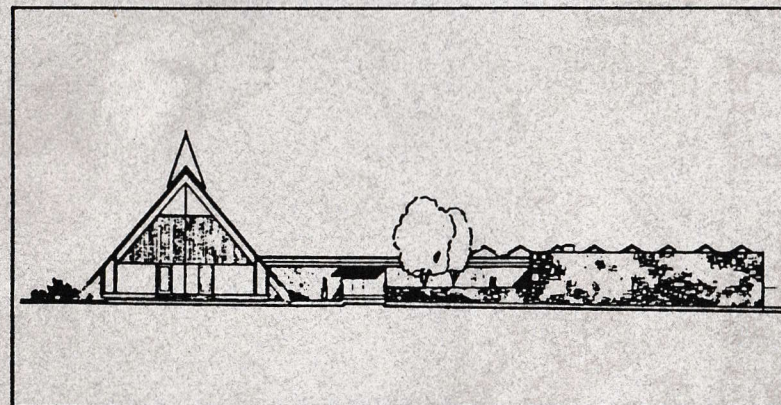


Peater

**The History of
The Unitarian Church of Princeton**



1953-1993

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

By Gail Ullman, Jacqueline Johnson and George Easter

May 6, 1993 marks our fortieth year as a church. The history of Unitarianism in Princeton, however, started almost forty-five years ago when, in July 1948, Lida T. Priest wrote to the American Unitarian Association (AUA) suggesting the founding of a fellowship in the Princeton community. The following spring, on March 27, 1949, an open meeting was held to determine the extent of local interest in liberal religion. Among those present were Margery and Alson Robinson, retired minister of the Plainfield, N.J., Unitarian Church and a vital force in our early years. The first service was held several weeks later on Easter Sunday. Fifty adults and five children attended. On May 4, 1949, a Certificate of Membership in the AUA was issued by Boston in recognition of the Princeton Unitarian Fellowship.

By Spring 1953 some forty-three families were active in the fellowship and interest was growing in attaining church status. To do so, the group was required to have sixty-five family units and to show it could undertake the financial responsibility of hiring a full-time minister. Immediately an informal "Lasso Committee" consisting of Margery Robinson, Margaretta Rutter, and Agnes Braden went to work, and by April the fellowship had its sixty-five families. The AUA agreed to assist in finding an experienced minister and to underwrite a portion of his salary for the next ten years.

On May 6, 1953, the denominational headquarters in Boston granted a charter to the Unitarian Church of Princeton. The group quickly incorporated under the laws of New Jersey and elected officers: Simeon Hutner, President; Ashley Montagu, Vice-President; Charlotte Holmes Wengel, Secretary; John Drury, Treasurer; and June Heald and Mary Wigner, Members-at-Large.

On June 4, 1953, Straughan Lowe Gettier was called as minister to the church, beginning his pastorate the following fall. The assembly hall of the First Presbyterian Church was the site of his installation service on November 22, 1953; the principal address was given by Dr. George D. Stoddard, former president of the University of Illinois and a member of the Princeton Unitarian Church. The following spring,

Harold Dean, a student at Princeton Theological Seminary, was appointed student assistant to Mr. Gettier, with special responsibilities toward the liberal religious youth group.

From the very beginning, growth was a delight and a problem. First meeting in the music room of Murray-Dodge Hall on the Princeton campus, the fellowship then moved to Princeton Country Day School on Broadmead; thence to Avalon (former home of Dr. Henry Van Dyke on Bayard Lane and location of current YWCA-YMCA); and then to the former YMCA building on Witherspoon Street (now the Paul Robeson Community Center). By March 1954, it was clear that the church needed a permanent home for its now 110 members, and a building committee was formed to find a way to meet the church's needs.

Dreams approached reality in October 1954 under President Peter Putnam, when the church began negotiations for the purchase of four acres on the corner of Route 206 and Cherry Hill Road from Mrs. George A. Harrop. In March 1955, the groundwork for a capital fund campaign began under the general chairmanship of Ken Wells with Peter Putnam chairing the special gifts portion of the drive.

That May the congregation adopted its present Bond of Union and made this historical statement of purpose:

The origins of Unitarianism are to be found in the sixteenth century among people like Michael Servetus, Francis David and the Socini, all of whom looked upon God as one rather than as a trinity. The early Unitarians, like their followers, were humanists seeking an ethical religion purified of irrational mysteries. Emphasis was on the power and ability of human nature to lead a moral life without supernatural aid. They rejected most of the traditional theology built upon the assumption that human nature was evil and needed a divine miracle to transform it. They denied the doctrine of original sin; man is not a fallen creature. They denied man's moral bondage, his unconditional predestination, his need of any magical redemption or transformation of nature, and hence they could not accept the theory of Christ's atonement for man's sins. In the figure of Jesus, they found a great moral teacher who was divine only in the sense that all men have something of the divine about them.

Of this statement and the Bond of Union, the congregation noted: "These statements are not to be considered permanent, and may be

reconsidered from year to year."

By this time 165 individuals had signed the membership book. Church school enrolled 107 children; the LRY comprised 13, and the university student fellowship was between 25 and 50. The annual meeting of April 1955 reported total annual revenues of \$9,126. Our transient accommodations during these years, however, created problems for both the religious and lay leadership. Thus, there was great excitement over the possibility of building our own church. In Fall 1955 Warner, Burns, Toan and Lunde were chosen as architects of the new building. Among their list of achievements was the Plandome, L.I., Unitarian Church. A building fund goal of \$100,000 in pledges was set, to be raised over the next three years, and extensive time and effort were devoted to preparation for the building fund drive. Church members and friends met in neighborhood groups to discuss plans for the building and to learn of the financial obligations involved. When held, the drive quickly raised \$108,000. News of the church's efforts reached the entire nation in October 1956 when Peter Putnam was interviewed on national television, showing movies of the church property and describing building plans. Groundbreaking took place October 4, 1957, with completion scheduled for fall 1958.

Church activities continued enthusiastically during these months. The "Robinson group" met regularly for social events; panel discussions were held on the topic of the Middle East; a social concerns committee was authorized by the Church Council (the governing body of the church), as was a women's group. Members worried about how to help people get acquainted and how to welcome newcomers — should members wear name tags? Mr. Gettier and members of the hospitality committee agreed to greet people at the door as they came to services. An activity preference survey revealed high interest in comparative religions, world affairs, religion and psychiatry, social concerns. The Women's Association met to knit bandages for cancer patients in hospitals in Africa. A long-range planning committee under the chairmanship of Dick Mason studied the organization and bylaws of the church and proposed revisions. In the spring of 1958, planning for the new building, the Cherry Hill Nursery School group was formed by members of the church and made arrangements for renting space in the church when it would be completed.

At the annual meeting in March 1958, President Ken Wells compared the church to an adolescent:

Trying to define ourselves. . . Trying to establish our church's scale of values. We want leadership, but not too much. We want new experiences, but we want to be quiet and calm. . . We want our church to be a place where one can say "I don't know" and hold his head up when he says it. A place where our children have at least a fighting chance to find out why their parents are the kind of people they are. A quiet spot in a confusing world. A haven for people who will always love the unending search for their own certainties about God, Man and the Universe.

In the autumn of 1958 we moved into our new church building. Although it was far from complete, a formal dedication was held on October 26. Nearly 140 pupils were enrolled in the church school. The Princeton community was introduced to the church that fall through a lecture series on world religions given by such noted scholars as Frederick Mote, Philip Ashby, Horton Davies and others. In February 1959, Doreen Spitzer chaired the first annual Auction. The \$800 Auction profit was spent on landscaping for our still bare property.

Meanwhile the unfinished building continued to receive the absorbed attention of many individuals. An ongoing discussion was whether to add a choir loft and to purchase an organ. Some claimed the acoustics in the large auditorium were poor, and the lighting was indeed incomplete. The minister's office was similarly unfinished, and the noise from the 7th grade class that met there during the Sunday service brought quick complaints. Nevertheless the church's activities and spirits climbed as we grew accustomed to our new space. As of April 1959, the church had 223 active members.

Early in 1960, Mr. Gettier announced that he would be leaving the church as of September 1 to take a pastorate at a Long Island congregation. A search committee was formed under chairman Ken Wells and spent many months seeking a new minister. In April 1961, Robert L. Cope was confirmed as minister of the church.

As early as 1953, visiting professor at Princeton Karl Deutsch had spoken to the congregation about the possible merger of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America. In April 1953, the Fellowship had gone on record as supporting the

federation of Unitarian-Universalists. Throughout the subsequent years debate and discussion continued at the national and local levels concerning the merger. Finally at the annual meeting of the denomination held on May 11, 1961, and attended by Peter and Durinda Putnam, Vee Spear, and Bob Cope, the denomination voted overwhelmingly for the merger. Dana McLean Greeley was elected first president of the Unitarian-Universalist Association.

Robert Cope was formally installed as Minister on October 8, 1961, with Justice William O. Douglas as principal speaker. The charge from the congregation was given by Rowan Boone, and Bob responded: "Not because I have the truth, but because together we may well have enough, thus I dare and do accept this ministry."

The larger world became a particular concern as the 1960s progressed. We debated in these years the resumption of nuclear testing, the wisdom of fallout shelters, the actions of the House Committee on Un-American Activities. In 1962, 125 members signed the Covenant for Equal Opportunity in Housing (in Princeton), the Social Concerns Committee participated in the organization of a Study Center for Youth held at Dorothea House. In 1963-64, civil rights activism mounted with the Freedom March on Washington D.C. in the summer of 1963. Over two hundred of us gathered on Monday, November 25, 1963, at a memorial service for President John Kennedy, killed the preceding Friday. A host of outstanding speakers that year included Loren Eisely, Dorothy Spoerl, Donald Harrington, Whitney Young, and Ralph Ellison.

In 1963 the Fine Arts Committee was formed which organized month-long exhibits of regional artists' work in the main auditorium for the ensuing four years. Insurance costs ultimately terminated this activity.

The church was represented at the national level from 1965 through 1967, when Peter Putnam went to Boston to serve as Vice President for Fund Raising for the UUA.

In March 1965, a young Unitarian-Universalist Minister, James Reeb was killed in Selma, Alabama. Among those who gathered at Selma in protest and indignation were Elaine Marshall, the Henry Drewrys, and Bob Cope. One thousand dollars of Auction proceeds that year were sent to assist UU fellowships in the south who were

active in civil rights causes.

Our need for a professional staff was growing. In September 1962, Margaret Odell had been hired as the first Director of Religious Education. Following her resignation in the spring of 1965, J. Howard Middleton was ordained as Associate Minister in October. The church school enrollment by this time was 288. Membership was 422.

With a talk entitled "Toward More Substantial Dreams," Ken Wells directed the congregation's attention to the need for additional expansion, and in February 1965 the congregation began to plan anew. The following February, the congregation approved an expanded structure that was estimated to cost \$300,000. The new building program encompassed a structure that would link the existing two buildings, provide religious education space for 250 children; a new multipurpose auditorium, with a stage, that would seat 100 persons, two new offices for the ministers, new chairs for the main auditorium and a new sound system. John Diehl of Princeton was selected as the architect. Of the funds needed, \$125,000 was to come from a new first mortgage. In a capital fund drive headed by Ken Spear, which commenced October 21, 1966, \$172,000 was raised by the end of the year. The Building Committee headed by George Easter immediately began overseeing detailed design work.

Increasingly, the U.S. commitment in Viet Nam came to be a subject of controversy and debate within the congregation, with members on both sides of the issue. Bob Cope and Howard Middleton signed a petition expressing concern at U.S. Involvement in Viet Nam sponsored by the National Emergency Clergy Committee Concerned about Viet Nam.

During the church year 1966-67, Professor Richard Turner led a popular series on religion and art. A variety of speakers participated in a series entitled "Why I Am Not a Unitarian." Our usual informal summer program during 1966 was interrupted when the congregation was called to a formal Sunday service during which Bob Cope preached a sermon called "Midsummer Dreams and Nightmares." The nightmare reference became clear when the Building Committee told a stunned congregation that the *lowest* bid for the new building had come in 50% over what we were counting on and that the total program would not be \$300,000 but \$442,000! After considerable

discussion, the congregation authorized the assumption of even more indebtedness (from \$125,000 to \$275,000). In the following months the money was secured through an increased mortgage and support from the denomination and the Plandome and Community churches in New York. Members increased their pledges from \$172,000 to \$192,000. Groundbreaking took place on September 24, 1967, in the area between the two buildings as scores of balloons were released over Princeton by the children.

Alarmed by the urban riots of the mid-1960s, the New Jersey Area Council of Unitarian Churches voted in September 1967 to hire a community organizer to work in Newark and asked churches to fund the \$10,000 program with contributions from members. In April 1968, the program was transferred to Trenton, where the House of Soul opened under Community Organizer John Young. The Princeton Church became a principal source of funds and volunteers for this program throughout its existence until November 1970.

Local debate also focused on the attempt by a group of black Unitarians calling themselves the Black Caucus to gain the UUA Board's approval of their separate status similar to the Women's Federation and the Laymen's League. In March 1968 the Princeton congregation voted 43-32 against separate status for the group, now called the Black Affairs Council. However, at the General Assembly in May, the delegates endorsed BAC and gave it the separate status within the denomination that it desired.

In October 1967, Howard Middleton preached an angry sermon entitled "The U.S. Government's Illegal and Immoral Intervention in Viet Nam." The subsequent uproar not only sparked a debate on the freedom of the pulpit but found the congregation sharply divided on the issue of the war. That month saw the creation of the Ad Hoc Committee of Princeton Unitarians Opposed to the War in Viet Nam and the formation of a committee opposed to the Ad Hoc Committee.

In January 1968 the Copes left on their first sabbatical leave under the Leadership Leaves program instituted by the New Brunswick, Morristown, Plainfield, Trenton, Monmouth, and Princeton Unitarian churches. Their trip took them across the country and included a stay in California. From Berkeley in April they sent a message read at our annual meeting — held several days after the assassination of

Martin Luther King: "7000 miles brought us to Berkeley impressed with Enormity, Beauty and Brutality of USA — racism and parochialism rampant — Dr. King's living dream screams for help from each of us — don't keep the faith, promote it." Later that spring, we also joined the nation in grief at the death of Robert Kennedy.

In June 1968, Howard Middleton left the church to begin the study of law, and Wilfrid W. Ward was called as Minister of Religious Education.

September 1968 was an exhilarating time. Fred Ward was installed on September 29, and Bob Cope had returned to the pulpit. In a week-long celebration, the new buildings were dedicated. For the first time in many years, children and adults could meet together in one location. Speaking on September 22, Bob Cope voiced the thoughts of many: "In these dark times one more light has been set on a hill. Rarely does a dream come true or a project be completed in such a way that the reality is better still. That has happened here."

In 1967, an anonymous donor gave the church \$8,000 for permanent art; and the Aesthetics Committee commissioned a work of art for our open book-shaped reredos — this would cover the existing gold leaf. The artist selected was George Ortman whose works were also in the Guggenheim Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. This work was installed and dedicated in November, 1968.

With 350 children enrolled in the church school, it became necessary to hold services in double sessions, beginning November 1968, at 9 and 11 a.m. For the next four years, until fall 1972, the minister would preach his sermon twice, teachers in the 9 a.m. church school would attend the 11 a.m. service; coffee "hour" became coffee "hours", with one clearing up just as the other began. After-service business meetings were likewise held in two sessions with complicated methods of communicating discussion and decisions between them.

In February 1969, the congregation took the opportunity to voice a strong conviction when it approved (107-0) a statement on conscientious objection intended to provide background to local selective service boards in judgements concerning young people from our church who might be seeking conscientious objector status.

On May 4, 1969, the church celebrated the 20th anniversary of its founding as a fellowship with the dedication of the new lounge to the memory of Margery and Alson Robinson. During that year, Dean Starr and Robert West (candidates for the presidency of the UUA) both spoke in our pulpit, as did Paul Carnes, then campaign manager for Robert West. Our activities were many and various: evening series on poverty programs, the Job Corps, Model Cities program, problems of the aging, youth opportunity centers. Les Muses en Series brought us classical guitar, modern dance, voice recitals. Sensitivity training programs began. Intergenerational programs were featured. The first circle dinners were held.

Early in 1970, the Creative Theater for Youth, supported jointly by the church and by McCarter Theatre, began in the small auditorium. Problems with the building continued to be with us: the furnace chimney was not high enough, creating heating problems; drainage from the upper parking lot left standing water in the lower sidewalk; pet rabbits, kept in the courtyard, ate all the plants.

In May 1970, the congregation voted to add a Youth Trustee to the Board of Trustees, electing Barbara Shimberg. In January 1971, the congregation approved a thorough revision of the bylaws and the reorganization these changes mandated, creating Vice-Presidents for Finance, Administration, Religious Education, and Program.

The early 1970s were particularly characterized by the need to meet the large budget involved in the maintenance and financing of our newly expanded building, the salaries of two professionals and office and custodial help and the demands that this made on a membership whose growth was suddenly leveling out.

With funds from the Mark Heald memorial fund, we began in February 1971 to plan the memorial garden that was laid out on the hill on the south side of the building. The two ton limestone rock that overlooks the garden was selected from the Delaware Quarry in Pennsylvania. Over the years, as memorial funds have been made available, additional plantings have been made in line with the original scheme developed for us by Howe Nurseries.

Stirrings of feminism were first noticed in the late 1960s and early 1970s in topics for adult programs and Women's Alliance discussions. On February 14, 1971, Bob Cope preached a "Valentine" sermon

supporting feminist goals. In April of that year, the Men's Club received a letter from about 30 members protesting that group's exclusivity and implacable ban on the occasional inclusion of women; the following month women were invited to Men's Club for the first time. In the fall 1971, the Directory changed listings from "Mr. and Mrs. John Doe" to "Jane and John Doe". Even the "Song of Exaltation" came under scrutiny. "Men of all cultures and all creeds, . . ." became "We of all cultures . . ." ("cultures" had perviously replaced "colors" during an earlier spell of consciousness raising).

Social concerns continued to involve many members. In the summers of 1969, 1970, 1971 many families participated in a reading and recreation program for children from Trenton. For several years, members gathered occasionally to make cookies with high protein fishmeal that were sent to children at the Woodrow Wilson school in Trenton. Other activities in 1970 were environmental action, peace action, the communtiy organizer program, civil rights. In subsequent years members became involved in the problems and concerns of inmates in the county prison, leading to the Thresholds program in which members were active for many years.

In Spring 1972, Fred Ward resigned to return to graduate work. He was replaced by member Mary Peck, hired as part-time R.E. administrator. In September 1973, member Carol Henderson and Joe Nyce, a student at Princeton Theological Seminary, divided the tasks of R.E. administrator with great success. In September 1975, Cynthia Ward took Carol's place, a year later becoming sole R.E. coordinator. By the late 1970's 100-130 children were enrolled yearly in the church school. The program continued to be richly diverse and stimulating, drawing upon the efforts of many adults under the guidance of the R.E. Committee. One highlight of the curricula was the pioneering sexuality course introduced to the church in 1971 by Fred Ward. Other developments in curricula enlivened our R.E. program "The Haunting House" and "Adventures of God's Folk" for primary grades; "Project Listening" for senior high and adults. The L.R. Y. continued its involvement in the Delaware Valley Federation, hosting conferences annually. Teachers and R.E. professionals regularly attended workshops and conferences. The R.E. and adult worship programs often merged through such services as the total

community series and the traditional, three-part "hanging of the greens" Christmas service.

In the fall of 1973 Bob and Pat Cope took their second sabbatical leave. Once again, members of the congregation, assisted by other ministers in the program, turned to one another for support and inspiration. The Copes traveled abroad until May 1974; at home, guest speakers filled the pulpit, among them District representative Carl Westman who spoke to the congregation about the Sharing in Growth program organized by the UUA. The program was designed to enable churches to undertake self-evaluation and self-help working through a small group of people from the participating church in conjunction with a companion group from other U-U Churches and the guidance of the UUA office. The congregation entered the program, and a Sharing in Growth group worked through the church year 1974-75. In 1976-77 a second group was formed to be followed by three additional groups in succeeding years.

In January 1975, Bob Cope announced that he would be resigning as Minister at the end of June 1976. In the spring of 1975 a search committee was formed, chaired again by Ken Wells. Also that spring, the congregation elevated the membership chairman to trustee level by creating a Vice-President for Congregational Affairs.

Typical concerns during the fall of 1975 were energy conservation within the church building and major roof repairs for the large auditorium. An extended family, begun the previous spring, met at the church for weekend activities. A family food co-op was started by several members. In November Sharon Naole and Herb Foster received approval from the Board of Trustees to establish the popular Forum for Singles.

In April 1976, Dr. Edward A. Frost and his wife, Christine, were invited by the Search Committee to spend a week candidating in Princeton. By the end of the week we knew our year-long search had ended and Edward was invited to become our Minister. When the church reopened in September, he was in the pulpit. At the installation service held on the evening of November 7, 1976, the Reverend Kenneth MacLean, President of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association, was the principal speaker.

The next two years were robust ones with programs that brought

the membership together as a whole to celebrate church community and with experiments in small group activities to develop a sense of intimacy among members. Circle Dinners inaugurated Dining Unitarian Style (DUNS) in 1977. Led by Enoch and Marilyn Durbin, groups of 12 persons agreed to potluck monthly in one another's homes for at least six consecutive months. The number of groups have increased annually, and some DUNS have met regularly for many years. Men's Club again became a men's club, but Dinner Discussion, organized by Helen and Ben Shimberg, has included everyone. Social highlights were the Middle Eastern Cabaret with a belly dancer and the elaborate Renaissance Dinner, at which the congregation turned out in full regalia for a royal menu and medieval dancing to authentic instruments.

On May 6-7, 1978, we celebrated 25 years as a church with a Sunday service and a gala Saturday night dinner attended by 280 members and friends. Chaired by Rowan Boone, the festivities were also attended by Paul Carnes, President of the UUA; Sandra Carron, Moderator of the UUA; Ethan Davis, President of the Metro New York District; and the Reverend Harold Dean, President of the New Jersey Area Council.

In the spring of 1978 the church granted permission to Princeton High School drama students to stage the controversial play "Moon-children" after the school administration had denied them permission to perform at the high school. The following year, our small auditorium was again made available to the Princeton High Drama Club for their production of "Equus."

Other junior and senior high schoolers, including our own youth and directed by Scott Ward, performed "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" for a Sunday service. The production was then taken to Haverford, Pennsylvania where it was the opening night feature of the UU Religious Education Conference. Under the leadership of Cynthia Ward and Ginnie Murphy (Aronson), musicals by our church school youngsters became popular in the late '70's; two memorable ones from that time were "Holy Moses" and "100% Chance of Rain," about Noah of course.

Although the board collectively put in about ten 40-hour weeks in meetings alone, recruitment for all other leadership positions was a

problem in 1978-79. In December, Edward Frost preached: "Church is a voluntary association . . . volunteerism is in trouble . . . A great many people are exercising their freedom to do nothing, to not belong, to not participate . . . statistics indicate our church attendance has increased over the past five years, but church involvement and financial support have not kept pace." That year, we published "Sharings," a collection of short member biographies to enable members to get to know one another better. Only a third of the congregation had their pictures taken for the church's photo directory; but a church-wide contest to rename *The Weekly Bulletin* evoked 140 suggestions, with the winning entry Joanna Foster's *Skylights*.

Very much alive was the church's continuing commitment to donate to charitable organizations from Auction, Etc. proceeds. In 1979, the first Auction Funds Outreach Committee was appointed to screen and recommend recipients of these annual outreach funds, and a popular silent auction feature was added to the Auction, Etc. format.

1979 brought good and bad news about two people close to us. The New Jersey Unitarian Universalist Counseling Services (UUCES) was established by the NJ Area Council of UU Churches with Fred Ward as director. Betty Klockner resigned after 14 years as our church secretary.

In January 1981 the Frosts left for England on a six-month sabbatical as part of the Leadership Leaves Program. In 1980-81, the board of trustees generally met twice each month, and the congregation approved the creation of the Vice President Social Concerns position. Lay-led Human Growth Programs, which lasted from 1974 to 1981, explored individuals' needs and offered Saturday workshops on such topics as single parenting, men's lives, and the psychology of adolescence. Volunteerism, alive and well, added Unitarian Singles monthly suppers, a magazine exchange, dinners for new members, and hospitality for visiting pulpit speakers to an already full calendar of traditional programs — plus a capital fund drive.

During the 1970's it had become apparent that our building, of which we were so proud, was not perfect. The worst problem was water, which increasingly leaked through various roofs into our main auditorium, lounge and classrooms, and through the walls and floor of the small auditorium. In addition upgraded office and kitchen

equipment were needed, and our exterior doors did not provide sufficient security. Individual members quietly donated funds to solve some of the most urgent problems, but by 1979 it was obvious that major action was required. Detailed planning commenced in early 1980 culminating in a major capital fund drive in the fall, led by Jim Johnson and Peter Putnam. The goal was \$100,000; within five weeks \$134,000 was pledged and repairs began. So that future repairs could be taken care of promptly, in April 1983, the Major Repair Fund was approved to be a part of each year's budget; and in May 1985, the congregation voted to make this annual provision an increasing percentage of the total internal operating budget reaching a level of 10% by 1988-89.

Another major financial concern was the need to assist the minister to purchase a residence. In December 1980, the church arranged a new \$40,000 loan from the Plandome Church and added \$15,000 of capital fund proceeds; this \$55,000 allowed the minister to obtain a mortgage and to purchase a home in partnership with the church. When the Frosts returned in September 1981, they and the church jointly purchased a residence at 74 Deer Path in Princeton.

Their new home started the Frosts' tradition of hosting receptions for church newcomers. The New U program was instituted that year to provide a thoughtful path for newcomers to become integrated into the life of the church; Jean Bussard was the first coordinator. In June 1981 Laura Hayes retired as choir director after having been a volunteer in our music activities since 1958 and starting our first organized choir.

After many Sundays of doughnut sales and other fundraisers in '82, the junior highers took a self-supported four-day trip to Boston to discover their UU roots; this because a biennial project that lasted for several years. The "Coming of Age" program for Junior LRYers was begun with individual mentors to help the teenagers reach their decisions on becoming members of the church.

In the summer of 1982 Cynthia Ward resigned, after seven years as the religious education coordinator, to pursue ministerial studies. Harlene Michaels succeeded her in September, which was also the month that Joanne Case was hired as the church secretary.

The nuclear arms race, world and local hunger, women's rights,

and Central America led the list of our social concerns in the early to mid-1980's. In the fall of '79, a special Sunday collection raised \$1,400 toward efforts to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. In 1982, the congregation voted unanimously to support "a verifiable nuclear arms freeze." In the summer of 1983, the church housed and hosted a group of "100 Scandinavian Women Marching for Peace" enroute to Washington, D.C.

In 1982, Barbara and Paul Sigmund (not members of our church, but political and academic leaders in Princeton) returned from a fact-finding trip to Central America sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) and spoke in our pulpit on human rights and conditions in that area. In fall 1983, we responded to the UUSC's urgent appeal for medical supplies for El Salvador, raising over \$1,000 in a special collection, the most of any church in the denomination. This effort was repeated in 1985 for Nicaragua with similar results.

In 1984 the church joined other churches in Loaves and Fishes, a program to provide meals for over 400 needy persons in Trenton on weekends when the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen does not operate. Our weekly food collections, first for the Forum project and in recent years for the Crisis Ministry, have continued to take place.

In 1984, too, the congregation voted to increase outreach funds from 50% of Auction, Etc. proceeds to 100% in stages over three years. The Silent Auction was spun off from Auction, Etc. into a separate event held in early June and netted \$6,300; the following year, it was renamed Fellowship Auction and established as a fall event. In 1987, the congregation moved to assure that at least \$10,000 each year went to outreach by donating all of Auction, Etc. proceeds plus Fellowship Auction proceeds as needed. Over the period 1984-1993, funds devoted annually to area outreach more than tripled, rising from \$3,700 to \$12,000.

In the spring of 1984, annual pledges for the church operating budget reached \$100,000 for the first time. That was also the year that three of our church members were elected to the governing bodies of Hopewell Township, Princeton Township, and Princeton Borough. In the spring of 1985, we accepted the resignations of two staff persons: Virginia Brewer, who had been resident custodian for five

years, and Harlene Michaels, who left her position as the RE coordinator to become an elementary school teacher.

Commemorating the 500th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther, the fifth and sixth graders came up with 69 things wrong with the world; they reported that they were prohibited from reaching 95 only by time constraints.

During the summer of 1985, Karen Snow was hired as Director of Religious Education. In December, 250 church and townspeople filled our large auditorium to attend the ordination ceremony for Cynthia Ward as a Unitarian Universalist Minister of Education. The 1986 annual meeting celebrated Edward Frost's tenth anniversary as our minister with a wicked skit, "A Deucedly Decent Decade — or Ten Years Before the Mass."

Issues of "Growth and Development," led by Marvin Reed and Edward Frost, were addressed with a vengeance in 1986-87 when 38 neighborhood and focus groups met to discuss 20 critical issues concerning church life — everything from music to endowments and spiritual needs to spin-off congregations. Our first organized observance of Passover was held in Robinson Lounge that spring. In January the minister left on his second sabbatical, spent in Tuscon, Arizona to gain deeper understanding of American Indian beliefs.

Growth and development programs were also happening within the UUA. After two years of study, the 1985 UUA General Assembly had ratified a new Purposes and Principles preamble to the UUA constitution to state unifying principles of the liberal faith. Edward Frost and other UU ministers from 1985 to spring 1987 created study materials for local congregations. Upon his return from sabbatical, Dr. Frost led an eight-session workshop, "What Unitarian-Universalists Believe: Living Principles for a Living Faith." It was about this time that framed "UUA Principles and Purposes" were hung at our church entrance and in the church school area. In 1987, too, the UUA published its new magazine, *World*, to replace its former tabloid; and the UU Metro District hired Howell Lind to fill the recreated district executive position.

Based on the work of the Growth and Development Committee, it was decided that adult overcrowding on Sundays made it advisable to return to two services beginning in September 1987. New audito-

rium chairs arrived that fall, and the board approved post-service brunches not only for members' pleasure but as fundraisers by the various groups preparing the buffets. Brunches did not reduce attendance at the traditional coffee hour, however; from September through March, we continued to consume our normal allotment of 86 pounds of coffee, 30 pounds of sugar, and 500 packets of Sweet & Low.

Art Severance, our intern minister for six months in 1987-88, arrived in the fall and immediately started Young Adults, a social group that quickly spawned the longer-lasting Not Necessarily Young Adults. In February Karen Snow began the adult seminar in feminist theology, "Cakes for the Queen of Heaven", which led to "Cakes II" and other spirituality groups for women. The church school's major service project in 1988 was sending school supplies and letters through the auspices of the American Friends Service Committee to children in Nicaragua; Julie Muller translated their correspondence into Spanish. From the "Growth and Development" discussions came the decision to terminate in June 1988 our 15-year rental relationship with the Princeton School for Exceptional Children, which had grown tremendously over the previous decade, and to recapture for church use those upstairs spaces that had been shared with the school. Over the summer Mary Peck and Edna Willis led the major rehabilitation and redecoration of rooms 21-23, the hallways, the kitchen, the minister's and secretary's offices, and the child care room.

The new Visual Arts Committee soon turned refurbished room 21-22 into a gallery, the start of an annual series exhibiting art by talented church members. The pace of activities of the Women's Alliance increased in the 1980's and this has been continued into the 1990's, with their annual Harvest Table and Christmas Boutique, the inauguration of a quilting group, the sponsorship of many church brunches, providing meals for the Senior Resource Center, an annual party at the Princeton Nursing Home, steadfast annual support to the Clara Barton Diabetic Camp for Girls Scholarship programs, Woman-space and Headstart supplies, support for the Campus Ministry, annual trips for the whole church, as well as providing the church with new drapes and Robinson Lounge chair coverings, and plastic film to reduce the glare on our windows.

Care for the environment grew in the late '80's. Concerned about the effect of hydrofluorocarbons, Sunday coffee hour switched from styrofoam cups to paper cups. No-smoking policies began with the small auditorium and "whenever children are present"; then extended to include the large auditorium, all classrooms, and three-fourths of the lounge; we finally established a smoke-free building in 1993. High-grade paper recycling was introduced in the early '90's, and the celebration of Earth Day became an important tradition for our family services.

The Long Range Planning Committee, appointed in the spring of '88, conducted a special congregational dinner meeting and two-days of discussion/workshops in October to provide a forum on planning for the future. During the next few months, 207 persons participated in 27 neighborhood groups for further input. "The 1989-1994 Long Range Plan" was distributed at the Congregational Annual Meeting and received by the board as an information base and resource for church decisions. Although there had been such plans in the past, this document emphasized long range planning as an ongoing responsibility of church leadership.

In 1988-89 not one but two of our members served as officers of the New York Metro District Board—Carl Haag, vice president (later to become president), and Kamal Nigam, youth representative. The UUA published goals urging an integrated effort toward gay, lesbian, and bisexual outreach and inclusion. Two years earlier, the Reverend Scott Alexander had spoken in our pulpit on AIDS awareness, and AIDS information had been the focus of a Women's Alliance program.

On December 1, 1988, Karen Snow left to become the public programs specialist at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. With the church school commencing to grow again in the late '80's, the members requesting more adult education programs, and the minister needing help with increasing pastoral care responsibilities, it was decided that the time had come to hire a second minister. In February 1989, the congregation authorized the formation of a search committee, headed by Ted Fetter, to seek a minister of education and program.

In May 1989, as the search for a minister of education and program

was getting organized, Edward Frost announced that he had accepted a call to be senior minister of the large Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta, Georgia. A second search committee, headed by Doug Rhodes, was quickly elected to seek a parish minister. The simultaneous search for two ministers continued for two years, until May 1991.

A September reception welcomed the Reverend Peter H. Samsom as interim minister for 1989-90. He was soon to note in *Skylights*: "Among all the 13 Unitarian Churches I have served as minister (six settled and seven interim) the Princeton Unitarian Church takes the prize for having the most complete and varied Christmas observances." But the yuletide was not our only festivity as we kept old and created new traditions through the interim year. Ferdie Serim produced his popular jazz nights; NNYA sponsored a spring fling dance; current and past officers hosted receptions for newcomers; trustees hosted their New Year's Day reception; the Spaghetti Factory Family Dinner fed 90 adults and children; and we held a Seder. We celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the UU Service Committee with a gala dinner, attended by UUSC Director Richard Scobie. We said goodbye to "the large aud," "the small aud," and rooms "21/22 and 23," for the Room Naming Committee had given us "Channing Hall", "Sophia Fahs Theatre," "The Founders Room," and "The John Murray Room."

Beginning in 1989-90, the vice presidency for administration was split into two VP's, one for administration and one for building and grounds. Satisfactory results from this division of volunteer labor led the board to consider it no longer necessary to plan for the hiring of a church administrator in the near future; the suggestion for a staff administrator as a future hire "when practical" had gained congregational support the previous year.

On April 1, 1990 The board decided to replace the staff position of choir director with that of music director. The Music Committee began the search for a half-time music director who would be responsible for all church music, including the broader reach beyond Sunday services into other adult and youth programming, and would also be the piano accompanist. On the year's last Sunday service in June, Ginnie Aronson ended her nine years as choir director. Later in the summer, Peter Lauffer was hired as music director.

The second successive "interim year" was planned quite differently from its predecessor with no full-time interim minister, and the Reverend Fred Ward hired to provide essential pastoral counseling and rites of passage services for church members and friends. For Sunday services the Speakers Committee, chaired by Melanie Milner and Bart Hoebel, arranged 27 services with post-sermon discussions. Speakers included 17 Unitarian ministers or other UU leaders from around the country, three ministers from other denominations and seven speakers from academe, law, or the performing arts. In addition, the Music Committee provided three complete services, including Mozart's "Magic Flute," complete with orchestra. Extravanzas directed by Richard Swain that year also included "Christmas Tryptych," followed the next season by Moliere's "Les Facheux." A children's choir was organized.

During that interim year, volunteers certainly did "run the church"; and this included ministering to one another during the Persian Gulf War, to which some of our children were assigned. A statement issued in November 1990 by the UU ministers of the New Jersey Area Council deplored the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq but opposed U.S. military action in the Persian Gulf. Church school teachers attempted to quench the fears of children who were facing war daily on television; Fred Ward offered conscientious objector counselling; and NNYA arranged for a unit of the Red Cross Blood Donor Program to be held at the church.

After a candidating week crowded with two services, receptions, dinners, and interview meetings attended by hundreds of old and new members, the congregation called the Reverend Dr. Paul S. Johnson as its new minister on May 2, 1991. His formal installation was held on November 10.

In spring 1991, when no minister for education and programs had been found despite two years of intensive effort and with the arrival of a new parish minister, the congregation decided to stop this search for the time being and to reassess the church's needs. Chris Reed, who had served as interim RE Coordinator in 1989-90, was given a two-year contract as Director of Religious Education in the summer of 1991.

The fall of 1991 was the beginning of a rich church life with Paul

Johnson, who introduced new rituals and ceremonies to Sunday services, added a new dimension to caring for the church family and the larger community, and brought a variety of adult education programs in cooperation with Chris Reed. The church had a new look that September, too. We were greeted by the long-awaited repaved parking lot, Channing Hall sans "the hump" that had always stood in the center of the back-half of the room, and 50 additional new chairs that had been purchased with substantial assistance from the Mary Peck Memorial Fund.

The Campus Support Committee became active and coordinated activities with the Reverend Donna Discuillo, the UU campus minister at Princeton University. Unitarian-Universalist university students met for dinner at the church with officers and interested members, and some of our denominational outreach funds were committed to the campus ministry, along with other specific denominational groups and causes. Because we had been contributing to the denomination since our inception as a fellowship, this was also our 43rd year of UUA giving. The trustees, in 1991-92, committed the church's participation to a fourth six-year cycle in the Ministerial Leave Program.

In 1992 the Creative Worship Committee was created to plan additional forms of spiritual expression on themes taken from nature, humanism and mythology.

By the late mid-80's the Forum for Singles had become an autonomous organization and in the spring of 1990 moved to other facilities. In 1992, a new church singles group was started quickly attracting 70-100 participants.

The 1992 annual operating pledge drive reached \$200,000 for the first time. At the beginning of the year, the Music Committee had presented the board of trustees with a detailed report on the need for a new piano for Channing Hall; and on May 10, the congregation supported the board recommendation to buy a new grand piano with volunteer contributions to lighten the capital expenditure. On June 24 the new Steinway arrived.

During the 1990-91 interim year, with guest speakers, we had returned to one Sunday service; in the spring of '92, the congregation voted to return to the two-service schedule in 1992-93 in order to

accommodate once again the growing church school enrollment, which reached 210 children in early 1993.

Despite radical swings in the church school population during the 1970's and 1980's, dedicated religious education staff and parents continued to evolve the curriculum with innovative materials. Introduced into the program were such courses as "Celebrating Our Roots and Branches," "Growing Up Human," "Earth, Sky, Life and Death," "Ethics," "World Religions," "Growing Times," "Why Do Bad Things Happen?," "Images of Our Lives," "How Can I Know What To Believe?," "Holidays and Holy Days," "Friends," and "Windows." Many adult education series were also created by both staff and lay leaders. These have included "Developing Your Total Self," "Building Your Own Theology," "Career Life Goals," "Explorations in Aging," "Helping: Emotional and Spiritual Aspects," "Life Mapping for Partners," "Interfaith Relations," "A Course in Miracles," and "Active Parenting," as well as various series on Unitarian-Universalist history and beliefs and other religious heritages.

In 1992 the Cookbook Committee, after a long year's work, published the beautiful and interesting *Gatherings: A Recipe Collection* with all profits donated to the Trenton Soup Kitchen. Joseph Swies, church custodian since the summer of 1987, retired at the end of December 1992. As of January 1993, the church became debt-free, and a mortgage burning ceremony was held at a Sunday service featuring members who had been around when we had bravely taken on the costs of the 1968 building expansion. An Appraisal and Review Committee worked from August to April to survey the congregation on the importance and performance of all aspects of church programs and governance. The Pulpit Art Committee removed the George Ortman construction from the reredos and relocated it. At a congregational meeting in April, members approved a by-law amendment that changed our two categories of membership, voting and non-voting, to one definition — all members are now voting members and a member is one who has signed "The Membership Book" and has responded to the annual pledge drive.

Now, as this history goes to press, it is time to celebrate our 40 years as the Unitarian Church of Princeton with festivities on May 22, 1993.

TO BE CONTINUED . . .

Our Church Ministers

Straughan Lowe Gettier, *Minister*
October 1953 - September 1960

Robert L. Cope, *Minister*
April 1961 - April 1976

Howard J. Middleton, *Associate Minister*
September 1965 - June 1968

Wilfrid W. Ward, *Minister of Religious Education*
September 1968 - September 1971

Dr. Edward A. Frost, *Minister*
September 1976 - June 1989

Dr. Peter H. Sampson, *Interim Minister*
September 1989 - June 1990

Dr. Paul S. Johnson, *Minister*
September 1991 -

Our Church Presidents

Simeon Hutner	1953-1954
Peter Putnam	1954-1955, 1955-1956, 1956-1957
Kenneth Wells	1957-1958, 1958-1959, 1964-1965
Edward Morehouse	1959-1960, 1960-1961
Rowan Boone	1961-1962, 1962-1963
Joseph Bachelder	1963-1964
Albert Marckwardt	1965-1966, 1966-1967
Richard Mason	1967-1968, 1968-1969
George Easter	1969-1970, 1970-1971
Chester Aronson	1971-1972, 1972-1973
Ingrid Reed	1973-1974, 1974-1975
Enoch Durbin	1975-1976, 1976-1977
Carl Haag	1977-1978, 1978-1979
Sally Easter	1979-1980, 1980-1981
Hugh Janney	1981-1982
Sidney Willis	1982-1983, 1983-1984, 1984-1985
Douglas Rhodes	1985-1986, 1986-1987
Elaine Nigam	1987-1988, 1988-1989
James Johnson	1989-1990, 1990-1991, 1991-1992
Theodore Fetter	1992-1993