

Unitarian Universalist Church
at Washington Crossing

Our Stories

OUR CHALLENGES

Our History

An interactive display of the
history of our church.

You are invited to share
your memories of these
historic events by writing
them on the post-it notes
provided and affixing
to the display.



Join the Journey.
Open to You.

Our Beginning - 1916

THE CHALLENGE: Conservative Fundamentalism

*I*n response to the “hellfire and damnation” sermons being preached by Billy Sunday, with particular mention about the “Unitarian sinners,” William Amberson, a young teacher at Trenton High School, is sufficiently upset that he set out to organize an alternative religious offering for the residents of Trenton.

William Amberson opens a reading room in Trenton to distribute liberal religious literature. At the same time, the Philadelphia-based Joseph Priestley conference of the Unitarian Church and other Unitarian ministers holds meetings in Trenton. Following many gatherings and committee work, 61 men and women sign a “bond of fellowship” and approve a constitution and by-laws on April 16, 1916 as the

First Unitarian Church of Trenton.



“As I left [the religious revival led by Evangelist Billy Sunday], I resolved I would oppose such activities. I was sufficiently disturbed by the antiquated religious views and the highly emotional atmosphere to decide that a more reasonable and scientific point of view in religion needed to be put before the city.”

— William R. Amberson

Dr. William Amberson, charter member and our “founding father.” Pictured here in 1975 at the dedication ceremony of new building in Titusville.

1920s – 1930s

THE CHALLENGE:

Keeping the church going with no ministers, no church building and declining membership

1919:

The Nominating Committee chair reports to the Trustees, “*Your committee has given consideration to a suggestion that to some may seem novel... recommendation of two women to the Board, along with two men*”. **Ella Cook** and **Anna Hughes** are elected to fill the two positions.

1920–1933:

The fledgling church goes through four resident ministers:

Robert Holt: Dec. 1920 – September 1921;
A. Robert Shelander: Feb. 1922 – Feb. 1922;
Elmer Colcord: March 1926 – April 30, 1930;
Robert T. Weston: October 1930 – June 1933.

1931:

The **Women’s Alliance**, interested in social equality, promotes social and fundraising events for the church and sponsors speakers and lecture series.

1933:

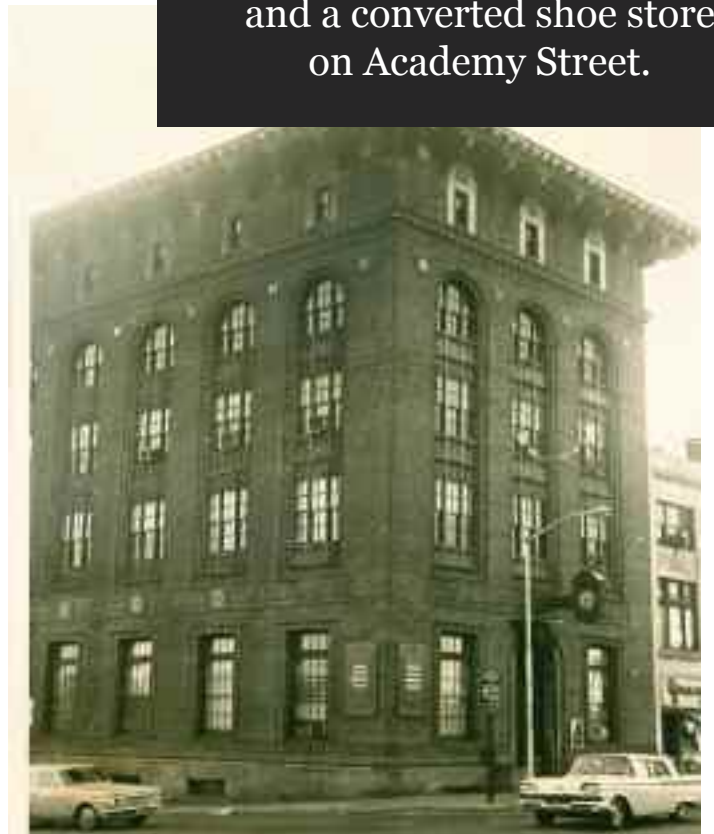
A 7-year period of **no resident ministers** begins. Membership dwindles.

1936–1938:

After two unsuccessful ministers under whom membership dropped, the church completely falls apart. Stalwart members determined to keep the church together meet in each other’s homes.

THE CHURCH GOES THROUGH MANY HOMES

The auditorium of Trenton High School, the School of Industrial Arts, the meeting rooms of the Stacey Trent Hotel, the Contemporary Club, the Jewish Temple on Stockton Street, the WMCA and a converted shoe store on Academy Street.



The School of Industrial Arts, Trenton



Contemporary Club on West State Street, Trenton

1940s

THE CHALLENGE:
Maintaining a permanent minister and
increasing membership

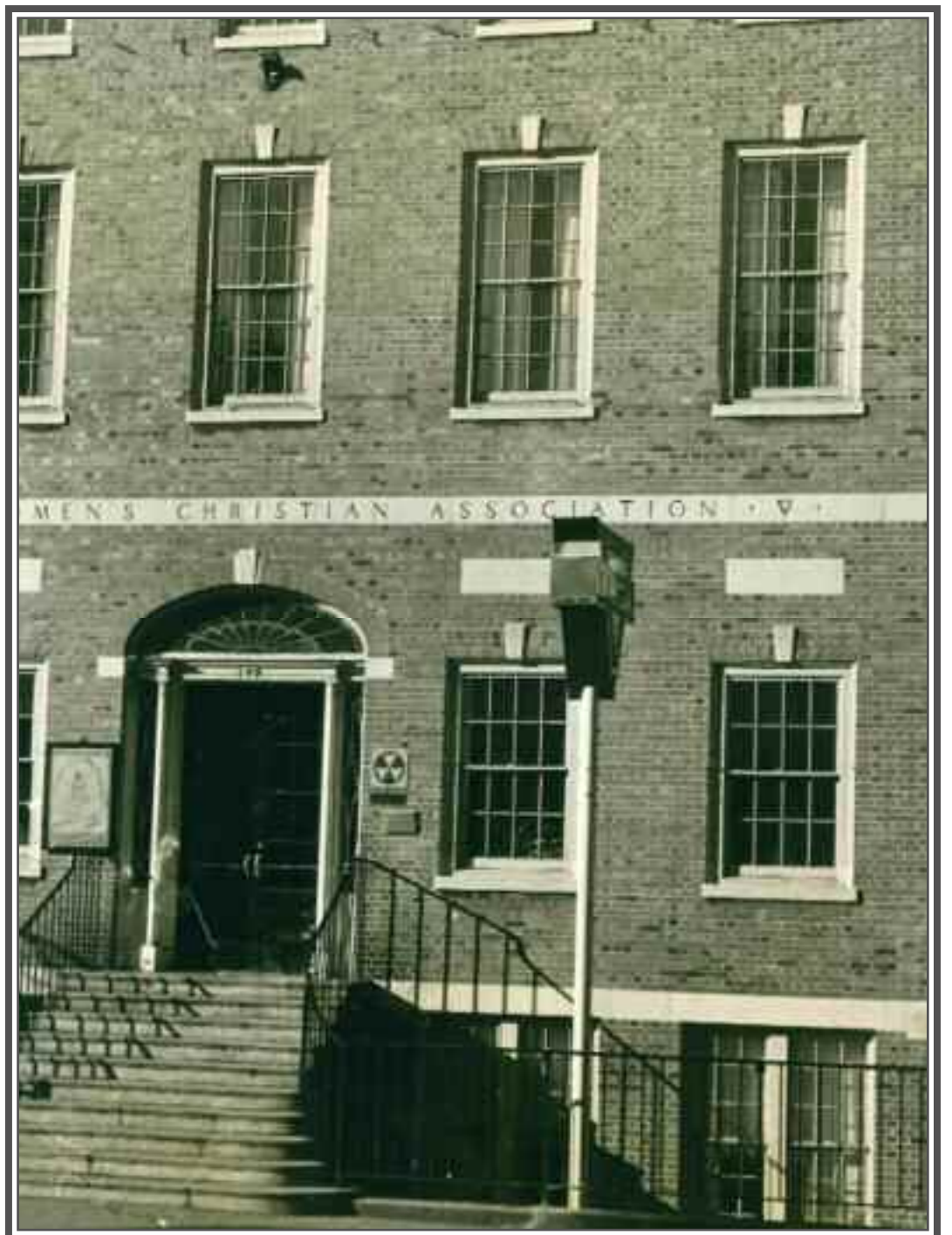
1940–1948:

- **George O'Dell** becomes the 6th minister in October 1940, serves until June 1946.
- Membership continues to be around 50.
- Sunday evening talks on popular subjects of the day could draw 250 people.
- **Dublois LeFevre** becomes the 7th minister in March 1947, serves until September 1948.
- **James Hutchison** becomes the 8th minister in September 1948, serves until September 1951.
- Church services are moved to YMCA on Hanover Street in Trenton (1948).
- Sunday School is established (1948).

1949:

Five Guiding Principles are established by the congregation.

- ✦ Individual freedom of belief
- ✦ Discipleship to advancing truth
- ✦ The democratic process in human relations
- ✦ Universal brotherhood, undivided by nation, race, or creed
- ✦ Allegiance to the cause of a united world community



Services held at YMCA on Hanover St. in Trenton.

1950s

THE CHALLENGE:
to maintain the viability of
the church with no growth of
membership or budget.

1950:

The Neighborhood Groups approve a new statement defining membership:

“Membership in this church... implies a commitment not to a creed, but to a quest.

A fundamental principle is respect for individual freedom of belief and action that will express more fully for each person his or her own unique and individual experience of the meaning of life.”



Services are held at a converted shoe store at 135 Academy Street

1951:

Hugo P. Fleming
serves as 9th minister for
5 months.

1952:

The church moves to
a storefront at
135 Academy Street
in Trenton.

1954:

William Horton
becomes 10th minister
and serves until
June 1958.



1955:

Property owners at last!
The congregation purchases a
house on West State Street and
paid off the mortgage by 1963!



489 West State Street, Trenton
Front view (L); back view (above)

First Unitarian Church of Trenton

1956:

The Social Action Committee seeks a closer relationship with Trenton's Negro churches.

1956:

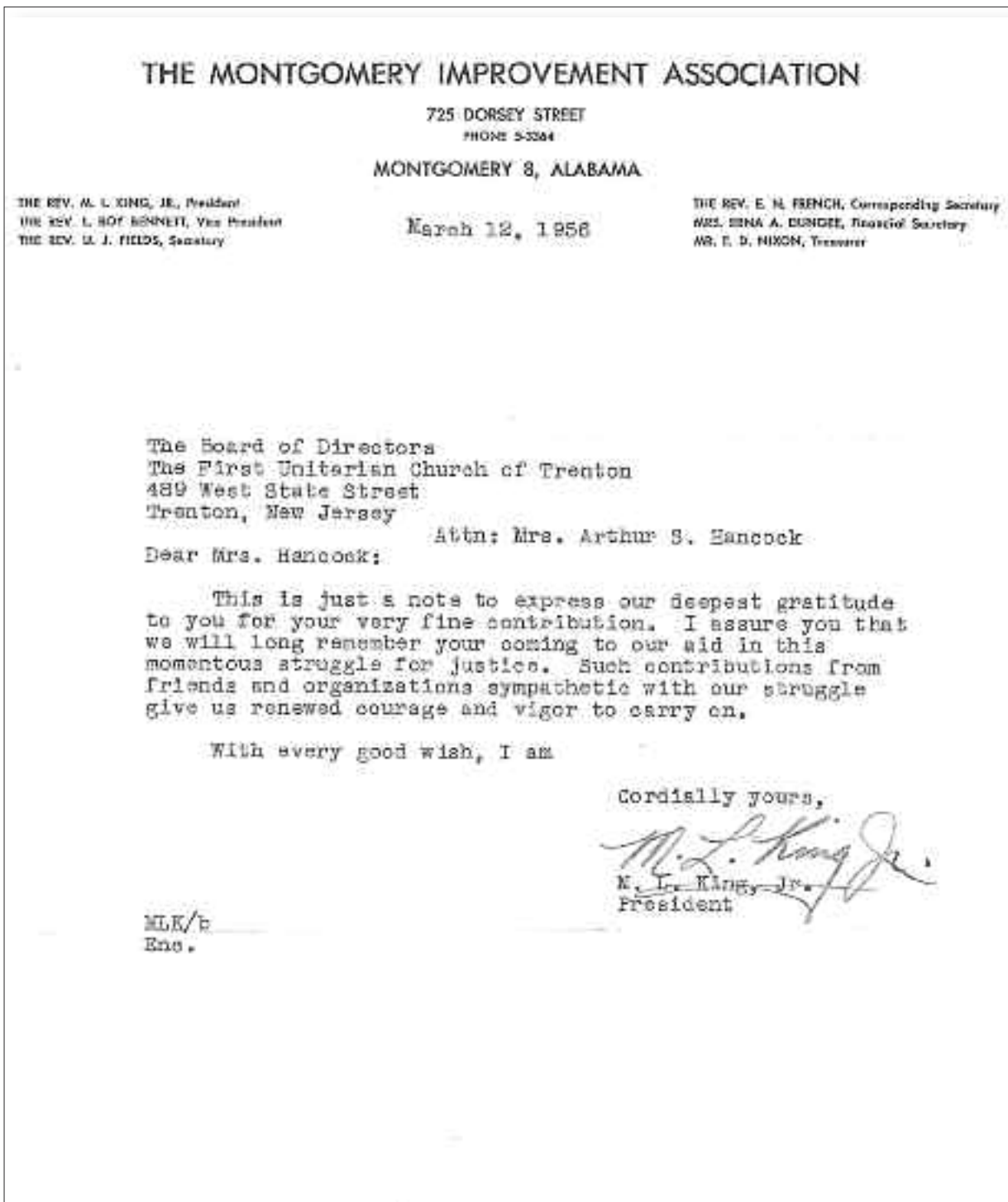
- **Vera Hancock**, Social Action chair and Board member, leads the church in its response to civil rights.

To Martin Luther King Jr., she writes:

"We think that in the midst of the grievous occurrences in your city, certain things stand out with a clear and inspiring light. The fact that in face of such pressure as has been exerted against them, Negroes in Montgomery have stood together in such numbers and so unswervingly, is certainly cause for admiration, especially from those of us in the North who are not called upon to meet such grave opposition."



Vera Hancock



The church receives a thank you letter from Dr. King.

1957:

The church is involved in the Hungarian relief effort led by Vera Hancock. One couple took in refugees on a temporary basis until permanent homes could be found.

1958:

Dwight Brown becomes the 11th minister in October 1958, serves until June 1961.



Women's Alliance circa 1958

1960s



1961 • Merger of the Unitarian
and Universalist Associations



The congregation, circa 1960

1962:

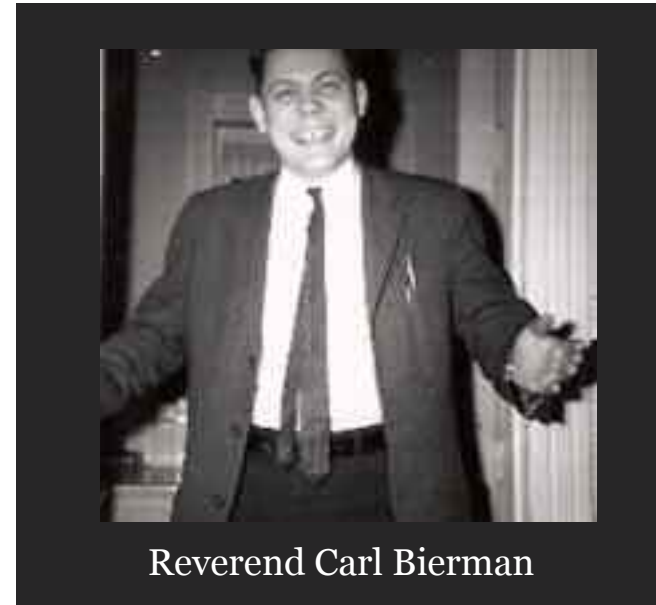
- **Carl Bierman** becomes Minister and serves until March 1978.

1963:

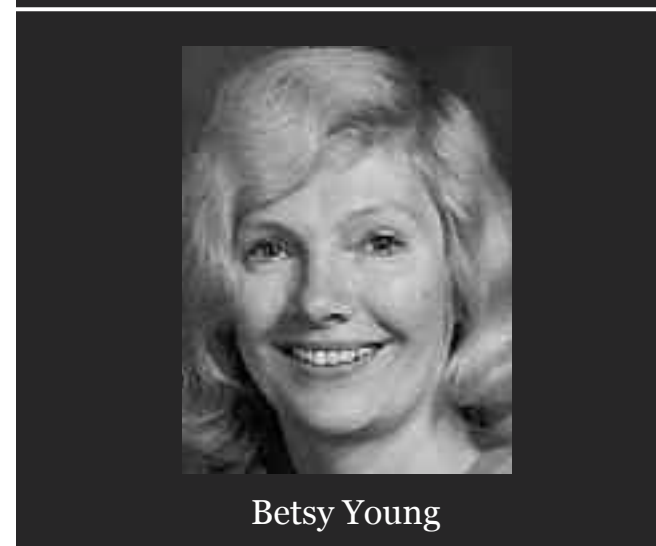
- The Trenton Council of Churches tells the Board of Trustees in July that it does not feel that Unitarians should participate in its Council because Unitarians were not Christian. It does, however, welcome Unitarian cooperation with projects they have planned.
- The UU Commission on Religion and Race asks for volunteers to join the March on Washington, DC, on August 28, 1963. The request is referred to the Social Action Committee. **Betsy Young** attends the march.

1964:

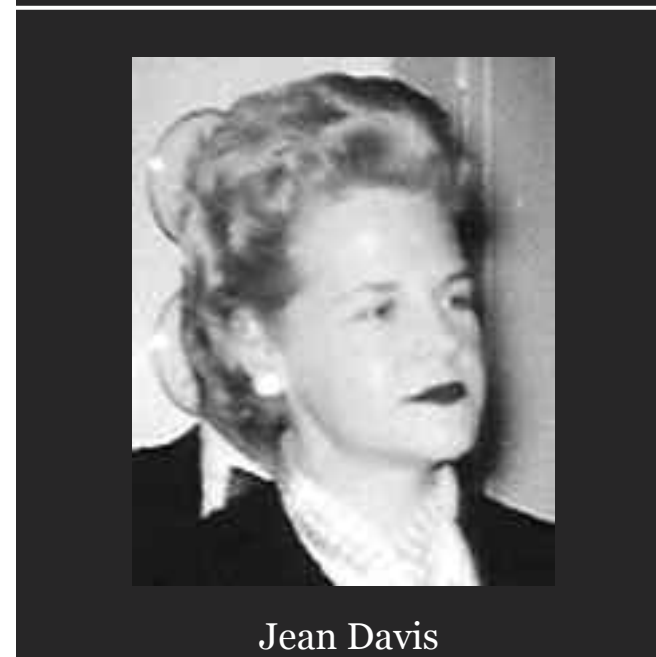
Social Action begins a literacy and tutoring project to assist children in Cadwalder School in Trenton.



Reverend Carl Bierman



Betsy Young



Jean Davis



RE class, Mildred Neubaum, teacher
circa 1968

1965:

Race Relations Sunday is observed. Contributions from the service are made to the Freedom Fund administered by the UU Commission on Religion and Race.

1966:

- **Jean Davis** becomes the first woman president of the board, serving through 1970.
- Several church members reach out to assist members in their communities.
- The church joins New Jersey Area Council of UU churches.

A Move?

In 1966, a Development Committee is formed to study options for moving out of Trenton. The Trenton Lutheran Housing Corporation offers to buy the building on West State Street; consideration is being given to buying land in Ewing Township.

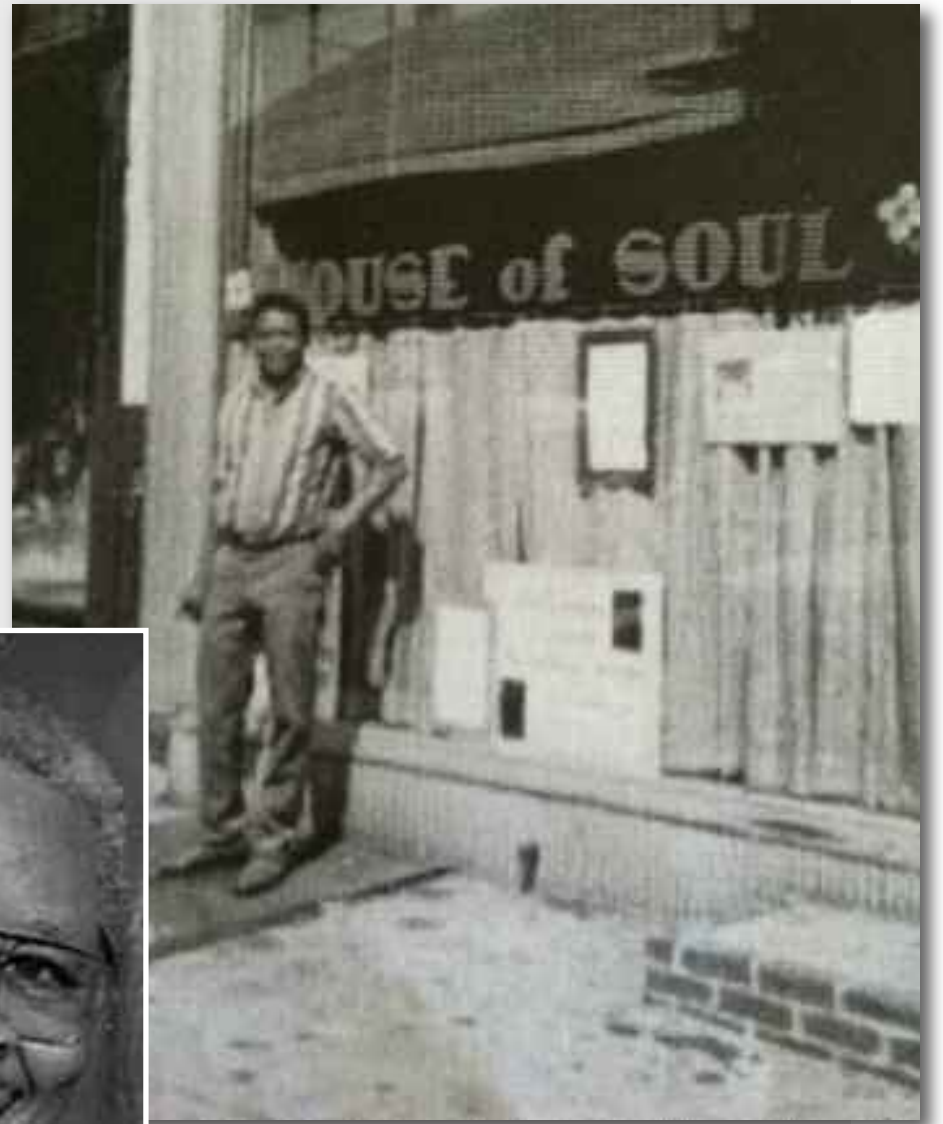
HOUSE of SOUL

1967:

The New Jersey Area Council of UU Churches, in response to widespread unrest and injustice in Trenton, hires **John Young** as its community organizer.

House of Soul

opens on North Clinton Avenue under his direction and, with volunteer support, provides education and recreation programs for children, high school students, and seniors, as well as legal and social services.



John Young

- The Social Action Committee finds volunteers to be “Big Brothers” to five high school students referred by a school counselor.
- Church provides volunteers and direction to the new Metropolitan Fair Housing Center in 1967.
- Along with the Trenton Council of Churches, church sponsors a series of six forums on the Vietnam War in 1967, open to the public. One is held at the church.
- In 1968, the church volunteers to house and feed 50 marchers participating in the Poor People’s March on Washington.
- Attendance exceeds 80 at two sessions of the Negro history study series (1968).

1970s

THE CHALLENGE:

Weighing the pros and cons of staying in Trenton or moving to the suburbs

The possibility of moving out of Trenton has been on the table for several years. As deliberations progress, months of contentious discussion occur between those in favor of relocating to the suburbs and those who strongly contest the move, believing the church should remain in Trenton. However, when the final vote to purchase land in Ewing Township is put forth, only 3 members vote against the move.

1970:

- The House of Soul is closed due to management and safety concerns.
- After the building on 489 West State Street is sold, the church relocates Sunday services to the Fisk School in West Trenton.

1972:

- Church is later relocated to the Jewish Community Center on Lower Ferry Road, Ewing.
- The active membership is 100, although the signed membership is 115. Active families number 64.



- Prisons Group is formed to study conditions in local institutions and seeks ways to improve conditions for prisoners.
- **Chuck Spicer**, an inmate serving a sentence in Mercer County Jail, requests membership; there is no objection. Rev. Bierman takes the membership book to the jail and Chuck becomes a member.



1974:

Several women members object to Rev. Bierman's negative remarks about women's liberation.

A New Address in Titusville



Rev. Bierman and Gus Caton at the Titusville groundbreaking in 1975

Property is purchased on Jacobs Creeks Road in Ewing Township, but the neighborhood's objections to having a church built there results in selling that property.

Another property, the Titusville location, is purchased and in 1975, the new church is built.

The first worship service at the Titusville location is held Oct. 5, 1975. William Amberson, charter member, is the speaker.



Rev. Bierman speaks at the groundbreaking in 1975



1976:

- After 5 years of inactivity, the Women's Alliance begins meeting again.

1978:

- Rev. Carl Bierman resigns after 16 years, the longest serving minister thus far.

- **Deborah Pope-Lance** becomes the 13th and **first woman minister** of the church. She serves until October 1983.

- The **Women's Alliance** becomes a standing committee serving on the board of trustees.

1979:

- Social Responsibility Committee is inactive for the second year.



Rev. Deborah Pope-Lance

1980s

1980:

- **Ruth Samsel** is elected Board president. She is the second woman president.
- Social Responsibility Committee is reactivated.
- Two proposed bylaws changes are defeated:
 1. removal of the age requirement for membership
 2. changing the church's name to the *First Unitarian Church of Greater Trenton*.



Ruth Samsel



The Crossings Room circa 1980, when it was the church's sanctuary



View of the church circa 1980

CHALLENGES:

Establishing our identity in Hopewell Township, improving communication with the surrounding community social justice issues, and lack of short- and long-term goals.

1981:

- Vera Hancock bequeaths \$500 to the church to benefit the Hopewell Township Community.

1982:

- Church name changes to **Unitarian Universalist Church at Washington Crossing** to reflect our new location, as well as the 1961 merger of the Unitarians and Universalists.
 - One of few African American members, **Rudy Turner**, is elected chair of Internal Communications Committee, then the Nominating Committee.
-



1983:

- Guest speakers fill the pulpit October 1983 thru January 1985.
- UUCWC is designated as a **Peace Site** by the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE). Funds from Vera Hancock's bequest used to establish the site, which bears her name.



Rudy Turner with RE class circa 1985

1984:

Under the direction of chair Rudy Turner, the Social Responsibilities (SR) Committee distributes \$168 to the following causes:

- ◆ African Drought Relief
- ◆ Forum Christmas Dinners
- ◆ WomanSpace
- ◆ Trenton Area Soup Kitchen
- ◆ Scholarship for Trenton Central High School senior

1985:

- **Rev. Peter Jenkins** is installed as the 14th minister; serves until June 1989.
- SR Committee participates in Pennington CROP Walk for the first time.
- Congregation supports UU nationwide response to Rev. Jerry Falwell's remarks questioning the authenticity of Bishop Desmond Tutu's leadership against apartheid. The petition to support Bishop Tutu is presented to him on his visit to the United States.

CHALLENGE:

Growth in membership — how to accommodate increased numbers as well as space for RE.
Continuing our commitment to social justice issues.

1987:

- **Project 2000** launched to study the growth of the church and develop plans for future renovations and building expansion.

☀ Member **Bob Griffiths** shares with Rev. Jenkins that he is gay. Jenkins and Griffiths initiate discussions on gay and lesbian issues, encouraging others to come out.

☀ Three more church members come out (**Wendy Lucas, Barbara Livingstone and Ruth Samsel**).

WGGLI (Working Group for Gay and Lesbian Issues) is established, with both gay and straight members.

1988:

- SR Committee increases Trenton High Scholarship to \$1000. Also donate to Forum, Crop Walk, TASK, Mt. Carmel Guild, ISLES, Mobile Meals and St. Michael's Hispanic Seniors Program.
- Church participates in Loaves and Fishes for the first time.



Loaves and Fishes

1989:

- Minister's wife, **Julie Jenkins**, organizes a group to study women's issues and teaches the UUA course "**Cakes for the Queen of Heaven.**"



Cakes for the Queen of Heaven retreat.

- SR Committee divides into working groups to address various issues.
- **WGGLI (Working Group for Gay and Lesbian Issues)** holds a successful homophobia workshop for church leaders. Several church members participate in a march to support AIDS research.
- **Julie Ann Silberman** serves as part time Director of Religious Education; she is replaced by **Sally Conroy**.

Rev. Peter Jenkins resigns after 4 1/2 years of service and the church has a year of guest preachers. Only later do church leaders learn about Jenkins' sexual misconduct while UUCWC's minister.

1990s

THE CHALLENGES:

Facing the reality of Rev. Peter Jenkins' sexual misconduct.
Healing, recovering.
At the same time, seeking ways to
accommodate increasing growth.

1990: • **Rev. Linda DeSantis** becomes the 15th minister;
serves until January 1996.

- The Health and Disabilities focus group is established to study ways to make the church barrier-free.
- Membership grows by 38% in one year.

1991:



Reverend
Linda DeSantis



**UUCWC celebrates
its 75th Anniversary.**

**Project 2000 report accepted;
it includes roof repair and
building a new addition
to the church.**

Crossing Boundaries

- ❖ In 1991, Board President **Michelle Hunt** informs the congregation of ministerial sexual misconduct by Rev. Peter Jenkins while he was minister at UUCWC. Four members/friends come forward with evidence of his misconduct.
- ❖ UUA sends two investigators to gather information in taped interviews of the 4 people who wrote letters to the Department of Ministry and any others who want to be interviewed. April 1991 Rev. DeSantis preaches a sermon, "Telling Our Secrets," in an attempt to heal the congregation.



Michele Hunt,
Board President

- UUA officially designates UUCWC as the nation’s fourth UU “**Welcoming Congregation.**”

- The **Committee on Racial and Cultural Inclusivity (RACI)**, established to raise awareness of societal diversity, makes an intentional effort to reach out to people of color and make them feel welcome.

- Growth in RE leads to the rental of a construction trailer to be used for temporary classrooms.



The RE trailer

- The **Renovations and Building Committee (RBC)** is formed to address growing building needs.

- The congregation votes to change its governing structure. Board to consist of president, treasurer, secretary, and 6 trustees.

Committee chairs to be elected but not to serve on the Board.

Board and Chairs to meet several times a year as a church council.

1992:

SR Committee expands and church becomes a member of the **Interfaith Organization for Community (IOC)** which rehabilitates housing in Trenton.

Membership reaches 250; the church embarks on a capital campaign to renovate and expand the original 1975 building.

WGGLI becomes **WGGLBI** (Working Group on Gay Lesbian and Bisexual Issues).

Caryl Tipton joins staff as first Music Director.



❖ Board President Michelle Hunt sends second letter to the congregation, with updates on the UUA investigation of Peter Jenkins’ ministerial abuse:

- UUA interviewed people who wrote letters; accusations were validated.
- **Peter Jenkins, when interviewed by the UUA Department of Ministry, admits to sexual misconduct at UUCWC.**
- UUA ended its investigation when Peter Jenkins resigned from the ministry; there was no provision in the process to tell the complainants they had been heard and believed.
- Members of the congregation sign a letter to the victims of the clergy misconduct, saying: *“This congregation wishes to affirm its support to the victims of Peter Jenkins’ ministerial abuse. Those below particularly want the victims to know they are believed, supported and loved. May they face their recovery with courage, and may they feel our compassion.”*

1993:

A Resilient Congregation

- ❖ As a result of UUCWC's experience with the clergy sexual misconduct of Rev. Peter Jenkins, **UUA Department of Ministry** recommends an article be printed about us in the *UUWorld* Magazine, with names and places changed.
- ❖ UUA modifies its rules so that investigation of ministerial sexual misconduct will continue until all complaints are resolved, even if the minister resigns UUA fellowship.
- ❖ Rev DeSantis writes in her annual report saying the sexual misconduct issue ***“could have caused great and lasting difficulty for the average congregation. But we are not an average congregation. We are a remarkably resilient and healthy congregation.”***

- UUCWC becomes a “no hate zone” during the Ku Klux Klan’s campaign of hate called “Gay Bash 93.”

- The Board establishes the **John Young/Rudy Turner annual award** to recognize the achievements of a person or group committed to UUCWC’s social justice work.

- Rev. Linda DeSantis informs hospice workers that she is available to conduct funeral service for victims of the AIDS pandemic.

- WGGLBI becomes a standing committee; changes its name to ***Interweave*** to conform with UUA guidelines.

Groundbreaking ceremony for the new sanctuary is held on September 12.

Creed Myers digs the first shovelful of dirt.



1994:

- Plans for the new building proceed under the direction of church member and building manager **Farzad Shadzik**.

- Rev. Linda DeSantis speaks on a GA panel on congregational response to clergy abuse. She and Michelle Hunt join a NY Metro group developing a Code of Ethics concerning sexual misconduct. This work influences the UU Minister's Association's ethical rules.

- Sharon Reilly informs the board that a group of members plan to **create a new church** for UU members in Burlington, Monmouth, and eastern Mercer County.

- Member **Elva Kiernan** receives a certificate of appreciation from UUA for her work with Women's Alliance; her biography is included in the UUA volume *Sisterhood: The Life Stories of UUWF Clara Barton Sisters*.



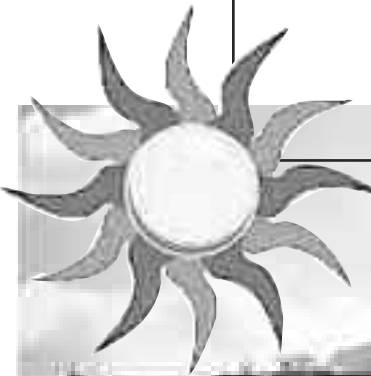
Elva Kiernan

- Neighborhood Groups established.

1995:

CHALLENGE: adjusting to a new building

The hot summer of 1995



1995:

- The church is closed from April through September 1995. Contents are emptied and the church is renovated and a new sanctuary is added.

- **October 1: the new Sanctuary dedicated;** Rev. John Buehrens, president of the UUA, delivers the sermon.
October 20: the renovated and expanded sanctuary and RE wing are officially opened.

- A 9-foot stained glass window from the original church on State Street in Trenton, newly restored and installed in the new sanctuary, is dedicated to the memory of Earl and Alice Wagner.

- Alfred Gordon Bussey, father of church member **Holly Bussey**, donates our chalice. The stand, designed by Mary Synnott and built at an atelier in Trenton, is donated anonymously by two church members.



1996:

- The Social Responsibility Committee remains inactive for over a year.
- **Rev. Linda DeSantis resigns** in January; **Carolyn Colbert** serves as Interim Minister from March 1996 to July 1997.



Rev. Carolyn Colbert



Lucy Klaus-Li

- **Lucy Klaus-Li** is hired as DRE responsible for Lifespan Education for children, youth, and adults. Her salary is supported by a 5-year grant from the UUA.

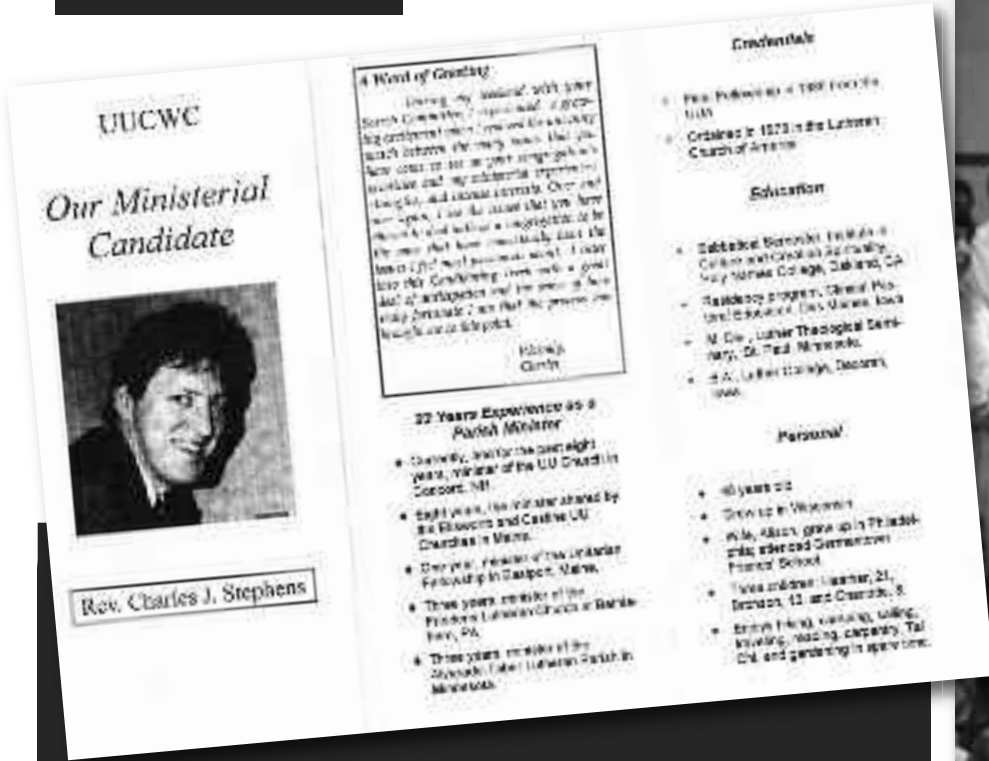


Rev. Linda DeSantis' goodbye celebration

- The Our Whole Lives (**OWL**) program begins.
- **Meals for Aid for Friends** established.
- **UUCWC Archives Project** begins with **Jane Shafer** as coordinator.



1997:



• **Rev. Charles J. Stephens becomes the 16th minister; serves until 2012.**

- The Women's Alliance, now called the UU Women's Federation, functions have been absorbed into standing committees — Fellowship and Fund Raising. After 81 years of service to the church, the group decides to disband.
- The church assembles 400+ meals monthly for **Aid for Friends**; more than 150 volunteers worked on the project.



Member recognition service held in 1998 honoring long-time members of the church.

1998:

- *Weaving the Fabric of Diversity*, a UU course, is piloted by DRE Lucy Klaus-Li; 15 participants and 6 facilitators involved.
- HomeFront furniture collection is held; also weekly dinner/tutoring program for homeless families begins.



- **AIDS Awareness Weekend** held at the church; four other congregations attend.
- A second stained glass window from the Trenton church is restored and installed in Crossings Room; dedicated to **Gus Caton** and **Iona Myers**.
- President-elect position is added to the Board structure.

1999:

- **Journey Toward Wholeness (JTW)**, a UUA initiative, is begun as a task force to address racism. The UUA Curriculum “Language of Race” piloted.
- The congregation votes to begin the process of becoming an **Accessible Congregation**.
- The Nominating Committee is made a standing committee.

CHALLENGE:
Our new minister has cancer.

- Spring 1999, Rev. Stephens reveals to the congregation that he will have surgery for colon cancer; months of chemotherapy and radiation follow.
- During Charles’ six month absence , Worship Associates assure that Sunday services continue; a Ministry Support Group, appointed by the Board, sees to it that all other areas of the congregation’s ministry are covered.
- Board President, **Tony Panzetta**, meets with Charles weekly and the Stephens receive deep expressions of love and care from church members.



- Charles returns to the pulpit in September 1999 “without a hair on my head.”

• Rev. Stephens works with UUA representatives to develop ways the Districts and UU Minister’s Association can better come to the aid of ministers suffering serious illness.

• Rev. Stephens conducts a workshop on this topic for fellow ministers at the pre-GA Ministry Days.



Charles performs a wedding ceremony in 1999

2000 – 2005

CHALLENGE:

Responding to issues of peace and social justice both within our walls (Boy Scouts, Safety) and without (September 11).

Culminates in our Vision Statement in 2003.



2000–2001:

- Journey Toward Wholeness is approved as an established task force.

- Congregation holds extensive discussions and debate regarding a proposed Boy Scout project on church grounds, with some objecting because BSA's anti-gay, anti-atheist agenda is in conflict with UU principles. The Board rejects the Scout's proposal. The decisions leave ill-will in its wake. A few members resign.



- Director of Religious Education **Lee Andrews** ends his relationship with the congregation following some controversial behavior regarding his concerns about aspects of the RE program.

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- Memorial Garden planning begins; design presented at annual meeting.
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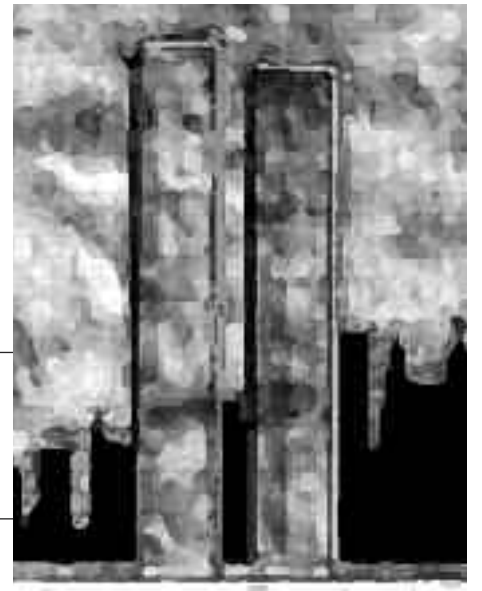
- Church celebrates its 85th anniversary.



- Worship Associates sponsor a visit from Tibetan Monks in July.

2001–2002:

- ◆ UUCWC keeps sanctuary open following bombing of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. Church participates in an interfaith service titled “Hands Across Hopewell Valley.”



- ◆ **Jean Wiant** is hired as first full time Director of Religious Education.

- ◆ Journey Toward Wholeness works to establish a partnership with Mt. Zion AME Church of Little Rocky Hill.

- ◆ Recruitment and training begins for Transformation Team and Accountability Group.

- ◆ Sustainability-oriented covenant group addresses environmental issues; sponsors an extensive list of participatory and donor activities throughout the year.

- ◆ Volunteer Coordinating Committee is created.

- ◆ Endowment Committee is created.

2002–2003:

- Safety policies and procedures are developed.
- Rev. Stephens is on 6 month sabbatical for 2nd half of church year. Leadership Leaves Program helped provide some ministerial leadership during this time.
- Endowment Committee receives a \$100,000 matching challenge from an anonymous donor.
- The Memorial Garden is completed and dedicated.
- Following the Board’s mandate, the Nominating Committee implements a 2 term limit for leadership roles.



UUCWC adopts its Vision Statement:

“UUCWC will become an inclusive faith community focusing our energy and resources on spiritual deepening, challenging us to be a dynamic and recognized force in our community(s).”

CHALLENGE:

Making our building completely accessible.

2003:

- Adult Religious Education Committee sponsors the **Seven Principles Project** to help bring deeper meaning and appreciation for UU principles.

Several new task forces are initiated:

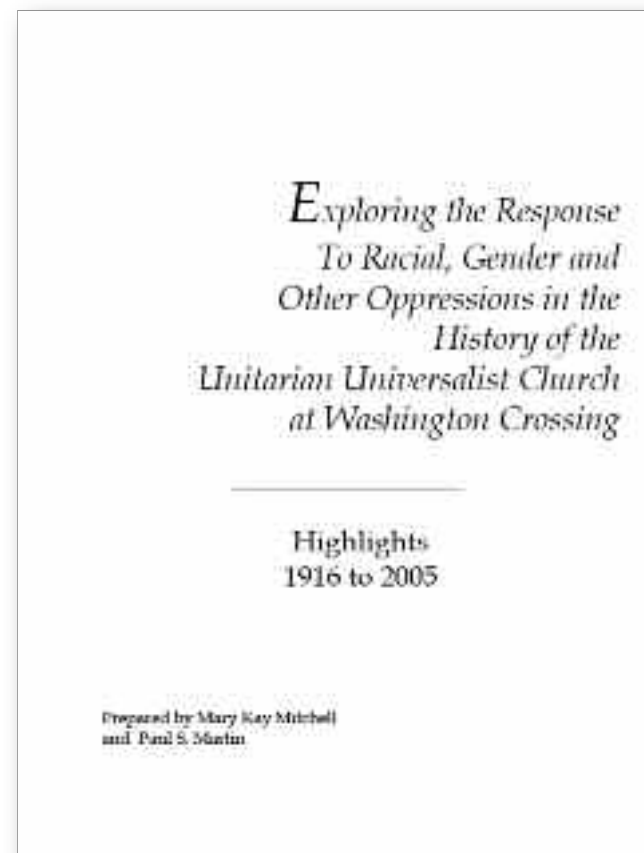
- ➔ The Welcoming Statement Task Force
 - ➔ The Covenant Statement Task Force
 - ➔ The Membership Growth Task Force
 - ➔ The Two Services Task Force
 - ➔ The Committee on Ministry Task Force
- UUCWC is designated as a **Metro District Chalice Lighter Congregation** to make UUCWC a fully accessible congregation. Visits to 53 Metro District Congregations nets \$23,000 for Accessibility Committee to arrange for installing an incline chair lift and automatic door openers, and connecting fire doors to the fire alarm board.
 - A **campus ministry** is established at the College of New Jersey.
 - **Committee on Ministry Task Force** is established to represent the ministry of the entire congregation.
 - **August of 2003** — most households in the congregation are receiving the *Crossings* newsletter in electronic form.
 - Based on recommendations from the **Membership Growth Task Force**, congregation votes to move to two services. *Rationale:* Two services are needed to meet the growing demand for parking and classrooms, as well as make congregating in the sanctuary and lobby more intimate.
 - UUCWC is the first congregation in the UUA to be designated an **Anchor Congregation** due to our work with young adults and campus ministry.
 - **Sustainability Circle** prepares application for grant to install solar panels on the roof.



- **Transformation Team** (Journey Toward Wholeness) prepares a 70 page document of church's history in response to oppression since its founding.
- In response to recommendation from the **Welcoming Statement Task Force**, two welcoming statements, rather than one, are used: one to greet and one to use with candle lighting stating our commitments.



- Candle-lighting words acknowledge our church as a Welcoming Church, Vera Hancock Peace Site, Path on Journey Toward Wholeness (Anti-oppression), and Accessible site.



Find this document on our website:
www.uucwc.org/what-we-believe/history-of-the-uucwc/

CHALLENGE:
 Transition from one to two Sunday services.
 Affects many programs, all staff, and many functions.

2004–2005:

- Church begins two services.
- Safe Congregation Policy is discussed.
- Anonymous gift of \$20,000 is received for kitchen renovation.

CHALLENGE:
 Concern that UUCWC's message is not sufficiently focused. While the congregation is well known within the UU world, it is not known locally among other denominations or service organizations.

2005:

- Congregation adopts a strategic direction of becoming a **Peace and Justice Ministry**.



- Nancy Torres-Vignola begins as Director of Religious Education.
- UUCWC becomes the home of two **antiracism libraries**: the New York Metro District Library, and its own.

Nancy Torres-Vignola (R) pictured with the church staff in 2005

2006 – 2012

2006–2007:

- Rev. Charles Stephens serves as board member of state-wide **New Jersey Regional Equity Coalition** focusing on fair housing practices; his involvement continues until his retirement in 2012.
- Rev. Stephens and three Lay Wedding Officiants offer to conduct same sex Holy Unions free for the 2 weekends after it became legal in New Jersey to perform civil unions.

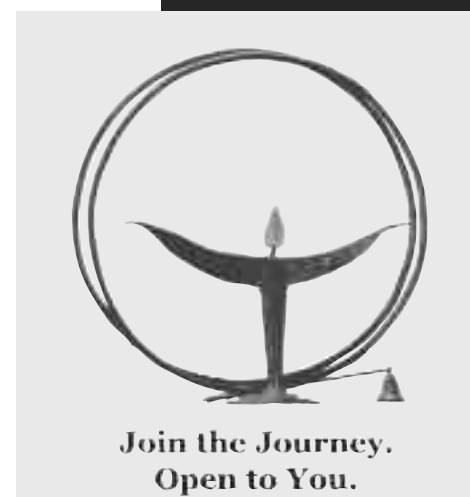


- Chair lift is installed as part of Chalice Lighter Project.



Keri Hanson launches the chair lift

- **Communications Committee** designs logo/brand for UUCWC made up of our chalice and the tag line “**Join the Journey. Open to You.**”



- Fellowship Committee launches **Neighborhood Group Potlucks.**



- UUCWC joins the **UU Legislative Ministry of New Jersey.**



UULMNJ clergy at Equity Rally

CHALLENGE:

Being financially prepared for unanticipated building costs.

2007–2008:

- Nancy Torres-Vignola resigns as Director of Religious Education.
- Rev. Charles Stephens serves on the **Board of Kirkridge Retreat Center** and **UU-UNO Office**.
- Rev. Charles Stephens takes half of his 6 month sabbatical divided between October and April/May.
 - During his spring sabbatical, Rev. Stephens participates in **Compassionate Listening Tour** of Israel and Palestine.
- Ceiling in minister's office collapses due to roof leaks; congregation contributes generously to help with repairs.
- Final phase of Chalice Lighter Project is completed with the installation of automatic door openers on the outside lobby and upstairs bathroom doors.
- **Small Group Ministry** is launched; by end of church year, 36 members are meeting in 5 groups.
- Renovation of kitchen begins to bring it up to full service code.



Rev. Charles Stephens and members of the Compassionate Listening Tour, pictured with mayor of Hebron.



The kitchen of yesteryear



The full-service kitchen of today

2008–2009:

- ☛ Excess funds from member donations toward minister's office ceiling repair are used to establish a **Building Capital Improvement Fund** for replacement of major mechanicals.
- ☛ Board review of Organizational Structure and Operations results in new practice of all staff reporting to the minister.
- ☛ Solar Panels are installed on church roof.



2009–2010:



- UUCWC attains **Green Sanctuary Accreditation** from UUA.



Living Our Principles effort is established to continue an open dialogue on the Boy Scout issue and to meet with local Boy Scout leaders to share our hopes for a shift in BSA policies.



- Hopewell township approves our newly renovated kitchen; full-service use begins in September 2010.
- Church takes a crucial role in establishing the UU Legislative Ministry of New Jersey, along with the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Princeton.

Conflict occurs within UUCWC regarding church grounds as a site for a Boy Scouts of America Eagle Scout project. Following numerous focus groups and discussions, members approve the project by a small margin at a Congregational Meeting. Without the full and enthusiastic support of the church community, the scout withdraws his request.



- **Robin Pugh** is installed as our new Director of Lifespan Religious Education.

2011–2012:

- Congregation votes to increase the amount of funds from Sunday collection, minus pledges, from 40% to **50%**.
- Caryl Tipton is named as Director, Music Ministry.

Rev. Charles Stephens retires from full time ministry and from UUCWC after 15 years as our minister. The congregation votes to name Charles as Minister Emeritus.



- Board hires **Rev. Jennifer Brooks** as Transitional Minister for two years, to begin August 1, 2012.
- Board approves new position of **Sexton**.
- **Safe Congregation Task Force** is appointed by the Board, to begin meeting in August.
- *Living the Welcoming Congregation Program* concludes; 25% of membership participated over two years.
- **Food Ministry** provides over 1,200 meals during the church year.
- **“Pebble Bowl”** is introduced by Worship Associates; during Sunday services, attendees are invited to drop a pebble in the bowl of water to commemorate a silent joy, sorrow or concern.
- In anticipation of our 100th anniversary, the Board appoints a task force in spring 2011 to develop a **5-Year Strategic Plan**. Final plan presented to the Board in March 2013 and approved by the congregation in May.



2013 – 2016

CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY:

Transitioning from Charles
to a new settled minister.

*W*here do we want to be when
our 100th anniversary comes in 2016?

What do we want to say about ourselves?

What stories does our history tell about
who we are and what we offer to the
community and to one another?

*O*ur future is in our hands.



**Join the Journey.
Open to You.**