’s performance in these areas was asked for, but it seemed apparent that the congregation had the kind of minister it wanted.

Respondents, however, presented a fairly strong request for more coffee hours, suppers, discussion groups, and welcoming of newcomers, and within the next few years personal phone calls to newcomers inviting them to suppers and Society events were instituted, and greeters at the door were scheduled.

The questionnaire also revealed that the majority of members and friends at that time were from Unitarian and Protestant background, that they wanted to hear a sermon and obtain knowledge, that the majority were humanistic and agnostic, and that most were ages 30-50.

When Ruland Anderson read to the Board of Trustees the notes people added to the questionnaire, Melville Reiner, Secretary, reported that “The dominant theme of many of these ‘remarks’ was the popular approval of Mr. Sheffer’s great contribution to the Society.”

In 1962, “Dr. Zeno Wicks, Dr. Robert Lindsay, and Mr. Howard Roylance,” at two special Board of Trustees meetings (April 15 & 22), presented the retirement plan that Homer Sheffer desired. Sheffer wanted to stay in Ridgewood for the 1962-63 year with a one-month vacation plus guest speakers one Sunday per month. For 1963-64, he would be on sabbatical leave, with “no commitment on his part to return or on the Society’s to rehire him.” It was clear that a minister, pro-tem or permanent, would be

needed for 1963-64 and that a search should begin. Sheffer himself suggested that “this Society hear other ministers with the thought that if the Society hears one that it feels can fill our pulpit beginning in September, 1963, he [should] be hired as minister.” The monthly guest Sunday would provide a good first hearing for various ministers.

There was a procedural hitch: under UUA rules, the pulpit had to be declared vacant in order to begin the minister-selection process, and none of the monthly guest ministers could be considered as candidates because the pulpit in Ridgewood was not vacant. Yet, a full-time minister for the year 1963-64 would be needed just the same, if Sheffer took his planned sabbatical leave. The professional “interim minister” role had not yet been invented. The UUA’s Leon C. Fay wrote, “It sounds to me like Homer Sheffer is going to do the choosing of the next minister and, if so, he has worked out an ingenious system.”

Russell Miller, who was on the Board of Trustees recalled:

. . . [A]s we approached the end of the year, we had to face up to the fact that Homer should retire. [There was] considerable dissension in the group. A large percentage of the congregation felt that we were being hard and harsh in forcing a man because of age to leave a pulpit he had served so faithfully and so well for a long period of time. And the other half took the position that the welfare of the Society had to rise above personalities and that we had to look to the future, and we wouldn’t want to be in the position of our minister becoming ill, or dropping dead in the pulpit, and leaving us without any guidance whatsoever.

At the May, 1963 Annual Meeting of the Society, Sheffer’s retirement was discussed in detail, with many suggestions offered for resolution. After much thought, the members voted almost unanimously (only one negative vote) “that Mr. Sheffer be hired from September 1, 1963 to August 31, 1964. The pulpit to be vacant July 1.”

At Sheffer’s request, a series of guest ministers was instituted during 1963-64, instead of the earlier plan for a full 1963-64 sabbatical. The list of visiting ministers included such well-known Unitarian clergy as Homer Jack, Jack Mendelsohn, Dana Greeley, and Kenneth Patton.

Ruland Anderson read a letter to the Trustees at the December 1, 1963, meeting. He recalled the low morale and small membership of 1939, and the poor new minister who had been without work for a year at that time. A member since 1935, Anderson expressed fears of splitting the congregation on the issue of retiring Homer Sheffer:

. . .the church is heading for destruction. . . . In 1939, when Mr. Muder left, Mr. Sheffer was hired; he [Sheffer] was deaf and his spirit was broken; 19 or 20 came to services. Mr. Sheffer did a great deal for the congregation. At the time of Pearl Harbor, Mr. Sheffer said he was a pacifist; the congregation stood by him. He has had a free pulpit.

Anderson’s conclusion made the point that even though a broken church and a broken minister had pulled through and thrived, supporting each other in spite of differences, nevertheless it was time for Homer Sheffer to retire.

Chairman of Ministerial Search Committee Bill Rosenquest later reported that in January and February of 1964, Sheffer was seriously ill, but he rallied thereafter:

The problem was “What are Homer’s plans?” Bob Lindsay, Zeno Wicks, and Howard Roylance talked with Homer quite a bit. A group thought we were forcing Homer out.

But we thought we were helping Homer make up his mind. It didn't split the church, but there was some feeling on the two sides. Homer was rather insistent that he was leaving. But some people prevailed on him to put his own name in as a candidate when we were looking for a new minister for the church! But finally he said, "I'm leaving. Find yourself a new minister."

Homer said only two men could serve this pulpit. One was Steven Fritchman from California, outspoken liberal, social activist, challenger of government, and the other was Patton, known as an iconoclastic person, author, poet, [who] had worked with Frank Lloyd Wright [to build] the Madison, Wisconsin church. Neither of these two guys was available, not on the official candidates list [at the UUA].

Rosenquest, when in California on a business trip, went to see Steven Fritchman, who said he was not interested in moving at his age, but urged Rosenquest to call Ken Patton, saying "Even if he's interested in moving to another church, he'll never tell Boston [i.e. the UUA]."

Patton said he would be interested. "So we said O.K.," Rosenquest continued, "We'll get you on the candidates list."

Patton said, "I don't cotton to that stuff." So we got dancing around at high levels at 25 Beacon Street, and we got his name on the candidates list even though it never appeared on the Candidates List, if you know what I mean, and then we were able to take a look and talk with Ken Patton.

In order to hear him, the whole search committee flew to Boston, and took cabs to the Charles Street Meeting House to hear a sermon. Afterwards they met with Patton and his wife Mitzi in their apartment, and finally invited him to Ridgewood for a candidating week.

And after that the search committee made the recommendation to the congregation that they call Patton.

[T]he night we had the vote I got a telegram – that's when [Western Union] delivered them personally – and it said, "I bet your congregation doesn't have the guts to call Ken Patton, if they're smart. Signed, Steve Fritchman."

I've always thought that Homer Sheffer put Fritchman up to sending that telegram to make sure that Patton got his pulpit. . . . [Homer] told us who had to replace him! With Homer there was never any problem. He told you what to do, and you figured out how to do it! . . .

According to Rosenquest,

[President] Howard Roylance was a great leavening factor at that time, between the group that wanted Homer to stay and the rest of the church. Howard handled it in a very quiet business-like workman-like rational manner. It never caused a split in the church. Which is sort of amazing, because these things can really divide a congregation.

When asked whether he thought people left the church over that, Rosenquest replied:

No. I don't know of any. In fact, I can tell you that one of the most outspoken opponents of Homer's leaving, was Sid Babcock. Everybody pulled together and did a great job, frankly.

Another account is offered by Sid Babcock:

When we told our friends in the Central Unitarian Church [Paramus] that we were going to join the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, they were aghast. . . They told us that the minister, Homer Sheffer, was a cold fish who turned his hearing aid off at noon on Sunday and didn't turn it back on until eleven o'clock the next Sunday; that the men in the church sat around in the basement playing poker and had no human interests; that we would be at a loss to find anything of religious value there.

Despite these warnings we joined the Ridgewood Society anyway. We received a warm welcome from a caring community. We did find Homer somewhat aloof, but nonetheless a caring person who preached excellent sermons. I quote from one of them:

“The prophets of religion, contrary to popular notions, had little to do with predicting future events. They were preachers of righteousness, discoverers of ideas. They were men who used their own minds. They took all their experiences into account and gave the world their best judgments, and in so doing, pushed the human adventure forward into wider areas of understanding. They left the old behind where it hampered them, and struck out boldly into new wildernesses.”

[Homer Sheffer] often spoke of our need to love each other, not only locally but globally. . . . When I was recovering from an operation in a New York City hospital, he visited me. Unlike his successor, he was proud that no one knew his innermost religious beliefs, for he did not want his ministerial position to interfere with anyone's views.

In 1963, Homer's health began to fail, and a number of people thought he ought to retire. He was very ill in January and February. However, he rallied, and his friends and admirers wanted him to stay. Al Webster was a leader of the first group [retire him] and Hans Bodlaender a leader of the second [keep him]. Some dozen of the latter met at my house to plan a course of action. It happened I was the scheduled speaker on an approaching Sunday, January 19, 1964.

My topic was “The Care and Nurture of Prophets.” My text was, “A prophet is not without honor save in his own country.” I spoke extemporaneously, as was my custom. I described how badly the prophets of Israel were treated in their homeland, and how the practice was still prevalent in the treatment being given Homer Sheffer. I said—Yes—like all of us—he is getting older, and—as all of us—his health has its ups and downs—but his prophetic fire was still burning and we had but to listen to learn a lot. There was warm applause at the conclusion, but during the coffee hour, Al Webster said the address was out of place and in poor taste. I replied that a Unitarian speaker had the right to speak as he saw fit, and the listeners had the right to disagree.

Homer's health took a turn for the worse and he announced his retirement at the end of the fiscal year. A search committee for a replacement was appointed. Then Homer's health improved and he asked to be appointed another year. This was turned down. He retired on schedule and died the following year.

Many people wrote to the Board of Trustees strongly supporting Sheffer in his desire to stay. Some excerpts:

It is not easy to find a clear thinker who courageously pulls no punches and who is a fine orator.” – John and Justine Polk.

[I appreciate] his clear insight into history and current events – his superior ability to analyze—his courage in discussing controversial subjects. – Robert W. Mason.

Gertrude Bartlett, who had cleaned, mended, and packed hundreds of garments to

send overseas after World War II, and looked after aging and frail Elizabeth Hawes, wrote,

Recently we have had a meeting, just a small, select committee, of course, to decide what we want in a new minister. . . .

I suggest a meeting to pick over the congregation for a change. What do we want in a congregation? Do we want to be a selfish, smug, complaining, petty, never satisfied group of people – a club? Or do we want to be an outgoing, sympathetic church full of people dedicated to the huge task of mitigating the suffering of people all over the earth? If so, how on earth can we continue to “fiddle while Rome burns”?

. . . Let’s be for something worthwhile; not against everything and everybody. Let’s treat our minister the way we should, with kindness, affection, and understanding.

To honor Sheffer’s 25 years at the Society, the trustees wanted a formal portrait of him. Susan Wicks commissioned Ann Chase to paint the portrait which hangs in Sheffer House at this writing (1996).

Many who remember Homer Sheffer say that the robe he is wearing in that portrait seems uncharacteristic, but photographs of Homer at the weddings of Christa and John Mott in 1958 and of Penny Kozma and Henry Whitlock in 1960 show that he did don a robe for formal occasions, and others recall that he wore it regularly on Sunday mornings. This is not a trivial issue to freedom-loving Unitarians, many of whom do not want the minister to appear priestly. Homer Sheffer, though, respected the custom.

Zeno Wicks:

Homer used the orders of service in the back of the old hymn book and the numbers of the hymns for the Sunday were put up on a board at the front of the church. He believed that there should be a continuity of ritual on Sunday mornings; for example he always wore his robe. You don’t see that much any more in Unitarian churches.

And yet, Jake ten Hove recalls Homer’s attire this way:

When we first came here, or when Jean did, she finally prevailed upon me to stay, and Homer was wearing robes! And when we got home I said, ‘I’m sorry! In a liberal church, I cannot see the significance of a robe. So I’m not going there again until we have somebody up there who doesn’t wear a robe.’ So the next week, I think it was, Jean mentioned it to him, and his response was, “I’ve been waiting for somebody to say that!” And he never wore it again! . . .

Different memories, different perceptions.

Homer Sheffer, on February 23, 1964, told the congregation that he would end his ministry in Ridgewood August 31, 1964. He took full responsibility for having begun the process by initiating the plan for guest speakers. On May 18, 1964 the Department of the Ministry of the UUA received notification from him of a change in status:

Kenneth L. Patton becomes resident minister, July 1, 1964. My resident ministry ends August 31, 1964. I am taking a sabbatical at my own expense. What I shall do then is in the lap of the gods. I shall of course continue to be Minister at Large with a salary. My privileges and duties were not defined.

I am not ready to retire. I did not want to be known as Minister Emeritus. I don’t like the name nor the implications. I was formally elected May 14, 1964.

The present title and salary should keep my standing as a regular minister.

So that was the comforting compromise—He would not be “Emeritus;” he would be “at Large.” In this way he was not rejected, not retired, but simply “on sabbatical.”

Albert Webster drove Homer Sheffer back to Linlithgo that summer. He enjoyed the rural landscape and his boyhood memories as he approached his birthplace.

On September 20, 1964, Homer Sheffer died. The minister he had chosen for Ridgewood—Kenneth Patton—and an attitude of fearless, even outrageous, honesty and freedom were his bequests to this congregation.

Edith Sheffer wrote,

I wish I could tell you how proud Homer was of being “minister at large.” He loved his church and the thought that he would be separated from it was intolerable.

The action taken by the Society gave him great satisfaction. Many times he said, ‘I am still a minister of this church!’

That you now grant the honorarium to me extends your generosity. It is a most deeply appreciated kindness. Our ‘farm’ offers a bit of Hudson River Country, with the Catskills blue against the sky. To any of the congregation who care to come, Dean and I offer a warm welcome.

At the Memorial Service in Ridgewood on September 27, Albert Webster, Robert Lindsay, and Kenneth Patton paid tribute to Homer Sheffer, who had nourished a dwindling church until it became strong and active. He “had a capacity to penetrate sham and pretense which few can muster,” said the UUA’s Dale DeWitt. And although he seemed distant, even cold, the power of his preaching was such that all who heard him went home with something new to think through.

SPACE FOR UNIVERSAL RELIGION 1964 – 1986

This House

This house is for the ingathering of nature and human nature.

It is a house of friendships, a haven in trouble, an open room for the encouragement of our struggle.

It is a house of freedom, guarding the dignity and worth of every person.

It offers a platform for the free voice, for declaring, both in times of security and danger, the full and undivided conflict of opinion.

It is a house of truth-seeking, where scientists can encourage devotion to their quest, where mystics can abide in a community of searchers.

It is a house of art, adorning its celebrations with melodies and handiworks.

It is a house of prophecy, outrunning times past and times present in visions of growth and progress.

This house is a cradle for our dreams, the workshop of our common endeavor.

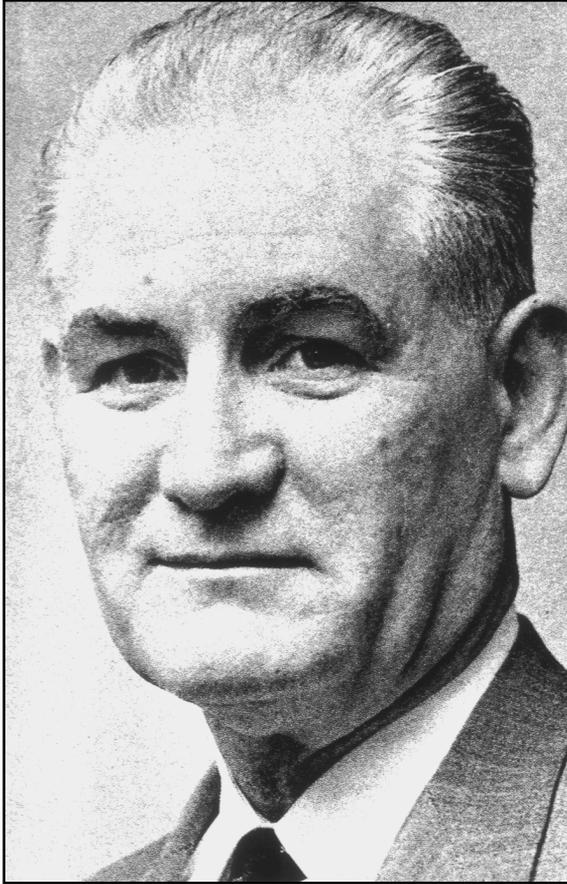
— Kenneth L. Patton, in *Man is the Meaning*

By March, 1964 the Unitarian Society search committee had listened to Patton and other ministers, and was ready to present Rev. Kenneth E. Patton to the Ridgewood Society as a candidate. Bill Rosenquest recalls: “. . . [Patton] told us we couldn’t expect more than five years from him in this society. So we said we were willing to take that chance. . .” Steve Fritchman, the West Coast radical humanist minister, wrote:

I do hope you will call one of the most brilliant and effective men in the Unitarian Universalist ministry. He will be remembered longer than almost all of the rest of us in our generation. I know nothing of his past role in organizational talents. I know him as a brilliant speaker, symbolist, artist, and human being. Power to you.

Patton spoke at the April 12 and 19 services. His topics were “Man’s Duty to Religion,” and “The Liberal Fellowship.” He met with committees and the congregation informally during the week between. At an April 22 meeting of the Society attended by 86 voting members a paper ballot vote produced “76 yes, 6 no, 3 abstainers,” equaling 85, plus “one no vote,” to call Kenneth Patton as minister. He was offered a salary of \$8,000, plus allowances and housing.

In accepting, Patton said, “Your long support of [Homer Sheffer’s] ministry was to me the highest recommendation I could ask for . . .” He came to Ridgewood knowing that Sheffer, an intellectual humanist, had gathered in Ridgewood a liberal-minded congregation supportive of their minister’s freedom to speak his mind.



Kenneth L. Patton, minister,
1964-86

Rosenquest's letter to candidate Rev. Howard Box of Brooklyn informing him of Ridgewood's decision to hire Patton included the comment:

As you can imagine, many factors entered into our deliberations, not the least of which was Homer Sheffer's admiration for Patton. Our future Church life will not be serene, but I am sure it will be rewarding.

A more accurate prediction could not have been made.

Kenneth Leo Patton was born August 25, 1911, in Three Oaks, Michigan. He didn't talk very much about his early life, except that he did say that he "never had a father" and that he was brought up by his grandmother, a very strict fundamentalist Methodist. He described his grandmother as "a harridan: God's right hand." When he woke at night with night terrors, though, she would cradle him tenderly. He grew up in Harvey, Illinois, on the south edge of Chicago, and somehow managed violin lessons, and study at the Art Institute of Chicago. He wanted early on to be a musician or an artist; but he changed direction while in college. Years later, he explained:

The arts were born from religious ritual and temple building. My life work has been to put the arts back into the uses of liberal religion. . . .

While a student at Eureka College, he married. Two of his five children by his first

wife, Betty, were born there. After receiving his B.A., he chose to study at the University of Chicago Divinity School because it was known to be the most liberal in the country. He received an M.A. in Religious Education and a Bachelor of Divinity in 1937. He held pastorates in several Disciples of Christ churches before becoming Unitarian. “By the time I got into my third parish, it was obvious I wasn’t going to survive much longer,” he said. He quipped, “The fundamentalists in my congregations had caught onto my humanism.”

While at the University of Chicago, Patton studied under the humanist professor Eustace Haydon. In addition to teaching, Haydon was part-time minister at the Madison, Wisconsin, First Unitarian Society. When the Madison Society decided to engage a full time pastor, Haydon recommended Kenneth Patton.

He spoke of going to Madison:

. . . I said to myself, “Look, they’re not going to hire you; they don’t know you from Adam. This may be the only time in your life you’ll get a chance to preach your sermon.” So I loaded it. And it proved to be the right thing. . . . That was the breakthrough. I think it was in the Fall of ‘41 that they accepted me in two or three months. And during that interim period Pearl Harbor happened. So I went to Madison in the January following Pearl Harbor.

Having come from a very fundamentalist family, a family in which religion was a very urgent thing, it wasn’t taken lightly at all, I knew where I had started and I knew what I was coming out of. And by that time I was a thoroughly converted humanist and I knew what I wanted. I mean, not just what I wanted, I knew some of the needs of what should be. I had been compromising for seven years, so I knew what compromises were—up to here. And I wanted no part of that at all. If I were going to compromise, I wasn’t going to go to a little peanut denomination of maybe a hundred fifty, two hundred thousand people, leaving [behind] a denomination of maybe ten, fifteen million. If I were going to compromise I’d stay where the crowds were and where the money was.

So I went to this little denomination and immediately I went whole hog. I went through the hymnbook and picked out the humanist hymns (there were only about 40 of them) and readings, and I said, “Jesus!” I’d been used to the whole Bible, you see. Responsive readings is a whole book of psalms, and all the abundance of Christian literature.

And here I had this old Hymns of the Spirit; it was the first hymnbook that had humanist material in it, but none of these people had literary backgrounds; they didn’t know where to look. They did a very poor job, but at least they made a beginning.

So I immediately began to collect material—write it myself. I picked up things, books and responsive readings and meditations that other ministers had got together.

I discovered later that the ministers previous to me had compromised. They had some songs that had questionable intimations of belief and all this sort of thing. And I was the one that had just drawn the line right down through it.

Patton stayed in Madison seven years, from 1942 until 1949. He established himself as a minister who would not wear a robe, nor engage in small talk and insincere glad-handing.

Also, while in Madison, Patton analyzed the Unitarian hymn book, *Hymns of the Spirit*. He collected other humanist readings, hymns, and the like, and wrote some himself, refusing to make compromises with his sense of a religion of realities.

Patton was already known for his work in race relations, peace, civil rights, and fair housing. Before the civil rights movement was under way, his stand on racial discrimination was made dramatically clear in 1947 when he preached a radio sermon in which he “resigned from the white race.” The aftermath of this talk he later reported in the Unitarian periodical, *The Christian Register*:

Always looking for a new way to state an old truth, I used Kingsblood Royal as a starting point for a radio sermon on the evils of the ‘myth of race’ and had further dramatized it by saying that I intended to ‘resign from the white race,’ since Caucasians are neither white nor a ‘race’ anyway, and be a colored man.

I invited others to follow suit and join me in “the united colored peoples of the world” to work together for the common good of all the human family. . . I was given a quick ride on the unpredictable horse of the Press. A rather sensationalized version of what I had said covered this country and found its way as far East as the papers of England and as far West as the Nippon Times of Tokyo. . .

Challenged to find out what it is really like to be “colored,” Patton and a black reporter and photographer from a “large picture magazine” toured a variety of Chicago area YMCAs, hotel dining rooms, and dance halls. He often found that he would be accepted, but by one subterfuge or another, his “Negro” companion would not be. When Patton declared that he, too, was “colored,” his money was returned.

We found a true democracy down in the slums, whereas the worst segregation in the area had been in the wealthy North Side suburb. Somehow in those two days I became “colored” in a more profound sense than mere verbal profession can ever consummate.

Of the two hundred letters he received in response to this early “Black like me” experiment, only 25 were antagonistic. But of those, many used passages from the Bible to justify their attitudes. Many Negro churches asked Patton to speak, regarding him as a “symbol of hope.”

I knew what little power I had to change the great social evil of which they were the victims. But I determined never again to be self-regarding and cowardly when I could do even the smallest thing to bring the equality of mankind closer to fruition.

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

When the Madison congregation was forced to move and build anew, Patton persuaded them to engage Frank Lloyd Wright, one of their members, as their architect. Wright’s father had been a charter member there, and his uncle was Western Unitarian Conference leader Rev. Jenkin Lloyd Jones. Wright had designed only one other Unitarian church, the Unity Temple in Oak Park, Illinois, in 1906. A short 1967 biography, states:

Mr. Patton created a new concept of a church auditorium as a multi-purpose “living room” for the society. In one main room were to be held the regular services, as well as concerts, dances, dinners, lectures, dramatic presentations, and all kinds of social functions. Mr. Wright made a stunning solution to these requirements, inventing a new temple shape. This was a triangular ship-prow structure pitching up from eight feet at the base of the triangle to 40 feet at the apex. He had put the steeple under the roof, pitch-

ing the whole roof [from] the earth into the sky. This new temple design has had worldwide influence. . . .

Despite some intense conflict between the church's building committee and Wright, the beautiful edifice stands, a symbol of Patton's dedication to the arts, architecture, and liberal religion. It is ironic that the building was not completed until 1951, after Patton left Madison for Boston and the Charles Street Meeting House.

Patton was called to Boston by the Massachusetts Universalist Convention in 1949, to head a "pilot project to develop new programs and approaches in liberal religion." Universalism was in a decline, there was no Universalist congregation in Boston, and the hope was that by establishing an innovative example of what Universalism could be, the denomination would attract new members and inspire other Universalist churches with alternative ways to worship.

With this challenge, a congregation gathered at the Charles Street Meeting House, and a new kind of religious center for art, music, dance, and drama came about. Patton recollected,

[W]e created, researched and designed the symbols of the world religions and the symbols of the main moral and aesthetic and other values of humanity. The whole thing was to make a religion for one world. . . . [W]e had celebrations and services and a dance group, and we actually created a religion. . . I attempted to create a new embodiment, a new tradition, and a new temple. . . .

One of the activities of the Meeting House was a publishing venture, The Meeting House Press, which published several of Patton's books.

Though start-up funding had been provided by the Massachusetts Universalist Convention, the Charles Street Meeting House continued to need financial support—support the Convention renewed each year, but which often threatened to collapse. After the 1961 merger of Universalists with Unitarians, the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) maintained the Meeting House until the mid-1970s, when they closed it. Patton's achievement there is fully recorded in his 1964 book, *A Religion for One World*. Rev. David Bumbaugh later spoke of the Charles Street Meeting House:

. . . Ken always functioned on the periphery. His was a suspect voice among many Universalists and Unitarians. They did not know what to make of a congregation which replaced the cross with a shelf of books, which was dancing around the maypole only a few blocks from the solemnity of King's Chapel and Arlington Street Church. Ken knew that in many ways he had been marginalized and accepted it as a necessary cost of doing what he was called to do.

In 1958, Kenneth Patton and his wife Betty divorced. He came to Ridgewood in 1964 with his second wife, Mitzi Anderson Patton, and their two-year-old son, Dag, named for the great United Nations secretary general and peacekeeper Dag Hammarskjöld.

Patton hoped that in a community such as Ridgewood his approach to religion could be given a fair trial in a real world setting, rather than as a pilot project bound for destruction.

In 1964, the Search Committee's analysis showed that one-half the membership of

the Ridgewood Society came from Ridgewood and Glen Rock. They described the area as one of commuters to New York City, one without industry. Republicans were predominant, the schools good, the taxes high. In this atmosphere of prosperity and big old houses, the Society maintained a “social action” reputation. The Search Committee told candidates:

The area offers to the minister as minister, a free supportive pulpit to take an active role in the affairs of an “upper middle” suburb, and to reach out to those in the community who are, but don’t know it, Unitarian Universalists in their approach to adjustments to life. Defining religion in this manner, the community offers a man [sic] as minister a real challenge.

Patton defined the Ridgewood area situation succinctly:

The Unitarian Society is an island of Democrats in Republican Protestant suburbia.

On November 1, 1964, Patton was installed in Ridgewood. The Reverend Charles A. Reinhardt of the Morristown Unitarian Fellowship spoke on the topic: “Toward What Species?”

A GLIMPSE OF CONGREGATIONAL LIFE, 1964-65

- On September 20, Patton was preaching on the subject “We May, We Can, But Will We?”
- Bob Hall was Director of Religious Education. The Church School registered students at \$5 tuition. There was a desperate need for teachers for 5th, 6th, and 7th grades.
- Donald Martin was Religious Education Committee chair, replacing Nancy Poole, who had resigned the post and her membership in the Society the previous spring, after more than four years of participation.
- By the end of October, 1964, the Society was humming. The Liberal Religious Youth (LRY) planned a Halloween party. The Music Committee sponsored a supper, the proceeds to “help bring us the fine music we have on Sundays.”
- Member and pianist Emerson Callahan played Schubert and Chopin for the November 1st Sunday morning service.
- The Uni-Uni Peds hiking group, led by Lois Tillson, planned to go to Green Pond on Saturday, November 7th.
- Edna and Howard Crane, as usual, hosted the 1965 Easter Egg Hunt for both children and adults.
- And in April, a concert—tenor, violin, and cello—planned by Annette De Luca, Music Committee head, was the first of a planned series.
- In May, the Evening Alliance announced that it had joined the daytime Rebecca Hawes Alliance; they would meet afternoons, and provide a baby-sitter.
- Tony Velonis recalls that Ken Patton invited a lay group of men from the Catholic church to meet with the Laymen’s League.

We had a general discussion. It was fascinating, because they couldn’t understand at all, this lack of belief in an almighty, a higher being, whatever it was, a father, that was the paternal aspect – Because they would feel completely cut off from the comfort, of being protected, psychologically. . . And being completely independent and alone, this sense of loneliness scared the heck out of them. We got a glimpse of it. I do remember at the end though, their priest said “You see! These people are people, and they don’t have horns

on them!”—It was a chasm all right, and it remained a chasm! There was a certain glimmer of understanding, though.

Perhaps it was about this time, or even earlier, that Velonis directed his first “Light Show” at the Society, a dramatic juxtaposition of scrim curtains, lights, music, dancers, poetry—with slide projections forming, combining, and fading on the wall. Only Tony Velonis could create such an overpowering mystical experience in the staid “1950s Protestant” style sanctuary.

SOCIAL CONCERNS: THE MINISTER AND THE CONGREGATION

One of Patton’s first acts in Ridgewood was to define clearly what the policy of the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood should be in regard to social action. As approved, that policy was: freedom of action for individuals and committees, without committing the entire membership to a political stand, unless at an official Congregational Meeting the matter was voted unanimously, or if not unanimously, a majority vote be reported with exact figures.

Patton stood, too, for freedom of the pulpit; the minister cannot be restricted in his freedom to speak his mind on social and political issues.

Nationally, the deepening involvement in Vietnam, the assassination of Malcolm X, and civil rights marches in Alabama marked the spring of 1965, Patton’s first year in Ridgewood. Two white Unitarian marchers, Viola Liuzzo and Rev. James J. Reeb, were killed in Selma, Alabama. The Ridgewood Unitarian Society held a Memorial Service for Reeb and raised a sum of money for his widow and children. The death of Ms. Liuzzo received almost no public notice.

Social action gained impetus in May, 1965, from the newly formed Unitarian Universalist Department of Social Concerns and its Social Responsibilities Committee headed by the radical minister Homer Jack. The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood then established its own Social Responsibilities Committee, with Bob Ritter as its first chair.

The congregation had been accustomed to working for social concerns through the two Women’s Alliances and the Laymen’s League, all of which dissolved in the mid-1960s. The new Social Responsibilities Committee continued their work, while members took up new areas of action against the Vietnam War, for world peace, and for racial integration, working through organizations such as the United Nations Association (UNA), Women’s Strike for Peace, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and the Society Against Nuclear Energy (SANE).

By the 1970s, members, notably Janet Webster and Betty Velonis, were working with Northside Forces to help a Paterson neighborhood just seven miles south of Ridgewood.

Patton’s call to work on social concerns continued into the 1980s: equality for women, the religious right’s entry into politics, a “one less bomb” petition to President Reagan, the destruction of the earth’s resources, overpopulation, the slaughter of innocent populations in East Timor and El Salvador, “The Reagan Fraud” of balancing the budget on the backs of the poor, and the evils of the nation state.

In 1983, in an address called “Let’s All be Catholics,” Patton asked all religious bodies to join the Catholics in support of the Bishops’ Pastoral Letter to build a united front for peace. Subsequent sermons spoke against the military-industrial complex in “Who

is the Enemy?"; and in "And No One Came," he suggested that if people refused to volunteer or be drafted or pay taxes, war might not exist.

In Ridgewood, Patton found strong lay leaders and workers among the membership, continuing a tradition begun by Rebecca Hawes and her contemporaries. Patton considered this an asset, and encouraged members to take responsibility for Society activities. Though he abstained from voting on issues, his position and tone of authority had such weight that many felt him to be domineering, while he felt that he was being democratic, not interfering with others' freedom and creativity.

GROWTH AND THE NEED FOR MORE SPACE

At the 1963 Annual Meeting, members had discussed the need for building expansion, on Cottage Place or elsewhere. Very few suitable sites existed in Ridgewood. (In May, 1965, the Board of Trustees would offer Food Fair, the owner of the property to the east later occupied by Kings Market, \$11,000 for part of its parking lot, but Food Fair turned down the offer.)

The challenge of growth, said a 1964 committee on Aims and Objectives headed by Al Webster, was

... to maintain programs of worship and study, for ourselves and for our children; to facilitate beneficial relationships among members and friends; And to develop channels through which each person may labor for the betterment of the greater community in which we live—



Interior of building, circa 1940

The building's interior was in the style of the 1950s, with bleached oak woodwork, wrought-iron chandeliers, and an oatmeal-colored monk's cloth drapery hanging behind the pulpit. The central platform for the lectern could not be moved, nor could the organ and small choir stall to the left. Yet, increased attendance on Sunday mornings called for an expansion of the auditorium.

In the post-war period the congregation grew rapidly, with young new members producing children at a great rate. There were 150 family units in the Unitarian Society membership, and 172 children, in 1965. The "boomer-babies" needed a liberal religious education. To accommodate the children the Society rented space for classes at the YMCA, at Christ Episcopal Church, and even at Octavius Pitzalis's "House of Beauty" on Franklin Avenue.

Betty Velonis was eloquent in her description of teaching conditions:

There was a separation between the auditorium and the two social rooms, and that's where some of the Sunday School was held. You can imagine the noise and confusion! And there were a couple of rooms in the basement. The younger kids were down there. . . .

A couple of classes were taught in the basement of Christ Church. That was a weird experience. I was teaching 7th grade, and it was a little difficult! In the first place it was damp and sort of dreary, and then I'm trying to talk to good Unitarian kids and they've got pictures of Jesus on the cross all over the place. It was difficult.

The tiny kitchen did not welcome cooks. The stairway from the basement led to the kitchen, and the only toilet was at the top of the stairs off the kitchen. An outside door on the south wall further complicated the traffic pattern. Putting a coffee hour together was difficult. In fact, coffee hours in the 1950s were held no more than twice a month, each one sponsored by a group or committee. Dinners were usually "covered dish suppers" to which people brought food, since cooking for a crowd was next to impossible. For dinners, tables were set up in the social rooms on the south side of the auditorium.

Don Anderson remembers that when he was on the Board in the mid-1960s, a resolution was passed that there must be "no fund raising except the annual pledge drive, no requests for money ever at any time, no fund raising whatsoever." The annual pledge would be the only fund raising of the year. A couple of years later, when Don Anderson was president, Patton pleaded for a little monetary leeway:

I would like to make a personal recommendation as to the building program for this summer. I believe that the board should be able to borrow money to have the new furnace and heating system installed, since this will unlock many of the future phases of the remodeling that could not be done otherwise.

However, Cal Lambert, the treasurer at that time, who had a cash-on-the-barrelhead attitude, opposed borrowing money, deficit budgets, and fund-raising activities.

Amid these difficult circumstances, Patton was eager to see this Society housed in an environment open to many varieties of religious and artistic expression.

The replies to the 1966 survey showed that, of those who replied, 50% agreed that of possible improvements, the physical plant was felt to be most in need. As for growth in membership, 89% would let growth come as it may, or make modest public relations efforts. Increase would take care of itself. They liked the intimate atmosphere.

A crucial practical question remained: To buy real estate somewhere else, in a less developed suburb, with enough land to provide an adequate Church School and a parking lot? Or, to stay on Cottage Place in Ridgewood? The rapid post-war growth of the Society made housing its activities the most urgent issue. Could the group afford to move? In 1960, the thought of buying land elsewhere had seemed economically feasible; by 1966 an unsuccessful search for an affordable larger location indicated that to be impossible, both financially and demographically.

After much discussion, the final decision was to stay at the Cottage Place location for its home-like atmosphere, historical roots, and easily-reached location from a wide area of Northern New Jersey. At the 1966 Annual Meeting the congregation voted to go ahead with the building expansion on Cottage Place (35 to 2, with 12 abstentions). The work would be planned in stages, and funds were to be accumulated for each stage as the work progressed; the Board would need congregational approval to borrow money for any part of the work.

Bill Rosenquest gave Ken Patton credit for the impetus to rebuild:

[Kenneth Patton] created this whole idea of an art gallery, the interest in art and music, the press and all the publication of his books; it was all part of his plan. . . [for] the rebuilding of the church.

When he saw that building, he said, "There's a lot we can do with this building, for not too much money."

Russ Miller, president 1964-66, believed the remodeling was a compromise with what Ken really wanted to do. He said,

You're not going to take a man who had created . . . the Charles Street Meeting House . . . to a church that looked like a prim mid Victorian place, you know. He wouldn't be happy. So obviously, without saying so, or promising. . . I have a feeling that Ken probably thought that Ridgewood was a fairly affluent village and that there would be money available around here for doing things. I think he really thought that we should sell the church and buy a piece of land and build a new church, along the lines of the Frank Lloyd Wright thing he did out in Madison. . . . I think we had to temper him down to our reality, our financial base

The Charles Street Meeting House in Boston, and the First Unitarian Society building in Madison, each reflected in art and architecture Patton's conviction that inspiring surroundings adaptable to many uses, such as dance, banquets and services of worship, sustain the religious spirit, and that the artistic and scientific works of the human race are priceless products of that spirit.

The crowded church school had to be addressed first. Although five school rooms had been added to the east end of the main building in 1950, and the minister had moved to a new parsonage on Vesta Court, freeing Sheffer House in 1956 for use as a Church School, by 1966 some children were being cared for and taught in the undesirable basements of both buildings.

In 1966, the Society bought a residence at 122 Cottage Place for \$38,000, for use as a religious education building. The Board of Trustees borrowed money for the purchase and for remodeling the building, later named James J. Reeb Memorial House.

Octavius Pitzalis redesigned the interior and decorated the building inside and out



Laying the front patio,
circa 1969

for Religious Education use. The drive encircled an Italian style garden with stone benches and a large central planter, and gave a feeling of shady privacy only a few feet from the street.

Everyone helped do the work. Reported Don Anderson:

We had painting projects going on, outside, inside, . . . I remember painting with Ken Patton. He was the only man I ever saw who could paint with a roller in each hand. He had two hands going sideways, up and down—.

The building was ready to be occupied by the children and teachers in the fall of 1967.

Once Reeb House was in use, renovation of the main building could begin. The Society obtained a \$30,000 mortgage from a local bank, at 5 1/4%, and began a capital funds campaign with a three-year goal of \$100,000. Treasurer Howard Crane urged people to make their building fund pledge payments so that work could proceed. The idea was to incur no more indebtedness than the \$30,000 already borrowed. Member Joe Mullet created an open-space design and showed a model of it to the congregation. A brochure with an artist's rendering of the planned appearance of the building shows Mullet's intent. The following summer, 1968, Gladys Johnson contributed \$10,000 to help speed things along. Her daughter, then Ellen Haviland, planned to have her wedding to Don Anderson in the renovated auditorium. But the auditorium was not yet ready. The wedding had to be held at the Old Paramus Reformed church, which Ellen and her daughters had attended during her first marriage.

Mullett left in March, 1969 for an important job in Florida. He could not stay to see the Ridgewood project through. Patton, who never felt that experts in any profession had knowledge unobtainable by lay people, had confidence in the skills within the congregation. He urged artist-member Tony Velonis to take over the building design, and

Velonis agreed. It is to Tony Velonis that the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood owes the warm spirit of Anderson Auditorium, 1968-1996.

Conrad Yanis used his knowledge of architecture and engineering to plan the demolition process. He and other members of the Society hacked away with sledge hammers at a portion of the foundation hidden under the 1950 addition, creating a new doorway into the church school room. The men hauled huge rocks out to the waiting wheelbarrow. Conrad Yanis, Tony Velonis, John Handley, Sy Friedman, Don Anderson, Will Stonier, and Kenneth Patton himself, were the stalwarts. Sy Friedman recalled:

The basement of the church . . . was nothing but stone. No clear space. John had an air hammer, and I remember both John and Will working to break down the stone, and Don Anderson and I were carrying chunks of stone upstairs and dumping them in boxes, putting them in the back of my car—I had an old Chevy Nova—and taking it all someplace to dump it. . . I remember [John and Will] looked just like what you'd expect of a couple of coal miners. Stripped to the waist, covered with dirt, with the air hammer going away at the stone. . . .

The largest basement room was paneled, carpeted, and furnished by the members of the congregation.

Board of Trustees minutes show that the LRY was eager to help:

Jac ten Hove volunteered the services of the young people to help with the building program, particularly painting, and with the Fair. Mike Franklin will coordinate such activities. Jac reported that the group [of 35]. . . is anxious to begin decorating their meeting room as soon as a leak is fixed.

In the summer of 1969, Ken Patton painted while stairways were removed. Russell Miller remembered seeing him on a high ladder “painting the auditorium with that high ceiling, . . . and I was afraid he would fall and break his neck.”

New closets, an enlarged kitchen and expanded auditorium were gained by removing the wall between the auditorium and the 1950 addition. When the wall was removed, a stained glass window was discovered encased in it. Possibly once the gift of Rebecca Hawes or Charles Greene, in its next life, the window became a light fixture over Naomi and Conrad Yanis's dining table. The former attic in the east end became an organ loft.

Friedman continued:

I remember Tony Velonis getting these large logs . . . They were lying out in the front yard and he hadn't yet decided how he was going to treat them. He must have already known what the nature of the sculpture was going to be. And I remember him trying to decide how to finish the wood. He tried a number of techniques and I think he ended up using a blow-torch to char the wood and rubbing it down with steel wool, for the finish of the sculpture.

The result: the rugged wood sculpture and a small stained glass window transformed the north wall, and the center of interest turned 90 degrees. Platforms could be placed anywhere and rearranged in many configurations. Velonis's multi-layered stained glass windows on the south side, one representing dinosaurs, the ancient, and the other the Sun, the eternal source, still disappear behind shutters when the area becomes The Cottage Place Gallery and the shutter is needed for an artist's exhibit. The stackable chairs can be cleared away or rearranged as needed.

The redesigned auditorium, ca. 1970. Kenneth Patton, seated; Harriet Aschoff at the piano; and member soprano Lillian Wehr.



Outside near the driveway, the concrete stairs that formerly led to the kitchen door were almost completely hidden, thanks to the work of Octavius Pitzalis. He covered the steps with stonework and plantings, and created a rock-garden throne for a god and goddess, or king and queen. (This landmark was demolished in the 1996 enlargement of the building.)

The front and back patios were constructed by Society members. Maypole dances and candlelight singing have stirred hearts there.

Sy Friedman told a bit about the subtleties of good fellowship in his remembrance of patio-making:

Arthur [Octavius Pitzalis's "American" name] was . . . head of Buildings and Grounds. When we were rebuilding the inside of the church, and were going to re-do the outside, Tony [Velonis] had an idea of what he wanted the patio in front to look like. . . Railroad ties, and stones and sort of a Mondrian look.

I got a phone call from someone who said "You know Arthur Pitzalis is casting large hexagonal blocks, which he intends to donate as the front patio." Whoever called was aware of Tony's plans [but] somehow Arthur and Tony hadn't talked to each other. Arthur was unaware of Tony's plans, and I remember calling a hasty meeting of Building and Grounds and Tony. I called Arthur, sort of pretending I didn't know what he was planning, and [told] him that we needed a meeting because Tony had some marvelous plans for the front patio, and we needed to get together and take a look.

So the next night, we got together and Tony brought his drawings, and Arthur was there. That was Arthur's first exposure to Tony's plans, and Arthur never mentioned his hexagonal blocks. Sometime later Arthur said he thought he would do something about improving the back area, and would use hexagonal blocks, and they ended up there in that little patio. . . .

The rear patio, near the kitchen, served for outdoor barbecues and for cooking and serving Leonard Van Arsdale's clam chowder, and in September 1995 was still in use for the Centennial Building Campaign kick-off party.

At the January 4, 1970, celebration of the completion of the auditorium, the congregation honored President Bob Lindsay, Al Webster, Betty Velonis, Conrad Yanis, and Tony Velonis. Soprano Jane Chenoweth sang.

Part of Tony Velonis's speech in celebration of the "new" hall described his creative process:

I needn't tell you about the versatility of use that we tried to build here. Ken Patton was promoting that idea from the very beginning. . . I never would have assumed the responsibility for the rest of the design if it were not for Ken Patton's encouragement. Once I got going, I really was hooked.

Basically, I thought of this place as a theatre, but not a theatre in the usual sense where there is an audience and a stage, but rather that we are all players, like Mr. Shakespeare says, and we have our own parts to play. . . We see each other grow up, get married, get grey hair, and pass on. We also have here some of the qualities of Greek theatre where there is always some proportion of comedy and tragedy. . . [M]aybe we could observe that there is a strange inevitability in our play-acting which is really (for lack of a better Unitarian term) sacramental. When we do see all this, that awareness is enormously moving. Wouldn't you call such feelings "religious"? Seen this way, life becomes art and theatre and art and theatre become life.

What I wanted to get was not any obvious symbol but a sensation. . . from a subtle and complex combination of many hidden rhythmic symbols intertwined in various proportions. This can only be felt. It's not a conscious process. The closest analogy is what goes on in music. . . .

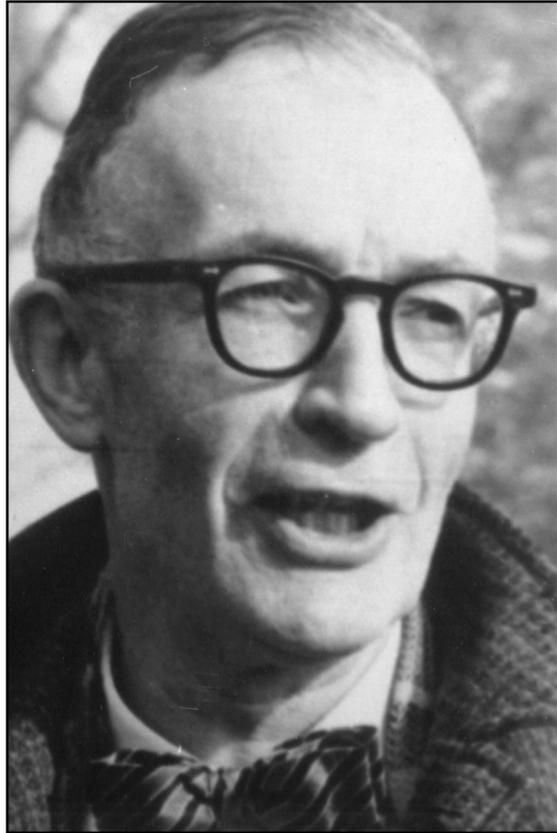
We used a blow torch to burn the deep color and bring out the beautiful grain of the wood. Someone, whom you all know but who shall remain nameless, suggested this was Calvary after it had been through a Unitarian forest fire.

We've made this dramatic tall window to look out upon the living green and a few tantalizing swatches of sky. And right across the picture, we are confronted with an unexpected and unnatural festoon. [Tony is referring to a thick electrical cable, visible through the window, connecting the building to the power line at the street.] . . . It's real. Little electrons flow through the copper to us to light up our house. When you think about it, it's fantastic! Here is our connection to our eternal energy source, the Sun! Or, it could be a reminder that we depend on that sprawling outside social machine, a mother machine that provides us with an umbilical cord. I guess we'll hang onto it for awhile. . . It's beautiful!

As for the stained glass windows, in the morning sun, dinosaurs are engaged in a primeval struggle for survival. In the afternoon, the lifegiving Sun will be there whatever will be the destiny of mankind. Symbolism enough.

For me there is symbolism in the very process of what we did. We took an old structure. We did not tear it down. We altered it to suit our own changing taste. So the old has become the new. But this time, we hope the new has an element of universality, that the art of our new world view is inclusive and has a feeling of timelessness. We would meld together and make indistinguishable both the East and the West which are now the common heritage for a future united humankind.

Composer Glen Daum and Tony Velonis installed a good sound system, and in later years, John Handley and Ralph Ilowite improved on it. (In 1994 Ilowite and Wayne



Ruland Anderson

Armstrong installed “radio station WUU,” a low-power AM radio transmitter, broadcasting within the premises to hearing-impaired people who listen with small radios with earphones.)

Patton described his vision for the future:

If we are going to move confidently and creatively into the freedom we have provided for ourselves, we will have to produce. We need readers, actors, dancers, musicians, artists, who can express our religious idealism in terms of the mood and meaning of these times.

Patton’s love for the arts and music quickly became a positive force. The Art Committee, continuously active since 1964, provided area artists a new venue: The Cottage Place Gallery, occupying the south sections of the auditorium that once had been “social rooms.” Planned specifically by Tony Velonis to function as a gallery, the dark walls and shutters that sometimes cover the south-facing windows offer an ideal display area for artworks. The Society purchased art at least partly because of Patton’s interest.

And so, under Tony Velonis’s supervision and with his and others’ work, between 1967 and 1970 the interior of the building was gutted and an entirely new environment, spacious and inspiring, came about.

Since 1968, member Carl Petrie’s drawing of Velonis’s sculpture has appeared on

every *Newsletter* and Order of Worship. The warm logs and the glowing window express the home-like spirit of this Society.

Ken Patton's dream for the Charles Street Meeting House was carried out in Ridgewood on a small scale. Velonis's completed design allowed religious expression through the arts, music, dance, poetry, discussion, and fellowship and food.

Unitarian activist Ruland Anderson had been a leader in the Society, particularly in social responsibility, since the 1930s. Anderson died following a heart operation the summer of 1972. In October, a memorial service was held for him, and the following April the redesigned auditorium was dedicated to the memory of this outstanding leader in good works, and named "Anderson Auditorium."

KEN PATTON'S HYMNS

When he was a child, Patton's grandmother sang old-fashioned folk-hymns to him at bedtime. His early musical training and his religious background—both early fundamentalism and liberal theological school—prepared him to develop musical materials for religious services. Vincent Silliman's *We Speak of Life* and *We Sing of Life* (1955) contain naturalist and humanist materials especially suitable for young people. Kenneth L. Patton was one of the contributors, and, with this experience, was in 1961 a natural selection for a position on the Unitarian Universalist Hymnbook Commission for the creation of a new hymn book. The result, *Hymns for the Celebration of Life*, was published in 1964.

Patton's strong influence on the Commission is evident upon examination of the book. While it is not possible to determine which hymn lyrics were those Patton particularly urged (13 of the 327 hymns were his), the table of contents is impressive. Included are humanist poetry and tunes gathered from many cultures: for example, a translation of a portion of the Hindu Bhagavad-Gita, "Give Me Your Whole Heart," set to a tune composed by one of the volume's compilers, Kenneth Munson; a translation of a poem by 12th century Chinese statesman Fan Cheng-ta, "Early Spring," set to a 20th century hymn tune by Alfred Morton Smith; a paraphrase of 13th century St. Francis of Assisi's "Canticle of the Sun," sung to an 17th century German melody; a 14th century version of Moses ben Maimon's articles of faith, sung to a traditional tune for the Yigdal; in addition to works of Christina Rossetti, James Russell Lowell, Robert Frost, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and works of 20th century Unitarians, such as Vincent Silliman and John Haynes Holmes.

Perhaps the most beloved of Patton's hymns is "Our Friendly House," written to celebrate the opening of Madison, Wisconsin's, new Frank Lloyd Wright designed Unitarian Meeting House in 1951, and sung also to celebrate the redesign of the Ridgewood building in 1970.

The publication of the hymnal coincided with Patton's move to Ridgewood. The Ridgewood congregation served as an experiment for the reception of Patton's musical energy as well as his philosophic, scientific, architectural, and artistic themes.

MITZI PATTON, MUSIC AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Music was brought to the Society by both the Pattons. Mitzi Anderson Patton had

both academic and musical qualifications. Besides her B.A. in history (Washington University, St. Louis) and her M.A. in history of ideas (Brandeis), she had been trained from the age of five as a pianist, winning contests, and had been expected by her parents to become a concert musician. In Ridgewood, she soon became the Society's organist and choir director.

The former custom had been to engage soloists some Sundays, and on other Sundays members Catherine Tchinnis and Annette De Luca, head of the Music committee, led the hymns. De Luca suggested that a paid position of Music Director be created, to which Mitzi Patton was appointed in 1966. The Music Committee's function became advisory, raising funds, supporting special occasions, and planning concerts. Early attempts at organizing a choir were unsuccessful, and the tradition continued of relying on paid professional soloists.

Member and soprano Jane Chenoweth recalls a wonderfully creative period during which Kenneth Patton wrote new words to lieder by Schubert and Schumann, songs that Chenoweth performed. She remembers, too, performing the works of new composers such as Elliott Carter and Marc Blitzstein. Fresh ideas, challenging music, and high standards of performance prevailed. However, these changes did not occur without some friction. Annette De Luca and at least one other member of the choir, unhappy with Kenneth Patton's leadership, left the Society.

About 1970, Mitzi Patton resigned as Music Director. After a search, the Music Committee hired Harriett Aschoff to assume the position of organist and Director of Music.

In June of 1967, Kenneth Patton was scheduled to be in Chicago to receive an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Meadville Theological School, where he had studied for the ministry. Instead, he was hospitalized with a high fever and abdominal pain. He underwent an operation, but ultimately the diagnosis was rheumatic fever, a very serious streptococcus infection affecting the heart. His daughter Clarise stood in for him at the ceremonies in Chicago.

Simultaneously, Mitzi Patton went into premature labor and entered the same hospital—Valley Hospital, in Ridgewood—leaving their son Dag for a while with Unitarian neighbors and friends. When the Pattons' second son, Channing, was born he was named for the founder of Unitarianism in the United States, William Ellery Channing.

Fortunately, both Pattons recovered, and very tired parents returned home to care for Dag and Channing. Ken Patton commented at a Board of Trustees meeting that he would have to pace himself carefully in the coming months—an aftermath of his illness.

The Vesta Court parsonage was cramped: Patton's study in the enclosed breezeway was used also for choir practice, and the tiny dining room made dinner parties almost impossible. The Pattons requested more space in which to raise their two sons. After several months of searching, the Society purchased the large old-fashioned house across the street from the church at 114 Cottage Place, which enabled the Pattons to entertain—a function that in those days was considered a necessary part of a minister's life, and traditionally an important responsibility of his wife. (Edith Sheffer's independence from the "minister's wife" role had been unusual in religious organizations accustomed to getting "two for the price of one.")

Mitzi Patton decorated and furnished the big old house attractively, invited many people to small dinners, and entertained the whole congregation at a Christmas open house.

The Board of Trustees in 1967-68 included Don Anderson as president, and the conservative strong-minded Cal Lambert as treasurer. Lambert and Patton were completely at odds with each other. Buying and renovating the bigger parsonage for \$49,000, remodeling the main building, and purchasing Reeb House for the Religious Education program must have been a serious problem for Lambert, whose instincts were to hold on to money.

Board secretary Denny Chandler recalls that Lambert would argue and argue against the budget, and after concessions were made, he would still vote against it. She remembers Edna Crane comforting a tearful Joyce Nicholson after a particularly trying Board meeting: “Don’t take it to heart, honey.”

In all fairness to Lambert, his childhood in “Lambert Castle” on the mountainside outside Paterson was fraught with anxiety because when his father’s business failed during the depression, the family could not even pay its electric bills. They finally had to deed the mansion to the State of New Jersey; it is now a museum. Cal Lambert’s convictions about finances were founded in painful experience.

About 1970, the women’s movement became a force and natural focus for many Unitarians, especially the women. In the 19th century, Unitarians and Quakers had led the struggle for women’s suffrage, and founder Rebecca Hawes herself had, in the 1870s—a century before the Patton era—circulated a petition for restoration of school suffrage for women. Hawes served as a member of the New Jersey Woman Suffrage Association in 1894, and chaired its school suffrage committee in 1896.

Thus, Ridgewood Unitarians in the 1970s worked for women’s rights from foundations laid by Unitarians of earlier generations. Delight Dodyk, Roberta Svarre, and Helen Lindsay began discussions which became an informal consciousness-raising group. Eventually a National Organization for Women (NOW) chapter came into being locally as Northern New Jersey NOW, and elected Mitzi Patton as president. When the chapter became too big, Unitarians Delight Dodyk and Florence Dickler started a Ridgewood Area NOW, with Dodyk as president.

Delight Dodyk attributes her election to the Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Society to the influence of Ruland Anderson, who felt that it had been too long since the Society had had a woman president (Jeanette Olson, 1956-58). He undoubtedly had noticed Dodyk’s leadership ability in her work in the women’s movement, especially in NOW. Dodyk became president of the Society 1973-75.

When Mitzi Patton resigned as Music Director at the Unitarian Society, she enrolled at Columbia University to work toward a doctorate in sociology. In 1972, having finished her course work and ready to start on her dissertation, she left her husband and Ridgewood, taking sons Dag and Channing with her.

PROBLEMS AND THEIR SOLUTIONS

Physical illness and marital conflict were not Kenneth Patton’s only difficulties. After the first fast growth of the Society following his appointment, membership and Sunday

morning attendance began to decline. Sy Friedman recalls:

As is the usual when you get a new minister, a segment of the congregation doesn't fit the profile of the new minister, and there was a cluster of people who became exceedingly upset with Ken Patton I think some members of the congregation left never to come back again.

Complaints came to a head at a Board of Trustees meeting in April of 1968. The issue of the minister's salary apparently was the trigger which threatened to split the Board. There was a faction who wanted to ask Patton to leave.

Some of the complaints mentioned in Bob Lindsay's notes taken at an informal meeting in April, 1968, however, were not about money. A few people were angry enough about the minister and the atmosphere at the Society that they had telephoned members to gain support for the ousting of Kenneth Patton. They cited poor public relations, and the minister's failure to work with other clergy in the area or take a lead in social action. But most of the problems discussed were whole Society functions rather than those strictly ministerial:

- No system existed for noting members who had left, or finding out the reasons why.
- Newcomers needed better assistance integrating into the Society. No one—especially not Kenneth Patton—spoke to some of the new people during coffee hour. No pamphlets were offered describing Unitarianism.
- Teen-agers weren't incorporated into whole-society activities, and there was too little guidance in their Liberal Religious Youth group.
- The Society over-emphasized Ridgewood as a center of interest, when many came from other towns.
- The poorly kept back yard was an eyesore.

The result: A "peacemaker" Board with no hold-overs was voted in for 1968-69, with Bob Lindsay as president, Sy Friedman as vice president, and Howard Crane in the treasurer's seat. Friedman later said Lindsay was "selected as a stabilizer; you know, peace and order, to help resolve this thing." A self-study survey of the congregation was undertaken, even though one had been conducted only two years earlier.

In the survey of 1968, half of the 153 who replied were "new," members for fewer than four years. 70% spent three or fewer hours weekly "active in the Society's affairs." Most important, 45% felt they had "no influence at all" in the Society's affairs.

Members felt that "dealing with people" was the most important aspect of a minister's work, with preaching, counseling, and leadership close behind.

And as for the Society itself, 44 respondents (29%) said they wanted "more fellowship, warmth, communication and participation of members." As a result, an effort was made to get a larger proportion of the membership involved in Society activities.

A few who wanted Patton to leave, left the Society themselves. The voice from the pulpit, while interesting intellectually, seemed to dampen their spirits. Of those who came to the Society "for the celebration of life," and could not do so. The majority found life at 113 Cottage Place a celebration, week after week, as the Society worked on name tags, greeters, luncheons and dinners, and other methods of getting people together.

MINISTERIAL RELATIONS

The 1968 crisis passed, but in the spring of 1975, an ad hoc Ministerial Concerns Committee consisting of Bob Lindsay, Bob Chandler, and Frank Robbins formed, and by March of 1977, the Board resolved to make a formal assessment of the Society's and the minister's work. All members received a copy of the resolution:

RESOLVED, that a review be undertaken of the Society's goals, objectives, programs, and minister, to include consideration of the means and the timetable of such a study. . .

We hope to engage you in the dialogue which it implies, and solicit your thoughts before the next regular monthly meeting of the Board . . .

In 1977-78, a decade after the previous uproar, a committee headed by Rosa Lee Holstein and Bob Ritter created another self-study questionnaire, to look at the Society itself, its functions, goals, and expectations, as well as its expectations of a minister. The questionnaire was sent May 30, 1977; 142 members and friends responded. Ritter and Holstein, with Wayne Armstrong, analyzed the replies and made the figures public the following October.

Significant results fell into three categories: Functions of the Unitarian Society, Services and Meetings, and Minister's Work. Items were marked as to their importance, and as to their being satisfactorily performed. For example:

Functions of the Society considered important were "fellowship among members" (137) and "religious services" (117). 118 thought "fellowship" was satisfactorily carried out, and 91 thought religious services were satisfactory.

Characteristics of Services and Meetings which were considered important were "intellectual stimulation" (134), "fellowship," (134), and "aesthetic satisfaction," (121). Most found them satisfactorily fulfilled: 107, 119, and 108, respectively. Half or more respondents felt Patton had a satisfactory performance on five of the fourteen aspects of his work, including ethical leadership and creating religious services.

One hundred and three thought a minister should be active in Religious Education, but only 33 thought Patton performed satisfactorily in this respect. Yet, one of Patton's first creative endeavors when he arrived in Ridgewood had been to outline a three-year revolving curriculum adapted to all age levels, which would give all the children a sense of history and comparative religion.

Theologically, the humanists, agnostics, and atheists made up the majority: 107, out of 137 responses. In this respect there was a good fit between the people and their minister.

The survey in most areas of Patton's work corroborated what was common knowledge: significant dissatisfaction with the minister. The new president, Jack Ritter, when offered the report, said he didn't need to see the results: "I know what they say."

A discussion of the results held at a Sunday morning service resulted in a Clergy-Lay Committee, charged with defining the minister's responsibilities and functions, with establishing a Ministerial Liaison Committee to meet regularly with the minister, and with reporting annually on whether the needs of the Society and the minister were being met. Roberta Svarre chaired this committee.

Kenneth Patton's response was a paper, "The Liberal Ministry," his honest definition of his unique role as a minister. In the essay he abjured the liberal minister to use

freedom of the pulpit to define the ministerial role anew—and in his case, radically:

This was my privilege, as long as I could convince a liberal congregation that what I required in my work was what they also desired in their ministry. This I have managed for 36 years

My definition of my liberal ministry is based on two considerations: my own abilities, interests, and ambitions, and my judgement of the nature of the free religious society and the problem areas in society and the world. . . .

Describing his “abilities, interests, and ambitions,” he wrote:

First of all they were artistic, in music, sculpture, painting, dramatics, speech, poetry, prose, architecture, the dance. The arts were born from religious ritual and temple building. My life work has been to put the arts back into the uses of liberal religion. . . . But the arts were but one of my preoccupations. Of equal interest was philosophy, psychology, ethics, social issues, mysticism, and the human society in the family, in the fellowship, the community, the nation, and the human commonwealth. . . .

Subsequent discussion with the Clergy-Lay Committee revealed that Patton did not feel himself to be a leader, but instead, an equal. Therefore, his responsibility as pastor, visiting the sick, welcoming newcomers, and the like was equal to, but not greater than, that of any member of the congregation. He felt that administration was not his role at all, and that foregoing administrative tasks had the positive result of developing a Society with a dynamic and strong lay leadership. He felt he was best in one-to-one counseling when called upon, but few asked. As for relations with the community, he said that other clergy would not accept him, and that Ridgewood had few social issues.

The Clergy-Lay Relations Committee’s report states, “It is hard to say that someone has ‘failed’ in an area where he wasn’t ‘trying.’ Apparently this lack of communication has characterized clergy-lay relations in this Society for the last 14 years.”

Having neither provided a ministerial job description at the beginning, nor made any periodic follow-up evaluations, the Society was responsible in part for the difficulties. On his part, Patton had not clearly communicated his idiosyncratic view of his ministry. The result: dissatisfaction and misunderstanding.

The committee’s recommendation was that a job description should be formulated, a sub-committee of the Board of Trustees (later called the Ministerial Relations Committee) should meet with Patton regularly, and the sub-committee should regularly report to the Board as to whether the Society’s and the minister’s needs were being met.

Patton’s interpersonal sensitivity improved somewhat through consultation with the new Ministerial Relations Committee. He made an effort also to give support to Religious Education and Social Action.

SUNDAY SERVICES

Patton’s addresses were always carefully thought out, closely reasoned, giving the listeners much to think about. Some of his most powerful Sunday mornings were four he produced in 1975 on the seasons of the year:

MARCH 9—TOPIC: THE FACE OF WINTER

The richness of our lives drawn from the richness of the world in which we live, ourselves

being but a part of that world. This service explores the wealth of winter as a season of the year, through sonnets written during this winter past, and colored slides taken of the scenes and events that provoked the poems.

For your minister, this is a new kind of “preaching.”

MAY 25—TOPIC: THE FACE OF SPRING:

This will consist of colored transparency slides of the passage of this spring in Ridgewood, illustrating poems about the experience of spring. . It is hoped to complete the cycle with services on summer & fall later in the year.

SEPT. 21—TOPIC: THE FACE OF SUMMER:

This is the third of the programs of poems & slides on the seasons. Summer is celebrated as the season of childhood, and it may be that this is a presentation that children would particularly enjoy. Everyone, of all ages, is welcome.

NOV. 9—TOPIC: TO AUTUMN WITH LOVE:

Part of the service will be a showing of slides on autumn, with Marcia Spitz accompanying them on the piano “ex tempore.” The address will be on the part our relationship with nature (other than human-nature) can play in a natural & human religion.

The services were effective because of Patton’s exquisite photography, the dominance of the “big screen” projections on the west wall, and the precision and grace of his poetry, all bound together by music.

As for Sunday morning routines, there were differences of opinion between the minister and the lay leadership, specifically when President Don Anderson (1966-68) wanted a place in the service for announcements. Patton was extremely reluctant to give up any control over the service. Any other suggestions about the Sunday service met a similar response. Sing hymns while seated? Awful. Allow latecomers to slip in during the music or a reading? Unthinkable. As artist-dramatist-liturgist-musician-lecturer, Patton wanted total control over the production. Disruptions of the artistic and emotional unity of the service could frustrate the purpose of the service.

In the fall of 1978, Patton returned to the pulpit after a 6-month sabbatical leave, and made a visible effort to satisfy the congregation’s needs for a more outgoing pastor. In a Sunday morning address he spoke openly of his personal life, and described himself as “shy.” A noticeable change in his manner came about, and by February, the Ministerial Review Committee complimented him: “Good work, Ken. You made a remarkable turnabout.”

Between February 1979 and May of 1980 at least three Sunday morning services were devoted to open discussion by the congregants and the minister of the Society’s program and purposes, in an effort to keep in touch with the real but often hidden feelings in the group. May 11, 1981, the Board of Trustees passed a resolution: “The outgoing board president will be requested to serve on the Ministerial Concerns committee for the year immediately following a change of president.” The on-going work on ministerial relations had become a permanent fixture in congregational life.

Patton compromised by allowing a few announcements to be printed—but not read aloud—in the Sunday morning Order of Service. In 1981, President Naomi Yanis won a

further concession: Yanis would decide what spoken announcements were essential, and Patton would determine exactly where in the service they could be placed.

In further negotiation, he agreed to give up one Sunday a month for a lay service, but when the Religious Education Director wanted to plan three family services in addition, he balked; too many of “his” Sundays would not be his.

ABOUT KEN PATTON

Former president Russ Miller remembers Ken Patton’s first visit to Ridgewood as a guest speaker in 1963:

[He was] a the diamond in the rough; the man really had a difficult childhood, I understand. . . We had him for dinner at our house when he came down alone that first time, and we were sitting at the table and Janet had a buffet there, and somehow or other we got to talking about the relations of parents to children, and I had expounded about my relations with my father, and all of a sudden Ken got up suddenly from the chair, and his face was kind of red, and he says, “Well, I never knew a father. I guess I’m a psychiatric mess.” And he walked over to the buffet. It made me feel sad. And, as you know, he was brought up by his grandmother, and I think that has a lot to do with his shell around him. He’s a very warm person, if you can get him to open up.

During the week in the spring of 1964 when Kenneth Patton was candidating for the position in Ridgewood, he astounded his hosts on more than one occasion. Once at dinner time, when guests were waiting in the dining room, he came with dirty, greasy hands and rolled up sleeves. He had repaired his Renault when it quit during the drive down from Boston, but he had not taken the time to clean up.

In April of 1965, well into his first year in Ridgewood, Kenneth Patton wrote in the *Newsletter* about his inability to engage in social small-talk. He quoted Ralph Waldo Emerson: “When people come to see us, we foolishly prattle, lest we be inhospitable. But things said for conversation are chalk eggs. Don’t say things. What you are stands over you the while, and thunders so I cannot hear what you say to the contrary.”

That Patton had no use for small talk accounts for much.

When Ken and Mitzi Patton lived on Cottage Place, they were invited to dinner with the family next door. Patton asked his hostess what her profession was. When she told him she was a kindergarten teacher, he responded, “I suspected, because you talk like a five-year-old.” She returned, “Thank you!” Patton appeared to be taken aback, not expecting thanks for that kind of remark. She explained, “Five-year-olds haven’t been filled with adult prejudices and concepts. They are very nice, and good company.”

Russ Miller wrote of Patton’s inclusiveness:

I will not forget when a newly arrived doctor from India arranged to have his bride-to-be brought over. His plan for an Indian wedding ceremony was stymied by the orthodox churches until someone recommended the Unitarians, and Ken Patton came to the rescue. All of the Society was invited to the ceremony and we had food and a festive time.

In spite of difficulties and eccentricities, the members valued Kenneth Patton’s strengths. Former Religious Education director Bobbie Moore recalled:

[T]here was coffee hour buzz and a lot of private conversations about Ken and his strengths and weaknesses, and I remember writing him a very positive evaluation on the basis of his stunning integrity, which to me was his central feature.

I also felt . . . that he was being criticized for not being what he never said he was, and for not being what he never tried to be. It seemed unfair to evaluate him in terms that were foreign to him and foreign to whatever promises he had ever made to the congregation.

On one occasion, after Patton had been long retired, member Bernice Medici said:

We liked him. He was not very warm. I think he is a very shy man and lacks a lot of social skills, but the brilliance of his addresses and the mind that he has—I don't think we have valued that as yet.

After Patton's death, several members spoke of his strengths. Former president Naomi Yanis summed up the value of the Society's interaction with Kenneth Patton:

. . . I believe that having Ken, that unique, obstinate, irascible man, as our minister, served as the sieve which determined the temper of our congregation—and I love the results. We governed ourselves, and took care of ourselves, and well, too. I came to be sure that whatever the issue, we would comport ourselves well, and come out with the right decision. For if we could thrive with Ken as our minister, we could surely deal well with virtually anything. . . . We functioned much as a fellowship, while we supported and provided an audience for a premier poet and essayist of our time.

In the highly valued area of counseling, many rated Patton's performance as low, very likely because they had never given him an opportunity. Bobbie Moore was one who found Patton a good personal counselor:

I wrote to Ken at the time of my mother's death and again at my father's. And then a third time at the request of a person in the church, who was having deep problems and was reluctant to approach Ken directly and asked me to feel out the situation. I did that and that person then went to Ken directly and was helped.

So in my three experiences, Ken was immensely helpful. Very direct. The kind of person he always described himself as and consistently was. Nothing evasive. He said what was on his mind. He asked direct questions. Elicited direct statements from me. There was no denial, no evasion. I found him compassionate, in spite of his toughness; very helpful. A man of unwavering honesty and integrity. Never in those years, and I saw him regularly, I never saw him off on a moral issue.

Bernice Medici:

When the Society tried to establish extended families, Ken was in ours. We got together several times, and even had a sleep-over at the parsonage. After his divorce, my (then) husband and I had him to dinner every week for quite a while, and I got to know him better.

When I had trouble I went to him, and he helped. When my mother died, I called him and he came. When my son had personal problems, he went to see Ken, and was helped.

Ken was certainly no angel, as you well know. He had difficulty relating to people, and also in sharing his feelings. He seemed aloof, but he was really very shy. There was something vulnerable about him. I came to care for him very much.

Russ Miller, who was president when Patton came to Ridgewood, recalled:

. . . I always felt I was walking a tightrope. Being neutral. On the one hand, [Treasurer] Cal Lambert was telling me . . . that Ken wasn't giving him phone bills and the phone company was threatening to cut off our service. And that he left the water running on an

outside faucet and ran up a big water bill. Cal had to chase Ken to get bills to pay. And Ken couldn't care less. On the other hand, we had people who literally worshiped Ken.

Along with penuriousness on the part of the Board of Trustees, Patton saw an unfortunate enthusiasm for fairs, dinners, and performances as fund-raisers.

In later years, Patton said:

When I came here, I said "Well, let's see if we can take the experiments we did at Boston and embody them in a local congregation." To some extent I succeeded there, but in many other ways—you see, the strength of a group is also its weakness. The strength of the Ridgewood congregation is that they're made up of managers. They're highly professional, organizational people—Wall Street, Madison Avenue and on and on. So when it comes to financial drives or building projects or things like that, things that are involved in traditional business practices, you have all the talent in the world here. . .

Well, good business practice isn't always good religion. . .

I have become appalled at the intrusion of a financial gambit in the collection right in the middle of the service. And we got rid of it in Boston. We just had a collection plate at the door. And in Madison we'd gotten rid of the fund-raisers [i.e. special events for raising money]. I tried to get them to get rid of their fund-raisers here. They were married to them. They didn't want to get rid of them. I think that probably the most enthusiastic thing they do here is their Service Auction. They love it. They love doing business. I pushed at these as far as I could, and I threw my hands up.

AUTHOR AND PUBLISHER

Kenneth Patton's outspoken hostility toward business was a source of friction with the Board of Trustees. Nevertheless, he wanted the Society to support his book publishing – and that required funding. The Society did so, but not until after considerable discussion.

Patton had published through both the Meeting House Press and the Beacon Press when he was in Boston. In May of 1966, he reported that he had signed contracts with Beacon Press for *This World, My Home* and *Fifty Services for the Celebration of Life*.

The Society had responded well to Kenneth Patton's need for a larger parsonage, but monetary support for his book writing and publishing projects was more difficult to win. Many felt he should spend more time with pastoral and congregational affairs, and less on writing and publishing.

Patton recalled years later:

There is a lack of flexibility in operation. For example, I had no trouble at all incorporating Meeting House Press as an integral part of the structure of the Charles Street Meeting House in Boston. But I had to move that here and offer the Ridgewood congregation the opportunity to participate in the publishing house. They turned me down. They didn't like the sound of it at all.

There had been considerable argument among the trustees about monetary support for Patton's Meeting House Press. Trustee Bea Robbins thought that if there was no charge for interest on a loan to him, the implication would be that the Society approved of Patton's spending his full time on writing and publishing. "[Charging interest] would also recognize that our function as a society is not limited to supporting our minister's great talent," her letter said.

In the fall of 1974, June and Lee Regal brought a proposal to a special meeting of the membership: that the Society should aid in financing *The Sense of Life*. In October the Society did so: \$2,589 lent at no interest for two years.

All Blessedness, *The Sense of Life*, and *Strange Harvest* were available for members to buy from Patton as a set for \$10 in December of 1975. When the question of extending the loan an additional year was brought to a congregational meeting, the favorable vote was unanimous. *The Way for This Journey* was going to press, and the trustees accepted 300 copies of it in lieu of \$450 against what Patton owed. In the spring of 1976, the pledge canvassers gave a copy of it to each household.

A Religion of Realities was completed in the fall of 1977. Ken Patton was encouraged by the Board of Trustees to “sell the books at full price to the members,” rather than for the Society to purchase them from him to give to members and friends.

He repaid his debt entirely by the end of November, 1977. He wrote:

At this juncture I would like to thank you for your patience & your collaboration. What does the venture mean? I have no idea. Books go where they will, are read, & are seldom reported upon back to the author. Whatever they will be, they have been launched.

On sabbatical leave from January to June, 1978, Patton spent the time researching and writing, finding 650 poems from some 200 poets for use as hymns; and studying the folklore of the African Bushmen.

By the fall of 1979 his new hymn book, *Hymns of Humanity*, was written; it was at the printers by February, 1980. He sent copies to ministers and churches, and he encouraged each Society member to pay for a copy for the Society’s use. He lent copies for a try-out for the June 1, 1980, Sunday Service.

In early 1981, Patton reported that his basic work on the Chinese poets was nearly complete, and that part of the results would be used in the coming Easter service. He saw a fascinating similarity between the Jewish prophets and the Chinese poets.

In October, 1981 *The Intimate Enemy* and *100 American Folk Tunes* were being printed, and he was writing and editing *Chinese Hymns of Humanity*. “He can now do everything in book publishing, including the binding, except the sewing of the folios,” *Newsletter* editor Nancy Petrie reported. June Regal reminisced:

Ken really was able to do more when we got him a special typewriter, one that made a beautiful typeface so that he could prepare camera-ready copy for the printer.

Ken said, “The reason I am here is because you allow me. You allow me to write.”

We cared for him; we loved his words.

In May, 1984, Patton reported that during the preceding year he had printed eight of his books; one of them was already bound. He was still in the process of writing three more, some of which were new editions of his previous publications. His purchase of a copier that year sped the process. He listed the year’s work:

- 101 American Folk Hymn Tunes
- Chinese Hymns of Humanity
- Hymns of Humanity from English and American Poetry
- The Intimate Enemy; poetry; a reprint with added poems

- The Happy Atheist
- Chinese Poets of Nature and Humanity
- Beyond Doubt, a reprint on humanist religion
- Recognition, a reprint of love sonnets, with additional poems
- Hymns of Humanity, Vol. 4, from more modern English and American poetry
- Kaggen, Folklore of the Cape Bushmen—first draft researched and written
- The Evolution of a Free Religion is a possible result of the previous year’s addresses

Some members, chiefly Wayne Armstrong, served as his editors. Patton called them “proofreaders,” and was surprised to learn that Armstrong, “that car salesman,” had a master’s degree in English literature. Thereafter, he treated Armstrong’s diplomatic suggestions with more respect.

Poetry, translations of Chinese poets, retellings of African folktales, and new hymnals for use in liberal religious societies, rolled off his press. This productivity, combined with his unusual conception of his role as minister, led some members to complain that he neglected his ministerial functions in order to keep on publishing. Ken dismissed the complaints. In one of his Sunday morning addresses, he stated baldly that he was not a pastor, but a writer and artist, and if the Society chose to, it could continue to support him.

To pay the expenses of writing and printing, Patton sold much of his personal art collection, toiling doggedly to complete his life’s work. He could not stop writing, and his output was prodigious.

He was immersed in ancient Chinese art and poetry. Patton, who did not know Chinese, studied all the English translations he could find, compared translators’ interpretations of the same poem, and finally created his own “translation” embodying what he sensed was the essence of the original. Each one offers, with simplicity, the meditations of a lone human being. Here is one example:

*Ignore the rains beating the leaves.
Walk carelessly and sing your song.
A bamboo staff, grass shoes will do.
There’s mist and rain our whole life long.*

Patton’s transformation of African Bushman folk tales for modern English readers enabled him to share them, potentially, with the whole world. He spent 15 years researching, writing, and illustrating the book, *Kaggen, the Mantis*, at his Meeting House Press at the parsonage, 114 Cottage Place. His last four books are *Kaggen, the Mantis*; *Chinese Humanism*, a 35-page essay; *Mine to Give*, his last book of poetry; and *Hymns of Humanity from English and American Poetry II*, utilizing 20th century poems.

His last effort to be sure his message was heard, he described in this way, in September of 1985:

Another project. . . was to cull out the prose readings that should make up a “humanist bible,” and this has been done, the excerpts photo-copied and gathered. I have made a plea in the Unitarian Universalist World that this project should accompany the new hymnal, but I cannot predict its future. It is too large a task for one old man to tackle.

To spread his gospel of a religion of realities for one world, he made bundles of eight or ten titles useful for women and men just entering the clergy, and at his own expense mailed a package to each new Unitarian Universalist minister.

A WORKING MAN

Patton was proud of his working class background, and his way of contributing economically to the Society's building program in the late 1960s was to follow in the footsteps of his predecessors in Ridgewood, especially Milton Muder, in serving as all-round fix-it-man, painter, and yard man. When the front porch of the parsonage needed repair, he did it himself. He mowed the lawn, trimmed the bushes, painted, and made many minor repairs on all four of the Society's buildings—the church, Reeb House, Sheffer House, and the parsonage. He thought about the tools of hand-work:

Not all of your minister's activities are "ministerial." A portion of my collection of old tools is on display in the gallery. I collect tools first of all because they are beautiful. . . .

There is an integrity, a lack of pose & pretense, an honesty in tools, often corrupted in so-called fine arts. I can afford them, most of them. Those I cannot afford give me something to live for. There is a sense of achievement in making a complete set of shoemaker's, cooper's tools, of braces & bits. My rewards are familial, for I come from the working class, & my father was an excellent cabinet maker. Perhaps some day I may be able to get his tool chest, & meet the man I never knew through his tools.

HONOR TO THE POET AND PROPHET

Patton's first honor of record was the honorary LLD from Meadville Theological School in June of 1967, when he was hospitalized with a serious illness.

In 1969 the Unitarian Universalist Laymen's League periodical, *Respond*, took a survey of readers to see what three living UU's they would choose as "outstanding." There were 92 nominees, and Kenneth Leo Patton received more votes than any of the others.

In May of that year, he received an award from the Religious Artists Guild.

Patton was honored as liturgist when the Unitarian Universalist Association asked him in 1978 to write the *Meditation Manual*. He titled it *Songs of Simple Thanksgiving*. Each page began with a quotation from a spiritual leader, followed by Patton's poetic extension of the thought, and was illustrated with his own line drawings.

In the summer of 1979, he received the Humanist Arts Award from area humanists.

He was the first recipient of the Bragg Award for Distinguished Service to Humanism, and the featured speaker at the Raymond B. Bragg Symposium on Humanism at All Soul's Unitarian Church in Kansas City, Missouri in May of 1980. His topic: "The Ultimate Religious Revolution." (Bragg, head of the Unitarian Service Committee, died in 1978.)

To recognize Kenneth Patton's twenty years with the Ridgewood congregation, "A Celebration of Ken Patton's Ministry" was held December 9, 1984, planned by the Lay Service Committee. Participants were Jim Hyatt, Marion Arenas, Enid Hayflick, Kempton Webb, Marty Lavanhar, Tony Velonis, Winifred Hawkins, and the Sample Singers. The Order of Service included music coordinated with his interests—"Bagatelles Chinoises," by Tcherépnin, and "Blues" by Noona-Glover. There were three

songs, with words by Patton; three of his poems, from *The Intimate Enemy* and *A Religion of Realities*; and readings from his sermons and from *Hello Man*, *The Happy Atheist*, *All Blessedness*, *The Sense of Life*, and *The Intimate Enemy*. The final responsive reading, *We Are*, was from Patton's *Hymns of Humanity*, emblematic of the resolute poet's lonely quest: It begins,

Our task is to be who we are, in every way we can be, our salvation proceeding in putting ourselves back together after each tumble.

If we interfere with the ways of nature, or deny others their privilege to be, we betray ourselves, for when we deny another we tear the gentle fabric of our own soul.

The last sections read,

Our dread is to realize that we are illusory even to ourselves, dupes of inner deceptions, veiled from our inner eye.

Our gamble is to wager that we grasp the real world, that we know our true self and substance, for we are while we are, and that is all.

We iridesce, shine, and radiate.

We exclaim and roar; we are.

TIME TO RETIRE

Patton's lengthy tenure as minister and his impersonal behavior toward newcomers and most members of the Society was still an issue in the early 1980s. Jim Hyatt (president 1983-1985) with the support of the Board revived a ministerial affairs committee that early on raised with Patton the subject of his future plans and the eventual conclusion of his ministry. Hyatt recalled:

Patton clearly viewed himself as a defiant outcast in the Unitarian movement and an often-unappreciated prophet even in Ridgewood. He made no secret of his belief that his value was in his message and that he saw little importance in cultivating casual social relationships. Thus, he valued the independence of the pulpit and was reluctant to talk about a retirement schedule.

However, once discussions between Patton and the committee began, the Board continued to insist that a transition plan for a specific timetable was necessary in the long-range interest of the Society.

Patton had stated in his report to the congregation at the Annual Meeting in May, 1984:

Working with the ministerial alliance committee, we have been exploring the possible future of my ministry with you. Before I came here, I said to myself: "If they could take Homer Sheffer until he was 75, they could take Ken Patton until he is 75." In two years I will be 75. It seems as if I had come to Ridgewood only yesterday. I would like to stay among you, as minister emeritus, or associate, call it what you will. But this we can explore in the months ahead.

His "ministerial alliance committee" was the Ministerial Relations Committee of the Society. Patton proposed that an assistant pastor be added who would take the senior position after he, Ken Patton, was fully retired.

Wayne Armstrong, who was vice-president 1985-87 and president 1987-89, remembers the process this way:

The Board of Trustees explored Ken's suggestion carefully, and came to the conclusion that any assistant would be dominated by Ken and that any candidate strong enough to meet the Society's requirements for Ken's replacement, if Ken ever did retire, would be unwilling to function in Ken's shadow for an indeterminate period.

After much discussion Patton agreed in the spring of 1984 that he would stay on for two more years, and that the Society could start the process of finding his successor. A committee, of which I was a member, was appointed to do so. Later, after that process had been under way for over a year, Patton [reversed himself and] said he had decided to stay on indefinitely, that he was at the peak of his powers and saw no reason to step down. He was told that the process of search had gone too far to be called off and that he would be held to his agreement.

Patton's later recollection was bitter:

When they decided it was time for me to go and I offered a creative idea of my staying on with limited participation, they turned that down. They always turn out to be much more conservative in an organizational manner than you would think they would be in terms of the way they talk philosophically. . . .

Kenneth Leo Patton retired in June of 1986, and the Society honored his service with a retirement dinner June 8.

At the General Assembly of the UUA that month he was presented the Distinguished Service Award by UUA President William Schultz, whose speech included these words:

You are in a very real sense our Unitarian Universalism psalmist and we praise and thank you for having put your gifts at the service of our denomination. . . .

And yet, poet though you be, your respect for the insights of science has always been immense. You have seen to it that your aesthetic expression has been consistent with your intellectual commitments, aware that to inquire of the world is to be stunned by its irrefragable mystery.

Your words have inspired and comforted and challenged us for five decades. In gratitude for your leaving with us the gleanings of your heart, we return your tribute and applause. . . .

Schultz's graceful tribute was followed by Patton's reply, full of typical Pattonisms, such as these:

I belong only with your mavericks, Adin Ballou, Theodore Parker, Emerson, Thoreau, and Channing in his last years. I am a maverick, as were the Old Testament prophets. One could name twenty prophets, but who can name one Old Testament priest?

I have two admonitions for you. Keep your one viable and creative tradition of total freedom of religion. This is your genius, for it invites to your ranks the mavericks from other religions, and from no religion. Now as you are cuddling up to the concepts and metaphors of traditional religion, you need young and feisty mavericks more than ever, and they may be hard to find in this yuppy generation. . . .

We can have museums for one world, universities for one world, science for one world, even Pepsi Cola and Toyotas for one world, but not religion for one world. As one born into authentic Protestant Pietism, I find liberal attempts at spirituality amateurish and

intellectualized. Please stay with your unique and indispensable function; make sense. . . .

I am deeply grateful for this honor, but not as coming from a denomination, or the general assembly of an association. I do not believe in organizations, bureaucracies, nations, and denominations. These are monstrous, arid, and cruel abstractions, without organic form, soul, self, memory, conscience, or honor, and religious organizations are the most corrupt of all. I come to thank my individual colleagues and fellow liberals, wherever they are, who have found meaning in my words, projects, and protests. . . . I have been a humble workaholic maverick among you, and many of you, especially Vincent Silliman, I have loved dearly. Thank you.

I will close out my misfit ministry with the most beautiful and briefest sermon ever preached. . . . A master of a Zen monastery was asked by the neophytes for the meaning of enlightenment. He told the monks to go about their chores, to work with the villagers, and reassemble in a week. They did so, and the master looked out at the sun and trees, listened to the birds, then spread his arms wide and left without a word.

At the Ridgewood Society's May 1986 Annual Meeting, President Helen Lindsay reminded the membership of Patton's importance to the Society in three areas: the curriculum for Sunday school based on the history of civilization and comparative religions; social action, especially in supporting the Black Affairs Council both locally and in the UUA General Assembly; and finally, in his vision of how the assembly building could be transformed into a space which would "reflect its people, activities and religion."

Soon after his retirement, Patton's failing health demanded a heart-valve replacement operation, which was successful and gave him eight and a half more years of life. He had planned to be the artist at last that he had always wanted to be. Now he could paint, in his "leftover life." He produced a number of art works, especially pastels, exhibited at the Cottage Place Gallery in February and March of 1988.

Patton remained in Ridgewood, speaking at one or two services a year at the Unitarian Society. He developed congestive heart failure during the last year or so of his life, and died in his sleep the night of December 24-25, 1994 at the age of 83.

Dag Patton lived with his father to the end. He said, "He was the best friend I ever had."

The Unitarian Society's new minister, Terence Ellen, held two memorial services for Patton. An informal one on December 31, 1994 was for family and friends. All seven of Patton's children were able to attend: Reuben, Michael, Jonathan, Clarise, Max, Dag, and Channing. The chosen hymn was Patton's "Brief our days, but long for singing." Talks by his children and members and friends of the Society were followed by Marcia Spitz's rendition of a Schubert "Impromptu."

Former president Kris Brainard's thoughts that day:

What I remembered during Ken's memorial service was standing for the hymn singing. He was rightly proud of those hymns, and he liked to have us stand. The tradition in the Society was that we sat. But every now and then Ken would get himself together and ask us to stand, saying that he didn't think we could do justice to a particular hymn while seated. It wasn't easy for him to do that, but it became clear at board meetings that he really wanted us standing. Became clear in the [ministerial] liaison committee, too. I

remember taking it on myself to be the person to stand up as soon as Harriett [Aschoff] started playing; and I might be the only one standing for a bit, but then everyone else would stand. It became kind of a joke that others would tease me about. But I knew it was important to Ken. That came back to me during the memorial service.

Ellen ended the service with a reading from Patton, which begins:

Let us worship with our eyes and ears and fingertips; let us love the world through heart and mind and body.

At the second, more formal memorial service January 28, 1995, President of the UUA Rev. John Buehrens, and Rev. David Bumbaugh, minister from the Summit, New Jersey, Unitarian church were among those present.

After the quiet Bach played by Harriett Aschoff, Terence Ellen opened the service: He led a way which a lot of folk, myself included, are still trying to catch up with. Most of all he spoke and he sang as he saw fit. And he sang this life and this world and this cosmos wonderfully and well.

UUA president Rev. John Buehrens spoke of Patton as both prophet and poet. As prophet, Patton respected the earth and nature. And as poet, Buehrens said,

Ken was a poet in our midst. When the prophets and the poets vanish from us the irony . . . is that it is only in the crucible of institutions that their songs, their works and spirit are preserved. . . . All across this continent there are institutions shaped by his prophetic and poetic spirit. . . .

Mind you, it is awkward for institutions to honor their poets. Ken was often a reluctant honoree. . . and I feel that reluctance somehow even today as we pause here. . .

May the prophetic and the poetic spirit that dwelt in him be kept alive indeed in institutions all across the continent that in the family of faith share with him that devotion to the earth, and to the realities of human existence which are our common home. In our singing may we recap that joy which was his.

Member soprano Barbara Bonazzi (now Barry) selected three songs by Patton that celebrated his love of nature and art. Spencer Lavan, Dean of Meadville-Lombard Theological School in Chicago, sent flowers and condolences in the name of faculty, students, and staff, recalling the honorary LLD the School bestowed upon Patton in recognition of his work back in 1967.

Among Rev. David E. Bumbaugh's remarks, after he recounted how helpful Patton's books were when he was a new minister, were these apt phrases:

. . . It was he who taught a monotone rationalism how to sing; it was he who taught a stumple-footed humanism how to dance; it was he who cried "Look!" and taught our eyes to see the glory in the ordinary. . .

Ken Patton, who insisted he had little patience with institutions, maintained a curious loyalty to our movement as he journeyed on his own road. It was Ken Patton who rewrote and reissued much of his own material when he became aware of the gender-exclusive nature of much of his language. It was Ken Patton, who, at the end of his career, packaged up his stock of books and mailed [them] free to ministers and students and churches all across the continent. No matter what he may have said to the contrary, Ken Patton was tied to this movement, and his quarrel with its institutional nature was a lover's quarrel. . .

At the close of Bumbaugh's talk, Patton's hymn, "Brief our days, but long for singing," was once again sung to celebrate his life.

Wayne Armstrong read selections from Patton's essay, "The Poet and the Poem," from *The Sense of Life*. In closing, Terence Ellen read Patton's poem,

*If nothing else I know this thing,
That something in me wills to sing.
No matter where they bury me,
Under rock or grass or tree,
A song will wander my dead heart:
A bubble, a breath, a bird, a dart,
Will cleave the earth and springing high
Will sing its way straight up the sky.*

This passage from Patton's *Man's Hidden Search* closed the service:

The world is so various I cannot see how anyone could be bored. We get down in the mouth once in awhile, tired, off our feed, but this is no lasting peak with life. I would like to be God himself, eternal and omniscient, so that I could take in the whole blooming business. I hope not only to die with my boots on, but with my bib tucked in, asking for more of whatever is left on the table.

GROWING HUMANIST BEINGS

The need for a liberal religious education for the children often leads the parents, too, to the Unitarian Society. The story of how Conrad and Naomi Yanis discovered the Unitarians in the mid-1960s is characteristic of many, as Naomi Yanis recounts their experience:

What I was looking for was to give [the children] a sense of their Jewishness without what I considered the baggage that comes with it. And [Linda Friedman] told me I would just love this church. She said the Sunday school was starting a three year curriculum and the first year was on Judaism. . .

I sat in on a class. John Handley was teaching. Very exciting. I couldn't believe what they were doing: they were talking about "If you were a group of people stuck on a desert island and you had to make a religion, what would you consider to be important in the religion?" And I was just flabbergasted by the ideas the kids were talking about. . .

One day, with great trepidation, I went into that building that was called the church, hoping to find something that I could be offended by. Expecting to find something, but really hoping to, because I wanted to find an excuse to not be involved. And the first thing that struck me was the name of the hymnal, which was called Celebration of Life. That was a mind-blowing idea for the name of a hymnal. . . And what Patton had to say was exciting, and stimulating, right, absolutely good. . .

The idea of being a member of something called a church was not OK. Having grown up Jewish, the word "church" was a no-no. If Ken had mentioned the name Jesus during the talk—and if he had said anything about God—I would have left. But he did not. . . I was enrapt by what he had to say, thought provoking. . .

The Yanises did not officially join until after a rabbi spoke at a service on "Why I Am Not a Unitarian."

The rabbi said, "For any of you [couples] who are [both] Jewish, all I can say to you is 'Come home, Baby.'" That is literally what he said.

I was so offended that I went up to him afterwards and I said, "You want us to come home, Baby. Do you really have a place for someone like me, who is an atheist?"

He said, "You don't have to belong to anything."

I was so totally offended by the idea. . .

So that's how I came to Unitarianism. I was really looking for something for the kids. I had no idea that I had a need for this kind of community. But it has been wonderful to have this community.

The Yanises' story is not unlike that of many members in the 1990s.

In 1911, the Unitarian Sunday School Society published, a little booklet called *Do You Know? A Sunday School Interrogation*. In catechetical style, it appealed for support, asking

DO YOU KNOW

that the Unitarian churches can have no future unless we awaken to a realization of the duties and privileges presented by the Sunday-school movement, and proceed to lay at once, at large expense of effort and money, the firm foundations upon which shall rise the greater, grander Church of the Future, that shall be the fulfilment [sic] of our present hopes and that shall trace back its strongest inspirations and impulses to the work of the Sunday-school of Today

?

The Unitarian Sunday School Society, founded in 1827, was not funded by the American Unitarian Association (AUA), but only by individuals and churches; and the money received from those sources amounted to only 3% of the amount that individuals and churches contributed to the AUA. The Sunday School Society's total receipts in 1911 amounted to only six cents for each Unitarian in the AUA.

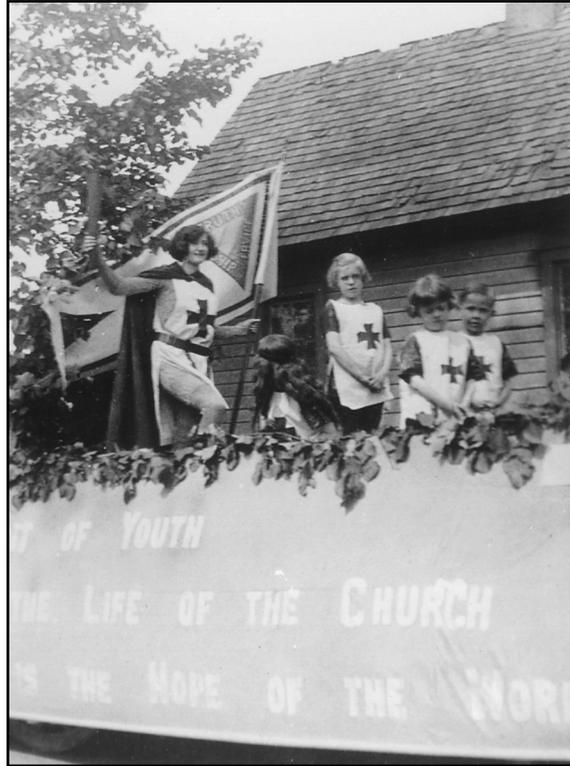
Today religious education is an integral part of the Ridgewood Society's budget, and since 1960 has hovered near 10% of total expenditures. In 1993 the Board dropped the practice of assessing parents a token registration fee, asserting the principle that all the members and friends of the Society are responsible for religious education.

This principle, however, is a recent innovation. The Ridgewood Unitarian Society at times budgeted money for religious education, and the Alliance at times gave the Sunday School money for special purposes. For the first 50 years or so, however, children's education was supported almost entirely by the children's "silver offering" and an occasional fund-raising dinner. At times the Sunday School helped to support the Society's budget: The Society gave thanks to the members of the Sunday School "for the contribution which they have made to the treasury of the Society" in 1933-34.

Today, in an adequately funded program, while the adults are attending ministerial addresses, readings and music, sometimes with follow-up discussions, the children engage in conflict resolution, comparative religion, history, music, drama, art, emotional growth, peace, free thinking, nature study, sex education, and the principles of Unitarian Universalism. Planning and implementing a growth experience for 100 or more youngsters every week is an enormous task, but the current director, Ruth Uscher, is in love with the job.

There are few early records of Sunday School activities. The only personal report of being a Unitarian Society Sunday school student comes from the late Helen Knothe Nearing (quoted in "The Early Years of the Society,") who grew up on Cottage Place and attended Sunday School about 1910 when Rebecca Vincent (wife of President Harry Vincent) was the teacher, and the Woman's Alliance was, for all practical purposes, the religious education committee.

The earliest record of financial support for Sunday School was the notation of a 1916



Unitarian youths and
prize winning float,
Fourth of July, 1924

Alliance contribution of \$11 for “the purchase of a banner.” The children had been invited to participate in a “Village Sunday School Celebration.” The invitation may have been of great importance, because the Unitarians often had difficulty being accepted by the other Ridgewood churches.

In 1924, the Unitarian children made connection with the other churches with a float in the Fourth of July parade, photographed by new member Charles T. Greene. They wear middy blouses decorated with the Maltese cross. Their banner reads “The spirit of youth in the life of the church is the hope of the world.” At the May, 1925, Annual Meeting, someone (probably President Richard Wheelock) reported:

Although the Unitarians are still not generally regarded as entirely worthy to be included among the Christian churches of Ridgewood, some headway may have been made . . . [T]he Unitarian Church School was allowed to parade with the other Sunday Schools on the Fourth of July, where it won a prize for its float; and the Unitarian church is ably represented in the Church Bowling Tournament, receiving considerable newspaper notice.

Six leaflets titled *God’s Wonder World for use in Grade IV*, published in 1919 by the Beacon Press, show an early attention in the Sunday School to science: dinosaurs, geology, electricity, sunlight, the solar system, and scientists. The scientist featured is Isaac Newton, whose working process is described:

Do you think [proving the theory of gravitation] was easy to do? Oh, no! Even after his keen mind had thought out a reason for what he saw, Newton had to work very hard to prove his law. He covered whole pages with figures. How long do you think his patience

lasted? One year? Two? Three? For seventeen years Newton kept on thinking and trying, and still he had not proved what he believed to be true.

(Finally, of course, Newton prevailed.)

The “woman question” was current in 1919, when women’s suffrage was about to be achieved. The leaflet continues:

Many of these boys [future scientists] had mothers whose love and ambition for them made them what they were. Some had sisters, daughters, and nieces, without whose patient and loving help they could not have succeeded. And many of these wonderful minds belonged to women: Maria Mitchell, the astronomer, and Madame Curie who discovered radium, are among the number.

So God blesses the world of men and women through the men and women themselves,—the men and women who were once children. . .

Suitable verses from the Bible are quoted. In the leaflet on glaciers: *Speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee.* (Job 12:8)

From the one about dinosaurs: *A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.* (Psalms 90:4)

And in the lesson on sunlight: *There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory.*(I Corinthians, 15:41)

The earliest extant report of the children participating in Society services is at Christmas, 1924. Clara Hershey played (piano? organ?) for children’s songs, and a Mrs. Montgomery made costumes for what was probably a traditional Christmas pageant. It was directed by Mildred Fogg.

Harry Hershey, superintendent, declared the Sunday School financially self-supporting by January 1925, but welcomed the Alliance’s help on special occasions. A year later, in December 1925, the Alliance furnished six Bibles and six more chairs. Hershey said that the Sunday School would pay for them. At the time, there were 24 pupils. (Reading between the lines, it appears there could well have been some competition between Hershey and the Alliance women for control of the Sunday School).

By May of 1927, the Alliance was looking for someone to “re-organize our Sunday School, inasmuch as the two local candidates for this position have decided not to undertake it.” There is no record of why Hershey didn’t want to continue, or why the other one or two candidates did not want the position. At the suggestion of the Society’s minister, Hubert Wright, the trustees agreed to pay a church school superintendent \$400 for the year 1927-28. Wright, who was also a teacher at Hackensack High school, had suggested a candidate from the Hackensack Unitarian church, but the Board of Trustees chose a member of the Ridgewood Unitarian Society, Frederick Woelfle, who was a Ridgewood public school teacher, instead.

Wright’s hope had been that with a paid superintendent, a religious education program could be developed. A reliable staff, however, was not forthcoming, and the salary for a superintendent was discontinued. Records state that Sunday School was discontinued entirely for the year 1929-30. Records reveal no more data about religious education until 1931.

Betty Velonis (1917-1993) grew up in the Rutherford, New Jersey, (Unitarian) Church of Our Father, and experienced first-hand some of the curricula popular in the 1920s. She reminisced,

We went to Sunday School, of course, and it was rather different, more traditional than now. It was OK. We had Sophia Fahs' books and I guess the thing I retained most was studying about clouds. And I still have a hard time saying Cirrus clouds; for me they were "serious" clouds. And you know that was the first time I [learned] anything about clouds: in Unitarian Sunday school.

The next minister, Milton Muder (1931-39), was full-time, in contrast to his predecessor. He set up educational and missionary groups in the Society. Under his administration as both minister and, with his wife Alice Jane Stepp Muder, as Church School Superintendent, a Sunday School was organized.

The names of the courses taught in those early days were reported in *The Free Church News Letter*, December 1934 issue. Rev. Milton Muder himself was probably the writer/editor:

The Church School, which meets each Sunday at 9:45 A.M. has the surprising good fortune of a larger enrollment than usual of small children. The School has an excellent teaching staff. The Kindergarten Department is being cared for jointly by Miss Lois Stevens and Miss Leslye Mahnken, and the course being used is "Religion in the Kindergarten." Mrs. Alice Jane Muder has charge of the Primary group and is using the course, "Living Together". For the Junior class, of which Mr. Muder has charge, a course is being followed called "Seeking the Beautiful in God's World." Mr. Frederick Woelfle, with the Junior High group, is using a course based on the New Testament. At present there are no Senior High or adult classes but it is hoped that such can be formed soon. Modern minded parents wishing to place their children in a progressive school of religious education will find ours suited to their purpose.

There were 33 children enrolled in 1932.

In 1938, the Intermediate class with Mrs. R. C. (Leila?) Lawrence was using the *God's Wonder World* curriculum. Muder was taking the high school students through a course on the origins of great religions of the world.

After Milton Muder's departure, the activities and church school he had organized failed to thrive. Rev. Homer Sheffer became minister of the Society in the fall of 1939. In a 1942 letter to Dan H. Fenn at the AUA, minister Sheffer mentioned a meeting of parents of children of church school age. "We are starting a new department and getting new people interested," he said. A *News Letter* item reads:

The church school has lost the services of Mrs. [Audrey] Schulze. But Mrs. [Florence] Myers on her own initiative has temporarily stepped into the breach.

Nevertheless, there was apparently almost no formal program. Jeanette Olson was superintendent 1946-48, when the post-war period of extremely rapid growth began. Janet and Albert Webster, both "birthright" Unitarians, first came to the Ridgewood area in 1943, and found Florence Myers taking care of the few children each Sunday. The Websters moved away, but when they returned to Ridgewood in 1947 they found no children's program at all.

Janet Webster remembered:

When we came back in 1947, we had twins who were four years old and another girl who was five and Nick who was eight. He had missed any church school, and we were very sad to find there was no church school nor child care in this church.

Janet Webster approached Homer Sheffer and told him the Society needed a Sunday School. His reply: “Well, if that’s what you want, go ahead and start one.” Somewhat taken aback, that is exactly what she did. She and other young mothers soon started classes.

Albert Webster reported,

Janet became at that time superintendent of the Sunday school. Our kids doubled the number of possible attendees: our kids, and four others. There was a family named Marks, who had six children. They had one set of twins. They were Jewish, but were happy to come to our church with their children. The Marks and Websters made up the Sunday School for a while. . . .

Gladys Johnson was helping, and when her daughter Ellen (now Anderson) came home from college (about 1943-46), she was pressed into service. Ellen Anderson remembers a state of disorganization:

Back when I was a Sunday School teacher [about 1946] there was absolutely no curriculum, and I was told I could teach whatever I wanted to.

In 1947, the Velonis family moved to the area, pleased to have the Unitarian Society nearby, in Ridgewood. Betty Velonis later described her induction as a religious education teacher:

Tony and I had not been doing anything [about religion]. But it was important not to have the kids to go to some traditional service. . . So when the boys got ready for Sunday School I took the kids there

My intention was to introduce myself, drop the boys off and go back home. But my daughter, the 3 year old, would have no part of that; if the boys were going to play and do something, so would she. So after getting the boys established I went down in the basement, where the little kids were, and there was Florence Myers. And then she looked up – “Oh, No! Not another one.” She was already coping with a bunch of little kids, so I said I was willing to stay. So I started teaching at Sunday school that day and I’m still doing it.

Indeed she was, only a month before her death January 1, 1993.

Phyllis Kozma recalls that before a curriculum was available, she devised ways of teaching first graders. She wrote:

I was the First Grade Sunday School teacher for a year and at that time . . . you could do almost anything. I had never taught before so I did it my way. I had those hundred copies of famous paintings from the Metropolitan Museum. Among them were many of the Madonna and Child. I passed them around to the children. Later, I took them each Sunday to visit various babies in town, one Chinese, another Black, etc. Their mothers were pleased and let the children fondle the babies and see that color of skin made no difference. They all had feelings and were alive and beautiful. I still feel that way. The Webster twins were in my class.

Janet Webster remembered:

Curriculum—it was straight out of Boston. We adopted Sophia Fahs’ pre-ordained prepared curriculum. [In that way] we eliminated a great deal of the theistic theology. [Fahs]

was the breakaway from Christian tradition, I was all for the humanistic fervor that I had felt as a college student.

Albert Webster said that in the hymn book for young people that his wife used, she had crossed out, in heavy black pencil, all references to God, to spirituality. She had sent to the Boston headquarters of the AUA for the Beacon Series from the Council of Liberal Churches. Thanks to her, orderly plans were in place in 1948, when the youngest children with Mrs. Stoughton studied *Animal Babies*, the primary age children with Edna Crane studied *Stories from Many Lands*, and Mrs. Nelson M. Park's class of 5th and 6th graders worked on *The Church Across the Street*.

Sophia Lyon Fahs and Dorothy Tilden Spoerl created The New Beacon Series in Religious Education for the Council of Liberal Churches, the 1953-61 organization administering education, publication, and public relations functions of both the Universalist and Unitarian denominations before the two merged completely in 1961. This comprehensive curriculum, for all ages from pre-school to high school, took up mysteries explained or unexplained by science, helped children understand interpersonal relations, introduced the children with respect but not obeisance to Judeo-Christian thought and gave them an opportunity to explore religions throughout history.

In Ridgewood, children enjoyed the *Martin and Judy* series taught in the pre-school and kindergarten classes. In these stories dealing with the difficulties of sibling rivalry and death, the parents always knew what to say and do to help a child's emotional and social growth. For 6-to-8 year olds, the Fahs series *From Long Ago and Many Lands*, and *How Miracles Abound*, were staples. The 9-to-11 year olds, ready for more distinctly religious study, learned from *Beginnings of Earth and Sky*, *Beginnings of Life and Death*, *Moses*, and *Jesus the Carpenter's Son*. Older children still studied *The Church Across the Street*, and had added by then *The Drama of Ancient Israel*.

Janet Webster reported at the May, 1949, Annual Meeting that a beautiful leather book had been contributed in which ten of the oldest children had signed their names as "junior members" of the Society, foreshadowing the youth membership issues of 1978-79. Webster pleaded for an expansion of the physical plant, "to keep the youngsters in our own church."

The Sunday school gave Phyllis Kozma \$50 to help defray her expenses for Religious Education Week at the Unitarian conference center on Star Island, New Hampshire, in 1949. Also, the Board of Trustees supported a request that Sunday School funds be kept separate from the general Society funds. The board contributed a check for \$50, "the School to make such disposition of the care of the money and funds subsequently raised that it saw fit."

Gladys Johnson, chair of the Religious Education Committee, asked the Board of Trustees for a telephone in the church building for Janet Webster's two-day-a-week office hours. Enrollment was growing very fast, and two or three Sunday School classes met at the YM-YWCA, at a cost of \$1 per week. In 1950, the Society added to the main building, expanding it toward the east to create "five Sunday School rooms," some in the new section of the basement. There was a plea for furnishings: bookshelves, a rug, magnets, a Victrola.

Webster recalled her experiences heading up the program:

I tried to be so professional; Sunday school was . . . an out of the home job for me, I think probably for a period of eight or nine years. Our son was seven, and so was Thalia Crane, and Kathryn Myers. Ten years later the bunch was having a great time in discussion groups, similar to what's been going on ever since at the high school age.

In 1949-50, Janet Webster and Gladys Johnson described the goals of the religious education program which were to help our children to acquire for themselves:

1. An ability to think for themselves: a habit of inquiring and reasoning "on their own"
2. The tools with which to fashion a personal philosophy, each of his own. . . .
3. Constructive and purposeful attitudes, including: democratic spirit. . . tolerance . . . appreciation of Unitarianism . . . and social responsibility

The building was again bursting at the seams in 1952. Of 99 enrolled, average attendance was 70. By the end of the year, 110 were enrolled in 10 classes. By 1954-55, three classes had to be divided from one another by movable screens in the basement of the main building, two in the 1950 "back rooms" on the main floor, and two in the two "social rooms" divided from the auditorium by folding walls. The junior high girls' class and the junior high boys' class met in the auditorium without blackboard, art materials, or other amenities needed for a classroom.

Until 1954, all classes grades 1-9 met at 9:30, and in addition, at 11:00 pre-kindergarten and kindergarten met in the basement. Later, double Sunday School sessions had to be held. When the "Y" was demolished, the 9:30 and 11:00 school-age classes that had met there moved to a basement room in the Franklin Avenue "Arthur's House of Beauty." ("Mr. Arthur"—Octavius Pitzalis—was a member of the Unitarian Society.)

In 1956 the parsonage, later called Sheffer House, was remodeled for use by the Sunday School, and Homer Sheffer and his wife moved to a new parsonage on Vesta Court. Kindergarten classes met in the basement of Sheffer House after it was renovated with new sheet rock and fluorescent lighting by Cal Lambert, Stuart Brand, and young Phillip Elias Velonis and his friends. By 1958, space at Christ Church, the Episcopal church just south of the Unitarian Society, was in use for Unitarian Sunday School classes, an arrangement that lasted until classes moved to Reeb House in 1967.

The religious education program leaflet, "Unitarian Church School, Ridgewood, New Jersey, 1958-59" quoted Sophia Lyon Fahs, the "mother" of the Unitarian curriculum:

All that quickens sympathetic imagining, that awakens sensitivity to others' feelings, all that enriches and enlarges understanding of the world; all that strengthens courage, that adds to the love of living; all that leads to developing skills needed for democratic participation – all these put together are the curriculum through which children learn.

Don Anderson recalls:

It was very difficult because Sunday School, at that time, was held in Christ Church, in their auditorium. There were six or seven classes in this huge room with no walls between us. And it was very difficult to keep order, especially in the junior high class.

In 1986, Woodie Holstein recalled his experience teaching Sunday School some thirty years earlier, in the Unitarian church auditorium. At that time Sunday School was held an hour before the adult service:

I was and I still am appreciative and grateful for the way in which this society provided a group for my children. . .

I discovered [my class] were active young people who couldn't sit still for long periods just listening, so I used to bring . . . drawing paper and crayons, and I remember once I brought a whole bunch of modeling clay. I put the stuff down in front of the kids and said "Let's make something!" Sometimes some of the kids would get imaginative and make something from the clay that was the subject of a discussion, a Bible story, or something like that.

We got a little crowded for space for the religious education classes, so [our class was] in pews in the church. The kids in my group were sitting there fooling with the modeling clay, and . . . one of the kids. . . threw a pellet of modeling clay at one of the other kids. Somehow it hit me. . . [and led to] the business of pelting the teacher with modeling clay.

This [event] came to the attention of Homer Sheffer, . . .and Homer was indignant. He called me up. . . . I said "Isn't it a shame that [the kids] would do that!" He said, "What bothers you about it?" I said, "I think it's wrong for kids to be throwing modeling clay around in a church." He said, "Oh, I don't care about that. If they want to throw modeling clay around a church it's all right, but it's that they threw it at you!"

And I thought that was a pretty good microcosm of a sane attitude toward youth and churches.

Lynn Schulze (now Bowdery), a pupil in the 1950s, recalls that when she was "in the older grades," she was taught Socrates, and Plato's dialogues. She never heard of them in the public school. She heard nothing in Church School about Christianity, which made it hard to figure out things other kids knew. But, she says, "It would be hard to draw the line between teaching a doctrine, and teaching about Christianity."

The Church School was then, as now, a surprise to newcomers. Penny Kozma (now Whitlock) remembers when she attended Unitarian Sunday School for the first time, all dressed up in her Sunday best, and carrying her Bible. The teacher, spotting the Bible as soon as Penny came in the door, said "Oh, you won't need that today." Her Bible was put aside, and each child received that day a lesson on growth, and the gift of a polliwog. That was her introduction: Not Bibles, but polliwogs!

Penny Kozma's friend Thalia Crane (now Sudnik) remembers especially the curriculum *The Church Across the Street*. Her class visited many religious congregations. The one she remembers most vividly, though, is the old Barnert Temple in Paterson, with its beautiful woodwork and 19th century grandeur.

In the fall of 1959, Church School began at 11:00, the same time as the adult service, rather than an hour earlier as had been customary. Under the previous schedule, classes had to meet in the auditorium of the building and elsewhere, but it was no longer necessary. Children and parents could attend their programs simultaneously, in different spaces. A "Junior Coffee Hour" was tried in Sheffer House to keep the children in the Church School for 15 or 20 minutes after the adult service ended, allowing the adult coffee hour to proceed with less disruption. A notice in the *Newsletter* asked:

. . . parents please pick up their children 15 to 20 minutes after services – after that they invade the Adult Coffee Hour and bedlam reigns!

After the 1970 remodeling opened up more floor space, the adult coffee hour has served cookies and juice for the children. Some bedlam still prevails, but it is pleasant bedlam.

By January, 1960, 128 pupils had enrolled in the Sunday school, plus 10 youths in LRY (Liberal Religious Youth).

The popular folk-singer Tom Glazer entertained at George Washington's Birthday Party in February, 1960, and the 4th through 7th grade children performed a skit based on American history written by member Arthur Owens. Admission: 25¢.

Glazer donated his singing, and Betty Velonis made props for the skit. Of the 187 children and adults who attended, about half came from the Bergen Ethical [Culture] Society, with whom Religious Education Committee member Polly Vibber had made friendly contact. Glazer did a return engagement in 1961.

By the spring of 1960, crowded conditions precluded any teaching method more effective than lectures. Arts and crafts, any physical activity, even opening rituals, were impossible. Among suggested solutions to the problem: linking the main building to Sheffer House, enclosing the porch of Sheffer House to make two rooms, finishing the attic of Sheffer House, even building a new educational building or erecting a new building for adult services and giving over the old building to classes. Still, five classes had to be housed elsewhere—at Christ Church. There they met in a large open auditorium, difficult conditions for teaching and learning.

The rapid growth in the religious education program in those years summarized it the enrollment figures in the list below. Actual average attendance, of course, was lower than total enrollment. The Society's records on this topic are incomplete. Records were not always sent to the AUA in Boston, and the official reports at congregational meetings at the end of the year did not always include these statistics.

Enrollment, 1944: 8

Enrollment, 1947: 32, in 4 classes

Enrollment, 1949-50: "over 50"

Enrollment, 1951-52: 86, in 9 classes, in the YMCA.

Enrollment, 1953: "well over 100"

Enrollment, 1957: 170, average attendance 100

Enrollment, 1960: 128 plus 10 in LRY

The coordination of religious education activities had become so complex and time-consuming that the committee chair, Lenore Kahn, proposed that the Sunday School Superintendent be paid \$1,000 a year and that Howard Roynance, Superintendent for the past six years, be reappointed. Instead, high school history teacher Robert Hall was appointed in 1960. He remained superintendent until 1965.

After Penny Kozma and Henry Whitlock's 1960 wedding at the Unitarian Society, Homer Sheffer officiating, the couple attended the Unitarian Society for many years. Henry remembers teaching Sunday School when Robert Hall was Superintendent. Hall's curriculum papers were still extant when Bobbie Moore and Joe Moore were Directors of Religious Education (1968-71). Bobbie Moore recalls Hall's plans as interesting and beautiful, well thought out.

Kahn also proposed that a \$10 fee per child be paid at the beginning of the year. Apparently this measure was not accepted. In August, 1964, Donald Martin, chair of the Religious Education Committee, recommended abolishing the Sunday School collection and charging \$5 tuition instead. The Board agreed, and some tuition charge (\$10 in 1975) was in effect until 1993, when the practice was abolished.

The desires of teachers and parents in a religious education program became clear in a 1960 survey. Little emphasis on Christianity, and more “other world religions,” more “ethics and philosophy,” and about the same amount of “arts and nature” and “Judeo-Christian concepts” appealed to the majority. The interpretation in 1995 of the words “more” and “the same amount” is difficult, but the sense of the survey’s results is apparent: the curriculum was what most wanted, with perhaps a bit more needed about exotic religions.

Homer Sheffer took little or no interest in religious education. Kenneth Patton, succeeding Sheffer in 1964, worked out ideas on religious education with Bob Chandler, chair of a curriculum sub-committee. Patton paid tribute to him, stating:

The one person who did more than anybody else was Bob Chandler. Being a librarian and knowing how to use those facilities and having that kind of a mind for the organization of that kind of material, he was the strong person in the whole business.

Bob Chandler recalled:

We developed a rather elaborate curriculum that involved a survey of different world religions, in part using different UU materials. But I branched out and I found, for example, that the Union of American Hebrew Congregations had a very good set of publications for children that was very adaptable for Church School use. . . . I felt we had, from an intellectual standpoint, a really good curriculum with graduated materials that covered the world’s religions from one age group to the next.

The Society’s 1965 Religious Education Committee stated:

The purpose of the religious education program should be to help us and our children discover how the needs within and the realities without can be related in a satisfying and productive life. Such a program must generate concern as well as impart knowledge. It should direct our attention to the rich variety of beliefs and practices through the ages in such a way as to illuminate the problems and opportunities of life today.

In keeping with the liberal tradition of our church, the program should promote a spirit of free inquiry rather than dogmatic acceptance. However, it should point out the strengths as well as the weaknesses of the beliefs of others. It should bring home to us that ‘seeing through’ our neighbor’s religion is in no sense a substitute for a faith of our own. As an active participant in life, the religious liberal needs to have positive convictions as much as the next person. Positive convictions, freely chosen, are in fact the end products of a successful religious education program.

Taking up the challenge in 1965-66 were John Handley and Nancy Van Arsdale, who agreed to be Directors of Religious Education (DREs), a new title replacing “Sunday School Superintendent.” Expressing dissatisfaction with anything developed in Boston at this time, including the recommended curricula, Ken and Mitzi Patton met with Handley and Van Arsdale to implement the entirely new curriculum based on Chandler’s research of the religions of the world, using the team teaching concept. This

involved grouping of grades 1, 2 and 3 in one cycle, 4, 5 & 6 in another, and 7, 8 and 9 in a third. Each class would study the same topic every fourth year, at an increasingly sophisticated level.

John Handley and Nancy Van Arsdale were understandably tired by the end of their first year as DREs. In May 1966, they presented their yearly report to the Annual Meeting. They wanted a working, rather than an advisory, Religious Education Committee—a committee of people ready to recruit teachers, train teachers, teach, register students and parents, and maintain the plant. “The Religious Education Committee should remain as a working unit until such time as the Church can assume the financial burden of a full time Church School Director,” their report said. Van Arsdale and Handley had been teaching the children since 1961, four years before they became directors. In need of a year off, they nevertheless remained on the job until the fall of 1968. The plan for 1966-67 follows:

- Prehistory and Neolithic Man [sic] 3 weeks
- Sumerian, Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Semitic civilizations, 8 weeks
- Early Judaism, from 1900 BCE to 1789 CE, 15 weeks.
- Islam, 3 weeks
- Judaism from 1789 to the present, 11 weeks.

The plan for another year focused on Asian religion:

- Hinduism, 5 weeks
- Yoga, 2 weeks
- Zoroastrianism and the Parsees, 2 weeks
- Chinese religions before Confucius, 1 week
- “Indian Celebration” 2 weeks
- Divali, 4 weeks
- Confucian concepts and social structure, 2 weeks
- Taoism, 1 week
- Chinese festivals, 2 weeks
- Shintoism, 2 weeks
- Buddhism, 5 weeks
- Tibetan Buddhism, 2 weeks
- Japanese culture and Zen Buddhism, 5 weeks
- Buddhism in Burma, Ceylon, and Thailand, 3 weeks

A third year division:

- Greek and Roman mythology, 2 weeks
- Jesus, 4 weeks
- St. Paul and the early church, 3 weeks
- Orthodox and Catholic Christianity, 3 weeks
- Christmas, 3 weeks
- Reformation, Luther, and American Lutheranism, 3 weeks
- Congregationalism, 1 week
- Quakers, 1 week
- Modern evangelism (Billy Graham), 1 week

Beginnings of liberal religion in Europe, 2 weeks
 Universalism, 2 weeks
 Easter, 2 weeks
 Liberal Leaders in America, 4 weeks
 Humanism, 3 weeks
 UUA and UUSC, 4 weeks
 The Ridgewood Unitarian Society, 1 week

The children and teachers explored these topics through art projects, music, dance, food, films, and field trips to museums and small group discussions. A “curriculum person” helped provide materials and information for each topic. Each grade-group had a “head teacher” and one or two assistants, and all could rely on the Director of Religious Education (DRE) team (Van Arsdale and Handley, from 1965-68; Roberta Moore and Joe Moore, from 1968-71).

Since the new Education Building would not be ready for occupancy until the fall of 1967, the classes were still scattered – some in Sheffer House, some in the main building, and some in Christ Church next door. Diane Foster (now Hostetler), a teacher of 3rd graders in March of 1966, sent this report to parents:

Evolution suffered a temporary setback when I discovered that the boys were embarrassed about seeing ape men without clothes. It’s probably just 3rd grade boys. However, this [reaction] necessitates a less direct approach to the subject. Perhaps it’s just as well, for most of the children found ape men too difficult to discuss objectively. Both boys and girls were uncomfortable.

... We discussed Thomas Jefferson, paying particular attention to doing things all by yourself. Public schools, freedom to be a Unitarian without being thrown in jail, decimal money, architecture, slavery, primogeniture, and experiments in fairness were batted around. I think the kids were surprised that a Unitarian ever became famous, let alone President.

Of her regime, Roberta Moore later remarked:

Food [was] very important in the 1968-71 curriculum. The idea was to associate traditional foods with religious practices, to reinforce [the lesson] as pleasantly as possible. Probably the least successful effort was my attempt to make pemmican for Native American religion study. Tasted awful.

The enrollment reached its peak during those years, about 200 pupils. It took many hours of work on the part of many people to design, research, plan, and especially, to carry out the curriculum with real children on Sunday morning. The undertaking was mammoth.

Among teachers in the religious education program during 1965-68 were Alice Brew, Denny Chandler, Delight Dodyk, Ginny Fairweather, Linda and Sy Friedman, Fred Jensen, Jane Keese, Helen Lindsay, Bob Lindsay, Bernice Medici, Angelo Medici, Joyce Nicholson, Joan Ritter, June Stonier, Will Stonier, Roberta Svarre, Jean ten Hove. Betty Velonis served as chair of the Religious Education Committee during this exciting time.

Others involved in the religious education program during 1965-71 and who are still active members of the Society in 1996, in addition to Helen Lindsay and Roberta Svarre

in the list above, are Don Anderson, Wayne Armstrong, Bob Chandler, Ruth Etzi, Barbara Goldberg, John Handley, Dan Post, Tony Velonis, and Naomi Yanis. There were undoubtedly others.

Patton asked that the religious education program be called “School of Religion,” rather than “Sunday School” or “Church School,” but somehow the phrase never really became rooted in the Society’s customs.

In the fall of 1967, classes were able to move into the new Religious Education building, at 122 Cottage Place, across the street from the main building, and volunteer crossing guards John Minch, Angelo Medici, Dick Etzi, and Ian Jacoby saw to it that children crossed the street safely between buildings. Children Valerie and David Moore placed orange traffic cones every Sunday to route traffic safely past the Society buildings.

At a ceremony in September, 1968, “James J. Reeb Memorial House” became the official name of the religious education building, so named at the suggestion of member Herman Lawson, to commemorate James J. Reeb, the Unitarian minister killed in Selma, Alabama during the 1965 march for civil rights. Lawson contributed to the Sunday school a portrait of philosopher statesman Thomas Jefferson, whose ideals of human relations Reeb sought to put into effect.

The Ridgewood Fire Department began insisting on regular fire drills at Reeb House. During one drill John Handley advised the Fire Chief that everyone had left the buildings. The Chief replied that one child was still in the building and he kept his stop watch ticking. Handley dashed into the basement and “rescued” Dag Patton, the one child who refused to leave.

The children began to enjoy new freedom and creativity. The following spring, Nancy Webb taught Zen Buddhism to grades four through six by means of Japanese flower arranging, bonzeki stone, and landscape gardening on trays. The children



Reeb House, 1966-97

brought plants, stones, branches, and flowers to class. They wrote haiku-style poems, some of which were published in the *Newsletter*:

*Peace was written in the sand
But the waves came along
And washed it away.*

– by Sara Van Arsdale

*The big bad bus
That honks at cars
And bangs together*

– by Brian Dreschler

In the fall of 1968, Joe and Bobbie Moore began as co-directors, continuing with a new three-year revolving version of the Patton curriculum, speedily revised by Patton at their request. According to Roberta Moore:

We approached Patton and asked that he design a revolving three year curriculum [because] very few kids got all the way through Sunday School. We were lucky if we got three years before they lost interest or they dropped out or their parents got transferred somewhere else by their corporations. . . . So we thought the most realistic way to get the message across was to keep repeating it at three year intervals at ever more sophisticated levels. What astonished us was the speed in which Ken presented us with the curriculum. He was such a resource that you could ask him and he would be forthcoming.

An example of Bobbie Moore's sharp ear for religious education is her *Newsletter* column identifying Fred Rogers of the television program *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* as creator of humanist hymns: "I Like You as You Are," "Everybody's Fancy," and "Let's Be Together Today."

In 1968, the Moores included this statement in their introduction to the curriculum:

Perhaps the chief characteristic of today's religious liberalism is its radical pluralism and deliberate inclusiveness. It makes no claim to special knowledge—no special revelations, no special godmen, no special books—but it cherishes a growing body of knowledge about man [sic] and the Universe, and for its inspiration it draws freely from the totality of human experience.

Bobbie was, as she put it, "de facto administrator." She wrote the Religious Education column for the *Newsletter*. Also, she tried out the art and music projects at home each week. "I would have my kids try it out to see if kids that age could do it." Joe spoke at Board meetings, Annual Meetings, and provided audio-visual planning and technical support. He also taught a class, and took care of the physical arrangements, audio-visual equipment and the like. In his view the hardest part of being a DRE was:

Recruiting teachers was always a difficult thing. Especially recruiting good teachers. . . [W]e had a lot of people willing, but not necessarily capable ones, who would come and want to give college level lectures to 4th graders. . . . It was hard to get the right people, and we often succeeded, but sometimes didn't. And we had many with great qualifications. There was one Sunday, I think, in the church school where almost every teacher had a doctoral degree. That didn't necessarily make them good teachers.

Teen-agers often helped teach the youngest children. In 1968-69 LRY member Christine Armstrong (now Hamann) had Katy Handley and Dag Patton among her



Religious Education class, early 1970s. Left to right: Jane Chandler, Gail Post, Jack Lindsay, and Joe Moore.

charges. The *Newsletter* reported that Christine worked with the 4-year-olds in November with Muriel Fielding; Judy Archibald taught 4-year-olds in March, with Chris Armstrong and Yolanda Bistany as helpers.

Chris Tchinnis, Linc Schulze, Ernie Charvat and Gunnar Berg took care of the projection and sound systems.

The events of the spring of 1969 featured a seder led by Al Siegler, attended by 100 people, half of them children; and an Easter Egg Hunt at the Crane's, with about 50 children searching for eggs the junior high class had hidden earlier. What a way to culminate the 15 week unit on Judaism! Janet Webster reminisced:

We had a few [Easter egg hunts] at our place on Crest Road, when Suzy [their dog] upset the apple cart by getting out of the house and finding the eggs—real eggs—. She found a great many of them and got very sick. But apart from that, the kids always enjoyed this and it always entailed a big table with a food spread.

In 1968-69, the focus of Patton's revised curriculum was pre-history, the earliest members of the human race. Bill Nicholson visited, showing his collection of African masks and sculptures to grades three through nine.

In January, 1969, the Religious Education Committee evaluated the Sunday School and found that the pre-school and kindergarten had "realistic curriculum which the teachers can follow," but the Patton revolving curriculum on religions of the world was "too ambitious for skills of teachers and for 30-minutes, 40 times per year." The teachers tended to lecture too much, or allow art work to occupy too much lesson time. The report ended on a positive note:

[The] principal value of this Sunday School as an instrument for religious education is that the medium is the message. Kids are not learning the content of lessons, but are learning that Unitarianism is not a dogmatic religion, and that it is concerned with mankind through study of the religions and cultures of the world.

Bobbie Moore, looking through the curriculum file folder years later, recalled that as DRE, she had to find substitute teachers for classes when a regular teacher was ill or out

of town. She often called on John Handley, who had generously offered to act as a permanent substitute, even at the last minute:

I'd meet him in the classroom on Sunday morning with all the papers, art materials, etc., and tell him just what the lesson was to be. And he would come with a can of green paint and a roll of kraft paper, and unroll it on the floor. He had the kids step barefoot in a basin of paint and run along the kraft paper, and then tape it up on the wall as a mural!

[John had] another way of teaching the same things we all were aiming for: besides whatever of the regular curriculum John was able to include in the hour, he also was teaching creativity and cooperation, and that going to Sunday school can be pleasant, comfortable, relaxed, and fun, and that UU adults are friendly, enthusiastic people who like kids.

Bobbie Moore recalled that the most memorable project of those years was the archeological dig, with church school parents and professional archeologists Ralph and Rose Solecki.

Ralph Solecki was active in saving the Abu Simbel in Egypt and Rose was an archeological researcher.

What Ralph did the first week was come with a bag of hard candy and told each child that at a real dig of this kind all would be taking malaria medicine, so the candy was the malaria medicine.

Sy Friedman, too, recalled Solecki's imaginative dig:

[He was] the guy who found the bones of the Neanderthal in Iraq. . . . Kurds were shooting it up with the Iraqis, and Solecki couldn't go back [to Iraq].

[When] he was one of the teachers at the Sunday School, the fathers brought in cinder blocks, and built a three-foot-high wall in a room (the Peace Room at Reeb House) about 4-5 feet away from the wall. And behind that two to three feet of earth into which Solecki put dirt and artifacts. The class dug the dirt up, they used screens, and had an archeological dig.

Hidden in the dirt were bits and pieces of "ancient" origin: pottery, amulets. The children discovered them and dusted them off carefully with soft brushes and recorded their finds accurately. Moore described the details:

We built a ten layer dig in which we buried ten layers of artifacts of civilizations and then over a ten week period had the kids excavate one layer a week.

We had Linda Friedman doing cave paintings to be buried there. We had Helene Ganza making clay artifacts and Ralph supervised all of this to verify the authenticity of it. The Code of Hammurabi was one of the clay things on one level.

And finally about the last layer, the most recent layer, Ralph said, "This isn't authentic because when the tourists come the first thing they see is cigarette butts." So someone went out to a car and got enough butts to toss on the dig.

It did take . . . about a week to build, but we had all the materials ready, and Ralph supervised it. Everyone pitched in. It got undone a week at a time, so the children learned the history of each layer as we took it down. It was a wonderful teaching tool.

Valerie Moore recalls with pleasure her childhood at the Unitarian Society, and the Sunday morning art experiences. At an early age, she had a sure feeling for what

Unitarian Universalists value. To devise a symbol of Unitarian Universalism, she constructed from clay a tray, a coffee pot, and coffee cups, as the Unitarian symbol of communion. From her child's eye view, she identified Ruland Anderson as "the boss of the coffee hour." Her teachers were Peter and Christine Tilgner. (Peter Tilgner, an art teacher in the Ridgewood schools, showed his art work twice at the Cottage Place Gallery.) Both were wonderful "instigators" of the children's work. It is unlikely, however, that they instigated another of Valerie Moore's projects: painting, with her friend Darby Charvat, a Kilroy on the classroom ceiling.

The Moore and Charvat artistic partnership may have been one of the stimuli inspiring 1973-75 DRE Dorothy Neff and artist Linda Friedman to redecorate Reeb House. The fresh new look was bright and homey.

When the Moores resigned after three years, Mary Brett directed the Grade 1 to 9 program in 1971-72 and Brietta Savoie continued in charge of the pre-school. Funding shrank, and they received only \$250 for their work. (\$1000-\$1500 was the usual compensation most years, from 1962-1976.) In the early 1970s, the Patton curriculum was again reformed, with each lesson a self-contained unit.

The practical difficulties of Patton's curriculum were overwhelming, and it was beginning to crumble. Twenty years later, Ken Patton told Delight Dodyk that newer parent-teachers didn't understand the concept, and "just wanted the Beacon Press curriculum."

In 1972-73 Diane Ringstad chaired the 8-person Religious Education Committee and at the same time worked as DRE, while Brietta Savoie stayed on with the pre-school. Both women worked without compensation.

When Zulema Weinschenk became Religious Education Committee chair in 1973-74 the Society tried having three DREs: Brietta Savoie with the pre-school, Dorothy Neff with grades 1-6, and Spencer Leighton with the junior high.

For 1974-75, the Religious Education Committee replaced the triumvirate of DREs with two "co-administrators," Bea Robbins and Dorothy Neff, for grades 1 through 8. Brietta Savoie stayed as pre-school DRE.

Responsibilities of the head of the Religious Education program seemingly remained the same, whether designated Superintendent, Director or Administrator, although possibly the title "Administrator" suggested less responsibility for curriculum design, teacher training, and policy.

When Robbins and Neff were unable to continue another year as administrators, Joe Moore, who had become President of the Society, persuaded Gail (now Gaia) Brown to become DRE in 1975-76 for grades 1-8, with Brietta Savoie to remain as pre-school Director. Joe Moore later stated:

I always felt that getting Gaia involved was the most important appointment I ever made. . . She was still finishing her master's degree and student teaching in Ramsey. So she had teacher training, a big asset. She was just a great person to do that job.

The Religious Education Committee had frequent changes of chair until Frank Schattschneider accepted the responsibility from 1974 to 1980. Famous for his red socks and his terrible puns, he is also remembered for having inaugurated two traditions in

1975: “May Madness” and “Happy New Year!” May Madness, begun by Vera Knapp, is an imaginative way to cope with children in the spring when formal lessons are difficult and a break from the year-long curriculum is welcome. The *Newsletter* announcement (April 14, 1975) reads:

From Reeb House, Grades 1-9:

“MAY MADNESS!” announces the R. E. Committee. What is it? An opportunity for our church school children to choose ungraded workshops in chess, softball, poster painting, embroider-you-own-shirt, & other activities. Scheduled for the 4 Sundays in May, these workshops will be led by talented adults of our congregation. Vera Knapp, coordinating the enterprise, says: WATCH FOR FORM for your child to check his/her workshop choice.
— Frank Schattschneider

May Madness is still practiced in 1996.

Schattschneider’s “Happy New Year, or How to Stay Fit by Exorcising” started on New Year’s Day in 1975 and involved children and adults in story, song, dance, and most especially, a ritual fireplace conflagration to incinerate all the bad events and regrets of the preceding year.

In 1974, the course called *About Your Sexuality* (AYS), published by the UUA Department of Education, came to Ridgewood, and Naomi and Conrad Yanis were the first to teach it. All who lead sessions take a training course before venturing into discussions of these delicate matters with early adolescents. AYS has become a permanent part of the curriculum.

Other curricula used by the Sunday school in the mid-1970s were *The Haunting House*, *Man the Meaning Maker*, *Decision Making*, and *Person to Person*.

As DRE, Brown established the family services for children and adults in spite of Ken Patton’s resistance. All age groups, she felt, should have some Sunday mornings when they interact. She saw religious education as the responsibility of everyone in the congregation, not just the parents. “If we see our Society as an extended family, then we must realize that all the children belong to all of us.”

Adult religious education began in 1977 with a Sunday evening discussion series, organized by Joe Moore and led by various Society members, on *Why Do Bad Things Happen?*—a review of various religions’ approach to the problem of evil. The topics were the same as those in the children’s course of study with the same title.

Other adult courses offered: *A Short Short History of Unitarianism*, *Guidelines for Exploring the Bible*, and *Parents (and Non-Parents) as Resident Theologians*, which, still offered in 1996, helps puzzled parents ponder how to discuss religion with their children, in keeping with the principle of freedom of thought.

By early 1978, Brown submitted her resignation, to be effective in June, agreeing to continue as a member of the Religious Education Committee. Perhaps as a consequence, the Religious Education Committee then met to define the duties of the DRE and of the Religious Education Committee itself, a process intended to give clear guidelines to all. Frank Schattschneider, chair of the Religious Education Committee (1974-80), wanted the new DRE, Barbara Bonazzi (now Barry), to “have defined support as she undertakes the director’s job.”

Bonazzi reported that the themes for the year's curriculum would be comparative religion, Judeo-Christian heritage, Unitarian Universalism, self-realization, and social concerns, all to be addressed in the following courses:

- Gr. 1-2 —The Haunting House (*No, this is not a Halloween story; it is a UUA curriculum based on the meaning of home, with all kinds of creatures having homes – snails, raccoons, human beings. The thought and feeling of home is always with a person even if s/he is away . . .*)
- Gr. 3-4 —Why Do Bad Things Happen? (*A consideration of the problem of good and evil.*)
- Gr. 5-6 —U.U.'s and You! (*UU history and principles.*)
- Gr. 7-8 —RUAUU2? (*Members of the congregation share their religious beliefs with the children.*)

The last two courses were designed by Gaia Brown.

The March 4, 1979 Newsletter gives a glimpse of the curriculum at work: the pre-school heard Herman the Helper; a story about homes called “Donkey Skin” for 1st and 2nd grades; the Prometheus story and the Ten Commandments gave 3rd and 4th graders a chance to consider sin and punishment; 5th and 6th graders celebrated Mardi Gras with a pancake breakfast and learned about the Christian season of Lent; and the junior high age youths discussed the life cycle, and how each age differs in physical characteristics, behavior, duties, and responsibilities. The advertised coming attraction: A film called *Buddha: Man and Nature*.

At the Annual Meeting in May, 1979 (see the chapter *Proactive Youths, 1917-1987*), the Society amended the constitution to remove the age limit on membership, making it possible for children and youth to join as fully responsible members of the Society. For youth to take a visible and helpful part in the Society's activities, junior assistants became directly involved in Sunday morning programs in the spring of 1980. Young people helped with the Sunday service by greeting at the door and passing the collection basket. They helped the Building and Grounds committee by pulling weeds, pruning shrubs, and wielding paint brushes. They assisted the teachers in the pre-school and first grade classes.

At the beginning of Bonazzi's second year as DRE (fall 1979), Schattschneider and the two directors, Bonazzi and Carol Patterson (then in charge of the pre-school), sent a letter to all parents. The gist of it: No teachers had stepped forward for the classes of 5th through 8th grades. If no one volunteered, there would be no such classes. The letter laid no blame—in increasing numbers of families, both parents held outside-the-home jobs, for instance—but there it was: *no staff, no class*.

The letter was effective—teachers turned up.

Schattschneider was desperate again by the end of that year. Barbara Bonazzi could not continue, and he could find no one to accept the director's place for the following year. “It is difficult to obtain and retain staff,” he reported to the trustees. “This may affect continuance of the church school.” A luncheon meeting of the Religious Education Committee considered whether a professional Director of Religious Education (DRE) was needed. The “roles and relationships between Board, Religious

Education Committee, & DRE need to be clarified,” they reported to the Board of Trustees at their next meeting, March 9, 1980.

The same need for definition had been seen two years earlier, and would reappear in 1982.

In April, Gaia Brown agreed to return. She had been DRE 1975-78. This time (1980-81), Margaret Utzinger would take care of the pre-school. The Religious Education Committee was enlarged to 12, with eight “areas of concern”: family services, adult programs, hospitality, curriculum, budget, denominational affairs, nursery care, and maintenance. Brown and the Religious Education Committee managed to recruit 17 teachers for 1980-81.

Frank Schattschneider left the leadership of the Religious Education Committee, but remained a teacher and member, while Barbara Bonazzi, Vera Knapp, and Pam Rogers each served as chair for one or more years between 1981 and 1987.

The junior high trip to Boston was inaugurated in 1981, to visit the Unitarian Universalist headquarters, the Arlington Street church, the First Parish church in Concord, and other historic sites. This trip remains a permanent part of the curriculum, held in alternate years for the grade 7 through 9 group.

The junior high also, in 1980-81, collected oral history interviews with many Society members about their lives and why they are Unitarian Universalists.

By 1981-82, pre-school enrollment had shrunk, as in the general population, and the need for a separate director for pre-school no longer existed. Brown, as DRE, absorbed this responsibility.

In April, 1982, the Board of Trustees revised the guidelines for the Religious Education Committee, and produced a job description for DRE. The document lists in excruciating detail the responsibilities of the DRE and of the Religious Education Committee, including a plan for regularly scheduled assessments of the DRE’s performance.

By 1983, enrollment was at a post-war low: only 60. (In 1995 enrollment was up to 105.) Activities and Sunday services at the Society were not attracting young families with children. Kenneth Patton’s approaching retirement was not the best time for growth in membership.

The children, however, were celebrating life with exuberance. At the Spring Festival in 1982, they released “messages to the world by way of spring-colored balloons!”

From a write-up by Nancy Petrie in the Newsletter, April 18, 1982:

FLASH! BALLOON FANTASY FULFILLED!

It wasn’t Winnie the Pooh, but the Burns family message that was carried “up, up & away” on Sunday & made a soft landing at 8 pm on a rooftop 30 miles north of Boston on the New Hampshire border. Gerald Glidden retrieved it & took it another step – to the Lawrence Eagle-Tribune, whose reporter called the church & then the Burnses. Their message: “Have hope. Enjoy. No nuclear war. We are all one. I got a new friend today, I hope you did too. Save the alligators.” What a story! Unitarianism & spring & all that!

The fall fair, or Uncommon Market, was a particular delight for the children partly because of the “Kidway,” a vital ingredient. The humorous games, instant craft projects,

and spook house disappeared when the Uncommon Market changed its focus to a food festival, the Gourmanderie. The kids missed the Kidway. In response to their loss, Brown created “Mayfair” in 1986. Every spring since, on one day following the Sunday service, everyone gathers in Reeb’s spacious woodsy yard and enjoys face-painting, throwing a sponge at a target (someone’s face), eating hotdogs, and disporting themselves in other ways.

“Hotel Reeb” too became an annual event: a sleep-over/stay-awake-over for children and adults, with music, games, and Sunday morning breakfast together.

The children had social concerns, too. They reviewed several projects and chose Heifer Project International, at the time raising money to buy a goat for a needy family in Egypt. The kid she bore was then to be given to still another family. The children supported this project for several years.

The Task Force Against Growing Militarism was active when Brown reported a strong emphasis on peace education. She said the Society Against Nuclear Energy (SANE) had requested “that Reeb House be dedicated as a Peace Site.” The Board agreed, and in January, 1984 the site was dedicated, after four weeks of peace education for the pre-school through junior high classes. A plaque declaring the building a Peace Site is located on the outside front wall, just to the right of the front door.

In 1984-85 member Les Garnas, who once had been training for the priesthood, taught a new curriculum on ethics, with Dave Cooper, to the junior high class. DRE Brown continued to plan and carry out adult religious education; in 1984-85, 35 enrolled in a six-session series on *Making Sense to Ourselves*, in which the principles of Unitarianism were central to discussion.

That year Sunday school enrollment increased from 57 to 67.

In 1986-87 Brown devised a *Peace Curriculum*, and led a special service on peace in February with the assistance of the Senior Seminar, the senior high age group.

About 1988, Les Garnas arranged a telephone interview for his class with Dr. Linus Pauling (1901-1994), winner of two Nobel prizes—the first for his work in chemistry in 1954, and later the Peace Prize in 1962 for his support of disarmament. The young people were interested in Pauling’s finding that Vitamin C was a nutritional element powerful in the prevention and treatment of many illnesses, and that it was opposed by some within the medical establishment. Some excerpts from that interview:

Katherine Brown:

What gave you the courage to keep going when faced with skepticism from the medical community and the government on things that were important to you?

Pauling:

If there’s some medical advance usually it takes quite a while, 10 years perhaps, before the medical profession accepts things [P]hysicians in general are not able to follow the publications, papers and books describing new methods, because they are too busy taking care of their patients. I think that is a good thing. I criticize the medical authorities at being slow to accept new ideas.

Jennifer Schneider:

What went through your mind when you accepted the Nobel Peace Prize?

Pauling:

I was quite pleased at this recognition . . . because it means that what I have been doing to help people to understand the dangers from nuclear war, and the radioactive fallout causing damage to human beings, including unborn human beings That it is respectable to work for the world's peace.

Anne Meyers:

What do you see about the world today that's different from when you were a teen-ager?

Pauling:

There have been tremendous advances in the field of science.

[Now] the development of nuclear weapons . . . could lead to the destruction of civilization. We just have to give up war between the great nations.

Todd Cotten:

What one piece of advice would you like to pass on to teen-agers like us that comes from your experience?

Pauling:

First, to find what you like doing best, and to find a way of making a living by doing it.

By 1987, Brown had completed her fifth and last module of the UUA Renaissance program for DREs, gaining Renaissance Recognition from the UUA. This increased her desirability for a congregation seeking a DRE, which would find her name on the UUA list of those with this basic education for DREs.

Enrollment had increased again, to 80.

Although she was an example of Linus Pauling's ideal (one whose work was what she liked doing best), Gaia Brown resigned her post as DRE at the end of the 1986-87 year after a dispute with the Board of Trustees concerning salary. In terms of 1987 dollars, her \$7,700 was more than three times the \$1,200 she had received in 1975 (inflated to the equivalent of \$2,400 in the 12 years.) Yet, \$7,700 was less than one-half the salary of a beginning public school teacher, the amount she requested.

Friction was inevitable under the circumstances. Brown was better qualified than before on two accounts: her achievement of Renaissance Recognition, and her years of experience. Nationally, the style of leadership in religious education programs had been evolving from unpaid and often untrained volunteers, toward salaried DREs with professional qualifications.

The slow shift of custom from no monetary compensation, to offering a volunteer Superintendent a token of thanks, and finally to paying a professional DRE a salary comparable to what could earned elsewhere, is still in process. In 1995, the UUA established salary guidelines that this Society plans to approach in graduated increments spread over several years.

Jo Ellen Willis, who served next from 1987 to 1989, had the handicap of being new to the congregation, which made it even harder for her to recruit teachers than it had been for earlier DREs. When she discovered she really wanted to become a parish minister, she left the Ridgewood Society to enroll at Drew University to prepare for the



Religious Education class, circa 1989. Clockwise from lower left: Jessica Leto, Thomas Sanchez, Jonah Flateman, Tim Cole, Adam Katzman, Owen Uscher, Elizabeth Ames, and Betty Velonis

Unitarian ministry. Willis is now (1995-96) minister of the Little Rock, Arkansas, Unitarian Universalist Church.

Member Evelyn Schneider took up the leadership of the religious education program on very short notice in March of 1989. She began the “Secret Pal” program, still an annual event (1995), in which an adult communicates with a child by mail with notes or little gifts, the child not knowing who the “secret pal” is. A party celebrates the day of revelation. Schneider brought adults and children together at an annual square dance party for all ages, and devised a parent-aide program to involve non-teacher parents in the children’s classes. She also planned monthly family services at 10:30 a.m., and started the audiotaping of Sunday services, still carried out by Beth Sherman, to give teachers an opportunity to listen to the adult service.

Regularly scheduled periodic assessments of the DRE’s work had been listed in the guidelines 11 years before, but had not in fact become a routine occurrence. In early 1993 when Schneider’s work was evaluated serious differences emerged. The DRE job description approved by the Board of Trustees differed from what had seemed to Schneider implicit in what was expected of her. Mediation failed, and she resigned. To prevent such misunderstandings in the future, a DRE Relations Committee has since been created.

During her tenure in Ridgewood, Evelyn Schneider began trials of a new curriculum of her own devising, *Celebrating Freedom*, teaching Unitarian Universalist positive values by means of symbols. After refining this curriculum at her new post in the New Brunswick, New Jersey, Unitarian Church, Schneider received the 1995 Unitarian Sunday School Society Religious Education Award for Children’s Worship.

Debra Hoagland filled in very competently as interim Administrator in 1993-94.

The present DRE, Ruth Uscher, previously chaired the Religious Education Committee and took on the task of restructuring it so that each member of the Religious

Education Committee now has specific duties. Joe Harris at present (1996) serves as chair. Uscher's philosophy of education is well stated in her January, 1995 *R. E. Views* newsletter:

We are not trying to teach what to think; we are trying to teach how to think. We are not trying to teach what to be; we are trying to teach how to be. . .

As for notebooks and textbooks, they make up only one third of the curriculum, she said.

Another third is the implicit curriculum. It includes everything in our life as a community: how children are greeted. . . , the design and cleanliness of the room, the attitude of the teachers and parents, how decisions, big and small are made, how we spend our money and much more.

The final third is the "null curriculum," which asks "Do we know what we are missing?"

Ruth Uscher has increased the number of Sunday morning services in which the children join the adults in the main building, and she especially seeks ways to help adults and children get to know each other.

She suggests that to judge the success of the religious education program, one should look at the lives of its graduates. One example of the many that could be named is John Lindsay-Poland, whose humanitarian activities in Central America are described in *Love Made Manifest*, the social responsibility chapter.

Another is Jaco ten Hove, who recalls being a valued participant in the Unitarian community when he was about 12. At a fall fair, Jaco was put in charge of a table full of tools for sale. Carefully arranging the tools in an orderly way, he took care of customers, learning that he was a trusted and competent member of the community. Jaco is now a Unitarian Universalist minister in Edmonton, Washington.

In 1994-95, Ruth Uscher and the Religious Education Committee composed a mission statement:

We are a participant community of all ages that promotes the lifelong exploration of religious and ethical values and that helps us lead lives grounded in those values.

In 1995-96, with enrollment over 100, Uscher and the Religious Education Committee set forth these Goals of the Religious Education Program:

1. To nurture each child's development as a religious person within the context of a caring, intergenerational community.
2. To foster each child's pride in our Unitarian Universalist heritage and in our Society's first 100 years.
3. To give each child at least one opportunity to be of service to the wider community.

In 1992 Betty Velonis assessed her long involvement:

Once we were asked what were the most important things in the Unitarian Society, and my spiel concluded that the most important thing I got out of it was my experience with religious education.

The Society's dedicated and caring religious education workers believe that the religious education program is not merely a child-care adjunct to the adult program, but rather an essential investment in the future of the Society and in the future of the world. The children are the joy and care of the whole congregation.

PROACTIVE YOUTHS

The first reference to youths of the Unitarian Society is found in the Women's Alliance Secretary's Book for 1917-27. In April of 1926, the Alliance agreed to pay the expenses of a "young person" for a week at Star Island. A year later, the youths organized a dance to help defray these expenses, and the Alliance planned to make up the difference, if the dance did not produce enough funds.

There may have been a youth group which met regularly in the 1920s, but the first one on record was established in 1932. Under Rev. Milton Muder's leadership, the Society's Unity Club was for high school seniors, young people attending nearby colleges, "and a considerable number whose college ambitions have been thwarted by present economic conditions. The main objective of the Club is to help young people to find ways and means of adapting themselves most wisely to present disappointing conditions, and to help them to consider carefully their relationship and responsibility to the world of the future."

From 40 to 60 attended the semi-monthly meetings; for comparison, the Sunday morning services were attended by only 20 or 30 people. The Unity Club held dances, discussions and picnics; performed one-act plays under the name "Unity Players;" and invited outside speakers on social welfare and cultural topics. On April 24, 1933, "the Reverend Louis Berry, Rector of St. Phillip's Church (colored) of Newark, spoke on 'Race and Progress.'" In March, 1937, members debated an important topic: "Resolved: That Government supported Socialized Medicine is Desirable." Carol Mathews and Abe Black will uphold the affirmative and Evelyn Many and Adolph Plesch will defend the negative," the *Free Church Newsletter* announced.

The Open Guild was the high school age youth group, meeting twice a month on Wednesday evenings, and open to all "regardless of denominational affiliation." Both the Unity Club and the Open Guild were part of the Young People's Religious Union (YPRU), founded nationally in 1896 by the American Unitarian Association (AUA).

A junior-high age youth group was part of the Lend-A-Hand Society headquartered in Boston and founded by Unitarian minister Rev. Dr. Edward Everett Hale. It met alternate Friday evenings, and specialized in social service activities such as giving books to libraries in "neglected communities," and supplying missionary Dr. Wilfred Grenfell's medicine chest. Muder's *Free Church News Letter* announced a "junior church" with young people as officers, in 1936. A decade later, Janet Webster organized "junior members."

No records have been discovered of youth activities in the 1940s, but in 1950 the group was called "Ridgewood Unitarian Guild," a section of the American Unitarian

Youth. In 1953, when the Unitarian and Universalist youth groups merged, Liberal Religious Youth (LRY) was chosen as its name. And finally, in 1982, Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU) was born, the latest youth reorganization on the national level.

In the 1950s, the youth group debated eternally interesting questions: "Should I Go to Church or Sunday School or Why Have a Religion" (April, 1953. Jeanette Olson, advisor; Stephen Vibber, president.) With a card party, they raised \$75 for the benefit of the Society. Two years later, Olson's daughter, Karen, was president of the newly formed LRY.

By 1957, the LRY had become largely self-sustaining, assuming responsibility for conducting an occasional coffee hour for the Society and raising its own funds to send LRY members to Star Island during the last week of June each year. The October 1959, *Newsletter* noted that LRYers regularly transported members' donations to the Thrift Shop, and that two young people were assisting with Sunday school classes.

An especially transforming experience was reported by Philip Velonis at the 1960 Annual Meeting of the Society: LRY members spent five days in Harlem at a seminar of the American Friends Service Committee. The experience of living in a racially integrated tenement building was unforgettable.

At LRY meetings, the young people discussed philosophy, foreign policy, government, and socialism, and participated in a program with adults in the Laymen's League and the Evening Alliance. One Sunday, April 12, 1964, the youth taught all the Sunday school classes grades 4-12 so that the teachers could hear ministerial candidate Kenneth Patton.

By 1963, LRY reported 30 members. Their advisors were Mr. and Mrs. John Kiely, of Montclair. Bill Rosenquest and George Wolfe helped the group in 1965-66, followed by Elaine and Russ Higgins during 1966-67. When Jean ten Hove relinquished her position as advisor in the fall of 1968, Betty and Tony Velonis took over.

In 1965-66, the LRY discussed the Kitty Genovese case, and the Vietnam war. They defined a "moral man" [sic], and read the poetry of Dylan Thomas. The high point of the year was an all-day conference of the Jersey Area Federation (JAF) of the LRY, the first such conference held in Ridgewood.

Janet Webster said:

LRY attracted a few non-Unitarians . . . from Ridgewood High School. . . They discussed the great moral issues: What is a lie? When is a lie? What kind of respect do parents deserve? Why should young people submit to any authority? Those questions were all alive then, as now.

Jac (now Jaco) B. ten Hove was elected president, Dave "Tode" Oshin treasurer, and Gay Holstein corresponding secretary, of JAF-LRY in 1968.

Their lay Sunday service for the closing of the 1967-68 year, on the theme, "Don't Let It Bother You," was an examination of estrangement as set to words, music, and dance by LRY members. Theirs was a generation that grew up with ideals dashed by the Vietnam war and the everyday injustices around them. As if denying ideas of alienation, LRY member Mike Franklin coordinated efforts to help paint the remodeled church building, and to assist at the 1968 fall fair.

When Jean ten Hove and Tony and Betty Velonis were advisors, the group grew to 35 members, not all from Unitarian homes.

A 1969 Jersey Area Federation newsletter noted that LRY purposes seek:

- to unite liberal religious youth
- to build understanding and cooperation between youth and adults in the liberal religious movement
- to provide for the effective implementation of these purposes through local and regional organizations and activities
- to help individual young people grow in: dealing creatively and imaginatively with religion as the most exalted quality and spirit of living; nurturing the distinctively liberal tradition and responsibility of belief, the free and questioning mind, the use of reason and the scientific method in religion, and respect for the individual integrity and dignity of every man [sic]; achieving a responsible and durable personal faith through personal and group experiences of learning, service and worship; understanding and practicing the privileges and responsibilities of the democratic spirit and method; becoming creative and realistic contributors to the achievement of a just, peaceful, and united world community.

The newsletter was written by “jac b. ten hove.” Both critical and supportive of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and of what the UUA could become, he saw that young people are essential to Unitarian Universalism’s strength.

. . . some of us do not want our parent [the UUA] to wither away and/or become a relic. we are intrigued at the possibility of having a real people’s church, rather than the social person’s church that it seems to be now. . . .

we are the spokesmen [sic] of tomorrow. our vision for what liberal religion can be is our primary contribution to the movement. within lry many potentialities have been explored that the church has ignored. feelings about fellowship among us must be related to the church, so we can begin to warm the cold pews.

These were ten Hove’s reactions to an LRY-Adult Colloquium at a New York Metropolitan District meeting, the first time youth representatives had been invited to attend the adult District meeting. His humorously sincere conclusion:

with an eye to the future we can, together,
build a movement that lives up to our platitudes.

And, more seriously,

i stand with you as i
hope you stand with me
jac b. ten hove

Perhaps he sensed that he was already headed toward what would later become his life’s work, the Unitarian Universalist ministry.

Conferences of the JAF-LRYs were always the high point of the year. There were 120 JAF participants in 1969; the theme was “Life and Its Alternative.” Christine Armstrong Hamann recalls she portrayed. . .

an old lady with the shawl that I still have (which I still get compliments on . . . purplish-red, with flowers—yellow—that’s falling apart). Phil Kilbourne was the corpse, complete

with coffin, and Mary Sue Moses was in the Toddler's room . . . sucking thumbs and all, wearing diapers.

In the *Newsletter*, the LRY thanked many adults for their help, but most especially “our amazing and adventurous advisors Tony and Betty Velonis.”

The February, 1969, LRY Sunday service had as its focus “empathy.” A series of readings and music were performed by “kenny timmerman, jac b ten hove, bruce macalister, ed kilbourne, michael franklin, claire petrie, becky armstrong, judy ten hove, byron gardiner, and chris armstrong.” The responsive reading was a dialogue between Youth and Adult, in which Youth expressed disapproval of Adult fixation on money.

It was about this time that Jaco ten Hove, as president of both JAF and LRY, published *The Mag*—a 40-page mimeographed booklet of creative writing by JAF-LRY members, including poems by Ridgewood Unitarian Society youths Elgie Holstein, Sean Bruner, and Marcia Hulley.

In 1969-71, under the Velonises' sponsorship, 41 youth were enrolled. Fourteen were children of members and friends of the Unitarian Society. Some of the LRYers did not live in the local area, but came to Ridgewood from as far as New York City. At the same time, some Ridgewood area parents felt that their children were left out. Clarifications of the purpose of LRY and the role of the advisor were in order.

Adults Janet Webster, Al Siegler, Betty and Tony Velonis, and youths Jac ten Hove and Gay Holstein worked as a committee to set up guidelines for the LRY and its relations with adults, resulting in a Ridgewood area youth-adult colloquium in May of 1969. This gathering was an opportunity for discussion of smoking, of marijuana, of sexual behavior, and of housekeeping at conferences. At the next all-night conference there were more chaperons, and the building was left spotless for the Sunday morning service.

A junior LRY was organized (1969-70) with Elaine Battles advising. Later, the advisor for a junior group was Paul Bonazzi (1977).

The few records available for the years 1969-1975 give no indication of how the guidelines adopted in 1969 changed the make-up of LRY membership, but changes obviously came about. In 1975, at a joint conference with the Paramus LRY, the two groups decided to merge. Bernie and Marcia Spitz, advisors, said that the group had “grown immensely to 15 or 20 attending regularly.”

In March of that year, the group went to the Berkshires for maple-sugaring at Leila and Matthew Lawrence's home. The LRY's May 17th, 1975, crafts fair sold a variety of artwork and crafts and included a bake sale. Jonathan Spitz provided music, playing his cello.

Steve Gradman held a poetry workshop at the LRY Memorial Day weekend conference. One result was the following *Community Poem*, put together by the group:

On this warm afternoon
Everything is insecurity of me.
Feelings - unexpressed - lie down deep
deep in the prison of a confused mind.
I look at the darkness and stillness inside
where I see peace, yet so hard to find,

difficult to grasp, and hard to keep hold of
 But afterwards, it was worth it.
 I'm not sure I'll do it again;
 But I must feel, touch, and grasp for more
 than I can reach.

January 1976 found the LRY at an overnight campout at Camp Yaw Paw in a heated cabin. "It's not a retreat – it's an advancement in human relations," quoth the Spitzes, "So come on – Let's Advance Humanity!"

1976: a garage sale at the Scanlan's nearby home, a Halloween party, and a bake sale. The conference had a medieval theme, a rousing success.

The LRY with the Committee on Aging sponsored a concert version of the musical *I Do! I Do* for a Sunday morning service, March 13, 1977.

The youth of the Society suffered, as did all the members and friends, when, during the summer of 1977, Jean ten Hove died. She had been caring, wise, and forceful in her nurturing of youth. The young people who frequented her house called her "Mom." Her youngest child, son Jay, was at that time an LRY member.

Jean had been active in the Ridgewood community, a ground floor organizer of Summer Evening Workshops which later bloomed into the all-year-round Ridgewood Community School. She had been among the chief instigators of voluntary recycling of waste.

In the Unitarian Society, Jean ten Hove had served on the Board of Trustees, had done her stint as editor of the *Newsletter*, was advisor to the LRY, and counseled youth with love and wisdom. Tall, with a voice one could not ignore, Jean ten Hove was a force of nature. At her memorial service, her own words, first spoken at Star Island in 1971, were repeated:

I would leave you only these words from my heart:

Listen to what is said, by friends & lovers alike, so that you may hear what is not said, for what is not said is often where true need lies.

Hear what is not said, so you may know where true need lies.

Know what is needed of you so that you may love, not just another but many others and so that someday your need may be recognized.

Love, so that you may survive.

When Barbara Bonazzi (now Barry) and Judy ten Hove (now Engelken) were advisors, the group proposed that a youth representative should be part of the Board of Trustees. When Betty Velonis and Naomi Yanis presented this constitutional amendment to the congregation at the 1977 Annual Meeting, the motion passed unanimously, and Lori Yanis became the first youth representative.

Among the Ridgewood LRY's programs, 1977-78, were two meetings on disarmament, one of them with a speaker from the United Nations.

In February 1978, LRY member Jennifer Brett signed the membership book.

On May 12, 1978 at the Annual Meeting of the Unitarian Society, the LRY youths proposed constitutional amendments to eliminate the age requirement (16 years) for

membership, increase the Board of Trustees from eight to nine members, eliminate the youth representative, and add a youth trustee equal to the adults in power. These amendments were voted down.

Immediately after the Meeting, Phebe Dodyk on May 14 and Kate Brett on June 4 signed the membership book.

Next, at the UU General Assembly in June 1978 over 100 youth from across the nation formed a Youth Caucus, asking for more participation by youth in the Unitarian Universalist denomination, youth representatives on local Boards and more inter-generational activities. They asked for full voting membership for persons of any age who choose to become members, and for funding “sufficient to meet their legitimate needs and in fair proportion to the importance of young people to the denomination.”

The Caucus asked full participation in the UUA and its affiliates, and passed social action resolutions affirming that a Living Will should be legally binding, and affirming a woman’s right to choose abortion.

In September 1978, Lori Yanis signed the membership book, but she had not yet reached the required age of 16, and her membership was turned down. Secretary of the Board of Trustees Fred Burns wrote a very kind letter to her (October, 1978):

[I]t is my unhappy duty as secretary to inform you that the byelaws [sic] of the Society do not currently permit full membership for individuals under the age of 16. . . .

The trustees at that time were concentrating on their most urgent business, establishment of a ministerial liaison committee to cope with the difficult relations between Patton and the congregation.

When Jennifer Brett was elected Continental LRY Social Action Director in November 1978, she resigned as youth representative to the Board of Trustees to travel the U.S. helping LRY groups nationwide develop social action projects. Phebe Dodyk replaced Brett as Ridgewood’s youth representative.

The Ridgewood LRY, in the spirit of the times, continued their campaign for constitutional changes, and in May of 1979 the two amendments, after heated discussion by those members present, passed with a two-thirds vote. Jennifer Brett became the first Youth Trustee, in 1979-80.

Very soon, the LRY had submitted a draft of rules for LRY Conferences held at the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood; the rules prohibited drugs, alcohol, fire arms, fireworks, and smoking in the building. Other reasonable rules of housekeeping were on the list, and a promise of at least two adult advisors present at all times. These specific rules may have been necessary, as easily can be imagined when groups of 100 or more adolescents spend two or three days at a conference, sleeping on the floor of the Society’s main building.

Also in the spring of 1979, a coffeehouse featuring a Jug Band with Wayne Armstrong playing the washtub bass, raised over \$100 to send youth delegates Jennifer Brett and Laurie (formerly Lori) Yanis to the UUA General Assembly, where the relations between the LRY and the UUA would be under discussion.

Phebe Dodyk said, in 1980, “[Ours is] the strongest local [LRY] in the metro-district area.” The young people made a schedule for participation in several adult responsi-

bilities: building and grounds upkeep, helping with preschool, kindergarten, and grades one and two; assisting at the regular Sunday morning service, greeting, ushering, and coffee hour; readings), helping in the Religious Education office, and teaching grades one and two. At the 1980 Uncommon Market, the LRY, with Laurie Yanis as chief designer, created a very scary and highly successful spook house in the Reeb House basement. Some of the youth who were participants were Laura Brainard, Laura Hyatt, Karen Loscalzo, George Mamunes, Andrea Medici, David Molnar, Russ Regal, and Amy Zoler.

Although there were only three LRY members in the fall of 1980, by March there were from 8 to 15 at each meeting, with Wayne Armstrong as advisor. A meeting with Summit and Paramus LRYs held in Ridgewood drew 110 youths, made a \$400 profit, and “clean-up was done well.”

Nationally, the years from 1978 to 1982 saw the LRY struggling to keep its place as an affiliate of the UUA. The Ridgewood youth were very much opposed to reorganization, which threatened to leave youth groups virtually powerless to run their own programs.

The Continental LRY felt underfunded and undersupported by the UUA, and in 1976 sought added support of youth programs. A Special Committee on Youth Programs (SCOYP), appointed by the UUA in November 1977, reported “massive abdication of adult responsibility.” SCOYP identified 661 youth groups, only 155 calling themselves “LRY,” but not all of the 155 were actually connected with federation or continental groups. Some youth felt the name LRY had become stigmatized. Yet, the LRY was the only denominational support in existence for youth groups; those not connected with LRY had no denominational support whatever for programs and projects.

A *Newsletter* notice (May 6, 1979) alerted the congregation of the LRY’s possible demise:

WE VALUE OUR AUTONOMY!

The UUA Board’s proposal to decrease funding for LRY by replacing the 5 nation-wide LRYers with one adult director looks to us like a step backwards. Letters to the UU World may help; the General Assembly in June is our last chance to change the proposal—so please write!
— *Laurie Yanis*

SCOYP recommended an Office of Youth Programs responsible for both junior and senior high programs.

The LRY responded, in January 1978, with a position paper that objected to the weakening of LRY. Acknowledging that adults have valuable experience, the LRY wanted more adults as advisors to the LRY, which would nevertheless keep its programs and responsibilities.

At the Ridgewood Society (March 8, 1978), 21 adults and 7 youths attended a meeting to discuss SCOYP’s proposals. Pencil notes made at the time show that there was considerable support of LRY, and at the next Board of Trustees meeting the negative attitude toward the new organizing system was reported, because it “tends to undermine the ‘youth run’ concept of the LRY.”

Across the continent, the SCOYP report sparked similar discussions. Common



Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU) on the steps of 25 Beacon Street in Boston, the Unitarian Universalist headquarters, 1989. Front row: Meredith Nash, Katherine Brown, Matt Rogers holding Matthew Schneider, and Andrew Franks. Standing: Leanne Cotten, Todd Cotten, Brian Golden, Jennifer Ford, and Jen Schneider.

Ground Youth Assemblies met in 1981 and 1982. The final result: abolishment of LRY, to be replaced by Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU).

Under LRY, the youths themselves did the outreach, education, and organization of their work. In addition, having no denominational title in the name, the organization could be a vehicle for outreach to all young people. The YRUU has both adults and youths as leaders, and the Unitarian Universalist title clarifies what organization is responsible. YRUU is a service of the UUA, requiring no “membership,” no fees or dues, since each local youth group is part of a local church or society affiliated with the UUA.

Nationally, in the UUA, there was a retreat from the youth empowerment revolution that had brought about, in the Ridgewood Society, changes treating youth as fully responsible members. Opening membership roles in Ridgewood resulted in many new full members of the Society: Jennifer Brett, Kate Brett, Andrea Burns, Phebe Dodyk, Katy Handley, Nicky Handley, Andrea Medici, Russ Twyman, and Laurie Yanis.

The 1982-83 Religious Education Program description included several categories for youths: For 7th grade and up, “Unitarian Universalism and You” would “help them to understand the workings of their church, and explore human relationships and other topics of interest to them.” A course called “Ethical Questions and Comparative Scripture” for older youth focused on critical reading of the Bible and other religious writing. And finally, a category called “Seven-Up” was described as follows:

We hope to have a Youth Group, for young people in Grades 7-12 to get together for fellowship, service, fun and fundraising. Meetings would be held twice a month at some time other than Sunday morning. WE NEED AN ADVISOR - OR - TWO!

The advisor materialized: Jaco ten Hove, who had returned to Ridgewood to finish his B.A. at Ramapo College, had graduated and was willing to help. Working with Vera Knapp and recent LRY graduate Rusty Twyman, the youth group stayed alive and well. Trying to meld younger (grades 7 and 8) members with the older (grades 9-12) proved to be a challenge, however, finally met by forming two groups. Many conferences, working for socially responsible causes, and meetings full of warmth and caring were a memorable experience.

Jaco ten Hove's final project before he left Ridgewood was the junior high Sunday school class's outdoor service for the whole congregation. Held at 7:00 p.m., June 10, 1984, the performance was the culmination of a day of madrigals and folksinging, ball games, and supper. In the Reeb House back yard, the young people performed their skit, a family feud drama on the topic "Hope at Reeb, Our Fireside Finale." It was followed by a campfire. Ten Hove left Ridgewood in 1984 to enroll at the Starr King School for the Ministry.

The fall of 1984, YRUU members, under Barbara Cotten's leadership, watched a spooky film, *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, while their parents met at the Susan and Dave Cooper's house. The plan was to continue, about twice a month, to have simultaneous meetings of YRUU and their parents.

The LRY was formally disbanded in 1986 and reorganized in 1988 under Vera Knapp's, and later, Celia Flateman's, guidance. At present (1996), the Junior Seminar (grades 6-8) meets as a regular Sunday morning class, with a curriculum determined by the Director of Religious Education and the Religious Education Committee. The Junior Seminar is connected with the Metro District Junior High, and works with CAMP volunteers at the after-school program in Paterson. The Senior High Youth Group (grades 9-12) meets Sunday evenings in the basement of Anderson Auditorium, "hangs out," holds conferences, and works on social action projects. Its agenda is set by the youth; their advisor serves as a resource.

THE FOUNDATION OF GOOD WORKS FINANCIAL HISTORY, 1895 – 1995

by Robert W. Chandler

From humble beginnings a century ago, the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood had blossomed into a \$200,000 a year operation as it entered its centennial year.

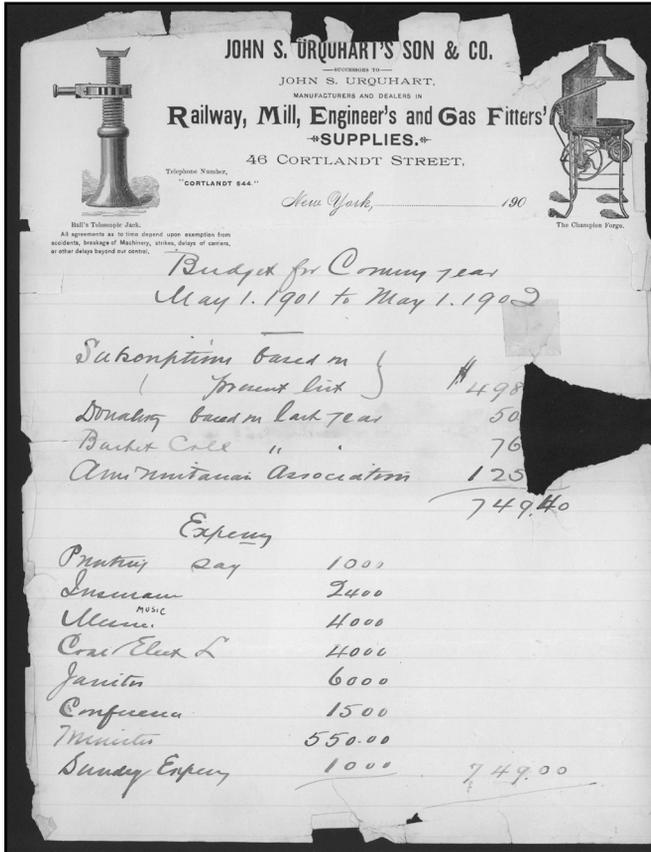
The first entries in a book bearing the inscription “Treasurer’s Account” are dated November 24, 1895:

Collection	\$4.00
Fare and janitor	\$1.80
Monthly payment on organ	\$5.00

Further entries by Rebecca W. Hawes, the first Treasurer, show expenditures of \$36.11 and a balance of \$4.25 by December 31st. Three more months went by before fourteen people gathered in the Ridgewood Opera House on Van Neste Square to establish the Society as a formal organization. At that meeting, Elmer Rodrigo, presiding, reported receipts of \$146.16 and expenses of \$137.99. The Treasurer’s Record Book shows that 24 people had subscribed by June 1, 1896, pledging amounts that ranged from ten to fifty cents a week (about \$1.50 to \$7.50 in 1990s dollars). Husbands and wives pledged separately. For the year ending May 7, 1897, Treasurer Hawes reported receipts of \$411.35–\$326.60 from “Subscriptions” and \$84.75 from “Donations.” Expenditures totaled \$386.02.

Ridgewood’s Unitarian Society met in the Opera House and other rented spaces for four years. Before the turn of the century, however, they began looking for a suitable lot on which to build a permanent home. They considered and rejected several properties before settling on the “Robinson” lot on Cottage Place. President James Warren announced the purchase of this lot for \$700, \$10 per frontage foot at the annual meeting on May 3, 1900. On August 2nd the Society awarded a \$2,500 contract to Peter Zabriskie, Jr. to build the church. Mr. Zabriskie completed his work by the end of September. The Society spent the next two months acquiring and installing furnishings. The first service in the present building took place on the second Sunday in December, 1900.

The “Treasurer’s Account” began as a running record of expenditures in the left column and receipts in the right column. The ten-year American Unitarian Association (AUA) mortgage of \$1,400 was repaid in only nine years by the Women’s Alliance as described in Chapter Three. Expenditures at the time of the first service in the new



Budget from 1901

building included 65¢ for “Broom and pail” on December 7 and \$2 for “Mat for church” on December 29. Electric bills were 80¢ a month in 1901 and held at 85¢ for the next four years before reaching a dollar in 1906.

The silver offering from the Woman’s Alliance literary lectures paid for piping water into the church, the water bills, and a sewer connection. Building repairs, and the minister’s salary, were also defrayed in part by Alliance contributions.

In 1912 the parsonage behind the main building (later named “Sheffer House”) was built at a cost of \$3769.54, which was more than the \$3,000 AUA interest-free mortgage and the \$450 loan from Rebecca W. Hawes. The 25 subscribers were forced to come up with the difference before the Society could receive the AUA money to pay to the builders.

The Society’s hand-to-mouth accounting in the first two decades accurately reflected its financial condition. By the fall of 1913, President Harry S. Vincent judged the Society’s financial circumstances desperate. He wrote to Rev. Samuel A. Eliot at the AUA about the possibility that the Hackensack church would be interested in hiring Ridgewood’s minister, Rev. R. Shaw Barrow, for half-time:

Should the Hackensack people not be favorably disposed toward Mr. Barrow it will be necessary for us to go on as at present, or to close the church, as you know it is impos-

TABLE 1: ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGETS, INCOME, AND EXPENDITURES
FISCAL YEAR ENDING APRIL 30

Year	Budget	Income	Expen.	Year	Budget	Income	Expen.
1920	NA	\$ 509	\$ 229	1964	\$19,685	\$21,539	\$19,582
1921	NA	1,174	1,077	1965	21,209	21,285	20,126
1922	\$ 1,345	NA	NA	1966	23,200	22,965	21,701
1923-28	NA	NA	NA	1967	26,950	25,466	25,897
1929	NA	3,434	3,217	1968	26,250	26,596	25,339
1930-31	NA	NA	NA	1969	30,464	28,352	29,315
1932	NA	3,221	2,522	1970	32,600	32,569	32,485
1933	NA	3,155	3,121	1971	34,761	35,423	34,912
1934	NA	3,143	3,090	1972	35,675	34,586	34,997
1935	NA	2,710	2,644	1973	35,740	34,611	35,091
1936	2,150	2,802	2,732	1974	37,409	40,036	38,770
1937	2,100	2,606	2,570	1975	41,662	44,849	43,086
1938	2,050	3,112	2,984	1976	45,510	46,548	46,548
1939	1,925	2,213	2,159	1977	47,757	47,634	47,634
1940	1,925	2,762	2,720	1978	48,957	49,953	49,953
1941	2,350	3,429	3,369	1979	54,932	54,345	54,345
1942	2,310	3,201	3,083	1980	56,050	54,930	54,930
1943	2,250	2,802	2,488	1981	59,246	59,533	59,533
1944	2,450	3,354	2,954	1982	64,825	64,894	64,894
1945	2,650	3,340	2,983	1983	70,499	69,216	69,216
1946	3,107	3,155	2,735	1984	74,872	74,254	74,254
1947	2,970	3,351	2,897	1985	79,292	82,046	82,046
1948	3,354	3,637	3,332	1986	88,862	90,412	90,412
1949	3,405	4,134	3,854	1987	113,585	124,088	124,088
1950	4,559	5,061	4,974	1988	124,412	125,322	121,469
1951	6,261	6,736	6,228	1989	136,922	135,468	133,573
1952	6,149	7,353	6,374	1990	138,000	141,453	136,547
1953	6,217	8,180	7,367	1991	149,320	146,881	146,363
1954	6,924	8,186	7,112	1992	159,200	161,528	154,684
1955	7,838	9,224*	8,160*	1993	170,000	181,690	169,587
1956	7,954	10,149*	8,796*	1994	182,915	186,681	173,777
1957	9,370	9,978	9,715	1995	194,000	198,635	198,477
1958	10,280	9,420	9,840	1996	204,800	NA	NA
1959	10,538	12,228	10,358				
1960	12,878	16,551	13,895				
1961	16,532	18,798	16,431				
1962	16,850	18,518	16,601				
1963	19,750	21,147	19,274				

Statement closing dates for 1920, 1921, and 1922 are April 25, May 5, and May 4, respectively. All others are April 30.

* estimated

sible for us [to] carry on the work here without financial assistance from the Unitarian Association, I would suggest that arrangements be made to have the regular quarterly payment of \$125 sent to us . . . in event of the arrangement with Hackensack not being consummated, otherwise it will be difficult for us to meet our obligations without embarrassment.

Fortunately, Hackensack liked Barrow.

The New York League of Unitarian and Other Liberal Women held a meeting in November 1917. A Mrs. Pelton, Ridgewood's delegate, reported at the November 5th Alliance meeting that the subject for discussion was "Raising Money." In view of the fund-raising responsibility of the Alliance, it was a serious topic of discussion.

World War I apparently took a further toll on membership and on income available to pay the bills. With a cash balance of only \$21.37 carried over from the previous year, the Society once again seriously considered closing down in 1918.

The first annual figures to appear in the Society's records after Treasurer Hawes'

TABLE 2: EXPENDITURES FOR MINISTER'S SALARY, ADVERTISING, AND UUA DONATIONS FISCAL YEAR ENDING APRIL 30

Year	Minister's Salary	Advertising	Donations to UUA**	Year	Minister's Salary	Advertising	Donations to UUA**
1920	\$ 120	\$ 21	\$ 16	1960	\$ 5,500	\$ 488	\$ 0
1921	545	87	31	1961	6,000	444	0
1922	500	NA	NA	1962	6,500	376	0
1923	1,000	NA	NA	1963	6,500	526	1,635
1924-26	NA	NA	NA	1964	6,765	352	1,700
1927	1,500	NA	NA	1965	8,833*	432	200
1928	NA	NA	NA	1966	8,000	321	2,000
1929	720	179	150	1967	8,500	395	1,500
1930-31	NA	NA	NA	1968	8,750	368	1,000
1932	1,000	151	100	1969	11,250	403	1,500
1933	1,000	81	50	1970	11,250	280	1,500
1934	1,000	0	50	1971	11,250	246	1,500
1935	1,000	0	40	1972	12,375	247	1,500
1936	1,100	0	48	1973	13,000	263	1,000
1937	1,100	0	40	1974	13,715	278	1,200
1938	1,100	0	20	1975	14,750	114	1,500
1939	1,100	0	28†	1976	15,250	69	1,500
1940	1,100	0	38	1977	15,500	74	1,000
1941	1,200	0	40	1978	15,700	37	1,000
1942	1,300	0	65	1979	16,300	46	1,250
1943	1,300	0	31	1980	17,000	58	750
1944	1,300	70	46	1981	18,350	46	750
1945	1,500	122	58	1982	19,500	359	1,000
1946	1,600	114	0	1983	21,450	205	1,000
1947	1,600	149	0	1984	22,500	312	1,000
1948	1,600	76	0	1985	22,500	316	1,000
1949	1,600	299	0	1986	NA	332	1,100
1950	1,900	318	0	1987	NA	366	1,500
1951	3,500	262	0	1988	23,067	283	3,636
1952	3,500	277	0	1989	21,000	178	4,080
1953	3,850	288	0	1990	6,500	0	4,356
1954	4,000	385	0	1991	9,200	0	5,568
1955	4,500††	326††	0	1992	NA	0	9,581
1956	4,500††	470††	0	1993	21,456	0	8,179
1957	4,750	517	0	1994	22,314	0	9,296
1958	5,000	292	0	1995	23,207	0	9,963
1959	5,000	284	0				

Statement closing dates for 1920 and 1921 are April 25 and May 5, respectively. All others are April 30.

Minister's salary figures have little significance for comparative purposes. They fail to reflect not only inflation but part-time and overlapping ministries and wide variations in allowances for housing, utilities, parsonage maintenance, insurance, automobile, minister's leave, and pensions.

* Homer Sheffer 4 months @ \$6,500 annual rate and Ken Patton 10 months @ \$8,000 annual rate.

** Listed as "American Unitarian Association," 1920-41, "United Unitarian Appeal," 1942-45, and "Unitarian Universalist Association" 1961-present.

† Includes a special contribution of \$8 for "Hurricane Relief" in September, 1938.

†† Estimated

entries in 1897 (see above) are for the year ending April 25, 1920. Receipts were \$509 and expenditures \$229, including the \$120 salary paid to the minister Elizabeth Padgham. The first recorded budget, for the year ending May 4, 1922, totaled \$1,345 and provided an \$800 salary for the minister, then V. G. Hartman.

In November of 1922, the Board of Trustees—of which Rebecca Hawes was a member—and the members of the Unitarian Society decided to borrow money to add a kitchen to the building. The World War I financial slump was somewhat overcome in

TABLE 3: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (RE) EXPENDITURES, 1947-95
FISCAL YEAR ENDING APRIL 30

Year	RE Director	Other	Total	Year	RE Director	Other	Total
1947	0	\$ 25	\$ 25	1976	\$ 1,200	\$ 600	\$ 1,800
1948	0	44	44	1977	1,350	600	1,950
1949	0	211	211	1978	1,950	695	2,645
1950	0	520	520	1979	3,100	608	3,708
1951	0	261	261	1980	3,320	602	3,922
1952	0	199	199	1981	3,652	902	4,554
1953	0	202	202	1982	4,017	1,200	5,217
1954	0	213	213	1983	4,875	1,200	6,075
1955	0	261	261	1984	5,500	1,185	6,685
1956	0	484	484	1985	6,160	1,200	7,360
1957	0	504	504	1986	7,000	1,300	8,300
1958	0	396	396	1987	7,700	2,194	9,894
1959	0	755	755	1988	10,000	737	10,737
1960	0	1,768	1,768	1989	10,500	643	11,143
1961	0	1,978	1,978	1990	10,568	2,903	13,471
1962	\$ 1,000	982	1,982	1991	11,500	3,575	15,075
1963	1,000	1,069	2,069	1992	12,100	4,262	16,362
1964	1,000	818	1,818	1993	12,584	4,522	17,106
1965	100	391	491	1994	9,923	800	10,723
1966	1,000	665	1,665	1995	13,000	4,554	17,554
1967	1,000	1,289	2,289	1996	13,910	NA	NA
1968	1,000	1,470	2,470				
1969	1,500	1,486	2,986				
1970	1,500	1,363	2,863				
1971	1,500	468	1,968				
1972	250	811	1,061				
1973	0	345	345				
1974	1,000	662	1,662				
1975	1,200	440	1,640				

Note: Before 1947 expenditures for religious education were reported twice, \$60 in 1929 and \$3 in 1932. The column for other indicates a variety of expenditures. In early years it probably covered supplies. In 1995-96 it may include supplies, professional expenses, child care, and the like.

1922, and the Women's Alliance guaranteed the mortgage. Secretary Fredericka Wadsworth recorded:

Miss Hawes gave a very interesting and touching talk on past and present work of the church and Alliance and suggested that the Alliance carry the loan of \$1,700, the sum needed to make the kitchen extension now in progress. A motion was made and accepted to carry out Miss Hawes's suggestion. This loan is to be paid in ten years.

Rebecca Hawes herself contributed \$450 for the kitchen; Richard Hawes, her brother, \$50; \$1,000 was borrowed from the AUA. The members had the interior of the church decorated and bought "modern" pews as well, and redecorated the Sunday school room. The entire building also was re-roofed.

The *Treasurer's Record Book* shows the Society borrowed \$1,500 from the AUA on May 31, 1923, payable in ten annual installments without interest. The figures recorded in the Alliance minutes and those in the *Treasurer's Record Book* don't quite match, but it is clear that a big financial burden was largely the Alliance's responsibility. The Alliance assumed the AUA payments. Those for 1924 and 1925 were gifts from Rebecca Hawes.

In 1923, Rebecca Hawes set up a trust fund to be used toward a pipe organ and a memorial window in honor of her mother. For additional funding, the Ridgewood Alliance appealed to sister Alliances to contribute to the Ridgewood Unitarian Society's Organ Fund, and received money from across the nation. In 1924 the pipe organ was

TABLE 4: MUSIC EXPENDITURES, 1920-95
FISCAL YEAR ENDING APRIL 30

Year	Organist	Musicians*	Other	Total	Year	Organist	Musicians*	Other	Total
1920	\$ 16			\$16	1966	\$ 1,368			\$ 1,368
1921	245			245	1967	1,200	\$ 369		1,569
1922-28	NA			NA	1968	1,200	380		1,580
1929	330	\$ 150		480	1969	1,500	505		2,005
1930-31	NA	NA		NA	1970	1,600	570		2,170
1932	330	0	\$ 9	339	1971	1,587	485		2,072
1933	270	60	18	348	1972	1,560	506		2,066
1934	270	93	9	372	1973	1,600	499		2,099
1935	214	50	3	267	1974	1,800	597		2,397
1936	200	14	7	221	1975	1,800	600		2,400
1937	200	30	0	230	1976	1,800	739		2,539
1938	200	235	6	279	1977	2,000	822		2,822
1939	200	11	11	222	1978	2,100	838		2,938
1940	200	46	89	335	1979	2,200	943		3,143
1941	200	61	8	269	1980	2,350	462		2,812
1942	200	62	8	270	1981	2,585	750		3,335
1943	200	60	0	260	1982	2,850	822		3,672
1944	200	73	0	273	1983	3,135	1,073		4,208
1945	200	95	24	319	1984	3,300	795		4,095
1946	200	100	21	321	1985	3,540	1,078		4,618
1947	200	100	37	337	1986	3,800	1,400		5,200
1948	240	120	24	384	1987	4,180	1,544		5,724
1949	240	120	125	485	1988	4,680	1,485		6,165
1950	300	120	0	420	1989	4,900	2,240	\$7,522 •	14,662
1951	240	184	0	424	1990	5,437	1,940		7,377
1952	240	180	0	420	1991	5,700	2,583		8,283
1953	240	182	69	491	1992	6,000	2,900		8,900
1954	275	197	80	552	1993	6,240	2,712		8,952
1955	356	282	84	722	1994	6,500	2,525		9,025
1956	267	308	80	655	1995	6,760	2,630		9,390
1957	319	146	126	591					
1958	346	100	106	552					
1959	360	100	107	567					
1960	366	100	27	493					
1961	0	542	0	542					
1962	0	640	1,420	2,060					
1963	0	939	0	939					
1964	0	855	0	855					
1965	0	800	0	800					

Statement closing dates for 1920 and 1921 are April 25 and May 5, respectively. All others are April 30.

Listed as "Choir," 1929; "Musical vespers and other music," 1933-35; "Music," 1936-43, 1961-66, and 1994-95; "Soloist," 1944-60; and "Music Committee," 1967-93.

• Piano restoration.

installed at a cost of \$2,483. (The organ was still used occasionally in 1995. In early 1996, in anticipation of planned changes in the building enlargement, the organ was disassembled and sold.)

In 1927, the front vestibule and a second social room were added to the building at a cost of \$6,500. The Society borrowed from a local bank, and two years later this mortgage was assumed by the AUA as part of a \$5,900 interest-free loan. In 1929, President Charles T. Greene estimated the value of the Society's buildings to be \$34,000. The following year the Society made the final \$600 payment to the AUA on the 1923 loan of \$1,500.

By 1929, the April 30 fiscal year which the Society now (1996) observes was firmly in place. Receipts and expenditures had risen to \$3,434 and \$3,217, respectively. Then came the depression. The Society's total expenditures for the year ending April 30, 1934, were only \$3,090.25, and the expenditures the following year only \$2,644. Income from subscribers and plate collections dropped that year by 15%. Annual totals declined thereafter, bottoming out in 1937 (Table 1).

TABLE 5A: SELECTED CATEGORIES OF OPERATING INCOME 1920-61
FISCAL YEAR ENDING APRIL 30

Year	Pledges*	Plate Collect.	Donat.†	Church School	Women's Alliance
1920	\$ 410	\$ 39	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
1921	646	142	105	0	0
1922-28	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
1929	2,187	120	380	0	150
1930-31	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
1932	1,720	126	159	0	200
1933	1,533	311	87	25	250
1934	1,317	232	115	25	250
1935	1,235	239	71	0	400
1936	1,439	116	103	0	294
1937	1,312	115	191	0	300
1938	1,273	105	161	0	400
1939	1,266	79	135	0	175
1940	1,436	201	58	0	300
1941	1,551	203	85	0	250
1942	1,774	145	122	0	250
1943	1,859	185	108	0	250
1944	1,858	318	87	0	250
1945	2,154	509	58	0	150
1946	2,105	539	0	0	150
1947	2,015	733	0	0	175
1948	2,250	582	50	0	300
1949	2,55	189	40	0	200
1950	3,796	768	0	0	200
1951	5,694	734	0	0	200
1952	5,670	750	0	0	300
1953	6,011	943	0	0	200
1954	6,316	1,005	0	0	0
1955	7,000•	1,050•	0	0	0
1956	7,800•	1,200•	0	0	0
1957	8,774	1,204	0	0	0
1958	8,402	1,017	0	0	0
1959	9,610	1,103	60	538	0
1960	11,987	1,323	448	652	0
1961	14,286	1,204	100	520	0

Statement closing dates for 1920 and 1921 are April 25 and May 5, respectively. All others are April 30.

* Variously designated as *Subscribers*, 1920-39; *Members*, 1940-41; *Members and Friends*, 1942-56; *Pledges and Contributions*, 1957-58; *Every Member Canvass*, *Canvass*, and *Pledges*, 1959-95.

† Includes donations by users of facilities.

• Estimated

In the year 1938-39 the Society survived on receipts of only \$2,213.43. In 1938 no payment at all was made to the AUA on the 1929 loan, but instead, the AUA loaned the Society \$300! The balance due in 1940 was \$1,900. In early 1940, the trustees asked the AUA to renegotiate the mortgage to reduce the monthly payments. The AUA lent the Society an additional \$1,100, making the total amount due \$3,000, with a repayment schedule of annual installments of \$300. In this way needed repairs in both the church and the parsonage, including especially new heating systems, could be done. This new mortgage was not so easy to pay off, however. The Society paid only \$200 instead of the agreed-upon \$300 during two of the war years, probably 1943 and 1944. Howard Crane, Treasurer, issued a special plea to members to send money, because there was still a \$1,700 debt. By 1948, that debt had been reduced to \$300.

TABLE 5B: SELECTED CATEGORIES OF OPERATING INCOME, 1962-95
FISCAL YEAR ENDING APRIL 30

Year	Pledges	Plate Collect	Donat.	Church School	All Spec'l Proj.	Serv. Auct.*
1962	14,113	1,460	25	433	NA	\$ 0
1963	16,177	1,519	691	411	NA	0
1964	16,604	1,473	985	320	NA	0
1965	16,244	1,496	646	625	NA	0
1966	18,522	1,238	594	947	NA	0
1967	19,438	1,271	2,384	805	1,438	0
1968	20,453	1,088	2,626	1,390	300	0
1969	22,193	1,007	950	1,625	2,577	NA
1970	25,010	1,197	1,203	1,302	3,657	NA
1971	25,986	9981	,257	1,040	6,004	1,548
1972	22,857	837	1,708	940	6,869	NA
1973	22,533	827	1,635	590	7,413	1,836
1974	26,229	920	1,925	825	9,472	NA
1975	27,491	1,029	2,479	875	10,797	3,639
1976	28,964	822	3,448	934	10,144	NA
1977	29,454	996	5,141	1,009	11,679	4,711
1978	31,196	947	4,297	1,030	14,711	NA
1979	33,205	745	3,706	1,068	13,797	NA
1980	34,623	922	4,297	988	15,200	6,043
1981	36,057	926	4,364	1,038	17,237	8,240
1982	39,670	1,288	4,550	884	16,482	8,403
1983	41,233	1,068	6,933	810	15,304	7,264
1984	45,832	1,384	6,653	1,315	16,211	8,836
1985	51,286	1,342	8,098	1,212	18,226	10,728
1986	59,800	1,539	8,890	2,180	21,190	11,613
1987	62,564	1,790	10,251	1,940	24,101	15,274
1988	73,817	2,297	12,442	1,153	22,690	17,581
1989	83,481	2,358	10,784	1,879	23,475	20,735
1990	92,762	3,055	8,577	1,685	23,151	19,487
1991	98,088	2,701	11,098	1,615	22,922	20,641
1992	104,626	<16,267>		2,595	28,903	24,154
1993	122,806	3,236	22,495	2,385	26,753	25,228
1994	125,126	3,614	21,472	0	33,295	30,141
1995	137,539	4,114	18,482	0	35,966	33,463

* The part of Special Projects income received at the Service Auction.

The full time minister's salary, which had risen as high as \$1,500 when Hubert H. Wright was minister in 1927, dropped back to \$1,000 for 1932 to 1935, and stood at \$1,100 when Homer Sheffer began his ministry in 1939 (Table 2). However, salary comparisons are misleading (see first footnote to this table). In fact, according to a historical account by Charles T. Greene, Reverend Wright was charged \$70 a month rent for the parsonage plus \$10 a month for the garage. These charges would have left only \$140 for everything else had they been levied against an annual salary of \$1,100.

In 1950 the Society took a \$9,000 mortgage, later refinanced through the AUA, with the North Jersey Trust Company to add five Sunday School rooms to the rear of the building; and a \$616 loan from the Franklin Trust Company in Paterson for insulation. The improvements cost \$11,036.

The Society's operating budget, receipts, and expenditures remained in the doldrums well after World War II ended in 1945, reaching \$4,000 levels for the first time in 1949 and 1950. Then the Society entered a period of rapid growth. The budget rose dra-

TABLE 6: NEWSLETTER EDITOR/SECRETARY'S SALARY 1961-95
FISCAL YEAR ENDING APRIL 30

1961	\$150*	1970	1,528	1979	3,032	1988	7,650
1962	565	1971	1,882	1980	3,354	1989	10,500
1963	683	1972	1,810	1981	3,636	1990	11,601
1964	668	1973	1,579	1982	4,260	1991	12,100
1965	905	1974	2,146	1983	4,884	1992	12,600
1966	1,090	1975	2,810	1984	5,541	1993	13,659
1967	1,327	1976	2,409	1985	5,915	1994	13,878
1968	1,345	1977	2,507	1986	6,500	1995	14,423
1969	1,295	1978	2,810	1987	7,150	1996	15,200

* Part time

matically in each successive decade: from 1950-60 by 182%, from 1960-70 by 153%, from 1970-80 by 72%, from 1980-90 by 146%, and in the half-decade from 1990-95 by 41% (calculated from Table 1).

Operating costs increased virtually across the board (Tables 2, 3, and 4). Personnel and associated costs grew as the paid staff was enlarged to include a secretary, music director, comptroller, and religious education director along with the minister and custodian. Significant increases also occurred in maintenance costs of the Society's buildings, debt service, office costs, and denominational contributions.

Membership in the 1950s grew to about 175; the minister's salary, to \$4,500 in 1955. Space for Church School was again inadequate only five years after the 1950 expansion. The Society authorized the purchase of a new parsonage for the Sheffer family, so that the old parsonage to the rear of the main building could be used for classes. \$27,000 was raised for this purpose, pledged over a three-year period.

In 1956, the Society, using a mortgage of \$12,000 from Citizens First National Bank, bought a house at 391 Vesta Court for \$21,300 for use as a parsonage by Homer Sheffer and his successor, Kenneth Patton.

Citizens First National Bank extended three mortgages to finance the purchase of buildings: \$12,000 on the Vesta Court parsonage in 1956; \$30,000 on Reeb House in 1966; and \$18,000 on the Cottage Place parsonage in 1969.

Between 1967 and 1972, the Society conducted two capital fund drives that raised \$79,000 for the renovation of everything, including literally the kitchen sink. The project featured enlargement and furnishing of the auditorium with sculpture, furniture, window treatment, and lighting designed by Tony Velonis; extensive remodeling and expansion of the kitchen and basement; repair and redecoration of Sunday school facilities at Sheffer and Reeb Houses; and improvements in the grounds, driveways, and landscaping of the property on both sides of the street.

Re-roofing of the Cottage Place parsonage in 1972 and Reeb House in 1975 cost \$1,832 and \$3,600, respectively. In 1985 loans totaling \$4,500 financed the porch repairs made on the latter parsonage in 1985. Sheffer House underwent a final remodeling in 1987, when the Society spent \$65,000 to convert it from a Sunday school to administrative headquarters. This conversion was initially financed by a \$50,000 bridge loan from an anonymous lender in 1986. The loan was paid off the following year with a \$65,000 loan from the Unitarian Universalist Association carrying a 5% interest charge for the first five years and 10% thereafter.

In 1991, the property next door to the church at 121 Cottage Place came on the market. Sensing a uniquely favorable opportunity to address future needs, the Society purchased the property for \$375,000. Current plans call for moving the administrative headquarters from Sheffer House into the newly acquired building as part of the expansion program. A \$200,000 loan from an anonymous lender provided most of the financing for the purchase.

Eventually all committee funding came under a unified accounting system, and each was allowed an amount from the operating fund budget. When each committee's expenditures were withdrawn from that group's part of the Unitarian Society account, the actual cost of running the Society became somewhat more visible, but not completely.

A glance at the treasurers' annual reports of income, expenditures, and projected budget cannot divulge the entire story: for instance, the Social Responsibility committee might be perceived as underfunded because it has only "seed money" allocated to it. Yet projects such as CAMP in Paterson, UNICEF boxes, food collections, SHARE residence, and committees such as Art, Music, and Religious Education, held their own fund-raisers. The true generosity of the congregation in money—not to speak of time and talent—does not appear in account books.

WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM

In the early years, before 1920, apparently the Society financed its modest operations almost exclusively from pledges (then known as "subscriptions"), and plate collections. Two important additional sources surfaced in the 1920s: donations, primarily from outside users of the church building, and the Woman's Alliance (Table 5). Donations were meager through the mid-1940s and for a decade they disappeared from the annual Treasurer's report entirely. But they resumed in 1959 and have since grown to major proportions under the headings "Building use fees" and "Other contributions." The Woman's Alliance (Table 5) made annual contributions ranging from \$150 to \$400 from 1929 to 1953 accounting for about 6 per cent of the Society's receipts over that period. Church school fees have contributed to the budget from 1959 to 1994.

However, most of the Society's income has always come from annual commitments by individuals, variously reported by different Treasurers under the headings "Subscribers," "Members," "Members and Friends," "Every Member Canvass," "Canvass," and "Pledges." Pledge payments have provided from one-half to four-fifths of the Society's operating income. Currently (1996) they are running at about two thirds. Pledges totaled for entire decades from \$19,553 in the 1940s to \$528,363 in the 1980s, a figure already surpassed in the first half of the 1990s.

Growth in membership accounts for much of the growth in pledge income. Over the past two decades the number of pledging units has increased by almost half, from 149 in 1976 to 219 in 1995. Inflation and rising incomes also boosted the dollar totals. A significant third factor is the effectiveness of the annual pledge drives in tapping into these expanding resources.

TABLE 7: TREASURERS, 1895-1995

Years Served	Name	Years Served	Name
1895-99	Rebecca W. Hawes	1944-47	Howard G. Crane
1899-1919	unknown	1947-55	H. M. Mahnken
1919-23	H.S.Vincent	1955-64	Howard G. Crane
1923-25	H. L. Hershey	1964-68	C. A. Lambert
1925-26	R. M. Gidney	1968-77	Howard G. Crane
1926-28	unknown	1977-83	Rebecca Zoler
1928-29	G. Derby White	1983-87	Michael Patterson
1929-32	unknown	1987-91	Arthur Toan
1932-34	H. L. Hershey	1991-93	Anita DiGiulio
1934-44	E. Milton Lilly	1993-96	Frank Loscalzo

The results of the pledge drive reflect the skill and hard work of the canvass team. Organizing the campaign, recruiting, briefing, and energizing the canvassers, making the calls, and following up every prospective pledge are essential steps in a successful pledge drive. The Society is fortunate to have found in its midst each year capable and dedicated people to carry out this work. The kick-off to the canvass known as the Fellowship Feast, which displays the talents of many people in a spoof of the Society's traditions and personalities, puts the congregation into a good mood for giving.

Even in the early years, the Society occasionally added to its income the proceeds of social activities. The Woman's Alliance raised money for charitable purposes, and counted the Unitarian Society itself among the charitable causes worth supporting.

Committees' fundraisers often benefitted the whole congregation. For instance, the Music Committee held paper drives and scheduled benefit concerts to buy a better piano, and to provide a good sound system. The Religious Education Committee gave spaghetti dinners and showed films to help pay for supplies.

Treasurer Cal Lambert (1964-68) was unwilling to agree to many expenditures, so afraid was he of a deficit. Especially, he was opposed to underwriting Ken Patton's book publishing, and it is said that at some meetings he would refuse to tell the Board of Trustees how much money was in the operating account because he did not want it spent on things he thought were risky or unnecessary.

In the mid-1960s fundraising events became more frequent and elaborate. The Service Auction added an important ingredient to the fund-raising process: bringing people together for an evening of entertainment so that fund-raising takes place in a relaxed setting. Dinner is followed by the lighthearted cajoling of the auctioneer.

Special project income was reported by the Treasurer for the first time in 1967 and the Service Auction portion in 1971 (Table 5b). In 1971 special project income totaled \$6,004, a quarter of which came from the service auction. Since then, Service Auction income has soared. Over the past decade it has accounted for 80 percent of special project income and 14 percent of total operating income. The upsurge in annual pledges and the growth of income from the Service Auction has fueled the expansion of the Society's operations.

Other special projects have contributed significantly to the Society's budget as well as to the enjoyment of the participants. For six years from 1977-82 the Uncommon Market netted \$6,000 annually on average, offering a laundry list of attractions. Concert

series, film series, New Year's Eve parties, and yard sales have also enlivened and enriched the Society.

Fund-raisers for social causes, or fund-raisers to keep the Society afloat? Don Anderson said:

There was a big turning point in the church, when we quit running things like BAC [events to support the Black Affairs Council]. . . —good causes—and started running things for our own budget—church fairs, Uncommon Market, and all that started up—But now at the church annual meeting, when we have to vote on a budget, we realize that we really need the money from the fund-raisers, and can't count it as extra funds for special purposes. It might be questioned how sound it is, for us to count on that.

To meet the yearly budget, the Society has depended since about 1970 on a major fund-raiser. And of course, as Anderson once pointed out, "We certainly do enjoy them."

From the early energy exhibited by the Rebecca William Hawes Branch Alliance, which paid off the initial mortgage in only nine years, until 1995, fund-raisers for specific needs seemed inevitable. They provided a religious nexus of bonding and fellowship, and supported both social and spiritual human needs. Regardless of the ethical question, and regardless of risk, fund-raising for its own survival has always been a part of the Society's operations.

SPECIAL GIFTS

From time to time the Society has identified special needs and concerns that it could not accommodate within the parameters of its operating or capital budgets. And donors have made special gifts to the Society outside the context of conventional pledge drives.

Occasionally the special need has prompted the special gift. In 1922 Rebecca W. Hawes gave \$2,000, of which \$450 was used to reduce the mortgage on the parsonage and \$1,550 to furnish the church with a memorial window and a pipe organ. In 1972, Lois Stevens gave \$1,832 specifically to reroof the Cottage Place parsonage.

More often, the gifts come with no specific expression of the donor's wishes. In 1966, the Society received distributions totaling \$4,712 under terms of a will from the estate of Lina Zellweger. This bequest was assigned to the Society's expansion fund. In the same year Lois Stevens made a gift of \$10,000.

In 1967, Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc. donated 6,900 record albums to the Society when it converted its New York City radio station from music to news programming. Sales of these records netted the Society \$2,728, of which \$1,000 went toward expenses of delegates to the 1967 General Assembly, \$546 toward a tape recorder and sound equipment in 1968, and the balance of \$1,182 toward the purchase of a better piano for the auditorium in 1969.

Gladys Johnson made gifts totaling \$9,627 in 1968. In the following year, Tony Velonis gave the Society 350 shares of stock in Value Corporation of America worth \$11,200.

Ruland Anderson named the Society beneficiary of a life insurance policy that paid \$5,218 after his death in 1972. In keeping with his wishes, the Society used the proceeds

in ways that reflected his social concerns. A grant was made to the Ecumenical Association for Urban Concerns, an after-school youth development program in Paterson, with which members of the Society were very involved. The Ruland Anderson Education Fund was established to provide grant-in-aid to college-bound graduates of Paterson's Kennedy High School.

In 1978 the Society received a \$1,000 bequest from the Henry M. Mahnken Trust. Mr. Mahnken was the Society's Treasurer from 1947-55.

As more special gifts came its way, the Society took steps to incorporate them into its over-all financial structure and to encourage more of them. Discussions of a memorial fund took place in 1968. The Society approved changes in the Constitution and By-Laws in 1970 that included provisions for a special gifts program. It implemented the program by issuing a brochure entitled "Special Giving by the Concerned Person to the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, N.J."

A Special Gifts committee handled both the receiving and distributing functions of the special gifts program. In 1984 it recommended and obtained approval of \$500 tuition grants to Jaco ten Hove, now a Unitarian minister, and to Lisa Glidewell, a minority student at Ramapo College. When Aurora Micu came to the United States from Rumania, the Society provided to her some scholarship help so that she could study music and voice at Westminster Choir College. The Special Gifts program also provided \$400 for a VCR purchased by the Society.

In 1994 the Society undertook a review of the Special Gifts program. It updated pertinent sections of the Constitution and By-Laws and focused renewed attention on the range of options the Special Gifts program offers prospective donors. A new "Endowment Fund" was established. A Planned Giving committee has replaced the Special Gifts committee to promote and manage the new fund.

CENTENNIAL BUILDING FUND

In 1995, Delight Dodyk and Helen Lindsay headed a Capital Fund Campaign for the Society that raised \$670,000 in pledges to be paid over a three-year period. These funds are to be used to add to the existing building. Space for the religious education program, a fellowship room, a larger kitchen, main floor bathrooms, and accessibility for the handicapped are some of the improvements in the plan. The enlarged building will keep the children on the same side of the street with the adults. Children will no longer be endangered by having to cross the street.

KEEPERS OF THE EXCHEQUER

Rebecca W. Hawes, was the Society's first Treasurer. She served from November 24, 1895 to May 4, 1899, when she turned over a balance of \$29.24 to her successor, who remains anonymous. The tradition of diligent bookkeeping by anonymous Treasurers persisted for the next twenty years.

In the year ending April 25, 1920, H. S. Vincent became Treasurer and continued in the post for three years. H. L. Hershey took over for two years ending April 30, 1925, and was succeeded briefly by R. M. Gidney. Mr. Gidney left for Washington to go to

work for President Coolidge as Controller of the Currency. This move is hardly surprising when viewed in context. During that period the Republican Women's Club was making regular donations to the Society for its meetings in the church.

The roster of Treasurers appears in Table 7. Especially noteworthy is Howard G. Crane's record of service in the post for 21 years in three tours of duty: 1944-47, 1955-64, and 1968 until his death in 1977. He also served as President for three years from 1947-50.

LOVE MADE MANIFEST

Righting unjust and dangerous wrongs locally, in the nation, and in the world at large was the mission of Unitarians during the years of social upheaval following President John Kennedy's death. In an era of assassinations, undeclared war, racial discrimination, poverty, and political oppression, members and like-minded friends of the Society did whatever citizens could do to reverse the direction of events. They made hope for the world plausible.

Ministers of the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood held the conviction that victims of war and poverty can be helped, and that the social system, belonging to all citizens, is capable of being repaired or even re-invented. Milton Muder ran mind-opening Fireside Forums and Homer Sheffer was an outspoken pacifist. Their ministries shaped the Society into one with a powerful social concern.

PART 1: SOCIAL ACTION POLICY

It was only five years before Kenneth L. Patton arrived in Ridgewood that encouragement for political social action began to come to Unitarians nationally through the leadership of the well-known Homer Jack. Vice-president Richard D. Long, one of the Ridgewood Society's delegates to the 1959 May meeting of the American Unitarian Association, was excited to learn at the that a new "fighting" group called the Fellowship for Social Justice, separate from the AUA, had registered as a lobby in Washington. Long reported that the group "will aid and abet members in their fights, helping local groups champion any cause within the framework of Social Action." For instance, whereas Planned Parenthood had been "hobbled, stifled, outlawed, run out of town and considered unfit to be included in Red Feather (United Way) campaigns," the Fellowship would "counsel, advise, help organize, coordinate with other churches, suggest speakers, and send literature on this outrage."

Long said "We are living in exciting times for our movement." He concluded that the Fellowship for Social Justice would lead the way in a more activist style than the Unitarian Service Committee could muster.

Arriving in Ridgewood in 1964, Kenneth Patton stood unswervingly against all forms of discrimination. He brought with him a long-time commitment to social action, as evidenced by his resignation from the "white race" in the 1940s. Patton had a clear view of the tension between social action with its political implications and the Unitarian principle of freedom of belief and how these could be reconciled.

The atmosphere was shadowed by political repression and fear of Communism. Separation of church and state was threatened by the proposed Becker Amendment to

the Constitution, designed to overthrow the Supreme Court rulings preventing religious observances in the public schools. The *Newsletter*, in May of 1964, called for religious opposition to the amendment.

A congregational survey revealed that of 228 respondents, only one third thought that individuals and groups could formally represent the Society in social action. Yet, a large majority (139 to 66) thought the “church” could take a formal public stand on a controversial social issue. For the Society to take no stand, while offering an advertised public forum on an issue, had even greater approval, with a majority of 187.

These much-discussed issues were resolved in Kenneth Patton’s 1964 recommendations, which reflect the policy still adhered to in 1996:

THE LIBERAL SOCIETY IN POLITICS AND SOCIAL ACTION

1. The liberal society offers to its members unconditioned freedom of belief. Therefore it cannot subscribe to any theological nor political doctrine as required of its membership, as orthodoxy. Thus the society may not take any official and irrevocable stand on political and social issues, for this would negate the meaning and intent of the individualism and freedom of its members.
2. And yet the society cannot tolerate being voiceless and impotent in political and social issues.
3. The society should avoid official backing of any and all political candidates and parties for the above reasons. Another reason is that the behavior of candidates and parties upon their election is unpredictable, and as a religious institution, the Society could find itself embarrassed by the delinquency of the candidate it had sponsored.
4. It would seem a justified policy for the society to request that no political propaganda, petitions, etc., be distributed at services of worship. This is not in keeping with the spirit of the occasion, nor with the free mind principle.
5. An exception can be made of lectures and discussion groups, especially if the various sides of an issue, or the various candidates, are equally represented, for purposes of education and discussion.
6. The liberal society needs a social action committee, to study social issues, and to recommend action to the society as a whole. This committee should be able to make decisions and publicize them as a committee, without in any way committing the society as a whole to those opinions. The committee may also recommend to parish meetings that they act on the sponsorship of social issues, always with the proviso that any minority opinion shall be publicized with the majority decision. By a system of checks and balances, limitations and delegation of privileges, the society can become effective in the promotion of social issues, and yet not prejudice its essential nature as a free association of free thinking and free believing individuals.

Soon after, in his April 13, 1965 address, “Striking a Balance,” Patton held that the two concerns of a liberal religious society were:

1. to support its own program, plant and staff serving the needs of its local community, and
2. to support denominational world-wide service projects—thus providing the membership with a full range of liberal interests and projects.

Later that month he extended the thought:

In the liberal society we have no creeds. But freedom of belief is meaningful only when those exercising it come up with vigorous and productive beliefs. . . . We can hope that our liberal Society is one made up of people who are known for what they do about the problems of their world, and the needs of their fellows.

The Board of Trustees created the first Social Responsibilities Committee in May, 1965, with Bob Ritter as chair. Following the design of the Unitarian Universalist Association's (UUA's) new Social Responsibilities Committee headed by Homer Jack, the Ridgewood subcommittees included the United Nations and world order, social welfare, civil liberties, and matters of civic concern. The committee's charge was to keep the congregation informed and encourage participation through panels, forums and open meetings. Ritter organized a forum on capital punishment at which both views were presented.

Terry Ripmaster succeeded Ritter in the chair of the Social Responsibilities Committee, serving 1966-68.

Although the involvement of members of the Society in social concerns continued unabated in the early 1970s, the Social Responsibilities Committee formally disbanded in May, 1975, for lack of members. Apparently its "umbrella" function was actually not needed at that time. Sue Denniston (now Mounkhall), chair, continued to disseminate information on community needs and projects through the Newsletter, and Bea Robbins led a Social Action Committee with the issues of peace and amnesty for draft resisters, as its urgent work.

President Kris Molnar (later Brainard, now Henrickson) invited all to participate in Society activities at a Sunday morning discussion-style Lay Service February 25, 1979. Those attending expressed a strong interest in social action, and a March dinner meeting chaired by June Ritter surveyed various area social action agencies and the Society's participation in them.

At a subsequent Board meeting, Secretary of the Board Fred Burns reported:

Ken is organizing a Social Action group. They are compiling a list of people who need help and a list of people who can provide help. The world seems to be behaving fairly decently at the moment. No good issue to stir the collective Unitarian heart can be found at the moment.

Perhaps having no Vietnam war to protest brought about a certain calm; but the trustees, of course, knew that there were other arenas where Unitarians steadily worked, such as civil rights, community needs, and national and international concerns.

PART 2: CIVIL RIGHTS

During the 1960s, members of the Society were deeply involved in the civil rights movement. Laymen's League President Russ Miller (later President of the Society) stated, in 1961,

. . . that it seemed most characteristic for men and women and, of course, youth of a Unitarian Society to be other than complacent about the fulfillment of civil rights in our democracy.

Racial Integration

Miller announced in the *Newsletter* that the Evening Alliance, the Laymen's League and the LRY were planning a joint meeting to discuss "a challenging and vital issue of our day."

On March 4, the three groups heard William Larkins, President of the student body at Florida A & M University, a segregated school, talk about being arrested for a sit-in and charged with breach of the peace. He served a 49-day jail term, and refused to pay a fine or appeal the charge. His appearance drew a crowd of 50, and raised \$36.06 for the NYC Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). Later, in 1963, Robert Nicholson, CORE member, and Christa Mott of the Art Committee held an art show for the benefit of CORE.

"A Matter of Conscience—Can the North meet the Challenge of Integration?" was Ruland Anderson's address in May 1961. The Society later named its auditorium after this persistent civil rights activist.

Fair Housing

The Ridgewood Unitarian Woman's Alliance was alone among New Jersey Alliances to take a stand on race prejudice when, in May, 1963, the Association of Alliances met in Ridgewood. In 1965, Bob Ritter, chair of the Social Responsibilities Committee, asked that people of good will unite to create the kind of climate that would help make the newly passed open occupancy laws effective.

Society members participated in a program of "testers"—whites visiting properties where a black renter had been turned down to see if the property was available to white renter. Janet Miller recalled being a tester:

I had to become a person of a certain income and certain salary and description to go and apply for an apartment in Hackensack. I was to check the apartment where a black person has been refused. And if [the landlord] would then accept me then we knew it was discrimination against the black person.

Bill Rosenquest recalled sitting with a black Ridgewood family who had a cross burned on their lawn and who had been threatened with physical violence.

Friends of the Society Nancy Reis and Gladys Herschel, members Ruland Anderson, Sue Handley, Janet Miller, Janet Webster, Jean ten Hove, Bill Rosenquest, and Quaker Dorothy Mock, with many others, worked with the Fair Housing Committee of Ridgewood, Glen Rock, and Vicinity to break the color ban among landlords.

Society members participated in a day-long Martin Luther King film festival in March, 1974, a decade before January 15 was declared a national holiday. Sponsored by the Fair Housing Committee, films by black filmmakers on "Aliens in Their Own Land" were shown all day at Benjamin Franklin Junior High School, and a reception at the Unitarian Society followed. Dick Bruner and Ralph and Wini Ilowite were on the planning committee.

A full-page advertisement, bearing the names of many Unitarians among the signers, appeared in *The Ridgewood Sunday News* in June, 1974 urging readers to join the fight for fair housing. The Board of Trustees approved the use of Anderson Auditorium

for suppers by the Ridgewood Fair Housing Committee—a form of Society support that didn't require a vote of the membership.

James J. Reeb

Under Martin Luther King's leadership, March 1965, blacks and whites attempted to march together peacefully from Selma, Alabama, to the state capital at Montgomery, for the right of blacks to vote. Mob violence, a sheriff's posse, and state troopers using whips, clubs, and tear gas injured more than 50 marchers. Two days later, on March 9, 1500 people, including white Unitarians Viola Liuzzo from the Detroit area, and Rev. James J. Reeb from Boston, attempted the march again. That evening, James J. Reeb was beaten by four white men, suffered a fractured skull, and died on March 11. On March 13, President Lyndon Johnson met with Governor George Wallace, informing him that the brutality must be stopped. Yet, after the march was over, Liuzzo was shot and killed on March 25 while driving marchers back to Selma. Four white male suspects were arrested and charged with murder, but were acquitted. Later, in a federal trial for conspiring to violate Liuzzo's civil rights, three of them were convicted and sentenced to 10 years. (It was not until the following August that the Voting Rights Act was passed.)

Minister Kenneth Patton joined other members of the Ridgewood Unitarian Society in a protest march in Ridgewood, and on March 21 conducted a memorial service for James Reeb. People from the entire Ridgewood community attended the service, and a sum of money was raised for Reeb's widow. Later the Society's religious education building, at the suggestion of 90-year-old member Herman Lawson, was formally dedicated to James Reeb.

Citizens For Swimming

In 1968, Unitarian Jean ten Hove and co-workers on the Fair Housing Committee Nancy Reis and Mickey Mullen asked the Ridgewood Commissioners for permission to bring a group of children, most of them black, from Paterson to Graydon pool for swimming and instruction. The Commissioners turned down the proposal, but said that Village citizens could bring the children as guests. The resulting program, Citizens for Swimming, continues at this writing (1996). Donations pay guest fees, and Ridgewood volunteers accompany the group of children and their counselors at the pool twice a week during August. Sue Handley continues to organize the efforts of numerous Society members in this community-wide project.

Black Affairs Council

After Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination on April 4, 1968, righting the injustices that black citizens endure became even more urgent. Kenneth Patton's address on May 5, 1968, on "The Establishment of Violence," asked:

What are the institutions and establishments of violence? What is our folklore of violence? Is man [sic] a violent creature by nature? The time has come when America must ask these questions of itself.

Within the Unitarian Universalist denomination, discussion of black empowerment began. Black Unitarian Universalists formed a Black Affairs Council (BAC), and asked for affiliate membership of the UUA with UUA financial support. Another group, Black and White Action (BWA), opposed BAC, believing an integrated approach to empowering blacks a better approach. The Ridgewood Society, in a special congregational meeting on April 7, 1968, adopted a resolution supporting BAC, and the Wednesday Morning Discussion Group mailed copies of the resolution to all Unitarian Universalist societies, churches, and fellowships in the United States, and to the UUA – just in time for the upcoming General Assembly to be held in Cleveland, Ohio.

A number of Society members—notably Ruland Anderson, Edna Crane, Bob Lindsay, Bill Rosenquest, Betty Velonis, Tony Velonis, and Janet Webster—were active in a white support group for BAC, called FULLBAC. Ken Patton, speaking from the floor at the UUA General Assembly, and the Ridgewood delegation, helped BAC to gain recognition and funding of \$250,000 a year from the UUA, to be renewed each year for four years. Ruland Anderson reported to the Ridgewood congregation:

. . . a strong resolution in support of the Black Affairs Council was adopted by the General Assembly of the UUA by a vote of 846 to 327. There were four hours of debate and parliamentary maneuvering, but all attempts at amendment to weaken the resolution were defeated. . . . Mr. Patton spoke from the floor in support of the position endorsed by our Society. . . . I think we can be proud of the part our Society played in the whole matter.

President Robert Lindsay greeted members and friends with these words the following fall:

Unitarians come together on the theory that improvement is possible. We believe that good will, an open mind, and involvement in public questions can bring real change.

The congregation embarked on a four-year fund-raising effort to support BAC, scheduling benefit performances by well-known and socially conscious entertainers, both black and white, to standing-room-only audiences at the 773-seat Ben Franklin Junior High School auditorium.

The February 1, 1969 benefit performance featured Vinie Burrows, and raised \$2,531, earmarked for BAC. Betty Velonis provided refreshments afterward at the Unitarian Society’s auditorium, which overflowed with people. The congregation voted to give \$500 to the House of SOUL (Society Of Unitarian Laymen) in Trenton, a black-run project of the New Jersey Area Council of Unitarian Universalists, sending the rest of the proceeds to the UUA for BAC. In his transmittal letter to the UUA, Bob Lindsay wrote:

The vote in Cleveland [at the General Assembly] last year—an overwhelming vote by any standards—is a commitment that all of us must live up to, if we are to claim, ever again, any moral leadership in this country.

The UUA continued BAC support at the 1969 General Assembly in Boston, in spite of opposition by BWA and a walkout by both BAC and BWA. BAC demanded that the UUA invest \$10 million in minority-groups enterprises as reparations for “past injustices” to Negroes.

The 1970 BAC event on February 5 featured folk singer Pete Seeger, who donated

his services, and Frederick Kirkpatrick. With higher ticket prices and a lower artist fee, the event raised \$5,220. A local newspaper article stated:

Together these two men [Seeger and Kirkpatrick] found a full house of 750 enthusiasts who came . . . to find that they were attending more than a concert. They were at a gathering that had all the intimacy and feeling of oneness as did the March-on-Washington, the Moratorium, Woodstock, the Poor People's Campaign and the Selma March all wrapped into one evening that ended with joined hands and voices singing chorus after chorus of "We Shall Overcome."

The proceeds were divided, two-thirds to BAC and one-third to the House of SOUL.

In 1970, BAC formally "disaffiliated" from the denomination, which was facing a severe financial crisis, and took its appeal directly to individual Unitarian Universalist churches and fellowships. The UUA Board of Trustees then recommended that all UUA funds to BAC be discontinued, a decision that was upheld by the vote of the 1971 General Assembly.

In 1971, the February 20 benefit featured the dramatic presentation, *To Be Young, Gifted and Black*, by Lorraine Hansberry. The proceeds were donated to the independent BAC, to the UUSC, and to provide seed money for Century 21's proposed low-cost housing to be built in Paterson's north side. A project that never came to be.

A group from Cornell University performed *To All Things Black and Beautiful* for the 1972 benefit for BAC. *The Ridgewood News* reported that members of the Unitarian Society "were the only people in town reaching out to make a black-white culture."

Some of the Unitarian members and friends who worked on the benefit performances for BAC were Ruland Anderson, Mary and John Brett, Diane Dannells, Delight Dodyk, Linda and Sy Friedman, Wini Ilowite, Jack Jennings, Helen and Bob Lindsay, Diane Ringstad, Julie Risch, Gene Svarre, and Betty Velonis.

PART 3: LOCAL AND COMMUNITY ACTION

Housing

Some of the most far-reaching social actions of Ridgewood Unitarians have been in changing patterns of housing.

In 1974, Roberta Svarre reported at the Annual Meeting that the Ridgewood Senior Citizens Housing Corporation, a non-profit group she initiated, would build a middle-income senior citizen apartment complex with some HUD support. By 1979 Svarre had obtained use variances from the Village for 129 units. The Unitarian Society voted at a special meeting in March 1980, to be a sponsor in the application for HUD funds lending \$1,666, and appointing Svarre as its representative on the Board of the Senior Citizens Housing Corporation. The apartments were opened for occupants in May, 1984, ten years after initiation of the plan.

Aging

A lay service, "A Touch of (Senior) Class," in December 1974 gave Sid Babcock, Hans Bodlaender, Vera Giger, Jack Hawkins, Winnie Hawkins, Kay Lyle, and Hazel McCurdy a chance to speak of the needs of the Society's aging members. As a result, The Committee on Aging was born, exploring health care, nutrition, transportation,



SHARE's "The Cottage Place"
after the 1988 addition.

housing, recreation, and the community resources available to meet them. The committee arranged transportation to exercise classes for senior citizens, and planned luncheon meetings with speakers on various aspects of aging. Hans Bodlaender was chair for the first two years, with Winnie Hawkins, Bill Scanlan, Mary Brett, and Eric Davies taking the lead in subsequent years, through 1985-86.

In 1977 the Committee on Aging and the LRY sponsored a Sunday service of selections from the musical *I Do, I Do* performed by the New Players of Ridgewood High School. In another lay service, Vera Giger described her development as an artist over six decades.

Jane Abbott, Anna Berg, Mary Brett, Bill Chioni (Bobbie Moore's father), Edna and Howard Crane (Thalia Sudnik's parents), Diane Foster (now Hostetler), Kay Lyle (Jane Diepeveen's mother), Lee Regal, June Ritter, Bea Robbins, Emma Russ (Sue Handley's mother), Bill Scanlan, Janet Webster, Albert Webster, and George Wolfe were among those active in the "Senior Action Committee" in 1979, as it came to be known.

Sol Goldberg, in 1995, revived interest in the management of aging by organizing a new UU Council on Aging.

SHARE / The Cottage Place

Bill Scanlan remembered his friend Jim Gillies knew something about the housing problems that older people experience, when he heard the lay service presented by Barbara Bonazzi (now Barry), Pat Malone (later Burns), and Sid Babcock in February 1979. Scanlan's April lay service had Barbara Anderson, Roberta Svarre, and Sharon Huber speaking of their experiences in the field of housing for senior citizens. Later in the year, Scanlan brought Jim Gillies, founder of "Share a Home," to tell how he had helped senior citizens buy and operate group homes.

Thus began Shared Housing Association of Ridgewood and Environs (SHARE), a not-for-profit corporation to create and operate a residence, The Cottage Place, providing shared housing for eight elderly people. Formerly a single family residence, it is

located across the street from the Unitarian Society's building. Although Society members initiated the project and have served as officers, board members and volunteers since its inception, the project soon grew to include broad support from many individuals and organizations in the larger Ridgewood community. The non-sectarian residence opened November 20, 1982.

It was by the skin of their teeth that the SHARE Board was able to have the home in order and prepared for visitors that day. Interior painting had been completed by the rector of Christ Episcopal Church, with professionals Peter and Terry Lyon, when ceilings had to be opened to install a sprinkler system. Winnie and Jack Hawkins and others re-painted ceilings, installed window shades and curtains and were still working on clean-up a bare ten minutes before the opening reception. Winnie Hawkins, in her role as writer and director, found ample material in that photo-finish for a skit for the next Fellowship Feast.

Among the many others who helped make the Cottage Place a reality were Mary Brett (now Evers), Judy Collins, Jane Diepeveen, Jack Hawkins, Lee Regal, Jack Ritter, June Ritter, and Al Webster. Kay Lyle was one of the original residents. Winnie Hawkins did not know in 1982 that 13 years later she would be a Cottage Place resident.

The Cottage Place was administered at first by volunteer June Ritter. Paid professionals followed: Gaia Brown, Mabel Tribiano, and Carol Moore. The Presidents of the Share Board of Trustees were Bill Scanlan, Albert Webster, Eric Davies, and currently, Jack Ritter.

In March 1988 an addition expanded the building to house 14 residents. As of this writing, SHARE is planning another senior residence on Prospect Street.

Urban Action

Activists on the local level spent much of their energy a little distance south, in Paterson, as Terry Ripmaster attested. "We Care. . . We Can. . ." was the theme of the 1968 program describing urban ghetto life, sponsored by the Ad Hoc Committee for Urban Action. One result: a group of adults took high school students to churches in Paterson to tutor the children, organized by the Paterson Federation of Neighborhood Councils. Unitarians involved were Ruland Anderson, Gordon E. Brown, Ruth Lusky, and Catherine Park.

Society members raised scholarship money for black students of Northwest Bergen County, to be distributed through the Order of the Lamp, an organization originating in 1950 among the black community of Ridgewood. In May, 1968, Ruland Anderson reported that the fund received over \$15,000 in response to a town-wide mailing for a Martin Luther King scholarship fund. In 1995, the Order of the Lamp was still holding a yearly cotillion to raise scholarship moneys.

In the early 1970s, Society members Sue Handley and Wayne Armstrong tutored Cuban refugees in Paterson who wanted to learn English.

Northside Forces

The Paterson Federation of Neighborhood Councils developed a program originally called the "Task Force for the Northside" and later "Northside Forces." Janet

Webster, the Unitarian liaison with the Task Force, worked diligently to arouse support for the emerging neighborhood service. Unitarians cooked and served the first of the International Luncheons for the Paterson Ecumenical PreSchool (PEP) in March, 1969. Betty Velonis, helped by Sue Handley, Rosa Lee Holstein, Kris Molnar, Roberta Svarre, Janet Webster, and Naomi Yanis prepared gourmet specialties from many nations, for subsequent events.

The Task Force supplied Nancy Van Arsdale with time, money, and playground equipment for a playground and a garden in Paterson. (A generation later, Eileen Mohan and Tommie Hutto-Blake, too, have made a garden and playground.) Opportunity Industrial Center taught youngsters pre-vocational skills and helped them find jobs.

By 1978, other churches were supporting Northside Forces with \$25,000, whereas the Unitarian Society contributed up to that time only funds raised specifically for that cause. In 1978, the Society donated from its general budget \$100. Betty Velonis and Janet Webster persuaded Unitarians to sponsor children at PEP and CAMP (Community Action with a Ministry to People), an after-school tutoring and activities program and a summer day-camp for school-age children. And of course, Velonis's international luncheons and dinners raised funds.

On January 20, 1980, a panel of speakers from Northside Forces described the self-help program at a Ridgewood Unitarian Society Sunday morning service introduced by Janet Webster.

Al and Janet Webster remembered those who quietly helped. Janet Webster said: Various people went down and did a lot of things. Betty Velonis, notably. She would go down in that little tiny nursery . . . and do this fabulous stint of getting lunch every day for the nursery school.

Edna Crane did all kinds of things. Like going to the Thrift Shop here in Ridgewood and buying up a lot of snowsuits and taking them home and putting on any patch or button that could be done and donating it to the Northside Forces. She spent weeks of time doing this. She would do all kinds of little quiet things at Northside like that.

She gave other groups their share of the credit:

I think the Methodists and the Presbyterians had a missionary interest in something close to home, and a very nebulous group called a "task force" was formed to support the need. . . and if money is needed, to go back to their own churches and try to raise the money for a special roof for the pre-school, or a special [stove for] the soup kitchen. . . It has been a bootstrap operation that has kept coming up a little.

Al Webster said, of his wife,

. . . [s]omebody said that Northside and [she] were the Unitarians' conscience. Charitable conscience.

But Janet Webster, in 1986, was still angry:

The [Unitarian] church itself always refused to vote even a \$50 budget appropriation. . . There has been no official action. The Harvest service came the nearest thing to it, that [DRE] Gail had last November, where we took a collection. . . .

I got nowhere with the suggestion that [the Unitarian Society] include [Northside] in the budget. There was always the feeling that we can't quite balance our own budget.

Her disappointment in the Society's inability to vote funds for Northside was never assuaged.

PEP's annual luncheon and fashion show in May of 1981 honored Janet Webster for her cooking, teaching, toys, furniture, fund-raising, and speech classes, offered to PEP since the mid-1960s.

Janet Webster died in August 1988, having passed her many responsibilities at Northside to capable younger Unitarian hands: Sue Handley, Denny Chandler, and Luciana Pirani. Wayne Armstrong, Barbara Goldberg, Tommie Hutto-Blake, Ginny Jones, Ruth Lusky, Eileen Mohan and others joined in tutoring and other assistance.

The Unitarians remain heavily engaged in Paterson's needs: a senior citizens' center, a hot lunch program for the homeless, PEP, and CAMP. Every year, when Ridgewood celebrates Martin Luther King day, the Society's young people and those from CAMP enjoy lunch and entertainment together in Anderson auditorium.

Pure Water

In 1978, Unitarian Mary Franklin almost single-handedly helped the governing body of Ridgewood understand the dangers of selling the Ridgewood Water Department to the Passaic River System. She urged Ridgewood residents to sign petitions, and appear at Open Public Meetings of the Village Council to support her "Committee to Keep Our Water Pure."

AIDS

In more recent years, Bob Sproul, Marion Arenas, and Terry Ellen, have each presented a Sunday Service focused on AIDS, the Buddy Support Project, and the Glen Rock-Ridgewood AIDS/HIV Ministries program. Carol Burton was the Society's liaison with this group.

The Society provided a meeting space for Parents of Children with AIDS, whose leader at that time was Caroline Ackerman.

Homeless

Caroline Bolton, Lois Brown, Margaret Davies, Barbara Goldberg, Jim Hyatt, Helen Lindsay, John Rydberg, and others were, beginning in 1986, supporters of the Interreligious Fellowship for the Homeless. In 1989 a performance by the Jubilee Singers from Washington, D.C. at John Harms Center in Englewood raised \$15,000 for the Fellowship.

Hunger

In 1986-87, Bob Lindsay formed a Stop Hunger Committee that elicited the active support of at least 25 members who collected food from supermarkets and delivered it to the Social Service Association's food pantry and to Northside Forces.

Among the workers were Ellen Anderson, Wayne Armstrong, Rev. Jo Bartlett, Hans Bodlaender, Barbara and Jim Cotten and their son Todd, Lynn Deitzel, Harry Donnally, Rena Errick, Barbara Goldberg, Sue Handley, Helen Lindsay, Melanie and George Mamunes, Luciana Pirani, Mike Patterson, Brietta and Edmond Savoie, Bob Shoemaker, Tony Picozzi, Janet Webster, and Naomi and Conrad Yanis.

In the 1980s, Society members joined the activities of the World Hunger Program of the Ridgewood Interfaith Alliance, “Bread for the World,” and the CROP walk each October to raise funds for hungry people. Sol Goldberg and Ira Mendelsberg chair the Hunger Committee in 1996.

PART 4: NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONCERNS

Interim minister Josiah Bartlett (1986-87) said:

The Unitarian Universalist style is enabling and has a minister who empowers individuals and the congregation, to take charge and carry out their decisions on their own.

He then discussed the United States’ excessive expenditure for weapons, and policies that increased the danger of nuclear war.

Society members’ dedication to the cause of world peace dates from 1915, when members of the Women’s Alliance supported the Woman’s Peace Party, and the 1930s, when they joined the Women’s Peace Council in Ridgewood. In 1935 Rabbi Sidney Goldstein of the Free Synagogue of New York City spoke at one of the Fireside Forums at the Unitarian Society on the topic “World Peace.” During World War II minister Homer Sheffer’s totally pacifist stand was well tolerated by a congregation that seems, however, to have accepted the necessity of fighting that war. The disarmament proposals that followed in the late 1940s, the nuclear disarmament activities of the 1950s, the anti-Vietnam-war protests, and the amnesty proposals for Vietnam war resisters, found energetic volunteers among Society members in the 1960s.

The murders of President John F. Kennedy in 1963, of Malcolm X in 1965, and of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King in 1968, were traumas for the nation. The death during a protest march of James J. Reeb in Alabama in 1965; the deaths, in 1970, of four students killed by the National Guard at Kent State University in Ohio, and two killed by police at Jackson State College in Mississippi; the deaths of millions in Vietnam – all led to an anxious sense of chaos and the knowledge that war and violence are never held completely at bay.

After Robert Kennedy was shot in 1968, a memorial service for both Kennedy brothers and Martin Luther King raised \$125 for the “Kennedy King Fund.” Kenneth Patton tried without success to interest other groups in contributing to the fund. Ultimately, because the Social Responsibility Committee and Patton saw world hunger as the issue most in need of resolution, the money went to the UUSC to help feed the starving Biafran children.

Members and friends of the Unitarian Society participated in the Vigil for Peace at Van Neste Square, attended the Solidarity Day in Washington, organized lectures against appropriations for deploying MX and Pershing Missiles, marched in the annual Fourth of July parade, held fund-raising dinners in support of nuclear freeze, sponsored lay services on “Roots of the Arms Race,” supported the Task Force for Disarmament, and sponsored the action of the Board of Trustees in naming Reeb House a Peace Site. A lay service explored the experience of adult members in the peace movement, and children shared what they had learned of peace education in the religious education program.

Some of the leaders of the United Nations Association (UNA) were Unitarians.

Harry Donally and Brietta Savoie each served as UNA president. Ralph Ilowite and Al Blake are on the UNA board at the time of this writing.

The UNA presented its Human Rights Award to Woodie Holstein in December, 1982, for his work as Chairman of the Ridgewood Area Peace Coalition. John Lindsay-Poland (1992) and Helen Lindsay (1993) received the Human Rights Award for their work in Central America. Other Unitarians who have received the Award are Ruland Anderson, Octavius Pitzalis, Cecilia Raven, Roberta Svarre, Betty Velonis, and friend of the Society Robert Sproul.

The UUA-UN Envoy program's first envoy from the Ridgewood Society was Helen Lindsay. Interest in the UUA-UN Envoy program brought, in 1966, five members to UU conferences on China. A dinner-film-discussion meeting in Ridgewood explored United States policy toward China. Later, Kay Lyle served as the Society's envoy.

The United Nations Ambassador from Uganda came to Ridgewood in March, 1967, under the auspices of the Social Responsibility Committee and the UN Envoy program. He spoke at the Ridgewood Municipal Hall at a meeting open to the public, attracting about 200 people. Helen Lindsay, Lenore Kahn, and Betty Velonis co-chaired the event. Also in 1967, Committee sponsored a meeting at the Unitarian Society at which two political refugees from South Africa spoke.

Terry Ripmaster, chair of the Social Responsibilities Committee 1966-68, brought members' attention to leader Caesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers (UFW), who urged people to boycott grapes and head lettuce as an act of support for the underpaid workers. A few years later, Philip Savoie, 14-year-old son of Brietta and Edmond Savoie, walked the full 15 miles of a "Walkathon" to raise \$30 for the UFW in 1974-75. To continue the UFW work to support and publicize the plight of agricultural workers in California, the LRY sponsored a dinner, and picketed Shop Rite stores. The Social Action Committee urged a boycott of Gallo wine, iceberg lettuce and grapes. And Bea Robbins sponsored an evening meeting at her home to hear a UFW representative.

In April 1967, Ripmaster's *Social Responsibility Newsletter* asked members to take action against chemical warfare in Vietnam, which was killing children as well as destroying crop land; and to support a day nursery in Paterson. In November, the Social Responsibilities Committee approved a resolution on Vietnam to present to the whole Society.

Ripmaster organized Paterson tenants in a rent strike against their slumlord churches in Paterson. The tenants won, but as a result, Ripmaster lost his job at the Poverty Center, and opened up his own center in a storefront in Paterson. In the course of time, he became discouraged with the Unitarian Society's cautious approach, and resigned as chair of the Social Responsibilities Committee. He wrote,

Michael Ferber, who was arrested with Dr. Spock, et al. on charges of conspiracy, said this: "I grew up in the Unitarian church . . . with a heritage of idealistic social and radical commitment to change. . . I grew disillusioned . . . Just another bourgeois Protestant church, forgetful of its origins."

Because of my involvement and commitment, I have drifted far from the bourgeois ethic. Therefore, I feel that I can no longer serve as S.R. chairman. I am involved in radical, revolutionary commitment and my involvement leaves little time to [do] anything else.

After thanking all who cooperated with him, Ripmaster continued:

... [T]he Ridgewood Unitarian Church can be proud of its assistance to the inter-racial school, the day care centers in Paterson, and its support of the Community Action Program. . . .

... I would like to see the petty factionalism in the church replaced by a total commitment for social change. I would like to see the facilities used for a school for the poor; and large sums of money for a “radical commitment.” I would like to see Unitarians live up to the heritage of the Unitarian movement.

Ripmaster’s intensity and radicalism, and his critique of the Unitarians’ social action style, must have been the impetus behind the September 1968 dinner-discussion, “Is There a Place for Liberals Within the Existing Political Structure?” by Roberta Svarre and Sue Handley.

The Society supported the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee’s international outreach through the sale of Christmas cards; Margery Cleveland and Candy O’Meara are two who took this responsibility in the mid-1970s. The Sunday school children in 1978 began distributing the UUSC “Guest at Your Table” boxes to collect coins for under-developed nations. Since 1992, the Society has been a partner congregation in the UUSC *Promise the Children* program. These programs continue to the present (1995).

The political news in the United States in 1974 was tense with the Watergate investigation and the evident malfeasance of President Richard Nixon. In 1974-75, the Social Responsibilities Committee under Sue Denniston sent letters to congressmen and to the *Bergen Evening Record* supporting the impeachment of Nixon.



Fourth of July Parade 1988.
Hans Bodlaender (with hat)

Bea Robbins was Director of the Bergen County Chapter of the National Council for Universal and Unconditional Amnesty [for draft resisters], and the mother of a draft resister.

In August of 1972, the last American ground troops left Vietnam, but heavy bombing of Vietnam continued in December. In September 1974, President Gerald Ford announced amnesty for draft resisters. The following April the war in Vietnam finally ended. Bea Robbins, jubilant, gathered a group to celebrate and bind the nation's wounds at the Sheep Meadow rally in Central Park. Robbins brought the amnesty group and the Social Action Committee together for a convention February 21, 1976, where Vietnam war resisters, veterans, and former prisoners of war met.

In 1980, David Lindsay, son of Helen and Bob Lindsay, filed with the Unitarian Society his statement opposing participation in the military. Phebe Dodyk, the first Youth Trustee on the Society's Board, attended a Friends' meeting on this subject, and Kenneth Patton reported that the UUA had a registration center for such documentation of conscientious objectors' statements.

The Task Force Against Growing Militarism, created and headed by Hans Bodlaender, began in 1980 to hold vigils at Van Neste Square, and brought speakers on Nuclear Arms Freeze to the area. Professor of physics Michio Kaku of City College of New York was one. Jesuit Father John R. Hyatt of the Justice and Peace Committee of the Archdiocese of Newark spoke on the Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops in 1983. Joined with the Ridgewood Area Peace Coalition, the Task Force worked to stop appropriations for MX and Pershing missiles, and provided draft counseling.

John Lindsay-Poland, David Lindsay's brother, spoke at a lay service in 1984 on "Roots of the Arms Race." Soon Lindsay-Poland would ask the Task Force for support in his work with Witness for Peace in Nicaragua.

Anna Berg, Sue Denniston (later Mounkhal), Joe Diamond, Bud Foster, Woodie Holstein, Kenneth Patton, Al Schreiner, Betty and Tony Velonis, George Wolfe, Naomi Yanis, and members of the LRY were among those active with the Task Force Against Growing Militarism, 1980-1986.

The Social Responsibilities Committee and the Art Committee together helped the children in the religious education classes create several panels of a Peace Ribbon to join panels made by children across the nation. The Ribbon, at its full 10-mile-length, encircled the Pentagon in 1987.

In November of 1987 a Peace and Justice Committee created by Hans Bodlaender and Helen Lindsay focused especially on United States involvement in Central America. The support given to Vietnam Veterans for Peace, and to John Lindsay-Poland, were exceptionally dramatic.

Unitarian minister Terry Ellen said, "It's a wonderful morning when soldiers lead the rest of us in paths of peace," at an early morning rally at Van Neste Square in Ridgewood. The hard-driving rain did not prevent an enthusiastic send-off for the Vietnam Veterans for Peace convoy of food and medicine to Nicaragua. A group of 29 old trucks, driven by dedicated veterans, stopped overnight in Ridgewood. The Peace and Justice Committee was one of the sponsors of the convoy, holding a fund-raising dinner for Father Daniel Berrigan, who supported it, and providing housing for the drivers.

After several sessions of study of covert action in Central America, at a Special Congregational meeting (January 17, 1988) the congregation voted to support John Lindsay-Poland's refugee assistance work in El Salvador with \$500 from the Society's funds, plus \$1,500 to be raised by individual contributions. He worked under the auspices of Peace Brigades International (PBI).

The fully detailed story of the Peace and Justice Committee, and John Lindsay-Poland and his supporters in Ridgewood, must be told by a future historian. (Some of the committee's ongoing activities of 1986-1996 can be found in the chapter *The Recent Decade*.)

Seeking to create a world climate that would eliminate war, Unitarians worked with many groups: United World Federalists; Women's Strike for Peace; Women's Peace Party; the Friends' Positive Program for Peace; National Council for Universal and Unconditional Amnesty; Vigil for Peace; Campaign for Nuclear Arms Freeze; SANE FREEZE; Justice and Peace Committee of the Archdiocese of Newark; Witness for Peace; Peace Brigades International; National Peace Ribbon Project; the Vietnam Veterans for Peace Convoy; Interfaith Peace Group of Pascack Valley; World Peace Makers of Ridgewood; Ridgewood Area Peace Coalition; and the new committee of Unitarians, the Task Force Against Growing Militarism.

PART 5: FUNDING FOR SOCIAL CONCERNS

While we seldom budget donations to outside organizations, our activities inspire personal involvement and reflect personal commitments. If money is needed we plan a fund-raising event. Our history is full of examples: benefits for BAC and PEP, and CAMP, solicitations for Citizens for Swimming. This great amount of individual participation in outreach leads to our reputation in the community as an activist congregation and attracts new members who carry on the dedication to social action.

— *Barbara Goldberg*

Beginning in the 1970's, the Society budgeted a small amount for the Social Responsibility Committee's operating expenses, but not for contributions to causes. Since accepting Patton's 1964-65 recommendations, individuals, committees and groups within the society sponsor and contribute in their own names, but not in the name of the Society as a whole, except when approved at an official Congregational Meeting. The policy assures that no one pledging to the Society's operating fund will find that she or he is contributing to a cause antithetical to his/her convictions. Freedom of belief, freedom from the tyranny of a majority, has been maintained.

There was a slight change made May 12, 1978, when the congregation adopted a policy permitting the Society to provide seed money to committees in the Society to begin social action. The Board voted unanimously to give the committee working in Paterson with Northside Forces \$100.

Even under stressful financial conditions, the Unitarians managed to contribute to social causes. In 1979, income for the previous ten years had risen only 24%, while inflation had doubled costs. Yet the Society allocated \$250 to the Ridgewood Senior Citizens Housing Corporation, Inc. for expenses in applying for HUD funds. At the Annual Meeting, Janet Webster made a plea for Northside Forces:

[I]t is hoped that next fall the membership will share in more activity and exchange visits between youth and senior groups and will share in a month-long drive for food to help stock the emergency kitchen.

The result: Before the spring 1980 budget hearings, treasurer Becky Zoler reported contributions that Society members had made to social concerns during the 1979-80 year: special collections and donations of more than \$850, plus food, clothing and building use of incalculable value.

When, in 1981, the Social Responsibilities Committee wanted to be able to take official Unitarian Society stands without going to the full membership for each issue, the trustees decided that guidelines should be written and made part of the constitution. However, that never did happen. Patton's 1964 policy still holds. But the Society still provides seed money, as approved in 1978: \$1,200 was budgeted for 1995-96.

Another aspect of finance and its relation to social concerns is that of investment of the Society's capital. In 1987, when the Cottage Place parsonage was sold, the Investment Committee (chaired by Bob Lindsay) and the Board of Trustees studied available choices. The Society then invested \$100,000 in the South Shore Bank of Chicago, \$80,000 in the Calvert Social Investment Fund, and \$80,000 in Working Assets. All these funds in one way or another encourage economic growth for minorities, or fund socially responsible causes.

Through local and regional organizations, Unitarians have worked for a better world and have actively applied their religious concerns to social issues. Hundreds of Society members, acting individually, through the Women's Alliance, Laymen's League, or (in more recent times) committees of the Society have been instrumental in the founding, or significant factors in the success, of a great many programs benefiting individuals, the community, the nation, and the world as a whole – sponsoring fund-raising lectures, concerts and dinners, serving as officers or board members, or simply as volunteer workers and contributors of funds.

That tradition continues.



FOOD, FUN, AND FUNDRAISING

Life at the Society often centers around fellowship, fund-raising and fun: fellowship among the members and friends, fund-raising for social concerns and for the Society's operating expenses, and fun in the kitchen and at the dining table.

As past member Betty Sonders once quipped, "Unitarians are the religious arm of the Diners Club."

THE KITCHEN AND BETTY VELONIS

The following letter speaks for itself:

March 15, 1982

Unsung UU Award Committee

Attn: The Rev. William Holway

Dear Rev. Holway,

Betty Velonis is a cook who uses this method to express Unitarian Universalist ideals. When asked whom she cooked for, she replied "worthy causes. Some people sew or knit, some type or make 'phone calls. I cook." One friend calls her "Minister of Cooking." Truly it is social action when she "cooks to serve." Betty cooks annual fund raisers serving up to 100 people. The beneficiaries of her culinary expertise include the United Nations Association, Fair Housing, The Friends' Neighborhood Nursery School, the League of Women Voters, political candidates, and Paterson Northside Forces.

When PEP, the Paterson Ecumenical Preschool, began more than ten years ago, Betty cooked hot lunches for the children every day for four years. . . .

For her own Ridgewood Unitarian Society, Betty cooks two all church brunches, when services resume after the summer hiatus, and in the spring at pledging time. She has been an R E teacher for many years and with her husband, Tony, she has been an LRY advisor. She also has served on the Board of Trustees more than once. . . .

But cooking is Betty's greatest gift. It is never more evident than at the annual Society fundraiser, the Uncommon Market. For this she cooks and bakes and freezes breads, cookies, and main dishes. On the day of the market the delectable aroma of onion herb batter bread wafts throughout the building as she bakes in the church kitchen throughout the day, enticing reticent buyers right to the cash register. As a windup for this hectic day, she serves dinner to 100-120 people.

Perhaps the most endearing gift of all is the cake she bakes for each child participating in the annual naming service. . . . It is a sweet beginning to a lifelong journey and commitment to Unitarian Universalism.

— *Marilyn Crafts*

The “new kitchen,” completed in 1968, was part of the remodeling of the church building 1967-70, and it is hard to overemphasize the effect that a single room had on the subsequent life of the Society. Rosa Lee Holstein described the “pre-new kitchen” dinners:

We had always had tuna salad, macaroni and cheese, the cheapest food at the bring-a-dish suppers; dismal. Betty Velonis and her kitchen hit the church like a hurricane! Betty’s use of the kitchen changed everything we did.

Betty Velonis’s kitchen-centered labors of love went into high gear in 1968. Lois Tillson, editor of the Unitarian Society’s *Newsletter*, announced a “kitchen warming” brunch to celebrate the remodeled kitchen in 1968:

One of the best ways for people to feel a sense of belonging to a group and to each other is for them to share food and drink. Our Society wants to become warmer, more open, to grow in the sense of all of us caring about each other and our common ideas and ideals. Now—after years of struggling along in makeshift ways—we have a beautiful new kitchen from which many happy events can flow. . .

Current member Roberta Svarre agrees:

Shared experiences, common purpose and laughter provide a basis for lasting friendships and a true sense of belonging. The many special events held at the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood over the years played a unique role in developing the ties that make us an extended family. The fact that many of them were born out of necessity, the crass but ever present need for money, in no way diminishes the strength they have brought to our Society.

Before 1968, with no church kitchen at her disposal, Betty Velonis had little opportunity to cook for large groups. But with a large double-oven stove, two sinks, a refrigerator, an industrial dishwasher, and sufficient counter space, Velonis developed into the community “cook-for-causes” powerhouse so many in the Ridgewood area remember. Planning the kitchen with Naomi Yanis, she shopped for kitchen equipment, funded largely from her own pocket.

At dinner, she was usually barefoot, her curly gray hair pulled back in a pony tail. She wore a long, brightly-flowered skirt, and a shirt with sleeves rolled above her elbows. When she emerged from the kitchen to greet the hungry crowd, holding aloft a steel bowl and a wooden spoon, she banged on this dinner bell to tell everyone to line up for the buffet-style service at the long kitchen counter.

Naomi Yanis recalled:

One reason Betty and I got along so well was that somewhere along the line we came to agree on some important points, like the angle of the tables, and arranging the trays and table settings with matching silverware. It sounds trivial, but for Betty some things were important and other things weren’t.

Kris Brainard (now Henrickson) and Ellen Anderson agreed, stating that Velonis needed to be in charge, because that was the only way that she was able to accomplish all that she did. Sometimes she locked herself into situations where she would find at the last minute that she didn’t have enough help, and she’d grab some helper who didn’t do things to suit her, and (then) she would get frantic.

Anderson commented:

She was not a young person when she was carrying this big load. And her health was getting increasingly less. . . And toward the very end I remember getting very worried. When I went down there and she was doing some big thing, and was leaning over the counter island gasping for breath.

That must have been just a month or so before she died. She wanted to do this one last dinner, for some good cause. She felt an obligation.

Betty Velonis died January 1, 1993, at her St. Croix vacation home.



THE FAIR – UNCOMMON MARKET

The Unitarian Society had held fall fairs in the very earliest years, originally organized by the Woman’s Alliance. When volunteers Bob and Joan Ritter renewed the fall fair tradition October 8, 1966, they found the pews hard to work around. The Ritters and their group utilized the church driveway, the Sheffer House porch, and later the Reeb House porch and yards.

Janet Miller, a member whose memory goes back to the 1960s, recalled:

At the church fairs at that time the Unitarian women . . . instituted the idea of having casseroles and foreign food. We even had the *Ridgewood News* come and take pictures of us preparing for our fairs. . . I remember that Betty Velonis had her Greek dishes. There were Italian dishes. Jewish dishes. I was famous for a scalloped plantain. We made these ahead of time, and they were kept on ice at the fair so people could buy them and take them home and perhaps cook them or warm them up that night.

The traditional 1970’s fall fair—named “The Uncommon Market” by Bobbie Moore as a reference to the new European Economic Union—featured games, used book sales, a gamelan orchestra, artists ready to draw your portrait, primitive and fine art, tools, toys, a spinner and weaver, roving musicians, displays of pottery, weaving, jewelry,

plants, breads, homemade frozen foods, and a cafe for gourmet lunches.

Ridgewood merchants provided items for sale, in return for public acknowledgment of their contributions. The profits grew from \$2,400 early on to \$6,800 in later years.

Kris Brainard recalled:

I remember that I started going to the fair before I started coming to Sunday services I was looking for things to do with my kids when they were very little. And then too, I wanted a way to become more involved in the community, so I started coming to the fairs.

My favorite part was the used books table. Because these were the kind of used books I wanted to be reading. These were even better for quality than the College Book Club Fair. And one year, at the book table I found the book about city planning for children that my father, Merle Henrickson, had written when I was a young girl! I thought, "This is my thing."

It was after coming to the fairs for a couple of years, when my children were 5 and 7, that I decided it was time to enroll them in church school. After one week, I decided I hadn't really done this for them, but for myself.

I remember that preparations were going on for the Uncommon Market that fall, and I remember saying to Ruth Lusky "Would it be all right if I baked some bread for the market?" I wanted to do something. I had been baking bread for my family for a long time, and so I came to the fair that October morning with a box with a dozen loaves of bread in it. And everybody was just dumbstruck!

A glimpse of the 1975 Uncommon Market when it was going strong is in a series of *Newsletter* columns. The chief organizers that year, Kris Molnar and Becky Zoler, asked for needed help:

FAIR FORECAST

*High Winds from the Fair Committee,
Up to & including Saturday, October 18.*

!! UNCOMMON MARKET DAY!!

NO KIDDING—THE KIDWAY NEEDS HELP:

Ideas such as games and crafts;

Prizes; Unfrosted Cupcakes (for one of our popular booths, the Gulping & Gabbing Booth;

Spin Art machines.

The above is only a summary of what Jack Ritter and Sandy Grasso said they needed for the Kidway. Other parts of the Uncommon Market needed some things, too: Margery Cleveland (formerly Downey) asked for toys; Jane Valbert asked for books, old magazines, and records; Edna Crane wanted empty flower pots and potted plants; Judy Thompson needed, (for witches Hecate and Glinda the Good) hats, scarves, capes, masks, coats, and gloves, for Halloween costumes.

Linda Friedman crafted the Uncommon Market logo. Tony Velonis provided the silk screen stencils and equipment, and David and Valerie Moore and Michael

Friedman worked in the Moore basement printing t-shirts, pillow cases, and aprons.

Craft workshops at Reeb House and in homes produced wreaths, felt ornaments, pine cone decorations, calico ornaments. Dorothy Neff, Mary Brett, Sue Handley, Bonney Ford, Roberta Svarre, and Bea Robbins provided the know-how. Auctionable items such as furniture, art, jewelry, and classy bric-a-brac and collectibles, from old post cards to full-size rugs, were on John Handley's wish-list. Very special was the sale of tribal and oriental art from Kenneth Patton's collection. The proceeds helped him to publish his most recent book, *Strange Harvest*.

Probably 100 people were involved in one way or another in producing the Uncommon Market, in addition to those actually buying on the given day.

UNUSUALLY UNCOMMON.

Always, always the Uncommon Market has brought mention of 'There is something special about the Fair day. It NEVER rains for the Fair. Well, this year was going to be the sunniest ever, despite all the weather reports. After all, it never rains on our Fair!

Finally on Friday the phones started ringing & never-before rain plans were thought up on the spot. . . The auction was moved to the Reeb porch, the cafe to the Reeb living room, the books & toys to the church basement, the coffee and artists to the church auditorium, the kidway food to Sheffer porch, the kidway to the back room at Reeb.

Saturday it poured. But the people came, bought and stayed. . . .

— *Newsletter*, October 27, 1975

There was a smaller income than formerly from the Uncommon Market that year, but it was quite respectable, considering the circumstances.

The denouement: a thank-you from the President:

THE RAINBOW SIGN

For seven years of sunshine we have lived in fear of rain on the day of the Uncommon Market. This year it happened, & we coped, & we prospered.

The Uncommon Market has become an institution in our community. In many ways it is like our church -stable, broadly supported, dynamic.

To all our past Fair Ladies, & most recently to Becky & Kris, we are indebted.

— *Joe Moore*

Ellen Anderson chuckled about the retired men's group's experience cooking and serving at the Uncommon Market Cafe:

At one point, the Apple Pickers were in charge of the luncheon at the fair. Wayne Armstrong was in charge of the group making apple crisp for the dessert. He was cooling the eight baking dishes of apple crisp in his garage, but a squirrel got into the garage and ate from the dishes. Since there was no way to determine which had been contaminated, he had to throw them all out and do it all over by himself, without his team.

The proceeds of the Uncommon Market went into the Society's operating fund, helping considerably in the period of time when the ongoing costs were keeping the Society in a fairly difficult financial position.

In 1980, the Uncommon Market raised \$6,500. Chaired by Dom de Paola and Betty Velonis, it had a Bavarian Cafe, Bodlaenders' crafts, Lindsays' kites, and soup kitchen served by "dem bums." Betty Velonis reminded the congregation that the fair had value beyond money: "widespread participation by diverse people, common goals being achieved, enhanced fellowship and friendships."

A notable spin-off of the Uncommon Market was the *Uncommon Cookbook*. The women created a very simple cookbook in the 1970s. The response was quite favorable, and by early 1978, nearly a dozen were working on an enlarged edition. Known to have worked on the Uncommon Cookbook are Georgia Arnt, Kris Brainard, Gaia Brown, Mary Franklin, Sue Handley, Nancy Mack, June Ritter, Judy Scanlan, Betty Sonders, Naomi Yanis, and Becky Zoler, with illustrators Barbara Bonazzi and George Wolfe.

GOURMANDERIE

The Gourmanderie, too, grew out of the Uncommon Market.

In 1986, when Kris Brainard and June Ritter co-chaired the Gourmanderie, it raised only \$6,000, a somewhat smaller amount than in previous years. They recommended dropping it in favor of smaller fund-raisers. More than 30 people had worked on it that year.

The fair had grown both in complexity and in financial returns for the Society; but gradually the variety of offerings was narrowed down to the one most profitable: home-cooked frozen foods, sold by preorder, with no "fair" at all. Kirsten Brainard reported that at the last Uncommon Market, 37% of the proceeds were from the food table. It was more efficient to have a simple food sale, and the organizers of the Uncommon Market had wearied of the yearly effort.

Kris Brainard explained:

It was getting to be harder and harder to sustain all the different kinds of activities of the Uncommon Market because so many women were returning to work. The people who were most involved in the Uncommon Market near the end were people who really enjoyed cooking. And the cooking had become the big money maker. So we decided, about the early '80s, to make the once-yearly fair strictly a food fair. A Gourmanderie. We moved the date from October to the beginning of December, to capitalize on the fact that people were thinking about food for the holidays.

We made four kinds of soup, and twelve entrees, and a dozen desserts and different kinds of hors d'oeuvres. We would make up a list of foods and prices and send it out before the Gourmanderie. Then we would have many cooking parties to cook what had been ordered; for six weeks or so before the Gourmanderie we were constantly having cooking parties, in the church and in people's homes. We sold fresh baked breads and second hand cook books, kitchen items, and I think we even had a pottery table. The cooks included Sue Handley, Judy Collins, June Ritter, Luciana Pirani, Becky Zoler, Mary Brett, Rosa Lee Holstein, Mary Franklin, Betty Velonis. And there were others.

SERVICE AUCTION

Sue Handley conceived a new twist on the traditional "standard" auction: auctioning off members' talents and time, for the Society's benefit. The Service Auction and

dinner give an opportunity for people to become acquainted as they provide each other with goods and services ranging from a painted portrait to a weekend at the shore.

The first auction of odds and ends—furniture, crockery, art—took place in the church driveway during the Fall Fair, with John Handley shouting bids from the kitchen steps. Later, the porch and front yard of Reeb House were put to use to auction off used furniture and collectibles. Members' services were not yet offered.

At the first auction—probably 1967—where a few services were included among the offerings, non-Unitarians in the audience began bidding on a “Betty Velonis dinner”! Feeling unsure how to handle the situation, John shouted “Sold!” as soon as a Unitarian bid on the dinner. Later, John and Sue decided it would be best to save the auctioning of services for the indoors dinner at the end of the day.

At this point, Sue instigated the true Service Auction. She envisioned it as a way for the members and friends of the Society to raise money and at the same time get to know each other. No one could have predicted that Sue's idea would become the major fundraiser in the future, a permanent part of the Society's traditions.

The first pre-planned service auction was in 1968. The Newsletter of Sept. 17, 1968, stated “This new feature is gaining momentum daily. . . The idea is that we will auction off services of our members, and other members will gladly buy them.” Sue suggested items such as “father and son matching shirts,” “an hour of mending or ironing,” “painting a room,” “typing,” and “knitting,” as well as “putting on a child's birthday party,” and “providing canapes for 24 people.”

The first auction held separately from the Uncommon Market was on February 10, 1973, called a “Hearts and Minds Auction.” John Handley, still the leading auctioneer in 1996, declined the use of a bull-horn, preferring his natural lung-power.

The *Newsletter* of January 19, 1975, catches the spirit:

Going, going, Gone! Today, for the last & final time, you have a chance to offer your unique & one-of-a-kind service to your brothers and sisters in the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood. All you have to do is run both blades of your scissors across the bottom of this page, fill in your service, & mail to Service Auctioneer John Handley. Anything goes—loaves of bread even if you don't have any fishes, manna even if you don't have a heaven, a swim party in your pool even if Unitarians are counted by some as among the great unwashed. A ticket to the auction costs \$4.50 per person.

And the next week, the *Newsletter* said:

Many thanks: to John Handley, the Auctioneer with the Golden Throat; to June Ritter, the Chef with the Golden Palate; Mary Brett, the Woman with the Organized Mind; Pat Monroe, the Mixologist without Peer. They and their many helpful assistants, especially Sue Handley, Jack Ritter, and Janet Webster (who has made more reservations than the Bureau of Indian Affairs) made the Service Auction the most successful ever.

There are rumors that the custom of closing the bar at the end of the dinner, when the auction actually begins, allows the bartender to participate fully in the auction. Other rumors suggest that in some years the bar was kept open so that those in high spirits would be more likely to bid.

At the auction in 1975, 97 services were offered. By 1996, the number was 121. The proceeds have grown from \$1,500 to over \$33,000 in 1995.

THE NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY

The New Year's Eve party is a traditional event in the Society's life, attracting guests from outside the Society as well as the members and friends. Roberta Svarre was instrumental for first planning this spectacular evening. She related:

The Society's New Year's Eve Party is one of the most enjoyable events on our calendar. It had its inception in the early 1970s. Gene (Svarre) was Finance Chairman of the Society and agonizing as usual over the shortfall in our budget. At the same time Sue and John Handley were complaining that their annual New Year's Eve party had gotten too big and become institutionalized. They didn't know how to get out of it, but really didn't want to do it anymore. I suggested that a New Year's Eve party held at the church would solve both problems. The idea was heartily endorsed by the board as a special fundraiser. It also was seen as a way to bring friends together on a special occasion and to share the evening with many who would ordinarily be alone.

Gene and I chaired the first New Year's Eve party. The evening began at 9 PM with dance music provided by Bob Lindsay and his band, "The Moonlighters." Ed Page and Al Webster did solo turns on flute. Joyce Boroscz was in charge of decorations. She and her committee denuded half the Christmas trees in the congregation and turned the church into a sparkling fantasyland of greens and twinkling lights.

An elegant champagne supper was served at midnight. Cooking with us were the Svarres, Sonya and Roy Bryant, Sue Handley, Janet Webster and Rosa Lee Holstein.

On New Year's Eve, 1985, Anderson Auditorium became "Rick's Cafe Americain." June Ritter and crew prepared a Middle Eastern dinner for 127 people. The 1940s film *Casablanca* was projected silently on the wall throughout the evening. The talented and very funny cast, directed by Wayne Armstrong, included John Handley, Marion Arenas, Al Webster, and Fred Jensen. David Lindsay as Sam played *As Time Goes By* again and again, then joined French chanteuse Barbara Bonazzi and the Moonlighters Band (in fezzes) to lead the audience in a rousing rendition of *Le Marseille*

The New Year's Eve party is still an annual event, attracting guests from beyond the Unitarian group of members and friends.

MEDIEVAL FEAST

Roberta Svarre recalled the magical Medieval Feast. One of the most elaborate parties the Society ever had was the Medieval Feast of 1979. She related:

It all began with an unusual cookbook and a lot of imagination. Roberta Svarre received from Jane Diepeveen a gift of "To The King's Taste," a collection of medieval recipes published by the Metropolitan Museum. Roberta decided to use it as the theme for a holiday party the following Christmas.

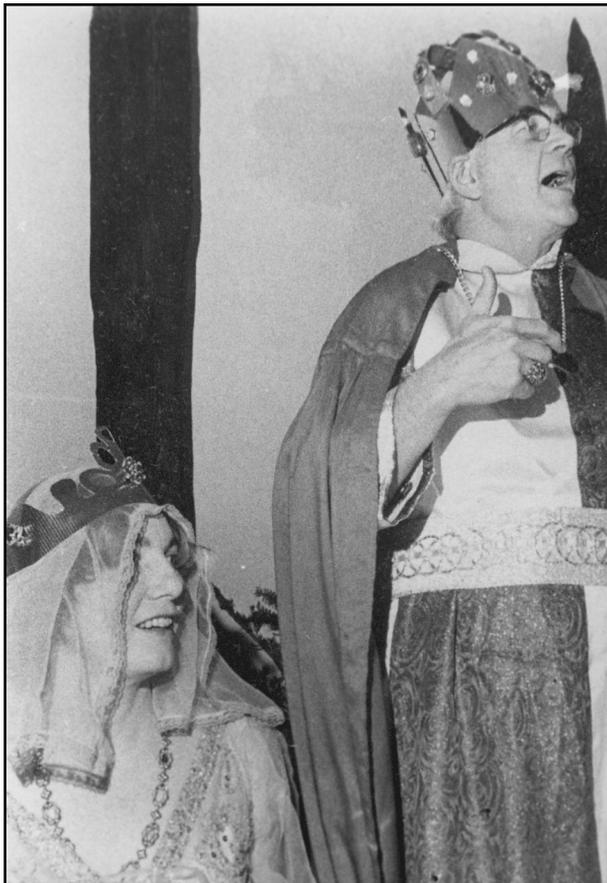
However, during a spring budget meeting of the Society when the need for special fundraising became clear, Roberta decided to turn her idea for a private party into a fundraiser for the Society. The Board of Trustees gave enthusiastic approval to the idea. She asked Denny Chandler and Delight Dodyk to join her as co-chairs. Denny was in charge of the entertainment, Delight, the decorations and Roberta was in charge of the kitchen.

All through the summer of 1979, the food committee tested recipes. The staff of the

Cloisters in New York helped Roberta locate shops which sell such medieval ingredients as rose petals, mead and carob.

An "Invitation to ye Festivities" from the "King and Queen" was sent to members in the fall. Guests were asked to wear costumes to the party, resulting in a frenzy of planning and sewing. Betty Velonis sewed costumes for the young people who, as knaves and wenches, served the dinner.

The entire congregation and many friends enthusiastically joined in the spirit of the evening. Creativity and humor were remarkable in the costuming as bathrobes, light fixtures, kitchen utensils and draperies were utilized by the "companie". Bob Lindsay, a professor at New York University, came as a medieval scholar. Gene Svarre was St. Louis, King of France. Terry and Joan Wing of Teaneck, were St. George and a Dragon. Pat Monroe was a unicorn, Joyce his mistress. Frank Schattschneider was a vision in mail and leather as a crusader. John Handley came as a mysterious knight on horseback.





Programme of Aletes and Festivities

PROCESSION OF THE COMPANIE
PRESENTATION OF THE SALT

Sarvine Tartee
A receipt brought from the East by our
zobie liege afior his crusade against
the infidel

THE KING'S FESTIVE PIPERS
Quand je vas yver retourner... Trouwre Salind
15th Century
Bon jour, Bon male.....Dufey
Ave ros emprieus.....English Carol
Masters in this hall.....English Carol
Dundus a nunciata.....Geron de Fawell
Douce Dame Jolie.....Nachaut

PRESENTATION OF THE HEDE OF BOZE

THE COURT CAROLLERS
The boar's head in hand bring I
Bedecked with baye and rosemary;
And I pray you my masters merry be:
Quit satis in comyrie.

The boar's head I understand
In the fastest ditch in all this land
Which thus bedecked with a garland gay,
Let us servire cantico.

Our steward hath provided this
In honor of the King of bliss,
Which on this day to be served is,
In Requiemus ario.

CADUT apri defero
Reddens laudes Domino.

Pigues rosted
St. John's Rice
Compost
Fungus
Oro - Golden Apples of Venus
artichokes and rue were well-
known medieval aphrodisiacs.
Eat ye this dische with care.

Brede of Paraley Brede of Saffron
Bode Nune Baere

THE QUEEN'S OWN TROPICHOBEANS
have verrie dancing

Rosce Tartee
Ypocras

THE ROYAL JUGGLER AND JESTER




On December 8 at 8 PM, 100 guests arrived at Reeb House to be introduced by Royal Steward Paul Dodyk and greeted by the King (Al Webster, Vice President of the Society) and Queen (Kris Molnar, President). Following libations, the royal couple led the company in a procession to the banquet room in Anderson Hall. Jugglers on stilts, jesters, and knaves with banners accompanied the procession.

The evening proceeded according to the *Programme of Metes and Festivities*:

From the Board Minutes the following evening, the accounting:

Medieval Feast: December 8, 1979

\$25 per person

95 tickets sold

\$2,375 gross income

(Net not figured yet. Wonderful, but not sure it could ever be done again; too much work.)

A few additional notes to Svarre's Medieval Feast story: John Handley identified himself as the curate from Christ Church next door, trying to crash the party. He was "riding" a beautiful model horse, part of his costume designed by Betty and Tony Velonis. Phebe Dodyk, gatekeeper, thought he really *was* the rector, who had not made a reservation, and did not want to let him in.

In 1995, Jane Diepeveen recalled the feast as "The most elaborate party we've ever had. High priced at \$25; some complained about that; but every table was filled. There were performances of belly dancing, and English Country dancing." Jane wore her own wedding dress!

THE FELLOWSHIP FEASTS

The Fellowship Feasts, all-congregation pot-luck dinners with a dramatic or musical program, have been the kick-off event for the annual operating fund drive since 1974. Ruth Lusky's story of more than twenty years of Fellowship Feasts records her high spirits and hard work, and that of many others in the Society – especially Winnie Hawkins, who took charge of the musical direction from 1976 until 1989, and the Sample Singers, who were the mainstay of the casts. Lusky herself was the sole organizer for the first two, 1974 and 1975, including the canvass itself. Tony Leto and Bob Nash have directed the show since 1990.

The performances at Fellowship Feasts spoof the life of the Society: food, fun, fundraising, baseball, religious education, music, Sunday services, fairs, dinners, parties, CAMP, SHARE, building expansion, coffee hour, theology, and – and!

Lusky's complete story is available in the Society's archives. She related, in part:

In 1973, I went to a regional Unitarian workshop for canvass leaders. Out of that workshop came the idea that we (1) plan a kick-off dinner with every member invited by selected table hostesses who would hand out food assignments (the personal touch would encourage people to come); and (2) after dinner present a skit or musical show related to current happenings in our society or to its members – something light and humorous to put everyone in a felicitous mood.

The first year, 1974, I got the hostesses myself and assigned them each a part of the membership list to call for potential table guests. Then I wrote new, apropos words for five familiar songs from *The Mikado* and recruited Dorothy Neff to work with a small group of singers to learn the new versions. We called the show *The Delightful Mikado*. *Delight (Dodyk)* was a great hit singing “Pooh Bah’s Song.” Ken (Patton) was on sabbatical and his song—“A Wandering Minister I”—was not sung until 1993 for Rev. Terence Ellen’s sabbatical.

In 1975 I chose songs from *Ruddigore* or *The Witch’s Curse* (Gilbert and Sullivan) which we called *Ruddy Door*, or *The Which’s Church?* The singers were *Delight Dodyk*, *Denny and Bob Chandler*, *Sue Stewart*, *Doris and Wayne Armstrong*, *Frank Schattschneider*, *Carl Petrie*, *Sy Friedman*, and myself.

In the fall of 1975 Winnie Hawkins started a group called *The Sample Singers* who occasionally sang in church. Members of the *Sample Singers* became the mainstay of the casts of many *Fellowship Feast* shows.

Later I looked back at the songs and skits of various *Fellowship Feasts* and found that they immortalized congregation’s activities, church problems, and odd or funny happenings of the passing years. For instance: our woman president of the Board, 1973-5; Ken’s sabbatical, 1974; the playing by the jazz group, *The Rowdies* (Bob Lindsay, Trombone, for instance) for the Christmas Eve Party, 1975; the *Uncommon Market*, 1974; a leaky church roof, 1975; Betty Velonis’s *International Luncheons* to raise money for *Northside Forces* in Paterson every year.

In ‘77 Linda Friedman, Bobbie Moore, and Jack Hawkins contributed some words to old familiar tunes. In ‘78 Bobbie adapted for us a Minneapolis UU show called *My Fair Share Lady*. Bobbie was so impressed by the performance that she wrote *Close-to-Homa* in ‘79, with a song by Jack Hawkins “*The Cash Flow is Dead*” to the [tune] “*Poor Jud is Dead*.” Another contribution from Jack was “*Till Tomorrow*” from *Fiorello* in 1980. More and more of Jack Hawkins’ love of the theatre and comedic outlook was reflected in our shows. 1981’s *How to Succeed*. . . showcased a tricky duet/dialogue between Jack and George Bouton called “*I Play it the Society Way*,” but the song that hit home the most was “*If I Can’t Take My Coffee Break*.” Roger Jones’ solo, “*I Believe in You*” led emotionally into the rousing “*There’s a Society We Know*.”

Also in 1981 Winnie Hawkins, with Gaia [formerly Gail] Brown’s help, wrote a skit, *Why Bad Things Happen*, a reference to the religious education curriculum of the same name. The skit depicted funny situations that occurred in the tiny, crowded Reeb House office of both our Secretary, Nancy Petrie and Gaia Brown, Religious Education Director. People struggled to get in and out, and a snafu arose as two different plumbers were asked to install the same water heater. Rosemary Bruner and Betty Sonders played the plumbers somewhat freely and were hilarious. And Winnie showed she had a real flair for humor.

In 1983 Gaia wrote words to a few songs from *Camelot* (Care-a-lot) and Jack Hawkins contributed “*Come to the Cottage Place*” as *SHARE*—the housing-for-the-elderly project—got under way.

1984 was a gala show with *Resound of Music*. Winnie herself wrote the lyrics for “*This hall is alive, with the sound of music*”—a fitting tribute to her own talents. Gaia Brown and I provided other lyrics. Roger Jones thrilled the house when he sang “*Climb Every Mountain*.” And Tony Picozzi’s faithfulness as greeter on Sundays was immortalized in

Gaia's clever words to "Edelweiss." My favorite lyrics among the ones I wrote that year were those to "The Lonely Goatherd" ("The Lonely Trustee") which had puns on the names of the Board members: Hyatt, Patterson, Cotten, Lindsay, Shoemaker, Holstein, Diamond, and Whitmore—though I may have been the only one to "get" the funny business.

In '87 *The Music (Movin') Man* dealt with our interim minister and our search for a new ministerial candidate. Both Lloyd Rogers and Gaia Brown contributed enormously to the show. Lloyd wrote the train song "Ridgewood Junction" as an opener, and then delivered the "Ya Got Trouble" soliloquy in a masterly fashion. He also wrote "Pick a Little" and "76 New Loans" ("76 Trombones"). Gaia wrote "Society Stubborn," "Our White Knight" about Wayne Armstrong and the refurbishing of Sheffer, "Laile and Jo" to "Ida Rose," "The New Minister" to "The Wells Fargo Wagon" and "Till there was You" for Roger Jones to sing about the Society. I wrote "Ya Got Trouble" and "The Sharper and Wiser Board for Me."

In 1989, the feminist movement inspired *Persons and Persons*, based on *Guys and Dolls*. Lloyd Rogers and Gaia were still contributors of lyrics—viz., "A Bushel and a Peck," describing the different ways men and women prepare a recipe. Gaia Brown wrote Wayne Armstrong's song, "Luck We Can't Use You" (from "Luck Be a Lady"), and Allyn Kidwell rendered "Stand Up, Start Rockin' the Boat" in a marvelous fashion. The Sample Singers continued to do their part.

In 1990 a new Fellowship Feast writing and producing team was born. Bob Nash, who is known for his guitar playing and singing, and Tony Leto, an active religious education parent with a passion for old comedy routines, paired up. Tony Leto continues the story from here:

Bob Nash sort of drafted me. We had become friendly on the softball team and he called one night to ask me to join the writing team. He was the only male member. In addition to the two of us, the team included Ruth Lusky, Doris O'Kane, and Elaine Ferstandig. The 1990 production was titled *Embraceable UU* and used all Gershwin music under the pretense that the lyrics were written by Sherwyn Gershwin, a Unitarian nephew of George and Ira. In addition to the songs, the show is best known for presenting "The Softball Rap" wherein several members of the newly formed softball team went on about how they would beat the other town churches and temple. The group featured myself as the coach and players Bob Nash, Jeri Cohn, Steve Rubenstein, Ira Mendelsberg and Rob Gorman. The show also brought us Terry Ellen as himself teaching the Board of Directors—as he demonstrated—a native American spiritual dance which somehow devolved into the Hokey Pokey.

In 1991, in *I Get a Kick from UU*, we focused on the music of Cole Porter using the premise of discovering the lyrics of another Unitarian lyricist, Noel Porter—Cole's nephew. The format changed to a sophisticated, cabaret style. The show was presented with an ensemble of only four singers (Barbara Bonazzi, Lisa and Paul Dodenhoff, and Allyn Kidwell) in formal attire, narration by Terry Ellen and with skits as bridges between the songs—the highlight skit being a parody of *Jeopardy* called "Unitarian Jeopardy" featuring Bob Nash, Doris O'Kane and Ruth Lusky.

The 1992 show returned to a single musical, *Oliver Twist*, for its songs, and became *Oliver Twisted*. Winnie decided to step back as piano accompanist and she found Nell Seymour to take her place.

I was Traveller SN9 who had been sent to earth to observe the Unitarians and report back to my leader, Lord D8T, Ruler of Planet FN (Bob Nash). For the first time children joined the cast (Jeremy Nash and Jessica Leto—out and out nepotism on our parts). After gathering data, SN9 returns to Planet FN and his error filled report to Lord D8T becomes the basis of “Who’s The President?,” a revamping of the old Abbott and Costello routine: “Who’s on First?:”

Lord D8T: Please provide me with the identity prefixes for the UU leaders.

Traveller SN9: Who is the president, What is the vice-president, I-Don’t Know is the secretary. . .

Lord D8T: Wait, Traveller, did you not obtain the identity prefixes as I had instructed?

Traveller SN9: Yes, my lord.

Lord D8T: Then who is the president?

Traveller SN9: Yes!

Lord D8T: Well, what is the president’s name?

Traveller SN9: No, What is the vice-president's name!

Lord D8T: I'm not asking you who’s the vice-president.

Traveller SN9: No, Who’s the president.

Lord D8T: I don’t know!

Traveller SN9: No, he's the secretary.

You get the idea.

Winnie retired from the Fellowship Feast following the 1992 show and the 1993 production was dedicated to her. We presented the show as a live, radio broadcast featuring the UU Radio Theatre Company, broadcast over WUU with host Harrison Wheeler, patterned on Garrison Keillor’s Saturday radio show, *Prairie Home Companion*. New writers Mary Franklin, Irene Lindemann, Maria Mascara, and Ruth Reichbart joined the veterans, Bob Nash, Doris O’Kane, Ruth Lusky and me.

Paul Dodenhoff took on the role of Harrison Wheeler. I managed to incorporate the Marx Brothers’ “Why a Duck” routine into a congregational meeting, and then depicted Wayne Armstrong before Ridgewood’s Zoning Board of Adjustment, seeking a variance for enlarging our sanctuary and using the House Next Door as a Sunday School in place of Reeb. This led to the Motown song “Stop Your Expansion Plans” written by Bob Nash and sung by Barbara Bonazzi, Lisa Dodenhoff, and Maria Mascara as the Zoning Board and giving their response to our proposal.

Terry on sabbatical was featured as “a wandering minister.” Elisabeth Mannschott sang about the thrill of becoming a Board member, and a “Phantom of the Auction” sung by Barbara Bonazzi and Lisa Dodenhoff featured the famed auctioneer himself—John Handley.

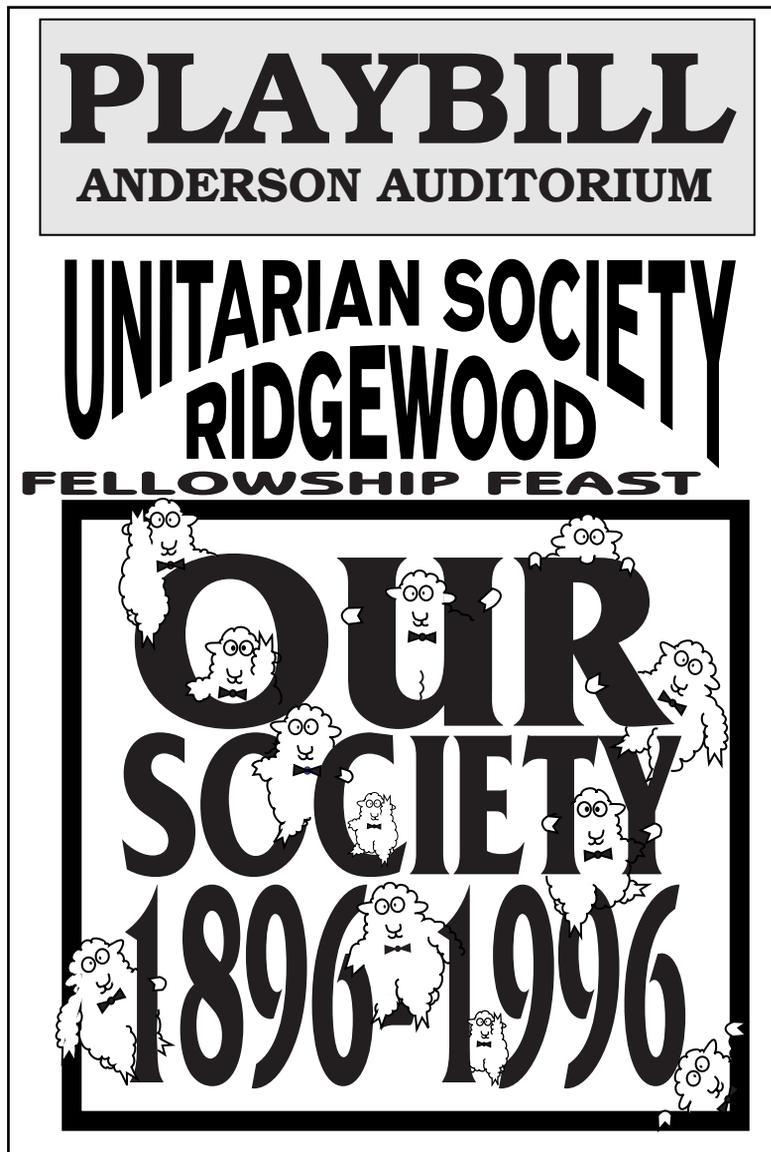
The 1994 Fellowship Feast show was a review of the best of 21 years of Fellowship Feasts as well as a parody of the Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, Norway. Our Unitarian Olympics took place in Ifihadahammer and the UU Olympic reports were interspersed between songs. Thirty songs were included.

The 1995 show was the Terry Lewis Pledge Drive Telethon. The writing crew was augmented with Susan Jordan and Ron Fry. It included a commercial for the “UU Matic,”

Ron Fry dressed as president Bob Jones presenting “What I Believe,” Joe Harris in drag introducing new members, and the real Bob Jones coming onstage to denounce the tastelessness of the show. The writers response: hitting him in the face with cream pies.

On March 23, 1996, the Fellowship Feast celebrated *Our Society*, 1986-1996, a humorous, often touching, look back at the Society’s history. Material was gathered from early drafts of this centennial history book and from the History and Archives Commitee’s collection of photographs.

Narrated by Bob Nash, slides were used throughout to show the passage of time. The show was written by Bob and myself with additional writing by Susan Jordan and Ron Fry. Musical direction was by Nell Seymour and stage direction by Ellen Blum.



Highlights included the slide depiction of the 1939 Martian invasion being greeted by our own Open Hearts, Open Doors committee; Terry Ellen's appearances as each of his predecessors and eventually singing "My Way"—as himself; the "Baseball Song;" and the touching ending as youngsters Jeremy Nash and Jessica Leto took the stage in a sentimental look to the future in "Our Time."

The cast included Jeri Cohn, Terry Ellen, Bonney Ford, Joe Harris, Susan Jordan, Jessica Leto, Bob Nash, Jeremy Nash and newcomers Jeff and Marcie Cagan.

Dozens of Society members participated as writers, stage hands, actors, musicians, singers, and designers.

Fund-raising among the Unitarians of Ridgewood is not merely a necessary part of Society life. Such events are worth the trouble for their own sake: they are fun and they beget a sense of warm community.

COMMUNITY LIFE

THE MEETING PLACE

In 1966, in his minister's column, Kenneth Patton wrote a wistful description of the Unitarian buildings:

I am going to ask you to try to take a "preacher's eye view" of your society's facilities. Most of you see it on Sunday morning, when it is badly overcrowded, not enough room for the school, the congregation spilling over into the social rooms, the coffee hour badly congested, and no possible place for a discussion period following the service. Or you see it at a dinner, or an evening meeting, or at the women's meetings on weekdays. There is always something going on.

Your minister works in his study in the school building [Sheffer House, the old parsonage]. The secretary is in the office in the mornings, but he is all alone in the afternoons. If he didn't like solitude for study and writing, it would be lonely. Even so, he often goes out for coffee in order to see a human face. Do you want real seclusion? To get away from the madding crowd? Go to your church during the week. . . .

Say we use the building two hours a week, 40 weeks a year; that is 80 hours out of 8,760.

Patton's view was only history in 1995, when the buildings were in use days, evenings, weekends, and all day most Sundays. After the 1996-97 building renovation, this will again be the case. If the minister wants seclusion, he will have to seek it elsewhere.

Many individuals and organizations use the Unitarian Society's buildings, some for one time only, others on a continuing, regular basis. Many of the groups that meet regularly at the Unitarian Society are ones that, while initially organized by members of the Society, became community-wide in leadership and membership. In the early years of the century the Ridgewood Garden Club and the Orpheus Society met in the building.

For many years in the 1970s and 80s the English Country Dancers were regularly in the building on Friday nights. The United Nations Association, SHARE, Inc., Parents of Children with AIDS, and Buddhist meditators meet regularly at the Unitarian Society.

Music students play recitals, weddings and memorial services are held there, as are receptions and dinners. A group of Asian women, new to the United States, get help in conversational English at Reeb House from Ellen Anderson.

The Arya Samaj, a forward-looking Hindu group, came in 1982 when President Naomi Yanis noticed a newspaper article describing their difficulty in finding a meeting place. She, with the Board of Trustees, immediately invited them to come to the Unitarian Society, and offered them the space gratis. The Arya Samaj leaders were overwhelmed with the welcome.

Alternate Sunday afternoons the Arya Samaj members still come to Reeb House and Anderson Auditorium for their services. Their congregation has grown in numbers. At Divali, the festival of lights in the fall, Unitarians are invited to join in the festivities. Dr. Rajinder Gandhi, his wife Jyoti Gandhi, and President Ram Saini, occasionally lead a Unitarian Service to describe Hindu principles. In 1995-96, the Arya Samaj led a weekly yoga session for all who wanted to participate.

Terry Ellen's phrase, "the web of interbeing," conjures up the hum of voices during Sunday morning coffee hour and at countless other gatherings in the Society's spaces.

AMBIENCE

In 1968, the Hospitality Committee made name tags for all as part of a plan to enhance the friendly spirit of the congregation. Harriet Leighton lettered that first set, and Gene Svarre made the rack to hold them. Would people actually wear them?

Six years later, in the *Newsletter*, September 30, 1974:

RHETORICAL QUESTION

Sue Handley: "Do you think we could make them put on their name tags before we give them their coffee?"

Our Hospitality person is SERIOUS ABOUT NAME TAGS—SO ESCHEW ANONYMITY AND WEAR YOURS!

Coffee hour was once or twice a month back in the early 1950s when a specific group would sponsor it, such as the Women's Alliance or the Sunday school. It would be an event. Eventually, it grew to an every week gathering.

From the *Newsletter*, April 1949:

On Easter Sunday morning, April 17, after the morning service, everyone is invited by the Alliance to remain after service for a social period at which time coffee will be served. The new members of the society, all who have joined during the year, are especially requested to be present. Can you manage to stay for a short time on Easter Sunday? Your co-operation will be appreciated.

In the 1970s, the price of coffee skyrocketed. At that point, because a number of people were feeling uncomfortable about taking on the cost of coffee hour, the Board decided to allow a basket for donations to offset the cost.

Newsletter, September 27, 1981:

Last year the Board voted unanimously to include children at coffee hour, and we are finally trying to implement this. A special kids' table at the pass-through. . . .

Parents: Please remember your children are getting goodies too when you put your contribution in the basket.

Parents: . . . you are responsible for the behavior of your children

Kids—you have had a privilege extended to you. You are expected to be orderly and polite.

NEWSLETTER EDITORS

The following volunteer and paid *Newsletter* editors have served:

Volunteers:

Emily Chi	1950
Dorothy Jacobus, monthly	1954-55
Howard Roylance	1955-56
Jean ten Hove	1956-58
Christiana Shorey	1958-59
Jean ten Hove	1959-60
Christiana Shorey	1960-61

Office Secretaries and Newsletter Editors:

Lois Tillson	1961-70; weekly <i>Newsletter</i> began 1961-62, Audrey Wadsworth Schulze took one day a week, to give Tillson a day off
Nancy Petrie	1969-Jan. 1972
Jean ten Hove	Jan. 1972 - March 1974
Bobbie Moore and Nancy Petrie	March 1974 - June 1975
Nancy Petrie	1975 - present

THE NEWSLETTER

The *Newsletter* is a magic glue that binds the congregation together.

In an interview with Delight Dodyk in 1986, former president Bill Rosenquest spoke of the early 1960s:

I wrote a newsletter. It was typed on ditto paper. I bought a gelatin pad in New York City and Saturday night I would sit there whipping off those pages from this gelatin pad and hand them out Sunday morning. That was the first means of communication.

One time we had a congregational meeting and I stood up as president and said, there's one thing we really have to have in this church and that's a mimeograph machine and if anybody's got any idea how we could raise \$300 to buy [one] I'd like to hear about it. As soon as the meeting was over a lady came up to me and said, "Bill, who can I make the check out to?" And we got our first mimeograph, and from then on we were in business.

I insisted that we get a secretary. It was one day a week, day and a half a week, \$5 a day or something like that. Whatever we could spare.

That's one of the highlights of my career as president, getting communication started.

Bill Rosenquest had cut out all the talking and just did it, Bob and Helen Lindsay agreed. Helen Lindsay said, "Before, no one would know from Sunday to Sunday what was going on."

In the *Newsletter* for February, 1961, Rosenquest advertised for a part-time secretary, 3 hours/day, 3 days/week: "This is a paying job and anyone interested should call Mr. Rosenquest." The *Newsletter* was an immediate success, much needed as the decades ahead were to be full of growth and activity. The pay was raised to \$2 an hour in 1966.

Lois Tillson took the job, and held it until September, 1971, when she turned it over to Nancy Petrie, whom she had trained. Nancy Petrie held the post until 1973. Then, because of other commitments, she relinquished it to Jean ten Hove for a short time. In February, 1974, Nancy Petrie and Bobbie Moore took on the task jointly. A year later Moore withdrew and Petrie has held the fort alone ever since.

In 1968 the Society bought an addressograph and a folding machine. The *Newsletter* still depends heavily on the clattering old folding machine's muscular capabilities in 1996.

Nancy Petrie, in 1986:

I really thoroughly enjoy this job. And to some people that's funny, and crazy, but I like it. This is my little creation; this newsletter. I like the feeling of being what people hear when they call up cold, I could tell them a little bit about what they're asking for, give them some literature, even just scheduling weddings or whatever.

Joe Moore, president 1975-77, in 1993:

One of the central people in the church for me was always Nancy Petrie. The *Newsletter* was absolutely the core of so much of the church. For a period of two years, I wrote something or brought something to her just about every week, to be edited as she wished and get into the *Newsletter*. I don't remember what her deadline was, but every Monday or Tuesday I was there with something written that I thought was essential to go into the *Newsletter*. She always did a fantastic job in adding a light touch to it, and getting it out was really important. So I really owe Nancy a lot.

INTERGENERATIONAL EVENTS

Newsletter, October, 1978

At the annual meeting last May the following resolution was adopted:

“. . . That the society directs the Board of Trustees to form a committee to plan & carry out intergenerational activities between the youths & adults in the church. If you want to be part of such a committee, let [President] Jack Ritter know, & he will set up meetings & discussions.

In both religious education activities for children and whole-family activities for both adults and children, there has been, at least since the 1970s, a conscious effort to be sure that the “children across the street” in Reeb House were not a forgotten appendage, and that families with children and people of all ages without children should have plenty of opportunities to do things together.

In that spirit, on October 8, 1978, nationally popular Unitarian singer-poet Ric Masten, with his wife Barbara Masten, led a gala, all-day affair for all ages. Ric Masten's service for children included the film and beloved song, “Free To Be, You and Me.” After brunch, workshops on “Women” and on “The Family” led to a dialogue on marriage. In the evening, they entertained with a concert. Naomi Yanis arranged this event.

Easter Egg Hunts And Picnics

In the 1950s and 1960s, the annual Easter Egg Hunt was a truly intergenerational activity. The older children went to the site early in the day to hide the eggs. After the Sunday service, families converged on the Webster's home on Crest Road, or the Crane's on Hawthorne Place. While the little ones hunted for eggs, the adults enjoyed sociability. Sy Friedman was astonished to find that he had joined a Society where beer was served at Easter Egg hunts—for the grown-ups, that is. Zeno Wicks admits that it was martinis that made everyone so cheerful, while the children vied with each other to see who would find the most eggs, and especially the Golden Egg.

The home of Zeno and Susan Wicks in Franklin Lakes was the perfect location for

several of the picnics, until 1965, when an unusual drought that spring almost dried up the lake. It became a mere mud puddle, and swimming was impossible.

The summer picnic at one time was held in June, after the last service of the year. By the 1970s, this event had migrated to the middle of the summer. The picnics in the 1970s at the home of Sue and John Handley featured a special menu: Gene Svarre and John Handley's whole pig, roasted on a spit outdoors and sliced juicy and warm.

A midsummer picnic is still an established custom.

Extended Families

A group of four people from Hartford, Connecticut spoke at the April 28, 1974, Sunday Service about how the "Extended Family" idea worked out in their congregation. Because so few people live close to their relatives, and because the need for relationships that cross generations and provide companionship and support was often unmet, exploration of the extended family concept interested the Society.

Those members and friends who wanted to become part of such a group gave their names to a committee headed by Naomi Yanis. "Families" were arranged spanning age, gender, and marital status; each group had about 20 people—some parents, some children, some childless, some married, some unmarried—who met together regularly for family dinners and outings, and performed the caring and celebratory roles expected of and enjoyed by families.

In November, 1976, there were four active families, and by February, two more were established. But by January of 1980, only two families were still functioning.

Camp Bernie

"Camp Bernie"—the YMCA's campground—provided the members a wonderful way to know each other through a weekend of sports, crafts, performances, and just being together. The first Camp Bernie Weekend was in June, 1976. For four years, the members of the Society organized a complex weekend of recreation and study in the outdoors for the entire congregation.

Joe Moore, who was President then, recalls how this weekend camp for all ages was arranged:

[Camp Bernie] was one of my pet projects. I really worked hard on that. . . We had a very, very ambitious program for that weekend. . . activities of all kinds: campfire, singing. You could do anything at any time of the day. It was kind of like a three-ring circus. . . .

We had people making kites, and flying them. Tony Velonis created an extravaganza outdoors—a light show under the stars. It was really super. 120 or so people; we filled all the beds.

For three more Junes, 150 children and adults, singles and couples, came together to sleep in dormitories and eat in the dining hall. People of a wide age range grouped themselves according to common interests rather than by age.

Janet Webster helped people make things with clay. Woodie Holstein and Al Webster played accordion and flute duets, Tony Velonis and his team performed a version of Edna St. Vincent Millay's anti-war play, *Aria da Capo*, Bernice Medici taught

ballet dancing; and horseback riding, swimming, softball, and hiking were available to all. After Sunday morning breakfast, Ken Patton told stories from the African Bushmen in lieu of a Sunday service.

The announcement for the 1979 Camp Bernie weekend listed Andrew Velonis leading a jump-rope group, Betty and Tony Velonis teaching mask-making, a sketch class, softball, and a sound and light show by the Velonises, entitled *Cycles —n the Universe & Man's Life*.

The last Camp Bernie weekend, in 1979, had a lower attendance, with 88 adults and 14 children, and the Velonises had almost all the responsibility for organization. “A financial and spiritual success” was the assessment; nevertheless, in October the trustees decided that a “spring glee” right in Ridgewood would take Camp Bernie’s place the following June.

What’s Your Game? Family Activity Nights

In 1979, as board President, Kris Molnar (later Brainard), furthered the Society’s effort to bring children and adults together and increase the warmth of fellowship for all by holding a once-a-month Friday night gathering. She asked families to bring along their favorite board game, or ping pong, or art projects—activities to do with other people.

Final Sunday

With the picnic in midsummer, and Camp Bernie weekends at an end, it became the custom to have a special all-day mixture of religious and irreligious activities on the FINAL SUNDAY. For example, in 1982:

SCHEDULE FOR JUNE 13 - FINAL SUNDAY

- 10:30 *Opening words, announcements*
- 10:45 *Softball game (Jack Hawkins)*
- 12:00 *Lunch.*
Community mural (Barbara Bonazzi)
Singalong (Winnie Hawkins)
- 1:30 *“New Games” (Gail Brown, until 2:30)*
“Global Futures:” simulation game
(Joe Moore, until 3:30)
- 2:30 *Gamelan orchestra (Tony Velonis)*
Volleyball (Kris Brainard)
- 3:30 *Closing words*

The last Sunday is still, in the 1990’s, an occasion for a joyous welcoming of summer.

GENDER

Laymen's League And Men's Groups

Al Webster reminisced (1986):

The Laymen's League and the Women's Alliance went their separate geriatric ways, and as far as I know, they never got together. I don't remember that we ever recognized the existence of the women, nor they of us. There were service jobs the men did—carpentry jobs, strong-back jobs, that sort of thing. The women took care of the curtains and the drapes—the fairs.

And now the men are going to cook lunch for the Gourmanderie! At least one of them is going to cook it, Wayne Armstrong, and the rest of us peel apples.

During that period between the mid-1960s and 1987, there was no active Laymen's League, no series of lectures run by men, and no social concerns group specifically formed by men. One exception: Spencer Leighton and Bud Foster started a Men's Group in January 1975 which did not leave any records behind.

In 1978 or 1979, men—many of them husbands of women in the women's group—tried it again.

Sid Babcock said in 1993:

Men's groups? It's comradeship. I belong to two of them, in the Ridgewood Society, and also one in the Paramus Society. Lunch time; retired men. There again, there are so-called retired people, Jack Ritter has so-called retired but he is so full of post-retirement activities that he doesn't have time! There are several others. We put together a list of 33 retired people four years ago, and only some 25 have joined. The others are just too busy. Post-retirement activities, which is understandable.

Women's Issues — Signs Of The Times

1950s:

Grace Welles, who was a pediatrician (M.D.), used to say at Evening Alliance, "I was never allowed to be a regular mother because I was a doctor." For her, being a professional woman seemed to have meant missing out on something that other women did, or could do, but from which she was barred.

1960s:

April 15, 1964: The Adult Discussion Group and Evening Alliance sponsored a film, *Through the Looking Glass*, and a speaker, Michael Charney, anthropologist. His topic: "Women from Primitive to Modern Cultures." Note: Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* was published in 1963.

From the *Newsletter*, October 29, 1968:

LADIES

The Rebecca Williams Hawes Alliance has worked from the early days of this church to provide material things and social activities. We are now old, let's face it, and need new members to help us carry on. There are other groups who are now working for the church but we are charter members of the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation and it seems important to keep contact with the larger organization. Our meetings are

to be the second Tuesday every month in Reeb House. Do come out and see what you can do to help us.

This 1968 notice was a sign of the times: the need for separate organizations had diminished. The Women's Alliance and the Laymen's League had lived out their time. The fund-raising, upkeep of buildings and grounds, speakers on current topics, films, and myriad other responsibilities now came from the Society's various committees with no formal connection to the Rebecca Williams Hawes Women's Alliance or the Laymen's League.

1970s:

In 1974 the Northern New Jersey National Organization for Women (NOW), which Mitzi Patton had founded four years before, became too large and split to form two groups. One was a Ridgewood area NOW, headed by Delight Dodyk.

1980s:

Valerie Moore, an active member of NOW, traveled to Virginia to push ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Kenneth Patton, whose two marriages ended in divorce, supported women's liberation in spite of some bitterness toward his ex-wives. A 1980 Sunday morning address was entitled "Welcome to the Club:"

What will women have won if & when they achieve complete equality? It cannot come too soon for me. Welcome to the club!

Mother's Day

A clearer view of the span of life could not have been shown in any better way than the Mothers' Day service in 1974. Six women spoke, one from each decade of life from her twenties to her seventies: Barbara Pirani, Ellen Kielty, Dianne Hostetler Foster, June Regal, Kay Lyle, and Gladys Johnson.

Music was by Mary Fassler and Margaret Ann Martin, with lyrics by Bobbie Moore.

Paintings and sculpture, book selection and program cover design, by women of the Society: Livia McGinnis, Pat O'Connor, Harriet Leighton, Ruth Etzi, Linda Friedman, Vera Giger, Nancy Petrie, and Susan Kinder Turconi.

Men and women presented pictures and recordings to "enable us to probe the subject of sex role stereotyping in our society" in May 1975, on Mother's Day. President of the Society Delight Dodyk with Jane Valbert, Florence Dickler, Spencer Leighton, Charles Brainard and Jack Ritter spoke, and the congregation then broke into small discussion groups "to consider together what we have seen & heard."

Turning toward the personal lives of women, a women's presentation on another Mothers' Day, 1978, and a follow-up two weeks after, enacted the personal dilemmas and satisfactions of motherhood. The previous January, the following notice was in the *Newsletter*:

"WHERE ANGELS FEAR TO TREAD"

Two Sunday Services (5/21 & 6/4) will attempt to answer unanswerable questions: "What are we here on earth for:" & ergo: "What is my involvement with my future, my loves, my children, my career, my world?"

A recent best-seller, *Passages* by Gail Sheehy, may make a good starting point for think-

ing through these questions. Although each of us is unique, we are brought up short with surprise that we have remarkably similar life problems. The purpose of these two services, then, is to share our life-purposes & life-problems, & to deepen our fellowship.

Women now are in the vanguard of changing patterns & purposes in their lives, so it is only fitting that a group of our own women plan these two services. We have time to work toward the creation of life-deepening experience for our congregation. Help plan these services.

Many women volunteered. They held meeting after meeting to discover what was important, and how to present it. In the process, they came to know each other's personal lives deeply.

Women's Groups

After they presented those two services, the women continued meeting and opened the group to others as well. In this way a women's group was born. Some members were young, with young children, some in the "senior citizen" range, and others between those two extremes. The principles: confidentiality, and commitment to each other's growth.

There were feelings that the group could be seen as an exclusive, closed sorority. Naomi Yanis explained:

[The Women's Group] evolved. At first it was very loose, and it soon became apparent that that wasn't going to work. You don't have a cohesive feeling about being a part of women's group if the participants change

We didn't want it to be limited to just us, a cliquy thing. In the fall, some of us . . . came up with the ideas for the kinds of rules we had to have about commitment to be there, and other kinds of rules about punctuality, and such.

And now there are several women's groups. It's really amazing. More like having something grow than having something planned.

By 1982, two other Women's Groups organized themselves. Ruth Lusky, a member of the Unitarian Society for more than thirty years, is now (1996) a member of a Women's Group:

I find that it's a cheerful and pleasant thing to do. . . I have a sharing group, which is mostly made up from people of the Society who all went back to work and we meet once a month and share dinner together.

When she was asked about her group's functions, as a support group or a discussion group, she replied:

It functions both ways. For instance, we have taken time for each of us to speak about our mothers, and our relationship with them. Also with our fathers.

We've talked about interesting articles that we found. One was about the change in young women, young girls between the age of 10 and 15, when all of a sudden they stop talking and being so outgoing, and shut up and listen to boys. And their whole personality seems to change and they seem to suffer somewhat. . . .

Lusky reported that the topics tended to have to do with women's lives and experience.

A lot of times it's been problems that younger women are working through with their

own children. In their families. Very personal things, which don't go outside the group. But I feel that they've gained support and help from just talking about it. And they're getting feedback.

Women And Mythology

Therapists Georgia Arnt and Pat Burns ran a workshop in 1982 on *Myths and Women*:

Come discover the myths and your personal value systems that block your further growth.

And about 1985 the then-Director of Religious Education, Gaia Brown, tried out a new adult curriculum from the UUA: *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven*. In a series of evenings, women gathered to learn more about the goddesses of ancient history, and how the old stories can be interpreted to empower modern women in their personal lives.

In 1995 and 1996, the adult education program once more offered a course in women in myth and in history, *Rise Up and Call Her Name* which culminated in a lay service organized by Tommie Hutto-Blake in March 1996 with Celia Flateman.

Language And Gender

Between 1974 and 1976, the Society eliminated sexist language from its constitution and from the hymns and reformed the mailing list so that the first names of husbands and wives had equal billing.

Some members of the congregation and their leaders raised the congregation's consciousness of sexist language in *Hymns for the Celebration of Life*. Joe Moore, president 1975-77, says,

This was a concern of Delight [Dodyk, president 1973-75] and of mine. . . People pressed this on Ken. . . [B]efore we sang he would announce some word changes. He thought that he was the only one who could do this without destroying the poetry. And then we began to notice that people, on their own, were penciling in word changes, and you'd pick up a book and find that someone had written in some new words.

In 1980, Patton's songs for liberal and humanistic religion married his own poetry to American folk hymn-tunes. He stated, of his newly published *Hymns of Humanity*:

As far as I know, this will be the first collection of songs to be published from which all the now offensive masculine language has been removed. With the growing number of women ministers in our churches, this has become mandatory. If their male colleagues do not clean up their act, the women will do it for them. I would prefer doing it myself, & furthermore, since I totally agree with them, it is a pleasure. But it is a lot of work. Any helpers?

Even though the customs of the nation were going in this same direction, it nevertheless took individual people to make the decisions to change the ways of the Unitarian Society, for example, Bobbie Moore worked in the Society's office in 1974-75:

Came time to revise the mailing list, and it hit me that all the women were buried in parentheses in the list. At this point, my consciousness was raised somewhat and I said

I will make a unilateral decision to change the format of the list. And what I decided to do was put all the women's names first. Why not? The men had been listed first for centuries. And to use the name by which I was called, "Bobbie," instead of "Roberta," and to take the "Drs" off of everybody because nobody called anybody doctor in church or at coffee hour. So I changed it to "Moore, Bobbie and Joe" and did the same thing for everybody else.

An example of the changes:

1963: Babcock, Dr. & Mrs. Sidney

1964–1974: Babcock, Dr. & Mrs. Sidney, (Margaret)

1975–present: Babcock, Peggy and Sidney

A score of years later, no change, except one additional step taken in 1978: The children's names and birthdates are listed with their parents'.

ABUNDANT LIFE

Ruland's "Harem"

An undocumented but influential series of meetings remembered fondly by many is the Wednesday Morning Discussion group, begun by Sue Handley, patterned on a similar group she once belonged to in Columbus, Ohio where the Handleys lived at one time.

The Wednesday Morning Discussion group served as a forum over a period of about 20 years. The group hired a baby-sitter so that young mothers could attend. They met in the living room of Reeb House. Many were women who did not work outside the home, but one retired gentleman, the activist Ruland Anderson, was the spark.

Bobbie Moore reminisced:

We had child care and met in the church and could park our three-year-olds for a couple of hours. It was just wonderful to be with other women, except for Ruland, women with common concerns and young children. And we mounted a couple of projects, things to help the church and community. It was a wonderful place to be.

Ruland Anderson's effectiveness in the Unitarian Society and in the Village of Ridgewood apparently lay in his ability to take a back seat, know everyone's unique capabilities, see a cause that needs support, imagine a way to help, and, finally, to tap the right person to lead the work. The Wednesday Morning Discussion group was surely among Anderson's resources, a place to try out ideas and a place to discover leadership.

The significance of the Wednesday Morning Discussion group during the Patton years was far greater than its informal loose structure would suggest. Often the discussion was on a current topic of interest, especially civil rights, and ways of planning effective social action, such as the sending of letters supporting the Black Affairs Council at the UUA General Assembly in 1968. And often the discussions were on personal topics, on how to live. Bernice Medici said,

It came to be known as Ruland's Harem. Sometimes it was hard for him to get a word in edgewise and I remember one time he got so frustrated at all of us talking at once that he yelled out "Shut up, you bitches!" So we did.

We started out discussing high-minded things and eventually it just became kind of a kaffee-klatch, which I enjoyed very much.

Rosa Lee Holstein's description:

It was a wonderful group with many of the characteristics of the present women's groups. Not entirely, though, [the Wednesday Morning group] spent a lot of time on issues of the moment, in the country, and in the village of Ridgewood. The school board, in depth, what they thought it should do, shouldn't do, who should be on it.

It was there that I spent Wednesdays for many years with people that I came to really love. . . . They became friends that have remained friends. A lovely group.

Rosa Lee Holstein believes that when Ken Patton began to attend, the women found that his dominant style, combined with his position as minister, changed the mood and tone, and the group became less gratifying. Just the same, its strength is proven by the persistence of the First Wednesday Luncheons to this day. They are pot-luck lunches on the first Wednesday of each month in people's homes. All are invited: the schedule is announced in the *Newsletter*. The only requirement is to bring food of some kind. During the summer months these lunches occur every week, usually at homes with swimming pools. The roots of these luncheons, however, go back to the 1960s when a Wednesday Morning Discussion group, all women plus Ruland Anderson, met regularly, but not for lunch!

The group left behind no written records. Some of the regulars in the 1960s were Ruland Anderson, Ruth Etzi, Linda Friedman, Sue Handley, Rosa Lee Holstein, Harriet Leighton, Carol Loscalzo, Bernice Medici, Bobbie Moore, and Naomi Yanis.

Lay Services

It was not until Ken Patton came to Ridgewood in 1964 that regularly scheduled lay services became customary. For a year or two he made occasional trips to Boston to look after the still extant Charles Street Meeting House. After that, he was rather jealous of giving up his Sundays, but Patton's two sabbaticals gave the congregation many opportunities to organize Sunday services. During one of Patton's sabbaticals, the Society was part of a group of Unitarian churches with pulpit exchange agreements. The visiting ministers reduced the number of services the lay people had to organize. On the other hand, Patton's responsibility was to be the visiting minister for other congregations when their ministers were away, so once again the lay persons of the Society had increased opportunities to present topics important to them.

Joe Moore was chair of the lay service committee during both of Patton's sabbaticals.

Some of the programs were by outsiders, specialists we brought in, but for many of them it was our own people, doing their thing. I always felt that the sabbatical benefitted Ken but certainly benefitted the church, because it became more of the people's church while he was gone.

I remember one, a simulation game I invented, called "Exploit" (November, 1973) in which we simulated international relations and had a first, second and third world arrangement. . . . Betty Velonis was involved in providing all the rich food for the people in the first world, and the third world was a loaf of bread and a rusty bucket. . . .

Hans Bodlaender became the leader of the third world group. With his accent it was just too authentic.

This service engendered such intense emotion—somebody became so engrossed that we had to get some strong men to carry her out, she was so emotionally involved with the simulation.

I had a lot of help on that service from Al Webster.

We did a silent service Cliff Knapp and Bobbie Moore helped with in which nobody could speak (January 1975). We began by playing Simon and Garfunkel's song, "The Sound of Silence." We projected the words on a screen so people could follow them, if they didn't know them. And then we had a silent service. Harriett Aschoff conducted the singing. It started with George Wolfe's birthday. We brought out a cake with candles. Harriet led the singing of Happy Birthday but everybody only mouthed the words. Slides were projected on the walls. We had an hour of silence, and people said that this was a very religious experience, that silence was religious in itself.

In March of 1978, Wayne Armstrong presented a service entitled "See, I am in Good Relation to the Earth." With appropriate slides of photographs and paintings of Native Americans, their artifacts and art work, Armstrong read stories, poems, and prayers from several tribes, with accompanying recorded music of indigenous people of North America. It was so well received, and widely discussed, that he was asked to present it at the Pomona, New York and the Plainfield, New Jersey Unitarian churches, as well as at the South Bend, Indiana church where he had been a founding member in 1953.

When Tony Velonis organized a lay service on "Can Art Replace Religion?" He concluded that:

If you have that kind of religion there's hardly any difference between art and religion except one of content. And that's why art, most of the time, supports religion architecture, music, etc. You go way back to the tribal people, they use masks, and color their skin and have their celebrations, they fix up their beads.

Velonis was either chair or member of the Lay Services Committee for many years. He later said, "I've done over twenty lay services. Skits and so on." At least 13 Tony Velonis services were between 1973 and 1992. (Documentation is incomplete, but memories are rich.) He achieved a theatrical effect with his sound and light shows, with music, dance, poetry, and meditation. Three projectors cast large-format slides on the huge west wall, fading and merging magically, enthraling the congregation with sounds and images symbolizing the mystery, the cosmos, life. The masked actors' audiotaped voices were authentically their own, yet with no danger of forgotten lines.

Betty Velonis, too, had several roles in lay services. She was often one of the actors or speakers in his or others' Sunday morning services. She was one of the performers in the May, 1981, Spoon River Anthology reading.

Besides performing, Betty Velonis created costumes, ran the slide projector, and took over other practical details of production of the sound and light shows. On December 13, 1992, she described the next Tony Velonis show, which would be one they had done several years before, *A Unitarian Mass*:

We're doing a UU Mass. . . . It has a lot of music and dance and singing. There are slides and music and there's poetry and some dialogue that's funny. There are two sun dances, one at the beginning and one at the end, a real dramatic ending.

Winnie Hawkins is working with those Ad Hoc Singers. And I have choir robes that I made. And our son Andrew is coming down from Syracuse to do the sun dance.

For the congregation and the performers, the Unitarian Mass was a solemn and joyful experience. Betty Velonis died less than three weeks later at their St. Croix home.

Outstanding lay services have been frequent, and all are worth describing. A sampling:

October, 1979: Ed Freedman: "Sports in Our Society: If Winning is the Answer, Maybe We'd Better Rephrase the Question."

February 28, 1982: "Death by Choice?"—a playlet by member Dick Bruner, followed by discussion groups; planned by Al Webster.

May 1, 1983: Marty Lavanhar: "Male Feelings and the New Masculinity."

September 25, 1983: Delight Dodyk and Sol Goldberg, "The Human Struggle" on the labor movement in Paterson, and the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union.

February 24, 1985: City College of New York Professor Perezi Kamunanwire; Solomon Nekkonen, scholar from Ethiopia; and Clarence Davis, photographer and teacher: "The American-African Connection."

January, 1987: Anthony Salandra: "AIDS: The Person Behind the Disease."

Film Series

The 1960s were years of excitement in the film industry. Small art-film theaters sprang up, and foreign films were of great interest. Ridgewood did not have an art-film theater, but our Society, with the Ethical Culture Society of Teaneck, showed *Pather Panchali*, *The Idiot*, and possibly others at special showings at the Bergen Mall theater. The showings produced a profit which helped the Society to make a contribution to the Unitarian Universalist Association Development Fund. Lenore Kahn and the Religious Education Committee made the arrangements.

The Unitarian Society ran its own film club for a while, renting foreign films to be run as a fund-raiser. John Handley was projectionist, and Sonia Bryant found the films, which were often fairly scratched up, with subtitles hard to read. As Bobbie Moore said,

Here we had these Swedes baring their souls in Swedish as we tried to decipher what they were saying, while we drank our \$2 cups of coffee. It was great. The club went on for two years or so.

That must have been the Bergman film, *The Seventh Seal*.

Uni-Uni-Peds

The UNI-UNI-PEDS, a hiking group, was started by Cal Lambert and Russ Miller about 1961. Lois Tillson, (the *Newsletter* editor, 1961-70) became a leader of the group,

who often came to Sunday service in hiking boots so as to set off for the woods immediately after.

In 1964-65, Ken Patton's first year in Ridgewood, Tillson reported:

We've had 10 hikes this year, from 2 to 5 miles each with 5 to 20 people of all ages. We go most often to Harriman Park.

As a rule we plan a hike for every other Saturday in spring and fall.

Ken [Patton] says he doesn't mind walking to get some place, but he doesn't see any sense in walking in a circle.

In May, 1966 the Uni-Uni-Peds 1966 report was printed in the *Newsletter*, rather than at the Annual Meeting. Somehow the twinkle in Lois Tillson's eye—or maybe the squeak in her hiking boot—came through her typewriter:

"Here come the Millipeds," said the father of one of our members when we descended on his home as a starting point for one of our hikes. We don't care what we're called—"Millipeds," "Outdoor Discussion Group," "Walkie-Talkies" or whatever—as long as our bi-monthly hikes are not called "Off."

Statistics since the 1965 meeting follow:

No. of hikes—10 (including 1 unadvertised summer hike.)

Record high attendance—25 (14 teen-age);

Record low attendance—2 (unbeatable for a group hike)

Average attendance—9.6 (1 small teen-ager);

Average age of hikers—25 (would you believe 35?);

Record number of bird species sighted on 1 hike—35

Casualties —4 scraped legs, 7 wet feet, 1 bumped head, 1 chipped tooth.

Eggs donated to Cal Lambert—6 devilled, 1 Easter, 1 empty shell.

Lois Tillson led a Bicentennial Celebration Hike November 8, 1975, to follow the 1779 American march to capture Stony Point, or the 1777 British march to capture Ft. Montgomery and Ft. Clinton at Bear Mountain.

Nancy Petrie, who had succeeded Tillson at the *Newsletter* editor position, reported on the hike:

Newsletter Nov. 17, 1975:

HIC, HAEC, HOC

Seven bipeds on the Bicentennial Hike cavorted in the peaceful rustle of the woods, & even learned some history. Rewarding, by George! Thanks, Lois!

Dramatic Performances

Fellowship Feast performances came into the life of the Society in 1974, thanks to the energy and creativity of Ruth Lusky. Such Fellowship Feast shows have become traditional, and are traditionally brilliant. The history is fully told in the *Food, Fun, and Fund-Raising* chapter.

The reading and performing of plays, from living-room readings by a few, to fully-staged versions of well-known dramas for an audience, occurred during the 1960s and 1970s. Also, Tony Velonis's lay services were often theatrical multi-media presentations.

Some of the dramatic events:

1965-69: A group enjoyed reading plays aloud. Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* was one they tackled.

About 1965 or 1966, *An Evening With Friends: Dramatic Readings by Okey Chenoweth, Music by Russ Higgins* presented bits from Chase's *Harvey*, Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *The Caretaker* by Pinter, and *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder. Chenoweth is a teacher of writing and drama at Glen Rock High School.

Dick Bruner, one of the Society's own playwrights, wrote two plays that had their initial performances in Anderson auditorium in 1975 and 1976: *Amistad*, about the slave trade in South Carolina, and *A Small Disturbance*. Both were eventually performed professionally, *Amistad* in Charleston, S.C. and also in West Virginia, and *A Small Disturbance* at the Off Center Theater in New York.

Also in 1975, a "Readers Theater" performance of the play *Equus* took place at Anderson Auditorium. Okey Chenoweth, Linda Friedman, Flo Hall, Chip Heptig, Rick Leighton, Shelley Leighton, Spence Leighton, Joyce Nicholson, and Bernie Spitz performed, with Stanley Molner of Morristown in the leading role of the psychiatrist, and Dick Bruner directing.

In 1981, member Enid Hayflick's sister, Ducky Lydecker, directed readings from *The Spoon River Anthology*, creating a moving lay service for May 24. Lisa Druck (now Dodenhoff) and Roger Jones sang; Mary Comins, Enid and Jack Hayflick, Woodie Holstein, Frank Schattschneider, and Betty Velonis were placed at various posts among the audience, and recited the epitaphs with sensitivity.

Books

In its earliest years, the Alliance had a Literary Committee which planned "fortnightly readings of original and selected papers." For many years it was the Alliance's responsibility to have a regularly stocked Book Table available every Sunday morning. In 1960, the "Bookshop" gave \$500 "to be used for the publication of selected sermons and writings of Homer Sheffer." When the Alliance faded away in the mid-1960s, the book table survived to sell Beacon Press books, Meeting House Press books, and both new and used publications from other sources. Grace Chewning and Florence Myers are just two of those who kept the book table going. In 1966, Chewning reported that the book table sold \$418.15 worth of books, mostly from the Beacon Press and from Patton's Meeting House Press. This enabled the purchase of a book truck. (Chewning now lives in Maine where she is the book table chair in her Unitarian church there.)

In 1975, the Board of Trustees advanced \$100 to the book table for purchase of books. Dan Post offered a list of titles to revitalize the book table.

Many book-reading groups have existed throughout the history of the Society. Several are still (1996) in good health, and new ones form from time to time. They meet on various schedules and use different methods of choosing and discussing books; what

their members have in common is a love of books and a compulsion to talk about them. They're Unitarians.

The Softball Team

For many years, a softball league consisting of local churches and the temple existed in Ridgewood. In 1989, under the leadership of Robert Cole, the Society organized a team and joined the league.

Games were held on Sunday afternoons. The first season saw the team surprise everyone by finishing the regular season in first place. The team did not succeed in the playoffs and lost to the dreaded Lutheran team (a team of much younger players).

The team became very successful in drawing players. The new minister, Terry Ellen, was found to be an excellent third baseman and daring base runner.

Eventually two teams were created. An "A" team for those who wanted to play for the purpose of winning the championship and a "B" team for those players who preferred a more casual, play for fun style. The "A" Team was managed by Bob Cole, Tony Leto, and Bill Connolly. The "B" team was managed by Ira Mendelsburg.

The teams eventually merged again in 1993 under the management of Steve Rubenstein, with Jeff Uscher becoming manager in 1995. As of 1996, the team has yet to beat the Lutherans in the playoffs but has served as the basis for introducing new members to the society and creating friendships.

Country Dancers

At a picnic in 1976 at the Van Arsdale home in Allendale, English Country Dancers entertained. Naomi Yanis said, "It was beautiful, and I loved it. That was a very important thing in my life." Naomi and Conrad Yanis and others were so excited by what they saw, that they started a group with the Yanises, Mary Comins, Bob and Denny Chandler, Bob and Joan Ritter, Dorothy and Al Neff, Barbara and John Koffel, Nancy and Carl Petrie. All worked on one dance until they got it right.

They danced once a week for many years in the Unitarian church. They danced at the famous 1979 Medieval Feast, and on other occasions. Nancy Petrie, Naomi Yanis, Ruth Reichbart, and Jackie Tafuni still dance with the group, although it meets elsewhere now.

Bridge Marathon

Every year the bridge players held a year-long marathon, at the end of which the winning couple received a trophy. Of course it cost a little to play, and the result was that the bridge-players had a nice nest-egg to give to the Clara Barton Camp for diabetic girls. In 1968 Woodie and Rosa Lee Holstein were the winners of the trophy.

THE ESSENCE

Nancy Petrie took a corner of the *Newsletter* to condense the Society's 1981-82 activities:

UNASSIMILABLE INFO: DURING 1981-82

. . .besides Sunday services, Uncommon Market, Service Auction, Flea Market, & Picnic—our church buildings were the gathering place for both church & non-church groups & individuals for: weddings, 1 memorial service, 5 workshops, 1 bazaar, 15 concerts & recitals, 4 slide talks, 7 art receptions, 13 meetings, 4 receptions, 10 parties, 24 dinners & lunches, 2 Hindu prayer meetings, & 5 Bible study meetings

—in addition to weekly or monthly meetings on a regular basis of LRY, Sample Singers, Country Dancers, Buildings and Grounds, SHARE, Task Force Against Growing Militarism, Ridgewood Area Peace Coalition, Lay Services & R.E. Committees

—plus 16 cooking parties, innumerable rehearsals & planning meetings of all kinds, a new dance rehearsal group, & LRY events (bake sales, car wash, conference).

AND THAT'S NOT COUNTING events OFF the grounds, such as Book Group, Music Listeners, 1st Wed. Luncheons, Circle Dinners, Fall Dinners, Board meetings, Parenting Group—and I've no doubt overlooked some! Busy people!

It was a typical year.

THE COTTAGE PLACE GALLERY

Since the early 1960s “art”—in the sense of pictures, sculpture, ceramics, fabric art, folk art—has featured prominently in the life of the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood. The November 1960 *Newsletter* credits Lynn Roylance exhibiting member Ruth C. Skidmore’s watercolors and sculpture in the social rooms just south of the auditorium.

At the November 4, 1962, Board meeting Kelly Tolces requested that an Art Committee be established, and by spring an Art Committee was on the organization chart, without, however, any specific guidelines from the Trustees. “Artists exhibiting at church are to sign the damage and theft release. Present exhibitor Bob Freed [probably Fried] has done so,” appears in the December 2, 1962, Board of Trustees’ minutes.

In November, 1963, member Christa Mott brought Robert Nicholson, a member of the Council of Racial Equality (CORE), to a Board of Trustees meeting to gain permission for an art exhibit to benefit CORE. Permission was granted.

During Homer Sheffer’s last year in Ridgewood, Nancy Petrie, Portrait Sub-committee chair, hung an exhibit of various artists’ work in preparation for choosing one to paint a portrait of the minister. John Mott, husband of Art Committee Chair Christa Mott, started to work on a Sheffer portrait for the exhibit, but didn’t complete it. Susan Wicks, unbeknownst to the Art Committee, generously commissioned Ann Chase (who had not participated in the exhibit) to paint the portrait.

In that era, Nancy Petrie and Christa Mott exhibited Society members’ artworks. Petrie recalls that she and Mott first organized a fair to which members brought hand-made arts and crafts and that it was quite a hit. With Board encouragement, Mott and Petrie shows became almost continuous, with art works taken down and immediately replaced with new ones.

After a while, too few people were available to keep such a program going. There was a hiatus until Alice Katz agreed to chair and organize the first formal committee, with members Nancy Petrie, Lucille Willing, Hesi Bodlaender, Vick Owens, Joyce Nicholson and Tony Velonis. In August, 1964, the committee defined its goals: increase the committee membership; select artists to exhibit, limiting the selection to professional artists; and renovate the social rooms.

The decoration of the two social rooms (the areas on the south side of the auditorium) in 1964 resulted in improved lighting, and freshly painted walls. Kenneth Patton invited everyone to bring any leftover paint that they might have lying around. Then he mixed it all together into a soft neutral tone, and they all painted the walls of the social rooms at no cost.

Four exhibits were organized that year: Ken Patton’s collection of drawings, etch-

new work

by nancy van arsdale

saturday

dec 4 1971

4-8 pm

champagne
punch



including: mushrooms • essay on
dandelions • relationships: sarah,
richard and dustin • dolls and deaths
will be on exhibit at the cottage place gallery
113 cottage place Ridgewood New Jersey

ings, lithographs, and wood-block prints by the German artist of social protest, Käthe Kollwitz, brought from the Charles Street Meeting House; separate exhibits of the works of Stephen Cline and Betty Martin; and a combined exhibit by Peter Tilgner and Nathaniel Weil.

An early show of works by Society members included a piece made by Doris Drake; a white hand-crocheted full-size bathtub with faucets and drain, it was strategically placed under a spot where the roof leaked. While water leaked through the crocheted mesh, Bob Lindsay religiously intoned that the drops were “holey water.”

Most exhibitors were, and still are, artists from the area surrounding Ridgewood. Petrie explained:

We tried to get outside artists. But one of the disappointing things is that you cannot get New York artists, because that’s where they go, and they don’t want to exhibit here in a small place, and if they are being shown in New York, the gallery there doesn’t want competition. [But, then] you get really good people out here that are painting and exhibiting and teaching.

In 1965-66 there were ten exhibits, and shows began to attract an audience from the surrounding area.

The work of Czechoslovakian émigré artist Mia Le Comte, exhibited in April of 1966, was controversial. A painting of two female nudes, entitled “Friends,” had been part of an exhibit by members of the Modern Artists Guild at the Jersey City Museum; but the museum trustees deemed “Friends” to be indecent and ordered the painting removed. In protest, Mia Le Comte withdrew all her paintings from the museum exhibit.

When Unitarian Alice Costantini read of the problem at the museum, she recommended the Le Comte show to the Art Committee. Some Unitarians found “Friends” questionable, too, but others saw the work as interesting, beautiful, worthy to be seen. Jackie Owens (formerly Rootes) recalled:

I was chair (probably by default—I was new) of the art committee and in the interest of good art we (the group and I) went to see an artist who was not well-known to the congregation, but highly recommended.

The work was good, fresh and worthy of showing. The artist . . . insisted that one specific piece be included in our selection. It was a painting (in her slightly cubistic style) of two women, one of whom was touching the other’s breast. This was not a problem for me, although it was for some. After a discussion we took all the paintings, hung them in the church art area—and THE STUFF HIT THE FAN! Someone (I don’t recall who) suggested that we remove the OFFENSIVE ONE and we did. . . The furor subsided.

According to a second version of the story, Costantini refused to remove the painting, saying that the Society respects an artist’s opinions on what is art, and use of any other criteria would be a violation of the artist’s freedom of expression. Memories differ. In any case, it is a matter of record that on April 10, 1966 the Board of Trustees and committee member Lucille Willing discussed “the committee’s problems preceding the current exhibition,” and the Art Committee agreed to “continue with its investigation and definition of the committee’s purposes and that procedures and guidelines for employing such purposes be submitted for approval at the next Board meeting.”

Some of the applicable guidelines in the resulting document were:

The front wall is a background for our service.

Art, one of the creative expressions, is basic to man [sic] and the creative man is worthy of our esteem and interest. . . .

[I]t is the responsibility of the art group to provide. . . a place where meaningful art can be shown and discussed, and to choose with discretion what is to occupy this space.

No record of the Board's subsequent action has survived.

In 1967, Ethelyn Woodlock, a spiritualist artist, attached poetry to her paintings, some of which were trompe-l'oeil. After her opening in the Gallery, she gave a lecture on art and spiritualism to a large audience.

In 1968, the Newsletter announced that the Creative Arts Planning Group under Marilyn Crafts' leadership would hold Saturday workshops in art and music for children. These workshops attracted many families, and attest to the strong support for art in the Society.

From 1970-73, Lucille Willing and Nancy Petrie were co-chairs of the committee. Willing moved away, however, and although Petrie says no one was in charge for a while, she was the de facto chair and kept the program together with Diane Ringstad, Joan Ritter, Livia McGinnis and Vera Giger.

In 1971, member Vera Giger exhibited her silk-screen and wood-block prints. Giger, a member of the Society from 1969 until her death in 1984 at age 89, and mother of Brietta Savoie, was born in Brooklyn, where she studied and taught art for six years in Brooklyn high schools. From 1937-1947, she lived in Zurich with her husband, a Swiss engineer, and painted many portraits and landscapes. Returning to Brooklyn in 1947, she studied with Kuniyoshi in Woodstock, and was taught print-making by Edmund Casarella. Three of her works are owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The University of Wisconsin, the Ridgewood school system, numerous private collectors, and, of course, the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, own pieces of Giger's work.

Her drawings were very strong. Member cartoonist George Wolfe told her she drew like a man; Giger accepted the intended compliment, though she was an ardent feminist.

Nancy Petrie, a noted artist in her own right, served as the Society's one-woman art committee for about ten years. She recalls:

Bernie Spitz had been asked to [chair the committee] for a while. But he soon found that he was out of town too much, and so for a particular show that had been planned, Bob Lindsay [president of the Society] asked me to hang the show. That started me off.

That initial effort consisted of contemporary Japanese prints from a Boston gallery owned by Nitza Rosovsky, the wife of a colleague of Lindsay's. Nancy Petrie hung that exhibit herself, and most of the shows for a decade thereafter. Sometimes, as with Laura Mausner's show, teen-ager Valerie Moore helped Petrie with the task, which required an eye for arrangement, skill with hammer and nails, and adeptness in handling heavy framed work during hanging as well as dismantling the show. Publicity and refreshments were provided by the same two.

In 1972, Harper T. Phillips, a black instructor at Bergen Community College, showed his experimental relief paintings, heavy with paint and metal. His show was

called *Harper T.'s Experience*. One painting happened to be hung over a hot air vent; the acrylic was sensitive to heat, and the color began to run. Phillips good-naturedly took his painting back with no complaint.

Tony Velonis, whose career began during the depression of the 1930's in the Federal Arts Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), pioneered a new medium which he named "serigraphy," a unique silk-screening process. Velonis showed his work at retrospective shows at the Unitarian Society in 1978-79 and 1982-83. His name, works, and the invention of serigraphy are still honored alongside works by other WPA artists such as Jackson Pollock and William de Kooning. In November, 1990, The Susan Teller Gallery in New York City displayed Tony Velonis's serigraphs from 1934-1986.

In an address to the Society, Tony commented on the spirituality permeating his 1982-83 works—serigraphs, paintings, and constructions entitled *Windows, Doors, Gates, Portals*:

Windows, gates, doors, portals—these symbols have often appeared in my work without my awareness that they were so recurrent. Now that I know, I am digging in this area with more curiosity.

The picture rectangle itself is a window or door. This door could lead on to a second door inside the painting. What is beyond? Another plane of unreality?

The goal of the game is to find something interesting in the upswellings out of the unconscious mind. As soon as we find that something, then the game, the drama, the play, is over, but the air of mystery lingers. "The play's the thing." Process. There is no end. There is always another act. Looking is more important than finding.

Another exhibitor, John Lindsay-Poland, grew up in the Unitarian Society. The son of Bob and Helen Lindsay, John, with artist James Groleau, went to Guatemala in 1986 as part of Peace Brigades International to protect people endangered by the oppressive dictatorship. Their book, *And Then There Were None: Portraits of Guatemala*, with Groleau's art illustrating Lindsay-Poland's text, described conditions in Guatemala. The Society exhibited Groleau's art with quotations from Lindsay-Poland's and purchased one of the art works. Many Society members purchased copies of the book to benefit a Guatemalan cooperative.

An unusual opportunity arrived when relatives of Romanian artist Margaretha Stahl brought her work to the Society in 1989. Many of the paintings displayed were smuggled out of Romania in letter-size envelopes and thus were no larger than 8 1/2 by 11 inches. Although Stahl's most frequent themes were religious—often Mother and Child—some of her later work under the oppressive regime expressed the desperation of captivity.

In April 1990, a light-hearted art show and concert displayed George Wolfe's opera cartoons while Society members and friends enjoyed a recital of operatic arias.

Thirty years after the Le Comte controversy, Connie Gordon's paintings of nudes offended the Arya Samaj, the liberal Hindu group that meets in the Unitarian Society buildings. After a complaint, the painting deemed most offensive was taken down during the hours the Arya Samaj was present.

The Society can boast of many talented artists as members. A number have had individual exhibitions at the Cottage Place Gallery: Barbara Bonazzi, Jean Chandler,

Alice Costantini, Vera Giger, Randy Kuiper, Marty Lavanhar, Vick Owens, Ken Patton, Nancy Petrie, Susan Rubenstein, Maxine Shields, Deedee Sprecher, Peter Tilgner, Nancy Van Arsdale, Tony Velonis, and George Wolfe. Many others contributed to the year-end exhibitions of works by Society members.

The Cottage Place Gallery has provided a venue over the years for many artists of Ridgewood and the surrounding community, and has earned an important place in the cultural life of northern New Jersey.

THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY'S COLLECTION

When Kenneth Leo Patton became minister in 1964, he brought a wealth of experience in the arts to share with the congregation. Patton and his parishioners collected religious art at his previous church, the Charles Street Meeting House in Boston. Years later, he recalled what he tried to do there:

I tried to get [the Unitarian Universalists] to prize the art of all the world religions, the poetry of all religions. . . . We developed this really magnificent art collection at the Meeting House.

In Ridgewood, Patton encouraged the building of an art collection representing a wide variety of cultures, as an integral part of the Society's celebration of life. He donated a number of pieces of religious art from his own collection, and in the January 6, 1970, *Newsletter*, he inaugurated a series of columns on world religious art and the meaning of the pieces then in the collection:

Their derivations are Islam, Buddhism, Ancient China, and Australian Aborigine—quite a spectrum. These works are messengers from other times, places, and peoples. They have meaning for us in our liberal faith in that they speak of the common human situation and man's universal search for the good life.

But these will be merely curios unless we do some home-work, unless we understand the religions they demonstrate and the significance they express within those religions. This is what we are giving our youngsters in their education program, an orientation course in the religious history and aspirations of mankind.

If, when this series of columns is complete, you want further information of this kind, the means of acquiring it will be simple and direct. Give more art works to our collection, and I will be pledged to pass on to you what I know or can learn of their history and meaning. What could be a more creative method of self-education? And we would have acquired a permanent treasure of beauty and symbolism to adorn our temple, and to pass on to those future generations that will extend the religious quest of humanity into the unknown future.

In 1971, Diane and Robert Ringstad, Society members, gave the Society a beautiful Navajo Ye'i blanket. The Ye'i, often depicted in Navajo sand painting designs, are Navajo Holy People, supernatural beings important in healing rites.

In the December 27, 1972, *Newsletter*, Patton wrote about the Society's growing collection:

[W]e claim the entire religious past of humanity as our tradition, and draw religious and moral insights from wherever they have arisen. . . .

On the walls are four hangings: a rug from the Navaho, an Islamic Prayer rug from

Turkey, given anonymously [actually by members Herbert and Carol Dreschler], an Australian Aborigine bark painting [given by members Hesi and Hans Bodlaender], and a Japanese painting of Buddhist monks. In the display case by the front entrance are: a stone-age axe head and sinker weight, American Indian; a Churinga (bullroarer) from the Australian Aborigines; from Mexico, a Guerrero stone figure, a “Pretty Lady” from Jalisco, and a Mayan head; a Peruvian grave figure; from India, figures of Vishnu, Brahma, Ganesh, and Hanuman, a Jain figure of Mahavira; a Buddha head from Siam; two Buddhist figures from Japan; from China, a Pi Disc; a Greek vase; and from Judaism, a Kiddush cup, a Hanukkah Lamp, and a Megillah, the scroll of Esther.

Along with the Tony Velonis wood sculpture and windows, the driftwood piece from the Websters, the new pulpit, and pulpit chair to come, our auditorium is becoming rich aesthetically and symbolically. All this has been accumulated with little organized or “official” action, but in the main from individual and spontaneous participation, which is how any religious expression should develop.

The Ridgewood Sunday News published a large picture, “Religious Art Display at Unitarian Society,” and quoted from Patton’s *Newsletter* article.

The permanent collection has been expanded over the years, both by donations from member-artists and by purchases. Acquisitions, in addition to those contributed or purchased early in Kenneth Patton’s pastorate (already listed, above), include:

- From Vera Giger, a print entitled “Rodeo” purchased for the Society’s collection in honor of Vera’s 85th birthday, and also a Giger print “The Grape and the Bottle.”
- From Tony Velonis, two serigraphs, “Prisoner #1” and “Obeisance;” two color sketches made in the process of designing the stained glass windows for the Society’s building; mixed media study made in designing the “Dinosaur” window; a mixed media, “Helios #1,” on loan to the Society.
- From Barbara Bonazzi, an oil “Landscape in Blue and Orange.”
- From Nancy Petrie, a watercolor (later reproduced by the Society for framing and notepaper) of the church building that she originally did for Gertrude Bartlett, and that Bartlett willed to the Unitarian Society; also a watercolor, “After the Storm” purchased for the Society by the Art Committee.
- A print by Dorothy Cochran, purchased by the Art Committee.
- From Pat Hyatt, a fireplace screen of her own design.
- From George Wolfe, a cartoon about the Society’s 90th anniversary.
- Al Schreiner, inheritance of his art work and artifact collection.
- The Society purchased three pastels by Kenneth Patton after his death in 1994, as well as a Chinese screen.

In April, 1983, a Creative Arts Committee was formed among some Unitarian Society members. Sheffer House, empty at that time, became the cooperative Sheffer House Artists and Writers Colony providing studio space for Society members. Many of the works produced there were exhibited subsequently at member-only exhibits. There were frequent problems with water, electricity and heat at Sheffer House and the art colony relinquished the space when the Society undertook renovation of the building for church offices. Participants included Barbara Bonazzi, Judy Collins, Rachael

Daum, Pat Hyatt, George Mamunes, Elaine Petrowski, and Susan Randall.

Jim Hyatt reports:

George Mamunes had a writing room there for a while, worked on his Whitman book. Pat Hyatt and Rachael Daum worked writing a children's musical, "Amazing Game," that Glen Daum wrote the music for. We later recorded the show with our kids singing the parts. It's never been performed publicly, but it would be fun to do sometime. Judy Collins painted downstairs. That was good use of a building when it was not being used otherwise.

THE VELONIS INFLUENCE

In 1965-66, Tony Velonis offered a sketching class which met every Tuesday evening with from 10 to 17 people at the Ridgewood School of Art.

After Tony Velonis's 1968-70 redesign of the Society's building, the name "Cottage Place Gallery" was given to the area formerly used as social rooms. His design for the entire interior space gave Society members and friends new possibilities for shows and activities, in addition to Sunday morning services.

During exhibits mounted since 1970, the windows in the south wall disappeared behind dark wooden shutters that matched the walls, increasing usable wall space. Ceiling spot lights illuminated the art works. When there was no exhibit, the shutters were opened and the area was flooded with light from Tony Velonis's multi-layered stained glass windows—"Dinosaurs" and "Sun"—and the two clear glass windows.

It may be that after the building's 1996 enlargement, this space will remain a similar gallery. At this writing, the details of the future design of Anderson auditorium have not been fully determined.

ART COMMITTEE EXHIBITS

1960-61: Lynn Roylance, volunteer

- Ruth C. Skidmore, watercolors and sculpture, November 1960

1962-63: Christa Mott, Chair

- Bob Fried, December 1962

1963-64: Christa Mott, Chair

- Ulysses M. Martin
- CORE benefit—artists' names not on record
- S.C. Valastro, photographs, exhibited—date uncertain.
- Nancy Petrie, Portrait Committee chair, showed portraits painted by various artists, in connection with choosing a portraitist for Homer Sheffer.
- Ann Chase's oil portrait of Sheffer was commissioned and purchased by Susan Wicks for the Society.
- A changing show of Society members' work was continuous.

1964-65: Alice Katz, Chair; probably the first year that an Art Committee existed. Earlier exhibits had been organized by individuals.

- Kaëthe Kollwitz, engravings and etchings, from the Charles Street Meeting House collection in Boston

- Stephen Cline
 - Betty Martin, modern impressionism
 - Peter Tilgner and Nathaniel Weil, combined exhibit
 - Society members and friends
- 1965-66: Alice Katz, Jackie Rootes, Co-Chairs (?) named the space “The Cottage Place Gallery”.
- Kenneth Patton, two exhibits:
 - Oriental religious art
 - Primitive African and South Sea Island art
 - Sunday school children, two exhibits
 - Pratt Institute, graphic art
 - Ethelyn Woodlock, surrealist paintings
 - Vick Owens, abstract expressionism
 - Bob Fried, black and white drawings
 - Mia Le Comte, boldly colored linear impressions
 - Marion Lane, expressionistic paintings
 - Selden Rodman, paintings from his collection
 - Thomas L. McNemar’s collection of African Masks, etc.
 - The Society purchased a piece of Patton’s African art
- 1966-67: Lucille Willing and Nancy Petrie, Co-Chairs
- Pietro, works
 - Jean Chandler, paintings and graphics
 - Ethelyn Woodlock, paintings and poems
- 1967-68: Records missing
- 1968-69:
- Beki Petras and Sylvia Thumim (organized by Lucille Willing and Bernard Spitz)
- 1969-70: Bernard Spitz, Chair
- 1970: Lucille Willing and Nancy Petrie, Co-Chairs
- Eileen Divone and Bunny Leibowitz, paintings
 - Beki Petras, paintings and collages
 - John White, watercolors
- 1971-72: Nancy Petrie, Chair
- Japanese Prints
 - Vera Giger, silk-screen and wood-block prints
 - Irv Koenig, paintings
 - Alice Costantini, fabrications and soft sculpture
 - Harper T. Phillips, experimental relief paintings in acrylic and metallics
- 1972-73: Nancy Petrie, Chair
- George Wolfe, cartoons
 - Nathaniel Weil, watercolors, drawings and wood block prints
 - Beki Petras, acrylics and collages

- Leonard Pisaniello, surrealist black and white graphics
- Peter Tilgner, sculptures. Among the sculptures Tilgner exhibited was the lectern he designed for the Unitarian Society auditorium.
- Anne Janowitz, paintings
- Soni Woolley, photographs
- Betty Williams, ceramics and paintings
- Ron Moore, drawings

1973-74: Nancy Petrie, Chair

- Ken Patton, oriental art
- John White, watercolor landscapes
- Donald Shambroom, semi-figurative oils
- Betty O'Brien, acrylic abstracts
- Charlotte Hinzman, oil landscapes
- Roberta Van Note, acrylics and collages

1974-75: Nancy Petrie, Diane Ringstad, Chairs

- Pam Young, circular woven pieces
- Beki Petras, traditional oils, abstracts acrylics and collages
- Pamela Tillson D'Armond, oil landscapes. The artist is the daughter of old members Ben and Lois Tillson, who live (1995) on Cape Cod.
- Helen Algase, traditional oils
- Doris Mogerley, Susan Turconi, Emily White and Eileen DeNuto, photographs entitled *Women's Vision*
- Society members' works

1975-76: Nancy Petrie, Chair

- Laura Mausner, abstract and semi-representational collages
- Cynthia Goodgall, watercolor landscapes and florals
- Roberta Van Note, acrylics and collages
- John Wagner, sculptures and paintings
- Tom Berrian, paintings and collages, *New American Roadways*

1976-77: Nancy Petrie, Chair

The Art Committee now consisted of Nancy Petrie, Chair, and Miriam Justice, Joan Ritter, Jack Hawkins, Cap Hossfield, Tony Velonis and Bill Scanlan; six exhibits were organized.

- Justine Buck, pastels and watercolors
- Michele Mangas, oil paintings
- Sheila Lavovitch, watercolors
- Pasquale Ciambriello, non-objective acrylic paintings.
- Vera Giger, a retrospective, cosponsored by the Committee on Aging

1977-78: Nancy Petrie, Chair

- Carolyn Avery, oil paintings. The artist is the sister of former member Marilyn Crafts (who died, October 1994) and niece of well-known American artist, Milton Avery.

- George Wolfe, cartoons
- Maxine Shields, a retrospective
- Sue Ellen Hains, watercolors and collages
- Nancy Van Arsdale, photographs
- Society members' works

1978-79: Nancy Petrie, Chair

- Pam Young, lace and woven pieces
- Ken Patton, old tools
- Val Fox, sea and landscapes in oils
- Aimee Sonn, watercolors
- Nancy Van Arsdale, *Hands Help Heal*, a photo essay; shown with works of her apprentice, Wendy Friant
- Tony Velonis, a retrospective
- Society members' works

1979-80: Nancy Petrie, Chair

- Sandy Tarr, oils
- Roberta Van Note, oils
- Barbara Bonazzi, oils and watercolors
- Leonard Pisaniello, graphics
- Sue Ellen Hains, watercolor collages
- Society members' works
- Phyllis Lasky, Edna Bingham, Mary Ann Stokes, Berniece Pak, Pat Meyer and Prie Stahl: photographs by six photographers

1980-81: Rachael Daum, Chair

- Dorothy Cochran, prints
- Jane Garnes, photographs
- Nancy van Arsdale, photographs
- Carol Richardson,
- George Wolfe, cartoons
- Nancy Petrie, watercolors
- Randy Kuiper, sculptures and drawings
- Young people of the Society, multi-media
- The Society purchased a Vera Giger print, "Rodeo".

1981-82: Randy Kuiper, Chair

- Eleanor Lenahan, oils
- Janet Rogers, abstracts
- Nancy van Arsdale, photographs
- Society members' works

1982-83: Randy Kuiper, Chair

- Jane Garnes, color photographs
- Elizabeth Ebersole, Randy Kuiper, Nancy van Arsdale, a joint show entitled

Images

- Tony Velonis, serigraphs, paintings and constructions, entitled *Windows, Doors, Gates, Portals*

1983-84:

- Inger Busch, Wendy Fried, Jane Garnes, Melanie Heinrich, Maria Kosarewycz, and Cathy Scalziti: photographs

1985-86: Ethel Toan, Chair

- Ellen Reinkraut, abstract impressionist
- Irmari Nacht, fiber art
- George Wolfe, cartoons
- Mercedes Gallup, expressionist landscapes
- Elizabeth Scott, serigraphs of the Arctic
- Margaret Meek, old Paterson houses and the Paterson Falls
- Edmond Casarella, pictures of castles

1986-87: Ethel Toan, Chair

- Ludlow Smethurst, oils and watercolors
- David Kopke, oils
- Peace Ribbon
- Vick Owens, photographs
- Richard Van Tieghem and Nathaniel Weil, watercolors
- A display of primitive masks loaned by Hans and Hesi Bodlaender, Ken Patton, and Tony and Betty Velonis
- Nancy Petrie, watercolors
- The Society purchased “Landscape in Blue and Orange” by Barbara Bonazzi; “After the Storm,” a watercolor by Nancy Petrie; and Tony Velonis and Pat Hyatt donated their hand-painted screen for the Sheffer House fireplace.

1987-88: Barbara Bonazzi, Chair

- Hertha Bauer, photos and prints of New York City manhole covers
- James Groleau and John Lindsay-Poland, *And Then There Were None: Portraits of Guatemala*.
- The Society purchased one of Groleau’s paintings. John Lindsay-Poland is the son of former presidents of the Society Helen and Robert Lindsay (deceased).
- June Weintraub, watercolors
- Ken Patton, pastels. These were created after Patton retired in 1986.
- Ron Moore, drawings and assemblages
- The New Seven: paintings, collages, and pottery by Judy Friguello, Sonie Hecht, Charlotte Hinzman, Ann Lasusa, Cecile Lichtenstein, Helen Price and Karen Rossen
- The artists sold a total of 25 pieces during 1987-88s exhibits.

1988-89: (no chair)

- Barbara Bonazzi, paintings
- Masks from the Velonis collection

- Bob Berti, photographs of Central America, sponsored by the Peace and Justice Committee.
- The Society purchased one of Berti's photographs, "Children of War."
- Mel Stabin, watercolors

1989-91: Eric Davies, Chair of Art and Music Committee

- A new approach, having one chairman for both art and music, found Eric Davies in the new role.
- Society members' works
- Margaretha Stahl, paintings, an artist from Romania

1991-92: Susan Rubenstein and Judy Collins, Co-chairs.

- Susan Rubenstein, abstract paintings and paper works
- Walter Markham, abstract collages
- Connie Gordon, nude figure paintings and drawings
- Marty Lavanhar, cartoons
- Four artists from the Washington Street Gallery in Paterson, representative work
- Society children and children from the CAMP after-school program in Paterson, representative work
- Society members' and friends' works

1992-93: Lauren Roncetti, Chair

- A tribute to George Wolfe, a large display of Wolfe's works
- A craft show
- A children's show
- Lee Mamunes, works
- Nancy Petrie, watercolors

1993-94: Ethel Toan, Chair

- The Watercolor Affiliates of the Art Center of Northern New Jersey, 25 artists exhibited
- Florence Wint, hand colored etchings of animals
- History and Archives Committee of the Unitarian Society, for the Village of Ridgewood Centennial Committee, a show of photographs illustrating activities of Society members in the community since the Village's beginning in 1894.
- Deedee Sprecher, fabric collages
- Society members' and friends' works

1994-95: Ethel Toan, Chair

- Jean Tower Deyo, acrylics
- Barbara Carfi, *Equipoise*, abstract and impressionistic oils and monoprints
- Linda AS Thayer, relief, drypoint, woodcut, and embossing
- Cassandra Jennings, *Metamorphosis*, acrylics on paper
- a two person show by M. J. King (daughter-in-law of members Barbara and Sol Goldberg), drawings in mixed media on paper and five inch *Galaxy Boxes*, shown with Cynthia Dobie's sculptures and wall reliefs of trees, in clay and wood
- June Weintraub, watercolors of New Jersey, Manhattan, Italy, and England

1987

8 PM
Saturday,
May 16th

Our 6th
annual concert
of traditional & modern

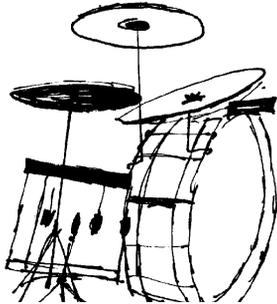


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THE SPIRIT OF MUSIC

The spirit of the Ridgewood Unitarian Society is voiced in music in Sunday services, celebrations and concerts. From the Society's very beginnings in 1896, music has been a part of every service. Organ accompaniment for hymns, occasional choirs, and vocal soloists were the Sunday morning fare until about 1970. Since then the piano has replaced the organ, and professional musicians—instrumentalists as well as vocalists—provide the special music most Sundays.

Music was this Unitarian Society's first capital expense. In 1900, before the group had a building of its own, members borrowed \$350 to buy a Vocalion reed organ, and the Woman's Alliance guaranteed the organ payments.

Founder Rebecca Williams Hawes had once been the area's only music teacher. She was devoted to both music and her birthright Unitarianism, and she led the Woman's Alliance to raise funds to pay for that Vocalion.

A musician's yearly salary became a permanent part of the yearly budget when the Society's first paid organist, DeWitt Clinton, a local musician and architect, was hired in 1901, replacing volunteer organist Anna Warren. Clinton held the post of organist for 23 years.

The 1924 Moeller pipe organ was also the result of Rebecca Williams Hawes' initiative. On December 27, 1922, Rebecca Hawes put in trust \$2,000: \$450 to finish paying a loan from the American Unitarian Association (AUA) for an earlier building expansion, and \$1,550 toward "a memorial window and the purchase and erection . . . of a new organ. . ." A small addition had to be constructed on the northeast corner of the building to house the organ pipes. The Woman's Alliance and many individual members made regular contributions to the Organ Fund, paying off the loan by December 27, 1926.

The pipe organ was duly installed at a total cost of almost \$3,000. A dedication concert was attended by beloved "Aunt Rebecca" October 26, 1924, only six weeks before she died at the age of 88.

Organist Percival Wheeler replaced DeWitt Clinton in 1925. Wheeler, a Christian Scientist, remained for 30 years, retiring in 1955. During the Depression years when the Society came close to financial collapse, an "Entertainment by P.V.Wheeler & Co.," April 17, 1934, netted \$33.50. His regular Sunday evening Vesper Concerts brought, via the collection plate, a net profit that year of \$11.51, as the music program helped to pay for itself.

Other musical performances in the 1930s were supported by the Unitarian Society and the federal Musician's Emergency Fund. There were afternoon concerts by the

Totzauer Quartet (a local teacher and his star pupils); and professional groups—the Durieux Quartet, and the Lavotta String Quartet—also played at the church. The Philomelic Society, an independent chorus led by Ridgewood’s Isa McIlwraith, used the Unitarian church for rehearsals and performed there at least once in 1933-34. (McIlwraith was organist at that time for the Pilgrim Congregational Church, Unitarian, Brooklyn.) In April, 1940, Organist Percival V. Wheeler, with other “vocal and instrumental talent,” once again gave a concert. These concerts may have been annual events.

Wheeler in 1931 received a salary of \$330, an amount which declined to \$200 as the Depression deepened. (The organist finally got a raise in 1947-48 to \$240.) Soloist Gladys Morey received \$10 a month in 1945.

Nancy Petrie recalls the music program of the 1950s: “I remember our then organist [Paul Kearns]. . . Young fellow; very good. . . He gave a Sunday afternoon concert.” Lois Tillson, the Society’s *Newsletter* editor, was very happy about the concert, and even printed a program for it. Tillson recalls that at Kearns’ first Easter service he was dismayed at the flower communion and at the failure to mention the name of Jesus. At the end of the service, as a postlude, Kearns belted out “Christ The Lord is Risen Today” as loudly as the organ permitted.

The Music Committee found many special musicians for Sunday mornings, who were accompanied by a small baby-grand piano the Music Committee purchased with a loan from the Society’s Board of Trustees. The customary paper drive (recycling of newspapers) was an important source of funds for music, augmented by donations of books of trading stamps, to be redeemed for \$1.50 or \$2. Merchant’s Green stamps, Triple-S Blue stamps, and Plaid stamps were all welcome. By the end of the fiscal year, the Committee had repaid all but \$74 of the \$500 loan from the Board.

But during the 1962-63 year there were some problems in the music program. At the September 9 Board meeting, Howard Roylance was asked to “speak to the music chairman” prior to choir auditions to assure a no-hurt-feelings policy. Bob Lindsay reported to the Board, on April 17, a conversation with organist Chester Wolfson concerning complaints about his organ playing and duties as musical director. Lindsay believed that Wolfson might not want the job the following year.

At a special Board meeting, Annette De Luca and Homer Sheffer disagreed about whether to allow people who came late to enter during a musical performance. Sheffer thought they should be allowed to do so; De Luca thought they should wait in the vestibule until the end of the music. The board sided with De Luca, specifying times during the Sunday service (indicated by asterisks in the Order of Service) for seating latecomers.

But Sheffer prevailed in some of the disputes. Sheffer didn’t like choirs. He reportedly said that “every choir is the curse of the minister, because they just cause trouble.” The Board agreed to have no choir, but, upon De Luca’s recommendation, to hire musicians from outside the congregation for music at most services. Under Mitzi Patton’s direction, however, the Society again had a choir for two or three years in the late 1960s; later, 1975-88, Winnie Hawkins volunteered her Sample Singers for special occasions; and in 1995-96, member Rachael Daum leads a small chorus on occasional Sundays.

But in the sense of an every Sunday choir, Sheffer's policy has held.

Sheffer also opposed Christmas music, a dispute even more painful. December 1, 1963, Annette R. De Luca, chair, and six members of the Music Committee, wrote to the Board of Trustees recognizing "the distress the present music program was causing Mr. Sheffer." To maintain peace, the committee was ready to "suspend our present music program," and "continue on providing a program which will be comfortable for Mr. Sheffer and as pleasant for the congregation as is possible, for the remainder of the church year."

The Trustees made one more decision about music: either Annette De Luca or Catherine Tchinnis would lead congregational singing each Sunday, and once a month there would be a paid guest soloist.

A letter to the members and friends from the Finance Committee, February 26, 1964, states, "In the past only the cost for the organist at \$850 has been budgeted, the cost for soloists and additional music [being] covered by the income from paper drives." The proposed budget for 1964-65 increased the Society's support for the music program to \$1,100 to cover all music expenses, presumably ending the paper drives.

Kenneth Patton's arrival and his love of music changed the musical life of the Society dramatically.

Mitzi Patton, a highly trained pianist, was appointed Music Director in 1966 at the suggestion of Annette De Luca. A small choral group Mitzi Patton formed sang on occasion until she resigned as Music Director in 1970.

In 1970, the Music Committee—Denny Chandler, Chair, Susan Stewart (later Vasiliadis), Barbara Koffel, Marcia Spitz, and Lillian Wehr—found Harriett Aschoff to take the position of Music Director—the completion of the building remodeling provided a larger auditorium with excellent acoustics. The Music Committee purchased a superb Steinway grand piano from a highly regarded area musician, Gates Wray.

To pay for the Steinway, the Music Committee planned three concerts a year for the next two years. The musicians—Lillian Wehr, Dorothy Neff, and the Bergen Baroque Ensemble (Denny and Bob Chandlers' recorder and early instrument group of six) —donated their services. The sale of a large collection of 33 1/3 rpm records donated by CBS when it changed the format of its New York station also aided the piano fund. (See *The Foundation of Good Works* chapter.)

Music Director Harriett Aschoff says:

As a result of this Steinway piano and the wonderful acoustics, players want to give solo performances in this hall. They experience artistic fulfillment from performing here. We've done ourselves a great favor, with this hall and this piano.

The piano proved so satisfying it soon became the major instrument for Sunday services, and the organ fell into disuse except for special occasions. Every week Aschoff performed—and still performs (1996)—preludes and offertories selected to coordinate with and support the theme of the minister's address. Each Sunday service includes a musical interlude, occasionally performed by talented members of the congregation, but most often by professionals Harriett Aschoff has engaged through her extensive contacts in the musical community of the New York area. Their artistry lends joy and depth to Sunday morning services.

In 1987 the piano went back to Steinway for a complete \$7,000 rehabilitation and repair.

When member Laurie Potter arranged a service on women, Aschoff created a segment on women composers. Additional beyond-the-call-of-duty contributions from Harriett were a members-only talent show, and the arrangement and harmonization, for Ken Patton, of his beloved folk hymn tunes. And in 1978, Aschoff organized many arts into one Sunday morning service, described in the *Newsletter*:

Muse & Music in the Celebration of Life—Harriett Aschoff’s musical tribute to poetry. Poems by Ric Masten, the Unitarian Troubadour, will be read by Doris Armstrong while George Wolfe draws & Harriett plays. You will also hear a Robert Frost poem sung by the Sample Singers, a woman cantor contrasting cantorial music with art songs, & the poetry of Haydn performed by the Hudson Trio—piano, cello, violin.

HYMNS

The Unitarian Universalist musical heritage was early enriched by the poetry of such eminent 19th-century Unitarians as William Cullen Bryant, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, James Russell Lowell, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. In the 20th century, Vincent Silliman and Kenneth Patton stand out, and a host of poets have followed.

Old Unitarian hymns known even outside Unitarian Universalist circles include “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear,” a paean to peace, with no reference to a magical baby, but only to the miracle of the possibility of peace, written by Unitarian clergyman Edmund Hamilton Sears (1810-1876); and “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” by Julia Ward Howe (1819-1910) in 1862, during the Civil War.

Kenneth Patton was on the editorial board of *Hymns for the Celebration of Life* (1964), and author of many of the hymns. When *Hymns for the Celebration of Life* became the Unitarian Universalist Association’s new hymnal, Al Webster was instrumental in getting Ridgewood members to “purchase” hymnals for the Society’s use. According to Denny Chandler, Webster made a pitch no one could resist.

At the celebration of the Society’s 90th anniversary in October of 1986, three hymns were sung that have historical significance. “O Life that maketh all things new,” by Samuel Longfellow (1819-1892), written in 1874 for the Festival of Free Religious Associations, celebrates life and the fellowship of seekers. “From age to age how grandly rise” by Frederick Lucian Hosmer, who wrote it for the 1899 Festival of the Free Religious Association, celebrates “the prophet souls” who, “though dead, they speak today” of freedom and faith. The third hymn chosen was one by Kenneth Patton, “The blessings of the earth and sky,” a hymn of rejoicing in “our friendly house” where “an earth of promise and of love” can grow. Patton wrote it in 1951 for the dedication of the Madison, Wisconsin, Unitarian Church’s new building. (The building was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright; Patton had overseen the planning.)

“Build Thee More Stately Mansions, O My Soul” from “The Chambered Nautilus” by Unitarian physician and author Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894) had been sung in 1936 by member Miss Wylde Wood at the Society’s 40th anniversary celebration, and



The Sample Singers led by Winnie Hawkins. Back row: Barbara Bonazzi (now Barry), Elizabeth Mannschott, Nancy Shalfaroosh, Ellen Heath, and Ruth Lusky. Front row: Carl Petrie, Bud Morris, Lee Regal, Jack Hawkins, and Tony Velonis.

in 1986 at the 90th by The Sample Singers, celebrating steps in the enlargement of the human spirit.

In June, 1986, at Kenneth Patton's retirement service, the music selected was from his 1984 hymnal, *A Chinese Hymns for Humanity*. The words of the hymns are Patton's versions of translations of Chinese poetry; the music comes from American folk hymn tunes from sources such as *The Southern Harmony* and the *Sacred Harp*.

When the UUA, about 1985, was planning a new hymnal and asking for songs from the congregations, Harriett Aschoff composed the music, and Gaia Brown and Ruth Lusky the words, of a hymn. Although their song was not included in the new hymnal, they found creating it a very satisfying accomplishment.

The new Unitarian Universalist hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*, arrived in time for the fall opening service in 1993.

CHOIRS AND CHORUSES

The origin of Sheffer's antipathy to choirs may lie in his hearing loss, or perhaps in the personalities of music directors and music committee heads. (Annette De Luca, for instance, in the 1960s, is remembered by many as being strong-willed.) The Society had a chorus in the late 1940s when membership increased after World War II. Lyman Bryan formed a chorus in 1956-57 that sang perhaps once a month until about 1963. Tony Velonis remembers Bryan as one of the most exciting directors he ever worked with. The chorus was characterized by good music, and happy relationships.

Bernice Medici speaks of Bryan's chorus:

At the beginning of 1960 I signed the book and became active in the choir. Carl Petrie used to drive me to and from [practice]. That was directed by Lyman Bryan, and a young man [Paul Kearns] played the organ for us. We had some enjoyable evenings.

Children's choruses arise on occasion, but have never become permanent. In the 1960s Dorothy Neff started a children's chorus that rehearsed during coffee hour. Enid Hayflick and Barbara Bonazzi (now Barry) took on the leadership of the children's chorus in the years 1978-80. On November 30, 1980, a children's chorus sang under the leadership of Rachael Daum. David and Rachel Molnar, Jenny and Laura Brainard, Jenny and Amy Zoler, Alice Mack, Diana Svarre, Andrea Medici, and Laura Arnt were part of the group. In December, 1995, a junior choir sang, led by Ellen Heath and Kathy Adorney.

Mitzi Patton's adult choir dissolved in the late 1960's. The Sample Singers, a small volunteer chorus, was organized by Winnie Hawkins in 1975 to provide choral music occasionally at Sunday morning services, Fellowship Feasts, and other special events. They sang about ten times a year between 1975 and 1988. In recognition of the Sample Singers' decade of singing, President Helen Lindsay presented a George Wolfe cartoon to Winnie Hawkins on December 22, 1985. Over the decade, 50 singers had participated, eleven of them for five or more years.

The group formally disbanded in 1988, and Hawkins "retired," but they continued to provide choral music "whenever the time was ripe" as the Ad Hoc Singers. They sang at memorial services for Janet Webster (fall 1988) and Lee Regal (January 1989). They sang, too, at an informal "carol sing" during the winter holiday in 1988, and at a performance of *Persons and Persons* (a parody of *Guys and Dolls*) for the Fellowship Feast in March 1989.

The group's musical scores were contributed by Ridgewood area music teachers and choral conductors Ethel Holderith, Jack Rodland, Bob Whittemore, and from Long Island, Barbara Bonazzi's father Richard Barry.

In the fall of 1995, another singing group, the Society Singers, began under the professional leadership of Ridgewood High School Arts Instructor (and member), Rachael Daum, to sing for special occasions.

THE PIPE ORGAN

Bill Rosenquest, President 1960-62, recalls that the issues in 1962 were how to raise enough money to keep the church going, and what to do about the pipe organ? The organ had been repaired repeatedly. Once, about 1940, its pipes were re-gilded by ex-president George C. Porter and his loyal helpers. At a special congregational meeting in 1962, when major repairs were necessary, Al Webster instituted an Organ Repair Fund Drive. A new replacement would have cost \$13,000, and an electric organ \$7,000; repairs cost only \$5,000, and resulted in an organ worth \$10,000.

Finally the organ was removed for restoration over the summer and reinstalled later in the fall. Rosenquest recalls that "An Italian from Paterson, N.J.," worked all summer long on those pipes. The repairs were completed by the Peragallo Organ Company in the fall of 1962. The organ was again tuned and repaired during 1976-77.

When Anderson Auditorium was redesigned in 1968-70, the organ was moved up

from the main floor to the loft. Its distance from the congregation, its limited capabilities, and the excellence and versatility of the Steinway grand piano discouraged frequent use of the organ.

As the Society approached the 1996 centennial and planned the next expansion of the main building, the choices were to relocate the organ or to remove it. The 1970-1996 organ loft would have to be demolished because of structural engineering problems, and it would be very expensive to disassemble the organ and reconstruct it in the redesigned Anderson Auditorium. Yet no one wanted to simply scrap the instrument. In January, 1996, Harriett Aschoff announced that a purchaser had been found who would buy the organ and absorb the costs of its removal: it would become a theater organ at the Galaxy theater in Weehawken, New Jersey.

Winnie Hawkins, who had been organist for many years at First Baptist Church in Ridgewood, enjoyed the use of the organ at the Unitarian Society as early as 1932 when she was a teen-ager. A boy she knew had a key – perhaps he was Unitarian!—and let her into the building so she could play the organ.

As Sample Singers director, 1975-88, Hawkins sometimes used the organ for accompaniment. On December 13, 1995 she played a *Winter Interlude* concert of Christmas carols as her farewell to the instrument.

The musical life of the Society continues in good health. Harriett Aschoff's Sunday offerings are much appreciated; the professional quality of the guest musicians she provides is outstanding; the quality of the performances by Society members continues very high; and afternoon and evening concerts continue.

A GATHERING OF HOLIDAYS

For religious liberals, the midwinter festival season is fraught with emotional and theological tensions.

An early example of seasonal musical offerings is the December 28, 1924 Christmas Carol Service of traditional Christian carols, responses, and prayers. There was no choir, but two soloists performed Christmas music, including C. Whitney Coombs, *In the Manger*. The organist, De Witt Clinton, played *Pastoral Symphony*, (probably from Handel's *Messiah*) and *Good King Wenceslaus* on the new organ. This service was probably one of Clinton's last as organist, for Percival V. Wheeler succeeded Clinton in 1925.

A generation later, Homer Sheffer described the Christmas story, in his 1960 Christmas address, as a fairy tale that could be enjoyed as such as long as one remembered that fairy tales are fairy tales, not truth.

By 1963, apparently he could no longer enjoy the fairy tale. He wanted to omit all Christmas carols from the holiday season. Several people wrote to the Board of Trustees protesting this policy as well as his objections to a proposed performance by children and adults of Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. Lois Williams supported the "strong lay leadership" in the Music Committee, writing: "I do feel that the music committee has been abused and dealt with. . .tactlessly. . ."

Member Sylvia Simons wrote:

I have heard that Mr. Sheffer said that if there is Christmas music at the Christmas Day

sermon, he will not speak. It is beyond my understanding as to why there can't be both, but I, for one, would rather hear lovely music.

Despite Sheffer's objections, the production of *Amahl* was held at the Christ Church during the Sunday School Christmas Party, and Music Committee Chair Annette De Luca thanked "Mr. Hall for assuming the costs for the musicians and the refreshments."

A new kind of winter festival came about under Patton's leadership. On December 19, 1965, a solstice *Turning of the Year* service of carols, music, and readings celebrated the myths whereby mankind has interpreted the mystery of the cycle of the seasons and the unopposable flow of time." During the Sunday morning religious education period there was a Hanukkah party for the children. At 4:00, the Board of Trustees hosted an Egg Nog Party, a tradition that continues.

That same month, there was a concert of early music by the Baroque Chamber Soloists, the Choral Group sang carols, and soprano Annette De Luca sang *Ma'o-Tzur*.

Christmas Eve services had not been held for some time before Barbara Bonazzi brought back the custom in 1980. Having served in the Religious Education program as committee member, director of Religious Education, and chair of the Committee, she brought her belief in the value of a Christmas Eve program to Kenneth Patton. He, with a humanist stance, could not understand why anyone would want such a program full of tales outworn, but opened the question to congregational dialogue at a Sunday morning service. The majority wanted a Christmas Eve service. Bonazzi's service celebrated the births of three religious figures: Jesus, Buddha, and Mohammed.

The three-birth-stories Christmas Eve service continued for a few more years. Later, baroque music, song and dance made a spirit of revelry. Subsequent Christmas Eves featured *A Child's Christmas in Wales* by Dylan Thomas, and *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*" by Barbara Robinson, both read by Wayne Armstrong.

The Christmas Eve service in 1995, falling on the last night of Hanukkah began with the menorah ritual. Traditional Christian carols and songs, a variety of readings by the youth of the Society, and congregational singing of the Unitarian hymn *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear* preceded an offering dedicated to the support of CAMP, the program to enrich the lives of children in Paterson. The 1995 story was *The Christmas Menorahs*, a true experience of a community's solidarity against anti-semitism. Leanne Cotten's cello accompanied *Silent Night* in the solemn glow of candles. Santa Claus, with sweets for all, ended the service.

SOME NOTABLE MUSICAL EVENTS

The listing which follows is incomplete, but illustrative of the variety and nature of special music events that have occurred at the Unitarian Society since the early 1960s.

- September 23, 1962: Special music by Harry Duffy, of Emerson, NJ, violin, accompanied by Miss Ann Seibert of Hillsdale.
- October 7, 1962: special music at the Sunday service, the North Jersey Brass Quintet.
- In April, 1964: the first of a projected series of concerts—tenor, violin and cello—planned by Annette De Luca.
- 1965: At a Spring Festival of music, there were piano solos by Mitzi Patton, and a

double quartet sang songs by Hindemith. Tony Velonis and Emerson Callahan were part of the double quartet.

- May 8, 1965: An Art Show and Concert featured a performing quartet: Frederick Ransom, tenor; Maria Goldman, cello; Ernst Goldman, piano; Tibor Pusztai, violin.
- December, 1965: The Baroque Chamber Soloists played two trio-sonatas in C minor for flute, oboe, bassoon and harpsichord, by Telemann and Quantz. William Rutherford, harpsichord, James Carucci, flute, John Mercer, oboe, and Eric Schleiffer, bassoon. Also, the Choral Group sang French Christmas carols and a song by Benjamin Britten; and Annette De Luca, soprano, sang a Hanukkah song, *M'ao-Tzur (Rock of Ages)*.
- May 12, 1968: At the close of the Sunday service, Rebecca Armstrong played Fantasia in d minor, K. 397, by Mozart, on the Steinway.
- December 15, 1968: Kenneth Patton's topic was *Religion and Music*.
- April 27, 1969: The Fairleigh Dickinson String Quartet, among them Mary Kay Naylor, violinist.
- [ca. 1972] Margaret Ann Martin and Mary Fassler, folk musicians, played guitar and dulcimer at a folk and bluegrass concert.
- December 2, 1973: Martin Canin, piano recital
- May 12, 1974: Gramercy String Quartet concert
- November 24, 1974: Beverly Somach, violin recital
- February 9, 1975: Sondra Cohen, piano recital
- September 28, 1975, Sunday morning service: member Marcia Spitz, pianist, and her son Jonathan Spitz, cellist, played.
- December, 1975: a new chorus appeared: Winnie Hawkins' Sample Singers.
- April 17, 1977: *Resound to Sound* concert by members Dorothy Neff, Marcia Spitz, Jonathan Spitz, Lillian and Albert Wehr, and the Bergen Early Music Players (members Denny and Bob Chandler, and friends Marcia Sautner and Marcia Barman); flyers designed by Jane Chandler; Mario Jamora, posters.
- April 9, 1978: The Zoot Sims group entertained at a Jazz Concert, arranged by Bob Ritter
- May 7, 1978: The lay service was *Muse & Music in the Celebration of Life – Harriett Aschoff's musical tribute to poetry*.
- November 12, 1978: Scott Brubaker, french horn; Robin Bushman, violin; and Ron Levy, piano; playing *A Concert of Trio Music* by Telemann, Brahms, and Banks.
- November 9, 1979: Member Marcia Spitz, pianist, Nancy Clarke, violinist, concert.
- March 23, 1980: The Alacorde Trio concert; musicians from the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, with Alice Sheffet guest pianist, performed a Brahms quartet.
- November 2, 1980: Jonathan Spitz, cello, and Michael Schmidt, fall concert.
- March 15, 1981: Aurora Baroque Ensemble, music by Alice Shields, who once was a student of Winifred Hawkins. Her mother, Maxine Ferree Shields, was an artist and a member of the Society.
- November 22, 1981: Barbara Blegen, pianist, concert. She was a student of Rudolf Serkin.
- December 24, 1981: "Christmas Eve service will be by candlelight. Sample Singers,

Children’s Choir, Instrumental Ensemble, Country Dancers, and congregational singing of traditional carols are on the program.”

- April 4, 1982: Nancy Clarke, violin, and Marcia Spitz, piano; Spring Concert, costs underwritten by the performers.
- September 25, 1982: Jazz Concert, “Quintessence,” Glen Daum on piano, with Earl Sauls on bass, Jeff Papez on drums, Barry Bryson on trumpet, and Ralph LaLama on saxophone.
- November 6, 1982: Betty Comora’s “majuberosity” Trio with Chris Berg, bassist, and Dave Larsen, drummer.
- January 29, 1983: Noreen Grey/Earl Sauls Quartet; jazz pianist.
- April 22, 1983: Eddie Hazell Trio, jazz.
- May 21, 1983: Glen Daum and “Significant Others”, jazz
- In 1982-83, Jacob Brown, Glen Daum, Bob Lindsay, Jenny Zoler, and the Sample Singers—all members and friends of the Society—performed on numerous Sunday mornings.
- November, 1983: Jonathan Spitz and Eve Wolfe, cello and piano recital.
- April 15, 1984: The Cottage Place Arts Ensemble premiered. Soprano Rebecca Armstrong, and Glen Daum’s ensemble performed the music of modern composers, including “Sparrows” by Joseph Schwantner.
- April 29, 1984, the Walden Trio played a recital.
- May 19, 1984 the annual Jazz Night by the “Significant Others” – Glen Daum’s jazz group.
- December 23, 1984: Presentation of a scroll and gifts to Winnie Hawkins, Conductor of the Sample Singers, by Tom Forsman.
- March, 1985: Bach Festival in Ridgewood; Unitarian members and friends participated both as listeners and performers. The Sample Singers sang Bach’s “Peasant Cantata” with singers from First Presbyterian Church, and the resident Linwood Trio played: Pat Hyatt, violin; Nancy Mack, viola; and Rachael Daum, piano.
- April, 1985: The Prometheus Trio concert, with Jonathan Spitz, cello; Erika Kiesewetter, violin; and Cameron Grant, piano.
- December 22, 1985: Recognition of the Sample Singers’ decade of music.
- March 9, 1986: The Vox Nova Quintet, five women playing woodwinds. Two composers of works on the program were present.
- May 17, 1986: Jazz Night; Glen Daum and musicians, cabaret night.
- November 16, 1986: Beverly Somach, violin
- March 15, 1987: The Aurora Baroque Ensemble with Virginia Brewer, Baroque oboe; Lisa Dandow Lyons, Baroque violin; Max Fuller, Baroque cello; and Eric Milnes, Harpsichord.
- May 16, 1987: Jazz Concert, an 8-piece band led by Glen Daum.
- March 17, 1988: Member Recital
- May 1988, “Significant Others” jazz night
- November, 1988: Ron Levy piano recital
- March, 1989: Inoue Ensemble: clarinet, piano, koto, and soprano. Alice Shields’

composition was dedicated to her mother, member Maxine Shields. Elizabeth Bell spoke briefly about her piece, that was played by the ensemble.

- April 8, 1989: Susan Teicher, pianist, played works of Beethoven, Schumann, and Bartok.
- May 14, 1989: Al Regni, saxophonist; with pianists Linda Sweetman-Waters, and T. O. Sterret.
- November 11, 1989: Benefit concert for the Interreligious Fellowship for the Homeless of Bergen County, at the John Harms Center in Englewood: The Jubilee Singers of All Souls Unitarian Church, Washington, D.C.; sponsored by the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, and the Unitarian Universalist Society of the Palisades.
- Fall, 1992: Concert by Elisabeth Mannschott and Roger Jones, to benefit the hymn-book fund.
- March 20, 1994, pianist Andrew Burns presented a concert.
- SPRING 1995: SEVERAL EVENTS:
 - Roger Jones' and Elisabeth Mannschott's evening of song.
 - The Leonardo Trio's performance for a Unitarian Society Building Fund benefit with Erica Kiesewetter, violin; Cameron Grant, piano; and Jonathan Spitz, cello, April 14, 1995
 - Tony Trischka with his banjo group, an evening demonstrating the history of the banjo.
 - "Christmas Interlude," Winnie Hawkins' farewell to the Moeller Organ, December 13, 1995.

MUSIC DIRECTORS, ORGANISTS AND CHORUS DIRECTORS

Anna Warren, 1895-1901, organist

DeWitt Clinton, 1901-1925, organist

Percival V. Wheeler, 1925-1955, organist

Mr. Sundermeyer, February 1955-1958(?), organist

Paul Kearns, 1958- 62(?), organist

Lyman Bryan, 1957-65 (?), choir director

Chester Wolfson, 1962-63, organist

Gretchen Cominetto, organist 1963-February 1964

Betty Hiemstra, February 1964-May 1965, organist

Mitzi Patton, 1965-70, organist, choir director, music director

Harriett Aschoff, 1970, organist, pianist and music director

Winifred Hawkins, 1975-1988+, The Sample Singers and Ad Hoc Singers director

Rachael Daum, 1995-6, Society Singers director

CHAIRS OF THE MUSIC COMMITTEE

Frank Knothe, 1926-30

Mrs. David L. Marks Oct.1950

Audrey Schulze, 1955-60

Jennie Gaitskill, 1960-62
Annette De Luca, 1962-ca. 1967
Robert Lindsay, 1967-68
Russ Higgins, 1968-69
Denny Chandler, 1969-71
Susan Stewart (later Vasiliadis), 1971-73
Al Neff, 1973-74
Enid Hayflick, 1974-75
Roger Jones, 1976-80

Rachael Daum, 1980-83
Arthur Toan, 1985-86
Denny Chandler, 1986-87
Rachael Daum, 1988-89
Eric Davies, 1989-91
Joe Harris, 1991-92
Diane Hipkins, 1992-95
Elisabeth Mannschott, 1995-

CHANGING TIMES, CHANGING MINDS THE SOCIETY'S PRINCIPLES

THE CONSTITUTION REFLECTS THE CONGREGATION'S PRINCIPLES

The vibrancy of the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood is in no small part the result of the foresight of the founders. After making the decision to form a Unitarian Society, their first step was to adopt a Constitution that would guide the group through a century of growth and change.

Over the 100 years since 1896, the religious philosophy has broadened. In the early years this non-creedal Society found its basis in the words and actions of Jesus. Without rejecting this view, the Society today honors many religious leaders and maintains an attitude of responsibility toward the larger world. No declaration of belief has ever been required for membership. A study of the original constitution and subsequent amendments reveals some of the changes the Society has undergone during its 100 years of development. (The 1896 constitution is reproduced here in its entirety. Many amendments are discussed here. The complete wording of all subsequent changes is available in the Society's archives.

THE CONSTITUTION: 1896

ARTICLE 1

The name of this Society and the name to be certified by the Trustees to the Authorities, as its corporate name shall be The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, N. J.

ARTICLE 2

The objects of this Society, shall be to promote in this community religion that is rational, honest, progressive, and liberal; to help establish Truth, Righteousness, and Love among men, and to furnish a Church home for all who would find in the Two Great Commandments the essentials of Religion.

ARTICLE 3

Section 1. Any person of full age may become a member of this Society upon application, approved by a majority vote of those present at any meeting of the Board of Trustees, and signing the Constitution.

Section 2. No declaration of belief shall be exacted from any member or applicant for membership.

Section 3. Every member shall be required to pay to the Treasurer, a sum not less than \$2 in each year. Upon the failure of any member to maintain such payments the Board of Trustees may, upon a majority vote, cause the name of such member to be stricken from the roll of membership.

ARTICLE 4

Section 1. The officers of this Society shall be a President, Secretary, Treasurer and a Board of Trustees, consisting of the President, Secretary, Treasurer and four Trustees all to be elected by Ballot upon the adoption of this Constitution, and at each Annual Meeting.

Section 2. The duty of the President shall be to preside at all business meetings of the Society, and of the Board of Trustees, and to act as Executive as occasion may require.

In the event of the absence of the President at any such meeting the Secretary, or in the absence of the President and Secretary the Treasurer shall call the meeting to order and preside until the selection of a Chairman.

Section 3. The duty of the Secretary shall be to make & keep a roll of membership and a faithful record of the transactions of the meetings of the Society and of the Board of Trustees.

Section 4. The Treasurer shall be the custodian of the funds of the Society, and shall keep accurate account of all receipts and disbursements making report thereof, at each meeting of the Society or Board of Trustees, and limiting disbursements to such amounts as may have been appropriated by the Board of Trustees.

Section 5. The Board of Trustees shall meet at such times and places as the Secretary may appoint at the request of the President, or any other two members. Any four shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. They shall have power to do whatever shall be required for the good of the Society, except to buy, sell or pledge real estate, to engage or terminate the engagement of a Pastor, or to assume any obligation exceeding \$50 without the consent of the Society.

ARTICLE 5—Meetings

Regular meetings of the Society shall be held on the First Thursdays of May and October, the May meeting being designated as the Annual Meeting. Special meetings shall be called by the Secretary upon the request of five members, for the transaction of any business the nature of which shall have been stated in such request, and in the Secretary's notice. Notice of such meeting shall state the hour and place of meeting and be sent to each member of the Society by mail, at least one week prior to the time appointed.

ARTICLE 6—Amendments

This constitution may be amended by a two thirds vote of those present, at any regular meeting provided that written notice of the proposed amendment shall have been sent to each member twenty days prior to the date of meeting.

Ridgewood, May 23rd, 1896

This Constitution was adopted at a meeting called for the purpose on May 7th, 1896, in the Opera House.

E. Rodrigo, President

Thos. F. Stoddard, Secy.

Quorum. One third members of Society constitute quorum see page 32 of Minute Books.

The unique principle in the Constitution is freedom of belief, freedom from divisive creeds, which defines Unitarian Universalism. Historically, in the denomination, there were repeated struggles within the American Unitarian Association (AUA) between the

Christian Unitarians and others who might define themselves as transcendentalist, humanist, agnostic, atheist, realist, mysticist, or naturalist. The resolution of such tensions has been, and still is, the honoring of the principle of freedom of belief. The religious philosophy of the majority of the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood evolved over the century from a form of Christianity based on the teachings of Jesus, to, in 1996, a majority holding humanist, agnostic, or atheistic beliefs. This Society is said to be far “left” in its religious philosophy, compared to other Unitarian Universalist congregations in North America.

Until 1955, only minor changes were made in the constitution (e.g., overlapping terms for trustees, amount of annual dues, amount Board could spend without consulting the members, dates of annual meetings, definition of a quorum).

In 1955, however, an appointed Chairman of the Religious Education Committee was added to the Board (later to be removed in 1963).

At the 1962 Annual Meeting, many amendments were proposed by a Constitutional Revision Committee consisting of Bob Lindsay and John Locke. The only amendment to pass was to Article VI: [n.b., throughout this chapter, when indicating changes to the constitution, deletions have strike-out lines, and additions are underlined.]

ARTICLE VI

This Constitution may be amended by a two thirds vote of those members present at any regular meeting, ~~[provided that]~~ or any special meeting specifically called for the purpose of amending the Constitution, provided that attendance at such meetings shall not be less than 25 members and that written notice of the proposed amendment shall have been sent to each member twenty days prior to the date of the meeting.

At the suggestion of the membership, the Constitutional Revision Committee re-studied the defeated proposals, and in 1963 the Special Committee to Reassess Our Constitution called a special meeting of the congregation to consider further amendments, somewhat changed from those on the agenda a year earlier.

Minutes of the Special Meeting on April 25, 1963, show that the members approved amending several articles:

ARTICLE II

The ~~[objects]~~ purposes of this Society shall be to promote in this community religion that is rational, ~~[honest,]~~ progressive, and liberal; to help establish ~~[Truth, Righteousness and Love]~~ justice and love among men[;]; and to furnish a Church home for all who ~~[would find in the Two Great Commandments the essentials of Religion]~~ seek truth and cherish human values.

By deleting the words “in the community” and “honest” from earlier “objects” of this Society, and by deleting the vague biblical reference to “Two great commandments, the essentials of religion,” and then adding “help establish justice” and “cherish human values,” the congregation recognized the Society’s philosophy of social responsibility. The change, by not referring to a traditional religious authority, included those whose beliefs were not based on Judeo-Christian tradition.

Article III has two 1963 amendments:

ARTICLE III—Membership:

Section 1. Any person 16 years of age may become a member of this Society by signing

the membership roll and receiving the approval of the Board of Trustees.

Section 2. No declaration of belief shall be exacted from any member or applicant for membership.

Section 3. Every member shall be required to pay to the Treasurer a sum not less than \$2.50/100 in each year. Upon the failure of any member to maintain such payments the Board of Trustees may, upon a majority vote, cause the name of such member to be stricken from the roll of membership.

Making the organization more inclusive of the young or the poor furthered the Society's purpose of furnishing "a church home for all who seek truth and cherish human values."

The 1963 amendment to Article IV, Section 1, removed the Chair of the Religious Education Committee from the Board of Trustees, and added the immediate Past President for a one-year term.

A new ARTICLE V established Nominating and Finance Committees.

President Bob Lindsay had presented those amendments. He recalled:

We went at the question of the preamble that still talked about the two great commandments. And we decided that had to go because we didn't know what it meant. . . we spent a fair amount of time on the nitty gritty, there was discussion, and maybe even some amendments that we debated and worked through. We got finally to the preamble and sure enough the group settled down and debated philosophy for about 40 minutes. Finally ended with the language we now have.

Between 1967 and 1970, another committee, chaired by Dick Dannells, studied constitutional revision. On April 9, 1970, the committee recommended, and the congregation approved, a stronger "Purposes" article, made explicit the Society's connection with the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), and deleted an unused portion of the "Membership" article which had allowed the Board of Trustees to reject a prospective member.

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS: April 9, 1970

ARTICLE I—Name

The name of this Society and the name to be certified by the Trustees to the Authorities, as its corporate name, shall be The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, N.J. The Society shall maintain a registered office at 113 Cottage Place, Ridgewood, N.J.

ARTICLE II—Purpose

The purposes of this Society shall be to promote religion that is rational, progressive and liberal; to help establish justice and love among men; to furnish a religious home for all who seek truth and cherish human values; to do all other things necessary to carry out these purposes; and to perform such other acts and to carry out such other purposes as may be permitted by law.

The purposes of the Society, as amended in 1970, explicitly cover any lawful activity. Massachusetts had enacted a law exempting citizens from having to fight in an undeclared war—i.e., the Vietnam war. Less than a month later, at Kent State University in Ohio, and at Jackson College in Mississippi, innocent students were shot and killed by the National Guard and by local police. To include "lawful activity" in the constitution was a statement of the freedom of the Society to engage in social action, to do what it

deems just and good, that is, religious, in an oppressive political climate.

ARTICLE III—Denominational Affiliation

The Society shall be a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

This statement of denominational affiliation made clear a relationship which was already in effect. Between 1946 and 1962 the Society had not sent any contribution to the American Unitarian Association nor to its 1961 successor the Unitarian Universalist Association, even though up to the mid 1940s the AUA had contributed monetary support to the ministers as “sustentation,” and to the Society in the form of interest-free loans. (The Society has made an adequate contribution to the UUA each year since 1963.)

ARTICLE IV—Membership

Section 1. Any person of 16 years of age or older may become a member of this Society by signing the membership roll, all members to be entitled to full voting privileges to take effect 30 days after the signing.

Section 2. No declaration of belief shall be exacted from any member of this Society or applicant for membership.

In 1970, the unneeded and unused barrier to inclusion of all who want to be members in the Constitution was changed. When the proposed amendment to delete the power of the Board of Trustees to veto an application for membership was under discussion, someone moved to amend the amendment and thus restore Board approval of applicants. That motion was defeated 6 to 21, and Board approval has not been a condition of membership since then. The 30-day wait before voting privileges take effect was moved by Bob Lindsay, and approved with only one dissenting vote.

Article IX, “The Minister,” was reworded to require a three-month notice for termination of the minister, and to state that the Board may not interfere with the minister’s freedom of the pulpit. The members voted to delete a list of the minister’s responsibilities in the Constitution Committee’s version.

Articles V, “The Board of Trustees,” and VII, “Committees,” removed the immediate Past President as an ex-officio member of the Board, and provided that resignations from the Board be in writing. Three standing committees—Buildings & Grounds, Finance, and Religious Education—would be appointed by the Board. The Nominating Committee would continue to be elected by the congregation.

Formerly, the five Nominating Committee members could nominate themselves to the succeeding Committee, but the 1970 amendment provided that only two of the five could succeed themselves, and then for no more than two years. (In 1982, the number allowed to succeed themselves was increased to three.) The articles removing the immediate Past President from the Board and restricting succession in the Nominating Committee have the practical effect of spreading the leadership of the Society to more members, avoiding the concentration of power year after year in the hands of a few.

A proposed article, “Length of Terms,” that would have had a similar effect, by limiting the number of consecutive years a person could be an officer (three years) or on the board (six years), was rejected, 6 to 16.

Articles XI and XII, “Fiscal and Business Affairs” and “Special Gifts Program,” put the Society on a firm business basis. Article XII described and established means for

individuals to give special gifts to the Society beyond the usual annual pledge to the operating fund.

The early 1970s were years of increasing tension among the minister, the Board and the congregation, pointing to the advisability of an on-going ministerial review procedure. At the Annual meeting in 1975, the members voted to amend Article VII, "Committees," to provide for an additional standing committee called Ministerial Affairs Committee, having the responsibility for consultation with and evaluation of the minister.

In December of 1975, two people of advanced years, Kay Lyle and George Wolfe, were in the forefront of change. Lyle moved, at a Special Meeting of Members, that all sexist language be removed from the Constitution. Cartoonist George Wolfe, who had never been known to modify his paternalistic attitude toward women, seconded Lyle's motion. With only one dissenting vote, a committee was empowered to eliminate all sexist language from the wording of the Constitution and By-laws.

On March 28, 1976, Section 2 to ARTICLE XI—Fiscal and Business Affairs—was amended, stating explicitly what had been implicit, that the "Society shall be an equal opportunity employer and shall carry on its fiscal and personnel matters without regard to race, creed, color, national origin or sex."

The rights and responsibilities of youth were to be clarified when the LRY, idealistic and hard working, asked for full membership open to all ages, and a fully empowered youth member on the Board of Trustees. At the Annual Meeting on May 13, 1977, the congregation approved the following motion:

. . . that the Board be authorized to invite an official representative from the LRY to sit at Board meetings; that the Board undertake necessary steps to make the LRY representative a full member of the Board; and that the congregation heartily welcomes the proposal.

Records are unclear as to whether Lori Yanis or Jennifer Brett served as the Youth Representative 1977-78. In March, 1978, an official notice sent to all members proposed the addition of a youth to the Board of Trustees as a full voting trustee:

At the 1977 Annual Meeting, the Society authorized the Board of Trustees to invite an official representative from the LRY to sit at Board meetings (Jennifer Brett had served with distinction as the LRY representative during the past year), and instructed the Board to undertake necessary steps to make the LRY representative a full member of the Board.

In the April 9, 1978, *Newsletter*, Brett alerted all to the coming vote on removing the age limit to membership:

AN AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION

. . . & by-laws of our Society is in order.

There is an age limit of 16 years on membership. This is age-ist & un-Unitarian*. Proposed change: Membership, Section I: "Any person 16 years of age or older may become a member. . ." to become "Any person may become a member. . ."

Proposed by: Jennifer Brett

Endorsed by: Naomi Yanis, Barbara Bonazzi

*The UUA's constitution states that no one shall be discriminated against because of race, creed, . . . age. . .

Both amendments were defeated at the May 1978 Annual Meeting.

In 1978-79, Phebe Dodyk became Youth Representative, and, undaunted, the LRY pressed for continued consideration of both measures.

These two controversial amendments came to a vote again at the next Annual Meeting, May 11, 1979. Albert Webster moved, and Naomi Yanis seconded, the Youth Trustee amendment. After heated discussion, it was approved by the required 2/3 of those present, in a vote of 34 to 11. A ninth member was added to the Board of Trustees: the Youth Representative, to serve one year. Phebe Dodyk was elected as Youth Trustee.

The debate on age of membership was fraught with emotion. Some people feared the votes of impulsive and inexperienced youth, and saw legal dangers in giving power to those too young to vote in village, county, state, and national elections. After intense discussion, eliminating the age requirement for membership was not approved on the first ballot: 27 for, 14 against. The amendment having failed, Sue and John Handley, who had voted against it, moved and seconded a reconsideration, whereupon a second vote was taken. This time the amendment was approved by the 2/3 needed with a vote of 29 for, 12 against.

Those who remember that stormy meeting may recall, as well, that a question arose of the legality of two votes. One couple, under the pressure of the controversy, had changed their vote to support the liberalizing amendment. Were these two people, Frances and Edwin Bailey, members, or not? A hasty examination of the membership book did not yield their names, and they were not on the mailing list. Since they maintained that they were members of long standing, the chair accepted their vote. Sixteen years later, research reveals that they were, indeed, members; they signed the membership book on March 13, 1960. Some of those present doubted the legality of the vote, but President Jack Ritter's ruling was correct.

Kris Brainard recalled that time:

The constitutional amendments providing for a youth representative, and that there be no age limit for membership, were passed at the same meeting that I became president. I remember that that was a very hot discussion. I think a couple actually resigned from the Society because they felt there was a real legal issue there, about young people making contracts. . . .

Although the couple that resigned has never legally rejoined, they have continued to be active in the Society. Jack Ritter, who presided over that meeting, comments:

[A]t the conclusion of the annual meeting that year we changed the constitution to bring in a youth member of the board and the membership age limit was dropped. This caused, I hate to say it, quite a bit of controversy among a very small group within the society. I would say that in the time that has elapsed since then, it has proved to be somewhat of a non-issue. A few sincere younger people have signed the membership roster. . . .

Among the adult sponsors of the age-limit and youth representative amendments to the constitution were Albert Webster, Naomi Yanis, Kirsten Brainard, and Barbara Bonazzi (now Barry). Placing no restrictions whatsoever on membership—money, age,

or a vote by the Board of Trustees—demonstrates the Society’s implicit respect for all people, regardless of race, gender, age, national origin, religious belief, or sexual orientation. This last, however, was not a focus of general attention in 1979, but has become so in the 1990s.

At the 1994 Annual Meeting, the membership approved two amendments: the date of the Annual Meeting was changed, and in a new version of Article XII, The Endowment Fund replaced the Special Gifts Program. The Endowment Fund was designed to achieve essentially the same purposes as the former program, but in a more detailed and tightly organized way.

On May 12, 1996, at the Annual Meeting, the following amendment to Article IV, Section 2, was passed unanimously:

No test of creed, faith, national origin, race, color, gender, sexual orientation, physical challenge or other similar test shall be imposed as a condition of membership.

(This superceded the former wording, which stated "No declaration of belief shall be exacted from any member of this Society or applicant for membership.")

The spelling out in explicit terms what had always been implicit as to eligibility for membership supports the realization that the inclusiveness needed in the larger world should start with the Society itself.

The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood’s constitution is its basic guideline. Untouched since 1896 is the clear statement “No declaration of belief shall be exacted from any member or applicant for membership.” The minister may say what he or she likes from the pulpit with no restrictions from the Board or the members. The deletion of all membership requirements was a natural development of the liberal principles of the Society. The care to restrict succession of members of the nominating committee developed from rational care for the organization’s health and the right and responsibility of all to participate.

The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood began, in religious terms, as a group that honored a liberal interpretation of the Judeo-Christian traditions, and espoused freedom of belief. Aware that wisdom comes from many sources, Homer Sheffer and Kenneth Patton made humanism a lens through which to view religious values, and the Society became a gathering place for religious liberals who found themselves living among the conservative majority in affluent suburbs.

In 1896 a small band of religious liberals decided to incorporate as a Society, with the purpose of promoting a religion that is “rational, honest, progressive, and liberal; to help establish Truth, Righteousness, and Love. . . , and to furnish a Church home for all who would find in the Two Great Commandments the essentials of Religion.”

Jesus referred to commandments with roots in Deuteronomy and Leviticus: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

The Unitarians decided that new ways of verbalizing the biblical commands should be devised, because “no statement of belief shall be exacted” of members. . . ,” and chose the words “to establish justice and love among all people” as an expression of the spirit of the congregation.

Freedom from creeds joins modern Unitarian Universalists to their 19th century forbears in the work of making a world of peace and love. Those who met together in the Opera House in 1896 had a vision – a religious society built upon freedom of belief – a vision this congregation inherits.

THE RECENT DECADE

Covenanting means our ministry is shared. It means that each one of us is entrusted with the care of the others, and that as a congregation we reach out together to meet, in some genuine way, the needs of those around us. And it means that our organization is such that each of us holds responsibility for the direction we take as a congregation. We are a democracy here, and each voice is important.

— Terry Ellen, March 24, 1994

The story of the recent past must, of necessity, be a mere outline of major events.

The 1986 survey of the congregation showed that the members felt the four most desirable ministerial functions and activities were 1) delivering intellectually meaningful sermons, 2) developing a sense of community, 3) involvement with adult programs, and 4) creating emotionally fulfilling Sunday services. They said they wanted a minister who was intellectual and a congregation builder, who was also a social activist and religious education guide. In sum: wisdom, warmth, commitment.

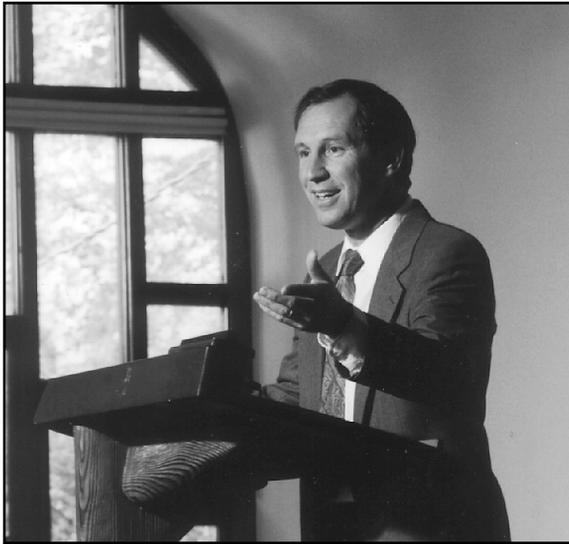
When Kenneth Patton retired, the congregation moved on, with Josiah Bartlett as interim minister. A wise man of long experience as minister, Bartlett was formerly Dean of Starr King School for the Ministry, and served as interim minister for many congregations. A better choice could not have been made: Jo Bartlett was interesting in the pulpit and a therapeutic congregational advisor who could examine the Society with an objective, yet kind, eye. After serving Ridgewood for the 1986-87 year, his suggestions included making the building accessible to the handicapped, adding a main floor bathroom and a fellowship room, and moving the Sunday School to a location on the same side of the street as the main building.

The Society was already in the process of rehabilitating the empty Sheffer House, so that it could be an administration building. Renovation of Sheffer House proceeded during the fall of 1986 with a great deal of “sweat equity,” especially on the part of Wayne Armstrong, who put in hours staining woodwork, painting walls and installing telephone wiring; there was, in fact, a half-joking proposal to rename the building “Armstrong House.”

Newsletter editor Nancy Petrie described the result:

RENOVATION OF SHEFFER HOUSE:

Open House January 11, 1987. Interior decoration by Rachael Daum and Pat Hyatt. Main office with seating and book shelves; minister’s office; board room with big table and chairs; and former kitchen transformed into a workroom for the treasurer’s team of book-



Terence H. Ellen, minister, 1987 -

keepers. Upstairs, two meeting rooms and a nursery, with refurbished bathroom. Soft gray carpeting, ivory walls, touches of peach in upholstery, and many of the Society's art works attractively hung on the bare walls with the Homer Sheffer portrait looking down on the board members at work.

That fall, Doris Armstrong headed a committee to produce the October, 1986, 90th Anniversary service. Narratives, slide projections, and musical selections of historical significance made up the Sunday morning program. Doris Armstrong, Delight Dodyk, Jack Hawkins, Bob Lindsay, Elaine Petrowski, Thalia Crane Sudnik, Tony Velonis, and committee members presented the history based in part on the newly discovered old documents. Friend John Hawes told his memories of his Great Aunt Rebecca Hawes. With Harriett Aschoff at the piano and organ, Barbara Bonazzi and Winnie Hawkins' Sample Singers provided the music. The Mayor of Ridgewood sent a congratulatory proclamation read by Ridgewood Councilwoman and Unitarian Roberta Svarre. Personal tributes were offered by President Helen Lindsay.

The committee that planned that service quite naturally evolved into the History and Archives Committee that became official in 1992. A grant from the New Jersey Historical Commission provided a consultation with professional archivist Peter Wosh, who advised the committee on preservation of its historic documents.

People who served on the History and Archives committee are Doris Armstrong, Gunnar Berg, Bob Chandler, Delight Dodyk, Barbara Goldberg, Jack Hawkins, Winnie Hawkins, Rosa Lee Holstein, Tommie Hutto-Blake, Eileen Mohan, Elaine Petrowski and Betty Velonis.

The most important project of 1986-87, of course, was the search for a minister. Ex-president Jim Hyatt was chair of the Search Committee composed of George Arenas, David Cooper, Barbara Cotten, Carol Patterson, Frank Schattschneider and Naomi Yanis. News of their adventures had, perforce, to be kept quiet until they agreed on a preferred candidate, Rev. Terence Holliday Ellen, a 40-ish man with a Sufi background, counseling expe-

Helen Lindsay and Delight Dodyk co-chair the Centennial Building Campaign, November 5, 1995.



rience, intellectual stature and a warm understanding of human beings.

Terry Ellen's candidating address, "The Vision and Work of Peace," on Mothers' Day, 1987, quoted Unitarian Julia Ward Howe's call for women to use their concerted efforts for peace. The congregation was immediately enthusiastic about him. In subsequent addresses as minister he has spoken many times on many topics, among them Central America, world federation, the United Nations, homelessness, the right to die, living wills, and the right of sexual preference.

Terry Ellen and Amy Boscov arrived in the fall of 1987 with their two-year-old son, Daniel. They bought a house in Wayne, New Jersey. The Unitarian Society assisted by investing some funds realized from the sale of the 114 Cottage Place parsonage. The Wayne location permitted professional use of their home, accommodating psychologist Boscov's need for an office and consultation room.

With two additions to the family, Lisa (1988), and Julia (1993), Amy Boscov now devotes her full time to parenting and homemaking.

When another Unitarian Universalist Society wooed Terry Ellen during his second year, he decided to stay with the Ridgewood congregation, a decision cheered by all.

Under Ellen, the Society has grown from 153 pledging units in 1986 to about 240 in 1996 and attendance at Sunday services has burgeoned. The Religious Education program, too, has grown. Member Ruth Uscher, Director since 1992, reports that the number enrolled increased from about 80 in 1986 to 104, preschool through junior high, and there are 18 in the youth group.



Model of the 1996 expansion of the building.

The congregation's community- and society-related activities have multiplied during the decade of Ellen's tenure: a softball team in Ridgewood's Church [sic] Softball League; intergenerational dinners and parties and square dances; newcomers' evenings with Society leaders and long time members; the Religious Education Committee's new curricula; and frequent intergenerational Sunday services.

The Odyssey project, directed by Sid Babcock, helped members and friends to know each other in ways beyond superficial exchanges during coffee hour. Each Sunday at 9:15 a.m. people came to the Peace Room at Reeb House, where a member was ready to tell about his or her own odyssey – a “How did I get to this point in my life?” story. People in this way came to know each other as individuals with unique lives. Members and friends who were not present may borrow the tapes for listening at home.

The need to expand the building generated much creative activity, and much anxiety as well. Former president Wayne Armstrong recalls,

While I was Building and Grounds chairman, (ca. 1990) they asked me to serve on an expansion committee with Art Toan. . . The problem was that we would have to expand; the question was how to do it.

We did a survey of where our Society members live. . . About 70% of our people then, and now, live within a radius of 5 miles of the church. And the rest of them are scattered all over North Jersey and into Rockland county. . . We didn't want to move out of Ridgewood, but there was no land available in Ridgewood that we could buy.

The committee members went to or called practically every Unitarian Society in New Jersey asking what they did, and how they did it. Are you growing? How do you handle it? Do you have second services? How does Coffee Hour work? What do you do with your kids?

We had someone talking to the UUA District representative, and to the architecture people in Boston.

And then we wrote a report to the Society saying “Here's the problem. Here are four alternative solutions we see available to us. Here is what we recommend that we do, and if we do so, this is where we think we eventually will wind up.” The congregation agreed with our recommendation. . . .

After much research, we drew up . . . plans to expand Anderson to the rear and then the Davies' property [next house north of the church] came on the market and everything changed.

When the "Property Next Door," 121 Cottage Place, became available for sale during the summer of 1991, the trustees quickly took the initiative and made an offer. Sensing a uniquely favorable opportunity to address the needs of the Society, the Society completed the purchase of the property in March, 1992.

The intention at that time was to move the Religious Education program to the new location, 121 Cottage Place, and sell Reeb House as a single family dwelling. The children would then be located on the same side of Cottage Place as the main building, and the constant danger of accidents to children crossing the street would no longer be a problem.

Architect Dan Toan, brother of member Arthur Toan, drew up plans for joining the two buildings with a fellowship room and kitchen that would extend across the back of the two lots, which would be joined to make one large lot. The old kitchen, in the southeast corner of the main building, would be transformed into additional auditorium seating space.

The Society went to the Village of Ridgewood Zoning Board of Adjustment for necessary permits. The owners of the other homes in the neighborhood objected to this plan, though, and the Board of Adjustment turned it down.

Ross Mamola, a new architect, proposed that Sheffer House be removed or demolished, and the main building expanded toward the back with a two-story addition able to provide Religious Education space, a new kitchen, and a fellowship room. Under this plan, in conformity with restrictions the Board of Adjustment imposed, the house at 121 Cottage Place would be used as administrative offices, not for religious education. After two years of appearances and presentations to the Board of Adjustment, approval of the plan was granted during the summer of 1995.

Former presidents of the Society Delight Dodyk and Helen Lindsay headed a Capital Fund Campaign in the fall of 1995 toward the building expansion. The outdoor Kick-off Party, held on September 30, in a tent on the grounds, stirred enthusiasm. By November 9, the goal of \$670,000 in pledges had been achieved.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, 1986-1996

Social action and caring for others are historically and in principle central to the purpose of this Society. It would be remiss not to report the multifarious activity on that front here, since so much has happened during the past ten years.

Some of the past decade's work has already been described in the chapter *Love Made Manifest*.

Work with SHARE, CAMP, CROP, UUSC, and other long-supported causes continued. A strong focus on peace developed in this decade of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Gulf War, and the U. S. attack on Grenada held the headlines.

In November 1987, Hans Bodlaender and Helen Lindsay initiated a Peace and Justice Committee, with a focus on Central America. Among those active in this cause were Wayne Armstrong (President 1987-89), Pat Burns (now Sieghardt), Barbara Goldberg, Ralph Ilowite, Bill Kennedy, Angelo Medici, Carol Patterson (President 1995-96), Laurie Potter, Lee Regal, Pam Rogers, Fran Vollaro and Al Webster.

The Society's sponsorship of John Lindsay-Poland's work in Central America heads a long list of Social Responsibility events. The committee:

- heard Society member Miguel Sanchez report his experiences as a physician in Nicaragua;
- heard Dr. Hugo Arguello, director of a hospital in Nicaragua, speak of conditions there.
- organized a five-session study of covert action in Central America.
- co-sponsored a conference on El Salvador with other area UU churches.
- hosted a dinner to raise funds for an earthquake relief caravan to El Salvador, and protested to Mexico's President Duarte when the caravan was stopped at the border.
- collected clothing for Nicaraguan hurricane victims.
- sponsored a letter-writing campaign to the Congress and the President in support of Rep. Robert Torricelli's exposure of CIA involvement in killings in Guatemala.
- cheered the New Haven-Leon sister city project, when Phebe Dodyk went to Nicaragua to report on health conditions there.
- sponsored a group led by Kris Brainard, her daughter Rachel Molnar, and Helen Lindsay, on a visit to Nicaragua and Guatemala "to experience the reality of poverty and injustice in Latin America;" and presented a program by Helen and Bob Lindsay and Kris Brainard about the trip.
- returned Helen Lindsay to Guatemala under the auspices of Peace Brigades International and the Interreligious Fellowship of Reconciliation.
- arranged a joint meeting with parents of Paterson's CAMP children and a member of CONAVIGUA, a Guatemalan organization of women widowed during the fighting in the 1980s.
- sponsored Society members' activity in the PBI Emergency Response program, protesting to Central American governments in instances of harassment of PBI volunteers and the people they escorted.

When war with Iraq became imminent in 1990, Society interest shifted to the Middle East. Minister Terry Ellen joined the Quakers and other religious groups in peace vigils in Van Neste Square. The Peace and Justice Committee sponsored a forum on "The Crisis in the Middle East," a four-meeting series on "The Problems and Consequences of War," an address by Professor El-Askara of New York University on the history of Iraq, and a panel discussion of the role of the media in wartime.

Jennifer and Paul La Rocca founded and led the Bergen County Coalition against the [Iraq] War. And after the war ended, the Peace and Justice Committee joined with the Social Concerns Committee of the Friends Meeting to organize a supper with Muslims living in Bergen County, discussing personal experiences of prejudice and methods of promoting understanding of differing cultures.

The Peace and Justice Committee has also:

- joined "20-20 Vision," an organization sending out monthly calls for action on peace and environmental issues.
- formed a group to study possible means of converting production facilities from military to other areas following the lessening threat of the USSR.
- held a series of evening discussion meetings on Arab-Israeli relations, led by Terry Ellen

Other areas of concern that the Social Responsibilities committee has introduced are sexual discrimination, low-cost housing, and environmental concerns, as well as racial prejudice in the local area.

- November 6, 1988: In an effort to raise consciousness about sexual discrimination, Delight Dodyk organized a lay service “These are Our Children,” at which Society members Denny and Bob Chandler, Helen and Bob Lindsay, and Naomi and Conrad Yanis, spoke of their gay and lesbian children and the families’ loving acceptance of their children’s partners. Terry Ellen later led a Sunday service, “The Welcoming Church.”
- In 1988, a traveling group of Habitat for Humanity volunteers stayed at the First Presbyterian Church while working on houses in Paterson. Unitarians prepared dinner for them on 2 nights and assisted in serving breakfast to them on several mornings. Later that year, a fundraising dinner raised \$800 for Habitat for Humanity.
- In 1989, Jeri Cohn and Joann Frechette formed the Environmental Concerns Committee. Speakers on backyard composting, on ecological dangers from development in Sterling Forest, on destruction of rainforest in Australia and Ecuador, and on the New Jersey Highlands Region study. The committee sponsored a speaker of the Sierra Club’s Population Committee at a lay service. They worked with the Building Committee and the architect to urge the use of environmentally sound materials and procedures in the design and construction of the expansion.
- The Village of Ridgewood, a predominantly white, suburban community, had seen little racial unrest until February 1990 when racist graffiti and feces appeared on the front porch of a black family. Terry Ellen spoke about this incident the following Sunday and asked for attendees’ signatures on a protest letter sent to the Ridgewood News. The following evening, outraged citizens met at a town-wide meeting at Christ Church and mobilized a group response, and organized a “CommUNITY Forum.” Many Society members were part of that discussion. The group provided a place of discussion of race relations in the community, and established a rapid phone network to use in the event of racial problems. The Forum encouraged the establishment of an official Community Relations Board of Ridgewood and Glen Rock to work for the acceptance of diversity.
- The need to address serious life situations became a focus when AIDS became a threat, and when senior members of the Society found that a renewal of programs on the problems of aging were needed.
- In 1995, Society members joined with the NJ Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice in a full page advertisement marking the anniversary of the murder of Dr. David Gunn, a health care provider at a Planned Parenthood Clinic in Pensacola, Florida.
- From 1991 to 1993, the Glen Rock-Ridgewood AIDS Ministry provided meeting space and held pot-luck suppers at various churches for people who were HIV positive and their guests. A group of parents of children with AIDS met in the Society’s administration building, Sheffer House.
- In the fall of 1994, a group of seniors and younger people with aging parents formed the Council on Aging. Sol Goldberg arranged several meetings during the year: the County Surrogate spoke on living wills; a gerontologist from the county Division on Aging talked of Living Longer and Living Better; the Chairman of the Bio-Ethics Committee of Valley Hospital spoke about medical ethics.
- June Ritter and Carolyn Musser launched The Open Heart/Open Door Committee, to encourage diversity within the Ridgewood Unitarian Society. Once-a-month soup/discussion sessions followed the Sunday service. The Committee arranged for the CommUnity Singers

of NYC Community Church to perform at a lay service in January 1995. Amy Read, a dancer, performed at an inter-generational Pot Luck dinner in January. In February, the Art Committee joined the Open Heart/Open Door Committee in sponsoring an exhibit by Cassandra Jennings, a black artist. In April, a three-film series showed *My Left Foot*, on the challenges and accomplishments of a boy born with cerebral palsy; *The Wedding Banquet*, about sexual preference; and *Zebra Head* about race relations.

TO SUM UP—

Since 1986, the Society has developed in positive ways:

- Action in social responsibility has widened in scope.
- Inclusiveness has moved from a taken-for-granted principle to a theme of study, discussion, and action.
- Leadership in religious education is strong.
- Sunday services often include both children and adults.
- An organized structure of adult religious education has developed.
- A network for caring for members and friends who are ill or in crisis has grown.
- Membership and pledges have increased.
- The decade-long progress toward expanded and improved physical facilities promises completion in 1997.
- Professional staff members are more fairly compensated than formerly.
- From forgotten boxes and rusty file cabinets, archives are now preserved and stored, forming a repository for the Society's long-term memory.
- A professional director, Rachael Daum, of the newly formed Society Singers is part of the staff.
- Festivals and feasts, art shows and concerts, coffee hour and the Newsletter, continue to kindle spirits and keep communication lively.
- The painstaking work and financial wisdom of many have kept the Society on a sound financial basis.

Under the leadership of minister Terence Holliday Ellen and presidents Helen Lindsay, Wayne Armstrong, George Arenas, Robert Nash, June Ritter, Robert Jones, and Carol Patterson, new and old members and friends find a religious home in the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood. Warmth and companionship, freedom from dogma, caring for others, and nourishment for the spirit continued in the past decade.

EPILOGUE

Terry Ellen, in describing his wonder at the voluntary activity around him – the "myriad aspects, fine touches, unseen efforts to respond to needs" – remembered that the Latin root of the word "volunteer" means "will" and "wish." He said,

“What impressed me most is that we together freely willed this whole venture into being, and even before that, we wished it into being. Out of our hearts and minds came a yearning, and thence an intention. In a world where coercive power loves to strut its bloody egoed stuff, the freedom, the beauty, the simple wishing into being, reminds me why I love being here. There is nothing more valuable than the free will, because its roots go down to that deep wish which lies beneath will.

So, while I celebrate what you remarkable volunteers have put together and accomplished, I even more deeply honor that wish in each of you that brought you to this place & helped to shape it. The origins of that wishing, that yearning, in each of us is so important for me as to merit the adjective sacred.”

A small group of 14 wished this Unitarian Society into being, rooting it in freedom of belief, in justice, and in love. The members today, like those before, work together for a peaceful world, help each other, and joyously celebrate life.

This book is an attempt to recover the Society's memory of itself, to pay attention to the little world these people have made on Cottage Place, to recognize the evolution of their religious sensibilities. Not only statistics of membership and budgets, not only documents and minutes of meetings, but also personal stories are bits and pieces of history, reported uniquely by each narrator. From the stories of those who lived through particular events, comes perspective on actions and issues and ideas in the present.

This Unitarian Society is remarkable for its strong lay leadership throughout its history. In the earliest years, with a very low budget and with ministers shared with other congregations, lay leaders carried enormous responsibility. In 1896, the members' deep wish for a liberal religious home, and the American Unitarian Association's wish to help new congregations, together planted and nourished the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood. Responsible, energetic, and creative men and women had the will to hire a minister, build a building, and design a program, just as they do today on a larger scale.

Women were fully responsible members and leaders in the earliest years, as in the present. In the 1960s and 70s, the principle of including any person who wished to become a member was guaranteed when both age and monetary requirements for membership were deleted from the constitution. In 1996, a constitutional amendment passed unanimously, making the already implicit inclusiveness explicit:

No test of creed, faith, national origin, race, color, gender, sexual orientation, physical challenge or other similar test shall be imposed as a condition of membership.

A concern to change the world was characteristic of these Unitarians from the start. The members have, throughout the century, cared for others and endeavored to eradicate social injustice.

The principle of freedom of belief remains unaltered. Each can make a personal quest for truth and wisdom, among fellow seekers.

Minister Terry Ellen bolsters and inspires the community, and brings to intense awareness the mystery of being:

Step by step, folly by folly, laughter by laughter, pathos by pathos we go, with all of our wits, with all of our feeling, with all of our company upon this earth of surpassing beauty and intricacy beyond imagination. If this everyday world is not enough for us, then what ever could be? It is simply our willingness to enter deeply in, to embrace what is already before us, in which our happiness, our sense of peace, our sense of meaning and fulfillment lie. Not off there, not somewhere over the rainbow, not at the end of pilgrimage, but here, before our noses, under our feet, within our own hearts and minds and souls, here.

A concern for freedom of belief, a sense of awe in the face of unfathomable mystery, an ethic of love and justice, and a warm sense of home, bind the congregants to this Society.

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