

Unitarian Universalist Church West History 1959-2018



**Unitarian Universalist Church West
13001 W. North Ave.
Brookfield, WI, 53005**

HISTORY- Unitarian Universalist Church West-1959-2018

This history of Unitarian Universalist Church West begins with the founding of First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee (often called "First Church") in 1842 with a wooden structure at the corner of Astor and Ogden Streets. The present First Unitarian Society building at the same location was built in 1892 and has housed the congregation since then. An increase in membership following the Second World War led to a discussion about how to address the problem of space. The long-range planning committee advised the Board in 1959 to foster the growth of a west-side branch. If plans went well, it was hoped that the branch would become an independent church in 3 years. At the same time the Unitarians and Universalists of the United States and Canada were talking merger, and in 1961 became the Unitarian Universalist Association(UUA).

The first service of the new branch was held in rented quarters at Underwood Court at 7405 Harwood Avenue in Wauwatosa on November 15, 1959. Thirty-five people attended, many of them members of First Unitarian Society. C.T. Bluemel conducted the service, as he was to do many times for the next two years. Telephone and loudspeakers transmitted the sermon, by the Reverend John Cyrus, as it was being delivered at First Unitarian Society. Religious education classes were held in two basement rooms. This arrangement continued for almost two years, during which time the group outgrew its space. On September 10, 1961, the branch moved to larger quarters in the Wauwatosa YMCA at 73rd Street and Milwaukee Avenue beginning with the same Sunday service format. Gradually guest speakers replaced the sermons transmitted from First Church. The nursery and youngest children attended Religious Education (RE) classes at the "Y", but middle grades through high school were driven to various nearby member homes for classes and returned to their parents at the end of the morning. In October the Reverend Grant Butler, a specialist in organizing churches for the UUA, arrived. He served as minister for 3 months. On November 7, 1961, the new church was legally incorporated in the state of Wisconsin as Unitarian Church West (UCW).

The membership formally voted to call the Reverend Christopher Raible and apply for membership in the Unitarian Universalist Association on December 10, 1961. Rev. Raible had met with the search committee in September and had agreed to be UCW's minister. The congregation also voted to purchase a house at 4761 N. 108th St. to serve as a home for the new minister and as a church office. The new church, now numbering 140 charter members, became an independent member of the UUA on January 1, 1962. Rev. Raible preached his first sermon on Sunday, February 18th, and was installed the same evening, despite an 11-inch snowfall. UUA President, Dana McLean Greeley, was the featured speaker.

Propelled by the vision and financial leadership of Oliver Trampe, Karl Bostrom, and Leon Hamlet, in the spring of 1962 the congregation voted to purchase land and begin plans for a permanent church building. A capital campaign the following fall netted pledges of \$68,000. Much planning followed to develop a congregational home. Those meetings, choir rehearsals, and parties were held at the home of Charlotte and Leon Hamlet at 2517 N. 100th St. in Wauwatosa.

The new congregation had a difficult time finding a satisfactory site for the construction of a church building for UCW. In May of 1962, the first site selected was at the southwest corner of 124th and Watertown Plank Road in Elm Grove. A proposal request to rezone the land was met with opposition at a public hearing. In a secret session, the Elm Grove plan commission denied a

request for the necessary rezoning and refused to reveal the commission's reasons for the denial. Two months later the Village Board of Trustees voted it down. Later in 1962, UCW asked for approval to build on a site across from Westmoor Country Club on the west side of S. Moorland Road just north of the Brookfield exit for I-94. After tabling the request for thirty days, the Brookfield plan commission granted conditional approval for the 3.5-acre site. UCW voted not to pick up the option to buy this property. In 1963 UCW sought approval from the Brookfield Common Council to build on a 4.4-acre plot at West North Avenue and North 130th Street. This parcel was in Brookfield and a narrow southern section in Elm Grove. At a Brookfield planning commission meeting, one objector asked, "Why does the church have to come here?" Despite this objection, UCW received approval to build by a vote of 12 to 1 from the Brookfield Common Council. In March 1963 the church agreed to purchase the property for \$42,000.

UCW's volunteer RE director and program developer, Joan Gander, found out that the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) were selling off old-school furniture economically. She and Carolou Lennon Nelsen went downtown to an MPS storehouse where the furniture was piled from floor to ceiling. They found tables and chairs which could be used for church primary grade classes. Even a sand table for the kindergartners was chosen. What to do with them until the building was completed? A few willing members hauled the heavy, solid oak furniture to the basements and garages offered for storage by members until moving in day at 13001 W. North Avenue. Some of these chairs and tables were still in use 50 years later.

In July 1963 the architectural firm of church member, Ken Kurtz, was chosen to design the building. The report of the Building Development Committee in May 1964 stated:

"We want our building to have a sense of history. It need not copy old forms and ideas, but it should honor the spirit of those whose conscience and conviction made our present attitudes possible. We want our building to be a place for education in the broadest sense of the term. It should help adults and children to grow in understanding, stimulate them in their own quest for truth, and challenge them to become better, not merely more knowledgeable."

On December 6, 1964, the congregation approved the plans for the building. A second capital fund drive in March 1965 raised another \$76,000 in pledges for the new church. At the groundbreaking on May 2, 1965, church members brought shovels and participated. Construction moved quickly, with church members playing a major role in finishing the inside of the building. Outside they constructed retaining walls and planted trees. The first service was held on February 20, 1966, even though painting and electrical work remained undone. On March 20th, 287 people attended the dedication ceremony. By this time church membership had risen to 234 with 175 children in religious education.

The UCW choir had begun while the congregation had its Sunday meetings at the YMCA. Warren Phinney offered his services as choir director and the small group rehearsed at the Hamlet home, often being treated to Constant Comment Tea and homemade pie. In 1966 Jack Osterhaus became the choir director and the choir began to grow both in size and musical competence.

In September 1967 the church provided a forum for the controversial Father Groppi and the NAACP youth commandos. Groppi had been denied access elsewhere in the campaign for open

housing. Seven hundred people attended this event with speeches broadcast outdoors to the The parsonage owned by the church was sold in 1969, and a loan was given to Chris Raible for a down payment to allow the purchase of his own home. The remaining proceeds of the parsonage sale were used to purchase the lot west of the church for additional parking.

At its annual meeting in 1969, the congregation initiated the formation of the Southeastern Wisconsin Unitarian Universalist Conference (SEWUUC). This Conference was formed to increase communication and cooperation among area UUs. It also enabled UUs to be represented on the Governing Board of the Greater Milwaukee Conference on Religion and Urban Affairs (GMCRUA). In that same year, Chris announced his resignation to be effective in June 1970. He was to become the first Director of Communications for the UUA. By that time church membership had risen to 350. With this growth, two services became necessary. An art-focused Religious Education program was provided at one service and the regular curriculum at the other.

Chris Raible's ministry was distinguished by well-organized and innovative sermons which were often reported in the newspapers, his involvement in social action in the community, his public stands on civil rights and his strong administrative skills. He instituted studies each year on a non-Christian religion and was responsible for beginning the "Talk About" session as part of the Sunday service.

In the fall of 1970, the church called the Reverend Robert C.A. Moore to be its next minister. RCA, as he was usually called, began his ministry with the church in January 1971. He was a creative thinker and writer with a radical personal approach to the ministry. He soon became active in human rights issues both locally and nationally. He also quickly aroused the opposition of some church members, who were unhappy with his Sunday services and certain of his interactions with the congregation. In December 1971 his relationship with the congregation worsened considerably as he released materials to the press about the church's use of the UUA's newly developed youth religious education course "About Your Sexuality", (AYS). Opinions varied as to whether he had done this without the congregation's approval, or indeed against the Board's wishes. Although there was divided opinion about the release of the materials to the press there was overwhelming support of the AYS course itself.

This new curriculum, which was about to be taught to the 7th and 8th graders with parental approval, was the subject of widespread news coverage. Following a feature article in the Milwaukee Journal, 500 residents signed petitions asking the Waukesha County District Attorney, Richard McConnell, to investigate. Mr. McConnell asked to see the AYS materials to determine whether they were obscene. The congregation refused to allow this and applied to the Federal Court for a temporary injunction to prevent the district attorney from prosecuting us for obscenity. The injunction was granted on February 11, 1972. The case eventually was appealed to the Supreme Court, was remanded back to the Appellate Court in Chicago, and was dropped in November 1974 after the district attorney lost his bid for reelection. It never was tried on its merits.

During 1971, in addition to the AYS furor, there was also conflict and publicity about the recycling effort going on in the church. "The Earthlings," the 4th, 5th, and 6th-grade classes under the direction of their Religious Education teacher, Helen Klimowicz, began monthly "recycle weekends" during which they gathered glass, metal, and newspapers in the church parking lot. The effort became popular in the community, which had no other recycling facility. Unfortunately, there was no easy way to prevent the use of the center outside of the set recycle times. Neighbors complained about the "mess" and in January 1972 the center was ordered closed by the Brookfield Common Council, which then decided to institute a city-operated recycling center. By then the "Earthlings" had collected 63 tons of paper, 36 tons of glass, and 12 tons of tin. They continued to help with the recycling effort in its new location. In 1972 church members numbered 367 with 161 children in the Religious Education program.

Several plays were performed at the church in 1972 under the direction of Jackie and Bob Bastiani in what was to become a church program that continued for 30 years as "Stage West". Jack Osterhaus left his position as choir director and was replaced by Bob Simiele. The FOCUS Commission, which directed the social action efforts of the congregation in the area of mental health, was launched and remained active for several years, with at least 25 church members participating in one year. Various programs at the mental health complex were initiated and run by church members. Church member, Rod DePue, later became the director of the Mental Health Association in Milwaukee and was named mental health's "man of the year" in Wisconsin. Since the building opened in 1965 much work was undertaken by members of the congregation and money was often raised by the Women's Alliance including \$1,404 to install the quarry tile foyer floor. For seven years the congregation had entered the building on a concrete floor. During these years, conflict continued between the minister and some members of the congregation. In June 1972 a congregational meeting was held to ask for RCA Moore's resignation or to censure him. Neither vote passed but both had considerable support. Church membership in 1973 numbered 309 adult members and 126 children. However, turmoil continued and in July 1974, a second congregational meeting was held, and the minister was asked to resign by congregational vote. The Rev. Emil Gudmundson was present at the meeting as the UUA Inter-district Representative. Following RCA's resignation about 30 members who had supported him resigned from the church and formed the Unitarian Fellowship of Milwaukee. Other members also left the church but did not join the fellowship.

The Reverend William Jenkins arrived in November 1974 as interim minister. His goals were to "create a proper mood for worship, help the congregation to put aside previous problems, assisting a search for direction and establish reconciliation with the splinter group." Membership in 1975 numbered 212 adults. Rev. Jenkins completed his ministry and retired in March 1976. During the years of turmoil, two members of the church decided to become UU ministers and were ordained by the congregation: John Gilbert in May 1976 and Bill Metzger in May 1978.

The Reverend Robert Latham became the church's next minister in March of 1976. The church was active in district events and hosted the annual meeting of the Central Midwest District of the UUA in November 1976. Two hundred and eighty UUs were in attendance. When Rev. Latham arrived, he described the congregation as being "in fine shape and will be growing and expressing

its ministry in the larger community in a very positive fashion." During his ministry, Rev. Latham participated along with other Southeast Wisconsin ministers in providing early morning Sunday sermons on radio station WFMR. These were well received and resulted in outside interest in the church. Adult programs increased in number. Church retreats were instituted and proved popular. Funds became available to hire a Religious Education Director, Linda Horton, who had been a longtime volunteer. This position had been unpaid for several years when funding was limited.

In December 1979 Rev. Latham left the church to return to Texas to pursue non-church related professional goals. Although Robert's ministry with the church was relatively brief, it was noteworthy for his intellectually challenging sermons, his interest in science and spirituality, his firm leadership and administrative abilities, and his skill in counseling. Little controversy marked this period. Church membership in 1979 was 280. In November 1980 the congregation with other Southeast Wisconsin UU ceremonially burned its mortgage, having completed payment on the building. The church continued with strong lay leadership until the arrival of the Reverend Marni Harmony, UCW's first woman minister, in December 1980. She expressed interest in the more emotional and spiritual aspects of worship, the use of music and imagery and subconscious psychic healing. She became involved in feminist activities locally as well as in organizations for women in religion. Marni held a variety of positions within the UUA. The radio sermons continued. In addition to regular Sunday services, Marni promoted Focus West Forums, a series of Sunday morning programs featuring noteworthy local speakers. Church membership numbered 260 in 1983, with 100 children participating in the church school. The GroWest Committee was formed and began to work toward a possible capital fund drive to pay for an addition to the building in anticipation of further growth.

The Tosa Community Food Pantry, initiated by the church's Administrative Assistant, Jean Weston, opened in 1983 and was supported by donations from 13 local churches, including UCW. This community program has continued to the time of this publication (2018). Marni announced her separation from her husband, Peter, in October 1985. She then announced her resignation as minister in February 1986. Marni's departure from the church surprised many and seemed to have been due to a combination of personal issues and difficulties with church leaders. By then the church had 273 adult members and 134 children registered. Plans for growth would be delayed. GroWest shifted its immediate goal to membership retention and special efforts were made to add money to the church funds. The first church festival, WEST FEST '86, galvanized lots of volunteers to staff many activities including music, raffle, auction, food, and tarot card reading. It turned out to be a rainy day so all activities, except for the elephant ride, were crammed indoors. It made close to its \$3,000 goal. There were hopes this would become a UCW yearly tradition, but it turned out to be the only WEST FEST in the church's history.

The congregation again decided against hiring an interim minister, and the church moved forward with lay leadership until the arrival of the Reverend David MacPherson in August 1987. By December 1987 a capital fund drive began. Having hired a minister interested in growing the church, the congregation prepared for a building addition. A committee to choose an architect selected a well-respected architectural firm. Unfortunately, the plan developed was not within the planned budget and it was decided to abandon that proposal. UCW member and architect, Kenneth Kurtz, who designed the original building, and who had previously been unavailable to work with the church, was hired to redirect the expansion of the building. Kurtz's original 1965

"stage plan" to include added RE rooms and a larger meeting room extending around a courtyard was also abandoned as too costly. Meetings were held for congregational input. Design adjustments were made according to budgetary constraints and the addition was completed in 1989. In January 1990, long time member Alice Holz, died. She left a considerable estate to the church, which was used to pay down the mortgage, establish a library, and add artwork to the church.

Rev. David MacPherson was particularly interested in UU history and came from a Universalist background. He believed it was important to reflect the Universalist heritage in the church name and supported an effort to add Universalist to the congregation's name. In May 1990 the congregation voted to become Unitarian Universalist Church West. In June, under the joint direction of Bob Simiele and a Cincinnati UU director, the combined UUA choirs participated in a gala concert at Milwaukee's Pabst Theater to raise funds for a new UU hymnal. The UUA General Assembly was held in Milwaukee at the same time.

Rev. Dave served the church for 6 years. During that time the congregation grew steadily in numbers. By 1993 there were 379 members with 203 children enrolled in Religious Education. Rev. Dave focused his ministry on growth, both in numbers and faith development, long range planning, both programmatic and financial, and the retention and inclusion of new members. A Lay Ministry group composed of members in helping professions was formed by Dave to help with pastoral care. He helped to revitalize a non-church group, the local Memorial Society (currently called the Funeral Consumer's Alliance of Greater Milwaukee). Dave left in June 1993 to return to his home state of Virginia and began a period of retirement.

During these years more UUCW members became ministers. In June 1986, the congregation ordained Nancy Roemheld, the third church member to become a UU minister. In May 1991 the congregation again ordained one of its own members, Barbara Jo Sorenson. Over the years four others who were at one time members of UUCW also became ordained UU ministers. They are Charles Saleska, Charlotte Saleska, Byrd Tetzlaff, and Lilia Cuervo. Jill Terwilliger, who did not become an adult member but grew up in the church, also was ordained. In addition, long time church member and former board president, Mark Ward, completed Meadville Lombard Theological School in 2004 and became the lead Minister of the UU Congregation of Ashville, NC. Nic Cable, another person who grew up in the UUCW congregation, completed Meadville in 2014 and in 2017 began his first called ministry at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbus, Indiana (UUCI). A total of eleven UUCW congregants now entered UU ministry.

The Reverend Douglas Strong as the new interim minister, arrived in August 1993. A whirlwind of energy, he attended many committee meetings and offered ideas for positive changes. He initiated the use of live music on Sunday mornings instead of recorded music, was instrumental in raising funds for and purchasing hymnals and revitalized a committee to help with members in need, to be called the Community UU Connections. He resurrected a Committee on Ministry, addressed infrastructure weaknesses, spurred the purchase of new office equipment and advised the Board and congregation of the weaknesses in the church's financial position and the need to improve staff salaries. In addition, he preached courageous sermons and experimented with Sunday and non-Sunday services. He completed his ministry in June 1994, leaving the congregation with his annual report in which he articulated changes he thought needed to be made. The Reverend Thomas Yondorf began ministry at UUCW in September 1994, bringing with

him his wife and two small children. He was enjoyed for his casual style, his sense of humor and his focus on family. He was interested in social action, and in 1995 helped the congregation raise \$2,367 to help the socially active Cross Lutheran congregation in Milwaukee whose church had burned. During this same period the congregation reactivated the Long-Range Planning Committee to offer recommendations for future growth. Plans evolved for two Sunday services, a capital campaign, and the hiring of a full time Director of Religious Education. In 1997 a group of about 22 church members resigned to form a new congregation, the Lake Country UU Church, located 17 miles west of UUCW. The Long-Range Planning Committee had addressed the possibility of encouraging a new church but planned this for a much later date. The need for two services was delayed. Membership fell from 405 in March 1997 to 357 in November. A full-time RE Director, Maria O'Connor, was hired in August 1997. At that time 217 children were registered in the religious education program.

In 1995 a children's choir was begun by Music Director, Bob Simiele. It soon involved 50 children. The adult choir had continued to grow over the years and numbered about 50 members also. Adult Enrichment classes were held, as was a program of musical events called Music West, which were performed from 1992-1997. A capital fund was initiated in 1997 and raised about \$210,000. Proceeds were used to replace the roof of the original building, pay down the mortgage, and fund other needed building related expenditures. Funds made available by the reduced mortgage payments were used to increase staff salaries. About \$210,000 was raised.

In addition to being able to make the needed building improvements through the capital fund, a wonderful windfall was received by the church. "The Kings" a 47-foot-long cement and paint sculpture by Canadian artist Jordi Bonet was installed on the west wall of the sanctuary on July 24, 1999, by a group of volunteers led by Ron Zdroik and Julia Collins. The sculpture came to the congregation as a gift the Associated Bank in downtown Milwaukee through the actions of the church's architect and emeritus member, Ken Kurtz. For the complete story of this amazing addition to the sanctuary see the appendix at the end of this history. A plaque explaining "The Kings" is located next to the sanctuary entrance on the east wall.

Complaints about Rev. Yondorf's performance surfaced early in his ministry and, with the Committee on Ministry and Personnel Committees worked with him to resolve them. Performance issues continued, and in spring 2000 several present and past members of the Committee on Ministry advised Tom to resign or risk facing a congregational meeting which would ask for his resignation. Tom had been popular with many, and a number of members were unaware that there had been problems and were shocked when he resigned. Some chose to leave the church. Well-attended meetings were held to facilitate the expression of feelings about the minister's resignation.

The Reverend Sam Schaal began a one-year interim ministry at the church in September 2000. In March 2001 the congregation voted to extend this to a second year, and Sam agreed. The focus of Sam's ministry was to help the congregation learn how it related to past ministers, what the role of the minister had been, and how church structures and the views and responses of the congregation had affected these relationships. In addition, he performed ministerial functions of preaching, teaching, administering, and providing pastoral care. Meanwhile the Board worked hard at analyzing and revising governance procedures to make meaningful change easier to accomplish.

In spring 2002 the Ministerial Search Committee reported to the congregation that they had been unsuccessful in finding a suitable candidate for minister. This coupled with the unfinished work of the Board on the changing roles and relationships between the Minister, the Music Director, the Music Committee and other staff and members led the Board to ask Sam to extend his ministry for a third year. With the approval of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) he agreed to stay. Sam and the board continued to work to bring all staff and lay relationships into what was called "right relationship." As a consequence of that effort some disagreement about roles needed to be clarified. In July, 2002, Bob Simiele, the Music Director of 30 years, resigned, stating that contractual differences would compromise his ability to do his job. The Board accepted his resignation. Some members of the church were angry about the process of Bob's leaving and several resigned from the church. Changes in the Music Director and accompanist positions during the following four years were many and culminated in Ruben Piirainen assuming the roles of both Music Program Director and Choir Director. More detail can be found the Music Program appendix.

Meanwhile, a new Ministerial Search Committee had been elected and began its work in May 2002. In February 2003 they presented the Reverend Suzelle Lynch to the congregation as their candidate. On April 13 Suzelle was overwhelmingly approved by the congregation. She began ministry at UUCW on August 15, 2003. Adult membership at that time was around 300. In 2004 UUCW began offering two worship services and religious education programs on Sunday mornings to accommodate increasing membership and religious education attendance. In addition, children began to be included in the beginning portion of the service about three times per month. Also added were additional multigenerational services. In 2005, Kelly Bognar was hired as a Religious Education Program Assistant to supply materials for RE classes and to lead the Summer RE program.

With concerns about the war in Iraq, the congregation adopted a Statement of Conscience against the Iraq war in March 2003 and a sign "Help Create Peace" was added to the UUCW roadside sign. Social Action issues continued in importance over several years including the following events:

- The church was certified in 2004 by the UUA as a "Green Sanctuary" congregation work in environmental stewardship and earth ministry. Those ministries have continued to the present.
- The same year a team of volunteers was sent to Nicaragua to build homes with the organization "Bridges to Community". More than 100 volunteers have participated in subsequent "Nicaragua Brigades." A more complete description by Eddee Daniel can be found in the appendix.
- In the spring of 2005, the congregation passed a Statement of Conscience on same sex marriage, and in spring of 2006, after several years of preparation the congregation voted to accept UUA certification as a Welcoming Congregation, a congregation that celebrates the lives of persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions.
- In the spring of 2008, an 8.4 kilowatt solar-electric generating system was installed on the flat roof of the church, another significant Earth Ministry achievement. UUCW was the first church in WE Energies SE Wisconsin territory to install solar power.

- The "Split the Plate" outreach program was launched in 2009. Half of the undesignated offering funds are shared with a different non-profit organization each month.
- In November 2010, after seven years of active peace work, the Unitarian Universalist Peace Ministry Network named UUCW as the first official Peace Advocacy Congregation.

In addition to the Social Action activity, Long Range planning efforts were again initiated in 2006, resulting in the Vision 2012 plan. It included enlarging the number of staff by adding personnel to all areas of ministry including Religious Education, Music, Facilities and Administration. In 2007 the Administrative Coordinator position was added, and in 2009 a part-time Membership Coordinator position was added for one year.

The 2 1/2 acres of land adjoining the church to the east were purchased in 2006. Although purchased with no specific plan, the land's availability seemed to be an opportunity not to be missed to protect the eastern border of UUCW's property. The land continues to be largely open green space with a Labyrinth and an area that is used for bonfires and other church gatherings. It significantly increased maintenance responsibilities for the Campus Committee and, because no specific plan was created for its use, the question of whether to keep the land was raised at various times.

A system of "policy-based governance" was adopted as the framework for conducting church business in 2007. In it, the elected Board of Trustees delegates authority for management of operations to the Executive Team composed of Minister, Board President, and Treasurer. Staff supervision and oversight of programs and activities were delegated to the Minister.

Activities to encourage members to connect and grow were also developing:

- In fall 2005, the UUnity Circles small group ministry program began involving both members or friends in groups. UUnity Circles were conducted through spring of 2016.
- Adult Activity Groups were gathered under the Membership Committee umbrella as Affinity Groups in the 2005-2006 church year with as many as 15 different groups providing many social and fun opportunities for members and friends.
- Also, in 2006 a group of women including key leaders, Jan Sandretti and Eleanor Neal, formed a quilting group and named it the PieceMakers. Their first joint work was a quilt auctioned off at the biennial UUCW Auction. They also made infant quilts for preemies and comfort quilts for terminally ill patients at the Froedtert Hospital. Member Dorothy Ann Phinney inspired, designed and provided materials for cushions to be used on the hard chairs in the sanctuary. A beautiful quilt representing many of UUCW's activities was jointly made for the church's 50th anniversary celebration in 2012 and hung in the sanctuary. It is representative of the shared work and camaraderie enjoyed by group members.
- A Lay Pastoral Care Team was developed by Rev. Suzelle beginning in 2008 and is available to help minister to those needing support. Training was provided to volunteers selected to serve.

Several projects were developed to improve the church connection to the wider community:

- A new website was created in the 2009-2010 church year to enhance communication with members and those outside the church community. It was refreshed again in 2017 and a new logo was designed by Kelly Bognar to identify the church.
- The East entrance was enhanced in 2012 by the construction of a canopy designed by church friend and architect, Gene Guskowski. It allowed people to be dropped off under shelter and provided an inviting look to the entrance.
- With the intent of making the east entrance even more open and inviting, the "Doors to the Future" project was completed in 2013. Funds were raised to replace solid wooden doors with glass doors giving the foyer the feel and visual accessibility to visitors envisioned by early building planners.
- The Vision 2020 Long Range Planning process was initiated in fall of 2011 to consider future possibilities for the church community.

Anniversary celebrations of staff tenure and the church itself were highlights over several years. Rev. Suzelle Lynch's 10th anniversary was celebrated during the 2012-2013 church year and Ruben Piirainen's 10th year as Director of Music was honored the following year. Celebration of the 50th Anniversary since the chartering of the church was initiated in January of 2012 and continued to mid-January of 2013. The purpose of the year-long celebration was to honor and celebrate the church's past, present, and future, with the theme "Come as You Are, Leave Inspired." Two anniversary-themed events each month highlighted past experiences in the life of the church. A month long "history display" in the Community Room provided visual documentation for all to see.

Various staff organization changes occurred following the adoption of policy-based governance. A Church Administrator was hired for the 07-08 year and left the following year to be replaced by an Administrative Coordinator in the fall of 2008. That staff person's tenure ended in the spring of 2012. Vicki Banville began in October of 2012 in the revised Church Administrator position and became part of the Executive Team. To strengthen the Membership Committee, a new half-time position of Membership Coordinator began and ended in the 2008-2009 year, and 2011 brought the church's first half-time Assistant Minister, the Reverend Lori Hlaban. Her portfolio was focused on "Membership and Congregational Engagement". When Lori left after three years to seek a full-time ministerial position, the Reverend Joyce Palmer, UUCW's first African-American minister, was hired to take on the Assistant Minister role beginning late summer of 2015.

Small Group Ministry programs were expanded in 2012 to include UU Wellspring, coordinated by Patricia D'Auria and Rev. Suzelle. It is a program for spiritual deepening developed by the First Unitarian Church of Rochester, N.Y. UU Wellspring offers a spiritual journey, based on five core components: spiritual practice, spiritual direction, Unitarian Universalist history and theology, small group participation, and faith in action. More than 40 members and friends have participated.

Two building-related objectives were realized thanks to a very generous gift to the church. One, new flooring was installed on the main level of the building in 2013. And, two, as an outgrowth of work done during the Vision2020 Long Range Planning Committee, a Holistic Study of the church building and campus was initiated during the 2015-2016 church year. The Workshop Architects group were hired to conduct the study. Through a

series of meetings with members and staff a preliminary plan was put together to answer developing needs of the church community. The need for a capital fund drive was clear and planning began in the fall of 2016. The campaign itself (Build 2020) began in the spring of 2017 raising \$1,166,305 in pledges from 175 pledging units to be paid over five years. The campaign continues to accept pledges and a committee was chosen to clarify goals and develop building planning.

With increasing racial tensions throughout the metropolitan Milwaukee area and the country, the congregation voted to follow the UUA's lead and support the Black Lives Matter movement with the following motion at a January 31, 2016 congregational meeting: UUCW supports the Black Lives Matter movement and endorses UUCW taking a public stand to show that support." On Sunday, April 10, 2016 UUCW members of all ages offered public witness on North Avenue and a large "Black Lives Matter" banner was hung on the North Avenue facing side of the building. By city code it could hang there for four months after which a smaller sign was placed at the side of the road. Various workshops and other opportunities for education relating to racial issues were available at the church and in the larger community. Ann Heidkamp was awarded the UUA Justice Building Innovator award and with Rev. Suzelle represented our church on anti-racism issues in a variety of community groups.

September 20th, 2017 brought recognition and honoring of the 50th Anniversary of Milwaukee Open Housing Marches, entitled "Open Housing; The Suburban Challenge Then, and Now" held at UUCW. On that date in 1967, Unitarian Church West became the one suburban congregation to open its doors for the NAACP Youth Commandos and Father Gropi during Milwaukee's Open Housing Marches. The program was preceded by a public witness for racial justice and open housing along North Ave. in front of the church building. In addition, work on anti-racism issues and education and the Black Lives Matter movement continued through 2018.

Staff changes marked the 2016-2017 church year. Kelly Bognar, who had worked as Religious Education Program Assistant since 2005, modified her role in Religious Education and became Publications Coordinator, immersing herself in all the various written and digital forms of communication from the church to the congregation and to the larger community. With the support of the Marketing committee, she developed a new logo for the church. Other significant changes occurred when both Religious Education Director Maria Costello O' Connor and Assistant Minister, Rev. Joyce Palmer, announced that they would leave at the end of the church year. Maria retired from her position of 21 years to be more available to her family and Joyce left for similar reasons. The fiscal year closed with 405 adult members. 165 children were registered in the religious education program with about 195 children participating.

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Material for this history was taken from annual reports, newsletters, newspaper articles and the historical writings previously done by Kathryn Whitford, Carl Steinhardt, Mark Ward and Lilo Sewell. Additional information was taken from the UUCW web history. After the Archiving Committee was given committee status in 2013, additions were made to the history and the church story extended through 2018. Archiving Committee members included Kristin Fewel, LaVerne Ferguson, Carol Klaus, Carolou Nelsen, Lilo Sewell, and Ann Terwilliger. Many thanks to all for helping to record the UCW/UUCW history.

UUCW History Appendices: 11-2018 (narrative)

Art at UUCW:

- Art pieces' list

- Bonnet Sculpture acquisition by historian Lilo Sewell(2000)

- 50th Anniversary Quilt

- UUCW and arts history*

Archiving Committee History

Awards presented at Annual Meetings 1989-2018

Building cornerstones, 1965, 1989 By-Laws as of 2018 revision*

Campus projects led and or built by members

Committee/program development outline1962-2018

Church leader lists:

- Board Presidents

- Board of Trustee members

- Treasurers

- Administrators

- Office staff

Endowment Committee history*

First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee - 175th Anniversary-2017 – UUCW Proclamation

Gifts (non-monetary) to UUCW - recent years not yet included

Labyrinths, outdoor and indoor development and maintenance*

Logo history*

Members of note -UCW/UUCW:

- Founders/Charter members/Emeritus members thru 2018

Meditation Garden history (2008) by Caryl Sewell

Minister development/congregants who became UU ministers

Ministers serving UCW/UUCW Music program

- History, Pianos, Personnel (Includes directors, accompanists)

Religious Education Program

- History, RE directors, paid and unpaid*

Small Group Ministry

Social Action Programs/History

- Black Lives Matter

- Common Ground

- Food Pantry

- Green Sanctuary* includes Solar panels, rain barrel, recycling

- Habitat for Humanity

- Interfaith

- Micah

- Nicaragua Brigades by Eddee Daniel

- Split the Plate

- Welcoming Congregation

Stage West*

UUCW Archiving Committee History by Carolou Nelsen

In 2006 LaVerne Ferguson asked Carolou Nelsen to join her in attending a Marquette University workshop on the archiving of church records. That planted some ideas about keeping the UUCW church records. More information was found through the UUA and other church denominations. LaVerne and Carolou believed their church story and records should be organized and safely stored while there were still some church members available with an institutional memory. In 2010 they began to work:

- Past books listing church officers and events were brought up to date and stored in the office safe.
- File drawers which held years of papers and early church histories were attacked.
- More hands were needed and in 2013 Ann Terwilliger and Lilo Sewell joined in the effort. Ann was elected chair of the team.
- Permission was sought and granted by the Milwaukee County Historical Society for the permanent and safe storage of UUCW records.

By a vote of the UUCW Board of Trustees the archiving team became an official committee in 2013 with a line-item budget of \$250. In 2015 Kristin Fewel and Carol Klaus joined the committee.

At this point (2018) most located church records have been sorted and organized. Board of Trustees books of minutes from 1959 to 2007 have been scanned into the church computer. Thanks to additional helpers, old newsletters and orders of service were also scanned. In 2007 the church began to keep all computerized materials and, fortunately, scanning of more recent materials is not necessary. Researched materials have been incorporated into the history of UUCW from 1959 to 2018. Appendices are being added for the description of various church pursuits and basic historical information. Committee members have spent many individual hours of research and met for two hours at least twice monthly for six years. We have greatly enjoyed doing it all!

The committee extends a special thank you to our 2017-2019 UUCW Intern Minister, Kimberlee Tomczak Carlson, for her interest in the church history and her decision to scan the many church scrap books assembled by Lilo Sewell covering the years 1959 through 2007. Kimberlee then put together a digital UCW/UUCW timeline using material from those books and other more recent sources making a comprehensive visual exhibit of the church history. Indeed, a wonderful gift to the congregation!

It is the hope of this Archiving Committee that UUCW will establish historians and committees for the maintenance of records from the present forward. Learning from the past contributes to the hope for our future.