In Good Times and in Bad
The Story of Sacramento's Unitarians
1868–1984

Rodney Cobb and Irma West

edited by: Doris Simonis
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Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento
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In memory of

the early leaders of Sacramento's Unitarian church

with gratitude far their perseverance.

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TIME LINE

1858	First known Unitarian sermon in Sacramento
1860	Rev. Starr King gives two lectures in city
1865	$100,000 raised for Unitarian "missionary work" in northern CA
1867	Rev. Charles Gordon Ames visiting; regular meetings held
1868	First Unitarian Church founded on 3129/68, serves 17 families
1868 to 1873	Rev. Henry W. Brown
1873	Financial Panic nationwide
1873 to 1887	No records of church activity for 14 years
1887 to 1892	Rev. Charles Massey, Pioneer Hall & Pythian Castle meetings
1892	Incorporation of First Unitarian Society of Sacramento
1892 to 1894	Rev. T.J. Horner
1893	Another Financial Panic nationwide
1895 to 1901	No church activity except one $25 donation to American Unitarian Association in 1898
1901	Request to American Unitarian Association for $25/mo. support for Sacramento church
1901 to 1911	No records of church activity for ten years
1911	Board of Directors resumes meeting
1912 to 1913	Rev. Franklin Baker serves Sacramento and Woodland
1913 to 1918	Rev. Charles Pease
1915	First Unitarian Church completed on 27th Street
1920 to 1921	Rev. Martin F. Fereshetian (Interim)
1921 to 1922	Rev. Hubert Cyril Carter (Interim)
1922 to 1927	Rev. Berkeley B. Blake

1927 to 1931	Rev. Robert E. Starkey
1929	Great Depression begins, membership tops 100 for the 1st time
1931 to 1933	Rev. Robert C. Withington
1934 to 1935	No minister; membership declines to 20 members
1936	Rev. Clarence Vickland serves Sacramento & Stockton (part time)
1936 to 1945	Rev. Arthur Foote serves Sacramento and Stockton (part time)
1945 to 1960	Rev. Theodore C. Abell
1949	Julia Bray Fund established, R.E. building completed
1951	200 attend Easter services, largest crowd to date
1960	New church completed on Sierra Boulevard, membership 450
1960	Rev. John Albert Taylor (interim)
1960 to 1970	Rev. Ford Lewis
1961	Merger creates national Unitarian Universalist Association
1961	Funds raised for construction of three church school buildings
1962 to 1968	Three new Unitarian churches spring up briefly in city
1966	Membership peaks at 735; three new R.E. buildings completed
1970 to 1971	Rev. Josiah Bartlett. 1st "official" Interim Minister
1971 to 1983	Rev. Theodore Webb
1976	Name changed to Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento
1979	Church membership at 559
1982	Eighteen symbolic banners hung in church
1983 to 1984	Rev. Aaron Gilmartin (Interim Minister)
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1999 to 2000	Rev. Sydney Wilde (Interim co-Minister)
1999 to 2000	Rev. Dennis Daniel (Interim co-Minister)
2000 to pres	Rev. Douglas Kraft
2004 to 2006	Rev Lyn Cox (Asst Minister for Education)
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2008 to pres	Rev. Roger Jones (Family Minister)

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INTRODUCTION & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The first Unitarians in Sacramento are believed to have been New Englanders who came out to California during the 1849 Gold Rush, probably hoping to strike it rich as so many others were doing. Ten years would pass before the first recorded Unitarian meeting in that city, and almost another decade before the formation of its first Unitarian church.

Those early years in Sacramento were filled with turmoil. Settlers faced one catastrophe after another: devastating fires, repeated floods that almost wiped the town off the map, economic chaos, a horrible cholera epidemic; outbreaks of smallpox, malaria and many other diseases, not to mention the daily hardships and violence one would expect in a raw, frontier town. In his 1950 history of medicine in Sacramento, *Memories, Men and Medicine*, J. Roy Jones described those first two decades as "replete with a symposia of difficulties." He went on to explain that "the nervous strain of those hectic days ... produced 4200 murders, 1400 suicides, and numerous deaths from dueling." Of course, the whole nation was reeling from a bloody civil war and the assassination of President Lincoln.

To persist against such great odds required uncommon determination, courage, and resilience. (In his book, Jones praised the character of the charter members of the Sacramento Society for Medical Improvement — several of whom were also founders of the city's first Unitarian Church that same year.) Moreover, in grappling with their problems, those pioneers became amazing innovators and problem-solvers. Who else would have ever thought of raising the street level of a whole city by 15 feet? Or changing the course of a river? Such desperate efforts took sheer gumption!

These qualities would stand our Yankee Unitarian church founders and their descendants in good stead, for they, too, would face many trials over the years. Time after time, financial crises occurred, some so severe that the church was forced to disband completely for up to ten years. Even in better

times, the church was frequently in desperate need of more space than it could afford. Occasionally, citizens from mainstream Christian religions bombarded the local press with letters assailing the beliefs or practices of Unitarian Universalists. Over the years, dissension sometimes threatened to split the congregation into feuding sects. More than one minister left the church with less than warm feelings.

Yet there were always some who stepped forward as peacemakers and problem solvers. Seeking common ground, they persevered, stubbornly holding onto their dream of a flourishing liberal religion right here in River City. They raised or borrowed enough money to build one church — and then another. Some even acted as "Secret Angels," digging into their own pockets to make up for shortfalls in church funds. Over the years, they worked together for social justice in their community, state, and nation. Many dished out meals to Sacramento's hungry or raised money for local charities; others participated in Peace Marches or stood up for their beliefs in other ways. They laughed and played and learned together, often forming extended families with fellow church members. In good times and in bad, Sacramento's Unitarians never gave up.

More than a century after the founding of the city's first Unitarian church in 1868, retired botanist Rodney Cobb took on the daunting job of writing a church history. His *Authorized History of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento, 1868–1970*, was published in five installments between 1975 and 1982. Then in 1990, all five parts were published in one volume, edited by Elizabeth Austin.

Cobb persuaded Dr. Irma West, a retired physician, to take over as church historian and write the next installment. In 1996, her *Authorized History of the Sacramento Unitarian Society, 1970–1984* was released. Funds from the sale of both histories benefited the church. Sadly, however, by 2006, only a few yellowing copies remained in the church archives.

The idea of reissuing both histories in one volume originated with church member Jeff Voeller, who felt that Sacramento area Unitarians could learn much from them. Kathryn Taylor agreed to lend her services as a graphic artist to put it all together. Others who gave their time and effort toward the project were Shirley Hines, Erika Kraft, Sally Campbell, Eliane Watson, Linda Hoganson, Fran and Jack Kennedy, Eileen Karpeles and the late Janis Dennis. Thanks to the hard work and determination of these volunteers,

Sacramento's Unitarian history is once more available to any who are interested.

In 2010, Peter Kosar republished the 2008 edition in electronic form, reformatting the layout, updating the timeline, taking care of some minor edits and adding several additional photos.

But the story doesn't end there. What about the years since 1981? What happened then? Inspired by these earlier works, a movement is now afoot to interview old-timers who are willing to share their memories of what it was really like during the past quarter century. Stay tuned!

The histories that follow have been edited and slightly revised. In some sections, details about day-to-day activities of groups within the church were omitted or greatly condensed. For the most part, Rodney Cobb's notes were maintained as well.

FOREWORD

by Reverend Doug Kraft

Who we are today is shaped by what happened in the past. This is true of us individually. It is also true of us collectively. While we can be certain of this, we can't be certain of what actually happened in the past. This "mist of time" can be very thick.

Police say that eyewitnesses are notoriously unreliable. Three people viewing the same crime often have different opinions. And they sincerely report different "facts". I have read minutes of Board meetings that did nothing to capture the tone of the meeting and even misreported some of the facts.

On a larger scale, several times I have been close to events that reached the attention of the national media. The media portrayed these very differently than what I saw. The reports were shaped as much by the consciousness of the reporter as by the actual events. My understanding of what is going on in the larger world comes through the same media that I find unreliable when I know the events. It makes me wonder if I have any idea what is really going on in the world today.

When we look into the past, getting a clear picture can be even more difficult. Many layers of consciousness and opinion filter and distort our view. At the very least, we have the filtering of the witnesses who recorded the events, the filtering of the historian who reads the records of the witnesses, and the filtering of our own perspectives.

For example, less than two decades ago, some members of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento left to form the Unitarian Universalist Community Church. Many witnesses to that formation are still around. I ask them: "What were the motivations? Spreading Unitarian Universalism? Anger about something in the congregation? Desire for a different size or a different focus? Was it a split or a sending forth?" In response, I get as many different accounts as there are people to ask. I am sure there is truth in all accounts. But

like the blind men and the elephant, all we have are different pieces of the larger truth. It's hard to know what this elephant truly was.

If we go back even further, the picture is even murkier. For example, there are several times in our congregation's history when the doors were closed or at least there are no extant records. We can see the glass as half empty: the church failed and closed. We can see the glass has half full: the church kept overcoming difficulty and springing back to life.

And what was really going on during those periods? Were Unitarian families in communication with each other? When the church came back to life, did it include those families? Was there some continuity? In other words, should we talk about the church going to sleep and the same church waking up again? Or did the church truly die and a whole new group of people start a whole new congregation? Should we speak of the present congregation as beginning in 1945 under Rev. Ted Abell's leadership? Or in 1936 after the Great Depression closed the previous church? Or should we properly speak of the congregation as starting in 1868 under Rev. Henry W. Brown's leadership?

There is no way to answer these questions objectively from the historical record. Yet we will each answer this question from our perspective.

And if we go back even further in time, we are left with more questions than answers. For example, we know that the charismatic Unitarian minister Thomas Starr King spoke in Sacramento in the late spring of 1860 and perhaps other times as well. Did he plant the seeds that later became the First Unitarian Church of Sacramento? There is simply no way to know.

Though it is difficult to know what truly happened in the past, there is no doubt but that it affects us in the present. The historian's job is to distill as objective a picture as possible from fragments of evidence. I am grateful to Rodney Cobb and Dr. Irma West for assembling these fragments. Rodney included direct quotes from the records. These give tone and flavor. As we look through the shrouded mist, we can see images and hints and suggestions. I find these fascinating to contemplate. Perhaps we should treat history as a source of contemplation rather than a story: something to enter into and reflect upon but that we can never know for certain.

I hope you enjoy these historical hints.

Rev. Doug Kraft
November 2007

PART ONE — THE FIRST HALF CENTURY (1868–1915)

Front Street, Sacramento, 1869

1 Earliest Events in Sacramento

Within a few years of its founding, Sacramento had moved beyond its original incarnation as a Gold Rush town and turned to the more conventional pursuits of agriculture, trade and government. Schools and churches were built and a library was operating. In the year 1858, the first known Unitarian sermon was delivered. The *Sacramento Bee*, which then rarely printed church news, carried this notice on Saturday, June 5, 1858: "PREACHING — Rev. Mr. Ritter, Unitarian clergyman, will preach in Rev. Mr. Benton's church tomorrow afternoon at 3 o'clock." It is thought that the church was Congregationalist, located on Sixth Street between I and J.

Nothing more about Rev. Mr. Ritter has been found. Instead, the big news of that Sunday appearing in the *Bee* was about the newly adopted Sunday Law;[1] by Tuesday, fourteen warrants had been issued and four persons arrested for its violation.

A more comprehensive introduction of Unitarianism resulted from visits of Rev. Thomas Starr King to Sacramento shortly after he arrived from Boston to become minister of the San Francisco First Unitarian Church in April of 1860. In addition, Starr King had two other important goals — keep California in the Union and the abolition of slavery. To those ends he wanted to be widely heard, so he wasted little time in arranging public appearances in the capital city of Sacramento.

Rev. Thomas Starr King

The *Bee* quickly recognized his potential influence, as shown by this wry comment in its columns on May 10, 1860, reprinted from the *Petaluma Argus*:

> THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL — On the departure of the Rev. T. Starr King for California, his congregation presented him with the sum of two thousand dollars. Preaching is becoming a more money-making business than either the legal or medical profession."

For his first appearance in Sacramento, he came as a popular lecturer, rather than as a Unitarian minister, working for a non-sectarian cause: retirement of the debt of the Sacramento Library Association. Accordingly, paid advertisements in the *Bee* appeared:

T. STARR KING'S LECTURES
ON WEDNESDAY EVENINGS
May 30th and June 6th
At the Congregational Church
(Sixth Street, between I & J)
Commencing at a quarter past eight o'clock
Admission $1.00, for the benefit of the
Sacramento Library Association

After the first lecture, the *Bee* reported, on May 31, 1860:

> LECTURE LAST EVENING. The lecture of Rev. T. Starr King last evening drew together one of the largest and most intellectual looking audiences ever convened in Sacramento on a similar occasion. "Substance and Show" was the theme, and its original and eloquent delivery by the speaker received the closest attention for nearly an hour and a half. In every particular the lecture was a complete success and those who staid (sic) away deprived themselves of an intellectual treat as is seldom obtainable in Sacramento.

On the evening of the second lecture, June 6, the *Bee* had as front-page news a two-column story from San Francisco which may have been the first printed description in Sacramento of Unitarian philosophy. The story reported the debates between Rev. T. Starr King and Episcopalian ministers in Boston and in San Francisco, contrasting the Unitarian and trinitarian theologies.

If anything, this publicity may have been a drawing card for King's second lecture because the next issue of the *Bee*, on June 7, reported:

> THE LECTURE LAST NIGHT — Rev. Thomas Starr King's second and last (for the present) lecture was well attended last night. Mr. King is a very popular lecturer, and has drawn out better houses here than were ever drawn before.

Downtown Sacramento in the 1860s

2 Origins of the First Unitarian Church in Sacramento, 1864-1868

The enthusiastic reception given to Rev. King demonstrated that the town was now fertile ground for Unitarian ideas. Indeed, the town of Sacramento had been founded nineteen years before the First Unitarian Church was organized through the direct efforts of the American Unitarian Association (AUA) headquartered in Boston. Its days as a rough frontier town were but a fading memory.

In late April of 1864, Rev. Henry Whitney Bellows of All Souls Church in New York City arrived in San Francisco because of the untimely death of his good friend Rev. T. Starr King, minister of the San Francisco First Unitarian Church. After selecting Horatio Stebbins to replace King, Bellows returned to his New York church determined to bring encouragement to Unitarian families scattered in towns arising around the Bay area.

"There are seventeen Unitarian families in Sacramento" he told a church convention in a plea for support of "missionary" help for the westward expanding portion of the nation. Largely through Bellows' determination, a fund of $100,000 was raised for that purpose in 1865.

As a result, Rev. Charles Gordon Ames became the missionary to the Pacific Coast area. Based in San Francisco as assistant minister of the church there and his salary paid by the Association in Boston, at age thirty-four he then had the stamina to explore adjacent towns in search of Unitarians and other religious liberals. By 1867 he was lecturing and preaching in public halls from Monterey to Sacramento. His transportation was by horse and buggy; often he stopped where nightfall found him to sleep under the open sky. By December of that year Ames' work had resulted in regular meetings of Sacramento Unitarians.

The *Sacramento Bee* carried this story in its issue of Saturday, December 21, 1867:

> UNITARIAN — Rev. Henry W. Brown, said to be a most eloquent divine who has just arrived from the East, will preach his maiden sermon in California at the Metropolitan Theater in this city tomorrow evening. He is said to be the most fascinating preacher on this coast.

According to an undocumented account, the Rev. Mr. Brown was an educator and a graduate of Harvard Divinity School, who came here in connection with the public schools. There were regular newspaper notices of weekly services by him in the Metropolitan Theater on K Street between 4th and 5th. The formal inauguration of the church has been dated as Sunday, March 29, 1868. On Saturday the *Bee* had announced:

> UNITARIAN — There will be Unitarian services at the District Courtroom, corner of I and Sixth Streets, at 10 3/4 a.m., and 7 1/2 p.m. tomorrow. Preaching by Rev. H. W. Brown. All are cordially invited.

This date marks the occasion of the formal founding of the church. An Article of Agreement was drawn up, stating simply: "We, the undersigned, do hereby associate ourselves in a body corporate, to be known as the First Unitarian Church of Sacramento, for the worship of God and the service of men."

The only condition of membership was the signing of the Article of Agreement. In a short time almost a hundred persons signed the document. The by-laws provided that three of the seven trustees might be women. No doubt that was very progressive for that era, even if it did guarantee minority status for women. Accordingly Mrs. C. W. Davenport, Mrs. Rosa F. Foote and Mrs. Georgiana Griffiths were elected. The male trustees were Dr. Henry L. Nichols, Dr. Alexander B. Nixon, Henry Starr, and Thomas Ross.

Dr. Henry Nichols, M.D., was born in Augusta, Maine in 1823. After postgraduate studies at the Philadephia Medical School, he practiced medicine in Maine until 1853 when, encouraged by an uncle to head west, he arrived in Sacramento by way of the Isthmus of Panama. In addition to practicing medicine in Sacramento, he served as the president

of the city Board of Supervisors and as the California Secretary of State. He remained a member and strong advocate of the Unitarian Church of Sacramento for forty-seven years.


Dr. Alexander Nixon

Alexander B. Nixon, M.D., was born in Ohio in 1821, educated at Miami University (Ohio) and graduated from Ohio Medical College in 1849. He came to Sacramento with the Gold Rush in 1849, became a state senator, headed medical societies and became chief of the Central Pacific Railroad Hospital in Sacramento.

Henry Starr was born In Nova Scotia, Canada, in 1819. He came to Sacramento in 1852 by way of Maine Wesleyan Seminary and became an attorney by "reading law" in Illinois. He was elected to the state legislature and later served as District Attorney in Sacramento, holding high military rank.

3 Sacramento Unitarian Church Revived (1887)

The original First Unitarian Church of Sacramento, organized on March 29, 1868, disappeared because of the financial panic of 1873 and the return of its minister to Boston. After a hiatus of fourteen years, there was a renewal of activities under the leadership of a Sacramento resident newly ordained as a Unitarian minister in 1886.[1] An account of the resumption of Unitarian services was recorded in the *Sacramento Record-Union* on January 8, 1887, as an item in the "Sunday Religious Notices" column:

> UNITARIAN SERVICE — AT PIONEER HALL. At 7:45 p.m. a meeting will be held looking toward the establishment in Sacramento of a church representing the liberal Christian faith. The exercises will be conducted by Rev. C. P. Massey, and addresses will be delivered by Rev. Horatio Stebbins, D.D., and Charles A. Murdock, Esq., of San Francisco, and Rev. C. W. Wendte, of Oakland. All are invited.

Reverend Dr. Stebbins and Rev. Wendte were prominent ministers of the Bay Area; Murdock was a printer who later became editor of the *Pacific Unitarian*, which was a missionary organ to propagate the faith in a region where Unitarian principles were little known to the public.[2] It is not known how Sacramento businessman Charles P. Massey qualified for ordination, but it is evident that he had enlisted strong and generous support from the Pacific Coast Conference for help in renewing the Sacramento church. It is also probable that missionary funds had been supplied by the American Unitarian Association. The initial service was reported in the Record Union on January 10, 1887; the article provides an account of the religious ideology to be followed by the newly organized group:

UNITARIAN SERVICE
The Establishment of a New Church in Sacramento

Last evening, in Pioneer Hall, a meeting was held and the first step taken toward the establishment in this city of a Church representing the liberal Christian faith. Rev. C. P. Massey conducted the service, and addresses were made by Rev. Horatio Stebbins, D.D., Charles W. Murdock of San Francisco, and Rev. C. W. Wendte, of Oakland.

The meeting was largely attended — in fact; some could not gain admission to the main hall, and were seated in the anteroom where they could hear. The choir consisted of Miss Alice Bush of Martinez, and Miss Emmy Felter, Miss Daisy Siddons, Elwood Bruner and A. A. Buchanan of Sacramento. Miss Gertie Gerrish presided at the piano. The canvass made of the city ensures the establishment of such a Church, with Rev. C. P. Massey as pastor. Services for the present will be held in Pioneer Hall.

Mr. Massey says:

> In the little company of Christian worshipers, formerly united under the ministry of Rev. Henry W. Brown, the years which have elapsed since his departure have made sad inroads, and death or removal has materially thinned the ranks of those who, under his leadership, maintained a society pledged to the truths for which the name Unitarian stands representative. Enough remain, however, possessed of stern convictions as to the essential character of that religious faith to warrant the attempt to again organize in Sacramento…
>
> The movement begins under circumstances which seem to be especially favorable. The missionary spirit lately infused into those of the Liberal faith, by means of which there has been effected a more systematic presentation of the claims of a rational belief, and this notably through two largely attended conferences recently held in San Francisco, and also through the free distribution of some of the vigorous writings of our most representative men, has already roused into life the slumbering thought of other communities, and the formation of other societies within a limited radius will assure to us conditions favorable to mutual exchange of sympathy and aid.
>
> The enterprise in which we are enlisted is distinctly religious. It plants itself firmly on the truths revealed to the world in Jesus of

Nazareth, but it assumes to interpret these in obedience to the intellectual demand man's advancing knowledge in every department of thought is now imperatively making; and it also assumes to apply these truths fearlessly, and untrammeled by tradition or the benumbing influences of theological dogma, to all the practical affairs of human life, its social problems and personal relations.

4 A Sacramento Minister and a Church Service of 1889

Sacramento's second Unitarian minister was a local businessman who had been ordained at age forty-five. Born Charles P. Massey, Jr., on 17 March 1842 in Philadelphia, he graduated from Philadelphia High School in July of 1858. He worked there in a mercantile house until 1863, when he migrated to San Francisco. In 1869 he married Miss Asenoth O. Dodge of Dodgeville, Massachusetts, to whom two daughters were born by 1872. In 1874 they moved to Sacramento where he went into the carpet and upholstery business until 1879, when he owned and operated the Grove Dairy located one mile southeast of the city. His dairy property was then valued at $12,500, a substantial sum in that era, until it was destroyed by fire in 1880.[1] His wife, Asenoth, was active in charitable works. By 1877 she was a member of the Board of Directors of the newly organized Marguerite Women's Home. Mrs. E. B. Crocker, widow of Judge Crocker, was its president, and donated the land for the home, which was dedicated to maintaining a place of refuge for sick and homeless women.[2]

There are no surviving local church records prior to 1892. However, an 1889 newspaper account has preserved a statement of the religious philosophy of Reverend Charles Massey; this provides an insight into the nature of Sacramento Unitarian beliefs of the period of 1887–1889 as expressed from the pulpit in a Sunday service. That service was on Sunday, 27 October 1889. The occasion was a dedication celebration of the first Unitarian meeting in the newly constructed Pythian Castle at 9th & I Streets, after having previously used Pioneer Hall on I Street. Here the newspaper account of that occasion is quoted in part:

DEDICATORY SERMON DELIVERED BY REV. C. P. MASSEY
The Unitarian Society Holds Its First Service
in the New Pythian Castle

The new Pythian Castle was filled almost to its capacity yesterday morning, the initial use of the building having been given to the First Unitarian Society for its religious services, and a programme of more than usual interest was presented. An efficient choir, composed of Miss Emma Felton, Miss Hattie Wheat. Mr. Richard Cohn and Mr. George W. Shannon, with Miss Gertie Gerrish as organist, and Mr. Charles A. Neale as special accompanist, occupied the neat little gallery, which was tastefully curtained, and rendered the following selections: "Venite" (Buck), quartet, "Calvary" (Rodney), trio; soprano, tenor and bass; "Stars of the Night Shine O'er Us" (Campana), offertory; "Angels' Serenade;' soprano solo, with flute obligato; and quartet, "Guide Me, 0, Thou Great Jehovah."

Rev. C. P. Massey took for his text 1 Timothy 5: "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of good conscience, and of faith unfeigned."

The content of his sermon is summarized briefly as follows:

> The use of the Knights of Pythias Castle was dedicated to Almighty God, in recognition that in spite of the years and Changes in thought which have occurred in consequence of enlarging knowledge of the world, there remains a need for religious sentiment with which to meet the emotions of awe, of wonder, of terror, of love, of delight arising from the mystery by which we feel ourselves eternally surrounded.
>
> These emotions belonging to such gifted souls as Moses, Buddha, Zoroaster, Mohammed and Jesus have been regarded as revelation. But the humblest among us has the power and facility of testing the truth of revelation by individual experience. There is not a marriage, birth or death but which can lift the horizon of our little souls into a potential greatness and majesty of which we had not dreamed. That which we call revelation is at last found to be but the reaction of the boundless and the infinite upon the soul of man and which would make all mankind brethren in one common privilege in the unity of God, the continuity of nature and the solidarity of man.

Reverend Massey then dedicated the building to the service of the Infinite and Eternal One in the realization that it might be only a temple dedicated to formal worship by some, but with the hope that his listeners might be endowed with the mighty spiritual strength of those to whom the church became a rich possession in the past.

5 One Unitarian Week of Eighty Five Years Ago

The *Sacramento Daily Record-Union* newspaper of Monday, December 2, 1889, happened to report the important activities of the First Unitarian Society of that week. That was the date that the women opened their Christmas season bazaar which was announced in the *Record-Union*:

AMUSEMENTS

> At Pythian Castle tonight the ladies of the Unitarian Society open a Bazaar of Days. There will be a booth for each day, and many holiday goods will be displayed... There will be a program of exercises this evening. The bazaar will be open all day tomorrow and again tomorrow evening.

An advertisement in another column listed the admission price as 25 cents for adults and 10 cents for children. To give an idea of the value of the admission cost then, that newspaper advertised women's fine shoes for $2.75, extra fine cambric night shirts at $1.25 and gents' warm overcoats at $3.00.

That issue of the paper also reported the sermon by Rev. C. P. Massey the day before. His pulpit address was "Looking Backward" which was the title of a romantic utopian novel by Edward Bellamy published the year before. It described the social organization of Boston in the future year of 2000, when the moral ills of a previously primitive nation had been replaced by a collectivist society founded upon humane and ideal solidarity. In one year it had become a best seller, with such a demand for it on the West Coast[1] that the pastor of the Unitarian Society replied to its challenge:

LOOKING BACKWARD
REV. C. P. MASSEY DISCUSSES SOME OF BELLAMY'S SOCIAL THEORIES
Fundamental Errors Pointed Out —
Human Nature the Most Serious Obstacle

The above was the subject of an interesting sermon preached before the Unitarian Society by its pastor, Mr. Massey, who took for his text Matthew xii, 12: "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force." He commenced by saying:

It is with no feeling of disrespect for the intelligent and enthusiastic company of men and women who have given their allegiance to the new social ideas advanced in Edward Bellamy's recently published novel, that I elevate such a caption as the text I have selected for a discourse intended to consider some of the positions taken in this author's fascinating book, entitled *Looking Backward*.[2] I feel, however, that some fundamental errors have been committed by this would-be valiant champion in the cause of social reform. I therefore do not believe the Kingdom of Heaven will ever come to the world by the adoption of these suggested principles.

Here are the main points of his impeachment of Bellamy's ideas:

There is such fervent desire to see the pall of human misery lifted that people are blinded by the pretentious fabric of Bellamy, that even if established it would speedily fall into decay. We have no way of knowing the possible accomplishment in the eternities of God's providence. There is today too much fact and too little truth because isolated facts may cause us to forget important principles. The principles of Charles Darwin give us the road over which humanity has already traveled. There is a perfectibility of human institutions, just as there is through protozoan, radiate, mollusk, articulate and vertebrate until as man he stands, the majestic figure amid the civilization he has established, subdues nature, invents agricultural machines, writes Hamlet and In Memoriam and becomes as a god in his knowledge of right and wrong. Bellamy would change the old order of the world because he thinks the old order incapable of being perfected and would institute a new one because of its moral appeal which will make it eternal.

Better conditions may ensue, but there remains the need for conflict, the dependence upon daily struggle for daily strength, the persistence of

sorrow in our lot to constitute life's most angelic ministry. Jesus found many conditions he could have attacked but he did not because he seemed almost unconscious of their existence. But Jesus came with the teaching: Be pure, be upright, be charitable; God is your father and you are brethren in one common inheritance and the monuments of civilization have been based upon his instruction. It is not only that household suffrage has been extended in England, that the slave has been admitted to citizenship in America, but woman now comes to claim her privilege as an important unit in the State. The fortune of the State must rest upon the intelligence and integrity of the citizen, not by losing our individuality in some great communal life in which the necessity of daily struggle is removed.

6 The 1892 Incorporation as the First Unitarian Society

By 1889 the Sacramento Unitarian Society had paid for a $2,000 lot and had pledges for the construction of a building[1] and a bank account for that purpose. The outcome of that effort is not recorded; instead, in March of 1892, a new Unitarian organization replaced the previous one.

There is no record of the events leading to the reorganization of 1892, but there are intimations that it was the result of an internecine battle. Minutes of the Board of Directors for that period, still in Society files, are silent on that point but relate details of reorganization. On March 10, 1892, in a meeting of fifteen members held in Pioneer Hall, the name "First Unitarian Society of Sacramento" was adopted, and legal incorporation for a term of fifty years was begun under a newly elected board of trustees headed by Dr. Henry Lambard Nichols as president.

In a meeting a week later, three of the trustees resigned from the Society, resulting in a new election and the acceptance of an interim minister for replacing Reverend C. P. Massey, who remained a member although there were contested financial differences between him and the Society. These were eventually settled by submission of the dispute over a sum of money to an arbitrator whose decision was to be binding upon both parties. In April of 1892 the incorporation and newly adopted by-laws provided for membership in a body defined as Liberal Christian:

Article II
Qualification of Members and Terms of Admission

> Any person over eighteen years of age approved by the pastor and Board of Directors may become a member of this Society, by signing the following Church Covenant:

> In the love of truth and in the spirit of Jesus of Nazareth for the purpose of sustaining liberal Christian worship, of inciting each other to good works and right living, we subscribers write ourselves together as the First Unitarian Society of Sacramento and promise to aid in the maintenance of the Society according to our ability.

In October of that year Reverend T. J. Horner of Westford, Massachusetts, was appointed as minister at an annual salary of $1,500, with two months' vacation in summer. During that period the American Unitarian Association was providing $400 a year for the support of the Society, which had been assisted over the years by both the national and Pacific Coast bodies.

Formal installation of the new minister was in January of 1893. Evidently, that service was held in the synagogue of Congregation B'Nai Israel, as was noted in the January 30th minutes of the Board of Directors recording a resolution thanking Congregation B'Nai Israel, its officers, and Rabbi J. L. Levy for the use of the synagogue during the past few days. This supports the legend in our Society that there has been a long term friendship between the two bodies.

Meetings of the Society were regularly held in various public or fraternal order buildings. The rent of Unity Hall of the Foresters fraternal order for Sunday services was $6 a month; for social occasions the use of the kitchen and dining room complete with linen, dishes and cleaning-up was $2.50. In the spring of 1893 Sunday services were being held in Pythian Hall, at Ninth and I, starting at eleven o'clock, followed by Sunday school at fifteen minutes past noon.

Celebration of Easter was the feature of services in March and April of 1893 in a series of sermons in answer to the question, "What Reason is There to Think that Jesus Was More Than Man?" Regular advertisements in the Saturday issues of the *Sacramento Bee* announced sermon topics of "The Christ Ideal," "The Deification of Jesus" and "Jesus Brought Back to Humanity." These meetings brought in about five new members each week to the small but growing First Unitarian Society of Sacramento.

7 Sacramento Unitarians of the 1890s

While the Easter sermons of 1893 had been in keeping with the liberal Christian covenant of the First Unitarian Society of Sacramento, the sermon topic for May 15 sounded much less conventional. The advertisement for it in the Bee on May 14 gave the title as "The Right of Private Judgement" and mentioned that it was "A Sermon for Unitarians"

On Sunday, June 4, a visiting minister from New Bedford, Massachusetts, spoke from the Unitarian pulpit in Pythian Hall on "The Mission of Religion Today." He was Rev. W. J. Potter, who for thirty-five years had been the pastor of the First Congregational Society in New Bedford. The *Sacramento Bee* reported that a large crowd was attracted to the Sunday service and that Rev. Potter would lecture on "Darwinism and Its Influence on Religious Thought" the following Tuesday in Pythian Hall. The timing of the Darwin lecture may have indicated that it was too progressive for a pulpit presentation.

In June the newspapers were carrying stories on the developing financial crisis which came to be known as the "Panic of 1893" and was to cast a darkening shadow over the future of the First Unitarian Society. The *Bee* headline on this subject in the June 3rd issue read "Still They Crash" in reference to the failure of the largest Chicago bank. On June 22 another story told of banks failing in southern California but gave assurance that Sacramento banks were in very strong condition.

Church records of that period show a total of eighty-eight members. Two thirds of them were women; all but ten were listed as "Mrs." Most of the members resided in what is now downtown Sacramento; only a few lived in outlying areas as far away as 20th St. The meeting place being at Pythian Hall located at 9th and "I" Street made it practical for many of the

members to walk to services. Due to the heat of summer, the Sunday services were discontinued during August and September. The Women's Auxiliary usually held a social to celebrate the close of the "season" in July.

The annual meetings of the Society were held on a Monday night early in January. In 1894 the meeting was at the home of F. F. Thomson on the corner of 18th and P Streets. Rev. Horner reported that he had received pledges in the amount of $275 for the year. With the $400 in missionary support from the American Unitarian Association, a total of $675 was assured. The previous annual budget is estimated to have been $2,000.

Somehow the Society managed to survive; in March it made its annual donation of $10 to the missionary fund of the Association. But in May the Directors voted to ask the Women's Auxiliary for a donation of "sixty dollars if in their possession." Evidently the treasury was in distress.

In July Rev. and Mrs. Horner were elected as delegates to the National Unitarian Conference to be held In Saratoga, New York, in September. The Horners left in August for their annual vacation in New England, realizing that there was no assurance that they could return. At the September meeting of the Board, it was recognized that "unsettled business conditions and consequent financial stringency have made it difficult for the present at least to properly (support) the cause of Liberal Christianity in this city" and released Rev. Horner with praise as "a pastor who has served the cause of our liberal faith with an earnestness, a vigor and a loyalty which we believe are almost exceptional in the history of the denomination."

The financial panic of 1893 caused great loss of funds for the American Unitarian missionary budget. In October of 1894 the Sacramento Society had no assurance of continued support from that source. The Society directors requested that each member contribute fifty cents per month to defray expenses. The 1895 Annual Meeting failed to draw a quorum and was adjourned. As of July 1895 regular meetings of the Society Board of Directors were no longer being held. A handful of members may have held an occasional meeting when a "supply" minister could be sent by the Pacific Coast Conference. At any rate, the next entry in the records was for three years later, when in December of 1898 the Sacramento Society sent a donation of $25 to the American Unitarian Association in Boston.

8 The Sacramento Society Enters the Twentieth Century

At the start of the twentieth century there was no indication of any Unitarian activity. In February of 1901 a request was made to the American Unitarian Association for financial support of the Sacramento Society at the rate of $25 a month. But there were no more entries until ten years later.

Meetings of the Board of Directors began again on 19 July 1911, at the residence of Dr. Henry Nichols at 909 F Street. There Pastor Franklin Baker recommended a list of forty persons for election to membership. It is obvious that there had been preparation for that meeting, that the parent Unitarian organizations had helped Pastor Baker in reviving the long dormant Sacramento group which was undertaking its fourth start in forty-three years.

Benjamin Franklin Baker was born in 1876 in Kansas City, Kansas; attended the University of Kansas and Chicago Theological Seminary, then did special studies at Cambridge University, England, and Heidelberg, Germany. Ordained in the Norfolk, Nebraska, Congregational Church in March of 1902, he served a church in Wisner, Nebraska, for a year before going to the Congregational church in Eureka, California. From there he went to Colorado Springs, Colorado; by 1909 he was serving in Sacramento, Woodland, Stockton and Long Beach; from 1910 to 1911 he was with Wanamaker Memorial Welfare Church which is not further identified. Was there a missionary ministry supplied with Foundation funds which included Sacramento and vicinity?

There was some connection between the Sacramento Society and the Unitarian Church of nearby Woodland, California, because in October of 1911 the Woodland church donated hymn books to the Sacramento

Society. The fact that the Sacramento Society paid Rev. Baker only $75 a month may indicate that he was also pastor of the Woodland body.

In the annual meeting of 8 January 1912, the Sacramento Society elected Dr. Henry L. Nichols, who then was eighty-three years old, as President Emeritus "in consideration of the valuable services rendered as President of this Society for so many years." He had been a member since 1868.

There was renewed optimism at the annual meeting. The Women's Alliance served an "elaborate dinner" for sixty two persons. The minutes reported with obvious pride. Dean Earl Morse Wilbur of the Pacific Unitarian School for the Ministry in Berkeley represented the American Unitarian Association; Rabbi Michael Fried of Temple B'Nai Israel in Sacramento was also a speaker.

There had been talk of constructing a church building. Evidently some funds collected for that purpose in past years were on deposit in a local bank. When Dean Wilbur visited Sacramento to speak at the annual meeting, he talked with officers as to the conditions under which the American Unitarian Association might be expected to help with a building project. One condition was that land suited to that purpose would have to be owned by the Sacramento Society.

9 Onward and Upward Forever (1912)

A little pamphlet published in 1912 reveals that the resurrection of the long dormant Sacramento Unitarian Society in 1911 was related to the Unitarian Church then in the neighboring village of Woodland in Yolo County. By sharing the services of one minister, the two bodies could afford professional guidance, which otherwise was not practicable then, because together they probably paid $100 a month minister's salary.

The front cover of the 4x6 inch, fourteen-page booklet reads:

UNITARIAN YEAR BOOK

Sacramento and Woodland California – 1912
Franklin Baker, Minister
Residence - 2924 F St. Phone M. 2871

Services
Sacramento: 11 :00 A.M. Woodland: 7:30 P.M.

The flyleaf reads:

UNITARIAN FAITH
The Fatherhood of God.
The Brotherhood of Man.
The Leadership of Jesus.
The Progress of Mankind, onward and upward forever.

The Covenant of the Woodland Church reads:

> In the love of truth, and in the spirit of Jesus, we unite for the worship of God and the Service of man.

The Fellowship Roll contained the names of fifty-two persons — thirty-two females and twenty males. Also listed were the following organizations:

- The Women's Alliance, meeting every other Wednesday afternoon.
- Sunday School, meeting at 6:00 p.m. Sunday.
- Dramatic Club, Reverend Franklin Baker, Instructor.
- Girl's Domestic Science Class in Sewing, Monday 3:00 p.m.
- Boys' Manual Training Class, Monday 3:00 p.m., instructed by Miss Lola Bray.

Miss Lola Bray and her sister Julia were were long time members of the Sacramento Society and are still remembered affectionately as the "Bray Sisters". They were related to an early-day Briggs family who in 1856 settled at Buckeye, now the town of Winters in Yolo County. As two of five children who lost their parents, they were raised by an uncle and aunt, John and Julia Briggs, who moved to Woodland for the children's education. Both girls became school teachers. In the Sacramento Society their talents and devotion were later applied to organizing and teaching in the church school for more than twenty years. Julia left a bequest to our Society for the religious education of Unitarian children. It continues to this day as the "Julia Bray Fund."[1]

The Sacramento section of the Year Book listed the names of seventy-five members. The Women's Alliance met every Monday at 2:30 p.m.; the Sunday School met at 12 Sunday. One page carried an unidentified quotation:

> The religion of these churches is free, not creed bound; scientific, not dogmatic; spiritual, not traditional; universal, not sectarian. It stands for the realization of the highest moral ideal of humanity, both personal and social; and the cultivation and dissemination of the spiritual qualities of reverence, peace and love.

To place this period of development in context with the year 1912: That spring the unsinkable luxury liner "Titanic" struck an iceberg in the North Atlantic and sank, but not before its newly developed radio telegraph called rescue ships toward survivors. The kings and emperors of Europe had but two more summers for rehearsing their armies for the first battles of World War I in August of 1914. The euphoric but ephemeral dream of the progress of mankind "onward and upward forever" was about to be eclipsed by reality.

10 Church Building Plans and More Liberal Principles (1912)

By 14 January 1912, a parcel of land on 27th Street had been purchased, for the sum of $4,550, as the site of the proposed First Unitarian Society building. Accordingly, the Board of Directors on 26 February 1912 authorized a request to the American Unitarian Association in Boston for financial assistance in erecting a church home on our recently purchased lot and a building committee was appointed.

The bulk of the purchase money came from a bank account amounting to $4,013.77. There is no explanation of the comparatively large sum at a time only six months after the long dormant Sacramento Unitarian Society had been revived. There are clues that it had been on deposit in the People's Bank of Sacramento over a period of years, perhaps starting as early as 1889, and it remained only because its use was restricted to the special purpose of a building program.

With the purchase of the land, the current expenses of operating the Society and paying the minister's monthly salary of $75 were being met by money being advanced to the Society by H. R. and Ella Thomson in the sum of $735. Mr. Thomson at that time was treasurer, later president, of the Society, and he is said to have been a wholesale hardware merchant with the firm of Thomson and Diggs.

The 1913 Annual Meeting on January 6 included a copy of plans for the construction of the proposed church building. At that meeting, the members authorized the preparation of a formal request to the American Unitarian Association for a loan in the amount needed to erect the structure.

Revision of the by-laws of 1892 was approved by congregation vote for a more liberal statement of Sacramento Unitarian principles:

BOND OF UNION

> We, whose names are here subscribed, associate ourselves together as a Religious Society for mutual helpfulness in right living and for advancement of sound morals and liberal religion in the community; and we hereby pledge ourselves to bear our part in the common cause and to care for the welfare and influence of the Society by which act we become members.
>
> Basing our union upon this expressed moral and religious purpose and emphasizing the influence of character and daily life above all creedal confessions, we invite to our membership all who are religiously drawn to us in our spirit and aims.

This replaced the 1892 by-laws section which read, "In the love of truth and in the spirit of Jesus of Nazareth for the purpose of sustaining liberal Christian worship, of inciting each other to good works and right living." It eliminated the minimum requirement of age eighteen for membership and added a provision for removal of the name of any person who "has ceased to be identified with the Society."

After some forty-five years of meeting in rented halls, the Society was preparing to assume, for the first time, the obligation of constructing and maintaining its own building. The broadening of the Bond of Union statement, which eliminated the Christian identification, and a more specific obligation to support the Society, evidently were in preparation for supporting an ambitious building program then being projected.

The role of women in the Society then was most clearly recorded in the minutes of the Annual Meeting, where it was reported that the Women's Alliance in 1912 had receipts of $294.15 and disbursements of $234.35. In an era when women could not vote at the polls, three of the seven Directors elected in 1913 were women — a continuation of the custom first set forth in the original by-laws of the Sacramento Unitarian Church in 1868. The conclusion of that annual meeting was a "repast" served by the Women's Alliance, followed by a social session.

11 Church Building, The Bold Venture of 1914

During the year 1912 the Sacramento Unitarian Society was growing under the leadership of Reverend Franklin Baker. The membership had increased to seventy-eight from the original forty who had revived the long inactive Society in July of 1911. Land had been purchased and a building committee appointed.

As 1913 began, Reverend Mr. Baker applied for a leave of absence of three months due to his wife's ill health, after which he resigned on April 30. As the spring and summer passed without ministerial guidance, the question arose as to whether the Society would continue. A special meeting of members for deciding the matter was called for the evening of 24 September 1913 in the home of President Thomson. After discussion, all members present, except one, voted to continue the Society.

With assurance of the determination of nineteen members to carry on, Dean Earl Morse Wilbur of the Pacific School for the Ministry then arose to present Reverend Charles Pease, whom the membership voted to call as their new minister. The date of his move to Sacramento is not known, except that he and his wife were honored with a reception at the annual meeting of the Society on 5 January 1914 in the Tuesday Clubhouse.

In the first week of May 1914, a called meeting of Society members considered a formal resolution to proceed with a building program. Thirteen of the seventeen members voted to adopt the resolution; four abstained but none voted against it. Building plans by noted Sacramento architect E. C. Hemmings were approved. The American Unitarian Association offered a total of $7,000 for the construction on this basis: $1,000 was to be provided upon receipt of a note guaranteed by individuals, without interest and repayable in ten annual installments of

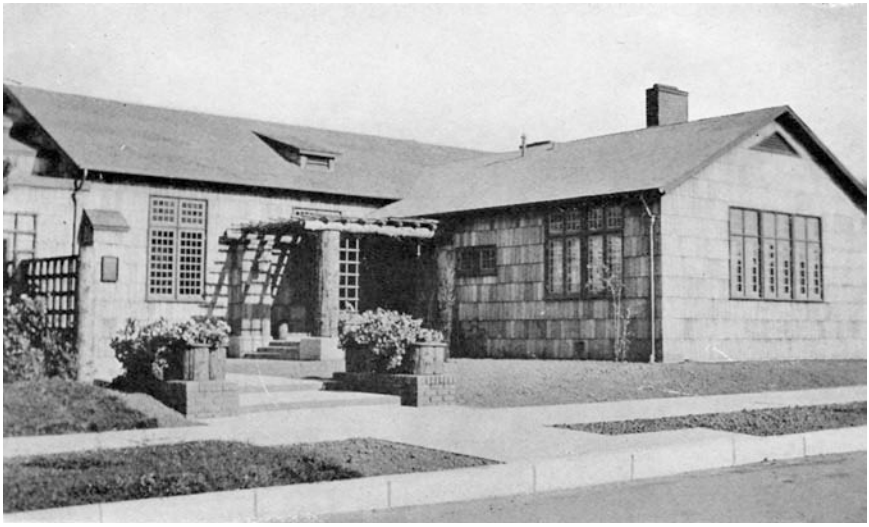
$100; the sum of $6,000 was to be provided, for which a deed to the property was to be conveyed to the American Unitarian Association of Boston. In summary, land costing the Society $4,550, plus the $1,000 loan and $6,000 to be secured by the deed, brought the total cost to $11,550.

A month later, June of 1914, the active membership of the Society consisted of forty-two persons; thirty-five others whose names were on the existing records were determined as being inactive and suspended unless they requested restoration to full membership. On that basis it appeared that there were forty-two supporting members when on 30 June 1914 the Board of Directors authorized "the erection of a church building on the south half of Lot One in the Block bounded by N and 0, and 27th and 28th Street." The church would be located at 1415 27th Street, on the east side of that street, adjoining the alley which was the south boundary. The location is now occupied by an apartment house which was built in 1975.

To put this financial obligation into context with income level and dollar value of those times — the basic wage rate for workers in the Ford Motor Company in Detroit had just been raised from $2.40 per nine-hour day to $5 for an eight-hour day.

In 1914 the Society's membership consisted of twenty-eight women and fourteen men, indicating a modest capacity for financial support. The undertaking of so ambitious a building program at that time could only be described as optimistic and courageous, but evidently one that was considered essential for growth toward a more permanent Unitarian body in Sacramento.

12 Completion of the Church Building (1915)



First Unitarian Church on 27th Street, 1915

Forty-seven years after its founding in 1868, the Sacramento Unitarian Society finally completed construction of its first building in 1915. The annual meeting of the Society was postponed several times until the newly completed building could be used for that occasion, which was 15 March. The first regular service in the new structure had been on Sunday, March 7. The *Sacramento Bee* of March 6 had carried this notice in its church news column of "Pulp it and Pew":

UNITARIAN
FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY,
a new place of worship, Twenty-Seventh Street between N and O.
—- Rev. Charles Pease, Minister. Sunday School, 10 a.m.; morning

> service topic "New Insight, and New Outlook" — Services in the new church will be inaugurated with special music.

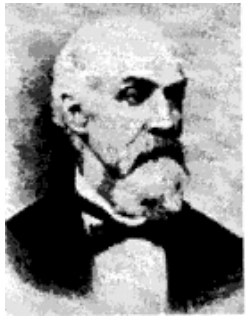
On Saturday, March 20, 1915, the *Bee* ran the following article:

> FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH, which has been completed at Twenty-seventh and N Streets, and which is now being used by the congregation. The little church is unique in design and one of the most attractive little churches in the city.
>
> The church is constructed of cedar shakes, with brown stained woodwork. The windows are of amber glass in simple leaded patterns of the casement type. Architect E. C. Hemmings drew the plans for the building. The structure cost $8,000.
>
> [One striking] feature of the structure is the entrance, which is on a Pergola porch, formed by big bark covered cedar logs. Both the auditorium and social rooms have open trussed roofs with rolling partitions, so that both rooms may be used as one in the event of a big crowd. A big fireplace of mission tile makes the social room the coziest part of the church.
>
> A most delightful feature of the building was later discovered to be the effects of the tall windowed alcove behind the pulpit. There the hanging drapery curtains diffused the natural light from the east windows so that it streamed down to accentuate the form and color of flowers and greenery from field and garden customarily placed there for morning services.

The newspaper account of the cost of the structure as $8,000 was not consistent with the fact that only $7,000 had been provided for that purpose. Later it came out that Society President H. R. Thomson, who was the silent "angel" of those days, had paid $670.95 out of his pocket to the contractors, Murcell and Haley, as a final sum due them. It was three years before the membership learned of this; then they gave a note for that sum, bearing five percent interest to President Thomson. A few months before the building's completion, a "Note Redemption Fund" had been started for setting aside $10 each month for repayment of $1,000 loaned by the American Unitarian Association for initiating the project; the remainder of the cost would be supplied by the Association and secured by a deed to the property.

13 Symbol of the Past, Symbol of the Future (1915)

In the first months of 1915, the Unitarian Society building was nearing its completion. Because it was visible, it would be the symbol of the Unitarian presence in Sacramento for almost half a century. Previously, that symbol had come to be one person, Dr. Henry Lambard Nichols, who had served as a director or as President for forty seven years since the Unitarian Church had been first organized in 1868. In 1915 he was in his ninety-first year and had previously been elected President Emeritus "in consideration of the valuable services rendered… as President of this Society for so many years."



Dr Henry Nichols

He was born in Augusta, Maine, on 11 September 1823. His mother was Lucy Lambard Nichols; his father was Asiph R. Nichols who had migrated to Maine from Massachusetts, practiced law and served as Clerk of the Maine Supreme Court and as Secretary of State. Dr. Nichols graduated at age twenty-two from Maine Medical School of Bowdoin College in Brunswick, then attended postgraduate studies in Philadelphia Medical School.

He began the practice of medicine in Augusta and married Sarah Evans Cole in Saco, Maine. After gold had been discovered in California in 1848, his maternal uncle, Allen Lambard, migrated to Sacramento, where he started a foundry and flour mill and then persuaded his nephew to migrate to Sacramento. After his journey from Maine by way of the Isthmus of Panama which he probably crossed on foot or horseback, Dr. Nichols arrived here in January of 1853, when this city was flooded, so that the only dry ground at the steamer landing was the levee at Front and J Streets.

From the levee the town of Sacramento showed above the flood waters mainly as charred timbers from the Great Fire of November, 1852, when almost every important building had been burned at a loss estimated as between six and ten million dollars. Two years later, his wife Sarah and her brother George Cole and the Nichols' two children came from Maine to their new home at 909 F Street.

In March of 1868 the First Unitarian Church (later Society) was formally organized "for the worship of God and the service of man." Dr. Nichols was one of the seven original trustees; perhaps he was its president since his name is listed first in a published account listing the trustees.

The Unitarian ideal of service to people was demonstrated in the long and useful life of Dr. Nichols. The month of the Unitarian organization was also the month when a dozen Sacramento doctors gathered to organize the Sacramento Society for Medical Improvement which still functions here. Two of the twelve charter members were Unitarians, Dr. Nichols and Dr. Alexander Butler Nixon. For many years one of the great pleasures of Dr. Nichols was holding meetings of the Medical Improvement Society in his home, where his wife prepared elaborate feasts of New England cookery served by their two daughters.

Perhaps we should recall the conditions of those times. There was little defense then against many diseases now prevented or rendered trivial. The germ theory of Louis Pasteur was to be long debated while surgeons still operated with bare hands under non-sterile conditions. Public hangings from the city waterworks building still drew crowds.

Dr. Nichols crusaded for pure drinking water at a time when untreated river water was being pumped through city pipes. He served in political office as ex-officio mayor and as president of the city Board of Supervisors.

He was California Secretary of State when construction of the state capitol building was at last completed; he climbed to the top of the capitol dome to place a golden ball on its spire, where it remains to this day. He then ordered the scaffolding removed so that he would be the last man to leave the heights.

Dr. Nichols lived to see the Unitarians' first building in the final stages of completion. Scarcely a month before the first service was held in the new structure, he died on February 16, 1915. He was the last surviving founder

of the Sacramento Society for Medical Improvement, which published his biography in a 1950 book about Sacramento's early medical leaders.[1]

For members of Sacramento's Unitarian Society, Dr. Nichols' death coinciding with the completion of the new church must have been bittersweet, indeed. A new era was dawning as the old one drew to a close.

Part Two — THE LONG THIRTY YEARS (1915–1945)

With the completion of its church building in 1915, made possible only through Unitarian money from Boston, it was then thought that the little congregation would flourish under its own roof. But that was not yet to be, for thirty long years were to pass with the Society struggling in indifferent success, in brief brilliant achievements, often in long despair, but always with a central few who would not give up their cherished hope for better days. Sustained by financial aid from Boston, often doled out in amounts just sufficient to barely save the Society from extinction, through good times and bad, this is the story of those thirty years.

14 World War I Years and the Return to Peace (1916-1921)

The Reverend Charles Pease & the War Years, 1916–1918

The Society began the year of 1916 with its annual meeting on 3 January in its new church building at 1415 27th Street. Seventeen of its members were present. Mr. Charles Pease[1] its minister of several years, was receiving a salary of $75 per month. The American Unitarian Association was granting financial aid of $400 yearly in addition to its help with the construction of the building which had included a $1,000 no-interest loan which was to be repaid at the rate of $100 a year for the next ten years.

During the Spring of 1917, which marked America's entry into WWI, the membership declined to seventeen, and the operating budget of $460 had been subscribed for that year. Evidently heroic measures were needed for survival. A membership drive was undertaken in the autumn of 1917 and by the following spring there were seventy-seven members representing sixty-five families. In 1918 the pledged subscriptions came to $1,400, but the annual subsidy from the American Unitarian Association was reduced to $300.

In a report to Boston Headquarters, the Sacramento Society treasurer wrote in April of 1918:

> We found that Mr. Pease had, through his tireless activity both in and outside the Church, through his public spirit and broad interests in matters spiritual, intellectual, educational, social and artistic, established himself, an[d] made himself and us favorably known throughout the community. It is due to the great public regard for him and his work that this campaign for new membership has proven so successful.

> The Society has been laboring under a great handicap — our minister, Mr. Charles Pease, whose services were not undervalued, was very much underpaid. In fact the situation was desperate and something had to happen. The Board knew that Mr. Pease could not be expected to do his best work while receiving a salary entirely too small to support his family, with a wife and four children of school age to care for. We were beginning to feel that we should suffer a loss of dignity and self-respect to allow matters to continue as they were. It became our conviction that he should receive a salary of $150 per month.
>
> If you decide you can aid us with an appropriation for the specific purpose named, viz: to put Mr. Pease's salary on an $1,800 per year basis, it will be a great stimulus both to us and to him to do our best work.

Shortly after this letter was sent, the Directors voted to increase the minister's salary to $100 per month as of 1 June 1918. Mr. Pease, after five years with the Society, must have been questioning the wisdom of attempting to remain in his post. With the war period, his salary had been increased thirty-three percent but the continuing inflation had resulted in a fifty percent increase in the cost of living, leaving him with less purchasing power than when he had started his ministry here. Sometime after May of 1918, Mr. Pease left Sacramento, the date not being known because Society records cannot be found for the period of July of 1918 through February of 1921.

Who Were the Unitarians in 1918?

The Society membership list of 1918 and the 1918 city directory were used to determine the church members' place of residence and occupation. This information gives some indication of the lifestyle of local Unitarians over half a century ago.

Of forty-eight women, twenty-six were "housewives" whose husbands were mainly in occupations of professional, managerial or skilled work; of twenty-two women not indicated as having a spouse, fourteen were teachers, four were librarians, and four were clerks. Of twenty-five men, there were two physicians and one veterinary surgeon, a president and a vice-president of a bank, the city superintendent of schools, and two high school teachers, a chief engineer of highways, a civil engineer, a legislative

counsel; two assistant superintendents, one of mails and one of a life insurance company; a chief clerk, two merchant owners, three salesmen, a grocer, a court reporter, a farmer, a gardener, a bill-poster and a tinsmith. The occupations of many members indicated that they either had professional training and/or an academic degree in an era when only three percent of the population had graduated from college.

Their main area of residence was between G and P Streets, from 11th to 29th Streets, or in a minor area south of T Street which was bounded by 21st Street and Franklin Avenues. Those areas seem to have been at that time occupied mainly by middle class Caucasian families whose names indicated origin in the British Islands and Germanic Europe.

Arbor Day, 1920

The Hardy Armenian, the Reverend Mr. Fereshetian

The Sacramento Unitarian Society was founded by early-day Easterners, mostly from New England, in nostalgia for their distant homes to which they could not return. As time spun out, that early influence would be diluted with peoples of diverse origins and memories, and with their descendants, although some new Englanders continued to influence the Society, particularly the ministers.

In the late summer of 1920, Martin F. Fereshetian, a native of Armenia, came from Salt Lake City Unitarian Church to the Sacramento Society, sent by the American Unitarian Association Church Extension Department in Boston to be Minister-at-Large. His interim mission was the revival of the then moribund local Society.

A memory of the Society at that time was recalled in a letter written in 1975 by Anne Mudge from Santa Rosa, California, who as a high school girl in Sacramento was attending Unitarian services in 1920.

> My first remembrance of the Sacramento Unitarian Church (in the little shingled building at 27th between N and a Streets) must have been around 1919 or 1920. We met, a small group, usually twelve or thirteen people, mostly women. A Mr. Pease was minister. He was an interesting preacher according to my mother, but not very practical. Taught at a private school part of the time to eke out his income.
>
> He left and a vigorous Armenian, Mr. Fereshetian, took us on. He was a very nice, outgoing person and very good with young people. But my mother found his preaching rather overwhelming. "How he roars at us poor meek little people" she said, "the usual row of faithful Unitarians!"

Mr. Fereshetian's biography indicates that physical vigor may have contributed to his survival as a child. Born in 1888 at Arabkir, Armenia where he lived for seven years, he escaped with his mother to Egypt to avoid being massacred in genocidal warfare of that period. Only the boy survived the flight; his father, then on a visit to the United States, went to Egypt for his son and brought him to the United States.

Martin Fereshetian was educated in Philadelphia with a degree in Scientific Agriculture. He then attended Meadville Theological School for a Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1916, and was ordained to the ministry in Kent, Ohio, that year, where he served until 1918. While in the Colorado Springs pastorate in 1919 he earned a Master of Arts degree from Colorado College. Afterwards, he was with the Salt Lake Unitarian Church for an interim until coming to Sacramento.

Fereshetian's Local Ministry

After his arrival here, he quickly visited all the Society members, raised a budget, and held a church dinner with forty-five people in attendance. On November 16, 1920, he wrote to his Boston office in triumph:

> Well, the Extension department has done it!
>
> I grouped all the ladies of the Church into two Companies, and appointed a captain for each. We are to have Family Suppers in the church the last Friday of each month. The dates are fixed until June. That will make ALL the women work. It will tend to do away with petty things.
>
> Sunday School now has thirty enrolled and we average twenty-five every Sunday. I am teaching a class of Boys and Girls of High School age, and of course that is a great joy, but I cannot really give them to anyone just yet. I must develop a High School teacher to take them in time.

In his letter he expressed surprise that he had been elected to the local Ministerial Alliance, and as if to forestall suspicion of apostasy he wrote:

> What do you think of this? I have been elected into the Misterial Alliance of Sacramento. One thing the Extension Department is doing through its worker in the West is the breaking of prejudice against us. I am never compromising in our Gospel. At the same time, I am not going about this with a chip on my shoulder against those who disagree on certain principles. One reason I enter the Ministerial Alliance is in order that those who come to these places after me may have access to various activities in the communities. I make the way easy.

Among the records of that period is a copy of a newspaper advertisement which gives our only information about his religious philosophy:

UNITARIAN CHURCH
27th St., Between N and 0 Sts.
Rev. Martin Fereshetian, A. M. B. D., Minister
Devotional Services at 11 :00 a.m.
Subject: The Prophet as Social Reformer

> All liberal minded men and women are invited to come and join us in our worship service. The minister is at your service at any time. If you are interested in a Christianity which places character over creed, this church heartily invites you to take part in its life and efforts.

In the Spring of 1921 his temporary mission in Sacramento was coming to a close; the "Board Minutes" for March of 1921 report that Mr. Fereshetian was present and preparing for his departure. Records in Boston show that he went to the Salem, Oregon, Unitarian pastorate for the years of 1921 to 1929. There he Americanized his name by changing it to Ferrey, studied law at Willamette University, and retired from the ministry in 1930 to practice law and work in politics until his death in 1935.

The Brief Ministry of Hubert Cyril Carter

The Reverend Dr. Hubert Cyril Carter arrived to Sacramento in May of 1921. The American Unitarian Association sent him on an interim basis for continuing the work of reviving the Sacramento Society. He was being paid from the Boston office entirely until in June the local Society began contributing $75 per month as a portion of his salary.

During the summer Dr. Carter prepared for resumption of the regular Sunday services in September, as it was then the custom to discontinue meetings during the heat of summer. Display advertisements in the leading local newspapers give us the only known information of his ministry, such as the *Sacramento Union* issue of Saturday, September 3, 1921:

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH
Sacramento
Twenty-seventh Street, between N and 0

> The Fall and Winter work of the Church will be opened on Sunday September 4, at 11 am. Dr. Hubert Cyril Carter, minister of the Church will preach. All lovers of Liberal Christianity are most cordially invited to worship with us.

A week later the advertisement text read:

> Dr. Hubert C. Carter will preach on FOOT WASHING. School of Liberal Education: We have an able staff of well-trained teachers

> under the direction of Mr. B.B. Blake. This is an excellent opportunity for the training of your children in the grace of Liberal Christianity. The open door of Sacramento's LITTLE CHURCH AROUND The CORNER IS FOR YOU. Add to your faith VIRTUE!

In September the Board of Directors received a suggestion from the American Unitarian Association Boston headquarters that Dr. Carter be selected as permanent minister for the Sacramento Society. In view of the fact that the local group had not been paying its own way and was still dependent upon subsidy from the national organization, it could not ignore the request. There seemed to be a lack of enthusiasm over the situation, but a special meeting was called for voting on the proposal on September 25th.

No record has been found of that meeting, but in the first week of October a letter was sent to Boston asking that Dr. Carter be relieved of his assignment in Sacramento. This request was purportedly based on the state of the Society treasury which contained $6.20 on October 1, 1921, after the September bills had been paid and the recently installed telephone had been discontinued as an economy measure. After his departure, Sunday services were continued with lay leaders and visiting ministers as a temporary arrangement.

15 The Society in the Nineteen-Twenties

Sacramento Unitarian Society, 1922

The 1922 Annual Meeting in early January reflected the condition of the hapless Sacramento Unitarians: nineteen members were in attendance with the usual ratio of sexes — six men and thirteen women. Without ministerial guidance, a major congregational decision was whether to continue under lay leadership with visiting speakers in the pulpit or to once more attempt to call a minister.

A motion for lay leadership was defeated by a vote of ten against, eight for the motion. Then a motion to call a Reverend Mr. Knapp as minister carried by a vote of nine to eight. No minister came, however; perhaps because of the financial condition of the Society which had an income of $925 in 1921 with an expenditure of $750. The closeness of the vote on the motion may have indicated that the small congregation was deeply divided on those issues, but at best it seemed that the resources were insufficient to pay for a minister and that the Society continued because of a small nucleus of devoted persons who simply would not give up their hope for better days.

Now, more than a half century later, we know the names of some of those whose efforts in those times of adversity helped shape the character of the Society. One was Herbert R. Thomson who in 1922 had then been a trustee or president of the group for at least thirty years. He and Mrs. Thomson were "silent angels" whose loans and covert gifts enabled the impoverished Society to repeatedly survive financial crises. Another was Burt Foster Howard, M.D., who as president of the group from 1921 through 1925 contributed to a fundamental liberalization of its formal statement of principles. As a friend and advisor, he left an imprint of his personality which continued beyond the forty-one years of his membership which would end with his death in 1962. There was also a long list of women who became legends of strength and devotion, such as the Misses Bray, Lola and Julia, who joined in 1918, and Miss Naomi Canon who joined in 1921 — only a few of the many ladies who through the Women's Alliance were a principle source of funds in periods when the Society would have disappeared were it not for their help.

Reverend Berkeley B. Blake

Berkeley B. Blake 1921-1927

In 1921 Berkeley B. Blake was listed in the Sacramento City Director as an attorney. In the next year he was listed as "Unitarian Minister." He had been elected to the Society Board of Directors by January of 1922. In October of that year, he resigned from the Board in preparation for his

forthcoming ordination as a minister of the Society. He was said to have been a graduate of Harvard law school and was then attending the Pacific Unitarian School for the Ministry, perhaps on a part-time basis.

A yellowing printed program of his ordination services, found in an old box of stored records, reads:

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH
Twenty-seventh Street, between N and 0
Sacramento, California
Sunday Services
Sabbath School… 9:45 A.M.
Church Service… 11 :00 A.M.

In the Freedom of Truth and in the Spirit of Jesus,
we unite for the Worship of God and the Service of Man

ORDINATION SERVICE
Sunday Morning, October 29, 1922
Ordination of Berkeley B. Blake, B. Lit. Sc., J.D.
As Minister of this Church
10:00 a.m.
Meeting of the Council of Churches, at the Church
11:00 a.m.

Ordination Service

Invocation	
Hymn No 490	
Reading of Scripture	Rev. Charles Pease, San Jose
Sermon	Rev. Charles Pease, San Jose
Solo	Miss Mavis Scott
Prayer of Ordination	Rev. Charles W. Wendte, D.D.
Charge to Minister	Rev. Earl M. Wilbur, D.D.
Right Hand of Fellowship	Frederick L. Hosmer, D.D.
Charge to the People	Rev. Charles Pease, San Jose
Hymn No 458	Tune St. Agnes No 295
Benediction	Rev Berkeley B. Blake, Sacramento

It soon became obvious that Berkeley Blake was a man of considerable substance and stability. During 1923, he dropped his divinity school work to become full-time minister, serving both the Sacramento and Woodland churches. The American Unitarian Association contributed $2,000 toward his yearly salary of $2,400.

That year the Sacramento Society membership did not increase, remaining at forty-seven. The Women's Alliance, in contrast, had discovered a unique role to play within the city which it supplied by presenting programs of literary, artistic and esthetic merit open to the public upon purchase of a $1 membership yearly with the Alliance. Two-hundred and forty-one members were subscribed in 1923; fundraising activities of the Alliance brought in $868 for that year, enabling it to become a major contributor to this Society.

The Laymen's League

There had been a women's organization within the Society as early as 1889, but the first known men's organization was formed in 1921 when the local chapter of the Unitarian Laymen's League consisted of twelve members. Its activity seems to have been desultory until the autumn of 1922 when the League organized a public lecture series titled "The Truth about Evolution." Under the leadership of Warren W. Gayman, who was a local college professor, over two hundred series tickets were sold at $1.50 before the first of the lectures in October. The speakers were provided by the University of California Extension Division. All were university professors chosen to cover the range from biology through the social sciences. The noted anthropologist Alfred E. Droeber, a pioneer in that subject at the University of Berkeley, was one of the speakers, indicating the high quality of the series.

Thanksgiving Services with Temple B'nai Israel

Berkeley Blake began a custom which has continued into the present time, that of joint meetings of the congregations of the Unitarian Society and Temple B'nai Israel. The first was a joint Thanksgiving Day service in the Unitarian Church in November 1924 with Rabbi Reinhardt and the Reverend Mr. Blake and their congregations. From very early days in Sacramento, the Unitarians and members ofTemple B'nai Israel had friendly relations so that annual meetings formalized an historical relationship in this community.

"No Religious Test"

At the annual meeting of the Society in January of 1924 the minister had pointed out that the "Bond of Union" Statement used in the application for membership was not the same as the one provided in the by-laws. He recommended that the two should be in conformity, "if a Bond of Union is to be required at all." The 1913 bylaws Bond of Union described its emphasis as upholding "the influence of character and daily life above creedal confessions." That revision had replaced the 1892 by-laws in which the Church Covenant united its members in "the love of truth and in the spirit of Jesus of Nazareth for the purpose of sustaining liberal Christian worship."

New by-laws were adopted by vote of the Society in its annual meeting on 14 January, 1926. They eliminated the previous Bond of Union with this statement, "No religious test shall be required of any member or of any applicant for membership in the Society." Evidently the brevity and succinctness of the statement was intended to clearly establish that freedom of belief was the policy of the Sacramento Society.

President Emeritus H. R. Thomson

By 1926 the by-laws also created the title of President Emeritus of the Society, to which Herbert R. Thomson was elected. He had been an officer and leader in the group for at least thirty-four years. The precedent for such a recognition had been its awarding to Dr. Henry L. Nichols in 1912 in honor of his long service to the Society from its founding in 1868.

The Presidency of Burt F. Howard, M.D.

Dr. Howard's term as Society president spanned the years of 1921 through 1926 and ended at the annual meeting on 20th January 1927. It had been a time of progress; the small society had discovered how to contribute to the larger community interest in literacy, artistic, aesthetic and intellectual matters through presentation of public lectures and programs at which attendance far exceeded in numbers those who were members.

Under his presidency the pulpit of the Society was occupied by a member of the congregation who was ordained into the ministry. The annual budget of the church had increased from $925 in 1921 to $4500 for 1927. The salary of the minister had been raised to $3,000 per year.

But the church had not overcome two characteristics which had marked the Sacramento Society for many years. It was shy about raising money and reluctant to solicit members. The Society was not self-supporting and was still receiving financial aid from the American Unitarian Association as it had for many years.

The policy of recruiting members was recorded in the minutes of the Annual meeting of 1924 when the Reverend Mr. Blake told his audience:

> Today our membership stands at approximately forty-seven, most of whom are actively interested in the church. A much larger number, however, are actively interested… (but) have never joined counting the numbers of the Sunday school there are not less than one hundred and fifty who are counting this church their spiritual home.
>
> There would be a much larger membership if all those interested had been approached… I feel, however, that hastily approaching newcomers among us with the request that they join with us is neither wise nor quite courteous. Perhaps I bend somewhat backward in that policy, but I do feel that joining a church is not unlike marriage — it should be, except for sound reasons, a life engagement… therefore I have not approached many of those even that are here tonight and who, I know, are with us in their hearts.

Departure of Berkeley B. Blake

Berkeley Blake's transition in Sacramento from layman to ministerial student and ordained minister of the Society had qualified him for higher office. In the summer of 1927, he resigned from the pastorate to become field secretary for the American Unitarian Association and Secretary for the Pacific Coast Conference of Unitarian Churches with headquarters in Berkeley, California.

A pulpit committee consisting of Dr. and Mrs. Burt Howard, Warren Gayman and E. Hendricksen was appointed for recommending a minister for the Society. When Sunday services were resumed in September, the pulpit was occupied by invited speakers; the Sunday school was directed by a lay person on a small salary as a replacement for Mr. Blake who also had been Superintendent of the Sabbath School.

16 Robert E. Starkey, 1927-1931

At the end of August of 1927 there was no feeling of urgency for filling the vacant pastorate, due to the seasonal low ebb of the treasury. A recent letter from the American Unitarian Association in Boston had stated that its annual support fund had been granted for the forthcoming year in the amount of $500; it had declined from $1,358 in 1925 to $800 for 1926, so it seemed that slowly Sacramento was progressing toward self-sufficiency.

After church services were resumed in September the Ministerial Committee recommended that a special meeting be called on November 25, 1927, for the purpose of voting on whether to call a minister whom they would recommend. Twenty-three members attending that meeting voted to extend to Rev. Robert E. Starkey[1] a call as minister of this church at a salary of $200 a month for a term of one year. The former minister, Berkeley Blake, who represented the American Unitarian Association spoke words of praise for Mr. Starkey.

The new minister came to Sacramento the next month. That event was recalled in 1975 by Ann Mudge who wrote,

> Bob and Frances Ellen Starkey came from out east… They lived with Burt and "Daisy" Howard at 1224 – 40th Street until they found an apartment. They were very interesting young people. Frances Ellen was about twenty-three, Bob twenty-eight. He was enormously enthusiastic and out-going, loved everybody… Bob was very liberal in his politics and religious belief… filled with a tremendous faith and joyousness.

His formal installation was held on April 10, 1928.

Speakers were Dr. Gill, the minister of a local Congregational Church, and Mr. Dempster from the Stockton Unitarian Church. Several local ministers and a rabbi were also present.

The employment of Mr. Starkey had been a conditional one for a term of one year. Accordingly, on 2 December 1928 a special meeting of the congregation was called for voting upon the continuation of Mr. Starkey, his first year having been completed. The vote for retaining him was unanimous.

Unitarian Pre-Schoolers, 1928

The Annual Meeting of 1929

For the annual meeting of the Society on 17 January 1929, Mr. Starkey chose leaders to submit written reports on activities of the Society in the previous year. It was his idea that:

> If we keep this custom it will be an easier matter one hundred years from now to find out just what we were doing this past year 1928. I hope that we may keep the custom, for someday this church may be worthy of having its history written.

In November of 1928 the presidential election involved a rancorous religious conflict because the Democratic candidate, Alfred E. Smith of New York, was a Roman Catholic and the Republican candidate, Herbert

Hoover, was a Quaker. At that time no Catholic had ever been elected to the Presidency, and 1928 was to be no exception.

Mr. Starkey was apprehensive that the election had caused division within his congregation, for in his annual report to the Society, for the year 1928, he stated:

> The time of a general election is likely to be a period of tension in a group such as ours… A number of Unitarian churches in various parts of the country have suffered very seriously from this tension. Knowing the suffering of these churches, I voiced my feeling of kindness (sic) to the Board of Trustees at a recent meeting that they had not felt it necessary even to mention the topic at their meetings. I am very sorry that there has been some tension in this Church, and I… express my deep regret for any feeling there may have been that the name of the Church or the minister was connected with political partisanship in any way.

The subject was included in the comments by the Society President, Wayne A. Perkins:

> There has been for some time, in the minds of many, among the members of this church a feeling that everything was not as it should be. Let us analyze the situation.
>
> On December second… a meeting of the congregation was held to consider the question of further retention of Mr. Starkey. Full opportunity for a hearing was given to those who are opposed to his ministry, yet… not a single voice was raised against his retention.
>
> Before Mr. Starkey was invited to come west, Mr. Blake warned us that his weakest point was his sermons, and we had full opportunity to observe this weakness before engaging him. The membership recognized this fact, but believed that this weakness could be overcome; I believe it is the opinion of many ... that the quality of the sermons has greatly improved.[2]
>
> However, there has been considerable resentment because it was felt that Mr. Starkey mixed too much in politics during the campaign. There has been a feeling that he is a socialist, and that such views should not be tolerated in a minister of this church.

In defending Mr. Starkey against the charge of being a socialist, Mr. Perkins remarked:

> No man should be condemned for adhering to a program looking toward betterment of the human race. The thought has also been expressed that Mr. Starkey is too much of a pacifist - that he would have us pledge ourselves to actions contrary to the laws of the country. Mr. Starkey served in the Great War as a soldier, at or near the front… His ideas for advancing the cause of peace throughout the world may be impractical, but he certainly should not be condemned for believing that the people of this earth should be freed from the curse of war.
>
> Controversial matters, however, have no place in the pulpit, and Mr. Starkey has made a sincere promise that he will endeavor to eliminate all controversial subjects from his sermons.

Starkey States Some of his Religious Values

The next month, on Sunday evening, 10 February 1929, Mr. Starkey's closing paragraph of his address revealed a brief description of some of his ideas on religion:

> One more definite change must come upon the religion of both the Christian and the Jew if he would make his religion ... (one) facing toward the future. It is a change involving our conception of deity. It was twenty years ago that President Eliot, addressing a summer session of the Divinity School in Harvard said that the development and the discoveries of the nineteenth century had made the orthodox belief in deity "crude and archaic".
>
> I believe that President Eliot was right… My chief difficulty, even with the more liberal conceptions of deity, is that worship through the old prayers, and through the old readings, is too much a matter of belief and too little a matter of experience… I am dreadfully dissatisfied with all the liturgy I know. I want to create a new liturgy with a new accent…
>
> I experience beauty… I know truth, one phase of beauty. I know goodness, another phase of beauty… I know that vigor, vitality, life, all are forms of beauty… Because I am so deeply stirred by the

> various forms of beauty, I want with all my heart and mind and body to give my whole self to beauty forever…
>
> Such is the heart of my religion. I want a liturgy to express it so that experience may underlie my belief. The liturgies of today cannot do it for me. Their theism is too certain, too dogmatic… look too much to the past. They ask too much of deity and too little of me… Our ancestors forged for themselves religions to meet their needs. We, in all our richness of mind, in all our richness of knowledge, and, most important of all, in all our richness of imagination, shall not suffer lack.

With this insight into his values, more meaning is given to the open-air services each Spring which he initiated in April of 1928. A copy of the mimeographed order-of-service shows that the central theme was praise of the beauty of nature. Held in the country some ten miles east of Sacramento, the location must have been in some unspoiled area of the hills overlooking the American River.

Summer Vacation, 1929

In June of 1929 the support of the American Unitarian Association was increased to $600 a year. In July and August the usual summer vacation during the heat of summer gave a respite from the care of routine church operations, so that in September services could be resumed with new enthusiasm.

That summer Mr. Starkey discovered the delights of camping out in Yosemite Valley. In 1975, Anne Mudge wrote of it:

> In 1929 after my graduation from college, while his wife was visiting in the East, he and my mother and I went for a summer camping trip on a ledge 1,000 feet above the floor of the Yosemite Valley, something no longer allowed. We had a wonderful time with hikes, swims, and meal gettings for five or six weeks at that spot. The bears and deers walked through it nights.

That experience must have been the inspiration which led him to get permission of the Society directors for holding liberal, non-denominational religious services in the Yosemite Church Bowl on Sundays in July and August of the following year.

17 The Storm Clouds Gather

In October of 1929 the Board of Trustees approved the proposal that a survey be made of the sixty subscribing members during the annual finance solicitation to discover:

1. Those who favored the extreme liberal movement. so-called humanism
2. Those who favored the more conservative Unitarian ideas
3. Those more or less indifferent

The survey provided this information as to the ideological orientation of the members.

6	Liberal	10%
45	Conservative	75%
9	Non-committal	15%

The Depression Begins

The first spectacular event of the Great Depression was on 29 October 1929 when the stock market "crashed" in New York City, but its significance would not be realized until long afterwards.

At the annual meeting of the Society on 16 January 1930 the minister delivered an optimistic report on the condition of the Society. He stated:

> Last year for the first time in the history of a Unitarian movement in Sacramento, our membership went over one hundred. This year we have continued to go ahead in membership… One fourth of the supporters of this church are new within the year.

Slowly across the nation, however, the developing depression caused a slackening of employment and income. The 1930 Society budget of $3,600

would decline to $3,279 in 1931 and to $2,841 in 1932, when the reality of the Depression would become destructive.

"A House Divided"

In a 1930 letter to Berkeley Blake, a Society trustee reported that the Sacramento Society was seriously "schismatized" in its religious ideology. His letter read, in part.

> It is about the present division of religious beliefs, which seems to have gradually developed during the past 1 0 or 5 years.
>
> Conceding the right of everybody, including the minister, to have his or her own ideas, and assuming for the sake of argument that the division is about half and half, it must necessarily follow that about 50% is not in full accord with the minister. Several factors, of course, will modify this percentage: the minister might be extremely able or the congregation might not come up to the expected Unitarian standard of tolerance or vice versa. But whatever the exact numbers, a considerable part of the membership will not derive from their connection with the Church what they expected. Loss of interest will be inevitable.
>
> The idea that I want to submit to you, to meet this situation to some extent is the following: If ministers of opposite tendencies should exchange pulpits as often as feasible, everybody would be benefited.

The 1931 Annual Meeting

In the minister's annual report to the congregation on 20 January, Mr. Starkey commented,

> Church attendance seems to be without rhyme or reason. Last September and October were the best in three years. Last month, December, was the worst in four years… If these figures tell anything it is that our people… don't look upon church attendance to be above Sunday morning laziness, company, or a trip in an automobile.

He did not mention the Depression. Instead he brought up what must have been an unexpected topic:

> Down through the centuries, honorable men of religion have in many cases confessed to their people when a revolutionary change in religious belief has come to them. A notable instance in this country is that of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who resigned from the ministry of the Second Unitarian Church in Boston at the pleasure of the congregation because of a great change of belief concerning the Lord's Supper which had come to him.
>
> I feel that I should make a confession to you. Ever since my service in the Army during the late War as a volunteer the problem of war has been to me a burning one. As a result of long study and meditation… I have very calmly come to the conclusion that it would be impossible for me to actively participate… in any movement where the taking of human life was deliberately adopted as one method of reaching a desired goal… Hence I feel that I should make this confession to you who elect me from year to year to be your minister.

The Crisis

By 11 March 1931 dissension within the Society was so critical that the Board, in a meeting with Berkeley Blake as administrative vice-president of the American Unitarian Association for the Pacific Coast, appointed trustees Scott and Perkins to discuss it with Mr. Starkey. In the meantime, a letter from Mr. Blake to Mr. Starkey had been mailed with information of the forthcoming visitation:

> Our aided churches are so weak in themselves that they must have the united support of practically all of their members in order to function even with the help of the denomination. I feel. therefore, that I officially must take the position that I cannot recommend a further grant of funds to a church which is substantially divided in its constituency. When it comes to a church in which the entire board of trustees feel that in spite of their personal love and affection of their minister, they cannot make progress under him, when, indeed, they say, as your board did on Wednesday night, that they are supporting the church out of old loyalty to it as an institution and in spite of the fact that they are getting little or nothing from it in the way of strength and inspiration, I feel that I have no alternative in the matter. For support reluctantly given will not and cannot last. To

> make our aided churches go, the enthusiasm of the members is vitally necessary.
>
> Mr. Perkins and Mr. Scott are going to see you. They have a proposal to make which has my approval. I am anxious to have this matter settled just as early as possible, as recommendations for the grants for the coming year should go in as early as possible.
>
> I hate beyond words to have to write in this way, but I have come to the conclusion that the greatest kindness which I can show a minister is to be perfectly frank with him. There is no use in a man's going on with an enterprise which he is not making a success of.

Mr. Blake's letter had been mailed from Berkeley and reached Mr. Starkey before the date set for the conference on Monday, March 16. Without consulting the trustees, Mr. Starkey resigned as minister with a statement from the pulpit after the Sunday morning service on March 15, 1931. A written resignation, to take place at the pleasure of the congregation, but not later than September 1, was transmitted on Monday to the Board President, Mr. Scott.

Mr. Scott wrote to Mr. Blake,

> Your letter to him was somewhat more challenging than I had anticipated that it would be, and without notice to any of us, he announced from the pulpit on March 15 that he had received your letter, that it stated the Board was unanimous in believing him unsatisfactory in his position, and that he would present his resignation to the Board on March 16th, which he did…
>
> There was considerable agitation and some indignation among members of the congregation about the affair, many believing that the Board had exceeded its authority in practically demanding the resignation of the minister… so many objected to the possibility of Mr. Starkey's leaving that a special meeting of the Board was held on March 18th, when it was decided to ask the congregation to vote upon the matter of accepting the resignation.

A congregational meeting was called for April 12 for voting on the question "Shall Mr. Starkey's resignation be accepted?" The No vote was fifty-two; the Yes vote was six, with some members abstaining. A motion was then

made and approved by vote that a letter be sent to Mr. Blake and Mr. Starkey "expressing appreciation of the congregation of Mr. Starkey's work in the past and of their confidence in his fitness to carryon the work in the future."

At the end of August, Mr. Starkey of his own choice abandoned his following of the ministry and with his wife and young daughter moved to Berkeley. Anne Mudge wrote in 1975, "He was so hurt that all these people he had liked so much didn't want him, he decided to leave the church and preaching and turn to some other line of endeavor. He became very depressed."

Epilogue

Six years were to pass before there was a more complete understanding of the episode of Reverend Starkey's departure from Sacramento. That came on the evening of Friday, August 27, 1937, on page two of the *Sacramento Bee*:

FINDS DEATH

> Tormented by "mental anguish" Rev. Robert Starkey, former Sacramentan, stepped off the San Francisco–Oakland Bridge and plummeted 175 feet to his death… He was the first suicide victim of the $77,000,000 bay span which opened last November.
>
> The 41-year-old former pastor of the First Unitarian Church of Sacramento ended his life on the day his wife, Frances, was to obtain her final decree of divorce in Carson City, Nevada.
>
> "ANGUISH" BRINGS SPAN SUICIDE OF EX-SACRAMENTAN
> Rev. Starkey Death Note Cites Mental Unrest, Asks Cremation of Body
>
> "This is my third try. I have been sick for six years. I am to go."
>
> Rev. Starkey's suicide note continued: "This would be better than spending years in a hospital. Mental condition poor. No grudges. Continual mental anguish."

The crew of a passing launch pulled Starkey from the water, still alive, his clothing torn to shreds by the force of the plunge. He was taken to an Oakland hospital on a commandeered Key Route train. He died on a respirator without regaining consciousness.

Left in 1931

Rev. and Mrs. Starkey left Sacramento in 1931 with their young daughter after Starkey served four years here as pastor. The tragedy of the years between that time and his death yesterday was pieced together by Sacramento friends of the family. They said he was a man who suffered under an increasing inferiority complex. Starkey's choice of the bridge as an agency of death was attributed by one close friend to the intense interest and admiration for the bridge and builders.

Friend Explains

The friend said, "The bridge distracted his mind from his troubles. In marveling at the engineering genius that conceived the span, he forgot, temporarily, the inferiority complex which he confessed was growing within him. When the bridge had reached the climax of completion and he had reached the lowest ebb of his dejection he chose it as an agency of death."

Another Reason

The same friend offered another explanation. He said the former pastor disliked funeral rites and that in leaping from the bridge into the swift bay currents he reasoned his body would be difficult to recover for a funeral service. However, he left another note asking that his body be cremated and the ashes thrown in the bay from the bridge.

Rev. Starkey left the Sacramento pastorate after criticism arose in the congregation, and despite a vote of confidence from the church Board.

Enters University

He moved his family to San Francisco where he entered the University of California to study for a Doctor of Philosophy degree. Two years later he accepted a position as a religious instructor in a small eastern school. In six months he was back to the Bay region engaged in adult education work and then he was accepted as an adviser in western CCC camps. The government job ended several months ago. The Starkey's divorce plans were heard of several weeks ago by Sacramento friends.

Pays Tribute

Rev. Lawrence Wilson, pastor of the pioneer Congregational Church, said today in a tribute to Rev. Starkey: "He was ever alert and active in civic movements. He was keen, too keen for most persons, and consequently very sensitive. I want to pay tribute to his brotherliness, his fair-mindedness, his positive convictions in the truth. I regret he chose to end what could have been a brilliant life."

18 The Depression Deepens

Reverend Robert C. Withington, 1931-1933

Robert Withington came to the Society in September of 1931 as a "supply" minister for four months, a stratagem designed for acquainting the congregation and the visitor without obligation beyond the stated term. In that way Sacramento's objection to accepting another "young and untried minister" was mollified.

Rev. Withington with Unitarian Sunday School Students

Withington had served as assistant pastor in Pasadena and in a temporary position as minister in Long Beach. The continuing Depression was limiting opportunity for newly ordained men to find permanent appointments because those who had pulpits were not eager to leave them. Thus, at the age of twenty-six and just starting on his career, he was in his third assignment in little over a year when he came to Sacramento.

Born in New York City, he attended high school in Charlottesville, Virginia, and got a degree in Business Administration from Boston University. He then attended Meadville Theological School in Chicago where he graduated in 1930. He was acceptable in California because Berkeley Blake preferred Meadville graduates, having become disenchanted with recent graduates from Harvard Divinity School as being impractical in the small parishes of the Pacific West region which he supervised.

In January of 1932 Mr. Withington was accepted as permanent minister of the Sacramento Society at a salary of $200 a month, the national Association having increased its monthly aid from $37.50 to $70.83 at least through April for helping meet the enlarged budget. His formal installation ceremony was on 14 February 1932.

Regular attendance at Sunday services averaged forty-two during the year in which total receipts were $1,943 and expenditures were $2,841. At year's end there was $19.61 on hand; the minister's salary was reduced to $175 a month in what became a time of increased economic distress.

The Year 1933

President Roosevelt had been elected in November of 1932; he was inaugurated on March 4, 1933, as was then the custom, and two days later he ordered all banks temporarily closed to forestall ruinous "panics" which could cause the collapse of the nation's banking system. That year marked a drastic change in governmental philosophy, in response to crisis situations which followed in succession far longer than anyone then could have foreseen. These events were reflected in the Society pulpit of 1933; in January the church calendar for the month read:

> During January the sermon theme will be "The Social Heritage of 1932": Your minister will review the outstanding books dealing with the social question, written during the past year.
>
> January 1 st. – *The Challenge of Technocracy*, a ten year study by authorities. What is their answer?
>
> January 8th and 22nd. – *Thunder and Dawn*, Glen Frank, President of University of Wisconsin sees the Dawn of a New Era.

> January 15 – *A New Deal*, Stuart Chase's answer to the purpose of an Economic System.
>
> January 29th – *A Planned Society*, George Coule's plan for an ordered world.

That year the minister's salary was again reduced, to $125. Mr. Withington began talking of his desire to return to the East. In a letter to him on 29 April 1933, Berkeley Blake bluntly advised,

> The only ways that any of us can grow are by hard work and by beating the difficulties that we face. You would not return to New England at the present time with any prestige, whereas, if you can manage to knuckle down and get the better of the Sacramento situation, you would return with both prestige and power… I recognize its hardness. Its difficulties have been increased both by the division that occurred before you were called and the financial hard times that have ensued since. These, however, are not entirely responsible for the steadily decreasing line of your attendance.

In July Mr. Withington resigned as of 1 September 1933. He went on to a successful lifetime career as a parish minister and in denominational religious education in the New England region.

Experience with Young and Immature Ministers

The Board of Trustees decided to continue for the time being without a minister. The Society President wrote to Mr. Blake,

> During the last few years the membership as well as the finances have declined. The general Depression, and on top of that the failure of the largest bank, accentuated the financial struggle of our organization.
>
> Our long experience with young and immature ministers indicated that the up-building of the church in that manner will not be successful. If a minister of proved ability can be placed in charge it is our belief that he will find a fertile field in which to build up a strong congregation.

The Depression's Fifth Year

The 1934 annual meeting on 20 January featured a dinner prepared by the Women's Alliance and sold at thirty-five cents per plate, indicating the economic conditions.

For a time Sunday services were held regularly by visiting ministers from churches in Stockton, Fresno, Los Angeles, Berkeley and San Francisco. Interspersed were lay speakers, mostly local college professors and Society members. It was a question of how long a partial church program could sustain the enthusiasm of the members. For a brief time the Sunday services were the highlight event of each week, but they couldn't replace the vital function of a professional minister whose services quietly filled important personal needs within the congregation which were of such a nature that they could never be quantified in reports.

Society Income Hits New Low

October Collections, 1934

Date	Church Plate	Sunday School	Pledges
7th	$1.15	$1.00	—
14th	1.60	.41	$6.00
21st	.50	—	8.00
28th	1.50	—	5.00
	$4.95	$1.41	$19.00

Cash on hand and collections	$33.29
Disbursments	32.07
Balance	$1.22

Attempts to Revive the Society

By the Spring of 1935, Sunday services were being held in the evening in order to get Bay Area ministers as pulpit speakers. In March a special series on "Aspects of Liberal Religion" was presented and publicized through advertisements in the *Bee* and *Union*, evidently without great success.

The Society trustees then proposed a plan for the American Unitarian Association to increase its annual financial aid for one year "to underwrite

a capable and experienced minister and place him here in Sacramento to see if the situation could be built up." The rationale was that past failures were caused by having young and inexperienced ministers in the Society because of a lack of funds, that the logical expenditure of AUA support funds was to increase the appropriation so that a skilled minister could bring the Sacramento Society to a self-supporting basis, thus actually resulting in an eventual savings to the national Association.

In response to that request, a representative from the Boston headquarters visited the Society and left with the Board of Trustees thinking that he had agreed to provide such funding. On May 11, 1935, he had to notify the trustees that further decline in income of the national organization would prevent the adoption of the ambitious program. He wrote,

> My hope has been that we could do for Sacramento this coming year what we did for Spokane and Seattle last year, but… our style has been somewhat cramped. Undoubtedly the results of this work will be beneficial but for the present [our reduced income] makes impossible forward looking plans which I had cherished.

The President of the Board, by return mail, minced no words in describing his displeasure [at] the bad news:

> The Board of Directors of the Unitarian Society are greatly surprised that the promised plan of placing an able and experienced minister here seems doubtful of fulfillment in the immediate future.
>
> We would like to protest in the strongest possible terms to the postponement of that program, since as a board we continually repeated this promise to the members of the congregation, and have made the effort to keep the church open with this idea as incentive. Failing in this, we see no alternative save the closing of the church in Sacramento, which we would greatly deplore.

The final word came from Boston in a letter dated 20 May:

> I confess myself to be rather amazed at your letter. When I visited your Board of Trustees last fall I expressed the hope that Sacramento would be the next place upon which we could move. I think it still is but… new work simply becomes impossible… So if you must close the church do it with the thought that as soon as we are able we

> propose to give the work in Sacramento a thorough trial before definitely deciding that it can't be done.

A Partially Active Society

The gloomy mood within the Society was described that April by one of the trustees in reply to a letter from an unemployed Unitarian minister in Nebraska:

> Relative to your inquiry concerning the vacancy in the pulpit here… we nearly have a vacant church also… I cannot offer you any encouragement as to coming. People seem more concerned as to getting food than as to their salvation, here as elsewhere.

In June of 1935 the Society ceased having Sunday services, but elected officers to care for the property and to hold together the twenty remaining members. In November the building was rented to the Sacramento Unity Center Church[1] on a month-to-month basis.

The only recorded functioning programs were the Women's Alliance, which had two meetings per month, and a devotional group of women who met weekly in homes for prayer, hymns and the reading of short published sermons, or informal meetings of a few women who gathered about the fireplace in the social room for talking of things Unitarian and to maintain a sense of continuity in the face of almost overwhelming discouragement.

19 The Stockton Connection

During the early decades of this century, the Sacramento Society had shared its minister with the Unitarian group in the nearby town of Woodland some twenty miles away. In 1936 the Sacramento Society used the help of the Stockton Unitarian group in a similar fashion. An official of the American Unitarian Association had suggested that the two bodies could share their resources to mutual advantage under the stress of the Depression.

Accordingly, the Stockton minister, Clarence N. Vickland[1], began holding services in Sacramento on Thursday nights in a schedule covering February 20 through May 28, 1936. The program was financed at $45 per month for the Stockton minister, with $20 a month for operating the Sacramento organization. The funds came in part from the $25 per month rental of the building to the Truth Center Church and the remainder came from subscription pledges of either $1 or $.50 per month by contributors.

The general plan of the meetings was described to the members:

> The proposed plan includes two different types of meetings — a Half Hour of Beauty to be conducted in the church auditorium at 7:45 by Reverend Dorothy Dyar Hill, and a forum meeting to be held in the large social hall at 8:15pm, with an address by Reverend Clarence Vickland of Stockton. The address will be followed by questions and discussion from the floor, and the meeting will be presided over by members of the congregation. By observing the Half Hour of Beauty the need for meditation, inspiration and spiritual communion will be met; by holding the forum hour educational and ethical needs will find fulfillment.

The April 1936 Thursday evening topics were on:

> The Spiritual Basis of Co-operation.
>
> Nazi Germany and the Present European Crisis presented by Professor Jacoby of the College of the Pacific.
>
> The Scandinavian Solution to Hard Times.
>
> The Labor Movement Throughout the World.

There had been a long tradition in the Sacramento Society of incorporating esthetic appreciation into the weekly services, such as that described for the "Hour of Beauty". Anne Mudge wrote in 1975 of her childhood memory of such services,

> "A vigorous youngish woman… not only gave readings but believed that as we listened we should have something beautiful to look at also, so she had a simple arrangement near her on the dias with a soft light on it. It might be a richly colored vase or a piece of pottery or whatever. I was twelve or thirteen at the time and I enjoyed them."

Perhaps that was the reason that some years later she recalled that in the late 1930's "I made a peacock-blue wall hanging that made a backdrop behind the pulpit, and the domed ceiling above the dais was painted a light blue like the sky." That background was particularly enhanced by the morning light, diffused through the east windows, falling over the bouquets of garden and field flowers or foliage customarily displayed there on Sunday mornings.

Enter, Arthur Foote

Records show that in the summer of 1936, Mr. Vickland was being referred to as the former minister of the Stockton and Sacramento groups, and Arthur Foote was being proposed as minister for both Stockton and Sacramento. The twenty-five year old minister had just graduated from Meadville Theological School in Chicago, after having received a degree from Harvard University in 1933.

The son and grandson of Unitarian ministers, he had student experience as an assistant minister in Chicago, and as a student pastor in Shelbyville, Illinois. His father had by choice started his career in a small church outside of his native New England area and recommended that his son


Rev. Arthur Foote

follow his example; for that reason Arthur Foote agreed to California as the place for his first pastorate.

Stockton and Sacramento agreed to share a minister, his residence to be decided by mutual arrangement. The Sacramento Society voted in a special meeting on 27 August to accept Arthur Foote as part-time minister until 1 January 1937. That was proposed by the AUA representative in Boston, in obvious recognition that Sacramento members were reluctant to accept another "immature and inexperienced" minister just out of theological school, and would be more amenable to the arrangement if it were for a limited term.

At Easter that year Arthur Foote and his wife, the former Rebecca Carroll Clark of Southwest Harbor, Maine, had departed for a European vacation prior to his anticipated assignment to a pastorate in the autumn of 1936. They returned to this country on August 15, with a request that he be ordained in historic King's Chapel of Boston, where his grandfather had once been minister, so that his father who was then a minister in Massachusetts could participate in his ordination. Representatives of King's Chapel agreed to holding the ceremony there, provided that they were requested to do so by the Sacramento Society and the Stockton Church. The date of Sunday, September 20 was chosen; the Stockton Church promptly replied, but it was not until Tuesday, September 15, in response to an urgent second telegram that the Sacramento trustees telegraphed their request for the ordination ceremony.

In the files of the Society a printed copy of the Order of Service for the ordination ceremony preserves the essence of the solemn ritual within King's Chapel staid walls which stood as the symbol of New England's unique Unitarianism.

A hymn written by his grandfather in 1861 was sung, the last verse reading:

Crown us with love and so with peace,
Transfigure duty to delight;
Our lips inspire, our faith increase,
Brighten with hope our darkest night,
Bring us from earthly bondage free,
To find out heaven in serving thee. Amen
(Henry Wilder Foote)

The "Address to the Candidate" was read by Reverend Samuel A. Eliot, DD:

> We, who are here present, acting on behalf of the First Unitarian Society of Sacramento, California, and the First Unitarian Church of Stockton, California, do hereby ordain you to the ministry, in accordance with the accepted uses of our free churches, bidding you to dwell among our people preaching the word of truth and in freedom and in love, rebuking evil and maintaining righteousness; ministering to them alike in their joys and in their sorrows, setting forth no less by your example than by your precept the Christian way of life.

The "Reply by the Candidate" read:

> Sir: With a deep sense of responsibility, I take up the ministry to which I am this day ordained.
>
> I so pledge myself, as far as in me lieth, worthily to maintain the freedom of the pulpit which I shall occupy; to speak the truth in love, both publicly and privately, without fear of persons; diligently to fulfill the several offices of worship, instruction and administration, according to the customs of my congregation and of this fellowship; and in all things so to live as to promote piety and righteousness, peace and love among my people and with all men.

Rev. and Mrs. Foote made Stockton their place of residence in October. The Sacramento work would be for two to three days a week. The double assignment of two congregations was thought to be well within the excellent physical stamina of the young minister. At Harvard University he had been the captain of its cross-country running team, and he had run a two-mile race representing Harvard at an intercollegiate track meet in Berkeley, California, in 1932. With that background it wasn't surprising to

see him bicycling about Sacramento while calling on his parishioners, even way out at 52nd and F Streets to the hospital there.

At a part-time salary of $50 a month from the Society, his first service was on Thursday evening, October 8. The congregation decided to continue its previous format of evening meetings, and announced those for the remainder of October:

> October 15th:
>
> At 7:30 Devotional Service, with Sermon by Mr. Foote
> At 8:15 Forum Discussion led by Mr. Foote on the Topic: "What Next in Europe"
>
> Mr. Foote has recently returned from an extended trip abroad and is well qualified to speak on future possibilities.
>
> October 22nd:
>
> At 7:30 Devotional Service, with Sermon
> At 8:15 Forum Discussion on Stuart Chase's latest book: *Rich Land, Poor Land*
>
> This volume, just off the press, discusses our present economic situation in the light of our past use of the nation's resources. It is a thought provoking work, well worth the careful consideration of every thinking person.
>
> October 29th:
>
> At 7:30 Devotional Services, with Sermon
> At 8:15 Forum Discussion of Sinclair Lewis' book: It Can't Happen Here!
>
> In view of present European trends, all would do well to consider the causes and the possibilities of a dictatorship in America.

The December "Monthly Calendar" mailed to members contained the statement by the minister which was indicative of the condition of the Society at the end of 1936:

> Two months have passed since the church was reopened. For me at least, they have been happy ones, and, I may truly add, encouraging ones. I came to Sacramento under no illusions, and so, while many

> of you have sought to persuade me of the difficulty of the task, I have found more interest and willingness to lend a hand than I had expected. Our group is small, and some of you seem to think that because it is small, it cannot justify its existence. But institutions are not justified by their size, but by their vitality and usefulness. For me the most encouraging fact of the situation is this: that the prevalent attitude in the church is changing slowly from one of discouragement and defeat to one of hope and of the 'will to victory: I call upon all of you who believe in liberalism and not in authoritarianism, and who desire to see our modern faith applied in our own lives and in the life of the world, to give us your support.

The Calendar also contained a notice on December 17 that a special meeting would be held on 1 January 1937 to decide whether the arrangement with the Stockton church and the minister would be continued, as provided in the original agreement under which Mr. Foote had come to the Society.

That event was recalled in 1975 by Anne Mudge of Santa Rosa, California, who wrote,

> Arthur and Rebecca Foote appeared on the scene, twenty-five and twenty-three respectively,[2] both extremely charismatic… he went about calling on people who had previously been in the church, trying to get them together and got pretty discouraged… By this time I was teaching at Sacramento High School and my mother and I had a charming three-bedroom house at 44th and T Streets. I got her to invite him to make our home his headquarters for the two days he had to devote to Sacramento (each week), where he could stay overnight, have breakfast, supper, whatever, and plug away at trying to get the church together. He said, "You have no idea what it means to be welcomed and aided in this difficult situation." He had a great mystical faith and gave very fine sermons… After several months a church meeting was held at which we were to decide whether we were to ask him to stay on a permanent basis. There were some members of the elder generation who felt that the situation was too difficult and that he should be sent back to New England before he had his light extinguished. There was much arguing back and forth and finally I said, "Why don't we let them decide for themselves?" So he and Rebecca were called in, by this time almost in a state of

> shock. When we asked if they wanted to stay they said they certainly did, so the matter was settled.

In his first few years in Sacramento, the Depression seemingly had become a way of life. In 1939 it was in its tenth year when in September World War II began in Europe; a limited national emergency declared that year by President Roosevelt foreshadowed war preparations in the United States which would lead to the end of the Depression. The United States entered into armed conflict in 1941, and in place of the financial dislocation, the war years would disturb the personal lives of Society members so that four years were to pass before anything resembling normality would come.

A Sermon of 1944

A brief glimpse of what Mr. Foote was saying to his congregations at the height of the war is preserved in a mimeographed booklet distributed in February of 1944, as one of four sermons on the problems of race in the modern world." The title was "Adam's Ancestors: The Origin and Unity of the Human Race as Seen by Modern Science." In it he discussed the current "racist epidemics" not only in Nazi Germany but in America against Jews, Negroes and Japanese-Americans, from the viewpoint that the only exact use of the word "race" would be to say the "human race."

But even more informative was his description, on the back cover of the pamphlet, of the philosophy of the Stockton Church and the Sacramento Society:

> THE UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP offers what may seem to you a revolutionary idea of "religion" and "the church." Far from being "an opiate for the people" religion, in the Unitarian sense, stimulates men and women to achieve for themselves — and for others — the best possible life. It incites them to do justly and to labor for a just social order.
>
> THE UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP is hardly a "church" in the ordinary sense of the word; nor is it just another sect or cult. It is a company of people who wish to live the religious life, while feeling themselves free to accept any interpretation of life that experience and knowledge seem to warrant and to change that interpretation in the light of new facts.

> They are in loose agreement on the things that are relatively KNOWN — the values, ideals and experiences that make for the enrichment and ennoblement of human life. They inevitably differ among themselves — with absolute freedom of belief - as to things that are relatively UNKNOWN — such as the origin of life, immortality, the ultimate character of the universe, the meaning and the value of belief in God.

The Year 1945

Through five difficult years of financial stringency and almost four years of America's war participation, Arthur Foote remained with his congregations, when nationwide there was a shortage of Unitarian ministers because fifty of them were serving in the armed forces. Then in the Spring of 1945, Mr. Foote left for a larger and more prosperous pulpit of the Unity Unitarian Church in St. Paul, Minnesota. He would serve as minister of that church for 25 years, retiring in 1970.

In May he wrote from his new location,

> It seems very different, and quite exciting, to be in charge of a big, going concern. It is wonderful to have so many facilities, such as a movie projector and an excellent stenographer… The church in desperation has bought a parsonage… with three stories; it seems large to us who have grown used to living in a five room California bungalow.

The nine-year period since he had arrived here as a "young, inexperienced minister" may have been longer than he had intended when he came here to a first pastorate. When he left, it was with mutual affection and respect that he and his congregation parted, he to a larger opportunity and the Society to face once again a familiar experience, that of attempting to survive.

20 Looking Back at the Era of 1936–1945

The departure of Arthur Foote had been preceded by his resignation months earlier at the annual meeting of the Society in January of 1945. The minister's written report for that occasion explained his action:

> I must say that the arrangement of sharing my services between these two parishes has become steadily more unsatisfactory. Being the minister of two churches under any conditions is no sinecure. I confess that I have found the burden pretty heavy of late… In the beginning, it was easy for me to give nearly as much time to parish duties in Sacramento as in Stockton. In fact, for quite a period I consistently did more parish work here, doing many things which showed no immediate results, but which I am convinced helped us to rebuild our shattered little Society…
>
> I have found it less and less possible to give attention to all the details which need attending to here in Sacramento. The good folk in Stockton have become more and more insistent that, now that they were financially able to afford it, they should have the full time of their minister. It has not taken clairvoyance on my part to see that both churches should have the full time of a minister…
>
> You will not be unprepared… because of what I have already said… that I am going to ask you to accept my resignation as minister of this Church, to take effect at a date to be arranged…
>
> It is now my sincere belief that the Church must have a minister all her own; that the American Unitarian Association will let the Sacramento situation simmer along indefinitely, until we make a move which forces it to step in with a helping hand…

> Sacramento is an important city, the capitol of a great state. It should, can and must have a Unitarian Church of becoming dignity and importance. No one needs to apologize for what we are today. But we do not wield the influence our Church should to this community. It is my conviction that this Church under the leadership of an able and prophetic preacher, will grow rapidly and will wield much influence.

Arthur Foote Glances Back Forty Years

In October of 1976, Arthur Foote, living in retirement in Southwest Harbor, Maine, recalled some experiences of his Sacramento ministry:

> Your letter requesting information about my eight and a half year ministry in Sacramento has brought back quite a few pleasant memories. What a vastly different Church you have there now from the miniscule little Society which I helped get back on its feet forty years ago. Can it really be that long since the September day I arrived[1], driving up from Stockton (which was to be my home base), trying to find anyone interested in reopening the Church that had virtually ceased to exist.
>
> I was never called to minister of the Sacramento Church, and I recall no official action installing me; I'm quite sure there was none. But the American Unitarian Association in sending this young greenhorn fresh out of Meadville Theological School to Stockton (in hope of averting the threatened demise of that Congregation — it had 34 members left when I arrived on the scene), thought that with my left hand I might just as well see if Unitarianism could be resuscitated in Sacramento…
>
> I referred to the rebuilding of "our shattered little Society."[2] As you know the schism resulting from Bob Starkey's[3] forced resignation did just about blow the whole Church to pieces. There were mighty few Unitarians left around in 1936 who thought that the Church would ever reopen, or who wanted it to. (Anne Mudge has doubtless told you the sad tale of how Bob was virtually fired by the Board of Trustees — a highhanded, undemocratic action that the Congregation sought to veto, and did by giving Bob a strong vote of confidence, asking him to stay on). But Bob left anyway, leaving in his wake a bitter, disillusioned little group. I've always felt that Bob

should have stayed on, at least for a year or so, siding with the large majority who wanted him to, against the small, conservative minority (I think there were only a handful who really wanted him out, because of his socialism/pacifism). Had he stayed, the few would probably have left, and the wound would have healed. So, in a way, he was partly to blame, for having been too thin-skinned to take a little opposition. But he was a fine man, much loved by most of the members of the Society. Ah, well, it's an old story. Church politics are no better, maybe a little worse than in other institutions, governmental, academic or what have you.

What the Rev. Robert C. Withington[4] found — and was apparently unprepared to find, and unequipped to handle — was (as noted above) an embittered group, most of whom were in no mood to accept a minister they felt rightly or wrongly had been picked by the conservatives, and these had no intention of ever darkening the door of the Church again. His ministry of a little more than a year proved one sustained frustration. He simply threw up his hands in despair and went back to where I guess he belonged — in a conservative New England parish.

Well, the wound was still festering on that September day in '36 when I came to Sacramento to see what I could initiate. I had been given the name of Mr. B. W. Begeer, and when I called Mrs. Begeer, she arranged for me to meet her husband at Hotel Sacramento at noon. My usual hungry self, I arrived at the hotel quite ready for a nice luncheon in what I assumed would be a posh dining room. Soon a pair of gentlemen hove into sight. looking quite like Mutt and Jeff. The squat Dutchman from South Africa, Mr. Begeer, had brought another member of the Church, one Oscar Kraft, a tall, rather cadaverous man. Introductions over, they whisked me out of the hotel and around the corner to a drugstore, seating me at the counter between them. I cannot be sure, but I don't think that I was consulted about the menu, for very quickly the clerk was mixing up three hearty milkshakes containing raw eggs, orange juice and other equally healthy ingredients. This was my "fine luncheon" and it nourished me adequately. But as I sucked through my straw, Messrs. Begeer and Kraft filled me with gloomy accounts of how hopeless the Church situation was.[5] Maybe they were just testing me, to see how easily discouraged I could be. If so, they didn't succeed. With

considerable reluctance, they agreed to try to gather a few of the still faithful brothers and sisters, to see if I could elicit any response.

It was mighty slow going, that first winter. The Church of the Truth (a Unity School of Christianity group) were renting our attractive redwood shingled building on 27th Street. But they agreed to letting us use it on Thursday evenings. Thursday evening proved a tough time to get anyone to come to Church, believe me. But we persisted holding services for the handful that came out, sometimes as many as a dozen, usually less than ten; and on one dismal, rainy night, only one hardy soul showed up (that was Elizabeth Kent, who had been a Unitarian minister's wife, and doubtless had pity on me). So, we were never skunked. But there was very little to encourage us that first year.

I soon knew that we had to meet on Sundays, even though it would have to be on Sunday evenings, since Stockton commanded my services in the mornings. The second season, our tenants let the Unitarian camel stick his nose a bit further into their tent. letting us have the building Sunday nights. This helped considerably, so far as attendance was concerned, and gradually the old wound — oh, so very gradually — began to heal. But the problem of being too small and impoverished a group to attract others remained to plague us. Visitors dropped in from time to time, but evidently figured we were pretty marginal, as indeed we were. As I look back I am amazed at our dogged perseverance. But we did persevere and gradually… new faces appearing at our services started to reappear. Of great encouragement was a group that began coming in from Davis, faculty folk from the then Aggie Campus — the Griffins, the Brooks, the Emlens, Margaret Eddy and Margaret Kleiber, and one or two less regular others. And a few of the former Church members, deciding that we really meant "business" gradually changed their attitude and "returned to the fold."

Several younger adults joined during this period - Wynne and Rae Rowlands, for instance, and Elsie Groves, all three of whom gave great time and energy to the program. Lloyd Bruno, a professor at the Sacramento Junior College, also comes to mind as one whose presence and leadership gave me much encouragement. But of course it is unfair to single out names. The old-timers, who stuck with the Church, or returned in due course, gave much toward its

resuscitation by their loyalty and devotion — A.L. and May Day; Florence Mudge and her daughter, Anne, the Begeers and the Krafts, Dr. Robina Larsen, Miss Carrie Finney and Miss Charlotte Stubbs (both high school teachers). And the Bray sisters, Julia and Lola, teachers also. Prof. Warren Gayman and his wife, Esther. And of course others, whose names will perhaps flash into mind as I type on — persons who should be recalled for their part: a Mrs. Todd, who started a Social Action group; a Mr. and Mrs. Thomsen — Helen especially a sturdy pillar of the Church; the Tracy Webbs, who were professional photographers… Anne Mudge used to play the reed organ for us most Sunday evenings; and when she couldn't I stumbled through the hymn tunes as best I could. Later, Lilly Angel was "drafted" as our volunteer organist.

By the time of Pearl Harbor, we had assembled what was still a small congregation, but morale was climbing, progress visible if slow. My memory for actual figures is poor, but I think we were usually thirty or more most Sundays.

You ask: "Were there struggles of competing ideologies?" Yes, I suppose so. The more conservative element, small in numbers, thought my social philosophy quite a bit too far to the left; and they grumbled about the activities of our Social Action group (the Unitarian Fellowship for Social Justice). But I guess they liked me personally, and they were certainly eager to avoid another "Starkey" incident. Few in the congregation shared my pacifism, but they lived with it; and I, for my part, was careful (while making my position on the war plain) not to shove my conviction down their throats. I recall one parishioner's view, one of our college profs: "I could never be a conscientious objector myself," he told me, "but I'm kind of glad to have a minister who is." Of course, I viewed my job as one of healing and uniting, especially in the first several years. And my theological position has always been one that emphasized the inclusive and catholic nature of Unitarianism, and I strove then (as I have steadily since) to make sure that the whole theological gamut could feel at home - from the agnostic and humanist across the board to the traditional theistic religious liberal.

Well, let's let it stand at this… I've probably left unmentioned quite a few who shouldn't be. But it's been a long time.

Part Three — TRANSITION INTO THE MODERN SACRAMENTO SOCIETY (1945–1950)

With the departure of the Rev. Arthur Foote in 1945, the small Unitarian Society of Sacramento gave no indication that it was upon the threshold of an unprecedented era of growth and development. The turning point came when a Sacramento resident became part-time minister in November, and minister almost a year later. That person was Theodore Curtis Abell, a native of Connecticut. who had been nurtured in religious orthodoxy and trained for the Methodist ministry from which he departed in the 1920s because many of his developing concepts were then too far ahead of the times. These chapters chronicle the remarkable period of 1945-1950, in which Mr. Abell diligently but confidently gave the Society its modern character.

21 The Postwar Period

Against the background of five years of violent, armed conflict around the world, which came to a dramatic end after atomic bombs were dropped on two Japanese cities in August of 1945, the affairs of the Sacramento Society then seemed minor. Besides, it was a time when people were primarily concerned with readjusting their lives and affairs to peacetime conditions.

Appraising the Society, Spring of 1945

At the request of the departing minister and the Society trustees, Florence Baer[1] as a representative of the American Unitarian Association visited Sacramento in April for appraisal and recommendations for the future course of the church. In a fourteen-page report she outlined her evaluations. She noted that Sacramento was growing at the rate of a thousand persons a month, that its population of 105,000 in 1940 had reached 127,000 just five years later. The number of Society constituents — persons participating in Society activities — was steadily increasing while the number of members was declining, according to the data that she presented:

Year	Members	Pledges	Constituents
1942	54	25	115
1943	42	28	130
1944	33	24	160

Her conclusion was that the Society had no systematic way of attracting members from persons attending services. She stated, "Your weakness has been that you have not always used the most businesslike way to bring about the results you desire."

She commented as to the physical appearance of the church building: "The windows are in bad shape… It is unbelievable that you have allowed one window to have no glass at all but a simple cloth tacked to frames… The glass in the others is badly in need of repair."

She cited a current Sacramento religious census which found that 10,000 persons identifying themselves as Protestants were not members of any church. That was considered to be evidence that a sound and vigorous Unitarian program could be maintained in Sacramento under the leadership of a full time minister.

The usefulness of the report as a guide to the vitalization of the Society seems to have been diluted due to unfortunate circumstances. Florence Baer became seriously ill for several months and unable to pursue that project. Interaction between the Sacramento congregation and the Boston headquarters was broken off, apparently by the pressing need for a large number of Unitarian ministers who had been serving as military chaplains to be relocated into parishes as the armed forces were disbanded as rapidly as possible in October and November.

This loss of communication between Sacramento and Boston resulted in a poor state of Society morale, as revealed in a letter written on 5 October 1945 to the Boston office:

> Mr. Foote's leaving was a heavy blow to the group here, and the apparent indifference of the American Unitarian Association after Miss Baer made her survey was most disheartening to the entire membership… many felt that the time had come to give the whole movement a decent burial and seek other channels for their activities.

The Sacramento Society and the AUA

It may be useful at this point to explain the relationship between the Sacramento Society and the American Unitarian Association (AUA). Unitarian churches use a "congregational" structure, which is defined as "that system of church organization which vests all ecclesiastical power in the assembled brotherhood (members) of each local church." Thus, while being completely autonomous and recognizing no hierarchical control by the AUA, the Society was in the ambivalent situation of having existed at least since 1893 by financial grants off and on from the AUA. Over that

period aid had averaged perhaps $1 a day, but the trustees had apparently become accustomed to thinking of it as a birthright of a permanent nature.

The AUA is a national association of completely autonomous groups, be they named churches, societies, fellowships or whatever, banded together for mutual benefit and funded largely by voluntary contributions from member groups. In return the AUA educates ministers, recruits and guides ministers offered for selection by congregations, develops program resources for local groups; inspires, informs and publishes aids to the development of local programs, and so on. By philosophy it is opposed to proselytism, so there has been little "missionary" effort. Rather, its procedure is to help new and weak local groups to become self-sustaining through direct and temporary financial aid, more so in the past than in the present.

Enter, Rev. Theodore Curtis Abell

At that low point in the fortunes of the Society in 1945, unexpected help was provided through a Sacramento resident who came forth as minister[2] to infuse new life into the discouraged little band. He was Theodore Curtis Abell, a former minister of a Unitarian Society, then employed by the California Department of Social Welfare. In April Florence Baer had recommended Mr. Abell as a possible minister for the Sacramento congregation. At that time he had declined, perhaps because its budget for the 1945-46 fiscal year included only $600 for minister's salary at the rate of $50 per month. The American Unitarian Association had been requested to grant an additional sum of $2,400 for ministerial salary; instead it had granted $900, which at that time was not even reported to the Society because of the breakdown in communications between Sacramento and Boston.


Rev. Theodore Curtis Abell

In late autumn Mr. Abell agreed to take charge of the Sunday services only, on a half-time basis, but not the obligations of Society minister. He was then receiving a yearly salary of

$3,600 as a social worker, and he would not consider further obligation to the Society without adequate compensation. He stated in an October letter to Boston, "I fear that I shall not be worth any more than the local group can pay… I agreed to extend what help I could during my spare time until the services of a full time minister could be secured."

Another Beginning

A congregational meeting called for the regular Sunday night service on November 25, 1945 resulted in the election of Mr. Abell as part-time minister. Within the week he instituted a new regime. Morning services replaced the evening ones. A display advertisement in the next Saturday Sacramento Bee set the tone for the new era:

UNITARIANISM

> Is [it] the religion of reason and the human heart? It stands for deeds, not dogma; for hope and trust and vision, for freedom of thought and progress, not for bondage to the past; for earnest and united effort to build a Heaven on earth. It teaches that truest service to God is service to man.

Services every Sunday morning at 1415 27th Street
10 A.M. - Worship 10:30 A.M. - School
11 :15 A.M. - Fellowship for Social Justice
THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF SACRAMENTO

Under the new format of Sunday services started at ten o'clock with a short general assembly for hymns, prayer or meditation, readings, a short sermon, offertory and benediction. At ten-thirty the adults moved to the front of the auditorium for their "Sunday School" conducted by Mr. Abell while the children went to their classrooms in the kitchen, the fireside social room and assorted nooks and crannies in a building inadequate for their needs. At eleven-fifteen, the Fellowship for Social Justice gathered under the leadership of Everett "Alex" Pesonen to pursue a topic of discussion.

Notes regarding the 2 December 1945 service listed Mr. Abell's Sunday School topic as "The Bible in Light of Modern Knowledge" and Mr. Pesonen's as "A Program for Social Action."

Christmas, 1945

That Christmas was under the still-dark shadow of… World War II, which had left Europe suffering from widespread destruction. Mr. Abell's description of the aftermath of that conflict was published in the *Shopping News* of December 21:

> Much of the world is today experiencing the darkest days of its history. Everywhere there is starvation, disease, cold, degradation, despair. In Czechoslovakia almost a million children are destitute. In Hungary, there is no hope of bread after February 1. In Poland, there is indescribable, unimaginable distress, devastation and anguish. In Berlin, infant mortality reaches fifty percent. In Transylvania, thirty thousand sick children are homeless.

The American Unitarian Association was calling upon its people, nationwide, to join in sending food to Europe by New Year's Day. Sunday, December 23, was designated as food collection day for the Sacramento Society, when the "price of admission" to regular services was a can of food — meat, milk, vegetable or fruit.

The Christmas program was held that evening, beginning with the minister's message which was followed by a party. A feeling of continuity was provided by the reading of a message from the Rev. Arthur Foote, who wrote from his new parish in Minneapolis, Minnesota:

> To the Members and Friends of the First Unitarian Society of Sacramento, California:
>
> You are always in our heart and often in our thoughts, and we shall be with you in spirit as you gather about the board for the Christmas party, December 23rd. May the blessing of Christmas be yours, and may the New Year be one of growth and enrichment in the church we love so dearly. We have followed with eager interest every development since we left, and we share your confidence that under the competent leadership of Theodore Abell, 1946 will bring progress, both in outward sign and, more important, in the inward life of the Society.
>
> — Rebecca and Arthur Foote

22 The Year of 1946

After fifteen years of Depression and war, Society members were making a fresh start. They were finding their part-time minister, Mr. Abell, to be a most methodical and meticulous person. On 1 January 1946 he began the monthly publication of a mimeographed information bulletin named The Sacramento Unitarian, a copy of which he filed with other records and bound into permanent yearly volumes. It was the first time in Society history that comprehensive records had been systematically preserved with the thought that they would come to have permanent value, indicating also that the minister had confidence both in his success with the Society and its progress.

One of his first tasks for the new year was to compile a list of active members of the Society, for by then no one seemed to know who they were. As of 13 January 1946 this was the list:

Mrs. Lilly Angell
Mr. B. W. Begeer
Mrs. Etta Biegle
Miss Julia Bray
Miss Lola Bray
Mr. Lloyd Bruno
Mrs. Ruth Bruno
Mr. John S. Cute
Mrs. June M. Cute
Mr. Artemus L. Day
Mrs. May H. Day
Miss Ann Day
Miss Alice Day
Miss Rose Day
Miss Henrietta Frey
Mrs. Amelia B. Fulton
Mrs. Phyllis Gardiner
Mr. Warren Gayman
Mrs. Esther Gaymen
Mrs. Dorothy Grimley
Mr. Lauren Groves
Mrs. Elsie Groves
Mr. Oscar Kraft
Dr. Robina H. Larsen
Dr. Henry B. McDaniel
Mrs. Stella McDaniel
Mr. Everett Pesonen
Mrs. Eleanor Pesonen
Mrs. Mabel Pfaendler
Mr. Wynne Rowlands
Mrs. Mary Russell
Mr. Elton F. Sleeper

Mr. Will E. Thompson, Jr.	*Junior Members*
Mrs. Carmen Thompson	John Heckes
Mrs. Helen C.Thompson	Barton Pesonen
Mrs. Frank Todd	Rene Thompsen

Earlier, Mr. Abell had circulated a questionnaire by mail to a list of one-hundred and fifty members, former members and friends of the Society, asking for information that he needed for formulating his program of revitalizing the Society in Sacramento. It also requested their previous religious affiliation, if any, and their theological preference.

The returned questionnaires showed that only four had been brought up as Unitarians and one as a Universalist; the majority had come from leading Protestant sects and the Roman Catholic church, with a few from Buddhist and Islamic religions. Their current identities were described as liberal Christian, Unitarian, theist, Ethical Culturist, Humanist, agnostic and atheist, including some having none. They had discovered the Society mainly through friends who had invited them to services.

Working Toward a Full-time Ministry

In the first six months of 1946, increased attendance at the church school and the Sunday morning services, along with the raising of the year's budget of $1,500, indicated an improving morale. By that time there was increasing talk of moving toward the goal of getting a full-time minister. With that in mind, by May the American Unitarian Association had agreed to a multi-year program of financial grants to the Society for helping it become self-supporting. The funds were to be supplied on this schedule of decreasing support over the four-year period ending in 1950:

September 1, 1946 to August 31, 1947	$2,000
September 1, 1947 to August 31, 1948	1,500
September 1, 1947 to August 31, 1948	1,000
September 1, 1947 to August 31, 1948	500

The trustees[1] found that Mr. Abell would accept the full-time ministry at a salary equal to the one he was receiving as a social worker, $3,600 per year. Accordingly, a special meeting of the Society was called for Sunday evening, June 23, for voting on two propositions — whether to hire a full-time minster and whether to offer the job to Theodore Abell.

Of the twenty-two members present (fifteen women, seven men), voting by secret ballot, twenty-one voted for the propositions and one voted against. Thus, for the first time since 1933 the Society was to have a full-time minister as of 1 September 1946.

The customary summer recess was followed by resumption of Sunday services on September 8. More traditional hours of meeting were adopted. Sunday School was at ten o'clock, church at eleven; the Fellowship for Social Justice began to meet on Thursday evenings, and Mr. Abell repeated at that hour his previous Sunday School lesson for those who could not attend his daytime class.

Taking His Message To The Public

With the start of his full-time ministry, Mr. Abell began two-column display advertisements in the Saturday editions of the Union and Bee newspapers. The September 7 ad read:

UNITARIANISM

> A progressive, reasonable religion for the modern age, based on human experience, in harmony with the latest scientific knowledge and dedicated to the ideals of justice, kindness and beauty.

Two weeks later the text of the advertisement read:

UNITARIANISM

> Is founded upon individual freedom of belief. To the Unitarian, religion is an attitude, an inner experience, not a body of doctrines. True religion grows within a man, it sums up his loyalties, his choices, his ideals, his disillusionments, his aspirations. Inevitably, it rules out creeds.

In the remaining months of 1946, the advertisements made clear some of the philosophy that the new minister thought would serve to build a viable Unitarian organization in keeping with the growing city. Certainly they had made it evident that the religious philosophy of the little congregation had been publicly stated by its minister, whatever response might be evoked.

23 Theodore Curtis Abell's Early Life

This biography was developed from information published in *Who's Who*,[1] conversation in 1977 with the former Mrs. Abell (nee Helen Jean Carter) who graciously loaned copies of early publications by Mr. Abell, and from information related by his former parishioners.

His Origins

Theodore Abel was born at Waterbury, Connecticut, on 12 November 1891. His ancestry probably included the Elizabeth Abel who married George Curtis in England and came to New England in 1630, the year that Robert Abel (her putative brother) also arrived in America and founded the family from which Theodore Curtis Abel claimed descent.

Theodore Abell decided sometime around 1930 that the correct spelling of his family name was "Abell," which he adopted through court procedure. Therefore, earlier documents show his name spelled as "Abel;' while later ones carried the spelling of Abell — both pronounced as "able"

His father, Hiram Abel, was a carpenter in an era when the meager earnings of manual workers ensured a life of frugality with little hope for prosperity. The family religion was Methodist — then austere, dogmatic, prophetic, authoritarian and evangelistic in nature.

An Intelligent and Sensitive Youth

He proved to be of high intelligence, sensitive and responsive. He did not follow his father's trade; instead, he became a typist and office worker, winning contests in speed typing.

While he was still living at his boyhood home, he became greatly concerned with what he thought to be his parents' obsession with material values. The boy Theodore, indoctrinated with a religious expectation of an early return of Christ to judge a wicked world, was saddened with the folly of his mother and father striving to accumulate earthly goods whose value would turn to ashes on Judgment Day.

He also experienced religious ecstasy in which he walked and talked with Jesus, as if in a dream. Living in a religious milieu in which he evidently was taught that the devout should regularly converse with Jesus through a prescribed ritual of prayer, it was not unheard of for an impressionable youth under a church revival atmosphere of great emotional intensity to have visions of other worldly nature.

At some point he became convinced that he was appointed to literally "save the world for Jesus." Consequently he began hoarding his earnings in preparation for achieving that ambition, but he let no one then know of his intention. Thus it was not until the autumn of 1912, when he was nearing the age of twenty-one and soon to become an adult, that he came to the family breakfast table dressed for traveling and announced to his astonished family that he was leaving that day for "the West" to begin study for the ministry. He then proceeded to central Ohio where he matriculated at Ohio Wesleyan University, a Methodist school in the town of Delaware, north of Columbus.

His College Years

An anecdote about his higher education indicates that his financial resources were precarious. The story goes that while ice skating he fell and broke his eyeglasses at a time when he had no money for their repair. That day a letter from Connecticut arrived, containing $5 as an unanticipated gift by a benefactor — a sum sufficient for the restoration of the glasses. Someone casually remarked upon the fortunate coincidence of the arrival of that money. Abell reported that it was no coincidence, that he was serene in knowing that his needs would be supplied through divine protection.

In 1913, his second year at Ohio Wesleyan, he began a series of student pastorates in Ohio and Indiana, in combination with graduating with an A.A. degree, cum laude, from Wesleyan in 1916, then attending Garrett Bible Institute in Evanston, Illinois.

He took time from his studies for eight months' service in the Army during World War I and emerged as a second lieutenant in November of 1918, the month the war ended. In 1920 he received a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Garrett Bible Institute and ended his student pastorate days at the farming village of Wheatfield, in northwestern Indiana, not far from Chicago, eight years after entering college. In his last months of student pastorate, he attended Northwestern University at Evanston, Illinois.

24 A Season of Disenchantment

Just as it seemed that the young minister, Theodore Abel, was about to embark upon his career, his connection with the Methodist Church was summarily terminated by expulsion from that body when he was thirty years of age. A decade later he published an account of that event:[1] "the writer, who was born, raised and educated in the Methodist faith, was voted out of the Northwest Indiana Conference in 1921 because he could not honestly agree to "preach and maintain" the Articles of Religion required by that Methodist authority.

The major substance of those Articles that he cited was this:

> There is but one living true God… And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons… the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; the son… took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin; so that… the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one person… Christ… was crucified, dead and buried to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but for the actual sins of men; Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again his body… wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until he return to judge all men at the last day… The Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation; man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually… we are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, by faith, and not by our own works or deservings;… the Roman Catholic doctrines of purgatory, and their practice of making invocations to saints, praying in a language not understood by the people, as well as their teachings concerning sacraments, the mass, the celibacy of priests… are repugnant to the Word of God.

Making a New Start

Nine years earlier, Theodore Abel had left his boyhood home to begin study for the ministry, fired with Christian fervor of the Methodist variety. We cannot trace the steps by which he had come to no longer believe in the dogma required for a Methodist minister, and felt impelled by conscience to confess that fact. It is known that his first doubts arose when he studied biology in Ohio Wesleyan University, and that in later years the hopes he had for "salvation" through religion were transferred to "Science" for the performance of that function.

So it was that Theodore Curtis Abel, unchurched, made a new start through migration to California in 1921 where he took a position as instructor in the Claremont School for Boys in the Los Angeles area. Within the year he had become acquainted with the Unitarian Society of Hollywood and in December became minister to the eleven persons comprising its membership. By 1926 he was giving Sunday evening addresses over the newly developed radio medium, through station KNX, "The Voice of Hollywood" to listeners scattered eastward into the Rocky Mountains and northward into western Canada.

What may be typical of those presentations, and his newly adopted philosophy, is in a pamphlet containing a transcript of his broadcast on 21 March 1926 under the title, "Does Science Afford an Adequate Basis for Religion?" One of the closing paragraphs is in answer to his question:

> Theologists have prompted men to persecute, to burn, to torture, and to murder their fellow beings; they have burned libraries and destroyed learning; they have forever been in opposition to the advancement of science. But Science has brought light and understanding and sympathy and tolerance; Science has built libraries and established institutions of learning and of the arts… The religion of science will build up the great human values in civilization… Science is, as Burbank has said so well, the Savior of the world.

That statement was followed by this explanation of the Hollywood Unitarian group:

> The Unitarian Society of Hollywood is an organization of men and women interested in the propagation of a free, rational religion

> founded on the recognized facts of science and dedicated to the advancement of all that promotes the welfare and happiness of mankind.
>
> It values truth above tradition, sincerity above sacrifice, service above salvation and welcomes into its fellowship all persons of like interests regardless of their race, color or creed.

Growth of the Hollywood Unitarian Society

In October of 1927 Mr. Abel began the publication of a monthly journal for the Society with the title, *The Hollywood Humanist*. The slogan of "Not Anti-God, But Pro-Man" on the front cover identified its ideology. The first issue featured a photograph of the Society's rented meeting place for Sunday services, the rococo Hollywood Playhouse Theater at 1733 North Vine Street.

Mr. Abel's radio broadcasting and pamphleteering had helped the group grow from the eleven members in 1921 to over two hundred and fifty members and Sunday attendance of four hundred by 1928, the last year that he was its minister.

The Hollywood Humanist Society

Without comment, the *Humanist* announced in its May issue of 1929 the formation of the Hollywood Humanist Society with Mr. Abell as founder, director, and minister.[2] The published statement of its philosophy read in part:

> An organization to humanize religion, disseminate science, stimulate thought, promote goodwill. Seeking to banish superstition and fear, to foster good-will for all men regardless of creed, to make known the latest findings and achievements of science, psychology, sociology, etc., to encourage a more intelligent formation of morality.

Its philosophy was then in a formative stage. In January of 1932 a statement of the fundamental principles of "Humanism" was published:[3]

> First, that in human society, man is supreme in importance… Man is more important than theological creeds, or political systems of government, or codes of law, or standards of morality or any

> institution whatsoever… Man is supreme, an end in himself… In the words of Pythagoras, "Man is the measure of all things."
>
> The second principle is that man is a natural product of natural evolution… and he has hopes of evolving to ever higher planes of nobility and intelligence…
>
> The third principle of Humanism… is that man's mission is twofold — to develop human capacities to the highest possible degree and to build the best possible social order here on earth. The Humanist believes that it is possible for men to become greater than any god that has yet been conceived and to build a human society more beautiful than any paradise that has yet been dreamed or imagined.

Into Other Social Service Work

Theodore Abell's Humanist Society had been founded in 1929, some months before the famous stock market crash in October which marked the beginning of the Depression. As conditions became more desperate, year after year, articles in *The Humanist* became increasingly concerned with the devastating human effects of the breakdown of the economic order. The Humanist Society must have been similarly affected, for some time in 1934 Mr. Abell left its leadership to become a field social worker for the California Relief Administration, a governmental agency created to deal with the economic distress.

The formal entry of the United States into World War II in December of 1941 almost immediately ended the Depression. It also created special needs for trained workers to deal with social problems of military personnel suddenly separated from their families for service around the world. In 1942 Mr. Abell joined the field service of the American Red Cross serving as a director of its program for the armed forces in Sitka, Alaska, until 1944 when he returned to Sacramento and the California Department of Social Welfare.

A Unitarian Again

In 1946, when he returned to pulpit ministry in Sacramento after a twelve year absence, he was fifty-five years of age. With his twenty years of ministerial experience as a Methodist student-pastor, then a Unitarian turned Humanist, he probably was at the height of his powers as an

inspirational leader. He also must have realized that the Sacramento pastorate probably would be his final opportunity to achieve what he thought to be his true worth.

25 A Dominating Purpose

Mr. Abell's biography gives an insight as to the source of the intensity of his effort to make a success of his ministry to the First Unitarian Society in the late 1940's. An indication of that was provided by a 1947 Society publication titled the "Ten Commandments of Happiness"[1] which included this recommendation:

> Thou shalt have a dominating, worthwhile purpose in thy life and allow nothing to turn thee from its fulfillment.
>
> —T. C. Abell

As the minister, he clearly had his "dominating worthwhile purpose." It was to develop the Unitarian Society to the realization of its best possibility in the growing city of Sacramento. He was aware most members would be new to the Society, in transition from conventional church experience and seeking reinforcement of self-defined values. They would be mostly those who had departed their earlier religious identifications but who were still receptive to fellowship in an institution tolerant of widely ranging, independent and personal viewpoints.

Measuring Society Progress

Mr. Abell knew what he wanted to accomplish and how much of it [still) was to be done. From the beginning he recorded and published data measuring some aspects of progress — primarily attendance at services, membership and financial support. As far back as the records [went,] they showed that the Society had been overwhelmingly female in membership and attendance at meetings, the usual ratio being two women to one man. Going into the year of 1947 that ratio still held, but Mr. Abell had already quietly set about increasing male membership and attendance. At the end of 1948, male membership was 43%, compared to 36% in 1947. Men were more irregular in Sunday attendance than women. On some days

males were one third of the audience, on other days attendance was almost equal as to men and women, and only on rare occasions did males exceed females, and then only slightly. Even with an increase in male participation, women continued to be the stabilizing influence in the society as they had in the past.

Informing the Public through The Press

The newspaper ads in 1946 had featured statements of Unitarian principles which showed their unique, if not controversial, nature. In the first part of 1947 a new theme appeared in both the *Union* and the *Bee*. Statements from Unitarian men then prominent in public life were quoted. Typical of these was this one in February which appeared with the notice of the regular Sunday meetings:

UNITARIANISM

> is a religion of reason more than of emotion. A scientist believes in order and free and unprejudiced thinking, as do the members of the Unitarian church… The Unitarian, untrammeled by worn-out traditions, can investigate new realms of the spirit and help bring about a better world.
>
> — George R. Minot, Nobel Prize Winner in Medicine

As if to reassure the Sacramento public of the acceptability of Unitarian thought in high places, the weekly advertisements quoted persons such as the governor of Massachusetts, a Supreme Court Justice, architect Frank Lloyd Wright, or a university president. These quotations seemed to have been calculated to foster an aura of masculine propriety and respectability for the local Unitarian establishment.

Another Motivation

An additional and compelling motivation to make a success of his ministry came to Mr. Abell in 1947 at the age of fifty-six, upon his marriage to Miss Jean Carter, a teacher in the Church School. Their Valentine's Day marriage was reported in the February issue of *The Sacramento Unitarian*:

MISS JEAN CARTER BECOMES MRS. THEODORE C. ABELL

On a rostrum decked with two huge banks of white stocks and gladiolas, Miss Jean Carter and our minister, Theodore Curtis Abell, were united in marriage at the church, on February 14, at 12:30 P.M. The marriage service was written by Mr. Abell himself. It is a beautiful expression of the obligations and compensations of marriage. The service was read by Rev. Delos O'Brian, Pacific Coast representative of the American Unitarian Association. He came from San Francisco for the occasion. After the ceremony the bridal couple accompanied Rev. O'Brian to the Bay Area where they spent the weekend.

Members and friends of the church first learned of the wedding plans on Sunday, Feb. 9, through a brief announcement in the program for the service.

Mr. Warren W. Gayman, retiring president of the Society, was Mr. Abell's best man. The bride was attended by Mrs. Hugh C. Seay. Mrs. Lilly Angell played the wedding music.

Abell's Library Opened to Members

In November of 1947 Mr. Abell opened part of his personal library for use by Society members. A partial list of five hundred titles, mainly on science[2], politics, history, religion, philosophy and literature was made available. Since his college days he had been increasingly interested in the value of the printed word. He wanted to share that interest with others; for thirteen years he had been without a group with whom to communicate the flow of information accumulating in his library. Now he had a vehicle for making a wider use of his books — his Sacramento congregation.

26 Progress Under the "Four-Year Plan"

Under the "Four-Year Plan" for rebuilding the Sacramento Society, the American Unitarian Association was supplying substantial financial support, albeit by an annually decreasing sum. The fiscal year 1947–48 was the second one under that arrangement. As the annual subsidy had decreased, the need for income generated within the Society would have grown by at least that amount.

A Report of Progress

The Annual Meeting on 15 January 1948 with eighty-five in attendance was compared with the sixty-five persons present at that event the year before. The prevailing optimism was reflected in Mr. Abell's report that there had been a 73% increase in membership and 100% increase in income, and 50% more contributors. Meeting attendance was up 100%. The composition of audiences showed an increase of male attendance to 48%, which the minister had worked for because he saw it as a way of gaining increased support for the Society through strengthening the base of family unit participation by both husband and wife.

Mr. Abell closed his report to the congregation with this comment:

> Viewpoints of adult men and women have been changed, skepticism has been changed to enthusiastic participation; race prejudice has been erased; ignorance has been dispelled… frustration has been buried and forgotten with the acquisition of a broader view and a deeper understanding of life and of our social problems.

A Constitutional Amendment

The constitution of the Society provided for its revision by a two-thirds vote of the members present at any meeting called for that purpose, and through a specified procedure. At the 1948 annual meeting this constitutional amendment was adopted by an overwhelming vote:

> Article III — Qualification for Membership, Section 6: Any member of this society who, during the period of one calendar year, shall have shown no interest in the work of the Society either by attending its Sunday morning meetings or by financial support, and who has given no reason for such apparent lack of interest that shall be deemed adequate by the Board of Directors, shall have his name removed from the list of active members at the close of the year.

The Background for that Amendment

Mr. Abell had proposed the introduction of the revised Section in December of 1947 when he explained to the Board of Directors,

> The membership list shall always be active and up-to-date, so that we shall not be requisitioned for support of denominational enterprises on the basis of a long list of names, many of which are… of people who have lost interest and do not attend or support.

The Directors approved the proposed amendment after they had revised some of the wording in Mr. Abell's draft.

A month later he had written in his monthly report to the Directors,

> "I have proposed this for the sole purpose of establishing a clear understanding regarding the right to vote at our meetings. The amendment was suggested to me by a similar one which I noted the Los Angeles church has in its bylaws."

In September of 1947 he had initiated the compilation of detailed attendance records suited to the execution of the proposed amendment. Records of persons attending Sunday services were, from then on, being quietly posted by a person able to identify members. Only rarely was there a failure to identify everyone, such as was shown by notations such as, "Miss _____ , friend of Mrs. Brooks," or "Unknown man." Over time, this

effort and the amendment that necessitated it were to cause ill will in the congregation.[1]

Deficit Operations

Even with brighter prospects for progress, the Society was still not self supporting. Expenditure of $5,760.22 by the Society of ninety-two members in 1947 represented a per capita cost of $62.61. The American Unitarian Association support of $2,000 for the fiscal year represented a subsidy of $21.74 per member. Only three or four of the members contributed an amount equal to the per capita expense for maintaining the Society. One of the largest individual contributors gave $200 per year for his family of four, so that pledge represented a below-cost sum. The "big giver" that year was the Women's Alliance which raised $401.66 through card parties, bazaars and dinners. That had been a traditional activity of the women for at least fifty-eight years.[2]

Thrift was the rule; the organist was paid $10 a month for ten months per year, the janitor $15. Volunteers often made repairs to the building which was then over thirty years old and increasingly in need of maintenance after long periods of neglect.

As during the Depression years, monthly dinners continued to be a major resource in the post-war era. Eleanor Pesonen recalled, thirty years later, how she organized a crew of gleaners for gathering free food from nearby farms for such projects. With her family and some friends, she gleaned potatoes, peas, lettuce and parsley to supplement the purchases at wholesale of meatloaf beef, butter and bread. The two Pesonen boys fed the pod-peas into a washing machine roller with its spring tension eased enough to gently squeeze the peas from their hulls. With huge bowls of tossed salad, heaps of boiled potatoes garnished with parsley and plenty of steaming fresh peas to accompany the meat loaf, the cost was minimal and the returns favorable to the treasure of the Women's Alliance and its annual gift to the church budget.

Who Were The Members in 1948?

In 1948 Mr. Abell initiated a Directory of Members[3] in the format which has been continued ever since. In it the names of members were listed alphabetically by family, giving occupation, address and phone number.

By using the membership list of 1918 and a 1918 Sacramento City Directory, a similar list has been assembled so that a comparison might be made between the congregations thirty years apart in time.[4]

The most obvious difference had to do with place of residence. In 1918 a fourth of the member families lived within six blocks of the church, at 1415 27th Street, which was within walking distance. Fifty-seven percent lived within a mile of it, and forty-three percent lived more than a mile distant, but roughly within a triangular area cornered at 7th and H Street, 33rd and McKinley, and 4th Avenue at Freeport Boulevard. By 1948 only eight out of sixty-one families lived within a mile of the meeting place; the remainder were scattered in a larger area running from West Sacramento to Del Paso Heights southeastward to Fulton Avenue, thence down to 43rd and Freeport Boulevard, with members in Davis, Elk Grove, and on three rural mail routes.

By occupation, the two congregations were similar in that the members tended to be employed in occupations requiring technical training. Of the 34 male members, seven were students, six were college professors, three were in social work, three were in government supervisory positions, two were foresters, two were in business, two were retired, and one was in each of these occupations: school administrator, accountant, landscape architect, statistician, doctor, engraver, salesman, rancher, organization secretary.

Of 58 women thirty were homemakers, eleven were teachers, eight were students, two were clerks, two were librarians; one was in each of these occupations: doctor, telephone operator, musician, food administrator, retired and unspecified.

The Questionnaire of 1948

Through the circulation of a questionnaire in the autumn of 1948, Mr. Abell compiled a description of several aspects of his congregation. The main group by age was between thirty and forty, in contrast to his statement that "two years ago 60% of our members were well over 50 years of age." Members were native to twenty-four states and four foreign countries; fourteen were born in California, but only four in Sacramento. A third had resided here less than two years.

About half of those replying had a college degree related to their employment mainly in professional and semiprofessional occupations. Mr. Abell's reaction to that educational data was revealing:

> The very high percentage of our members who are college graduates indicates that our program appeals particularly to the educated. It would be very greatly to our advantage, however, if we could attract a much larger number of those who have not had the advantage of college training… we believe our message should be just as appealing to the common laborer as to the college president.

27 The Church School Gets Its Own Building

Unitarian Society Sunday School Class, 1950

The Society did not have adequate facilities for a church school. The practice was to convene Sunday classes before ten o'clock in various rooms of the church, including the kitchen, then dismiss before the eleven o'clock church service. When Mr. Abell became minister, he stressed religious education as essential to the function of the Society and necessary to its growth. As the teacher of the Sunday adult class, he soon had a

flourishing group pursuing education in religious topics, with attendance often equal to that of the children.

In the early months of 1949, there were forty regularly enrolled young students ranging from nursery to high school ages, with nine adults serving as teachers or staff. The school was the responsibility of a religious education committee chaired by John R. Shannon, with members Robert H. Chapman, Winchester G. Felt and Roger H. Hoag. Mr. Abell was school superintendent, Mrs. Abell was secretary, and Mrs. Rosa Chapman was treasurer of the school, which was financed largely by class collections. The teachers were Miss Joyce Lent. Mesdames Helen Bradfield, Doris Hendershot and Julie Diggs, Mr. Abell and Winchester Felt.

The stated objectives of the School of Religion were as follows:

1. To enlarge the world of the growing child and give wings to his imagination
2. To acquaint the child with the rights of others and to help him adjust to them
3. To develop an appreciation and love of Nature in all her forms and moods
4. To acquaint the child with the thoughts of great men regarding Life and its meaning
5. To challenge individual thought concerning the mysteries of life.
6. To encourage a definite commitment of the child to the better things of life
7. To inculcate a love for the church and a desire to help make it a force for social righteousness

School Growing Pains

The Religious Education Committee report for May of 1949 stated, "The problem of adequate classroom space for our growing school was discussed… and several suggestions made; however, no solution is in sight. and it remains our No.1 Problem at present."

Those concerns were shared with the congregation in the June 12 Sunday service which celebrated Children's Day. The young pupils marched in singing the processional hymn entitled, "With Happy Voices Ringing." The minister gave a brief "story sermon" for the children, after which the younger ones exited. The meeting was designed to acquaint the audience

with school programs and the problems of adequately providing the religious education that an increasing number of members were seeking for their children.

The Property Next Door

An unanticipated series of events began to unfold which, within three months, was to bring a separate school building adjacent to the Society meeting place. A small residence and two-storied barn were for sale at an asking price of $6,000. The Board took an option to purchase it, subject to approval by the congregation. After Society members voted approval on 24 July, the owner agreed to accept their reduced offer of $5,000.

The next matter was the funding. Mr. Abell had figures showing that the American Unitarian Association had given the Society a total of $16,785.83 since 1892 and was obligated to give another $500 by the next August to complete the four-year plan of financial support for reviving the Sacramento Society. There seemed to be general opinion that nothing more could be asked of the national organization.

Nevertheless, though it is not now clear as to how it came about, records show that the American Unitarian Association officials agreed to loan $4,500 to the Sacramento Society towards the purchase of the property for the school, to be secured by an interest-free installment note for repayment at $450 a year. The offer was accepted and the note was signed by the Society president, Allen Ramsey, on 1 August 1949, and the Society raised $500 to complete the purchase sum.

Thus it was that on 2 October 1949, the Society has its first religious education building.[1]

The Julia Bray Memorial Fund

Just a month later, the Religious Education program would receive news of support from an unexpected source. Julia Bray had been a member since 1913 and was noted for her unfailing support in many capacities during the long period when the small Society struggled to survive. She was particularly active in support of the Sunday School and the Women's Alliance, and taught in Sacramento public schools from 1914 to 1945.

Julia Bray Lola Bray

The Julia Bray Memorial Fund for religious education in the Society was created on 1 November 1949, following her death on 26 October, and continues to function into the present time. The November issue of *The Sacramento Unitarian* then announced:

The Board of Directors at their meeting on Nov. 1st voted that a Julia Bray Memorial Fund be established by popular subscription for the promotion of Religious Education in this church particularly with a view toward expanding and more adequately equipping the school's physical plant. It is thought that perhaps we can raise enough to remodel the barn to afford two beautiful rooms for our school and that in later years when a new church building is acquired we can plan a Julia Bray Memorial Room.[2]

The concept of the Memorial Fund was not only to honor Julia Bray as an exemplar but also to provide a means of consolidating memorial gifts, bequests and donations into more effective support of religious education. Consequently, the Bray Fund continues to provide a vehicle for expressing individual interest in the Religious Education program of the Society.

The fund reached $639.15 in July of 1950, providing the materials for the addition to the school "cottage" which was being enlarged by volunteer workers. The story of that project is best told by a report which appeared in the October issue of *The Christian Register*, the national Unitarian publication.

SACRAMENTO — THE OUTSTANDING UNITARIAN "REVIVAL" ON THE PACIFIC COAST

One Sunday morning in Sacramento, a neighbor, watching a harassed young Sunday School teacher trying to herd four or five scattered pupils indoors, turned to his wife and chortled, "Sometimes I think the Unitarians

are as bad as the old lady who lived in a shoe." His humor was more pointed than he suspected.

That was in the spring of 1949, when Sunday School attendance had swelled so suddenly, and so overwhelmingly, that the congregation, in fact, didn't know what to do. Because there was far too little space left in the church building, the house next door had been bought. But already there were more than 60 in the bulging classes. And there was little prospect of accumulating the money to buy more real estate.

Early that fall a troubled church Board met. The members looked at each other and looked away. Dr. John Shannon, associate professor of education at Sacramento State College and chairman of the church Education Committee, had asked the fatal question, "What are we supposed to do now?"

Somebody — probably Allan Ramsey, who was then president — asked hopelessly how much it would cost to tear down the old barn that [had] been acquired in the deal for the house next door and then construct an annex. But they all knew the answer. It would cost no less than $7 a square foot. And they all knew, too, that there was $100 in the Julia Bray Memorial Fund, from which the Sunday School money had to come.

"We are going to need three additional class rooms" said Dr. Shannon, "and as I figure it, a contractor would want about $4,200 to put them up."

There was a gloomy silence. Then Theodore Curtis Abell, the minister, cleared his throat. "Is there any possibility" he asked in a small, still voice, "that we might be able to put it up ourselves?"

And so it happened that a little later some of the members — enthusiastic amateur craftsmen all — ripped down the old barn board by board. The lumber was saved because much of it could be used again. In the spring came the long process of cleaning and sorting the wood, or ripping out nails and doing all the little, important tasks of getting ready to build. And finally, on 18 June, 1950, after Sunday morning services, the whole congregation trooped out for a ground breaking ceremony.[3]

Through the whole summer there were the sounds of hammering and sawing evenings and on Saturdays and Sundays — whenever, in fact, the

heat of California's Central Valley was not too enervating and spare moments could be gleaned.

It was a striking effort at cooperative enterprise. The plans were drawn by Don Peterson, an architect who is also a member of the church. Wayne A. Perkins, a hydraulic engineer and head of the Building Committee, worked assiduously at directing the operation "for other people's children" he once noted, since he had none of his own at Sunday School age. Avery E. Hovey, President of the congregation, often came out of an evening.

Mr. Abell, pardonably proud, recently looked at the annex and said, "Here you see the spirit of this church. We have come forward from small beginnings, and we are growing because little things — like pulling nails — are not too little for us, and big things — this job, for instance — are not too big."

There was evidence to support him. On December 31, 1945, there were 37 members in Sacramento's First Unitarian Society. When services were discontinued for the summer this year, the roster showed an impressive 192. The attendance on Sunday mornings has grown from approximately 20 to an average, from January 1 to June 30, 1950, of 102; Sunday School attendance from less than 20 to an average of 79, including 42 children. The staff, in the meantime, has more than doubled.

And the church, for all its financial acrobatics to get the annex built, has become bigger business. The current expense budget has increased from about $1,350 to $7,000, and the denominational benevolences from a meager $70 to something more than $500.

For much of this Mr. Abell has been directly responsible. Once a lay member (though an ordained minister for many years,) he ascended the Sacramento pulpit in the dim, unhopeful days when there were only 30 to 35 to hear him. For nearly five years he has built slowly, painstakingly, tirelessly.

Once he said, "I never worked so hard at anything in my life." But he added, "I never did anything I felt was more worthwhile doing, either."

The growth is constant. Even in the summer, with services suspended, a men's club with more than 20 members was formed. There are, besides, a branch of the Women's Alliance, Channing Club and a Starr King Club.

With all this behind it. the Sacramento group — a little puffed, it may be, with local pride - is looking eagerly ahead. It prepared confidently for a much larger school. Dr. Henry R. Hansen, Assistant Professor of Education at Sacramento State College, agreed to become superintendent. A regular teacher training course, directed by Dr. Shannon and staffed with Dr. Hansen, Dr. James M. Bradfield, another Assistant Professor of Education at State College, and Dr. Frank F. Tallman, Director of Mental Hygiene for the state of California, is in process of arrangement.

And so, more and more frequently in Sacramento's Unitarian Church you hear prophetic voices, and their words are curiously alike: "I wouldn't be at all surprised if pretty soon we found ourselves needing a bigger church." — William Mayer[4]

Groundbreaking, Sunday School Cottage Annex, June 18, 1950

Sunday School Class, Jean Whittlesey, Instructor, 1950

Sunday School Class, Awanna Kalal, Instructor, 1950

Sunday School Class, Beulah Finch, Instructor, 1950

Teen Group with Alex Pesonen, 1950

(Left to right): Nancy Reeve, (not identified), Diane MacLennan, Gail Harris, Dan MacLennan, Dixie Harvey, and Alex Pesonen

Part Four —

THE HOUSE OF A THOUSAND WINDOWS, BUILDING THE NEW CHURCH ON SIERRA BOULEVARD

Model for New Church, Auditorium and School on Sierra Boulevard
John Harvey Carter, Architect, 1958

28 Easter 1951

The following Spring brought vivid demonstrations of the need for more space. Easter came early that year — March 25 — when cherry petals were falling. That Sunday in the little rustic building on 27th Street, the younger children reflected the spirit of the season as they marched in the service to receive a gift of a potted flowering plant.

The 200-member Society was then providing church school for 90 enrolled children of grade school and junior high age. The classrooms across the alley had once been a residence; the interest-free mortgage payments of $450 a year to the American Unitarian Association in Boston were being met on time, and a recent appeal for $50 more in donations resulted in the completion of the school facility.

That Easter the Sunday service was attended by 200 adults, the largest audience in the 83-year history of the Society. A portion of the minister's presentation on that occasion has been preserved.[1] This condensed version gives the essence of his meditational reading for the service:

Immortalility

> "Immortality," said Robert G. Ingersoll, "is a word that Hope through all the ages has been whispering to Love." But he added, "The more we love, the more we fear!"
>
> Mark Twain wrote in his Notebook, "One of the proofs of immortality of the soul is that myriads have believed in it. They also believed that the world was flat."
>
> When we ask for the evidence on which men believed in immortality, we begin to doubt, for the evidence is lacking. Obviously, men have believed, not because of evidence, but

> because of their desire to live again with departed ones, or because of intense suffering in this life and the hope for a more comfortable life thereafter; or because of injustice experienced here and the feeling that the universe may grant justice by a change of scene later…
>
> It seems then that the longing for immortality has been due very largely to our inability to appreciate the life we now have, our inability to see the beauties of character and of life that lie all about us; our craving to enjoy the best without having to struggle to achieve it.
>
> Perhaps if we'd stop dreaming of what we'd like to have, and begin to appreciate what we do have ... perhaps if we'd begin to practice the kind of living that we dream of living beyond the grave, we'd suddenly become aware that we are now in heaven.

Mr. Abell's forthright address to the large Easter audience was not to go unchallenged. In the April issue of the *Sacramento Unitarian*[2] the minister reported, "The following letter… from one of our most valued members… (is) of interest to publish hoping that it may stimulate others to contribute their thoughts from time to time."

In the interest of readability and brevity, the subject of the letter and Mr. Abell's reply are combined in dialogue form.

> *Member*: I was disturbed by your talk today on the "Dream of Immortality"… Could it be… that the case must be stated, "either we die and that is the end of us" – or – "we are resurrected, or our soul continues on?"… I know of no other alternatives… but that doesn't mean there are no others.
>
> *Minister*: It would be quite absurd for anyone to say dogmatically that immortality of the individual consciousness is impossible, but that in any case, the best preparation for any future life is living a good life here.
>
> *Member*: I agree that the dream of immortality has probably done immense harm and caused suffering… To kill a man to save his soul was a mistaken inference…

Minister: The church leaders did not want to lose their prestige, privileges and power, but the belief in the soul and the necessity of saving it gave those leaders the alibi they needed… without this belief and the thought that the church held the keys to the heaven beyond, men could never have been held in mental slavery for so long.

Member: The tone seemed to me to be somewhat on the dogmatic side… you may have given us the last word, but not the final one.

Minister: I intended to emphasize in this discussion that the real values for us lie in this life — not in idle speculations about the "beyond" about which we have no evidence… There is a whale of a lot more satisfaction in attempting to make heaven here, than in thinking about heaven thereafter… We do not need hope of heaven or the fear of hell to live a good and happy life here.

Member: I was disturbed — not so much for myself, because I know the context of your talks, but visitors don't. I didn't think that the "old standbys" would have objected today with so many visitors present if you had been a little bit more elementary.

Minister: The minister cannot believe that our members would want him to "soft-pedal" his talks in any way just because visitors are present. Rather, they are too enthusiastic about the value of a church whose minister is expected at all times to preach what he honestly believes and not what he thinks people want to hear.

29 A Labor of Love

Mr. Abell constantly maintained a flow of printed information to his congregation. When he came to the Sacramento Society he began a mimeographed monthly bulletin, *Sacramento Unitarian*, with Vol. 1, Number 1, dated January 1946. The typical format was a front page message of inspiration, meditation or poetry, followed by reports, announcements, news and exhortations. In the early days of his ministry he wrote, edited and typed the mimeograph stencils on his own typewriter.

Since his first job in the office of a brass manufacturer in Waterbury, Connecticut, he had been proud of his skill with the typewriter. That talent was useful in his early ministry in Sacramento, when the Society could not afford to provide him adequate secretarial service. So his publications were a labor of love; carefully preserved copies were permanently bound and stored with the Society. He then expressed the opinion that in the future, the Society would achieve such importance that it would have its history written.

The October 1951 issue contained articles reflecting the response of some of the Unitarian ministers of California to political and ethical ideas of the times. The front cover was given to this statement

A STATEMENT OF FAITH

> At this time of world upheaval when men's loyalties are called into question, we the members of the Central Pacific Branch of the Unitarian Ministers' Association feel our duty before God and man to re-affirm the faith and responsibility which we hold in common:
>
> We hold that mankind is one; that people are more important than property, institutions, or ideologies; that the human dignity of each person is our trust; that all men are created equal in rights and, since

wisdom, truth and virtue rest in no individual or group, freedom to disagree must be protected and encouraged; that good ends should not be sought through bad means; that it is better to educate and persuade than to coerce and punish; that loyalty and respect cannot be compelled but must be earned; that love and cooperation are the creative processes by which the human spirit grows and in which life finds fulfillment; we therefore dedicate ourselves to the common defense and promotion of these principles.

(Signed)
F. Danford Lion, President
Theodore C. Abell, Secretary-Treasurer
(and eleven members)

The Occasion for the Statement

On the following page was a copy of a statement given by Rev. Stephen H. Fritchman, minister of the First Unitarian Church of Los Angeles, to the Committee of UnAmerican Activities[1] at a hearing in the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel, on 12 September 1951.

FRITCHMAN VS. UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES [COMMITTEE]

I am profoundly shocked at this first example to my knowledge of the Committee's calling before it of a parish minister… As a churchman and a citizen I am appalled and indignant at this invasion of my duties and privileges as a minister of religion…

Representative Jackson said on Monday at this hearing that the purpose of these hearings was to "determine the extent of infiltration of Communism into the film industry." This being the case, I can see no reason whatsoever for my being subpoenaed by the Committee. I have no knowledge whatsoever of the matter. My opinions are an open record, being expressed in the pulpit and on the air with predictable regularity… I happen to be a birthright Quaker now serving the Unitarian denomination which has officially taken a position of disapproval of the work of this Committee. Many of my fellow ministers in the Unitarian churches… have frequently protested the work of this Committee. Now, with this subpoena you actually seek to invade the realm of religion. The churches will not, I

predict, accept such an effort to achieve among the clergy a deadly uniformity through defining what are dangerous thoughts…

We in the church have no tradition of docile conformity to other men's statements of loyalty and sound patriotism. If this Committee should succeed in subpoenaing the ministers of this country and intimidating them, both American democracy and unfettered religion, as we have known them for 165 years, will vanish. I wish to have no part in such a disaster, and I shall do all I possibly can to prevent it from taking place.

30 The Way We Were 1951

While the atmosphere of fear created by the House UnAmerican Committee hearings was all too real, California was also experiencing a period of rapid growth and optimism. The population was in the process of doubling each decade in Sacramento. Yet, people were still riding passenger trains drawn by steam-driven locomotives. There were no freeways, so interstate traffic moved on downtown streets — log trucks, gasoline tankers, every kind of vehicle — which created traffic jams at busy hours. Airline service in propeller-driven planes operated out of the Municipal Airport (now Executive Airport) on Freeport Boulevard, which then was the southern edge of town.

Homes were cooled in the summer, if at all, with electric fans or evaporative water coolers because practically none had refrigerated air conditioning. Milk trucks delivered dairy products door-to-door. Major bakeries delivered bread daily. The postman delivered twice a day and the first "zip codes" were two-digit numbers ranging from 14 to 19.

The National Ambience

In the first few years after the end of World War II, it was widely assumed that worldwide peace was permanent. By September 1949, however, the Soviet Union exploded its first atomic bomb. In January 1950, President Truman authorized the Atomic Energy Commission to produce the even more terrible hydrogen bomb. And by June, American troops were fighting the Korean War and a 35-man military "advisory team" was sent to the aid of French forces fighting in Vietnam, a place-name few Americans then recognized.

Of the 15 million veterans of the United States armed forces in World War II, many went to college with their G.I. Bill educational benefits. Thus the percentage of Americans having college education reached new highs. That affected Sacramento Unitarian Society because people who attended college tended to verbalize their opinions and to be active socially.

Sunday Morning at 1415 27th Street

Unitarian Society of Sacramento, 1415 27th Street

Sunday morning services were in the small church on 27th Street as they had been, off and on, since 1915. Those attending "dressed up" for the occasion. Women's skirts were within ten inches of the floor, a few wore hats, hair was well groomed and faces adorned with makeup. Children wore their best clothes, shoes were shined, hair combed neatly, faces freshly scrubbed. Males had short hair, some still of the "butch" or "flattop" styles of the war days. Double-breasted suits were still in style; starched and ironed white cotton shirts were standard because the no-iron, drip-dry shirt was then an expensive novelty.

The church service had an unvarying format of the Protestant variety in which prayer and scripture reading was replaced by such ceremonial items as opening thought, reading, meditation and closing thought. Traditional music was used, but often the original words of hymns were replaced with contemporary sentiments. The service was ended as the minister declared, "You may be dismissed".

The Bookstore with Hans Poppe Attending

27th Street Coffee Hour

Following the service, the bookstore opened with Hans Poppe attending it and the coffee hour was almost as formal as a "tea". Ladies dressed in their best clothes and, wearing hats, presided over the lace-clothed serving table displaying china and silver service.

The gathering dispersed gradually for almost an hour; then the kitchen crew washed dishes until the last chores were done about 2:00 o'clock with the hanging of the tea towels to dry.

The church school was a mixture of traditional and innovative procedures. In 1951 a ten-page prospectus was issued informing parents about their Unitarian School of Religion.[1]

On page three it stated:

> We do not teach theology in our school. We regard religion as a way of Living… Bring your children every Sunday and be on time.
>
> We do NOT try to:
>
> 1. Stamp our minds on the young;
> 2. Make them see with our eyes;
> 3. Give a definite number of facts;
> 4. Burden the memory;
> 5. Bind to particular beliefs;
> 6. Impose religion in the form of beliefs.

One traditional Sunday school custom occasionally was revealed in records of that period — class collections were taken from children and the sums reported.

Members were encouraged to subscribe to the denominational newspaper published by the American Unitarian Association. Still carrying the title, *The Christian Register,* it identified itself as "The oldest religious journal of continuous publication in America".

The Film Club in 1951-52 presented 11 Sunday night programs for the 112 holders of season ticket books. The Russian film, *Spring: The Plow That Broke the Plains, Pygmalion, Rain,* and *Brief Encounter* were typical of the film fare that was so popular in that era. The inception of transcontinental black-and-white television networks in September of 1951, the month of

the first film-club show of the season, marked the arrival of powerful competition for future Sunday night audiences.

Bible study for adults was a particular interest of the minister.

In 1951 regular Wednesday night meetings once a month were given to Bible study, the attendance averaging 12 people. Mr. Abell's analytical and scholarly presentation of one book per meeting reflected his early conventional theological background as a Methodist minister. His choice of Wednesday night, the traditional prayer meeting night, for Bible study may have been reminiscent of his youthful days, but his historical objectivity toward the subjects[2] was in the Unitarian mode.

A Participative Society

Active participation by lay members became the salient characteristic of the Society. On Sunday mornings an average of 125 people assembled during the ten months of the church year of September through June; of those, 60% were members. On the sidelines and behind the scenes, the Sunday service required at least a dozen lay workers, from secretary to janitor, ushers, pianist, soloist and other musical personnel, coffee-hour hostesses, kitchen help and bookstore manager. Across the alley in the church school building were six age-graded classes whose total enrollment of 90 resulted in an average attendance of 60 children and several infants

for childcare, and an adult staff of nine. Among those in 1951 were Helen and James Bradfield, Patricia Reitter and Beulah Finch.

27th Street Church Auditorium, 1953

The operation of the 200-member Society involved seven directors, a secretary and treasurer, a Church Council of 16, nine committees having a total of 55 members, a church school staff of 11, and 20 officers of organizations, a total of over 100 positions functioning in the operation of the Society. Those 100 people served to deliver one hour of social value each week to 185 adults and children. The high rate of member participation in the work of the organization became a well-established characteristic which continues today.

Other Programs

The Women's Alliance met by day each month. It consisted of 24 members and was the continuation of the organization which in the year 1912 had had as many members.[3] A separate Evening Alliance meeting was for its 16 members; among them that year were Ruth Barr, Helen Bradfield, Julie Diggs, Edna Rae, Patricia Reitter and Mary Russell.

The Laymen's League average attendance at monthly meetings was a dozen men. Its purpose was support of the Society and was busy fund raising in 1951 for the new Church School annex building then awaiting completion.

The Sacramento Fellowship of Social Justice[4] had as its purpose:

> To apply Unitarian principles of freedom, reason and tolerance in our social life and to extend the influence of the Unitarian Society in the community… in united action against social injustice and in realization of religious ideals in present day society.[5]

Everett "Alex" Pesonen was its president in 1951 when this statement of purpose was made. The Fellowship listed 23 members that year, but some of its special meetings attracted many more people than did its regular meetings on Sunday mornings at 10:00.

Green Thumb Sunday with Alex Pesonen

31 The Idea: A New Church Building

The idea of a new building for the rapidly growing Society is traceable to May 31, 1953. In the weekly supplement to the monthly *Sacramento Unitarian*[1] this appeared:

AN ALL-MEMBER RALLY to raise funds to WIPE OUT THE MORTGAGE
and start a NEW CHURCH FUND
will be held at the church Friday night, June 5
••• Program, Entertainment, Games, Refreshments •••

> This will be an historic event in the life of our Society — one at which you will want your name to appear on the records for posterity. Don't miss the Big Rally, June 5th. A donation of 75 cents will be expected from all who attend.

As a result, a New Building Fund of $110 was established at the Fort Sutter Federal Savings and Loan Association.[2] In October the new chairman of the Building Site Committee was Marjorie Burgess.[3] Prospecting for suitable sites began primarily in the suburbs where land was priced at about $5,000 to $46,000 an acre, compared to as much as $100,000 in the Redevelopment Area of downtown Sacramento.

Earlier that year Mr. Abell had reported to the Directors that the Christian Church a block away on the corner of 27th and N Streets was for sale at $67,500. It had a seating capacity of 400 compared to the 200 at the Unitarian building and a small parking lot. Evidently there was no interest in buying an old building of conventional architecture in a location which was predicted to become a transition area from residential to commercial within 20 years.

In October, when the Society celebrated the 85th anniversary of its founding, Mr. Abell made some blunt and pointed statements to his congregation about the dismal record of financial support by the congregation throughout those years in Sacramento.[4] It had never had a building of its own until 1915 when an $8,000 structure was erected, of which $6,000 was given by the American Unitarian Association (AUA). It had never had church school classrooms until 1949 when a $4,500 interest-free loan from the AUA made possible the conversion of a next-door residence into school facilities. Nor had it in its history paid the full salary of its minister until 1951, previously having depended on the AUA all those years for part of the minister's salary.

A *Viewpoint of the Minister*

It was becoming evident that Mr. Abell had decided that the Sacramento Society had to develop an attitude that having a church meant paying for adequate facilities as a part of its existence, and that would be a change from the past. In May of 1953, Mr. Abell had written in a letter[5] giving some of his attitudes which were a distinct departure from those he held earlier in his ministry, showing that he, too, changed with time:

> I've come to distrust labels of any kind and when people ask me what I am, I'm inclined to answer: "I'm just a human being and I hope a good one."
>
> Although I've had a large part in the extension of Humanism on the West Coast, and am still known throughout this region as a Humanist, and never have any inclination to deny that term, I'm frank to admit that I'm more interested in building an organization where men and women of all faiths and of no faith can come together on equal terms and with equal rights and respect, and discuss all questions with perfect candor and tolerance…
>
> It is one of my real satisfactions that in this Society, we have people of various theological persuasions, ranging from "heathens," naturalists, humanists, etc., to frank theists — yet none of us bother with labels and we all work together for common ends.

This statement indicated that he was looking for a broader community base for the Society than that in the past, one which could result in visible physical achievement of buildings and grounds in keeping with the grandeur of its minister's secret visions for the future.

32 A Summer's Interlude

The summer of 1954 was marked by the customary termination of Sunday services at the end of June and their resumption on the first Sunday after Labor Day. In those weeks the minister might have confidently relaxed in light of his extraordinary success with the constantly enlarging congregation and his having started the first steps of a building program for constructing adequate meeting facilities for the future.

Records reveal, instead, that Mr. Abell was experiencing some emotional turmoil as the season's last service was held on 27 June 1954. His anxiety was revealed when a special meeting of the Board of Directors was called on 2 July, to consider a request from a group of resigning members for approval of the formation of a separate Unitarian Fellowship.[1]

> To: The First Unitarian Society
> July 2,1954
> Rev. Theodore C. Abell
> The Board of Directors
>
> The persons whose names are listed below wish to form a Unitarian Fellowship to be located in the suburban area around and near the Town and Country-Arden Park districts… the main reason for desiring… this fellowship is that the persons concerned have a community of interest that is not being met by the present Sacramento Church…
>
> [These] persons would like to have the approval of the First Unitarian Society of Sacramento for the establishment of the Fellowship… We sincerely hope that this action is not construed as a criticism of those who feel differently. We speak only for ourselves… and wish nothing but the best of everything to the First Church. We earnestly request not only the approval, but the cooperation of the Society…

The names of the 20 supplicants were given[2] and one of them, Benjamin Baer, read the letter at the Board Meeting. In a thorough discussion of several aspects of the proposal, the minister pointed out that a fourth of the Society members lived in that area and should they all withdraw, a fourth of the church's financial support would be lost. Several of the Directors recognized that the central reason for the request was personality clashes with the minister. In the end, this resolution was approved by unanimous vote.

> Resolved: that we approve, with some sadness, the petition… to establish a fellowship. However, we recognize their right to take this step and wish them god-speed. We will cooperate with them… in their securing recognition by the A.U.A.

The President of the Board recommended that the letter of request be published in the Society newsletter together with the related Board resolutions, and that a liaison person be appointed to maintain close contact with the group.[3] Mr. Avery Hovey was appointed in November as liaison person[4] in response to a request of the Fellowship.

The structure of the Fellowship resembled that of a voluntary extended family of parents with mutual interests who wanted their children to be integrated closely into the group. Each family had from two to five children in them. Meetings were held in homes as well as in some public facilities, and group activities such as camping, hiking and nature exploration were favored. At one time there was a move to purchase property some distance away in the foothills for a recreation activity site.

The Letter of July 17

In July the Directors were aware that Mr. Abell had become discouraged to the point that he was contemplating resigning. Consequently, they sent him a three-page, single-spaced typewritten letter which they signed individually in reassurance of his worth to the Society.[5] The letter began:

> You have become increasingly disturbed in recent months by the fact that attendance at the Sunday Services has not kept pace with the increase in church membership. No doubt the desire… of some twenty members to establish their own Fellowship will accentuate your concern.

The letter went on to say that a majority of members honestly felt that it was almost irreligious to attend church every Sunday, that attendance once or twice a month would be normal in this beloved community; that if a church grew very fast, there would be those who lost interest as fast as they gained it; that many members were active in several worthwhile projects and had to parcel time and energy between organizations; that some members joined only to have their children in a liberal Sunday School, not because of interest in Sunday services; regular attendance was simply not one of the satisfactions they enjoyed, preferring instead participation in the many rich activities of Society organizations.

> Pause, dear Ted, and reflect a moment upon what would probably happen if you decide to seek a pulpit elsewhere, after you have spent eight years of very hard labor in building up this Society from 40 members to over 400… Such a change would not prevent some persons from gaining – and losing – interest rapidly; nor could it possibly squeeze out more time than now exists for those many of us who have a variety of interests to demand our time, energy and means.
>
> Those who now feel that they gain nothing worthwhile from the lectures have already decided to establish their own Fellowship… Many in this group honestly prefer lay leadership and no minister would lure them for long…
>
> To sum up: nothing succeeds like success, and your success in building up this Society has been phenomenal. If you should leave prematurely, there would be a terrific loss… without any compensating gain. Therefore, may we suggest that you relax, quietly proceed… and above all else, never forget that neither you nor any other mortal can please all of the people all of the time.
>
> (Signed)
> Cordially and sincerely,
>
> | | | |
> |---|---|---|
> | Perry Sundquist | May H. O'Neill | Todd Nies |
> | Jim Bradfield | Hans W. Poppe | Harriet J. Smith |
> | A.E. Hovey | Margaret M. Howard | |

33 Gathering Momentum

A growing sentiment for building a modern facility for the Society was formalized at the annual meeting on January 21, 1954, when it was voted[1] "that the entire question of the purchase of a church site be referred to the Board for action and that a report be made back to the membership not less than 90 days from tonight."

Accordingly, a special meeting of the Congregation on April 19 resulted in instruction to the Board of Directors to appoint a Church Building Committee.[2] Under the chairmanship of George Reitter, that committee began interaction through use of a regular meeting of the Sunday Night Forum on May 16 to outline its fact-finding objectives.[3]

Ed Hillier and George Reitter

At that time the Society consisted of 400 members whose yearly income median was $5,500. The property was valued at between $30,000 and $40,000 on two lots: the 80′ x 120′ church lot and the 40′ x 80′ school building lot south across the alley. The property then could have been brought up to building code requirements for perhaps $65,000, but it still would not be adequate for the growing congregation. The school building was badly overcrowded, since the typical family in the Society had several children and the post-war increased birth rate had yet to show an appreciable decline. There was the question of whether future building plans should be for one central facility, which might or might not be allied

with outlying branches or fellowships, or limited in size upon the idea that there would be several independent congregations established as the city expanded into suburban areas. An immediate consideration was that since ownership of land was the first essential, how much land [would] be required, where would it be located, and how much would it cost?

A Helping Hand from Boston

A few weeks later, this information was received by the minister, from the American Unitarian Association, Boston, dated 8 June 1954:[4]

> We called a meeting of the Building Loan Fund Committee a few days ago and discussed a possible loan of $20,000 to the Sacramento church, $10,000 interest free and $10,000 at 4%. If as your plans unfold you find that you can raise enough money, which together with this $20,000 would be adequate to complete the job, so that the Association's money would be the last to go in, they will be happy to cooperate and work out with you and your committee the details of a repayment program.

On June 16 the Sacramento planning group recommended that two acres were needed for a new building[5] including parking space required by law. A two-acre lot suiting the purpose was available at 61st and Folsom Boulevard — 2.4 miles southeast — for $100,000. Most of the families lived in mail zones 14, 15, 16, 18 and 19 where available land was very expensive. However, the majority drove their cars to meetings — of the 154 families only eight rode the bus and twelve walked. It began to look as though the search for building sites would have to be in the suburbs where land was about $10,000 an acre. With the price of gasoline then 29 cents a gallon, the expense of driving to church would not be an overwhelming factor, provided that one-way travel time was half an hour or less.

The Starters Club

On September 15, 1954, the chairman of the Building Planning Committee, George Reitter, on his way to the monthly meeting of the Board of Directors, was thinking about what he was going to report as to the committee's work. For a long time there had been a lot of talk about building a new facility but little had actually come of it. Then he had an inspiration — somehow, a beginning had to be made; why not form a Starter's Club? Make a donation of $10 to the building fund as the

requirement for membership. That might at least be enough money to buy an option on some land, perhaps even make enough for a down payment!

So that evening he proposed to the Board the idea of a Starter's Club.[6] It was approved by the Directors, who submitted it for approval of the membership in a special meeting called for October 27 to consider building plan proposals. The Starter's Club idea was approved by vote of the congregation.

The Club proved to be the impetus for the eventual completion of the new plant on Sierra Boulevard. In time there were nearly 90 members, and almost $900 had been raised by the end of 1955[7] when the Club was terminated upon having achieved its purpose.

34 The Proposed North Sacramento Site

At the annual congregational meeting on 14 January 1955, John Carter submitted a resolution, which was approved,[1] providing for the "Expansion Committee (to) be empowered to place an option on a suitable property, and that any member of (the) Society can join the Committee at his or her own initiative."

By April the list of 32 available sites had been narrowed down to four.[2] In June an option was taken on a proposed site[3] in North Sacramento, now shown on maps as being at the junction of Royal Oaks Drive, Blackwood Street, and Southgate Road. The option was for purchase of a two-acre lot for $17,600 within the period ending in December 1955.

Getting Underway

Upon the resumption of services after the summer hiatus, a special issue on "Church Expansion" was published in September as part of the regular monthly *Sacramento Unitarian*[4] which was mailed to members. It described the site as being in a residential neighborhood, on elevated ground with many native oaks and gave the history of its very thorough evaluation and selection by several persons in the congregation who had professional experience useful for making such decisions.

On the first page was "A Voice of Dissent" by Erion Perkins, who opposed the idea of a new building. Not only had his parents been long-term members, he had done more to preserve the deteriorating meeting house than everybody else; he had patched, repaired, painted and crawled endlessly beneath the floors pursuing termites munching away on sagging foundation timbers. In contrast, 18 members wrote their detailed enthusiasm for the proposed new site.

The decision to purchase land and construct a new building was made on September 16, 1955.[5] A special membership meeting attended by 80 persons authorized the purchase of the North Sacramento property and directed the Board to name a committee for the raising of funds, execution and completion of a building project.

The Directors on 21 September authorized a publication on the building program.[6] Erwin Cooper wrote the copy for the four-page pamphlet entitled *Sacramento Unitarians Build a Church — An Action Blueprint for the Convinced and the Skeptical.* It contained a photograph of church school children crowded together. It was cropped at the top corners to represent the roof of a building crammed full of kids.[7] It outlined the need for raising $50,000 by December 1 for purchase of the site and prompt erection of the first building. This was one statement in it:

> The building of a church demonstrates dramatically that Unitarians are sending down roots into the firm soil of conviction. They have found a permanent spiritual home for themselves and their children — permanent enough to warrant a major investment.

When the ambitious plan for an entirely new facility was first discussed, the employment of a professional fundraising organization was considered. A contract with skilled and experienced people practically ensured success but at a cost — a flat guarantee fee and a percentage of the pledged total. That procedure was rejected. On October 19 the Board appointed a committee to finance and build the new facility but could not decide upon a name for it,[8] so for some time various titles were used.

The October Fund Raising Dinner

The funds were to be achieved in one bold stroke. At a special dinner meeting at the Tuesday Club on October 26, members were invited to pledge $50,000 that night. Rev. Harry C. Meserve of the San Francisco Church was the principal speaker; Jim Bradfield was the master of ceremonies.[9] Hattie Scott provided the music, while Edna Rea handled the reservations for the 108 people attending. Sixty pledges for immediate payment were made that night for a total of $15,792; by December 5 the total in hand from all sources was $23,500. Out of a possible 250 families, 89 contributed to the fund.[10]

An Unexpected Development

Building on the North Sacramento site would require a zoning variance to permit the construction of a church in that residential area. Everything at that time indicated that the variance would be granted promptly. However, an unpleasant surprise greeted the congregation when, after promising negotiations, the variance request was eventually denied. In July 1956, the site selection process was begun anew after a year of attempting to purchase the North Sacramento lots came to naught.

All that time the Church School continued to be crowded with children, who with staff equaled the number of adults attending Sunday services — which averaged 135 in 1955.[11] The great number of children reflected the increased national birth rate, which after a steady decline from 1800 to 1940 began a rapid rising rate that lasted well into the 1950s.[12] The unprecedented influx of children into the programs of the Society was a major impetus to the urgency of the building expansion effort.

35 Sierra Boulevard Site Chosen

The unsuccessful effort to purchase the North Sacramento land led to a new strategy. Options were taken on two prospective sites east of the Sacramento city limit, which was then marked by the American River. Designated as Site A and Site B, they were compared in a Society publication in this manner:[1]

	Site A Sierra Blvd.	Site B Jonas Ave Larkspur Lane
Gross Acreage	5.76	3.35
Price	$19,500	$14,000
Net Usable Acreage	5.37	2.60
Cost Per Usable Acre	$3,600	$5,400

These sites had been chosen from offerings submitted by 11 real estate firms.[2] A special meeting for deciding upon the purchase of a site was called for Sunday evening, September 16, 1956. One hundred and Sixty-five members were present, which was the largest such meeting in Society history.[3]

The Sierra Boulevard site had ample area for any practical future location for building, on slightly sloping land enhanced with several native oak trees. The Jonas-Larkspur site, about a mile northeastward, having less area would impose rather rigid limitations as to building space, which made it more in keeping with the parsimonious financial history of the Society. There were no trees on that land, which probably indicated a hardpan sub-soil not promising for the cultivation of shade trees.[4]

The Building Committee invited members to inspect the sites, and repeatedly tramped over the two locations with members comparing the

features, in preparation for the decisive meeting in September. Mel Newfield recommended the purchase of the Jonas-Larkspur site. Lou Watson advocated purchase of the Sierra Boulevard land. Mimeographed maps and fact sheets giving the pros and cons of the two locations were distributed by the Committee.[5]

The Decision

The Special Meeting provided time to all proponents and their adversaries for presenting their viewpoints. After a lengthy, lively, even heated debate, the votes were tallied and reported: for the Sierra Boulevard site 116 votes, for the Jonas-Larkspur site 48 votes; one vote for neither site. A resolution for the purchase of the Sierra Boulevard property was adopted. It was promptly acquired for $19,500 plus a closing cost of $36.94. The building fund then contained a balance of $5,269 at the close of the year 1956.

Sierra Boulevard Site

36 Developing A Commitment

In 1957 the newly purchased land on Sierra Boulevard became the symbol of the commitment to the building of a future home for the Society. It was located about four miles northeast of the church on 27th Street, in an area adjacent to the Horst family hop farm that later became the Campus Commons area. The agricultural appearance of that area was misleading because it was, in fact, the geographical center of the Greater Sacramento area. Arthur "Art" Zopf, a Society member and real estate broker, had foreseen the desirability of that strategic location, and knowing that there was money on hand in the Society building fund, pointed out that the land probably could be had at less than the asking price because it was on the market for settlement of an estate. That, indeed, was the case.

At that time the southern end of Howe Avenue terminated at Fair Oaks Boulevard. Sierra Boulevard was paved but narrow; there were some residences scattered along it interspersed with fenced pastures, nut and fruit trees. Here and there windmills pumped irrigation water. At the 2400 block of Sierra Boulevard, the rich river-bottom land gave way northward to slightly undulating terrain more suited to pasture and fruit trees than row crops. The new site contained 10 native oaks, 14 walnut, 10 olive, 16 fruit and five coniferous trees. A barn, lathe house, chicken house and a shack were north of the present caretaker's residence in the oak grove.[1] Horace Johnson, a member who was a civil engineer, arranged for a contour map of the property to be made by another engineer who surveyed the property as a gift, preparatory to grading of the site. It showed that one area was lower than the pavement level where a culvert drain passed under Sierra Boulevard. From there the property sloped to the northern boundary, some of which was five feet above the lowest point on the southern edge.

Volunteer work parties cleared brambles and brush, tore down some of the out-buildings, re-roofed the cottage, replaced the well-pump at a cost of $800, and rehabilitated the unoccupied cottage into a rentable one which

provided income for countering the newly acquired property tax liability which would continue until a building for services was operational.

The Decisions

The Building Committee decided that the success of the anticipated funding program required widespread support of the congregation. To achieve that goal, it was necessary to learn the views of the members as to a wide range of features that should be considered for inclusion in the buildings. To that end, the Building Committee formed a Program Committee for developing a dialogue between the congregation and those making plans for the new facility. This they achieved partly through a comprehensive questionnaire sent to the 417 members in January of 1957,[2] of which 207 were returned and tabulated. This was a summary of the information developed:

> 64% preferred a building with a seating capacity of 400 to 600
> 50% preferred a Church School capacity for 300 to 500 children
> 96% felt that the minimum requirements in a master plan should include the following:

1. Auditorium or chapel with related facilities
2. Religious education facilities including kitchen
3. Social activities facility including kitchen
4. Administrative facilities, pastor's study

> 95% felt that the first step was to construct a Sunday School and social activities facility which could also be used temporarily for Sunday Services until later expansion could provide a separate religious services (sanctuary) building.

Other facilities were recommended by this many persons:

160	Library and/or Book Store	40	Gymnasium
97	Playground	37	Swimming Pool
97	Crying Room[3]	35	Crypt
69	Minister's Home	32	Caretaker's Home
58	Garden Sanctuary	29	Meditation Chapel
50	Women's Lounge	24	Hobby Shop
45	Men's Lounge	3	Bowling Alley
43	Student's Recreational Facility		

In August of 1957 the Board of Directors signed a contract with John Harvey Carter for architectural services.[4] A graduate of the University of Southern California School of Architecture and Society member since 1953, he had been selected from seven architects recommended to the Committee. In mid-October he submitted a 40-page study of the physical features of facilities needed.

Internal Stresses

The Society was well known for its "liberal" philosophy, but when it came to raising money, its practice was clearly conservative. After having existed in Sacramento, active or inactive, for 88 years the church still had inadequate financial support from members. The 42-year-old unpaid mortgage on the antiquated church building was still being held by the American Unitarian Association in Boston. The 1956 operating budget expenditure of $18,400 for 414 members[5] was at the annual rate of $44.44 per capita. Anyone who contributed $200 a year or more could have been considered in the category of "Big Givers" — of which there were 12; only three persons gave $300 or more.

Furthermore, as membership climbed over 400 and the church school enrollment to 200, there were increasing signs of internal conflicts in relationships within the congregation. Perhaps this resulted in part from the very rapid growth and from the increasingly crowded facilities, when it was not practical to make long term plans in an orderly way because no one could foretell what the demands might be next year.

A unique problem was the question of a retirement plan for the minister. In the entire history of the Society, no minister had stayed long enough nor grown old enough to have been concerned about retirement plans. In 1957 the minister was 66 years old.[6] The Board of Directors three months earlier had decided that it was "too late to start an adequate retirement plan. It should have been done long ago." Mr. Abel mentioned "that he had always planned to tender his resignation at the coming January's Annual Meeting (1957) with the hope that it would not be accepted and he could continue here for at least another three years until he could qualify for the AUA pension… However, on the advice of his most loyal friends ... he had been discouraged from submitting his resignation at this time."

The minister's concern about retirement benefits was well founded, for he had told the Directors that he would be without adequate retirement

income unless he had a pension. Since his marriage in 1947, he had fathered a son who would be of college age when his father was in his late 70s, well beyond normal retirement age. As it turned out, the Board and the minister made an agreement of understanding which promised progress toward a retirement plan based upon contributions for Social Security paid for by the Society, and a small pension from the Society proposed for future budgets, upon the provision that he remain in ministerial service until January of 1960, which would then qualify him for a retirement benefit of $850 per year from the American Unitarian Association ministers' denominational fund.

Membership in Flux

Mobility, both social and physical, was prominent in the motivations of the members of that era. The congregation included persons born in 20 states and five foreign countries; many were college graduates, including those who had attended institutions of higher learning only because GI Bill educational benefits due to wartime military service had made that possible. It also was an era when the nation was rapidly changing from a rural to an urban mode, with great numbers of people on the move for improving their social status by going where economic opportunity was most attractive, which included the cities of California.

There was considerable flow-through in the membership of that period. When members moved from the area or just lost interest, or became disenchanted, they most often just disappeared, but some formally resigned. The type of resignation varied from terse, polite, noncommittal written statement of fact to expressions of discontent, frustration, anger or even sorrow.

The most detailed resignation that year was mailed by a resigning member to the entire membership in a three page, single-spaced typewritten letter[7] addressed to the "Directors and Friends" stating that the Society had become a bureaucracy that lacked a democratic climate and thwarted individual effort.

Another member, after five years of enthusiastic support, resigned with this comment:

> I want to set down the ways which I feel the Society has gotten off the track. The basic trouble is that you have sold your souls to the

devils of avarice, prestige and rigidity. You are avid for a new, handsome church and you desire the prestige in the community that will allow some of the well-to-do to join the Society and finance the building. How distorted can you get?

37 Raising the Money

In 1958 the building program passed from the dreaming stage into reality. After lengthy and detailed participation by the congregation in making decisions, the architect designed the buildings and constructed a scale model, which was put on display. The design was contemporary; the grounds would be spacious, with lawns green the year around. Since most of the members were fairly recent arrivals from many other areas, there was a strong feeling that the architectural style should be in harmony with the intensely sunny climate of the Sacramento Valley.

John Henry Carter, Rev. Ted Abell and Carl Anderson
with scale model of the Master Plan

The buildings were to be erected in three phases. The first was to house the 400-seat auditorium and basic facilities. The second phase was

construction of a 200-student religious education complex. The final achievement was to be the eventual third phase construction of the crown jewel — a church building located in the oak grove whose wall behind the pulpit would be of glass so that the audience would look outward and upward into the majestically towering arms of venerable oaks which probably had been growing there since before the first European had trod that ground. By eliminating the suggested but irrelevant facilities such as gymnasium, swimming pool and hobby shop, it was estimated that the entire project could be constructed for about 450,000 1958-dollars.

The Fund Raising

The Victory Meeting, Friday, Feb 28, 1958

Front row: Melville Newfield, Carl Horn, Avery Havey, Edward Hillier, Carl Anderson. Middle row: William Stephen, George Reitter, Frances Havey, Winchester Felt. Back row: Rev. Ted Abell, A K Gammon, Edna Rae, Howard Hause*, Betty Hause*
*professional fund raisers

The employment of a professional specialist was decided upon after much debate and some trepidation. The building fund effort of the Society in 1955 had realized $20,000 of a goal of $50,000 for what then was the entire building project. Eventually, an agreement was made with a fund raising specialist, Howard B. Hauze of Berkeley, California, in January of 1958, to plan and direct a four-week financial canvass aimed at raising pledges in excess of $90,000 to be payable over a 150-week period to the building fund.[1] For his services, he was to be paid $2,500 regardless of the total amount pledge or collected.

The building fund canvass was conducted during February 21-28, 1958.[2] Later the chairman of the Building Committee, Carl W. Anderson, wrote in a letter, "In the four-week campaign an amount in excess of $123,000 was subscribed… It was a magnificent achievement for our Society. It left us better acquainted, gave us greater unity, and inspired a new confidence in ourselves."

Who Pledged All That Money?

In the main, the pledgers were young parents who came out of conventional churches but whose experience of growing up under the social stresses of the Great Depression and World War II led them to seek what they thought of as progressive surroundings for themselves and their children. With more years of formal education than any generation in world history and riding a tide of war-stimulated prosperity, they were upward bound in socio-economic status. Because Sacramento was the state capital, the members were predominantly employed in salaried positions requiring specialized preparation, often through college education, for goal-directed lives for themselves and their children.

The spectacular progress of the building program was evidence that deep-seated emotional responses were operating in the growing support of the Society.[3] The minister was aware of the nature of those sentiments but he never made them the subject of public disclosure. Instead, he skillfully guided his congregation toward the realization of an adequately enlarged physical plant better to serve his people living in a rapidly changing world.

38 The Structure Rises 1959–1960

By midsummer of 1959, the Building Committee had accumulated $165,000 for constructing the Social Hall of Phase One of the building master plan. Society member William A. Campbell, a prominent Sacramento contractor, agreed to build it at no profit to himself. These sums were available:

Member contributions to date	$ 45,000
Loan from AUA[1]	$ 14,000
Bank loan, 10 years @ 6 1/2%[2]	$106,000
	$165,000

Groundbreaking, Sunday, 23 August 1959

Ritual groundbreakings were held on Sunday morning, 23 August 1959 — one ceremony by adults, another by the children. The scene was a summer pastoral, cloudless sky, warm zephyrs lazily spun nearby pumping windmills. Horses and cattle grazed on adjoining irrigated pastures whose green contrasted with the parched brown weeds of the unwatered church property.

Photographs[3] of the ceremonies show that over a hundred were in attendance, about 40 being children, many bringing shovels for participating in the groundbreaking. The August weather had reduced the soil to adobe brick consistency; shovels rebounded with clanging sound upon striking the earth. With diligence, enough soil was shaved into piles of size to emotionally qualify for “groundbreaking”.

"First Spadefull for New Church"
Groundbreaking Ceremony, Sunday, August 23, 1959

Children's Groundbreaking Ceremony

A Many Talented Congregation

In the nine months of construction, the talents of many members were available to the architect and the building contractor. When the food preparation and serving facilities were designed, Jane Pirkey, an institutional food administrator, donated her professional skills in concert with the architect. A.M. Van Valkenburgh, president of a pipeline construction company, donated and installed the pipe work for utilities, sanitation and subsurface drainage.[4] The interior decoration of the auditorium was planned by the Color and Furnishings Committee acting as advisors to the Building Committee. Its members at that time were Marjorie Vasey, Chair; Winifred Kennedy and Eleanor Van Valkenburgh. They selected the fabric for the large draperies and stage curtain of color to harmonize with the upholstery of the auditorium chairs and the wall paint tints.

The House of a Thousand Windows

Workers position new poured concrete wall. Note the fiberboard forms used to create the window openings. Lou Watson found that they could be easily removed by a strong blow with a 2x4 timber.

The building could well be called "The House of a Thousand Windows" because its walls contained 1,288 hexagonal windowpanes, 10 inches across, of translucent amber glass. This feature was the architect's response to the opinion expressed by many of the members that the building design should be in harmony with the sunny climate of the Sacramento Valley. Consequently, John Harvey Carter ingeniously designed sturdy poured-concrete walls through which the amber-hued sunlight streamed.

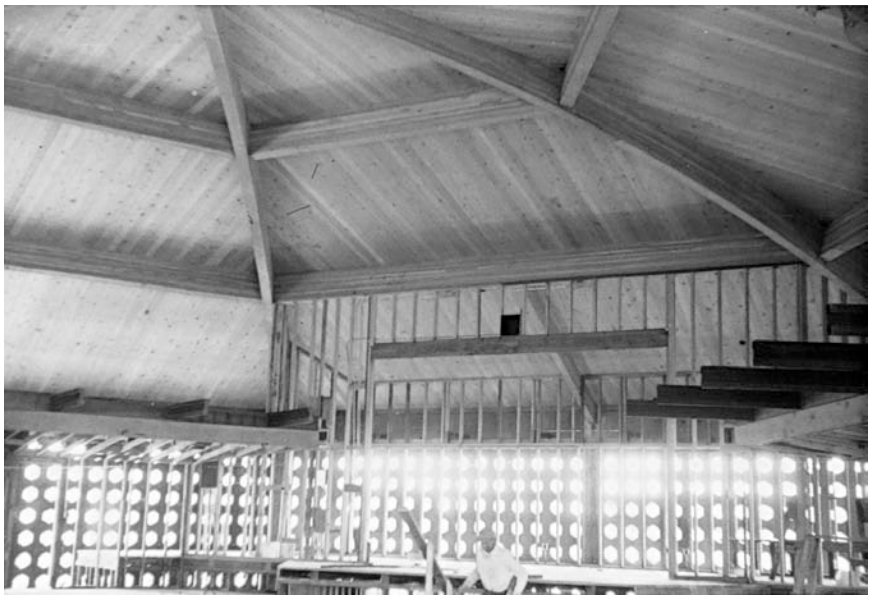
The fabrication of the walls required the assembly of waxed, heavy corrugated fiberboard into forms around which concrete was poured while in horizontal

position. After the concrete hardened, the wall sections were then hoisted by a crane into vertical position and attached to sturdy steel uprights. To save labor costs of preparing the 1,288 fiberboard forms for the window openings, large numbers of volunteers — the Laymen's League, women, young people, men — worked in an unheated warehouse at 8th and R Street on the last two weekends in November and Christmas week of 1959 in order to keep the construction crew on schedule.

The Laminated Wood Arches

The most impressive aspect of the building design was the domed ceiling and roof of the auditorium. The original design specified steel arches for supporting the dome, but they were found to be prohibitively expensive so sturdy laminated wood trusses were fabricated instead. The result was a ceiling of coniferous wood whose radiantly amber hue has intensified in richness with the subsequent passage of years. The arches were lifted in place on 11 January 1960, the congregation being invited to witness that dramatic symbol of progress toward a new home for the Society.

Installing the laminated wood arches at Sierra Boulevard Site



The dome, finished in natural wood, became one of the esthetic delights of the architecture.

Finishing Touches

Toward the end of March, the interior was finished. In early April a "painting party" of volunteers went to work under the direction of Peter Stenberg, a member who was a painter by trade. The cottage in the oak grove was renovated for use by preschool and kindergarten children. A mothers' work party began that task on April 17 along with an appeal for furniture donations; the cottage was ready for the children when regular services were resumed in September.

A workshop was held on May 14 for organizing the move from the 27th Street buildings to the Sierra Boulevard structure. John Carter, Alex Pesonen, and Mel Newfield conducted tours of the new building and grounds. The move was planned for July and August.

The formal completion of the Social Hall was on May 20, 1960, when William A. Campbell handed over the keys to the Building Committee. The first event in it was on June 10, when a strawberry social was put on by the Laymen's League. That included a tour of the building with a slide show on the construction process, after which strawberries, cake and ice cream were served to 59 children and 74 adults.

Main Entrance to the Social Hall, Sierra Boulevard, 1960

39 The Annual Meeting 1960

A week after the erection of the arched dome of the building on Sierra Boulevard, the last annual meeting had been held in the old church building on 27th Street on Sunday evening, 17 January 1960. One hundred and forty-seven qualified voting members were present for what probably was the largest such gathering ever.

In a lengthy agenda, the greatest interest was in a proposed new section for the Society constitution — Section 4 of Article VII — which established both a minimum and a compulsory age for minister retirement. There had been no such provision because the previous ministers had been younger men, mostly those just starting out.

As the church newsletter reported[1] the following week, "The new 'Section 4 to Art. VII' of the Constitution was the center of great controversy." The reason was that it established 68 as the compulsory retirement age.[2] Mr. Abell, born on 12 November 1891,[3] was 68 and two months old the night of the annual meeting; therefore, the adoption of that proposal into the constitution would have forced his retirement.

Congregational action in the meeting resulted in a revision of the proposed new article, by a vote of 63 to 56, to read:

> Section 4: Any minister who shall be chosen after the adoption of this section shall be entitled to retire, upon ninety days notice, at age 65, with benefit of all pensions available to him from this Society[4] and otherwise; or he may continue in service to age 70. He may be appointed on a yearly basis thereafter.

The article was then adopted by a vote of 96 to 36 with 13 abstentions — a clear two-thirds majority when a simple majority would have sufficed.

The following item on the agenda was a resolution,[5] which was adopted by a vote of 93 to 40, with 12 abstentions:

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS: Rev. Theodore C. Abell, in the dozen years* of his ministry in this church, has led it in development from a small and weak position to one of great potentiality, and

WHEREAS: In this development he has shown entire sincerity, great zeal and frequently the sacrifice of his personal interest, and

WHEREAS: The decade-long* efforts of himself and the congregation under his leadership are about to be crowned with success in the provision of a magnificent new home for the Church, soon to be ready for dedication, and

WHEREAS: In all reason he himself should pronounce the dedication of this new building, now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED: That this Society does now ask of Rev. Theodore C. Abell that he remain at his post as its minister, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That this resolution shall be placed in the Records of this Society and its contents shall be made publicly known through newspapers and by all other means.

The Annual Meeting of the First Unitarian Society of Sacramento, California, this 17th day of January, A.D. Nineteen Hundred Sixty.

* Author's note: The correct number of years was 14.

A Surprising Development

Shortly after the passage of that resolution, Mr. Abell came to the rostrum to deliver his annual "Remarks by Minister" as scheduled in Item 9 on the Agenda. George Reitter, who was chairing the meeting, recalled that event 20 years later in a voice tape made for the Society archives.[6] Mr. Abell's response to the events of the evening was to deliver, to the chairman and

the congregation, his verbal resignation as minister. Visibly shaken and reading his remarks from an impromptu script, Mr. Abell appeared to be distraught. Chairman Reitter recalls looking over the minister's shoulder and noting that his manuscript was hastily scrawled, untidy, with errors in spelling, entirely out of keeping with his customarily meticulously polished style. Upon the conclusion of Mr. Abell's remarks, the chairman requested that the written resignation be handed to the secretary for inclusion in the records of the meeting. The minister refused to do so.

Caught by surprise, the chairman needed time to restore order and formulate an orderly response. Cooler heads began to warn against precipitous action, while some expressed the minister's right to have a prompt response to his resignation. In the end it was agreed that the Board of Directors should call a special meeting of the congregation to act on the resignation at a date in the future that would allow adequate time for calm and deliberate examination of all aspects of the situation.

A letter of resignation[7] was published in the Society newsletter a week later:

THE MINISTER RESIGNS

> To Members of The First Unitarian Society of Sacramento:
>
> In order to do an adequate job in the ministry, the minister must have the assurance that the members of his church respect him, have confidence in his ability, and wish him to remain as long as possible. When any appreciable number of members expresses a desire to know when he is going to retire or resign, it seems an indication that they are not prepared to follow his leadership, nor do they wish him to stay.
>
> Your vote on the retirement this evening is definite evidence that although you're willing to "tolerate" your present minister for a limited time, if necessary, you wish him to know that it will be your policy, written into your Constitution, that any minister will not be wanted after a certain date regardless of ability or devotion.
>
> Under these circumstances, I feel that it would be folly for me to expect the kind of cooperation that one must have if we are to build for the present and the future.

> The future will be very difficult and will require real dedication, devotion, and even sacrifices for a great number of us. A new man may bring unity, cohesion, vision and enthusiasm to enable you to join together in the completion of the wonderful dream, which I have envisioned and [which] is now taking shape before us. He will find the first unit ready for occupancy.
>
> In consideration of the afore-stated facts, I hereby reluctantly tender my resignation as minister of the First Unitarian Society of Sacramento, effective September 1, 1960.
>
> (Signed)
> Theodore C. Abell

One of the first reactions was a plan to request that the minister withdraw his resignation. A Board-appointed committee mailed ballots to the 373 elible voting members of the church. Of the 278 returned ballots, 181 voted to ask Mr. Abell to withdraw his resignation; 93 voted to accept his resignation.[8]

That might have restored tranquility, but that was not to be. At that time the annual every-member canvass for funds had failed to reach the pledged sum necessary for the operational budget of 1960-61. This was influential in Mr. Abell's reply to the request that he withdraw his resignation; "I regret that I am unable to make a decision regarding the withdrawal of my resignation until the approved budget has been raised."[9]

Under the leadership of Ruth Horn, who had been a diligent fund-raiser for the Society for several years, a re-canvass was conducted which by April had assured the necessary funds, thus meeting that objection. However, despite the vote of support from the majority of the congregation, Rev. Abell still didn't withdraw his resignation, so a meeting was called for April 24th to settle the matter.

40 Triumph and Tragedy

Most people credited the 1946 rescue of the feeble and dispirited Sacramento congregation which hadn't had a full-time minister since 1933 and its subsequent unprecendented growth to Rev. Abell. The visible peak of that achievement was symbolized by the new church building nearing completion in the Spring of 1960. Yet at the same time, the precipitous resignation of Mr. Abell the previous January, and the delay in its acceptance until three months later, intensified tensions within the membership divided by internecine conflicts.

The Meeting of April 24

The main item for congregational action on the evening of 24 April 1960 was the minister's resignation. A summary of that event was published in the "Report of the Minister for April 1960," issued on May 10.[1]

On April 13 Mr. Abell had sent a letter to the Board of Directors stating "that he does not plan to remain as Minister after September 1st." At the April 24th meeting "Mr. Abell stated that his resignation is definite and effective September 1st, and that he will not withdraw his resignation."

As the meeting opened, motions were made, then amended, to increase the minister's salary and future monthly pension. A move to table the proposals was carried by a voice vote. When it was proposed that the minister's resignation be rejected, written ballots showed 77 votes for rejection of the resignation, 82 votes for acceptance. Then the meeting heated up, several speakers claiming that the voters had not understood the question. To clarify the situation, a member who was an attorney, moved that Mr. Abell's resignation be accepted. Balloting showed 85 votes for accepting his resignation, 65 against.

That should have been the end of a long and trying session running into the late evening. Instead, a lady who had been a member since 1924 arose to "read a statement of condemnation [of] the President of the Society, J. Lee Hewitt, and concluded with a motion requesting him to tender his resignation at the next meeting of the Board." After the motion was seconded seven members arose to speak in favor of the President remaining in the office to which he had been elected. Written ballots resulted in 42 votes favoring his resignation, 93 votes against.

At 15 minutes before midnight, the discordant meeting came to an end after a voice vote for the adoption of a plan for the selection of a Pulpit Committee for procuring a new minister. President Hewitt had foreseen that the meeting would be a confrontation between rival factions. In preparation for his presiding over the meeting, he earlier had a physical examination by a doctor for an appraisal as to whether at his age[2] his heart could be expected to withstand the anticipated emotional stress.

An Alarming Observation

In the following month, a very perceptive member confided to the writer the observation that the minister's enunciation in his pulpit addresses appeared to be deteriorating. Some of his words were slightly slurred, his otherwise facile and nimble tongue was beginning to trip, stumble and hesitate over some syllables. Close attention by this writer to the minister's pulpit delivery over several of his Sunday addresses confirmed the correctness of the member's observation. This alarming development in light of the medical implications of those symptoms was not known to have been publicly observed otherwise. In 2007, several longtime church members said Mr. Abell was diagnosed with a brain tumor around that time.

Mr. Abell's Last Pulpit Appearance

The last appearance of Mr. Abell in the Society pulpit was on Sunday, June 19, 1960 — the last service prior to the traditional summer hiatus. In his carefully kept record, he noted the attendance at that service: "Total 174: 96 women, 78 men."

In the June 26 issue of the weekly *Lamplighter*, this appeared:

A DEEP SENSE OF GRATITUDE

> At the conclusion of last Sunday's Church service to my amazement I found myself the owner of a 1960 Valiant! It is with a deep sense of gratitude that I say "Thank You" to the many friends that made this fine gift possible. — Theodore C. Abell[3]

The *Sacramento Union* on June 24 ran a two-column photograph of Rev. and Mrs. Abell smiling at the surprise gift of an automobile from the congregation at the close of the minister's last sermon.

Rev. and Mrs. Abell

Days of Triumph

A week later — on June 26 — the new church site was the scene of the Annual Picnic, which for the first time was held on its own grounds, during morning and until the evening. Over 300 people attended for recreational activities and a ceremonial presentation of the keys to the new church by William Campbell, contractor, to Mel Newfield, chairman of the Building Committee. "The evening concluded with group singing led by Merritt Winans and Johnathan Else, as well as folk dancing for all ages by Helen Gillman."[4]

The first service in the new building was on July 10 when the minister of the First Unitarian Church of San Francisco, Harry B. Scholefield, filled the pulpit. The weekly newsletter reported that event:[5]

> MEMORABLE DAY - 243 chairs were set out, all filled. Weather fine, acoustics remarkably good… Dr. Scholefield toured the building and grounds with John Carter, approved it all. Just before leaving, at the garden entrance to the room where he had held the service, he stood and thoughtfully looked in, smiled a little. The ushers for this day were Carl Horn, John Carter, and Mel Newfield.

Days of Tragedy

From *The Lamplighter* newsletter of 11 September 1960:

REV. THEODORE C. ABELL

> At this writing, our minister emeritus is seriously ill — no visitors or phone calls, please. Notes of concern or flowers may be sent to Mrs. Abell, 1721 40th St. The church office is in constant contact with the Abell family and you should call the office for information.[6]

In late November the *Sacramento Bee* reported that he died on November 22, 1960, in his home, 1721 40th Street, at age 69.[7]

For 47 years, since he first became a student pastor in 1913 at a Methodist church in Hyatts, Ohio, he had been a social catalyst. As such he attracted people into relationships with each other to their mutual benefit. He had been described as having had various identifications, such as Christian, Methodist, Humanist, Unitarian. In 1953 he had written of himself, "I've come to distrust labels of any kind and when people ask me what I am. I'm inclined to answer, I'm just a human being and I hope a good one."[8]

Part Five — THE SIXTIES (1960 -1970)

Tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis.
(The times are changed and we are changed within them.)

Definitions from two editions of *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*:

1994 Edition[1]	1971 Edition[2]
Unitarian - n. One who denies the doctrine of the Trinity, believing that God exists only in one person; also, one of a denomination of Christians holding this belief.	unitarian n. A). often cap. - one who believes that the deity exists only in one person B) cap. - a member of a denomination that stresses individual freedom of belief, the free use of reason in religion, a united world community, and liberal social action.
Universalism - n. theol. - The doctrine that all men will eventually be saved	universalism - n. A). often cap. - a theological doctrine that all men will eventually be saved B) the principles and practices of a liberal Christian denomination founded in the 18th century to uphold belief in universal salvation and now united with Unitarianism

No matter how much the official definition of their religion changed, however, church members were not bound by any definition or creed. Long ago, the Sacramento Unitarian Society had resolved doctrinaire debates in a simple but effective fashion. At its annual meeting in 1926, it had incorporated into its by-laws this simple provision: "No religious test shall be required of any member or of any applicant."[3]

41 Autumn 1960

Everything was upbeat upon the resumption of regular Sunday services on September 4, 1960, in the newly constructed church building. Most of the 450 members were under fifty and full of enthusiasm for converting the largely rustic, undeveloped site into a park-like environment. There was still a mountain of tasks to be accomplished. Among other things, a parking lot had to be graded from the slightly rolling terrain still covered with unkempt weeds and wildflowers.

From the beginning, the congregation had planned for the facility to be harmonious with nature, spacious and open to the skies, winds, rains, dews, fogs, mists, stars, and sunlight. surrounded by greenery. Above all, they wanted an environment conducive to the soaring of free spirits and the flow of ideas, enhanced by the beauty of the visual arts, of poetry spoken and written, of prose old and new.

At that triumphal time, the congregation was without a minister, the Rev. Theodore Abell having just retired. Earlier, the American Unitarian Association had provided guidance to the autonomous Sacramento Society in its process of selecting another minister. That procedure began in May when the Directors created a committee which presented a slate of 14 nominees from which a seven-member Pulpit Committee was to be elected by congregational vote. The biographies of the candidates having been published, a special meeting was convened on May 22nd at which these committee members were elected:

James A. Bradfield, Chairman

Clifton Gordon	May O'Neill
Sylvia Karkanen	Eleanor Van Valkenburgh
Mario Levy	David Whittlesey

Rev. Victor Goff, Regional Director of the Pacific Coast Unitarian Conference, gave professional guidance in the use of the Unitarian Association's "Recommended Procedure for Churches Seeking New Ministers"[1] including a four-hour instructional conference for Pulpit Committee members. The Committee prepared its prospectus describing the Sacramento Society for prospective candidates for its pulpit.

Insights into the Congregation

In the preparation of the prospectus, the Pulpit Committee circulated a questionnaire designed to solicit measurable data from its members. In July, a six-page "Tabulation of Returns to the Questionnaire from The Pulpit Committee"[2] summarized the information from the 174 forms returned of those mailed to 446 members, a 39% rate of response.

Fifty-nine percent of responses to the questionnaire were by women, 41 % by men. The estimated number of children in the congregation was 500, 73% being under the age of 12 and 14% age 12 to 14.

As for the composition of the congregation by age group, 67% were between 26 and 50 years old; 17% were aged 51 to 65, and 12% were over 65.

In reply to the question "How much formal education have you had?" 11% stated that they had not graduated from high school. Eighty-nine percent had attended college, ranging from 20% reporting some college to 19% having a graduate degree.

Of the 27 numbered items in the questionnaire, the first 20 were designed to elicit opinions. The first question was this: "The following are phrases which might be used to describe the minister we are seeking. Please check the five phrases which you consider most important."

Responses showed a desire for these qualities in a minister:

66% - A man with a mature personality

51 % - A man who is sensitive to people and their needs

49% - One who understands and works easily in group situations

44% - A man who has a quick and creative mind

44% - A man with a sense of humor

Next, a list of eleven different kinds of sermons a minister might deliver was presented with the request that a check mark be made by those considered most important. These were the five most frequently checked topics:

65% - The personal problems most people live with

60% - Current issues: world, national, or local

59% - Philosophical ideas

54% - Personal moral obligations

45% - An interpretation of the many world religions

10% - Sermons drawn from the Bible

To get an indication of members' theological identity, they were asked to choose which among several phrases best described their religious philosophy. These were some of the responses to 17 such questions:

82% - One who would examine all sources of religious and philosophical teaching as potential guides to moral and ethical development

75% - One who believes that religious truth is derived from nature and not from miraculous or supernatural revelation

70% - One who emphasizes human values, as opposed to supernatural values in religion

57% - One who finds the term "Christian" too limiting to define his religious philosophy

39% - One who believes only in that which seems rational and credible

33% - One who believes that we cannot know for sure whether God exists

15% - One who believes in an impersonal God as a creator and guiding force in the universe

4% - One who believes in a personal God who concerns himself with humans

4% - One who denies the existence of God

In reply to the question, "Why do you identify yourself with a Unitarian Society?", these are some of the replies to eight statements offered:

59% - I like Unitarians' principles of liberal religion, creedal freedom, and rational approach to religion.

6% - I identify with them for my children's sake.

1% - I was raised in a Unitarian or other liberal church.

The prospectus which was sent to candidates also included a comprehensive description of the Society. They were told that the budget for 1960 was $22,554, representing a per capita expenditure of $50.57 for each of the 446 members.[3] The ministerial budget allotment was $8,303, of which $7,000 was for salary. The proposed 1961 budget included an increase to $9,785 for the ministerial budget item.

42 "Seating" the Minister

During the summer of 1960, ministers from nearby Unitarian churches led services in the Sacramento church. The method of selecting a new minister through the process recommended by the American Unitarian Association was a deliberate and time-consuming one. With autumn fast approaching, Society President Everett "Alex" Pesonen proposed at an informal meeting on Sunday morning, August 14, that John Albert Taylor be employed as the interim minister[1] to serve until the permanent appointee was seated.

Rev. Taylor had been pastor of Sacramento's Merwin Memorial Methodist Church.[2] Having an interest in religious education, he had been attending Thomas Starr King School for the Ministry at Berkeley. His education included an A.B. degree from Oklahoma City University in 1953 and a Master's of Divinity degree from Boston University Graduate School of Theology in 1965.[3] His interim ministry at the Society began on the last day of August. He proved to be personable, youthful and dynamic, a leader who served the congregation well and went on to a distinguished career of service to Unitarian congregations.[4]

Meanwhile, in response to the prospectuses they had sent out, the Pulpit Committee had received twenty-three applications. After lengthy processing, the list was reduced to three, from which one was finally chosen as the candidate to be recommended to the congregation. Rev. Ford Lewis, Associate Minister of the Portland, Oregon, Unitarian Church, was named as candidate for the Sacramento pulpit.

Plans were made for Rev. Lewis and his wife Barbara to spend a week in Sacramento in order to provide for the fullest possible interchange between them and members of the congregation. The week of September 18–25, 1960, was "candidate week". It was filled with committee meetings and informal "open house" social gatherings in various parts of the city. In addition, Rev. Lewis was the pulpit speaker for the two Sundays of the


Rev. Ford Lewis

eight-day period. During that time, there was ample opportunity for the candidate to gather insights into the nature of his prospective congregation and for members to evaluate him.

During that process, Rev. Lewis concluded that the schism arising over Rev. Abell's resignation[5] was still too divisive for him to easily overcome.[6] Therefore, he notified the Pulpit Committee that he wished to withdraw his candidacy. That unexpected development focused attention on the fact that there was a question of congregational solidarity which had to be recognized, evaluated and dealt with just as a new minister was being considered. As it turned out, the Committee quietly persuaded Rev. Lewis to continue his candidacy.

A special congregational meeting was scheduled for Sunday evening, September 25, 1960, to decide whether Rev. Lewis was to be chosen. Voting was by written ballots. The tabulation showed 167 votes in favor, 17 opposed.[7] He would begin his Sacramento ministry in December.

The Installation Ceremony

On December 11, 1960, Rev. Lewis was installed in a ceremony which also included the formal dedication of the church building. Fourteen ministers participated in the ceremonies. Rev. Dana McLean Greeley, president of the American Unitarian Association, delivered the sermon. The Order of Service[8] included a brief history of Unitarianism in Sacramento and an account of the construction of the Sierra Boulevard facility written by Carl W. Anderson. It also traced events leading up to the formal organization of the Building Committee in 1955.

Memorial Service for Rev. Theodore C. Abell

Minister Emeritus Theodore C. Abell, who had retired from the pulpit in June, died on November 22nd, 1960, after a disabling illness of several

months. He never occupied the pulpit in the building he was so instrumental in creating. The memorial service for him was conducted on December 18th, the first such service in the new church. At the request of Mrs. Abell,[9] Rev. John Albert Taylor officiated.

Rev. Taylor, a Methodist minister, had exchanged pulpits with Rev. Abell back on March 20, 1960. That brief occupancy of the Unitarian pulpit had been a turning point in his professional life, for in September he wrote[10] of himself and of that occasion that he then placed himself "on trial" and his decision to become a Unitarian minister was largely determined by the cordial reception he received. He went on to say that his interest in Unitarians "grows with closer acquaintance" as does his "admiration for their courageous thinking."

Rev. Taylor was but one in a long line of people to benefit from knowing Theodore Abell, who had started his ministry 47 years earlier as student pastor of the Hyattsville Methodist Episcopal Church in Hyattsville, Ohio.[11]

43 The Year of the Church School
1961

The major goal of the Society in 1961 was to construct facilities for the church school, which was without housing adequate to its growing needs. The Society then consisted of 293 family units[1] with an estimated 500 children, of whom three fourths were less than twelve years old.[2] Plans had been drawn for five unique, hexagonal buildings designed to harmonize with the general architectural theme, and the architect's model of the structures had been exhibited to attract interest in the project.

The Building Drive for the Classrooms

In February, church leaders announced plans for a solicitation for funds for the religious education school. The General Chairman of that effort was to be William A. Campbell, a member since 1953 and a prominent building contractor. The new fundraising organization was divided into twelve committees.[3] The 12-page, illustrated brochure for the building fund project began with this brief outline:

> OUR NEEDS…
>
> During the past three years, we have accomplished much. We have built the first unit in our long range plan, the beautiful and functional parish building which now houses all of our activities. We have built within our means. Our long-range plan contemplates at this point the erection of at least two of the Sunday School units, each to house the activities of 100 children in the unique Unitarian Universalist religious program — a program designed to teach the basic moral and ethical values of our Judeo-Christian heritage free of superstition.
>
> The surveys conducted under the auspices of the American Unitarian Department of Education point up the fact that those churches which

> stress their concern for an adequate Sunday School program in surroundings which attract children are the churches which show the largest membership gains, for in many of our churches it is through fulfilling the needs of children that the parents become interested.
>
> To summarize: We are in a desperate need of at least two Sunday School buildings now — not several years hence.
>
> CANVASS PLANS
>
> In order to raise $132,000, which is the second step in our building program, it has been agreed that we will conduct, between now and March 8, 1961, an organized… intensive… individual… face-to-face solicitation in [members'] homes for building fund pledges on a weekly… basis, payable over a period of 150 weeks, commencing on Sunday, March 12, 1961.

Professional Supervision of the Drive

The organization and direction of the canvass was to be under the supervision of a professional fund raiser, Howard B. Hauze, of Berkeley, California, who had conducted the building fund campaign in 1958. That initial fund had been raised based upon pledge payments for a 150-week period which had ended January 8, 1961. The second fund drive came to the attention of the congregation on Sunday, January 29, 1961, with this notice in the Order of Service:

> WE ARE PLEASED TO WELCOME today Mr. and Mrs. Howard Hauze. Mr. Hauze is a professional fund-raiser from Berkeley… He will start tomorrow making preparations for his second fund-raising campaign, devoted to raising funds to house our Sunday school children, as well as to let us continue to meet our commitments against loans we have made in erecting this building.

In a report to the Board of Directors on February 7, 1961, Building Fund Chairman Carl Anderson showed[4] that the $123,000 in pledges made in 1958 yielded $90,700 by the end of the period in 1961. That was a depreciation rate of 26% of the pledged value. In anticipating the funds to be promised by pledges in 1961, knowledgeable fund-raisers realized there would again be depreciation at an unknown rate, so long range mortgages would have to be included in future financing of the building program.

Mr. Hauze had stated previously that conditions for campaign success were best in a church where A) the minister had been serving for at least two years prior to a fund drive, and B) the congregation was free from serious discord. Based on his observations, in his final report to the Board of Directors in March, he was less than optimistic.[5]

The Canvass Prognosis

Mr. Hauze explained,

> The auguries for a very successful campaign were, in my estimation, only fair to begin with. Several circumstances militated against raising the maximum goal of $132,000… These circumstances were as follows:
>
> 1) The impossibility of pre-determining the extent and depth of the damage resulting from the resignation of Rev. Theodore Abell under the conditions obtaining at the time;
> 2) The fact that Dr. Ford Lewis had been with you such a short time that the impact of his ministry was yet to be felt; and
> 3) The fact that we had to include on a Building Fund Canvass a sum of money to be raised for the payment of past construction.

As of March 11, 1961,220 pledges had been received for a total of $89,920 from these categories:

Member pledges:	178	for	$77,958.50
Non-Member pledges:	42	for	$11,961.50
TOTAL:	220	for	$89,920.00

A later and final report showed a total of $93,000 in pledges.

Construction of Church School Authorized

The authorization of school building construction required approval by vote of Society members. Therefore, a special meeting of the congregation for voting on the matter was called for Sunday evening, May 21, 1961.[6] Prior to the meeting, a pot-luck spaghetti supper began at 6:00 p.m. with tables set up by the Laymen's League and coffee served by the Women's Alliance.

Matters were vigorously debated. The exact cost of construction per square foot of the unique style of classroom architecture design proposed by the architect could not be accurately estimated at the time. One member with building experience estimated the cost at $17 per square foot, which was considerably higher than that for the conventional "ticky-tacky boxes" style of some low-budget church schools. In the end, the congregation voted approval for construction of the five church school buildings when financing was available. The first building contract was awarded to the Campbell Construction Company at a cost not to exceed $50,000.[7]

A "Corporate Resolution to Borrow" up to $118,000 from Bank of America[8] proposed by the Building Committee assured funding for buildings — and long-term mortgage payments were substituted for additional financial drives in the future.

Until adequate facilities could be built. improvised facilities had to be used for housing the Sunday school classes in which enrollment reached 350 in 1961. A Director of Religious Education, Mrs. Helen Bradfield, was appointed on a half-time basis in July of that year.[9] That summer, the church offered a day-camp for children age five through seven in the oak grove. A committee of mothers renovated the farmer's rustic cottage annex to serve as a nursery, with this resulting report:

> The cottage with its brightly-colored doors is a beehive of happy sounds, both at 9:30 and 11 :00, with preschool classes for children 2-1/2 through 4 under the capable supervision of Awanna Kalal and her staff of teachers and cooperating mothers.

The first school building would be in use by the end of the year, but it wasn't until five years later that the second and third were finished. There remained an unfulfilled dream, however — a projected sanctuary otherwise known as "the church" to distinguish it from the first major structure built which was originally meant to be the activities building, but in fact served as the "church" building instead. Plans for the sanctuary had been drawn by architect/member John Harvey Carter, who made a display model of it for future use when funds could be gathered for its construction. It was to be located in the oak grove, with a glass wall behind the pulpit providing an inspiring scene of living trees as the backdrop. That dream is yet to be realized.

44 Easter 1962

Easter Week showed the growing influence of the Ford Lewis ministry in the Sacramento area. A unique Good Friday drama-service was announced for the evening of April 20,[1] at which a dramatic presentation was to be the major religious feature, followed by the minister's brief message.

The new weekly church publication gave this explanation:

> Because it has many views of meaning and because of its redemptive note, Billy Budd is regarded by many as a major expression in literature of Christian faith.
>
> SOMETHING SPECIAL
>
> A cast of our own members will be presenting the powerful and moving drama of a man on trial. This man is Billy Budd. We believe you will come away with a new sense of understanding of the trial of Jesus and the human agony of Pilate. Dr. Lewis will help draw a few lessons from the play.

The publication gave further insight into the forthcoming evening service:[2]

> On Good Friday (April 20), an all-male cast of our own members will do a play reading from the dramatization of Herman Melville's Billy Budd… Barbara Lewis selected the play and did the casting and directing… This particular drama occupies itself with the theme of "Suffering Servant" or "Man of Sorrows" of Old Testament lineage. Why must the innocent suffer? Why do the guilty go unpunished?… These ancient queries, arising out of Job and Ecclesiastes and the writings of the Prophets, are far older than the Christian drama. They originate in the reflective mind and compassionate heart of man.

> Our treatment of the theme will constitute our best effort to mark the season with appropriate observations.

The work of the minister's second day of that busy weekend had been described in the current church news:[3]

> DR. LEWIS WILL SPEAK on the "Moral Imperative for Peace" at the conclusion of an Easter Walk for World Order, Saturday, April 21. He will speak in Plaza Park at an Easter Rally to be held at 2:00 p.m. Dr. Lewis emphasizes that he will not be speaking as a representative of the church, but as a private citizen. The walk will commence at Mather Field at 7:30 a.m. and proceed down Folsom Boulevard to Capitol Park to the Plaza.

Those Easter morning services resulted in what was certainly the largest Sunday attendance in the entire ninety-four year history of the Sacramento congregation. Three forty-five minute services were held, with these reported attendances:[4]

9:30 Service	208
10:30 Service	280
11:30 Service	238
Total	726

A major feature of the traditional Easter Sunday services was the "Presentation of Living Flowers" to children who marched down front to receive a flowering potted plant suitable for garden transplantation. A dedication ceremony for infants and children was held in one of the services. In those days, it was the Easter custom for everyone to come in their "Sunday-go-to-meeting" best clothes, hair neatly trimmed and groomed, shoes polished, and shining faces freshly scrubbed.

Music for services by the talented organist member of the Society, Hattie Scott, set the atmosphere of the gatherings. The address of the minister was a brief sermonette. All this pageantry demonstrated the spirit of a vital, growing congregation with an increasing number of children attending each year.

45 Early Life of Ford Lewis

James Ford Lewis was born in October 1914.[1] The locale was a farm near the village of Stonefort in the Illinois Ozark hills a region underlain with coal beds and covered with a variety of trees.[2] Today, that area is within the Shawnee National Forest. The culture of the region has been described as belonging more to Dixie than to the "North".[3]

The Lewis family had immigrated from Wales in 1635; more immediately, they had moved from eastern Tennessee's Clay County adjoining the Kentucky border. Grandfather Robert Lewis (1832-1919) had served in the Civil War as a lieutenant with the 31st Illinois Volunteers. Later, he became a Seventh Day Baptist minister, as did his son Ellis, who was an uncle to Ford Lewis.

The Seventh Day Baptist Mythos[4]

The Seventh Day Baptist church of the United States was founded in 1801.[5] In addition to baptism by immersion after individual "conversion" (thus ruling out infant baptism) believers practiced the custom of "Sabbath keeping" from sunset on Friday until sunset on Saturday. In his 1913 autobiography[6], Rev. F. F. Johnson, M.D., told how Sabbath keepers were treated by Sunday keepers: "A great many of my Baptist brethren got down on me for keeping the Sabbath holy and working on the first day of the week, Sunday, turning the cold shoulder to me and treating me as an enemy."

Many of the folkways of the Stonefort Sabbath keepers were remnants of distant cultural values which had filtered through the American frontier experience and were well remembered in an area which was still close to being "backwoods" in character in the early 1920's. Except for railways and steamboats, or an occasional automobile before the era of the Ford Model T. transport was mostly by animal power — horses, mules and oxen.

Human muscle felled the forests, guided plows, and fired the furnaces of steam-driven transport. Diseases were often fatal, with little defense against them except devoted nursing and resort to prayer. The work-week was six days long, often consisting of ten and twelve hours daily. Life was hard, often cruel and always expected to be so. In attempts to make the burdens of life more bearable, certain social values were reinforced through church congregations, which were the principal avenue of bringing people together on common ground.

In Ford Lewis' childhood, farm life required the cooperation of all family members. They drew water from an open "dug" well by a hoisting rope and bucket. There was no refrigeration or electric lights. With seven sons, his mother Dollie served as a moderating influence in the masculine atmosphere of their household. Young Ford had started to school before his mother was granted the right to vote in presidential elections through the 19th Amendment to the Constitution in 1920.

A bright and perceptive lad, Ford found theology to be sometimes puzzling. Once, talking about the Day of Judgment, he expressed the opinion that if his mother were then present, she surely would save him from being sent to Hell. Would God be less merciful? He wondered about the onset of the true Sabbath, which was at sunset on Friday, because as darkness fell upon their farm as shadows, the sun was still shining on the higher hills where others were laboring: were they sinning by working on the Sabbath?

Venturing Out

With the coming of their mid-teen years, it was then popular for boys to experiment with adventuring away from home. The usual way was to "hop a freight" meaning to leap aboard a slowly moving train for a free ride. Ford developed a way of sleeping during rides on freight cars by lying buckled with a belt to the "roof walk," a narrow, wooden-plank path on top of boxcars. The discomfort of adverse weather, the shower of coal cinders from the smokestack and the risk of hostile action from trainmen soon turned him to automobile hitchhiking.

For two summers in the early 1930s, he volunteered for a month of basic army training in the Citizen's Military Training Camp at Jefferson Barracks, Saint Louis, Missouri. There was no pay, but travel expenses were paid and food was abundant. However, the men put in exhausting 12-hour days, six

days a week. And for the first time, he was a "Sunday keeper," as was the army custom.

The Great Depression

By the time Ford completed high school, the "Great Depression" of the 1930s was bearing down upon the nation with unexpected severity. The price of farm products fell below the cost of production until government programs stabilized the markets at low levels. All over the country, the economy was in disarray which spread into even the most remote rural sectors. The hardworking Lewis family had improved their farm through a mortgage loan from an uncle, but by 1933 it became obvious that they would have to give up the farm, and in an amicable arrangement. it was relinquished through foreclosure.

The family then moved to Gentry, Arkansas, to work a farm "on shares" with a relative. That location was about seven miles east of the border of Oklahoma whose "Dust Bowl" became a part of American folklore through John Steinbeck's novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*. While Arkansas was not in the Dust Bowl, high-blown clouds from the west passed overhead on a course which sometimes dusted the decks of ships in the Atlantic Ocean.

In the fall of 1934, Ford Lewis marked his twentieth birthday alone in the house where he had been born and raised. He had been left behind to tend the livestock, get in the harvest and run the farm while the rest of the family, except for a brother in the Civilian Conservation Corps, went together to Arkansas to register his younger brothers in school. He rejoined them after Thanksgiving, following the sale of farm animals, implements and produce (his father having returned for this event), eager to see what life in the new circumstances would be like.

A Great Enlightenment

Soon after their arrival in Arkansas, nineteen-year-old Ford Lewis was struck by a sudden enlightenment one day while attending a Baptist Sabbath Keeper church service. His uncle Ellis, a Seventh Day Baptist minister, was preaching on the eternal damnation in Hell of those not granted salvation through the Baptist ritual of water immersion. At Ford's side sat his Methodist girl friend, who had been baptized by the sprinkling ceremony of that sect. Gazing upon her untroubled face, with a start he became aware of her predicted fate so graphically related by Uncle Ellis!

His reaction was an automatic and permanent disbelief in that dogma. He had begun to have a mind of his own in such matters. Hadn't anyone else ever noticed the contradiction of a kind and loving Father God throwing his children into the eternal torment of being burned alive forever in Hell,[7] he wondered?

Leaving Home

The village of Gentry was about 25 miles northwest of the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. Ford spent a summer at Fayetteville working in a boarding house, trying in vain to find a way to attend the University.

In the autumn of 1935, he reluctantly gave up his ambitions for a higher education. Instead, he set out toward New Jersey and a job that his brother had located for him there. He was to become a hired hand in a dairy at $20 per month, with room and board, for long days starting before daylight, including Sundays. Then, on his 21st birthday, he said farewell to his family and with suitcase in hand, started "thumbing a ride" a thousand miles eastward.

46 A Surprising Entrance into an Academic Career

It was cotton harvesting time when young Ford Lewis left Arkansas in October of 1935. One rainy night, he found shelter in a cotton gin where he gratefully slept on the cement floor of its steam-boiler room. He had learned to avoid cities and towns, whose residents were less hospitable to migrants than people in villages or on farms.

His immediate destination was the West Virginia village of Salem, situated on the Allegheny Plateau where it gently slopes downward to the Ohio River. There his friend Carl Maxon of Gentry, Arkansas, was a student at Salem College, which was operated by the Seventh Day Baptist Church General Conference.

Carl said to Ford, "You should go to college. You would do well there." Thereupon, Ford emptied his pockets of his entire fortune, consisting of two one-dollar bills and a few coins. "Man, I can't go to college. This is all the money I have!" But Carl was not to be put off so easily; he extracted a promise from his visitor to go for an interview with the college president as a prospective freshman if student aid could be found for him.

The following evening, Carl and Ford trudged up the hill to the home of President Bond, who had agreed to meet with Ford Lewis. Years later, recalling that occasion, President Bond said, "That night I saw something shining in your eyes that told me you would do well in college."[1] With a part-time student job and the promise of a $50 loan from an aunt, the young farmhand made a late enrollment in Salem College. His first job was something quite suited to his experience and physique — pruning apple trees in the school orchard.

Depression Era Church-School Campus Life

Salem College's weekly schedule followed its denominational custom of observing the seventh-day Sabbath which began at sunset Friday night, ending with sunset on Saturday. Required attendance at thrice-weekly chapel services on campus further reinforced the religious orientation of the institution.

Young and healthy but with limited income, Ford Lewis sought out activities requiring the least expenditure of money. He sang in the men's quartet, sold peanuts and popcorn at ball games, attended the young people's Saturday afternoon Christian Endeavor meetings at the village Seventh Day Baptist Church, and participated in class politics. One of his college yearbooks shows him seated on the front row in his class picture, legs crossed, showing the sole of a shoe hanging loose because of the lack of the fifty cents required for its repair by a cobbler.

His Discovery of Academia

Ford Lewis' unanticipated affinity for the academic world initially was discovered through his enrollment in social studies classes. Imbued as he had been with the pervasive folkways and theological dogma prevailing in his rural Illinois and Arkansas environment, exposure to history professor Summers' classes opened up dazzling insights into a new world of disciplined, scholarly inquiry. There he began to develop skills for formulating questions and seeking their answers, independence of thought and originality, which were encouraged and rewarded. These new abilities opened vistas to the provincial farm boy student which delighted, surprised and stimulated him to a lifetime of scholarly pursuits.

His evolution was not always easy, however, for it sometimes involved painfully relinquishing long held cultural values in the process of acquiring new ones. In his senior year he was brought up short by a first-year girl student who took him to task — an experience he was never to forget — which he recorded in his private journal.[2]

> One day in early fall I spouted off some unorthodox views in the church class for college students. Madge Conyers, who was a freshman, very conservative… sincere and devout, came to see me the next week on campus, rather disturbed. I recall how she doubted that anyone could be so radical. She had heard of such things

> heretofore, but had not believed them. But she helped me, for she called to my attention something I had not thought of. "You must be more careful saying what you think," she told me." You hold positions of honor and influence[3] on the campus. Many college students look up to you as a model. You may be misunderstood and cause someone to lose their grip." I had underestimated my responsibility on this score, I realized. From then on I was careful about rash statements in public.

The summer after his graduation in 1939, Ford's all-male, college quartet had come to the attention of the nation's First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, who invited the group to entertain guests at the Hyde Park, New York, estate of President Franklin Roosevelt. The four traveled there by auto for what certainly became a. never-to-beforgotten climax to their singing career.

In September Ford returned to Arkansas to begin graduate studies at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, some 25 miles southeast of his family home near the village of Gentry. Just days later, on Sept. 9, 1939, Germany began the six year long World War II with a savage bombing during its invasion of Poland. The following spring the future Navy lieutenant, Ford Lewis, USNR 1942-1945, wrote in his private journal:[4]

> I shudder to think how easily we might get into it and millions of Americans[5] become acquainted with the horrors of war. Wars are anathema to me, the antithesis of everything noble, cultural, progressive or civilized… Mankind seems to inflict on himself, without rhyme or reason, these horrors. Internecine strife has been his long suit for ages.

On his return to the U.S., Ford completed graduate school and by the late 1950s was serving as Associate Minister in a Unitarian church.

47 Phyllis Gardiner and Planned Parenthood

In the early 1960s, long-term member Phyllis Gardiner[1] told her friends that "the more she thought about it, the angrier she became." For some time, she had known that certain influential persons in Sacramento had seen to it that tax revenues were not allowed to be spent for "planned parenthood information" for the local poor and socially disadvantaged, whereas persons who could pay found it readily available from physicians.

In 1963 she was in her second year as president of the Unitarian Women's Alliance. After quietly gathering support of key members, she asked permission of the Society Board of Directors for use of the church building as a meeting place for the Planned Parenthood Steering Committee, of which she was Chair and Evelyn Watters was Secretary.[2] That led to the formation of an independent Planned Parenthood Association of Sacramento Valley.

The "Minister's Report" to the Board of Directors in 1964 noted that "thanks to Phyllis Gardiner, the Planned Parenthood Association is being established in Sacramento. Lewis is chairman of the Advisory Committee."[3]

Before making arrangements for an abortion, women had to provide an endorsement by an ordained minister and a medical doctor. Rev. Ford Lewis and member James A. Affleck, M.D., undertook that responsibility. To get things under way, Rev. Lewis served a dinner in his home for a meeting of participating doctors. The 1964 Alliance president, Mrs. Carolyn Garrison, later revealed with amusement that she helped with the serving of the dinner as inconspicuously as possible because she was noticeably pregnant with her second child.

From those modest beginnings, the local Planned Parenthood Association grew into what became Planned Parenthood of Sacramento Valley, an organization whose library was later named in honor of Phyllis Gardiner.

Why Phyllis Gardiner?

Why was Phyllis the one person who guided that group into its creation? An insight into this question can be gleaned from a biography of her parents that she wrote and published in 1959.[4] Her father and mother, Edward and Margaret Gill Hyatt, were both graduates of Ohio State University in the 1870s — an era when it was rare for a woman to have such an education. In the late 1870s, only 10% of the students at Ohio State were women. As a junior there in 1879, Phyllis's mother was the first woman to enroll in a geology course. Her female cousin, also a student there, said to Margaret, "Maggie, you'll be the only girl in the Geology Department. What will people say?"

"They can say what they please," Maggie responded, looking dangerous. "The University is open to women and I'm entitled to take any course that's offered… I'll take geology and if anybody doesn't like it they can lump it."[5]

The Hyatts had come to California from Washington Territory when Edward Hyatt, a geologist, contracted tuberculosis of the spine and was advised that the only known treatment was to move to a desert climate. Consequently, the family moved to the arid, southeastern California desert where Edward and Maggie became school teachers.

Typical of the Hyatts was their custom of setting goals for themselves and carrying them to success, no matter how difficult. For example, in the summer of 1895, the family made a 53-day journey by covered wagon from Riverside County to Yosemite National Park and back. The horse-drawn wagon could only accommodate seven persons. Since there were nine of them, two children had to pedal bicycles alongside!

Their daughter Phyllis, born in 1902, came to Sacramento when Edward Hyatt was elected California State Superintendent of Public Instruction and took office here on January 1, 1907.

48 An Expanding Congregation

Throughout the 1960's, Sacramento's Unitarian congregation grew steadily. Knowledgeable church members had predicted that a newly-constructed, prosperous-appearing building would attract new members. That, in fact, seemed one factor in the rapid growth of membership. Another factor was a dynamic new minister who, at age 46, had young children. In 1962 there were more than 500 members; in 1963 more than 600, and by 1964, more than 700 plus several hundred enrolled school children. Membership would peak at 735 in 1966; thereafter, it declined gradually, dipping to 505 in 1970.

There was some discussion of adding an assistant minister to the staff. But it became evident that with current expenses and mortgage payments on the main building plus the anticipated construction of badly-needed church school facilities in the future, there was no realistic prospect of affording an assistant minister. As an alternative, church leaders considered encouraging formation of separate groups known as "fellowships" with the eventual objective that they might become full-fledged Unitarian congregations.

The first need of such groups would be to find a meeting place. The original church structures on 27th Street had not yet been sold because a rising real estate market made it advisable to hold onto that property as a growing asset. To help the congregation in this regard, the American Unitarian Universalist Association, which still held a mortgage on the original church issued in 1915, advanced more funds toward construction of the new facility on Sierra Boulevard.

The Central Unitarian Universalist Church

In 1961 the national Unitarian and Universalist organizations merged into the Unitarian Universalist Association. Probably because so little was known locally about Universalism, the Sacramento congregation decided

not to change its original designation at that time. Soon, another group would beat them to the use of the new name.

In May 1962 the minutes of the Board of Directors recorded, "Since February 1962 the old church has been made available without charge for Sunday meetings to the Central Unitarian Universalist Church, a recently incorporated group of 13 Unitarians."

On September 3 Carl Anderson was named chairman of the new congregation; in November Rev. Flint became its minister. By June of 1965, the Central U. U. Church was paying rent of $1 a a month for use of the old church on 27th Street and $10 for the use of two adjacent church school rooms. In a letter dated 26 April 1965 the First Unitarian Society was notified that the Central Unitarian Universalist Church of Sacramento planned to discontinue services as of 30 June 1965 and vacate the premises.

The South Area Fellowship

A Unitarian fellowship for the south area of Sacramento operated from June of 1965 until June of 1968. With encouragement of the First Unitarian Society,[1] some 40 families organized under the name South Area Fellowship.[2] In September the name was changed to the James Reeb Unitarian Fellowship and announced in the newsletter of the First Unitarian Society:

> THE JAMES REEB UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP invites all south area families to its first service on Sunday, Sept. 19, at 11 a.m. in the Unitarian Church building, 1415 27th Street. Dick Tarble will conduct a family service.[3]

Approximately 80 persons participated.[4] The new fellowship was named in memory of James Reeb,[5] a New England minister who had recently been beaten to death on the streets of Selma, Alabama, as a consequence of his participation in civil right demonstrations there. His death had come after being struck with a baseball bat wielded by an enraged Selma white man resentful of "outsiders" coming in support of racial justice there. The killer received only a token penalty for his crime and was soon freed to walk the streets of Selma.

In October of 1965 the First Unitarian Society published this formal notice of its relationship with the new fellowship:

> THE JAMES REEB UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP is now… a full fledged member of the Unitarian Universalist community, having received a nice assist from Ford Lewis, who conducted the Sunday service and presented the membership book to those who wished to join.[6]

What Were They Saying In The James Reeb Pulpit?

More than anything, members of the new fellowship were talking about social realities — how they were changing and how they were yet to be changed. Newspaper advertisements for the Reeb Fellowship printed on the "Church Page" of the Saturday edition of the *Sacramento Bee* listed Sunday service topics such as these:

> "Winds of Change" – Oct. 3, 1965
> "Toward One Humanity" – Nov. 4, 1965
> "Kenya, East Africa: a Developing Nation" – Nov.11, 1965
> "Understanding the California Grape Strike" – Dec.2, 1965
> "The Freedom Movement in Song" – April 2, 1966
> "Religion for Heretics" – Sept. 17, 1967
> "Viet Nam and Violence: a Veteran's View" – Jan. 21,1968
> "Dawn of the New Age" – Feb. 11,1968

An examination of seventy published sermon titles of the Fellowship between 1966 and 1968 indicates that the majority of services addressed Sociological or political issues or religious or moral values, with only a few on music, drama or fine arts.

The Reeb Fellowship was terminated in the summer of 1968 when it lost the use of the 27th Street "old church building" after it was sold to repay long term mortgages (one of which had existed since 1915) and to make current mortgage payments on the Sierra Boulevard property of the First Unitarian Society. The Fellowship had operated on an annual budget in the $3,000 range, which it had attempted to increase but with little success. When faced with the loss of its meeting place, it became obvious that the practical course was to dissolve the organization.

It had served a valued therapeutic function for those who so acutely needed a channel for constructively responding to the social impacts of the

"troubled times" of the 1960's, including the assassinations of President Kennedy, Senator Robert Kennedy, Rev. Martin Luther King, and others, not to mention the Viet Nam war, which increasingly appeared to be a futile enterprise.

The North Area Fellowship

The North Area Unitarian Fellowship was organized in 1964 after a series of informal discussions by several members of the First Unitarian Society. A major purpose of the new group was to increase involvement of uncommitted religious liberals.[7] A further concern was for more direct religious education of members' children. In August 1964 seventeen people rented the Fair Oaks Grange Hall to initiate their own religious education program. Classes began in September with 20 interested adults and about 25 children. In October, they elected officers and adopted by-laws, thus completing formation of the Fellowship. On November 29, Rev. Lewis presented the membership book, which 31 adults signed.[8] Average attendance in early December was 46 adults and 26 children. In May the new fellowship received its charter from the American Unitarian Association.

In a letter dated 9 June 1965, the president of the North Area Unitarians thanked the Directors of the First Society for their support:[9]

> On June 6, the N.A.U. Board unanimously and formally expressed its appreciation and gratitude to the First Society and its Board for the financial and moral support given the N.A.U. throughout this first year. We are the product of your larger foresight, and we plan to take our place with you in the future as a strong and creative group…
>
> Our relationship to the First Society will continue to be warm. The fact that we have reached our present healthful state is largely because of the encouragement of the First Society… We are especially grateful to Dr. Ford Lewis for his support.

49 The Sacramento Unitarian Centennial Celebration (1968)

The 100th Anniversary of the founding of the First Unitarian Church of Sacramento was marked by observances in December of 1967 and February of 1968. The first church service had been held on 22 December 1867, followed by a formal organization announced on 29 March 1868. In his Centennial Sermon of December 3rd, Rev. Ford Lewis recalled nights in his early youth on an Illinois farm carrying a lantern for his Dad:

> I had that duty from the time of my earliest memories, carrying the lantern while Dad was doing the chores on a late winter evening. It came as a revelation to me, when he asked me to walk behind him rather than in front of him, that a light held behind someone helps a lot more than [one] held in front. History is that backlighting which shows us the future in far greater fidelity than we could ascertain from any other source. Thus we undertake through historical back-lighting to illuminate our congregation in Sacramento.

The first Unitarians had arrived with the 1849 Gold Rush, most coming from the New England states where the Universalists had organized in 1793 and the Unitarians in 1825. By 1865 officials at Unitarian headquarters in Boston were aware of seventeen Unitarian families living in Sacramento, but there was no evidence that they had developed the feeling of community essential to the formation of long term, stable bonds. Later that year, when Rev. Henry Bellows of New York City initiated the collection of a $100,000 fund for expanding the Unitarian religion in the Pacific coast area, there were only two far-west congregations in existence. One was in Oregon City, Oregon (1844), and the other in San Francisco (1850). Subsequently, churches were established in Portland, Oregon (1866); San Jose, California (1866); Sacramento (1867-68) and San Diego

(1873). By 1890 a total of 13 congregations had been formed in the region.[1]

The American Unitarian Association subsidized the several Sacramento congregations from the first one in 1867 until at last the Society became self-sufficient in 1951 — an elapsed time of 84 years. One might well ask why Boston headquarters went along so patiently for so long with the "hard-luck" Sacramento congregations.

One possible reason may have been that Sacramento was useful as an inexpensive "proving ground" for young and inexperienced ministers. Three are known to have survived an early ministry in Sacramento before going on to long and successful careers in churches elsewhere.[2]

50 The Sixties: A Decade of Religious Education

by Helen Bradfield[1]

Children of the post-World War II "Baby Boom" filled our Church School during the 1960s. At first we were optimistic, feeling that life in the United States was getting better and more peaceful. Faith in the United Nations and in America's ability to solve all problems soon gave way to a period of social unrest and turmoil. However, parents were still searching for values for their children to, hopefully, carry them into a peaceful world. The non-theistic, humanitarian, cross-cultural approach to religion which our church offered appealed to many.

During this period, our enrollment boomed. In 1960 we had 33 adults involved in Sunday morning teaching and 103 families enrolled, with pupil attendance averaging over 100. By 1963, attendance averaged around 175 and by 1964 it was over 200. Excitement and commitment were in the air. Parents and teachers gathered regularly to discuss what they wanted their children to gain from church school. In 1960, as a result of four simultaneous discussion groups, parents decided that the two values they would most like to see given priority in the school were these:

1. Love, understanding, and respect for the dignity of each person.
2. Freedom of inquiry, integrity in the search for truth.

To help achieve these and other denominational values, Beacon Press provided us with a thrilling choice of books and curricula which sometimes captured the interest of adult participants even more than of children. First it was the New Religious Education Curriculum and then it became the New New Religious Education Curriculum, each of which had its own textbook. There were teachers' and parents' guides and other aids to help make the material come alive for both adults and children. The

emphasis was on helping children develop satisfying self-concepts, appreciate the wonders of science and of growing things, gain a background of their Judeo-Christian heritage as well as of other religions, and learn about and appreciate the impressive, though little known, history of Unitarian Universalism. A particularly popular book for both adults and children was *The Church across the Street* because of the field trips and visits it suggested to other churches. In turn, we were visited by youth from other churches.

In the early 1960s classes met in every available nook and cranny of the main church building - in the kitchen, on stage, in alcoves and in the cottage which later was torn down. The first of the three school buildings was completed in 1961 but was soon overcrowded, even with double sessions. Eventually, we rented a large trailer with space for two classes and placed it beside the building. The second and third of the three school buildings were completed in 1966.

During most of the decade, we had double sessions for preschool through high school, but still often had waiting lists. Parents were expected to help in the classrooms and attend parent classes at 9:30 on Sunday morning and, occasionally, during the week. Each class had a parent coordinator who helped the teacher in many ways, such as by organizing field trips and social gatherings. Festivals of celebration were held from time to time, either on Sunday or during the week — Easter, Christmas and United Nations Days were memorable. Classes met together for group sings and assemblies, frequently with special guests from the Church or community.

An important way in which adults were involved was membership on the Religious Education Committee, which met regularly to help plan and develop the philosophy for the School. Besides the Minister and R.E. Director, there were ten members on the committee in 1965-66. Adults were involved in writing and publishing a weekly newsletter titled *The Juniortarian*, for and about the Church School, mailed regularly with the church newsletter. It contained information about classes, contributions from both children and adults, and philosophic insights into religion.

Two youth groups were active during most of the 1960s — the Junior Unitarian Youth (JUI) for junior high youth and Liberal Religious Youth (LRY) for high school students. Each group had adult advisors, usually a couple, who were often parents of one of the youths. They met regularly either at the Church or in homes and provided many hours of discussion

about personal and religious concerns along with much social activity. In May 1962, 100 youths and 26 adults from the Northern California Federation of Religious Liberals attended a weekend conference at our Church. This quotation was displayed: "Champion the right to be yourself, dare to be different and to set your own life. Follow your own star."

As the 60s drew to a close and social unrest widened, attendance in the Unitarian Church Schools throughout the country dropped dramatically. Our post-war babies were growing up, parents were becoming involved in many issues, more mothers were becoming employed and we were rethinking many of our values and traditions. While the curriculum from Boston attempted to keep pace with the concerns and changing values of the era, it no longer seemed so essential that children go to "Sunday School".

By the end of the 60s, attendance in our Church School was dropping rapidly. Beacon Press was devising new and relevant materials to meet changing needs of churches throughout the country. But the enthusiasm and involvement of the decade were over. At the beginning of the decade, we had thought we had many answers, but by the end we were not so sure.

51 An Overview of the 1960s Congregation

Most Sacramento Unitarians of the Sixties preferred to form their own values rather than passively accepting authoritative tenets. This may explain why, while regular Sunday services were the central assembly point for the congregation, only a third or less of members regularly attended them. This "core" of the congregation consisted of mature persons in their middle years who were old enough to have experienced the "Great Depression" of the 1930s or at least to have been aware of the stress that it had put on their parents. They had also experienced the World War II years. The other two-thirds of adult members (i.e., those who skipped church on Sundays) were between 26 and 51. It appears the "generation gap" that was dividing American society was present to some degree in the church, as well.

Participation in small interest groups became an important feature of the Society. An elaborate structure was created which provided for member participation in the operation of the congregation. The 1969 Membership Directory[1] required four 8 1/2 by 11 pages to list and describe the 58 activities for which 70 laypersons had identified and assigned responsibilities. There were eight staff positions, four laypersons assigned to Denominational Affairs, eighteen on the Educational Council, five on the Finance Council, eight on the Membership Committee, fourteen laypersons involved with Program Planning, five on the Property Management Council, and eight on the Worship Council.

Most members shared two common experiences — they had grown up somewhere east of California, and they had settled here by choice, in hope of better economic opportunities. Coupled with that was the recognition that they were in the capital city of California with its concentration of government agencies employing persons qualified through civil service examination in specialized occupations for state, county, city and regional

federal agencies. This meant stability of employment and good prospects of retirement benefits — which most of their parents had never had. To qualify, however, they would need a higher education.

It was not by chance that the new church had included in its construction plans a library and small, separate bookstore opening into the foyer. Later, the bookstore was expanded into a removable sales display of books and periodicals which could be set up in the foyer before and after the Sunday service. It became commonplace to find that members were participating in continuing education classes, both formal and informal, for both practical and purely personal reasons.

Increasing Social Stresses

The Sixties were one of the most turbulent periods in American history. The new Sierra Boulevard facility had been envisioned as a tranquil haven, a refuge from the troubled world which was so vividly portrayed on nightly television newscasts suddenly made even more dramatic with the increased sale of color TV's. But as the decade unfolded, the national ambiance would bring growing stresses reaching into the very fabric of the nation's social structures, including Sacramento's Unitarian congregation. These were some of the most significant events of that period:

June 1963 – The Supreme Court ruled that reciting the Lord's Prayer or reading Bible verses in public schools was unconstitutional.

August 1963 – Two hundred thousand people in an outdoor meeting in Washington, D.C. heard Dr. Martin Luther King deliver his dramatic "I Have a Dream" speech.

November 1963 – President John Kennedy was shot to death in Dallas, Texas.

1965 – The U.s. sent armed forces halfway around the world to bomb Vietnam, and the first American combat troops arrived there.

March 1965 – The Civil Rights March of 25,000 people in Selma, Alabama, was guarded by 4,000 armed U.S. troops.

August 1965 – The Watts area of Los Angeles saw riots of Black residents that resulted in 25 deaths and $200 million in property damage.

Summer of 1967 – During the "Summer of Love" in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district, hippies filled the streets day and night. They wore beads and bright colors and flowers. They had sex whenever and with whomever they pleased. They smoked pot and dropped acid and danced and laughed and played.[2]

April 4, 1968 – Martin Luther King, Jr. was publicly shot to death in Memphis, Tennessee; by mid-April, violence broke out in 125 cities in 29 states.

June 5,1968 – Senator Robert Kennedy was publicly shot to death in Los Angeles.

November 13-15, 1969 – In Washington, D.C., 250,000 people demonstrated against the Vietnam War. It had become the longest in U.S. history, with 39,000 U.S. dead, 255,000 U.S. wounded, and over 500,000 Americans troops fighting there.

During the Vietnam War, young men in certain categories, such as married undergraduate students and graduate students, were exempt from the draft. Within the congregation, information on these exemption provisions was provided quietly — but not secretly — to all who requested it.

As the decade progressed, it became obvious that the former custom of declaration of war by Congress had become obsolete. Instead, the United States chose to make war in eastern Asia continuously, both covertly and openly. The Viet Nam war continued throughout the decade, and it became increasingly obvious that casualties were disproportionately high among poor and minority draftees. By the latter part of the decade, young Americans were openly defying draft laws by fleeing to Canada or elsewhere, often with financial support from their families.

Sacramento did not escape the newly developing drug scene that swept up many of America's young people in the 1960's. A member of the Society from 1966 to 1975, Dr. Donald D. Baker, was a pioneer in the field of free medical clinics when he founded the Aquarian Effort Free Medical Clinic in Sacramento in 1969. He also worked at the Aquarian Effort detoxification unit.[3]

The availability and widespread use of oral contraceptives in the 1960's was one of the most important social developments of the decade.[4] Their

introduction was comparable to a sudden switch from horseback to jet plane. Few events during the past 20 years have facilitated women's emancipation more than "the Pill" or so quickly secularized the Catholic Church in Western Europe and the United States.

Many American families found themselves split along generational lines in their reaction to the "sex, drugs, and rock 'n roll" not to mention the long hair and funny clothes of the Sixties "anti-establishment" counterculture. No doubt, conflicts arose in some Unitarian families and groups, as well. But Sacramento's Unitarians were surely united in supporting the anti-war, pro-civil rights struggles of that decade's Youth Movement.

The Minister Retires

By the spring of 1970, Rev. Ford Lewis had informed the Ministerial Relations Committee that he was retiring from the ministry. At a special meeting of the Board of Directors on 27 April 1970[5] it was reported that thirteen members of the congregation had agreed to be candidates for election to a committee of seven for the purpose of selecting a new minister. The election was to be held in the forthcoming Annual Meeting on 17 May 1970. Thus, the apparatus for a thorough and deliberate selection of the next minister was put into place without delay.

In July the congregation honored Rev. Lewis and wife Barbara with an evening dinner, held at the Dante Club on Fair Oaks Boulevard, in appreciation of their decade of devoted service.

Part Six — 1970–1984

by Dr. Irma West

When Rodney Cobb retired as Historian of the Sacramento Unitarian Universalist Society in 1990, he asked me if I would be interested in succeeding him. Before I knew what I was getting into, I was appointed and agreed to compile the next segment of the history, beginning with the retirement of Reverend Ford Lewis in 1970 and ending with the resignation of Reverend Theodore Webb in late 1983.

I began by taping interviews with Marguerite and Ted Webb and some of the members of the congregation who had been active during the 1970's. In addition to sharing experiences and insights, they delved into their closets and attics for records I needed. For their generous help, I thank Anna Andrews, Helen and Jim Bradfield, Genevieve and Rodney Cobb, Julia and Charles Diggs, Dorothy Engelstad, Lila Gibson, Ferris and Mike Weber, and the Webbs. Dr. Josiah Bartlett was generous in answering my letters inquiring about his interim ministry following the resignation of Reverend Lewis. Next I descended upon the church office where I was introduced to old files in a back room. Jack Davidson, Business Manager, retrieved several boxes of records under the stage for me. Despite gaps in the most important records, such as the Unigrams, Annual Reports, and Directories, there was enough information — a lot more than if I had been dealing with a period 50 or 100 years ago. The Alliance had the most complete records. Thank you, Janet Fleur and Genevieve Cobb, for providing them.

The more work I did on this history, the more respect I accumulated for Rodney Cobb, who documented the first hundred years of this Society in such a comprehensive and interesting manner. Further, I am an amateur in both history and writing. I apologize in advance to all those Unitarian Universalists who are eminent educators and writers [and] could have produced a more polished document. — Irma M. West

52 Search for a New Minister

When Rev. Ford Lewis resigned as minister in the fall of 1970, Dr. Josiah Bartlett was called as the Society's first interim minister. He was also the first interim minister for the Unitarian Universalist Association. His pioneer efforts were the beginning of a new kind of temporary leadership which included not only pro-tem ministry, but consultation with congregations to work out their problems. Since that time, a cadre of accredited Interim Ministers specially trained as consultants have served the Association under the leadership of Dr. Bartlett. During the ensuing twenty years, he has served as Interim Minister or consultant to 55 congregations all over the United States and Canada.

Dr. Bartlett began as a Unitarian minister in Ohio and Washington State. He was then asked to lead and rebuild Starr King School at Berkeley, California, as a Unitarian Universalist professional graduate school for the ministry. After putting into place an innovative curriculum and taking the school into the Theological Union, a cluster of nine seminaries and the University of California, he saw it acclaimed as a model for the denomination. Dr. Bartlet has served at all levels from parish to district to continental office. He has been a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association Board and Chair of its Commission on Appraisal. Dr. Bartlett and his wife, Dr. Laile Bartlett, a university sociology teacher, have collaborated in their many writings and in raising their four children. Their Moment of Truth is a book about the liberal religious movement as is their *A Religion for the Non Religious: An Overview of Unitarian Universalism*.

Dr. Bartlett came to Sacramento during the Vietnam War, when Richard Nixon was President. In his report of December 1, 1970, to the congregation, Dr. Bartlett made a number of observations and recommendations. He stated:

> The Sacramento Church has almost unlimited potential. It has a spacious, beautiful strategic site. It has an attractive plant. It has a large and talented congregation and an even larger constituency. The city is waking up to the fact that it is no longer a small town, and by the same token, is at a critical decision-point in every aspect. The quality of life is at issue.
>
> At the same time, the Sacramento Unitarian Church seems to be stuck in a rut: the impression it gives, to itself and to the city, is of a middle-aged, middle class, White listening to sermons or interesting discussions and little else.
>
> One of the critical facts about the Sacramento church is that it has consulted with so many experts… conducted so many self-surveys, held so many church-and-minister surveys, etc. — with almost no results. It somehow goes heedlessly, blindly on.

His impression was that he saw "a low degree of commitment. a very high degree of apathy, and very little sense of a goal other than keeping the present wheels turning." He urged the congregation to think big, improve and maintain its property and rethink its budget process, and above all, promote unity and diversity,

At the annual meeting of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento on May 17, 1970, the following members were elected to serve on the Committee to Recommend a New Minister: Aubrey Harrington, Arthur Huntley, Lynn Jensen, Kenneth Norberg, Lyle Parkinson, Hortense Poppe, and RobertTaylor. Jackie Peterson soon replaced Lyle Jensen. At the first meeting, Dr. Huntley was elected Chairman; Hortense Poppe, Secretary. Rosemary Watson of the West Coast Region Unitarian Association served as ministerial consultant. The first undertaking was to design and distribute a questionnaire to determine what the membership wanted in a minister. At the second meeting, the Committee decided that four votes represented a quorum and that deliberations would not be revealed outside the meetings. The Committee received "Recommended Procedure for Churches Seeking a Minister" from the Department of Ministry in Boston.

There was a 15% response to the questionnaire, the results of which were summarized into four points: 1) A minister who could serve as a catalyst for all types of membership was needed. 2) Performance at the 11 :00 a.m.

Sunday service was most important. 3) The new minister should be able to attract young people in the 21–35 year range, a group lacking in membership. 4) The minister should not feel threatened by lay people running the Sunday service.

An unidentified member of the Committee to Recommend a New Minister offered these comments about the survey:

> The Committee to Recommend a New Minister has been given a charge which, while probably not impossible, is at least improbable. When the results of the survey were tabulated, it became immediately obvious that we either wanted a minister or we didn't. If we did, it was clear that he must be a man (or maybe a woman). He must be ... a radical kind of conservative (or was it a conservative kind of radical?). He must appeal to each element or group within our society, but — equally certain — he must remain aloof from all the others. He must never proselytize, but he must be able to fill our auditorium with interested and cooperative member listeners who will never go to sleep during the sermon and can fill our coffers to overflowing with the wherewithal to carry out our objectives (whatever they might be at the moment).
>
> And, speaking of sermons, he must be able to prepare and deliver spontaneously at least eight learned, erudite, philosophical discussions each month — of course, in words of four letters so they can be understood by those other members of the Society, who, of course, need it the most. He naturally must accomplish this without being in the pulpit, for his talents are much needed and must be used in support of the R.E. (Religious Education) Program, or for administrative duties, or some other phase of the Society's activities.

To supplement the questionnaire, well-publicized rap sessions were held after four Sunday services. As a result, a seven-point profile of a minister to serve the Society was drafted and sent to the Unitarian District office and headquarters in Boston. Much of October, 1970, was spent compiling the "Prospectus for a Minister, First Unitarian Society, Sacramento, California". All aspects of the Society's activities were covered, including reports from each of the Committee chairpersons and information about the community.

This prospectus listed 562 members of the Society, with 250 pledging units. Budget for FY'70 was $81,651, with the minister's annual salary given as

$16,323. Eighteen information sheets from ministerial candidates were soon received, from which eleven candidates were selected. Members of the Committee to Recommend a New Minister taped interviews with the candidates by phone or in person as well as taking what opportunities were available to hear them speak from the pulpit. One candidate was then selected to visit the Society for the week of May 9–16, 1971, during which time he attended a number of functions to acquaint him with the Society.

53 The New Minister

Reverend Theodore A. (Ted) Webb

Rev. Theodore A, Webb

Ted Webb was born in Bangor, Maine, in 1918 to Harold and Annie Webb. Harold Webb was a teacher and came from a family of Universalists. When he became an invalid, his wife took over as breadwinner, but soon her health also failed. Despite help from relatives, it was necessary for Ted to quit high school in his sophomore year to seek work, which he found in a factory in Norway, Maine.

He worked his way through Bangor Theological School, receiving his Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1945 and his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Connecticut in 1948. He became an ordained Universalist minister in 1945 and later served as student minister or minister in Universalist churches in Maine, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New York before becoming Executive Director of the Unitarian Universalists' Massachusetts Bay District in Boston (1962-1970).

At the first church where he was a student minister, he established a public library, and at his second church, he published and edited a denominational magazine. At his third church, he helped a group of citizens build a new school. At his fourth church, he housed a group of Peace Walkers on their way to Moscow who had been denied access to his

own church - all of this under the watchful eye of the police. His next move was to Sacramento where he served as minister for twelve years.

In 1942, Rev. Webb had married Marguerite Wilson from Callas, Maine, a public school music teacher majoring in piano and organ at the Julliard School of Music in New York. Their four children, who were young adults when the Webbs came to Sacramento, are Roberta, Christine, Theodore Brown, and Noel.

The Webbs found the Society to be exciting and diverse, but were surprised to find Sacramento so conservative. Rev. Webb's vision of the role of the church was to be the extended family of the members — the small-town environment missing in the lives of so many who had pulled up their roots to come to California.

54 Administrative Structure of the Church

In 1974 the Board of Directors presented a statement of intent and an administrative chart for the Society. This chart listed about forty committees or activities organized into nine categories, one for each member of the Board. The Statement of Intent read as follows:

1. It is the intent of the Board of Directors of the First Unitarian Society of Sacramento in adopting the attached Administrative Structure Chart that the Board of Directors:

2. Reaffirms the principle of freedom of the pulpit for the Minister as defined in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Society, and in keeping with the historical traditions of the Unitarian Universalist movement.

3. Recognizes that the congregation, in responding to the recommendations of its Board-appointed committees, is ultimately responsible for the professional services of the Minister and that the Minister is similarly responsible to the congregation for the performance of those services.

4. Recognizes the role that the Minister plays as an ex-officio member of all committees of the Society, with the exception of those dealing with his own professional services and the responsibility of that role of providing guidance, leadership, and direction to the various programs, services, and operations of the Society.

5. Recognizes the dual nature of the administrative organization of the First Unitarian Society, in that both the staff and the various Board-appointed committees have a joint responsibility for administering the programs, services, and operations of the Society as defined by the policy established by the Board of Directors acting on behalf of the Congregation.

6. Recognizes that the chart describes the legal, administrative, and authoritative organization of the Society for the conduct of its operations in concert with the above statements.

Board members were: Ann Antos, President; Marjorie Ryall, Secretary; Gretchen Cooper, Treasurer; Rev. Webb, Minister; Ann Smaage, Director of Life Education; and Committee Chairs Erwin Cooper, Jean Page, Bill McCartney, Joye Sweet, Eliot Sharpe, Marion Murphy, Don Dormeyer, Ann Garey, and Alan Boyd.

55 The Religious Education Program

At the time of Rev. Webb's arrival, the Religious Education (R.E.) Program was planning to offer its seventh grade Sunday School classes a 6–8 week course in sex education called "About Your Sexuality". It had been carefully formulated by educators in the national offices of the Unitarian Universalist Association and differed from other courses in its frank and honest answers to questions about subjects youth really wanted to know about — such as love making, homosexuality, masturbation, abortion, and contraceptives. Trained teachers provided a comfortable setting where students could bring their questions and "puzzlements". Explicit visuals were available. The intent was to build positive attitudes and values based on accurate information.

The program attracted local and national publicity. Featured in the local press were interviews with Rev. Webb and Helen Bradfield, Religious Education Consultant. Although the program pleased the students and the congregation, some Sacramento citizens were irate.

Lorene McDowell wrote:

> Until last night, I thought I had read everything in the paper! Sex education in a church at the eleven o'clock worship hour! I presume you are not only going to teach normal sex but the deneration (sic) of sex! At our church at the eleven o'clock hour, the boys and girls are not just taught but plainly told that they are sinners and need to be born again! (see Bible — John, Chapter 3) I suggest as a refresher course for you, Rev. Webb, and the cultured Mrs. Bradfield, [to] read Genesis, Chapter 2. [Also,] please don't neglect to read Romans, Chapter One. As a Sunday School teacher of 10, 11, and 12 year olds, this is an abmonition to me, and I assure [you,] it is an abmonition to the Lord.

Another letter to Rev. Webb from Iris Moynahan reads:

> In your plans for sex education for 7th graders, I sincerely hope you will think again. I hope that you and Mrs. Bradfield, Religious Education Consultant, will realize these are young minds and hardly in a position to know which form of sex is more attractive. I shudder to think what these young students will get out of these "explicit" recordings of two homosexuals explaining their situation. May God have mercy on you and Mrs. Bradfield if you go ahead as planned. I hope the parents of these children wake up and refuse to allow their children to attend.

Finally, Ainni Lee warned:

> What a shame and a disgrace [that] a supposed-to-be church would stoop to the gutter in this respect. Would you read what the word of God says about such: Romans, Chapter 24, 25, 26, 27, 28; Verses 30, 31, and 50. As you see, Hell will be full of people of your like. It makes a person sick that a church of this sort would even profess to know anything about the true God. A Warning.

This particular sex education program was not repeated despite its success. It was preempted by television and the Sexual Revolution.

Helen Bradfield, the Religious Education Consultant. had been Religious Education Director during the previous decade. She was a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley (UCB) and later studied at the University of Chicago, where she became a social worker and met and married her husband Jim. He was serving as a Marine during war time, but had previously been an English teacher at the University of Kansas City. After he received his Master's and Doctorate in Education from UCB, they came to Sacramento in 1948, where he became Assistant Professor of Education and Chair of the Department of Behavioral Science in Education at California State University at Sacramento (CSUS). In 1970, Mrs. Bradfield obtained her Master's in Anthropology from CSUS. Her thesis was on the Sikh community in Yuba City. The Bradfields have five children.

In 1973 Mrs. Anna Andrews Smaage became the first elected Program Director for adult and child religious education. The mother of two daughters, she had been an active church member, having served on the Board of Directors and as President of the Alliance. A former teacher, Mrs. Smaage had earned her BA in Home Economics and Art and her MA in

Behavioral Science in Education at CSUS. She was raised as a Methodist in Southern California and had taught there before going to Georgia, where she joined the Unitarian Church in Atlanta. She came to Sacramento in 1962. As Program Director, she was paid $600 a month for part-time work (but it turned out to be full time). She served in this capacity for five years. During that time the R.E. student fee was five dollars.

A ten-member R.E. Council met to set policy and make long-range plans. Rita Halowwa, a CSUS senior majoring in Early Childhood Education, was Preschool Director. In 1974, the national Unitarian Universalist Directory listed 153,750 adult members and 51,655 children enrolled in Religious Education. The Sacramento Society claimed 572 adult members and 130 children in R.E.

Several pages of detailed descriptions of the activities and subjects studied by each grade level have been omitted here. Children's topics included photography, Buddhism, "Warm Fuzzies," death, environmental awareness, drug abuse, native American mask-making, gardening, Judaism, and many more. Adult classes included yoga, bridge, parenting, intimacy, stained glass making, and disco dancing.

In 1979, a search committee chaired by Elizabeth Fraser nominated Virginia Stephens for R.E. Director. She was a ministerial student at Starr King Theological School in Berkeley with a BA in Psychology and Education as well as R.E. Director at the San Jose UU Society. She reared six children as a single mother.

In 1980, Joel and Janice Lamphear were co-chairs of the R.E. Committee, and Virginia Stephens returned as Program Director. Following a national trend, attendance at Sunday School was diminishing. There were now only about sixty students, whereas there had been more than twice that number during the previous decade.

Karen Hawkins was Religious Education Program Director for 1982–1983. The Adult Program featured a wide variety of subjects. Anyone could propose to teach a course and if it was approved. The course would be announced in the *Unigram*. If there was sufficient response, the course would be scheduled.

56 Alliance

The Alliance is the oldest of the groups operating within the Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento. It dates back to 1889, when the women held a Christmas Bazaar and produced a cook book, *Cookery in the Golden State*, a copy of which can be found in the California Room of the State Library. During periods when the Society was not functioning, the women still met. "Women's Alliance" first appears in Society records in 1912. Administration was through a Board of Directors consisting of elected officers and chairs of standing committees. Its by-laws and budget were separate from the Society's. The Alliance became a member of the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation (UUWF) when it was formed. Its objectives were service, friendship, and education. Except during the summer, monthly meetings were most often held on the morning of the second Thursday of each month. There were occasional evening meetings. Lunch and/or coffee was served at the daytime meetings and light refreshments at evening meetings. The programs included an inspirational reading and a speaker. There was usually a yearly bus trip, a Christmas Bazaar, and a May fund raiser.

A detailed, year-by-year description of Alliance activities and finances from 1970 to 1984 has been condensed below.

Alliance leaders during the Seventies and early Eighties included Bobby Stewart, Win Kennedy, Anna Smaage, Jean Page, Elizabeth Lavelle, Susan Boyd, Ann Antos, Norma Brown, Bobby Kramer, Lila Gibson, Mary Davis, Marjorie Ryall, Mary Stanton, and Karen Zelle. Here are just a few of the topics addressed by Alliance speakers during those years:

- The Plight of Out-of-Work Farm Workers Aquarian Effort
- Hopi and Navajo Indians
- Expanding Women's Awareness
- Body Language

- People of the Far East
- Mastering Your Own Finances
- Photography
- Travels in Peru
- Recovering Alcoholics & AA
- Patchwork Quilts
- Sacramento Children's Home
- Archaeology and Us
- Nutrition & Preventive Medicine

Members enjoyed outings to the Filoli Gardens, Jack London Park, and the Club Lido in the Sacramento River Delta. In 1972, over the objections of at least one member, Alliance leaders decided to serve alcohol at an "art and wine tasting" held at the Society and cosponsored by the B'nai B'rith Sisterhood.

From the beginning of 1970 to the end of 1984, Alliance membership grew about thirty percent. Men were invited to join, and Rev. Webb was the first to do so. The objectives of the organization (service, friendship, and education) were well met. Service to the Society was expressed by doubling the monthly pledge from $50 to $100 and giving more than $3,000 in equipment and furnishings to the Society. Members gave extra donations from craft sales and assisted at Society functions. The yearly budget more than doubled. Annual dues to the UUWF increased from $190 to $680, and annual donations of $100 each to the Starr King School and the UUWF Clara Barton Camp were initiated. Service to the community included food and money to charitable organizations and support to groups fostering women's issues and peace programs. Friendship was reflected by the many members of long standing and the steady increase in membership. Education was a major attraction at the luncheon meetings where a variety of subjects were presented by informed speakers. Field trips offered another opportunity for friendship and education.

57 Forum

The Forum was organized by the Rev. Ted Webb, with Dr. Mark Tool serving as the first Director during 1971–72. Ben Franklin and Mike Weber assumed direction later. The group met in the auditorium at 9:30 a.m. on Sundays except during July and August. A committee selected topics and speakers, presided at meetings, passed the plate, and took care of finances. The 1984 committee included Helen Bradfield, Betty Chmaj, Gloria Cox, John Crettol, Esther Franklin, Aron Gilmartin, John Menz, Jack Moore, Marion Murphy, Dr. Frank Pratt, and John Radu. During the 1980s, the Forum collected about $1,500 from its audience each year and incurred $300 in annual expenses. Proceeds went to the Society's budget.

Forum speakers volunteered their services. They were selected for expertise in a particular field. Because of the Society's proximity to two major universities and several junior colleges, the speakers were often professors. Others came from state or local government or the Sacramento religious community. They all contributed to the variety of timely and noteworthy subjects which made the Forum a popular educational experience.

Some notable Forum speakers during this period were:

- Phil Isenberg on "Cops and Liberals"
- Joe Serna on "Cesar Chavez of the United Farm Workers"
- Jay Miller, Executive Director of the ACLU of Northern California, on "The Case for Impeachment" of Richard Nixon
- Dr. Angus Wright on "Smoldering Racial Problems in South Africa"
- A representative of the Sacramento Committee to Overturn the Bakke Decision on "Affirmative Action"
- Mario Obledo, California Secretary for Health and Welfare, on his plan to have more Mexican nationals admitted to the United States
- Prof. Mansour Farhang on "Revolution in Iran and u.s. Foreign Policy"

- Ted Ruhig on "The Politics of Old Age"
- Mary Tsukamoto on her internment in a concentration camp during WW II
- Dr. Felecia Stewart on "Human Rights and Reproduction"
- Dr. John McFadden arguing against the U.S. policy in EI Salvador and Nicaragua
- Assemblyman Lloyd Connelly on "Our Environment and Toxic Waste"
- Rev. Robert Moon on "Religion and the 1984 Election"
- James Kelso, insurance chair for the retired teachers of California, on our "Health Care Cost Containment Problem"

58 Servetus Club

The Servetus Club for single adults was first established informally in the 1950s as a subgroup of the Unitarian Society of Sacramento. The first officers were elected in 1958. The Club was named in honor of the Father of Unitarianism, Michael Servetus, a Catholic priest who was burned at the stake during the Reformation because of his statements against the prevailing religious doctrine. The Servetus Club provided a friendly environment for singles so that they could form friendships and pursue social, charitable, educational, and religious activities. The Club was highly recommended by health professionals in the community to those who needed support while undergoing traumatic changes in lifestyle, such as divorce or death of a spouse. The group served as a home for those who felt left out of the usual social arena geared to “couples”. Servetus was considered the most desirable, friendly, and dignified of the singles groups, largely because of its sponsorship. Furthermore, the Club was generous in its fund raising activities for the Society.

The Servetus Club had its own by-laws and was governed by a Board of Directors which consisted of its President, Vice President, and Treasurer, all of whom were members of the Society. One of its officers represented Servetus on the Society's Board of Directors. The designation “Servetus” was restricted to the Unitarian Society and was protected by registration with the California Secretary of State in 1970 and 1980. Before that time, some singles groups outside the Society had been appropriating the name. There have been several other Unitarian Servetus Clubs in Northern California from time to time; one was in San Jose.

Membership in 1970 was 148 and rose to about 200 in the Seventies, coming down to 100 in 1983. Annual dues were $12. The group administered its own budget and bank account. There were no special requirements for membership, but if anyone misbehaved or harassed another, the perpetrator was expelled. Members were not required to

belong to the Society, but about one-third did. This arrangement became an "outreach" program, attracting new members to the Society.

Activities included a newsletter, monthly potluck, lunch at a local restaurant after Sunday service (often at Food Circus in Arden Fair Mall), holiday parties, Friday "Happy Hour," theater parties, picnics, bridge, and tours. A monthly dance held in the auditorium attracted from 150 to 250 persons and served as the major fund raiser. The Club raised about $1000 annually for the Society.

Dorothy Engelstad served most often as Servetus President as well as in other official capacities during 1970–85. Many parties and other gatherings were held at her home. Alta Hitchcock, Jack Carpenter, Bob Hamilton, Harry Berkholtzer, Ev Morrow, and Marc DeLose also served often as officers during this period.

Dorothy Engelstad was born on a North Dakota farm in 1918, where she went to a country school with her four sisters and two brothers. Over the years, they attended several denominations of Protestant churches. When she was sixteen, the family moved to another farm in Alberta, Canada, where her family still lives. She stayed with her aunt in Denver, Colorado, while attending business college and subsequently obtained a job as secretary for a Presbyterian Sunday school. She married into the Air Force during World War II. Her three children came along as the family traveled from France to Hawaii to Texas and several places in California before coming to Sacramento in 1960. She enrolled at American River College and went on to become a high school teacher, receiving her teaching credential and B.A. from Sacramento State University. After teaching for two years at Roosevelt High, she accepted a job with the State Department of Education's Commission on Teacher Credentialing, where she spent twenty-one years before her retirement in 1986. Her divorce brought her into the Servetus Club in 1964, where she found the support and friendship needed to rebuild her life. In the ensuing years, she returned to Servetus the help she had received by serving as President for five years and holding office more often than any other member. She joined the Society in 1966 and was active in its affairs, becoming the first elected President of the Board of Directors in 1983-86.

59 Notes from the Unigram and Annual Reports

These notes have been condensed considerably. Even so, they give a flavor of what day-to-day life in the Society was like during the Seventies and Eighties.

1973

- Don Dormeyer was Board President.
- Volunteers led by Barbara Larkin and Genevieve and Rodney Cobb adopted trees and flower beds on the campus.
- The minister's salary, including benefits, was $17,031. The Christmas Bazaar netted $1225.09.
- A foreign film club was organized.
- Todd and Rami White moved into the cottage on campus.
- Dr. Robert West, UUA President, spoke on the Justice Department's case against Beacon Press for publishing the Pentagon Papers.

1974

- Abe Ohanian of the UU Service Committee spoke at a January service about help for the Spanish Civil War refugees.
- Loudspeakers (insured) were stolen from the auditorium. The 18-30 group met at Patt Herdklotz's home to discuss ESP.
- A music committee conducted a preference survey which showed 85% liked to sing, 50% preferred folk songs, 66% preferred to listen to popular and folk songs, and 80% liked instrumental music.
- The UU Repertory Theatre presented "The Forthright Female" by Carolyn Garrison, which featured Marlene Parkinson's music.

- Smoking was not permitted at the duplicate bridge sessions organized by Roger Barr. The Decision-Making Class decided to go sailing on Lake Folsom.
- Only four replies were received from the congregation in response to a request for opinions on charging membership dues.
- Society members attended a protest rally against inflation at the Civic Center in San Francisco.

1975

- Three "Fat Lib" workshops were scheduled in January.
- The Society received a call for volunteers to care for orphans from Saigon expected at the Presidio and Travis AFB. Bess Young and other UUS women responded.
- The Society's duplex at 2449 Sierra Blvd. was for rent at $185/mo. Food and clothing were collected for the farm workers.
- William McCartney was elected President of the Board; Ben Franklin, Vice President; and Harvey Gabler, Finance Director.
- Rev. Webb wrote a letter to Billy Graham objecting to the latter's pro-war remarks about Vietnam. Appreciation was expressed to Joan Lee, music chair for the past six years.

1976

- Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance was the subject of a class by Ned Budlong. Another sale of services auction was held.
- A group dealing with "Decompression from Fundamentalist Beliefs" planned four meetings. The average Sunday plate collection was $75.
- The Board voted to obtain a liquor license from the State before any wine or other alcoholic beverages were sold on church property.
- Lila Gibson chaired the successful annual fundraiser "The Merrie Faire".
- Newly elected Board members were Ed Schneider, President; Ben Franklin, Vice President; Polly Watson, Secretary; and Bill Robertson, Treasurer.
- Rev. Webb took a sabbatical from August '76 to June '77.

1977

- Hattie Peterson, chair of the Society's Service Committee, called for members who could respond to a prisoner's request for a correspondent. Hattie married Robert Harris on August 12th.
- Newscaster Stan Atkinson spoke about his trip to Cuba at a special evening meeting in the auditorium. Sacramento Our School operated during the week out of the R.E. buildings. It was a nonprofit providing school and day care for preschoolers and grade schoolers through grade three.
- A September Sunday sermon by Rev. Webb was entitled "The Legitimate Heir to the God Who is Dead". Don Dormeyer refinished the grand piano! He was also Chef Dormeyer, cooking many a dinner for Society functions.
- At UU General Assembly, a resolution was passed to eliminate sexism wherever it was found in the denomination.

1978

- The Adult Education program offered a variety of classes, including "Assertiveness Training" and "Communication" by Ruby Campbell, "Intimate Relationships" by Shiela Sugarman, and "Unorthodox Treatment of Cancer" by John Radu.
- The Society had 608 members, a pledge income of $55,649, averaging $91.52 per pledging unit. The current budget was $8,000 short due to unkept pledges.
- A leadership retreat was held at Sly Park in June.
- "Myths about Homosexuality" were discussed by David Fanning at the July 30th Sunday service. The Society's budget was finally in the black.
- Shirley Brainin reported that the refugee family which the Society has "adopted" was learning English and the father had a job.

1979

- Solving financial problems and increasing publicity were the highest priorities for the Society, according to a Board survey.
- A meditation room was opened.
- Dr. Ford Lewis became Minister Emeritus in accordance with a resolution passed by the Society.

- George Anderson was commended for installing the rear fence, the irrigation system, and other work on campus.
- The Society had a radio program — the Cambridge Forum, on KZAP Sacramento, Sunday morning. It featured the Cambridge tapes produced by the Broadcasting Foundation of America and co-sponsored by the UUA. Gus Wood and Pete Larsen took charge of another all-church work day.
- Phyllis Gardiner celebrated her 53rd year as a member of this Society.
- Society members were 338 female and 214 male. Teachers and professors numbered 102, the retired were 60, students, 26; government workers, 18; business operators, 17; engineers, 14; lawyers, 11; physicians, 9; social workers, 16; realtors, 18; and 73 were homemakers.

1980

- A letter in opposition to the draft was signed by a group of young Sacramento UU's and sent to other youth groups of UU's. It included the statement. "We are against the organized sacrifice of human life on the altar of greed and stupidity."
- Rev. Ford Lewis, Minister Emeritus, led a cruise to Canada and Alaska.
- An editorial by Rev. Ted Webb described the crowding of jails and prisons and the underlying causes and costs.
- The book discussion group led by Don Dormeyer talked about *The Third Wave* by Alvin Toffler. Thirty-five trees were planted on campus.
- Betty Chmaj took on the Capital Christian Center in a debate on "Is the Christian Right Right?" The boycott of Nestle products was promoted.
- Five hundred dollars worth of library books and a Snapper lawn mower were missing.

1981

- Ministers in the Pacific Coast District signed a petition to the President opposing U.S. support for the Salvador government.
- Fifty years was the average age of UU's; 78% lived in communities larger than 50,000; 34% were single & 66% married; 60% were parents. Average income was reported to be $24,000 (1978) and 90% had some college education, 42% with graduate degrees. A majority came from Methodist or Catholic backgrounds. A minority (20%) believed in a hereafter; 53% did not.

- Rev. Webb appeared on a Channel 3 panel discussing the "Moral Majority".
- Whale watching trips were organized by Lila Gibson.
- The last payment was made on one of the church-owned duplexes.
- A coalition was proposed to promote and supervise publicity about the Society.

1982

- The Social Concerns Committee promoted a ballot initiative to control the sale of handguns.
- Those with hearing problems were asked to bring a radio and earphones to the Sunday service and tune to FM 95, the new UU broadcast frequency. Jim Feeney had installed the system.
- Alice Goodridge donated an upright piano.
- The Nuclear Weapon Freeze Initiative was promoted by the Society and later adopted by the City Council. Peter Christiansen, Walnut Creek exchange minister, spoke about "Intelligence as the Ultimate Aphrodisiac" at a Sunday service.

1983

- Three cases of wine were removed from the kitchen in a burglary; four speakers were missing from the Auditorium, as was a newly purchased blower. Two bouts of vandalism occurred on the premises. More books disappeared from the library.
- May Tucker succeeded Barbara Allen as organist.
- The bazaar netted $6,400 despite a power outage marring the proceedings.
- In September, Rev. Webb, the well-beloved minister, shocked the Society by resigning. As was the case with Rev. Lewis before him, "burnout" was the major reason. In addition, there was a stressful staff controversy about a janitor who was later relieved of his duties, which he had neglected while involving himself in many activities of the Society.
- Farewell events for the Webbs included a gala affair at the River Mansion and a luncheon following the Sunday service when a monetary gift was presented to further Rev. Webb's research into the Washburn family.
- Rev. Aron Gilmartin became Interim Minister of the Society.

60 The Church Banners

In 1982 a group of UUSS artists, designers, and other crafts persons, inspired by banners seen in other congregations, initiated a project to create banners for the meeting room. They gathered together the symbols of the world's major religions and philosophies reaching back into humanity's early yearnings, which led to the creation of gods and goddesses and representations of nature's forces. Within the next two years, the group created and hung eighteen banners. Their description follows.

AFRICAN

A Yoruba divining board, drawn in the Senufo style, is decorated with ceramic beads, handwoven cotton fabric, and bark cloth. Represented are the goddess mother and child from Ghana and the mythical buck from Mali.

BUDDHIST

The Dharma wheel is ignited by the fire of intelligence. The cycle of births and deaths is a bondage broken only by the heart of wisdom. This dharma is laid upon the blue field of Universal Mind.

CHRISTIAN

The fish, one of the earliest symbols of Christianity, is also represented by the “I H S” [Greek letters for ichthys or “fish”]. Both are laid upon the Pentecostal purple banner. They communicate the basic belief in the triumph over death through the resurrection of Jesus.

CONFUCIAN

Water is one of the five elements of nature, along with wood, fire, earth, and metal. Just as the dragon in the water symbol represents rain being released from the clouds, so the Confucian tradition seeks to release the rain of wisdom in dry, barren souls.

EGYPTIAN

The disc of Aton, symbol of the Sun God which is the source of life, is seen here with Ankh, the key to life. As the sun rises and falls daily, the Ankh suggests the ability of the human soul to rise and fall.

HINDU

The AUM (or OM) is the most universal Hindu symbol. It represents the "all in all" or self within the self. Energy constantly creating, preserving and dissolving is an expression of Cosmic Divinity.

HOPI

The Hopi suggests there is a path to integration — a path that may be entered from any direction: north, south, east, or west. Many of the indigenous peoples of North America share this belief and seek balance and harmony with the universe.

HUMANITY

The human figure represents the human family in its totality; therefore, it is unisex. It is an expression of humanism and is here encircled by the wreath of the United Nations flag. Human survival and world peace require concern, knowledge, love, and will from all people.

ISLAM

Arabic script proclaims the fundamental belief, "There is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is the messenger of God." Daily, Muslims turn to Mecca with this prayer, acknowledging their surrender and submission to their god.

JUDAISM

The Torah, which contains the commandments brought down from Sinai by Moses, is overlaid with the Star of David. The Torah expresses the covenant between the Hebrews and their god. The star illuminates its fulfillment.

MAYAN

An earth deity from southern Mexico suggests the religious movements and traditions of the indigenous cultures of Mexico and Central America. Humans stand between the earth and god and seek to connect the two in harmonious cooperation.

MYSTIC SPIRAL

The mystic spiral signifies a quest for centeredness, aspiring toward integration of the inner and outer, the self and the other, in an infinite process tending toward oneness.

NAMELESS

The religious quest continues, and will continue, probably until the end of time. New expressions will emerge and new images and symbols will appear. Here is an opening to fresh possibilities.

PEACE

This symbol has become in recent time the universally-recognized sign of peace. It signifies the human aspiration for an end to war. The white dove is the emblem of hope.

SCIENCE

The living cell (magnified) has been superimposed upon the caduceus, symbol of medicine. The scientific method has extended human knowledge and enriched the understanding of all religions.

SHINTO

The Torii stands at the entrance to the precincts of Shinto shrines; it suggests the way is always open to the higher spirits or gods. Shinto emphasizes the natural process of living and working in harmony with the universe.

TAOISM

The "Yang and Yin" is one of the oldest symbols in China. It suggests the duality from which all existence is derived. Yang is active, warm, hard, and dry; Yin is passive, cold, soft, and wet. Though appearing to be opposites, they are actually in basic accord: they complement each other. When working together in harmony, they are always good.

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM

As an expression of openness and possibility, joining separate circles hints at the union of separate parts of ourselves. The cross offset in one circle honors our Christian roots yet indicates it is not the central focus. The Lamp of Knowledge expresses the idea that the search for truth forms the basis of faith.

Banner Project participants included John Harvey Carter, Nancy Clark, Charlotte Dalrymple, Ruth Ellis, Aron Gilmartin, Virginia Hansen, Karen Hawkins, Wuu Huan, Jeanne Pinault, Mary Stanton, Dick Tarble, Georgene Tarble, Helen Tura, Ted Webb, and Tod White.

Banner Dedication Ceremony

61 Retreat of 1981

The leaders of the Society were called together by the Board Liaison to the Council of Leaders, Bill Lambert. They met on June 28th at "the Tennis Club" for the purpose of evaluating, planning, determining priorities, and adopting a theme for the year. The following people were present at this retreat:

John and Marion Alden – Finance
Ed Blanchette – Denominational Affairs and Choir
Erwin Cooper – Board President
Vera Cooper – Social Action Committee
Margo Gunnerson – Music
Fred and Virginia Hanson – Drama
Joel Lamphear – Board, Religious Education
Joyce Miller – Property Management Committee
Jean Page – Kitchen Committee
Jim Skow – Incumbent President
Len and Pat Thorpe – Board, Adult Programming
Ruth Van Unen – Board and Religious Services
Thelma White – UU Friends
Marian Wishart – Board
Karen Zelle – President, Women's Alliance
Ben and Esther Franklin – Forum, Social Action
Lila Gibson – Board, Fellowship
Ken Norberg – Religious Services
Carl Schmitthausler – United Nations Association
Ted Ruhig – Board, Gray Panthers
Susan Hanry – Religious Services
R.E Ted Webb – Moderator

The theme decided upon was "Building a World Community". Participants divided into three groups to discuss these issues:

1. As a movement in Sacramento, where have we been as a part of the total religious liberal movement? (List problems which confront the Society.)
2. Where are we now?
3. Where do we want to go?

Feedback pointed to a wide variety of problems or deficiencies which needed attention in order to go forward. Each was assigned to the appropriate Board member for action. Examples included inadequate pledging, a low minister's salary, the need for more and better fundraisers, and unrealistic expectations about the cost of maintaining the physical facilities. Some mentioned as problems an unspecified threat to the freedom of the pulpit and the fact that membership was static, mono-ethnic, and too old. Others said the Society as a group seldom participated in community affairs, and the community knew little or nothing about the Society or Unitarian Universalism. It was noted, however, that the Society had recently joined the Interfaith Service Bureau.

62 The Minister's First Ten Years by Theodore Webb

In the beginning was a definition of what the people of this Society wanted in a ministry:

1. Involvement of more people in the running of the affairs of the Society
2. Sharing of pulpit privileges.

For me, therefore, from the onset, it meant that my leadership would emphasize the place and power of the Board of Directors in the setting of goals and carrying out functions, policy, and programs. Secondly, a Religious Services Committee was to be organized whose purpose it would be to influence Sunday morning programming.

Historically, the congregation's expressed desire for involvement in a democratic process has been heeded. Each year, Board members are made aware of the importance of their position. Many have understood their function and have participated in determining program. People on committees have been responsive to their leadership. When Board members have not seen the challenge and responsibility, either due to lack of time or interest, I have tried to see that the vacuum was filled. Leaders have been called together at retreats. At successive retreats, attempts have been made to shift the weight of imaginative decision-making from "bureaucratic head" (the minister) to the leaders.

There has been limited success with this democratic venture. I am not prepared to evaluate it here, given space limitations. But I am prepared to note for the benefit of our church historian, Rodney Cobb, that for ten years there has been a succession of Religious Service Committees with chairpersons from Aubrey Harrington to the incumbent, Ken Norberg (and immediately prior to Ken, Dave Gilmartin). Religious services, meetings and decisions have not been dominated by the minister, though I have

always been present at meetings. Creative services have been planned and carried out by "the people's committee".

If there have been failures and disappointments during the ten years - numbered among them would be at least these two:

Sacramento Unitarian Universalists have not perceived the extraordinary opportunity they have in relation to state government on the one hand, and to California Unitarian Universalism on the other. Social action, in a word, has not been as meaningful or satisfying as any liberal minister would wish, given our location — the principal city in the Golden State. Those who have served ably as chairpersons of Social Action and Concerns will be the first to confirm this judgment.

Secondly, the democratic principal requires devotion and commitment to Unitarian Universalism, fully as much as does the autocratic and sometimes fear-filled theology of orthodoxy and fundamentalism. Disappointment has come from the realization that our 600-member Society has not provided financial support commensurate with the importance of this fine Society. As a result, employees are poorly paid. The benefits we most want for ourselves do not accrue to Society employees. Disappointing and less than adequate pledging (with exceptions, of course) have meant that my ministry has been hampered by my having to carryon without a fulltime assistant. I have not mentioned this felt need until this tenth year.

What has been immensely satisfying to me has been the friendship I have found among members. I have appreciated the enrichment and cultivation of the intellectual aesthetic and spiritual part of me. It has been satisfying also to observe a number of very able, talented men and women assume leadership roles in the Society with the serious intention of making a solid contribution to the life of this collective of Unitarian Universalists in Sacramento. If ever I write the Sacramento part of my history — which may end the story of my ministry — it will be filled with remembrances of persons, events, humor, adventure, and growth (including growing pains) as rich, meaningful, and exciting to me as was my first ministry in Sherman Mills, Maine.

Source: "The Minister's 'Pinion," The Unigram, June 29, 1981.

63 EPILOGUE

A Conversation with the Reverend Theodore A. Webb

As this publication goes to print, it is important to note the crucial role Ted Webb played in its creation. Over the years, several of Sacramento's Unitarian ministers mentioned their hope that "someday" a church history might be written. In anticipation of that day, a few took the time to record their personal memories and made a conscious effort to preserve church documents and records of key events. But it wasn't until Webb arrived on the scene that more direct action was taken. It was Rev. Webb who initiated the interest in publishing a history. It was he who encouraged Rodney Cobb to take on the task of writing the first history, and he continued to provide support over the seven years it took Cobb to complete the job. For that. we are indebted to him.

In December 2007, more than a quarter century after writing the foregoing "A Minister's Thoughts on his First Ten Years," Ted Webb (now Minister Emeritus) was still a regular attendant at Sunday services at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento. Though somewhat frail after a recent bout of illness, he had retained his sharp wit and a delicious sense of irony.

Reminiscing at a local coffee shop, he described the 1970's and early Eighties as an exhilarating period for Sacramento Unitarians, largely due to the fact that so many were actively involved in planning and participating in church services. Even before coming to Sacramento, Rev. Webb said, he had always intended for his role to be different: he would not be the church "boss" but instead, a committee would create and produce many services. And that's exactly what happened. On Sunday mornings, it wasn't unusual for someone to stand and spontaneously recite a poem he or she had just written, followed by an enthusiastic production of a play such as *Spoon River Anthology* or *The Emperor's New Clothes* — performed by a large cast of church members.

According to Rev. Webb, if anyone word could be said to encapsulate the atmosphere in the church during those years, it would be "creativity". "To me, seeing the success of those efforts meant that everyone has the potential to be creative," Rev. Webb said. "I'd like to think that some of my addresses had creativity in them, too," he added. One sermon which has continued to draw favorable comments for its creativity over the years was entitled "Heir to the God Who is Dead".

Prior to his move to Sacramento, Webb had served for eight years as Executive Director of the Unitarian Universalists' Massachusetts Bay District in Boston. "I used to hear ministers from the West say they had very little contact with Boston," he remembers. "When I got out here, I discovered it was quite true. We felt very distant from Boston, Massachusetts!"

Back East, he had long been involved with the peace movement. On his second day in Sacramento, Webb attended a meeting of the group which is now called Sacramento-Yolo Peace Action, and he was particularly impressed by the words of a man named Leon Lefson who rose to speak. When asked about the involvement of other church members in the peace movement. Rev. Webb responded. "A goodly number were sympathetic to the cause. Among the most active were Wayne and Ruth Hultgren. Esther Franklin, and Fran and Jack Kennedy." (Apparently, the group caught the attention of law enforcement agencies. At Wayne Hultgren's funeral many years later, his voluminous FBI file was on display for all to see.)

Of course, the primary focus of demonstrations during that era was the Vietnam War. Participants marched or waved their anti-war signs or handed out leaflets at the state capitol and also on the corner of 16th and J. Streets (the site of frequent demonstrations against the Iraq War nowadays). "In all the years I was involved in the peace movement," said Rev. Webb, "I don't remember encountering a minister of any other religion at meetings or demonstrations." In 1972, a Peace Fair was held at the Unitarian Church, and George McGovern, the Democratic candidate for President, attended, as did at least one other less-well-known candidate. During those years, Ted Webb counseled a number of young men about how to avoid the draft. He remembers that the daughter of one Unitarian minister married a young man who fled to Canada during that time. But the Sacramento church never considered becoming a sanctuary for draft resisters.

Generally, Rev. Webb avoided expressing his own political beliefs from the pulpit, feeling that would be inappropriate. On one occasion, however, he deviated from that pattern. Just after the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan, he stood before the congregation and proclaimed, “The newly-elected president is not my president!” Afterward, one longtime member quit the church in protest. His was the only negative response, however.

In that regard, Webb said he had initially felt a bit wary of Phyllis Gardner, an active and well known church member, one of the founders of the regional Planned Parenthood organization — and a staunch Republican. Prior to his move to Sacramento, he had come across a letter from her in a Unitarian publication. She was writing in response to an earlier article with which she strongly disagreed. In closing, she had advised the publishers sternly, “Watch it!” As different as their opinions were, it almost seemed foreordained that Gardner and the new minister would tangle someday. Yet in all his years as minister of the Sacramento church, Rev. Webb never received a single criticism from her.

Needless to say, passions ran high during the Vietnam War. One Sunday morning, as an invited guest was addressing the congregation, a young man burst into the room shouting antiwar slogans and demanding to be heard. While Rev. Webb felt empathy for the boy and understood why he felt such strong emotion, he made the decision to close the service at that point.

Not all the demonstrations were about war, however. When the *Sacramento Bee's* newspaper deliverers went out on strike, Ted Webb organized a group of local clergy to support them. A rabbi and a Catholic priest were among those who participated. “I was surprised to find liberal Catholic priests in California,” Rev Webb remembers. “Back East, all the Catholic priests I had known had been quite conservative.”

Webb describes himself as a socialist, but says he was never a communist, as some in the media labeled him when he took a position against the action in Korea during the 1950’s. He feels that the media — in response to pressure from corporations, the business community, and the Republican Party — have made the word "liberal" poisonous in this society. Consequently, the spontaneous response of most Americans to that word has come to be one of suspicion.

Throughout his life, Rev. Webb has been an active participant in the affairs of his community, country, and world. For many years, he served as either President or a Board member of the United Nations Association of the U.N. (UNA-U.N.). He also started a West Coast Unitarian Universalist ministers' group and tried to stir up interest among retired ministers in encouraging graduate students to study the effects on society of the growing number of women entering the ministry. "What exactly is the nature of that change?" he wondered. With a group of lay leaders of the church, he investigated the idea of building a retirement home on church property on Sierra Blvd. Serious discussions were held over a year or two, but they soon realized it was a big venture that would require someone with an excellent head for business to take charge. Bill Lambert seemed to be the ideal person for that job, but when he was hospitalized and died, no one else stepped forward who could fill his shoes, so the matter was ultimately dropped.

When reminded of the two "disappointments" he had mentioned in the article about his first ten years in Sacramento, Webb wryly pointed out that financial problems have always been a continuing problem for Unitarian and Universalists in general. "It's a mindset — there isn't anything to scare them!" he laughed. As for his expression of regret that Sacramento's Unitarians had failed to take advantage of the great opportunity that was theirs due to their proximity to the state capitol, he said he sees the recent creation of a UU Legislative Ministry as a very positive step.

The Sacramento church was not the last one whose pulpit the Rev. Webb would fill. For several years in succession, he ministered to a "summer church" in Canada, just across the border from Vermont. There, he served a group that couldn't afford a full-time minister, meeting their need during his vacation time. After his retirement from UUSS, Rev. Webb had four Interim Ministries: in Iowa City, Atlanta, Baltimore, and Minneapolis. He particularly liked Iowa City, but realized he'd never be able to persuade his wife Marguerite to move there permanently. "It was just too cold!" he explained. "After living in California, she wouldn't have considered moving there."

For twenty-five years, Webb spent much of his free time researching the lives of the Washburn family, seven brothers born in Maine in the early 19th century whose accomplishments were remarkable. Among the roles

the various brothers played, in addition to being founders of the Universalist Church, were Governor of Maine, U.S. Senator, Congressman, Ambassador, Secretary of State, and founder of the Gold Medal Corporation. Two of them were even considered as nominees for U.S. President! After retiring, Ted Webb wrote two books about these fascinating men, *Seven Sons: Millionaires and Vagabonds* (1999) and *Impassioned Brothers: Ministers Resident to France and Paraguay* (2002). One reviewer described the earlier work as "a rich tapestry that captures the zeitgeist of a whole era of American history." (Amazon web page)

For the past year or two, a group called "Ted's Web" has been meeting on Tuesday mornings at the church. Some (but not all!) are longtime members of the church. They generally discuss politics and current events, though the conversation sometimes strays in other directions. Everyone is given a chance to speak and all ideas are received respectfully. Newcomers are always welcomed.

In February 2008, the Ted's Web Discussion Group announced its sponsorship of a Peace Vigil and Anti War Demonstration to commemorate the 5th anniversary of the start of the Iraq War. Thus, history repeats itself. Or, as the French say, "Plus ça change, plus ça reste le même." (The more things change, the more they remain the same.) Sacramento's Unitarians have long been involved in social action; down through the ages, they have stood up against every kind of injustice — in good times and in bad.

APPENDIX A

Biography of Rodney Cobb

Rodney Dale Cobb was born on June 20, 1907, in the farming and sawmill village of Cotton Valley, Louisiana. For the first nineteen years of his life, he lived within earshot of a lumber mill whistle which regulated the life of his family. By 1919, his family was living in Arkansas, where the barefooted Rodney and his brother Neill built a workable printing press and began publication of *The Hamburg Times*.[1]

Later, the Cobb family moved to Bastrop, Louisiana, site of "the most famous incident of Klu Klux Klan terrorism and one of the best known murder cases in the 1920s."[2] On August 24, 1922, local Klan members ambushed and captured five men, brutally flogged two of them, and then beat to death Thomas Richards and Watt Daniel, whose bodies were then weighted down and dumped into Lake Lafourche.[3] The result was deep silence. Young Rodney later attended all the Grand Jury hearings[4] but justice was not done. The judge later apologized to him, admitting that the hearings were thwarted by rampant and pervasive perjury. After that, the Bastrop Klan quietly disappeared. Seeing the grim reality of violence and death under the guise of moral superiority totally alienated young Rodney from the primitive and contradictory values of Louisiana.

He found solace in the nearby forest developing an identity with the amoral and miraculous living world. On many long walks there, his interest in nature grew which, in time, was to lead him to a career first in archaeology and then in botany.

In 1941, he married Genevieve Moore, who had been a teacher in the Oklahoma Osage Indian Hills prior to becoming a University of Oklahoma employee. Cobb served four years in the military during World War II. He

became a member of the Sacramento Unitarian Universalist Society in 1956.

Rodney Cobb was a member of the church until his death in the late 1990s. In January 2008, his widow Genevieve was 99 years old and still residing in Sacramento.

APPENDIX B

Biography of Irma West

Irma Marie Calvert was born December 31, 1917, in Hespeler (now Cambridge), Ontario, Canada. In 1929, her family loaded their old Essex and headed for California, seeking a warmer climate for her brother, a "sickly" child whom they hoped to save from the fate of three earlier children they had lost.

The family eventually moved to Bremerton, Washington, where Irma graduated from high school. After earning a BA from Willamette University, she moved to Moffett Field, California, where she worked as a computer for military aircraft research at the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (now NASA). With her salary from this position and help from her family, she was able to realize her long held ambition to attend medical school.

After graduating from the Medical College of Pennsylvania (now Drexel) in 1947, Irma took her internship and residency training at St. Joseph's Hospital in San Francisco. She married Dr. Ernest West and they had one child, Michael David, before divorcing. Later, she moved to Berkeley, where she received her Master's in Public Health and accepted a position with the State Department of Public Health (now Dept. of Health Services). Over the years, she held many positions with the Department, including Chief of Occupational Health Research and Development Section, Associate Director of the Public Health Division, and Chief of Occupational Health Branch. Some of her research on the health effects of pesticides on agricultural workers was provided to Rachel Carson, author of *Silent Spring*. She authored over thirty scientific papers, contributed to seven books, and was a member of a number of medical organizations, including the American and California Medical Associations.

After retiring in 1980, Dr. West devoted more time to her grandchildren and great grandchildren and pursued her hobbies of medical history and writing. In 2007, she was still a member of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento.

Notes

Part One — The First Half Century (1868–1915)

Chapter 1: Earliest Events in Sacramento

1 "Blue Laws" were enacted in 1858, prohibiting commercial and other worldly activities on Sundays.

Chapter 3: Sacramento Unitarian Church Revived

1 "Unitarianism on the Pacific Coast", Arnold Crompton, Beacon Press, Boston, 1957; p. 115.

2 Ibid.

Chapter 4: A Sacramento Minister and a Church Service of 1889

1 Ibid. pp. 278, 288.

2 Ibid. p. 180.

Chapter 5: One Unitarian Week of Eighty Five Years Ago

1 *Sacramento Daily Record-Union* newspaper, October 28, 1989, p. 3.

2 "Looking Backward 2000-1887" by Edward Bellamy, edited by John L. Thomas; The John Harvard Library, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1967; p. 1.

Chapter 6: The 1892 Incorporation as the First Unitarian Society

1 Reference to the January, 1889 "News from the Field" department of "The Unitarian" monthly magazine quoted in a letter of 7 April, 1933, from the librarian of the national church headquarters in Boston, to Rev. Robert C. Withington, Sacramento.

Chapter 9: Onward and Upward Forever (1912)

1 Thanks to Society member Phyllis Gardiner, who wrote the biography of Lola and Julia Bray in 1975, their history has been preserved.

CHAPTER 13: SYMBOL OF THE PAST, SYMBOL OF THE FUTURE (1915)

1 The biography of Dr. Nichols was provided by the Sacramento Society for Medical Improvement, through its publication of "Memories, Men and Medicine: by J. Roy Jones, M.D., 1950.

PART TWO — THE LONG THIRTY YEARS (1915–1945)

CHAPTER 14: WORLD WAR I YEARS AND THE RETURN TO PEACE (1916–1921

1 Mr. Pease was the Minister of the Sacramento Society during the construction of the church on 27th Street.

CHAPTER 16: ROBERT E. STARKEY, 1927–1931

1 Born Robert Edmund Starkey, 5 September 1896, at Disco, Illinois. Volunteered for military service in World War I; received S.T.B. degree from Harvard Theological School in 1924. He was assistant to Rev. John Howland Lathrop at the Church of the Savior in Brooklyn, N.Y., 1924–1927.

2 In her letter of 1975 Anne Mudge described Mr. Starkey's pulpit delivery,"but though he had a very nice voice (he) was not a terribly good speaker as there were long hesitations between words and sentences. When I told one of his detractors that he was much better than he first was, she replied, 'Yes, I used to be able to count seventeen between words, and now I only count seven."

CHAPTER 18: THE DEPRESSION DEEPENS

1 This group described its objectives:
Love is the Spirit of this Center,
And Service is its Law,
To dwell together in Peace,
To seek the Truth in Love,
And to help one another,
This is our Covenant.
There were seven stated meetings per week, including the "Healing Meeting" on Wednesday evening.

CHAPTER 19: THE STOCKTON CONNECTION

1 Vickland was born in Admire, Lyon county, Kansas, in 1897; attended George Williams College (YMCA), Chicago; received a BD from the Pacific Unitarian School for the Ministry in Berkeley, California. Earlier he had been a railroad bookkeeper and a settlement education and church worker. He was minister of the Fresno Unitarian Church for three years before his four-year ministry at Stockton.

2 Arthur Foote was born in 1911, at Ann Arbor, Michigan, where his father was pastor of the Unitarian Church.

CHAPTER 20: LOOKING BACK AT THE ERA OF 1936–1945

1 1936.

2 Minister's Report to the annual meeting of 1945 on January 21st.

3 Minister of the Society, 1927–1931.

4 Minister of the Society, 1931–1933.

5 Messrs Begeer and Kraft had served as Society Treasurer during the Depression years, an experience not conducive to unwarranted optimism.

PART THREE — TRANSITION INTO THE MODERN SACRAMENTO SOCIETY (1945–1950)

CHAPTER 21: THE POSTWAR PERIOD

1 Society records show her name spelled either as "Barr" or "Baer".

2 That had been done twice before, by Charles P. Massey in 1887 and by Berkeley B. Blake in 1922.

CHAPTER 22: THE YEAR OF 1946

1 The term "Board of Trustees" was then the legal designation of that body.

CHAPTER 23: THEODORE CURTIS ABELL'S EARLY LIFE

1 *Who's Who In America*, Vol. 25, p. 19, 1948-1949: "ABELL, Theodore Curtis, Clergyman; b. Waterbury, Conn., Nov. 12, 1891…"

CHAPTER 24: A SEASON OF DISENCHANTMENT

1 *The Humanist*, Vol. 1, No.4, January, 1928, p. 51: The Unitarian Society of Hollywood, California.

2 That account was included in his address on 31 January 1932 to the Hollywood (California) Humanist Society and published as Vol. 1, No.3 of *Humanist Addresses* under the title of "Humanism and Christianity".

3 *Humanist Addresses*, Vol. 1, No.3, "Humanism and Christianity" by Theodore Curtis Abell, p. 23, a reporting of the address before the Humanist Society on 31 January 1932, published by the Humanist Press, Hollywood, Calif. This also marks the first documented date for the revised spelling of "Abel" for the previously used "Abel".

CHAPTER 25: A DOMINATING PURPOSE

1 *Sacramento Unitarian*, Vol. 2, No.5, May 1947, front cover.

2 It is significant that Mr. Abell made available in that library his copy of the scholarly "A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom" by Andrew Dickson White. Published in 1896 as 924 pages in two volumes, it has such permanent social value that it has been repeatedly reprinted and copies are available through local public libraries, now more than eighty years later.

As a history professor and president of Cornell University (founded in 1865) he had put stringent provisions in its charter for preventing control of it by any political party or religious sect, with the approval of Ezra Cornell who was its benefactor.

His interest in the conflict between science and dogmatic theology became a life-long study. Educated in leading American and European universities and versed in several languages, in later life he pursued his research in European libraries while he was United States minister to imperial Germany in 1879, and to czarist Russia in 1892, where he completed the manuscript for his book in 1895.

CHAPTER 26: PROGRESS UNDER THE "FOUR YEAR PLAN"

1 The Society always had a required procedure for entry into membership, but none for the termination of it. Consequently it often was impossible to learn exactly who considered themselves to be members and those who no longer did. The amendment was an attempt to resolve this problem-but it was easier said than done without hurting some feelings, or of arousing suspicion as to the motives of those seeking to establish terminated memberships.

2 A Christmas bazaar fund-raiser was reported in the Sacramento Record-Union of 2 December 1889.

3 The directory listed 91 persons in 61 families on two pages of the *Sacramento Unitarian*, Vol. 3, No.2, pp. 12- 13, February 1948.

4 The 1918 data was in Volume II, Chapter Fourteen, "Authorized History, Unitarian Universalist Society, Sacramento", published by the Society in 1978.

CHAPTER 27: THE CHURCH SCHOOL GETS ITS OWN BUILDING

1 The building, now a residence, still stands at 1417 27th Street across the alley from the site formerly occupied by the church building.

2 The naming of a future Church School room in "the new church" in honor of Julia Bray was voted by the Board of Directors in their meeting of 7 March 1950. Future events caused that intention to be long neglected; a little more than a quarter of a century later, on 22 November 1976, the Sacramento Unitarian Universalist Society Board of Directors rectified the oversight by naming the first Religious Education Building at 2425 Sierra Boulevard as the Julia Bray BUilding, and the adjoining recently constructed recreational facility as the Julia Bray Playground in recognition of the funding of it from the presently ongoing Bray Fund.

3 A photograph with the story showed Don Peterson, the volunteer architect; Dr. John R. Shannon, religious education chairman; Rev. Theodore Curtis Abell, pastor; Winchester G. Felt, a Sunday School teacher; Avery E. Hovey, congregation president, and Wayne A. Perkins, building committee chairman, wielding the ceremonial shovel.

4 He was listed in the Society membership directory as being by occupation a news reporter.

PART FOUR — THE HOUSE OF A THOUSAND WINDOWS

CHAPTER 28: EASTER 1951

1 *Sacramento Unitarian*, Vol. 6, No.4, p. 29, April 1951, published monthly by the First Unitarian Society, Rev. Theodore C. Abell, editor.

2 Mr. Abell frequently referred to Robert Ingersoll's writings in 1951. His January 21st sermon was on Ingersoll as "A tribute to a great American who has been vilified by orthodoxy because of his liberal views on religion." The Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, the Second Edition, 1944 printing, in its biographical section listed this: "Ingersoll, Robert Green, American lawyer and anti-Christian propagandist, 1833-1899." In Mr. Abell's private library, which he then was making available to Society members, there were three volumes by Ingersoll: *Crimes Against Criminals*, *The Gods*, and *Some Mistakes of Moses*.

The Sacramento City and County Library still circulates volumes of Ingersoll's writings.

3 Ibid., pp. 34-35.

CHAPTER 29: A LABOR OF LOVE

1 This was a committee of the United States House of Representatives from 1938 to 1975, often known by its acronym HUAC. The Committee was notorious in the 1950s for its repeated violation of some rights granted by the first ten amendments of the Constitution.

CHAPTER 30: THE WAY WE WERE — 1951

1 *Sacramento Unitarian*, No.6, pp. 105-113, 1951.

2 Ibid., pp. 24, 33,42,56,61,69,71.

3 Ibid., p.6.

4 The national Unitarian Fellowship for Social Justice held its annual meeting in May 1952, with the Annual Meeting of the American Unitarian Association in Boston. Its national membership was 268 at that time, so Sacramento was one of the more pro-Social Justice churches. (This information was published in *Sacramento Unitarian,* Vol. 7, No.5, p. 95, 1952.)

5 *Sacramento Unitarian*, Vol. 6, p. 369, 1951.

CHAPTER 31: THE IDEA: A NEW CHURCH BUILDING

1 *Sacramento Unitarian*, Vol. 8, No.5, p. 85, 31 May 1953.

2 Ibid., p. 93.

3 Ibid., p. 138.

4 Ibid., p. 145.

5 Ibid., p. 1209. This was in reply to a letter from the editor of *The Humanist* magazine, soliciting his contribution to a symposium on the 20th anniversary of "The Humanist Manifesto".

CHAPTER 32: A SUMMER'S INTERLUDE

1 *Sacramento Unitarian*, Vol. 9, 1954, pp. 1, 1557-67

2 The original members of the proposed Fellowship were:

Ben and Frances Baer	Patricia Kleps
Hayward and Charlotte Blake	John and Mary Matlin
Woodrow and Marjorie Burgess	Winifred Mitchel
Charles and Julie Diggs	Allan and Leah Ramsey
Leonard and Doris Hollister	Sidney and Virginia Young
Eugene and Betty DeGabriele	

3 Publication was made in the July-August issue of the 1954 "Weekly Newsletter;' pp. 3-4, *Sacramento Unitarian*, Vol. 9, 1954, pp. 205-6.

4 *Sacramento Unitarian,* Vol. 9, 1954, pp. 1679.

5 Ibid., pp. 1571-75.

CHAPTER 33: GATHERING MOMENTUM

1 *Sacramento Unitarian*, Vol. 9, p. 1, 393, 1954.

2 Ibid., pp. 1485; of the 13 appointed to the committee, John Carter, Edna Rea and George Reitter were members in 1982.

3 Ibid., p. 72.

4 Ibid., p. 1535.

5 Ibid., p. 200.

6 Ibid., pp. 234, 240,1601.

7 The list of Starter's Club members is recorded in the *Sacramento Unitarian*, Vol. 1 0, p. 206, 1955.

CHAPTER 34: THE PROPOSED NORTH SACRAMENTO SITE

1 *Sacramento Unitarian*, Vol. 10, p. 650, 1955.

2 Ibid., p. 127.

3 Ibid., p. 135. That site in 1982 was occupied by substantial residences (which paid property taxes) west of the main post office on Royal Oaks Drive, and north of Woodlake School.

4 Ibid., pp. 151-163.

5 Ibid., pp. 182-183.

6 Ibid., p. 1497, pp. 1045-6.

7 Described in Chapter 27.

8 *Sacramento Unitarian*, Vol. 10, pp. 171 and 1527, 1955. The members were: 3-year term: Ed Hillier, Horace Johnson, Lou Watson; 2-year term: Carl W. Anderson, Mel Newfield; l-year term: Rebecca Glines, Lee Hewitt, John Carter.

9 Ibid., pp. 297, 301, 311, 316.

10 Ibid., Part 1, Vol. 11, No.4, June-July, 1956, p. 2.

11 Ibid., pp. 743-761 lists by name and address 202 children enrolled in the church school as of April 1955; p. 765 showed an average attendance of 146 including babies, children, staff and adult Bible classes for September-December of 1954, declining to 121 for January-June of 1955. Page 399 shows average attendance at Sunday service as 131.8 for 1955.

12 "Reflections of America — Commemorating the Statistical Abstract Centennial", Norman Cousins, Honorary Editor; U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of Census, Washington, D.C., 1980.

CHAPTER 35: SIERRA BOULEVARD SITE CHOSEN

1 *Sacramento Unitarian*, Vol. 11, Pt. 1, 1956 (pages not numbered); the monthly *Unitarian*, October 1956, Vol. 11, No.5, p. 6.

2 *The Lamplighter*, a weekly newsletter, Vol. XI, No. 28, 5 Aug. 1956.

3 *Sacramento Unitarian*, October 1956, Vol. 11, No.5, pp. 4-7.

CHAPTER 36: DEVELOPMENT A COMMITMENT

1 In 1982 the Jonas Avenue-Larkspur Lane site was a recreational park whose only trees were recently planted ones on built-up hillocks.

2 *Sacramento Unitarian*, Vol. 11, Part 3, unnumbered pages, section titled "New Building Activities"

3 *Sacramento Unitarian*, Vol. 12, Part 3, 1957, section headings "Building Committee" and "fund", pages not numbered.

4 Ibid., Part 2, "Minutes of the Board of Directors", 7 August 1957.

5 Ibid., Part 2, "Treasurer's Reports" and "Contributions for 1957".

6 Ibid., *Sacramento Unitarian*, Vol. 12, No.1, January 1957, pp. 4,9.

7 Ibid., Part 3, section of "Correspondence Regarding Membership".

CHAPTER 37: RAISING THE MONEY

1 The employment of Mr. Hauze included the services of his wife as his secretary. The contract was signed by the chairman of the building committee and the minister; the original of the contract is in the Society archives.

2 The 1958 Building Fund Canvass Committee consisted of: Dr. Carl E. Horn, General Chairman; William A. Campbell, Initial Gifts Committee Chairman;

Edna (Mrs. B.J.l Rea, Special Gifts Committee Chairman; Edward J. Hillier, Teams Committee Chairman; Melville “Mel” Newfield, Training Chairman. Canvass Captains were Peter A. Van Steen is, Avery A. Hovey, Everett "Alex" Pesonen, Louis J. Watson, George M. Reitter, Dr. Roger J. Barr, Winchester G. Felt. There was a ladies team, which cannot be identified because of missing records for that period.

3 Some of the most interesting personal motivations for identifying with the Society resulted from earlier life experiences, such as the following samples:

Several were dissidents from life in Nazi Germany, one of whom served in the French Underground Resistance Movement of World War II.

Another, who left his native Italy for freedom from Mussolini’s government, later served with the U.S. armed forces secret internal Italian operations.

Another as a child fled with his family from the 1917 Russian Revolution, went through Europe and then China before attending the University of California, Berkeley.

Another, a native born American, was on the U.S. Staff of the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, Germany in 1946, during the war crimes trial which resulted in the hanging of 10 Nazis, the suicide of one, and the imprisonment of 11 others.

Another, a Caucasian native of a Deep South state, as an older teenager, witnessed the abduction of his father at gunpoint by hooded terrorists; later that week he attended a church service where that same group marched down the aisle to be publicly praised and blessed with prayer by the minister.

Several members were graduates of a state university in an era when state law made it a punishable offense for the university president to admit a black student, for a professor to instruct one, or for a student to attend class with one.

CHAPTER 38: THE STRUCTURE RISES, 1959–1960

1 The American Unitarian Association Development Fund, Boston, made a loan of $14,000 over the period of 1961-1973; $ 7,000 of it was interest-free; $7,000 was at 4 1/2% interest, repayable at $315 per month. That loan agreement was authorized by a Special Membership Meeting vote on 5 April 1959.

2 The $106,000 bank loan was repayable by monthly installments of $1,180 beginning 1 April 1960 for a 10- year period.

3 The photographs were made by Pierce Lyon, a Society member, and are preserved in the church archives. Twenty years later only some of those present could be identified in those pictures: Society officers and Building Committee members: Rev. Theodore C. Abell, Carl W. Anderson, Winchester G. Felt, John H. Carter, Lee Hewitt, Edward J. Hillier, Ruth G. Horn, Everett “Alex” Pesonen, Edna S. Rea, George M. Reitter. Adults in the audience identifiable: Jean C. Abell, Helen and James Bradfield, Duane C. Cady, Genevieve and Rodney Cobb, Neddie Farley, Janet Flyr, Phyllis Gardiner, Robert M. Harrison, Frances L. Hovey, Margaret M. Howard, Hans and Hortense M. Poppe, Charlotte L. and John N. Pratt, Felix J. Rehman, Patricia Reitter, Peter A. Stenberg, Ethyl R. Stevens, Perry Sundquist, Chester O. Teagarden, John N. Turner, Thomas Vasey,

John and Thomie Voeller, Ethel Mae Watson, William H. Wilsnack, Bessie M. Young. Of the 40 children in photographs only these were identified in 1980: Vernon Abell; Janet, Kathy and Steve Barr; Robin and Susan Bradfield; Edward and Susan Jones; Larry and Steve Levi; Cindy and Kerry Lyon; Jeannie Poppe; Doris Wilsnack.

4 *The Lamplighter*, Vol. 15; No. 11, 13 March 1960, p. 2, noted under the heading "NEW CHURCH PROGRESS REPORT… The sewer has been laid. Gas and water pipes will be in this week. This work is being done by our own Mr. Van Valkenburgh."

CHAPTER 39: THE ANNUAL MEETING, 1960

1 *The Lamplighter*, Vol. 15; No.4, 24 January 1960, p. 3.

2 Ibid., Vol. 14; No. 42,20 December 1959, p. 6.

3 The birth date of Mr. Abell is documented in the previously published "Notes" for Chapter 23, by citing his biography in *Who's Who*.

4 In the 1959 Annual Meeting a resolution was passed for providing Mr. Abell $50.00 a month being placed with interest in a pension fund, and a similar monthly sum to be paid for life upon his retirement.

5 *The Lamplighter*, Vol. 14; No. 42,20 December 1959, as amended in the annual meeting, 17 January 1960.

6 The tape was made on 14 May 1980 in the minister's study, with George Reitter, Ted Webb, and Rodney Cobb participating. The tape and a transcript are on file in the Society archives.

7 *The Lamplighter*, Vol. 15; No.4, 24 January 1960, p. 3.

8 Ibid., Vol. 15; No.1 0, 6 March 1960, p. 36.

9 Ibid., 20 March 1960, p.45.

CHAPTER 40: TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY

1 "Report of the Minister to the members of the First Unitarian Society for the Month of April 1960", dated 10 May 1960, consisting of two pages which included a copy of the minutes of the Special Meeting of April 24 recorded by Phyllis H. Gardiner, Secretary.

2 Mr. Hewitt gave this information to the writer some time after the meeting; his age was not stated, but in his biography published in The Lamplighter of 3 January 1960 his date of graduation from Missouri University was given as 1905.

3 *The Lamplighter*, Vol. 15; No. 25, p. 99, 26 June 1960.

4 Ibid., No. 26, p. 104, early June 1960.

5 Ibid., No. 27, p. 106, 20 July 1960.

6 Ibid., No. 30, p. 117, 11 September 1960.

7 *Sacramento Bee*, 23 November 1960, p. B7. His biography and photograph were included in that account.

8 For the context in which this statement was made, refer to Chapter 31, footnote 5.

PART FIVE — THE SIXTIES (1960–1970)

PROLOGUE

1 *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Fifth Edition, G. & c. Merriam Co., Publishers, Springfield, Mass., copyright 1944.

2 *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*, G. & c. Merriam Co., Springfield, Mass., copyright 1971.

3 *Authorized History of the Unitarian Universalist Society*, Sacramento, Vol. 2, 1915-1945, Chapter 15, 1977.

CHAPTER 41: AUTUMN 1960

1 "Recommended Procedure For Churches and Fellowships Seeking New Ministers", Department of Ministry, A.U.A., 25 Beacon Street, Boston 8. Mass, October 1958. A copy is filed with the Board Minutes of the Special Meeting, 22 May 1960.

2 This "Tabulation" dated 28 July 1960 is filed with the Minutes of the Board of Directors meeting of 8 August 1960.

3 "Report to the Annual Meeting", 22 January 1961, filed with the Minutes of the Board of Directors for that date.

CHAPTER 42: "SEATING" THE MINISTER

1 *The Lamplighter*, weekly newsletter Vol. 15, No.30, p. 118, 11 Sept. 1960.

2 Ibid., No. 12, p. 43,20 March 1960.

3 Ibid., No. 29, p. 113, 17 August 1960.

4 "1984 Directory, Unitarian Universalist Association", Page 224 lists him as minister of the First Unitarian Society of Ithaca, N. Y., after having served at Amherst, MA, and Urbana, IL, all of them university communities.

5 An account of that internecine conflict is contained in Chapters 39-40, *Authorized History, Unitarian Universalist Society*, Sacramento, Vol. IV, 1982.

6 Personal conversation with Minister Emeritus Ford Lewis in 1985.

7 Minutes of the Board of Directors, 25 September 1960.

8 A copy of this Order of Service has been attached to the Minutes of the Board of Directors meeting of 7 December 1960.

9 Minutes, Board of Directors, 7 December 1960, p.4.

10 *The Lamplighter*, Vol. 15, No. 30, p. 117, 11 Sept. 1960.

11 His biography is given in Footnote 1, Chapter 23, *Authorized History, Unitarian Universalist Society*, Sacramento, Vol. 111,1979.

CHAPTER 43: 1961 - THE YEAR OF THE CHURCH SCHOOL

1 Minutes of the Board of Directors meeting, 11 January 1961, p.2.

2 Ibid., 8 August 1960, "Tabulation of Questionnaire", Pulpit Committee.

3 Chairmen of the 1961 Canvass Committee: Melville Newfield, Planning and Publications; George Waite, Publications; Frances (Mrs. Avery E.) Hovey, Arrangements; Mrs. Winnifred Kennedy, Hostess; Edward J. Hillier, Canvass; Dr. Donald Maxwell, Special Gifts; Alfred E. Holland, Initial Gifts; Dr. Rober Barr, Teams; Carl Anderson, Training.Division Chairmen: A: Melvin Stover; B: George Reitter; C: Fred Hawley.

4 "Financial Statement, Building Fund", February 1, 1961, next to p. 1, "Minutes", 7 February 1961.

5 "Final Canvass Report", 18 March 1961, to the Board of Directors, from Howard B. Hauze, p. 2.

6 *Newsletter*, 18 May 1961, p. 6, and 25 May 1961, p. 2.

7 "1962 Annual Meeting" report for 1961, 21 January 1962, p. 14.

8 The resolution to borrow up to $118,000 from Bank of America dated 28 September 1961 is filed in pages following the Board of Directors Minutes, 14 Sept. 1961.

9 "1961 Annual Report" filed with the Board of Directors Minutes, 7 January 1962, pp. 10-11. Chapter 44: Easter 1962.

CHAPTER 44: EASTER 1962

1 *The Sacramento Unitarian Church News*, 5 April 1962.

2 Ibid., 19 April 1962.

3 Ibid., p.2.

4 Ibid., p. 1.

CHAPTER 45: EARLY LIFE OF FORD LEWIS

1 *Who's Who in the West*, sixth edition, Marquis,Who's Who, Chicago 11, Illinois, 1958, p. 462: "LEWIS, James Ford, clergyman; b. Stonefort, ilL, Oct. 14, 1914; S. Robert Ira and Dollie (Martin) L.; A.B. Salem Coli., 1939; A.M., U. Ark., 1940. Instructor, sociology and economics, Salem Coli., 1940-1941; field examiner, Nat. Labor Relations Bd., 1941-42. Served USNR, 1942-45; in U.5.5. Ramapo, U.S.S. Unimak, V.S.S. Greenwich Bay. Nat. Labor Relations Bd. 1945....,1949. m. Barbara Lee McDonald, Aug. 1, 1945; children - James Ford, Bronwen Lee, Mary Boutell e, Robert Bradford. Ph.D., U. Cal. at Berkeley, 1952; B.D., Starr King Sch. for the Ministry, 1952; minister All Souls

Universalist-Unitarian Ch., Riverside, CA, 1952. First Unitarian Ch., Stockton, Ca 1.1952- 1958.

2 The place name "Stonefort" originated from a crudely piled stone structure found there, but of unknown origin, presumably a stronghold of some kind. Seven others are known in the Ozark hills region of Illinois.

3 *The Nine Nations of North America*, by Joel Garreau, Avon Books, 959 Eighth Ave., New York 10019, 1981.

4 "my.thos /'mi-,thas\ n(Gk)… : a pattern of beliefs expressing often symbolically the characteristic of prevalent attitudes in a group or culture", *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*.

5 The World Almanac, 1959 edition, listed the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference of 60 churches as having a total membership of 5,965, headquartered in Battle Creek, Mich.; published by the New York Times, World Telegram and Sun, New York 15, N.Y.

6 Life and Works of F. F. Johnson, M.D., Stonefort, Illinois, Being an Autobiography of the Author, Written by Himself, Turner Publishing Co., Stonefort, 111., 1913, p.127.

7 Garrett Hardin wrote in "Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists", 28(6):37-41, 1972: "Any group of people that perceives its self as a distinct group, and which is so perceived by the outside world, may be called a tribe. That group might be a race, as ordinarily defined, but it need not be; it can just as well be a religious sect, a political group, or an occupational group. The essential characteristic of a tribe is that it should follow a double standard of morality — one kind of behavior for in-group relations. another for out-group." The Seventh Day Baptists used that technique to strengthen its social structure, a custom long hallowed historically.

CHAPTER 46: A SURPRISING ENTRANCE INTO AN ACADEMIC CAREER

1 Four brothers of Ford Lewis were to later graduate from Salem College as a consequence of his having attended that institution. Many years later a Lewis family reunion was held on that campus.

2 His private journal does not have numbered pages, being designed as a diary. This quotation is from pages listed as "March 9" and "March 10".

3 At that time he was president of the student body government and an undergraduate teaching assistant.

4 Ford Lewis' private journal dated 1940, pages headed "March 26, 27".

5 The number of Americans enumerated as having served in World War II armed forces is given as 16,353,659 in *The World Almanac*, 1970, published by the Newspaper Enterprise Association, New York, N.Y.

CHAPTER 47: PLANNED PARENTHOOD

1 Phyllis Gardiner, born Phyllis Hyatt, 22 February 1902; joined the Society on 14 January 1926; died September 17, 1983.

2 "Minutes", Board of Directors, 10 June 1963, p.1.

3 Ibid., 9 March 1963, p. 1.

4 *The Hyatt Legacy —. The Saga of a Courageous Educator and his Family in California*, by Phyllis H. Gardiner. Exposition Press Inc., 386 Fourth Avenue, New York 16, N.Y., 1959.

5 Ibid., Part II, Chapter II, pp. 196-212.

CHAPTER 48: AN EXPANDING CONGREGATION

1 Minutes, Board of Directors, 8 March 1965, p.3.

2 Sacramento Bee, 12 June 1965, p. A 14.

3 *Newsletter*, First Unitarian Society, Sacramento, 16 Sept. 1965, p. 1

4 Ibid., Sept. 23, 1965, p. 1.

5 On the eve of his departure for Selma, Rev. James Reeb spent the evening visiting his good friend, Rev.

6 Theodore A. Webb, in Boston. Rev. Webb served the Sacramento Unitarian Universalist Society as minister from 1971 until his retirement in 1984.

7 Ibid., Oct. 7, 1965, p. 2.

8 Four-page statement of Charles Masten, President of North Area Unitarians, dated 11 August 1969, attached to the August 11 Minutes of the Society.

9 Ibid., p. 1.

10 Letter to the Board of Directors First Unitarian Society of Sacramento, from Charles Masten, President North Area Unitarians of Sacramento County, dated 9 June 1965. This is filed with the First Society Board of Director's minutes of the 14 June 1965 meeting.

CHAPTER 49: CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION - 7968

1 1984 Directory Unitarian Universalist Association, 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108; p. 176.

2 Berkeley B. Blake served 46 years in California ministries, dying at age 91 in a Santa Paula rest home in 1979 (Obituary in the *Unitarian Universalist World*, 15 Dec., 1979, p. 15). Robert C. Withington served 50 years in the ministry before becoming minister emeritus in 1980 of the Unitarian Church of Hudson, Mass. (U. U.A. Directory of 1984, p. 232). Arthur Foote served the Saint Paul, Minn., Unity Church from 1945 to 1970 (op cit, p.176).

CHAPTER 50: THE SIXTIES

1 Helen (Mrs. James) Bradfield is the mother of five children and a member since 1948. She was Director of Religious Education, 1960-1966.

CHAPTER 51: AN OVERVIEW OF THE 1960'S CONGREGATION

1 The 1969 Directory was published in December of 1968, consequently it data was that of the congregation in 1968.

2 *Sacramento Bee*, Section E, p. 1,4 June 1987, "Love in the Haight". That district in 1965 was such a phenomenon that Rev. Ford Lewis spent a day there observing, and later reported on it in a sermon.

3 *Sacramento Bee* obituaries, Section B, p. 2, 17 January 1987. He died at age 55 in a San Francisco hospital. "The family requests that any remembrances be made to the city of Sacramento's McKinley Park Rose Garden or the Unitarian Church in San Francisco. The "Aquarian Effort, Inc." is listed in the Sacramento White Pages telephone directory p. 32, 1988.

4 "The Making of the Pill" by Carl Djerassi, in "20 Discoveries That Changed Our Lives", pp. 127-129, *Science 84*, November 1984, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Washington, D. c., 20038.

5 "Minutes", Board of Directors special meeting held in the church lounge, 8:00 p.m., April 27, 1970, President Mary Lou Evans presiding; 8 board members present, "eight guests in attendance".

APPENDIX

1 *Our Cobb Family, A History*, by H. Neill and Rodney D. Cobb, pp. 69-70, privately published; copyright 1975, #A 700278, Dec. 29, 1975, by Rodney D. Cobb.

2 *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest*, by Charles C. Alexander, University of Kentucky Press, Lexington, 1965; pp.68-75.

3 Ibid., p. 70.

4 The *New York Times* reported the hearings on its front page for 14 days out of the time from 6 January to 21 January, 1923. Microfilm of the *New York Times* of that period is available in the California State Library, Sacramento; there are some 40 columns of newsprint on the subject, including the testimony of Fred Cobb, father of Rodney Cobb, who identified Deputy Sheriff Larry Calhoun as the leader of a "whipping squad" in the New York Times of 14 January 1923, p. 23, column 5.