

A History of the Unitarian Church of Evanston

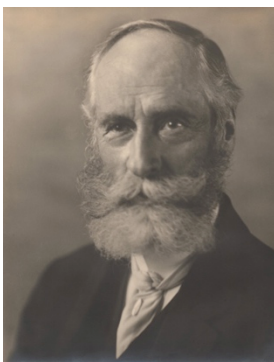
THE EARLY YEARS

Nellie Brough was the daughter and granddaughter of Unitarian ministers. She and actor-turned-banker Herbert Brough were beginning a family and they wanted their children to grow up in the Unitarian faith. When they moved to the Chicago area, Mrs. Brough went to work to recreate the Unitarian experience here for her children. She met neighbors who were also transplanted New England Unitarians, and together they decided to gather folks interested in hearing Unitarian preaching and perhaps starting a church in Evanston.



Nellie Brough

They contacted the Secretary of the Western Unitarian Conference, J.R. Effinger, who met with their first gathering in September of 1891. He recommended them to the Rev. Jenkin Lloyd Jones who was riding circuit in those days, supporting the establishment of several groups in the greater Chicago area (and beyond). Rev. Jones, in turn, recommended the group to his colleague, the Rev. James Vila Blake of Third Church Chicago. The men preached at the Evanston gathering for the first meetings that fall. In December, Rev. Blake agreed to preach and minister to the small congregation on Sunday afternoons.



James Vila Blake

Mr. Blake drove his horse and buggy from Third Church Chicago north to Evanston every Sunday until 1897, when he resigned his pastorate with Third Church, who were troubled by his stand against the Haymarket convictions, and signed on with the Evanston Unitarians as their first full-time minister. He remained for almost 25 years, resigning in 1916. The little congregation was quite pleased with his work and he did work hard, often for little or no pay. At one point they sent him to Europe on a holiday, to express their appreciation.

Nellie Brough saw to much of the organization of the new little congregation. Shortly after they began meeting, she called together a Ladies Aide Society, later called the Woman's Alliance; the Alliance had two committees, one to welcome newcomers and one to raise funds. Nellie Brough also organized a Sunday school for the children, for which Rev. Blake devised a 7-year curriculum in the study of the great world religions.

For its first decade, the group met in various halls around Evanston, and in 1898 they began to talk about perhaps building their own church. The Board of Trustees, however, was reluctant to take on such an expensive endeavor. The Woman's Alliance had other ideas and began staging fundraisers for a Building Fund, garnering \$1500, which they

presented to the Board in 1900. The Board then decided that they might well be able to bring it off and started a capital campaign.

Architect Marion Mahony, a member of Frank Lloyd Wright's studio of architects, was a member of the church and agreed to design a building which, after perhaps too much input from the congregation, turned out to be a very traditional little chapel seating about 100 people in its sanctuary, with Sunday school classrooms in the basement. The first service in the new chapel took place on May 22, 1904, and on June 17, 1904, the building at 1405 Chicago Avenue was dedicated. Wrote Nellie Brough, "Our wandering days were over."



The group had trouble coming up with a name for the church. They were divided on the issue of whether to declare themselves Unitarians. The vote, after quite a discussion, was equally divided between calling themselves "Evanston Unitarian Church" and "Church of All Souls," a popular alternative to "First Unitarian" in many communities. No decision was made, but in practice the group called themselves the "Church of All Souls." However, two issues forced their hand: When Julia Hintermeister took over the Sunday School in 1899, relieving Mr. Blake of a charge almost beyond the hours of his day, she began an earnest effort to recruit new families; however, members found it difficult to persuade their neighbors to bring their families to an institution that had no name; secondly, the Board learned they could not own the land they wished to buy, on which to build the church, without being incorporated (which they did in 1902), which process required registration of a name. And so "Church of All Souls" was so named officially in 1901.

The congregational covenant was written by Rev. Blake. With the exception of a brief flirtation with an alternative covenant during the ministry of Blake's successor, Rev. Arthur Thomas Brown, the covenant has been spoken every Sunday for over 120 years and counting.



Julia Hintermeister

In 1899, Fraulein Julia Hintermeister came to the church, "to bless us ever after," so said Nellie Brough. She took over creating curricula for the Sunday school, working with Mr. Blake, and developed a constant stream of social service projects for the children. In 1911, a group of girls was so inspired by a trip to see Jane Addams at Hull House that they formed a club to help the Evanston Visiting Nurse Association; that year, they made 25 garments and dressed 6 dolls. Miss Hintermeister also persuaded the adult community to lead in sponsoring "Camp Good Will," a summer-long series of fresh-air experiences for families from the poorer neighborhoods of Chicago; The congregation ran the camp, located in what is now northeast Evanston, from shortly after Fraulein Hintermeister's arrival at All Souls until her death in 1918.

THE MIDDLE YEARS

When Rev. Blake resigned the congregation and retired, the small group entertained interim ministries with candidates from Harvard Divinity School, usually ordaining them as well. All Souls' next "settled" minister was Hugh Robert Orr, who was called (and ordained) in 1920. Even though they wished to see him settled with them, the congregation wrote 1-year contracts for six years for Rev. Orr, partly due to financial straits.



Rev. Orr also presided over the American Unitarian Association and he began the discussion that eventually led to changing the name of the church to "The Unitarian Church of Evanston," in 1931. He argued for the name recognition of "Unitarian": the church would attract people who had heard the idea before; additionally, all churches using the same name would give the denomination more force in the American social world, competitive with the other major denominations of American culture.

With a second minister desirous to stay for a while, the little group felt more established and began seriously attracting new members. The church school outgrew its small basement quarters of three classrooms, and children could be found meeting in every cranny of the church, including meeting the kindergarten in "the cupboard under the pulpit." The congregation began to talk seriously about building an addition.

And so Hayford Hall (named for member and major benefactor John Hayford, retired



dean of the Northwestern University School of Engineering) was built onto the back of the church and dedicated in 1924. The hall seated 100 people comfortably for lectures, dinners, and dramatic productions. The auditorium accommodated overflow from the sanctuary when needed (with a "wire" radio feed). It could house four children's classes divided by movable screens; it had movable

chairs, so the space could be cleared for ballroom dancing lessons, dramatic rehearsals, and square dancing!

Membership numbers suffered through the 1920's. In October, 1921, the average attendance was 50, with 17 in the Sunday School. Nevertheless, the congregation apparently believed strongly in its future, committing itself to building the Hayford Hall addition. Said Nellie Brough in a letter to Rev. Lester Mondale:

Mr. Blake took us on in his retirement years, and when he finally retired again in 1916, after 25 years with us, we did wonder for a while what might become of us. We hired some of the new graduates of Harvard Divinity School over the next ten years or so, but none stayed more than a couple of years. However, we gradually came to realize that, in spite of the changing faces in our pulpit, we the

congregation were, indeed, thriving and growing. Every year we welcomed several new families on Covenant Day. A new hall was added to the church to accommodate the growing number of Sunday school children. And I cherished ever stronger hopes that our dear little church would carry on into a posterity.



In 1927, Rev. Raymond Bragg was called – and ordained -- to the ministry of All Souls, fresh from his theological training at the new Meadville Theological School in Chicago. He stayed for two years, bringing with him the message of American Humanism, having honed his philosophy in the Meadville classes of Curtis W. Reese and Eustace Haydon. After he left the pulpit in 1929, Rev. Bragg went on to become a leading Humanist of his day.

Rev. Bragg edited the *New Humanist*. He was a co-author of “A Humanist Manifesto,” published in 1933. Thus began a hearty relationship between the church and the humanist movement; the first edition of the manifesto and subsequent editions were signed by members of UCE and by Rev. Bragg’s successor at UCE, Lester Mondale, who ultimately signed all three editions of the manifesto, in 1933, 1973, and 2003.

Rev. Bragg was lured away from the Evanston pulpit to be Secretary of the Western Conference. From that post, he joined Hugh Robert Orr in convincing the Evanston congregation finally to change its name in 1931 to reflect its Unitarian predilections.

The management of the religious education program for the children was voluntary, but in 1927, the teachers in the children’s program thought it important to pay a superintendent to manage the program and instruct the teachers. By 1932, enrollment had risen from 14 in 1927 to 60, with an average attendance of 52. A salary of \$50 per month was budgeted to pay a superintendent and remained in the budget (although sometimes not paid out) until the mid-50’s, when the congregation hired their first salaried Director of Religious Education, Jeanne Kuch, who had completed the new Meadville course of study for religious education.



Lester Mondale, newly graduated from Harvard Divinity School, answered the call to the Evanston pulpit (and ordination) in 1929 and stayed for eight years. His passion was spirited discussion of the great issues of the day, and he developed the Fireside Forum with the Layman’s League. The Layman’s League was the male equivalent of the Woman’s Alliance; they, like the women, met monthly to hear a speaker and engage in discussion of the social and political issues of the day. When the series got established, the Layman’s League began attracting high-profile speakers and publicized the lecture series to the Evanston community at large. The group discussed the great ideas of Jane Addams and Clarence Darrow, among others, although they did not succeed in getting

those luminaries to visit the little stone chapel on Chicago Avenue. They did attract such notables as Saul Alinsky, Henry Steele Commager, Bruno Bettelheim, Margaret Mead, and Studs Terkel. The Fireside Forum continued until 1965.

Mr. Mondale was insistent that the church's pulpit and discussion hall be open; he characterized the mission of the church "to preserve the right to a forum for the most radical voices of the period." On June 5th, 1932, he rented Hayford Hall to a leftist group. In the course of the evening the church called the Evanston police to disperse a group of right-wing super patriots on the lawn who were trying to disrupt the meeting. The next morning Hearst's *Chicago American* headlined its report of this event, "Reds meet peacefully, Patriots battle police!"

Membership remained stable enough to support the church activities, but grew slowly. In 1932, membership was 84 and in 1939 it was 115, with 15 new members that year, and 30 in the church school. Said Mondale, "The fact that the church survived at all is a tribute to the large stature of the cultured gentry that constituted a good part of the membership."

In 1932, Sunday school superintendent Karl Heumann observed, "We belong distinctly to the left wing of Unitarianism, and as such we feel that we occupy a significant outpost in the educational life of our locality." He guided the church school curriculum away from the Bible and toward ethical and humanistic teachings of philosophers. The Sunday school children continued their social justice fund-raising efforts, that year supporting two high school students to help them stay in school until they graduated.

Rev. Mondale left Evanston to take on the Unitarian Church in Kansas City, his ministry immediately succeeding Raymond Bragg.

THE GROWING YEARS

Magician-cleric -- the headlines read, "Women Weep and Others Thrilled as Magician-Cleric performs in Pulpit" -- John Nicholls Booth, just out of Meadville Theological School in Chicago, was called (and ordained) by the congregation in 1942, and served until 1948.

Rev. Booth was a media man: he promoted Unitarian Universalism in radio, the new television medium, and print. UCE broadcast Sunday morning services, discussions at the Forum, and special interviews over WBKB Chicago. Unitarian ministers Homer Jack, Jack Mendelsohn, and Preston Bradley joined Booth for a Sunday evening radio series "Liberal Religion on the Air" on WAIT radio. In the infancy of television, for two years in the mid-40's, Rev. Booth broadcast a fifteen-minute program over WBKB-TV called "Looking at Life"; it is thought to be the first TV series in the world to be presented by a member of the clergy. Rev. Booth also wrote the first and immensely popular pamphlet "Introducing Unitarianism," used nationally by the denomination.



John Nicholls Booth

Media man that he was, Rev. Booth introduced a library of books about the world's religions to sit on the shelf behind the pulpit and speak to the Unitarian principle that all religions have something to say to us.

Ever the man for communication, Rev. Booth established the coffee hour, in spite of the frowns of the church elders, deeming it to be not a fitting activity for serious Unitarians.



coffee hour

Rev. Booth became the first Unitarian to be president of the Interfaith Evanston Ministerial Association, and the Episcopal and Lutheran ministers resigned in protest. Undeterred, Booth and the congregation participated in Thanksgiving union services with the Evanston downtown Christian churches for many years.

John Nicholls Booth composed "Soul of Truth," which was sung at the end of every service through the '50's, until 1963, when a particularly delicious parody of the hymn was done at the canvass dinner by Barbara Kepper, accompanied by washboard. After that it was hard to keep a straight face during the singing of the hymn on Sunday morning and it was quietly dropped from the service.

During the war, the Sunday school maintained an enrollment of around 20 children, with average attendance at 15. After the war, the enrollment rose in 1946 to 60 children, with an average attendance of 34. The teachers used the new Beacon Press curriculum written by educator Sophia Fahs, emphasizing Jesus as a model for ethical living. There were also curricula studying other religions and their differing perspectives on the "great questions" about the meaning of life. In 1948, the congregation sent superintendent Floyd Potts to a conference at Lake Geneva to learn how to run a Sunday school, UCE's first nod to the notion of professionally training their "paid volunteers."

The tenure of John Nicholls Booth was the first ministry of solid growth in membership. Rev. Booth reported that when he candidated for the ministry of the Unitarian Church in 1942, fourteen people were in the pews, including his wife and her father. By 1944, membership was up to 104, rising to 150 by 1948. Rev. Booth's energetic and often histrionic sermonizing brought the Sunday-morning attendance at the little chapel beyond capacity, with sometimes as many as 165 (Easter Sunday) attending.



1405 Chicago Avenue

While the adult gathering was outgrowing its space, the Sunday school also was cramped; by 1949, enrollment was at 80, and by 1953 it had reached 180. Four classes met in Hayford Hall, with rolling bulletin boards as dividers and classes met on the stage behind the curtain. By 1955, enrollment was at 225, and the congregation sought further accommodations; they located classroom space to rent at nearby Miller School, the funds

for which were to be raised through church dinners and square dances with caller Ed McQuiddy.

By the end of 1956 Sunday school enrollment ballooned to 375 children. The congregation was using all 13 classrooms of Miller School and ferrying their children back and forth from the church. Said teacher Elaine Mensinger, "It was a nightmare!" The congregation's concern to offer a quality religious education program for their own families brought the matter of space to a head. They felt that housing their children's program off-site was a poor message to give their children about their place in the church.

In response to outgrowing their beloved chapel, the congregation's first idea was to seed a new congregation, which they did -- they sent sturdy leadership to found (1953) what eventually became the North Shore Unitarian Church in Deerfield. But even with substantial new numbers joining the northern fellowship, the little chapel continued to be crowded well beyond its seating capacity. More space needed to be found.

The board insisted that first the mortgage on the little church must be paid off, which they did in 1948. Their second idea was to ask Ms. Mahoney to design an extension of the sanctuary, which she did. But finally, they decided that they should consider a new building.



Homer Jack

They were spurred on in that idea by newcomer to the Evanston pulpit, Homer Jack. When he came to Evanston, he had four goals: to involve the congregation in the new movement in Chicago (which he had organized) to fight racism; to initiate an exemplary program of church music; to promote the new education of directors of children's programs; and to move the congregation, crowded as they were, to make room for even more Unitarian Universalists.

As they worked toward a new building, the congregation began exploration of architects and finances in 1953. In 1956, they bought the piece of real estate on Ridge Avenue, concluded a successful capital campaign, and moved ahead with a building at 1330 Ridge Avenue, designed by up-and-coming architect Paul Schweikher. They dedicated the building in October, 1958, with Senator Adlai Stevenson as guest speaker.



1330 Ridge Avenue

The Board of Trustees convened the first Lake Geneva Retreat in 1956 to consider the future of UCE, and specifically how the congregation might meet the needs of its families while also managing a major capital building campaign. The group proposed elevating the Sunday school committee to a Board of Religious Education, promoting its role in church leadership. Rev. Jack felt strongly that it was time for UCE to hire one of the graduates of the newly-minted program for religious educators offered by the Meadville-Lombard Theological School. To their credit, the congregation decided to hire Jeanne

Kuch as their first professional Director of Religious Education, beginning her job in 1958.

Jean's teachers remember making up curricula "as they went along," because, although there were good programs for teaching the Bible and the world religions, there were no published materials to teach a humanist or naturalist approach to the world. This was the period when Sophia Fahs was working equally hard on a national level to publish similarly-themed UU curricula. BJ Wagner remembers most vividly creating curricula to teach ideas that were not taught in the public schools for lack of current texts, most especially the idea of evolution. Science was not taught in the public school early grades; she recalls that the third grade became something of a science course, with building siphons, digging tunnels, and doing experiments illustrating the wonders of nature.



Jeanne Kuch

With the new and more sophisticated organization of the religious education program, Elaine Mensinger stepped up from her teaching duties to become Sunday school Secretary, "to bless us ever after," to quote Nellie Brough regarding an equally large figure, Julia Hintermeister. Elaine morphed into the Church Secretary/Manager under Ross Allen Weston, and Executive Secretary under Charles Eddis and his successors. Elaine served the church as its organizing angel for 27 years, finally entertaining a resignation long overdue after she had seen the church thorough "the troubles" in the early 80's and into the ministry of Roger Fritts in 1985.

Rev. Dr. Homer Jack came to the congregation from a career promoting race relations in Chicago. In fact, Dr. Jack participated in a very early "Freedom Ride" campaign the summer of 1948, right after Congress legislated that interstate transportation had to desegregate their facilities; it came off pretty much without incident, mostly surprising the sleepy southern towns where they crossed state and race lines. Homer brought his concern with race relations to the congregation, which became active with the Evanston Brotherhood Week and with organizations of the community working for fair housing in Evanston. Rev Jack went to Montgomery, Alabama, the summer of 1956 to work alongside Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in one of the earliest race initiatives, the Montgomery bus boycott.

Homer Jack started the congregation on a path that would lead to confrontation between the church and its community a decade later. In 1959, among his last activities with the Evanston congregation, Dr. Jack introduced a petition to the congregation to take a stand on open housing, or more precisely a stand against the city ordinance which gave white residents the right to refuse to sell their homes to black families. The congregation debated the resolution heartily, but finally voted (by postcard) against it, not because it was the wrong stand to take, but because the congregation felt that "the church" should not speak for the membership – members should speak for themselves. A decade later, however, Charles Eddis led volunteers out the door of the church and onto the sidewalks of Evanston to march in favor of an open-housing ordinance in Evanston, no vote taken.

Dr. Jack was concerned to build an exemplary music program. To that end, UCE engaged Clarissa Greig in 1950 as organist, with the charge that she put together a choir as well. With Ms. Greig's great energy, the music program of UCE was launched.

Homer Jack enjoyed meeting the leaders of the world and was often out for weeks or months at a time visiting such luminaries as Einstein, Nehru, Schweitzer, Bertrand Russell, and Martin Luther King. Always bringing his stories back to the pulpit. He even tried to entice Schweitzer to Evanston for an 80th birthday party for the good doctor, but was unsuccessful –the party went on anyway!

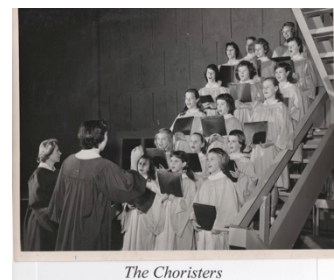
In 1960, the Rev Ross Allen Weston followed Jack in the pulpit, and his preaching combined with the new larger space to increase the membership to over 800, with over 300 in attendance every Sunday morning.



Rev. Weston impressed everyone with a dynamic speaking style, and folks filled the church to capacity to hear him speak; however, it was discovered that he was preaching other ministers' work, and he was eventually asked to resign in 1965. Many of the most influential church leaders were frustrated by the long reluctance of the congregation to dismiss Weston, so they left the church before he resigned and started their own congregation, which became the Lake Shore Society of Winnetka.

Ross Allan Weston engaged the congregation with the civil rights movement of the 60's. He brought to the pulpit Martin Luther King, Jr., the Freedom Riders, Rev. Eugene Sparrow, James Bevel and Diane Nash. In the process, town dissenters threw rocks through the north windows in 1963. Rev. Weston developed a supportive relationship between the congregation and the UU fellowship of Huntsville, Alabama, helping them become a beacon for freedom in that beleaguered part of the country. Building on work begun with Homer Jack, the congregation continued its work with the issue of open housing and a new initiative for school desegregation in Evanston.

This is the period that saw immense growth in the music program. Clarissa Greig's choir fit the little chapel perfectly, but the bigger church called for something much grander -- the sanctuary virtually celebrated vocal and instrumental music with its (sometimes over-lively) acoustics. Leone Severin took over the music program in 1959 (again, along with the organ bench), and organized a senior choir, a junior choir, and a group of 4th and 5th grade "Choristers." All three choirs sang on many Sundays and the senior choir sang every Sunday. Instrumental musicians participated frequently in the service. A "Children's Choir Festival" in 1960 brought together choirs from the greater Chicago area. The Easter service in 1961 featured the three choirs and a small volunteer orchestra. Ms. Severin concluded her tenure with the



first annual Spring Concert on June 4, 1961, with Junior and Senior choirs, a Brass Choir and a trumpeter from the Chicago Symphony.

Robert Chancellor took the choir leadership in 1961. His position was enhanced by the newly developed separate position of organist. Bob Chancellor began a series of three full concerts a year, choral works with orchestration. The Christmas Eve and Easter services became extravaganzas of instrumental and choral cantatas. The instrumentalists were many of them members of the Evanston Symphony Orchestra and the Northwestern Symphony, and Northwestern students and faculty. Soloists were often Northwestern students.



"Darkness into Light"

As soon as they moved into their new building, the congregation began work to sweeten up the cavernous, bare concrete sanctuary space.

Artist Martyl Langsdorf constructed the floor-to-ceiling mural mounted on the center core in 1961. In 1969 with Dorothy Dunn, she designed the huge batik banners. In 1976, Martyl designed and Mark Agnello fabricated the stained glass panels gracing the outside entrances to the sanctuary. Members began the process of annually painting the sanctuary floor (it would be covered in terrazzo twenty years later, in 1978). The congregation purchased a small Holtkamp practice organ for the sanctuary in 1966, which graced the sanctuary until the capital renovations of 1998.



The congregation had long desired the large convertible space that is their new sanctuary so they could clear the chairs and dance. And dance they did, keeping their spirits high while they fought the troubles of their difficult building – square dancing and folk dancing and ballroom dancing.

Dr. Homer Jack reminisced about the changes to the community who moved from their small tightly-knit, overcrowded church at 1405 Chicago Avenue into the cavernous, soon-to-fill-up sanctuary of the new church on Ridge. At the centennial in 1991, he observed, “The closeness of the members of the small congregation was precious. Small was beautiful and we feared our relationships might be fractured as our congregation grew bigger and moved to the new building on Ridge. In some sense things were never the same, but if liberal religion is good for the few, it must be made available to the many.”



UCE 1960

Too big for its old building on Chicago Avenue (375 children in 1958), the church school turned out to be much too big for its space in the new building as well (over 500 children by 1962). Building plans in 1956 called for a classroom building, but funds ran out and that plan was not realized until over thirty years later in 1990. In the meantime, enrollment in the Sunday school rose to 430 children the year after the building was dedicated. The basement at 1330 Ridge offered 9 classrooms, more space than the

Chicago Avenue church, but it was decided again to rent classrooms at nearby Dewey School for school-age children. The height of Sunday school enrollment was in 1963 (as it was for adults at 830) at 590 children and youth.



Ross Weston & Sophia Fahs

UU educator Sophia Lyon Fahs visited the congregation in 1963 and admonished the community to bring their children home. Enrollment fell off by 1969 (as it did for adults) to 270 students; in the 70's and 80's enrollment ranged around 175, and the children returned to the basement. In the mid-80's, enrollment rose again well over 200, and until the wing was built in 1990, classes were again held offsite for the older children, 4th grade and older.

In fact, as a result of Mrs. Fahs' visit, the board entertained a serious plan to raise capital of \$350,000 to build the church school. In 1963, the average attendance in religious education was 433 in 26 classrooms, combining the lower level of 9 rooms and 17 rooms at Dewey School.

The congregation could only think that the church school would grow bigger in the coming years. To bring everyone home, with room to grow, the expansion committee estimated they would need a total of 32 new classrooms, projecting a building with full basement and a second floor on the south lawn on the Ridge side. The plan came to naught, however, since the congregation was still paying on the capital campaign for the main building and since the relationship with Ross Allen Weston deteriorated to the extent that much of the leadership resigned the church.

When Ross Weston left and Rev. Charles Eddis was called and settled in 1966, Director of Religious Education Jeanne Kuch resigned her position to take up the directorship of the Religious Education program at First Society Chicago. Marjorie Rix served as Religious Education Director 1967-69, during which time the Fahs more humanist curriculum, "It matters what you think" was finished and used in the UCE program.

SETTLING IN YEARS



Charles Eddis

The Rev. Charles Eddis came to town in 1966, also with race relations on his mind. He had worked with fair housing in Montreal, Canada, and when he came to Evanston, the first thing he asked was where he might settle his family in an integrated neighborhood. He was told then of the battle by the real estate agents to maintain a "covenant" practice, barring homeowners from selling their homes across racial lines. Eddis immediately joined the congregation's work in the local fair housing battle. He teamed up with Rev.

Jacob Blake of the Ebenezer AME Church in Evanston to wage a visible campaign against the city council to force their hand in passing legislation outlawing the practice of "covenant." In 1968 the two ministers led the effort to victory.



Rev. Eddis and the congregation moved on to work for integration in the Evanston schools. A public board meeting was held in the church, which some 1200 people attended. After that meeting, many in the black community took their children out of the schools, and UCE was used as an alternative school for a few months.

UCE played a role in the movement against the Vietnam War. Senator Wayne Morse (the only Senator to vote against the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution) and correspondent David Schoenbrun spoke from the UCE pulpit against the war. The congregation began a program of draft counseling in response to the Vietnam War. Charles Eddis maintained that he spoke on Vietnam only one Sunday per year, but “It was too much for some.”



Avon Gillespie

The year the congregation called Charles Eddis, they also hired a young Black high school music teacher, Avon Gillespie, to lead the music program. Avon carried on the ambitious music program and added the elements of spiritual and gospel music. Through the 60's, UCE felt and sang the power of the civil rights hymns. Avon drew on his association with Northwestern University, the high school, black youth choirs of the community, and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra to bring exceptional music to Sunday services and the concert series. The selection of Avon gave to UCE a face of integration at time when that was a difficult and incendiary thing to do. Those were heady times. In 1972, Avon moved on to take a position on the faculty of the University of Texas.

Ed Lally took the conductor's podium after Avon Gillespie and, without Gillespie's valuable contact list for volunteers, Ed promptly blew the entire music budget on an extravaganza for Christmas Eve with the Chicago Symphony and chorus. The newly reinstated music committee was then enjoined by the Board to find someone who would not spend money. And so, no money to spend resulted in hiring the very clever Chris Syverud to be all of choir director and organist and youth choir director, which she did with enormous energy to replace big bucks. Chris mined the congregation for soloists and instruments to continue the ambitious programs of her predecessors, including madrigals, vocal groups, and four-hand piano with volunteer Jack Bradshaw.

By 1975, the fickle congregation, unapprised of the fiscal constraints under which Chris worked her miracles, was agitating again for a more elegant music program and the board asked for Chris's resignation to hire David Larson, the director of the North Shore Choral Society. David programmed with high ambition, presenting “Music Month,” involving Sunday morning services, a piano recital by young virtuoso Christian Giannini, and a concert. When David Larson resigned for health reasons after a little over a year of service, the music podium entertained a revolving group of talented musicians who continued the array of high-level music programming, until John Giles was hired in 1981 to build a sustained program until his death in 1996.

As an outcome of a “marathon” discussion session regarding the future of UCE in 1970, the congregation requested a time to discuss the minister's sermon ideas, and so the “9:30 service” was born. It morphed from a discussion of Eddis's sermon for that morning to

invited speakers, discussion of the day's news, etc. It continues in some form to this day -- "Warm up" during the 80's was later dubbed "Crackerbarrel" in 1988.

In 1970, Bea Swarm succeeded Marjorie Dix as Director of Religious Education. Bea had participated in the courses offered by Meadville-Lombard in children's curricula and brought a professionalism to the position, although not the full education of a Director of Religious Education. She introduced the "About Your Sexuality" (AYS) curriculum, presenting it to adults first, then using it with the junior high school class. Carl Hirsch and Jane Allen pioneered the curriculum "Black America: White America." Budgetary constraints led to Bea's resignation after a year. Volunteers served for the next six years.

In 1976, the minutes of the Church council observed that

Many, if not all programs are adversely affected by the poor condition of the building itself (unrepaired outside lighting, damaged doors, water leaks at the prisms, furnace problems, rusted metal work under the windows and doors, etc.) Activities which are or could be in the lower level are hampered by the uninviting nature of the rooms.



The congregation decided they needed to "finish" their very unsatisfactory building – or leave it! As was now their practice in capital improvements, they first cleared the mortgage, then in the mid-70's they began long-desired building improvements that included finished lower level rooms, the new



Martyl-designed stained glass panels, a woven triptych chancel hanging, improvement of the leaking glass slits (replacing the glass with plexiglass), a terrazzo floor in the sanctuary, and tile floors on the lower level.

Among his last efforts, Rev. Eddis encouraged the congregation to hire once again a professional Director of Religious Education. And so Carolyn Foster Buss came to Evanston in 1976.



Carolyn Buss Ordination

Carolyn brought enormous energy to the education of both children and adults and topped that by enrolling in the brand new course offered by Meadville-Lombard for the Ministry of Religious Education. She graduated the program and was ordained by UCE in 1981. Unfortunately, her rise in status caused a shift in perceived ministerial power among the staff and the congregation, and after two years of struggle, Rev. Dave Sammons left the church and Rev Buss left a year later.

Rev. Eddis left in 1977 to return to his beloved Canada. David Sammons came to the pulpit from the congregation in Cincinnati in 1978.

Rev. Sammons brought energy equal to Carolyn's, and some good ideas from his tenure at Cincinnati. Carolyn Buss organized an Adult Programs Committee that staged, among many social programs, Gaslight Days, international dinners, and a "Bal Masque." Rev. Sammons brought to UCE from Cincinnati, the Service Auction, later dubbed "Serendipity Auction." Carolyn and Dave designed "Children's Focus," a place in the Sunday morning service for a children's story.



Gaslight Days

Dave Sammons began a long tradition of April Fool's Day worship services whenever April first fell on a Sunday.



David Sammons

Among a huge number of program innovations, Carolyn Buss began a couple of our UCE traditions: Boston Bound and Ornament Sunday. Boston Bound was a program for junior high involving a study about Unitarian Universalism and its history; at the same time the students raised enough money to pay the rail fare to and from Boston, "headquarters" of Unitarianism in America. Carolyn Buss left a legacy of a well-organized program, bright and finished basement classrooms, and a slowly rising enrollment from 112 in 1978 to 208 in 1985 when she left.



Boston Bound

Rev. Sammons' passion was anti-war efforts for peace. Members of the congregation joined him in supporting the North Suburban Peace Initiative with almost weekly marches in Evanston and surrounding communities. To raise the visibility of the cause for a "nuclear-weapon-free world," and to persuade the city of Evanston to stand for the cause, the North Shore Peace Initiative asked folks in Evanston to display a sign designating their home a "Nuclear-weapon-free Zone." UCE posted one of the first signs on the lawn on Ridge Avenue in 1982.



John Giles

John Giles was engaged by UCE in 1981 to lead the choir, and his leadership continued until his untimely death in 1996. John was the first really long-term music director UCE has had. His music became increasingly ambitious as his choir became larger and more experienced. Under John's enthusiastic leadership, the choir grew to 75 members, with about 40 singing on any given Sunday morning. John composed music for the choir, including several cantatas. He continued the programming of his most ambitious predecessors, with "Big Music Sundays" (where choral music takes up the service), and piano and choral recitals. The choir made several professional-level recordings during John's tenure. In 1988, John resurrected the tradition of a spring choir concert, and presented the Mozart *Requiem* for an attendance of 430.

John brought the choir to various district assemblies where he conducted massed choirs (one at UCE in November 1992) and took the choir to General Assembly in Milwaukee in 1990, where they sang an original Giles composition for the Service of the Living Tradition. One attendee was heard to remark, “Imagine hearing that kind of music every Sunday!”

John’s contributions were recognized in 1991 with the title Lay Minister of Music.

Pianist Ken Smith came to the church in 1983, bringing folks from all over the Chicago area to hear his recitals. After Ken’s arrival, it became abundantly clear that the pianos at UCE would not accommodate so wondrous a sound and so a campaign began in 1985 to buy a first-rate piano. One of the highlights of this successful campaign was a piano play-off, pitting the performance qualities of a Kawai piano against the Yamaha that was eventually chosen. To raise money for the cash purchase, congregants “bought” the keys for \$65 apiece, with a vigorous bidding war for low A, middle C, and high C.



The Yamaha

The history of the music program at UCE would not be complete without a tribute to Christian Giannini. Son of church leader Ernie Giannini, Chris was a gifted pianist who played frequently at the services during his school years. His concert in the fall of 1977 occasioned the first time folks heard a first-rate piano (rented) in our sanctuary and many folks could not get the glorious sound out of their heads until we had our own piano. Juilliard-trained, Christian played with the Chicago Symphony and won many prestigious competitions. Toward the end of his all-too-short career, he was invited by his mentor Van Cliburn to the Tchaikovsky competition in Moscow, an occasion for much piano-playing in preparation and excitement among the congregation. He died of AIDS in January of 1991, a few months after returning from the trip.



Roger Fritts

The Rev. Roger Fritts was called to Evanston in 1985, and the Rev. Frank Robertson was called to be *Associate* Minister for Religious Education in 1986.

With their calling of the Rev. Frank Robertson to the position of Minister of Religious Education, UCE again sought to engage Religious Education staff with the highest credentials in the denomination. The congregation hired a member of the first class of professionally trained DRE’s in Jeanne Kuch. They returned to the professional with Carolyn Buss. And they entertained a member of the first graduating class of the Meadville-Lombard program for the ministry of Religious Education in Rev. Buss. After Carolyn, UCE has successfully called to its ministerial leadership Ministers of Religious Education, on principle.



Frank Robertson

Roger Fritts responded to the congregation's call for a minister to help the congregation improve avenues of communication and to facilitate a shared ministry model. Rev. Fritts worked out a Staff Relations Committee, a Caring Committee, and a model for lay Pastoral Ministry. Roger and Frank hammered out the definition of "Associate Minister" to every one's liking.

Frank's tenure brought real growth to the children's program. His second year began with 150 children and youth enrolled, and ended with 228. Forty-four new families joined the church. The teaching staff swelled from 45 in 1986 to 70 in 1987, organized into teaching teams with coordinators. Before the year was out, it was clear that, once again, more space would have to be found for the children's program. So Frank found space at the YMCA for the junior high, a congregant's home for the senior high, and space at St. Mark's Episcopal Church down the street for the 4-6th graders.



The Antique Show

Frank and his life partner Rick McDonald led the congregation to develop the delightful tradition of the Antique Show fundraiser, which graced UCE's fall calendar 1988-1996. Frank and Rick were collectors and antique devotees themselves, so the project was at least in the beginning a labor of love.

The end of the 1980's saw the congregation and staff finally settled in with each other. Roger was in his fifth year as senior minister, Frank Robertson his third year as Minister of Religious Education. John Giles was in his ninth year as music director, Ken Smith his seventh year as accompanist extraordinaire. The "wing" was on its way to being built, and a new kitchen was in place only inches before the canvass dinner in February, 1990.

In some ways, the decade of the 80's began with ministerial discord between Dave Sammons and Carolyn Buss and among the congregation, and ended with ministerial harmony between Roger Fritts and Frank Robertson. The congregation under the leadership of Roger defined for themselves and became comfortable with the new idea of ministry of Religious Education, and Frank's easy ways helped make that happen. Frank was designated *Associate* Minister for Religious Education from the outset. That title has morphed a bit since Frank into Associate Minister for Lifespan Religious Education. The commitment to Carolyn also set the new standard for UCE, who remain committed to engaging the most highly qualified professionals in religious education, acknowledging that a "minister" for religious education is just that much different and more meaningful. SO many people said of Frank, as of Carolyn before him, "He/She changed my life."

During Roger Fritts' tenure, the congregation worked to increase the space for the children's program, overflowing its tiny space in the basement and meeting at three off-site locations. The congregation decided to build an addition onto the existing structure. Bob Benson started the process, chairing the Space Expansion Committee, and John Lowe



The "New Wing"

took over as chair of the Building Assessment Committee, a four-year project. A capital campaign was launched and architects Hammond, Beeby, and Babka were chosen to design a wing onto the west side of the building, housing classrooms, first floor restrooms, and an entrance lobby. The wing was dedicated on November 4, 1990.

Said church member and sometime chair of the Religious Education Board, Mary Boesel: “In 1990, after a year of excavations, wiring, and mud, the door to the new addition was unbarred. We gathered for a celebratory Sunday service. Then our minister, Roger Fritts, walked to the entrance and threw the doors open. We eagerly crowded through to see the new, light, pretty space. People of the Sunday school are together at last and ready for what the twenty-first century will bring.”

Rev Fritts reflects further on the meaning of this new space:

The large room which is the sanctuary of the Unitarian Church of Evanston has shaped this religious community. The room encourages high standards in preaching and music. The room encourages us to see the dramatic beauty in nature. The room encourages us to plan big community events like speeches from Robert MacNeill, John Chancellor, and Studs Terkel, recitals from persons like Ken Smith and Christian Giannini, and concerts from our choir... On the other hand, the building does not tend to support the development of small group life within the congregation. My dream for the future of this church as we move into the 1990's is that we continue in the great traditions that this space has called forth in us; and that our new addition shape, nurture, and enrich the small group life of this congregation, so that in these small gatherings we become a more warm and caring community. For I believe real spirituality, and ultimately our connection with God, arises out of community.

Interim ministers David Bumbaugh (1984), Peter Samsom (1984-5), and Ann Tyndall (1985-6) helped the congregation deepen its faith in itself fostered by Revs Fritts and Robertson. The next decade of visionary growth was testimony to that strength into which the congregation had grown.

THE VISION YEARS

In 1990, at the request of Roger Fritts, UCE funded the practice of being a Teaching Church by inviting an intern every other year. Doug Reisner was an intern under Dave Sammons, but Roger began a biannual internship with Kirk Loadman-Copeland in 1990, continuing with Anne Marsh in 1992. Except for a hiatus while in search for a new minister, UCE continued the practice with Abhi Prakash Janamanchi in 1996-7, Mark Stringer in 1999-2000, Rosie Rimrodt in 2001-2002, Kathleen Green in 2005-6, and David Pyle in 2007-8. When the senior ministry settles again, the tradition will continue.

The Centennial was celebrated in 1991 with the attendance of seven living past and present ministers: John Nicholls Booth, Lester Mondale, Homer Jack, Charles Eddis, Carolyn Buss Podulka, Roger Fritts, and Frank Robertson.

Through the 1990's the UCE community cultivated a real diversity, expanding their embrace to include LGBT folk, an East Indian community in Chicago, women's energy, and the African-American community of Evanston.

Their work with the LGBT community was deeply felt. In 1987, John Giles and Ken Smith staged a piano concert in support of the new Chicago House, a hospice for people dying from AIDS. The concert garnered \$2400 in donations. Roger Fritts reflected:

Rabbi Harold Kushner writes about the death of his 14-year old son, describing all the personal growth he has gone through because of living through the experience of his son's illness. He writes about how much he has learned about the nature of life, the nature of loss and grief and the nature of God and love. And he says, "I would trade all that personal growth and learning if I could have my son back." Most of us are learning and growing a great deal around the issues of sexuality and fear and love because of this new illness. This gift of money is an example of this learning. It is a good education, a good maturing. And I would give up all this personal growth in a moment, if we could have back the good people who have died and will be dying.

And thus began a decade of 'learning and growing' with the LGBT community, culminating, but not ending, in certification as a Welcoming Congregation in 1999. In 1990, Rev. Roger Fritts brought to the congregation a segment of the AIDS quilt display of the NAMES project. The plight of the gay community was brought home deeply to the congregation with the death of Christian Giannini from complications due to AIDS in January, 1991. At the other end of the decade, the congregation experienced the death of beloved music director John Giles in 1996, also from complications due to AIDS. After almost a decade of education and discernment, in 1999, the congregation earned the UUA designation of "Welcoming Congregation."



AIDS quilt/NAMES project

Frank Robertson's's unique labor of love was helping Abhi Prakash Janamanchi, a ministerial student at Meadville in 1994, to found Bharat Samaj (east "Indian community"), a congregation of folks of Indian heritage living on the north side of Chicago and in the UCE community. Bharat Samaj might be considered UCE's most successful enterprise for racial and cultural diversity. Members of UCE participated regularly with the Indian community in the festival of Divali in the fall, Sankranti in the winter, and Holi in the spring; the Indian community joined in Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, and Earth Day. Members of the Indian community joined the church, and their children graced UCE classes. This side-by-side experiment in living was hugely successful in expanding the cultural and racial experience of both Indian and UCE communities. It was thought at one time that the



alliance between UCE and Bharat Samaj might become a full-fledged ministry. However, when Abhi needed to move on to his own ministry, and Frank retired after 35 years in the ministry, the group folded in 1998.



In October, 1987, the Rev. Leslie Westbrook (spouse of UCE’s Rev. Roger Fritts) and the Rev. Barbara Pescan led a training at UCE for women of the congregations of our District, for a new feminist theology course from the UUA called “Cakes for the Queen of Heaven.” Leslie Westbrook led “Cakes for the Queen of Heaven” for the women of our church on ten wintry Tuesday evenings in 1988, and the rest, as they say, was a transformative history. Many, many women participated in the several presentations of that curriculum (and later, “Rise Up and Call Her Name”), led by Eleanor Boyer and Judy Holman. They organized women’s groups, a women’s ritual group, two presentations of the District’s “WomanSpirit” conference, and altogether a very exciting ten years of women’s programming. Eleanor also designed worship services, including some very moving Mother’s Day events focused on the life stories of some of the women.

Among the women’s issues, the Inclusive Language Task Force did its work on behalf of John Giles, who was part of the UUA committee to develop the new hymnal. The Task Force persuaded choir members to get involved in proposing revisions of the sexist language of the current hymnal, as well as other documents of the church. They even went after the sexist language of Bach, although that proved something of a bit of nonsense. The Inclusive Language Task Force began energetic work in 1987 and ended a year or two after the publication of the new hymnal in 1992, continuing their work revising the documents of the church.

The Racial and Cultural Diversity Task Force worked through the 90’s with not only UCE, but also the Evanston community at large. They conducted a series on racism with the Evanston community in the fall-winter season of 1992. They staged the new UU workshop for developing anti-racist multicultural congregations, which resulted in UCE’s becoming a pilot congregation for a year-long development of a certification program as an anti-racist, multicultural congregation in 1996. UCE engaged in the curriculum “Journey toward Wholeness” in 1997.

Ed Harris was interim minister for 1993-1995 and left quite an impression. He got congregational leadership to talk about money and the pledge in his first year rose 19%, after failing to make budget three years in a row. Ed was greatly beloved by the congregation, their first 2-year interim.



Ann Tyndall & Barbara Pescan

Barbara Pescan and Ann Tyndall were called as the congregation’s first parish co-ministers in 1995. As often happens with the arrival of new ministers, the rest of the staff shifts, and this period was especially shifty. Administrator Linda LaPlante retired in spring of 1996 after seven years service. Music Director John Giles died August 1996 and Bart Bradfield stepped in almost seamlessly in January 1997. In

October 1997, Linda's successor Carol Hosmer, resigned to take on the administration of the Central Midwest District. Then in April, 1998, Frank Robertson retired as our first Minister Emeritus.

The ministries of Barbara and Ann are strongly characterized by a mission/vision discernment, which they did with the congregation soon after arrival (fall, 1996). Through small groups and lots of useful talk, UCE arrived at a mission statement: "to nurture the human spirit for a world made whole." Ann took up the first half of that statement, to deepen our relationships with each other and discern our own spiritual character more fully; perhaps most important to that end, she developed and supported covenant groups. Barbara supported a very ambitious and energetic program of social justice outreach and witness.



Bart Bradfield stepped in as Assistant Director of the choir, to help John maintain his directorship of the music program, while he contended with AIDS. When John resigned on disability in 1996 (he died at the end of that year), after 15 years of service, a short search process identified Bart to continue with the choir as Director of Music.

During Roger Fritts' tenure, UCE changed the way they worship. In 1992, the new hymnals arrived and the congregation began singing "Spirit of Life." Rev. Fritts introduced Joys and Concerns and a chalice lighting enhanced with sponsoring groups and congregational readings. The service moved to 10:30, with time for a talkback response session afterwards. Air conditioning in the wing led to the development of lay-led summer worship services in 1992; the attendance grew gradually, to the extent that summer services have been held in the sanctuary since 2009, with the new exhaust roof arrangement bringing heat relief, but no air conditioning! This on the way to a year-round church.

Rev. Frank Robertson retired from the ministry in 1998 and was named Minister Emeritus for UCE, the first so-named.

THE DEEPENING DECADE

Changes, changes! After a long rather settled decade of the 90's, ministerial leadership



changed hands quite a bit in the first decade of the new millennium: Marge Corletti was interim minister for religious education in 1998-99, Rev. Sue Sinnamon came in 1999 (to 2007). Rev. Ann Tyndall resigned in 2003, and Rev. Barbara Pescan went solo until 2011.



Nancy Shaffer was interim Minister for Religious Education in 2007-8, Rev. Connie Grant was called to be Associate Minister for Lifespan Religious Education in 2008 (to present). Mark Stringer, Rosie Rimrodt, Kathleen Green, and David Pyle supported the staff as interns.

In religious education, changes to the Sunday morning lineup were also in the works. Rev. Sinnamon instituted an early religious education program for children and adults at 9:15, with the worship service at 11; Connie turned the 9:15 slot into music and art and adult religious education, and returned the children's program to the 11 o'clock hour, now at 10:30.

At the outset of the new twenty-first century, the congregation began with caring once again for the building. A capital campaign was launched in 1998, growing out of ideas for sanctuary renovation, eventually also including "building renewal." With professional help, the congregation raised \$1.1 million to secure the building envelope with new window walls; install new lighting and sound resources; increase accessibility with an elevator and a lift; refurbish the lower level classrooms; and enhance the worship experience in the sanctuary with new banners, a new bamboo-wood chancel and pulpit, and chancel hanging.



A second, \$830,000 campaign at the end of the decade helped UCE retire its mortgage, install a new furnace with roof-top ventilation for the sanctuary, enhance the technology of music and sound, and continue the position of membership director beyond a first year funded by the Endowment Fund.

The work of the congregation in this decade carried forward the initiatives that were started after the mission/vision process in 1996. A great deal of energy continued to be focused on the two areas of deepening the health of our beloved community and of working to change the world.

“Nurture the human spirit for a world made whole”

In nurturing the human spirit, Eileen Wiviott came in 2007 as Membership Director. She initiated work in two important areas that enhanced member involvement at UCE: she greatly expanded and focused efforts of hospitality and she connected the congregation to volunteer opportunities for social service. Hospitality was enhanced to meet the goal that “at every level from the first time someone visits to the end of his or her life in the church, each person will be met by practices that welcome him or her into deeper involvement.” In 2010, Eileen led the congregation to discern “how we are together” and to develop a Covenant of Engagement.

In working toward “a world made whole,” the environmental task force led the congregation in a process of discernment, which resulted in certification as a “Green Sanctuary” in 2005. Their work began way back in 1989 with an evening series focused on developing responsible practices toward the environment; this was carried forward into a decade of education and changes of church policy toward environmental sustainability. The group also spearheaded work with the City of Evanston, to the extent that in 2007 the City of Evanston awarded the congregation the first “Sustainability award” from the Network for Evanston’s Future.

Social justice work deepened dramatically, from responses to September 11, 2001, to certification as a Peace Advocacy Congregation by the UUA Commission on Social Witness in 2012. The congregation built alliances with local organizations: United Power for Peace and Justice, Faith in Place, Connections for the Homeless, YWCA, Faith in Action, North Shore Coalition for Peace and Justice, the interfaith service group Good News Partners. UCE took a visible stand for peace and anti-war, both in demonstrations on the front lawn, and in a congregational resolution against the proposal for war in Iraq in 2001. The congregation took a visible stand for GLBT rights by hanging a banner “Civil Marriage is a Civil Right” in 2004. At the turn of the century, UCE began sharing the Sunday morning free-will offering monthly with community social service groups; in 2006, they elected to share *every* Sunday morning free-will offering. The Peace and Justice team took the congregation through a process of discernment that led to the congregation’s certification as a Peace Advocacy Congregation by the UUA Commission on Social Witness in 2012.



Bart Bradfield has brought his own imprimatur to choir music this decade, developing percussion accompaniment and drum circles, the Jazz Brunch with the Karl Montzka Trio, an annual interfaith choir festival, a recital series, jazzy carol sing at Christmas, African rhythms in the worship service, and music exploration workshops. Getting the congregation moving, singing, and playing was his goal. Changes in rhythm are noticeable in his staging of Robert Ray’s “Gospel Mass” in 1998, with piano, electric bass, drums, and the massed choir of UCE and Deerfield; and “Missa Gaia” with Jim Scott, saxophone, guitar, electric bass, drums, Afro-Latin percussion. And Gregory Shifrin has brought his piano virtuosity to Sunday morning services and most notably of late, to recitals of four-hand piano.

In 2002 Sandra Robinson joined the church staff as Church Manager, executing that job with such outstanding elan that in 2008 the congregation redefined her position as Executive Operations Director, a member of the Executive Team with the ministers. She joins that panoply of angels who have found their calling to help this congregation stay organized in order to move forward. In her new title, she can keep us visionary as well.

AFTERWORD

The Rev. Dr. Josiah Bartlett, as large a figure in mid-century Unitarian Universalism as you will find, visited the pulpit in 1965, when Ross Allen Weston left under a gray cloud. It was a time of healing for the congregation, not only for the troubled ministry of Rev. Weston, but also for disappointment with their difficult new building. Rev. Bartlett said to the congregation at that time, “You have come a long way in spirit on your journey from the little stone chapel on Chicago Avenue to this cathedral on Ridge Avenue. In such a sea change, remember who you are. You have always been a beacon church – activist in every liberal cause, carrying the light of liberal religious values into the teeming world around you. Now your beacon is set upon a hill, where all can see. You must –and I trust you will -- answer your destiny to be a cathedral church for Unitarian Universalism.”

And Rev. Carolyn Buss Podulka said at the 1991 centennial, “The richness of the Unitarian Church of Evanston is its people. This congregation has a strong core of people committed to the health of their UCE family. Ministers come and go, but the community has lasted through thick and thin. It was a growing and validating place for me. I had a love affair with UCE. I have wonderful memories.”