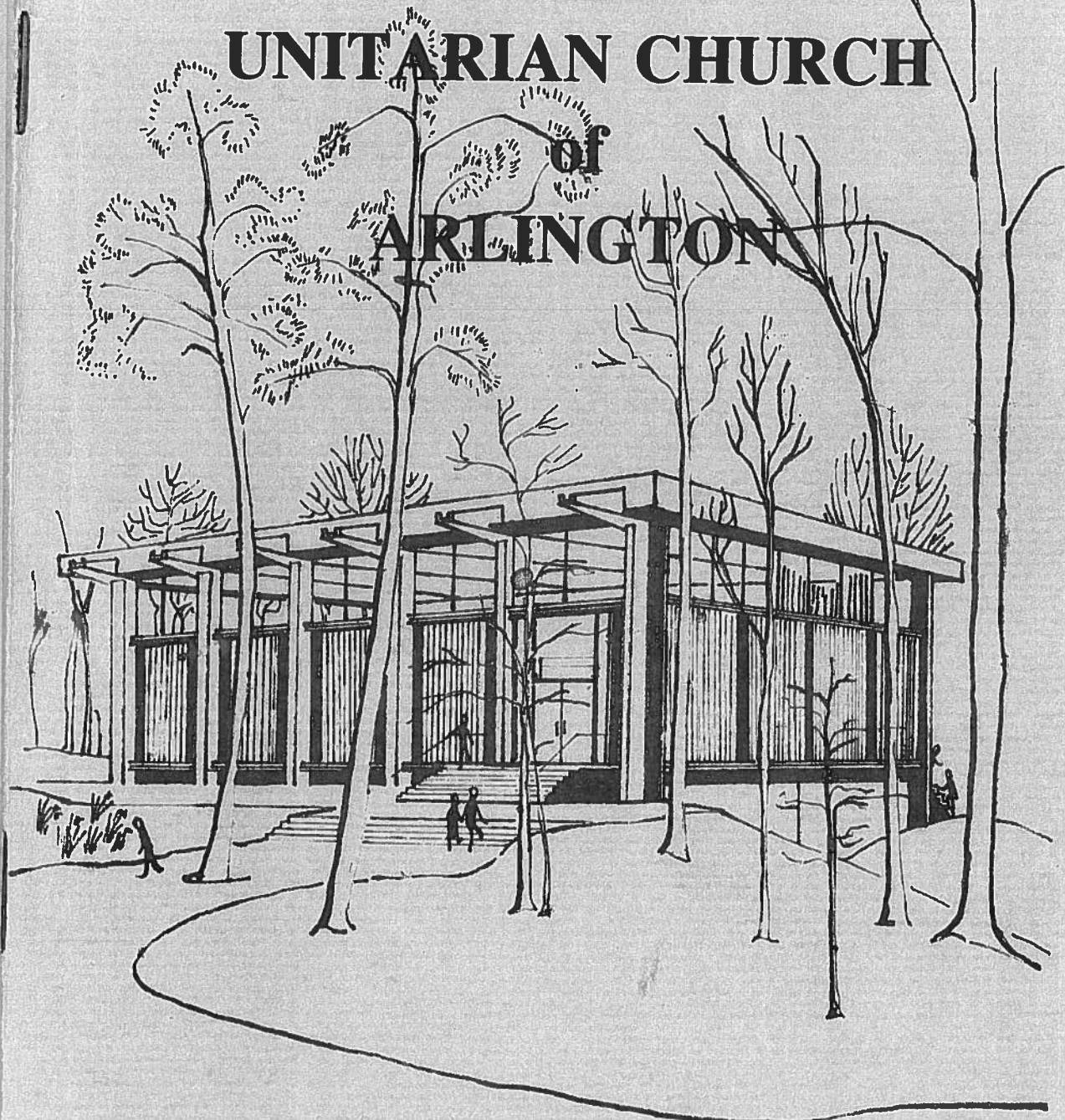


# **HISTORY of the UNITARIAN CHURCH of ARLINGTON**



**by Ruth W. Tryon**

Dave Hunter  
Kerry Mueller

# **THE UNITARIAN CHURCH OF ARLINGTON**

**First Edition  
The First Twenty Years  
by  
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**Chapter 7, 1968-1974, Editing and Production  
by  
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# CONTENTS

<b>Introduction: Robert C. Clarke</b> . . . . .	III
<b>Preface</b> . . . . .	V
<b>1. The Arlington Church is Founded</b> . . . . .	1
All Souls Looks to Arlington	
The Fellowship	
A Church is Born	
The First Building	
Early Years	
<b>2. Dynamic Decade</b> . . . . .	6
Ross Weston: A Year of Adjustments	
Stand for Democracy	
Other Social Concerns	
Community Reaction	
Service Projects	
For Adults: Education and Recreation	
More Unitarians . . . More Staff	
<b>3. Religious Education</b> . . . . .	15
Early Beginnings	
Program	
Teachers and Staff	
Special Activities and Organizations	
Gift to the Children's Chapel	
<b>4. Expansion: The Church Plant Grows</b> . . . . .	18
Forecasts and Decisions	
Addition of the Religious Education Wing	
"The Time Has Come . . ."	
First, More Land	
Design For a Liberal Church	
Realization	
Gifts	
Music in the New Church	
<b>5. Change</b> . . . . .	24
Ross Weston Resigns	
Taking Stock	
Edward H. Redman Comes To Arlington	
Activities Inaugurated	
Reverses	
Toward Recovery	

<b>6. The Twentieth Year</b> .....	30
Challenge to a New Minister	
Momentum Regained	
The Church Program: A Profile	
The School of Religion in the Twentieth Year	
Conclusion	
<b>7. 1968-1974</b> .....	37
Housing for the Elderly — Adversity Overcome	
Membership and Budget Grow	
The Elevator	
Social Responsibility Committee	
For Love of Children	
Human Sexuality Teaching Introduced	
The Choir Goes to Europe	
<b>8. We Gather, We Finance, We Improve</b> .....	44
George Kimmich Beach — Ten Years and Counting in '88	
Membership Remained Stable	
Finances Rose Steadily	
Memorial Gifts	
Major Capital Improvements	
The Church Meets the Computer	
<b>9. The Arts</b> .....	49
Music — A Bright Star in the Community	
Youthful Voices Join In	
Visual Arts	
We Go Hi-Tech with Television and Videotape	
The Arlington Unitarian Dancers	
<b>10. Religious Education Involves All Ages</b> .....	53
Co-op Preschool Serves Community	
<b>11. Social Responsibilities — Caring Beyond Our Walls</b> ....	56
Vietnamese Refugees — Help Begets Help	
Sanctuary For Undocumented Central American Refugees	
Sheltering the Homeless	
<b>12. We Meet, We Ponder, We Celebrate</b> .....	59
Men's and Women's Organizations	
Questionnaires — We Identify Ourselves	
Denominational Affairs	
Architecture Award	
<b>Appendix</b> .....	63
Ministers of the Unitarian Church of Arlington, VA .....	63
Special Assistants .....	63

Ministerial Interns . . . . .	63
Directors of Religious Education . . . . .	63
Directors of Music . . . . .	64
Pianists – Organists . . . . .	64
Chairpersons, Board of Trustees . . . . .	65
Recipients of the Unsung Hero Award . . . . .	66
Church Members . . . . .	67
Enrollment in the School of Religion . . . . .	68
Total Church Income and Pledges . . . . .	69

## INTRODUCTION

History is not always man-made. Noteworthy events do occur from time to time which man does not anticipate and over which he has no control. The San Francisco earthquake is one example.

Not all such events are disastrous. In 1848, an army of crickets threatened to destroy thousands of acres of crops in Salt Lake City. But sea gulls, roving far inland, devoured the crickets and the harvest was saved. So were the lives of many settlers.

But man alone records and interprets history even if he does not always make it; and most of those events which have been described and analyzed in writing deal with what human beings have done. Carlyle wasn't too wide of the mark when he wrote, "History is the essence of innumerable biographies." This is manifestly true of the Unitarian Church of Arlington, VA.

As with individuals, a church may well develop a multi-faceted personality; but over a period of years, a pattern of valuing and doing will emerge that reflects a discernible and integrated character.

For a church is a living organism. It can become ill and recover, it knows seasons of sadness and of joy. It is not conceived at the groundbreaking ceremony nor born at the service of dedication.

It is conceived in the minds, in the vision and in the wills of people, and is born when they come together and say, "Let us take the ascending path. Let us support one another in all the struggle, and celebrate with one another in all the exhilaration that make our free spiritual experience the unique adventure that it is."

Our buildings not only serve as facilities for worship, education and fellowship — important as these functions are. They also stand as the outward symbols of our commitment and our hope. They are a tender reminder, too, of those in whose eyes the vision first shone and of whose loving purpose we are the heirs and beneficiaries.

Since beginning my ministry here in May, 1967, I have had the opportunity to become well acquainted with most of our members and friends. Some, of course, are no longer in our midst, but many remain and more, I am grateful to say, continue to join us. Literally thousands of persons have played a part in the history of our church, and you and I are among them.

Finally, no one is better qualified to write the chronicle which follows than Ruth Tryon, for she has been creatively immersed in the life and

times which she describes. Mrs. Tryon, in addition to being a Charter Member of the Church, has also served as Chairman of the Board of Trustees and has held other positions of responsibility — in the Church and out — too numerous to list here. I would only add that she personifies the warmth and integrity of this Church as I have come to know it.

It is written:

A handsome woman is a jewel; a good woman is a treasure. Ruth Tryon is both.

Robert C. Clarke  
Minister, 1967-1977

## PREFACE

There is no such thing as an accurate and complete history. Even in closely knit dogmatic societies the diversity of opinion in recounting past events generates disagreement, even to the point of revision.

Thus, with a church congregation whose philosophies span the intellectual spectrum, the end product of an endeavor to recount history inevitably leads to compromise. This doesn't necessarily mean that there is controversy dominating the effort. Unitarians are notably flexible in their outlooks, easing the way toward a consensus.

In updating the history of the Unitarian Church of Arlington, the presence on the History Committee of old timers has made the task of sorting the mounds of material that were generated much easier. In nautical terminology these "plank owners" spotted errors in the first edition of the history and augmented some of the excellent text of the late Ruth Tryon. These are not changes in her text.

In this second edition the *modus operandi* was changed. Instead of the author doing all of the research, members of the committee combed such archives as existed, and compared notes. Several of the members volunteered their private contemporary notes, furnishing a wealth of information on events and personalities. Regrettably, some had to be left out because of space limitations.

Members of the 1988 Committee on Church History of the Unitarian Church of Arlington were Sally Recinos, Chair; Larry Booda, Editor; Albert Huntington, Mary Latham, Berenice Mallory, and Carrel and Joy Tod.



# Chapter 1

## THE ARLINGTON CHURCH IS FOUNDED

The Unitarian Church of Arlington, VA, can trace its origins to two things — another church and a war. Since 1821 All Souls had been the only Unitarian church in the Washington area. Then came World War II. On Dec. 14, 1941, seven days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, a group of 40 Arlington Unitarians met at the home of Marjorie Savage, 4108 Lee Highway. Present were Laurence C. Staples, Executive Director of All Souls, and Mrs. George Collier. The topic of discussion was the difficulty of transportation due to wartime gasoline rationing. (A situation that we in 1974 know can occur in peacetime.)

With the influx of war personnel crowding the suburbs and the scarcity of automobiles, driving became a luxury. It became imperative that services be held in Arlington. That meeting was presided over by a field worker of the American Unitarian Association. All Souls' minister at that time was Ulysses G.B. Pierce.

### All Souls Looks to Arlington

However, it wasn't until August 24, 1943, that a letter was sent by Mr. Staples, at the direction of All Souls Board of Trustees, to some hundred families and individuals in Arlington. It said, in part:

Dear Friends:

We in All Souls Church have been much concerned of late with regard to our members and friends living at a considerable distance from the Church, and so, unable, particularly at this time, to share in our worship and work as regularly as they, and we, might wish.

This problem is especially acute for those living in nearby Virginia . . . It has been suggested that it might be possible to hold informal gatherings of this group from time to time. Enough of a program would be arranged to make the occasion interesting and stimulating . . . All of us need, in these times, particularly, to preserve and strengthen our faith, and enrich and refine the quality of our living, and these things we can promote by association with like-minded, liberal people.

In response, a conference was held on September 26, 1943 at the home of Mr. and Mrs. George A. Collier.

It is appropriate that the Colliers should be the first Arlingtarians to be mentioned in this chronicle. The idea of a Unitarian Church in Arlington might well have died a-borning had it not been for George Collier's devoted and able service, given so unstintingly throughout the early years.

Dr. Pierce, Mr. Staples, and members of the All Souls Board met at the Collier home with a number of Arlington Unitarians, and from their discussion plans emerged to organize the Arlington Fellowship of All Souls Church. The first meeting was set for October 28, with Dr. Pierce, the scholarly philosopher who had been minister of All Souls for 42 years, as speaker.

Two weeks after the first meeting, Dr. Pierce died suddenly, a few hours after preaching at All Souls' morning service on the subject, "The Emerging God."

The Arlington meeting was held with Dr. Waldemar W. Argow of the Baltimore Church paying high tribute to Dr. Pierce's life and work. He continued with the topic Dr. Pierce had chosen for the occasion: "The Joy of Being a Unitarian." In spite of unfavorable weather, 33 interested Unitarians were present. George Collier was named chairman of a committee to carry on the Unitarian movement in Arlington; Jean (Mrs. Milo) Sonen was secretary.

Three more meetings were held that year with members of the staff of the American Unitarian Association and members from Richmond as speakers.

When the Reverend A. Powell Davies was installed as minister of All Souls Church the following year, the Arlington group, inspired by his invigorating influence, took on new life. Dr. Davies conducted monthly vesper services, held wherever space could be found — in a community center and a women's clubroom. Rev. Alfred W. Birks, a retired Unitarian minister living in the area, helped to conduct the monthly services.

### **The Fellowship**

Meanwhile a formal request was sent to the Board of Trustees of All Souls Church, asking recognition of the Fellowship. First among the aims listed was: "To promote better acquaintance and Christian fellowship among members of the group."

The request for recognition was granted, and early in 1945, the Arlington Fellowship was formally organized as a constituent body of All Souls Church.

Slowly, interest in the Fellowship grew. When Dr. Davies could no longer find time for the meetings in Arlington, the group carried on with discussions in the homes of members. In 1946, a survey — forerunner of a long line of polls among Arlington Unitarians — showed 35 families desiring services monthly or oftener, and most of them favoring regular social gatherings, lectures, and discussion groups. Parents of 29 children asked for a church school.

These hopes were partially fulfilled a few months later when Rev. Gilbert A. Phillips was appointed assistant minister of All Souls Church and named minister for Arlington. Rev. Phillips and his wife had been lay leaders in the Germantown, Pennsylvania, Church, and while completing his work at Harvard Divinity School he had served as minister of the First Parish Unitarian Church of Bedford, Massachusetts.

With the arrival of Rev. Phillips, the Arlington Fellowship began regular weekly evening services, held in the Pershing Drive Christian Church.

### **A Church Is Born**

Gil Phillips, as all his congregation called him, was young, dynamic, provocative, with a gift for the telling phrase and the challenging question. He conducted his first Arlington service on April 27, 1947, with a characteristic topic: "Roads for Traveling Souls."

Average attendance that spring was 45. By September, it had increased to 75. Enthusiasm mounted steadily, and the Fellowship voted to organize as a Unitarian church affiliated with the American Unitarian Association. This change went into effect on April 1, 1948, when the Fellowship became the Unitarian Church of Arlington. Officers were elected, and the Reverend Phillips was released as assistant minister of All Souls to become the first minister of the Unitarian Church of Arlington.

Thus, after four years of pioneering, the Arlington Church was established as an independent entity. It had a membership of 99, and its program was stated: "To promote the understanding and interests of liberal religion, based upon individual freedom of belief, universal brotherhood, and the democratic process in human relationships."

### **The First Building**

The office of the new church was established in the recreation room of the George Collier home, and the minister was to be found there two afternoons a week. The most urgent problem was to secure a meeting place to accommodate the Church School as well as morning services. Arrangements were made to rent the auditorium and several classrooms at the Kate Waller Barrett School, 4401 Henderson Road. But the congregation was eager to have its own church home, and a committee headed by George Collier at once began the search for a suitable site.

A tract of approximately an acre was found near the intersection of South Pershing Drive and the present Arlington Boulevard, and on November 7, 1948, members of the Church gathered to celebrate groundbreaking for their new building. The lot was muddy and overgrown with brush; it was a damp, dreary day, but spirits were high as each

member of the little group stepped up to turn a shovelful of earth.

The new building, designed by an architect member of the Church, Earl B. Bailey, was planned to be used ultimately for the School of Religion. It was a small, unpretentious brick structure, housing an auditorium (the present Reeb Hall), a kitchen, the minister's study, and a few rooms in the basement, a modest beginning by any standards, but for the new congregation it meant a dream realized — services under their own roof.

The cost was estimated as \$44,800, an ambitious goal, but the American Unitarian Association encouraged the project by paying for the land and making a loan of \$15,000; there were gifts and loans from members of All Souls, and AUA and All Souls gave subsidies for operating expenses — \$120 and \$1500 respectively.

### Early Years

The first year of the Arlington Church was a time of exhilarating progress. At the April, 1949 congregational meeting, the minister could report:

The accomplishments of the Unitarian Church of Arlington, Virginia, in its first year of existence are remarkable. One year ago we were renting a church building for our evening services. Our membership was 99, and church attendance on that first Sunday after we had established ourselves as a church (April 4, 1948) was 60. We had an Alliance and the beginnings of a youth group, but no School of Religion or any other organizations.

Now, a year later, our church attendance has more than doubled so that our average for the entire year is a significant 102.9. Our present membership is 167. Our Church School that began from scratch in September has grown to 129. We have two Alliances with over 70 members, a Laymen's League with more than 50 men enrolled and a Youth Group of 20-odd. We have developed a publications table and a community forum, sent box after box of clothing to the Service Committee and exceeded our United Unitarian Appeal by 50 percent. And we have a church building nearing completion.

But it is not only in terms of statistics that this first year has been one of accomplishment. It has been meaningful in many other ways, for we have begun to have an impact upon this community and have also started to lend our weight to the broad movement for liberal religion. Perhaps it can be expressed no better than by my suggesting that on one occasion when I met with some non-Unitarians in Northern Virginia on a community issue, the important question in their minds was, "Where do the Unitarians stand?" Or perhaps I can express it by noting that our Board of Trustees has already been asked for advice about building a liberal church on the West Coast.

These are but straws in the wind. But they show the direction it is blowing — and more than that, that it is rising and that the Unitarian Church of Arlington, Virginia, is a vigorous and precocious organism even though but one year old.

The first service in the new church building was held June 12, 1949, and the Church was dedicated four months later. In the meantime, and

for some time to come, work crews from the congregation stretched the building funds by taking over painting, carpentry, digging, and grading. From time to time, *The Arlingtarian*, a one-page monthly news sheet, marked their progress: partitions for the Church School classrooms completed; cinders spread on the parking lot; kitchen and classrooms painted; and kitchen cabinets constructed.

Church membership continued to grow. On the day of the dedication ceremonies, a congregational meeting was held to discuss a heartening dilemma — not enough space for the rapidly expanding Church School. Reluctantly, members voted to limit registration in some classes.

In November Gil Phillips, the young minister who had contributed so much to the growth and dynamic spirit of the young church, resigned. The reason was personal — his impending divorce from his wife and marriage to a member of the congregation.

Mary Jane Phillips had been a leader in the Church, almost as popular as her husband. She had helped to organize the School of Religion and the Women's Alliances; she played the organ for the worship service; and joined her husband in parish visiting. If the minister remained, the Board of Trustees foresaw a situation that was bound to be divisive to the congregation, just at the time when the drive for the building fund called for a united, harmonious church.

Members were shaken by the announcement of the resignation; some felt strongly that the Board should not have accepted it. But in the end the crisis was weathered. The members mourned their loss, then rallied and set to work to maintain the momentum that had made the Church such an exciting enterprise in its first year. A Pulpit Committee began the search for a new minister.

Worship services were continued with guest speakers; the Laymen's League and the two Alliances explored current problems — local, national, and worldwide. The Advance Committee arranged a monthly forum series with outstanding speakers discussing world cooperation. By February, Church attendance on Sunday mornings had risen to an average of 165.

## Chapter 2

### DYNAMIC DECADE

The second minister of the Arlington Church arrived in March, 1950. Ross Allen Weston was a graduate of Syracuse University and had studied at Drew Theological Seminary and Union Theological Seminary, where he received his B.D. degree. He was ordained in the Methodist ministry and spent eight years serving in Methodist parishes. In 1946 he left the Methodist Church and became affiliated with the American Unitarian Association. He came to Arlington from his first Unitarian parish at Kennebunk, Maine. While there, he had been elected Executive Secretary of the Maine Unitarian Association and Regional Director of the Unitarian Churches in Maine.

Young, energetic, and a stirring preacher, he was deeply concerned with social problems and turned to social action as a necessary expression of religious liberalism. His voice was a compelling one against injustice.

#### **Ross Weston: a Year of Adjustment**

Vigorous protest arose almost immediately after Ross Weston's arrival from some in the congregation who felt that they discerned in the new minister's preaching too much of old-fashioned New England Unitarianism, and even traces of Methodism. A stormy period ensued. One faction called for the minister's resignation; but in time, as Ross Weston preached more confidently in humanistic terms and took his place as a leader in forward-looking movements, the crisis passed. The minister himself, at the end of his first year, spoke of the stimulus he had derived from the Arlington congregation — from their intelligence and civic concern and wide public experience — and added, "How I have grown!" The congregation might have said the same.

Soon after the arrival of Ross Weston, the Planning Committee appointed to study the needs of the congregation outlined the Church's mission:

In addition to its Sunday morning worship program, the Church should serve the community every day of the week with social service activities; liberal, intellectual, and religious discussions; education and recreation for adults and children. It should be open to all persons interested in its objective, regardless of their color, nationality, or personal religious affiliation. Its program should be dynamic, active, comprehensive.

During the next decade this objective was to be realized to a high degree.

### **Stand For Democracy**

One of the first activities initiated by Ross Weston was the Community Council for Social Progress. Organized in 1951 and sponsored by the Church, this was an inter-racial, inter-faith group, working "to promote by individual, group, and community action the full development of democratic principles in human relationships."

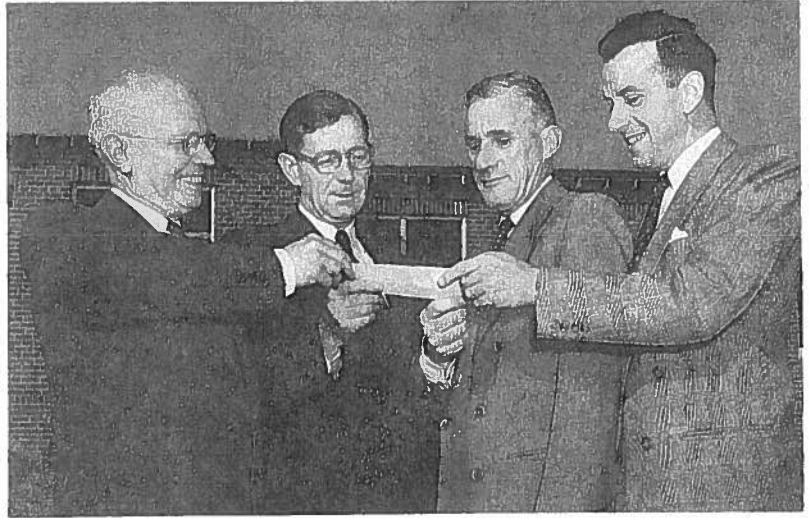
The CCSP brought together leaders in the white and Negro communities for discussion of mutual problems. Until the 1960s when other civil rights groups came to the fore, it was the only organization in Northern Virginia where leaders of both races met for exchange of viewpoints and concerted action. It sought support for public housing, eliminated "White" and "Colored" signs from some locations, challenged Virginia's law requiring segregated seating in public meetings, promoted integration in the schools, and called the attention of officials to evidence of racial discrimination. Not least among its contributions was the spirit of mutual trust and friendship engendered as members of both races worked together for the common cause of true democracy.

Another inter-racial activity, begun in 1949, was the Summer Workshop sponsored by the Day Alliance of the Church. This was a two-week vacation school, although not actually so-called because Virginia law required that all "schools" be segregated. Through a program of recreation and arts and crafts, and with an integrated volunteer staff, the children were given a happy experience of relaxed and natural cooperation with those of other races. For many it was their first such contact. One black parent reported his daughter's later experience in making friends with a little white girl: "She never could have done it if it hadn't been for the Summer Workshop."

The program was continued each summer until 1965, when progress in integration in Arlington lessened the need for such a project.

In November, 1954 came an occasion for the congregation to "stand up and be counted." The Supreme Court had handed down its decision outlawing segregation in the public schools. A commission appointed by the Governor announced a hearing to ascertain the views of Virginia citizens on school integration. The Arlington congregation voted 228 to 3 to authorize a delegation to present a statement in the name of the Church, urging the authorities to move towards school integration as soon as possible and condemning segregation as harmful to all children, black and white alike. At the hearing, the Unitarian Church of Arlington was the only Virginia church to speak for integration of Virginia's public schools.

In the years that followed, Virginia's "massive resistance" slowly gave way to at least token integration. When black students were allowed



**Early supporters Laurence Staples, left, and Rev. A. Powell Davies of All Souls, Carl Gibboney, and Rev. Ross Weston, Church Minister 1950-60.**

to enter Arlington's white schools for the first time, members of the Church cooperated with the Community Council for Social Progress to make the adjustment easier. Church members provided tutoring and arranged get-acquainted youth programs to make sure that black students would have some friends in the schools they were entering. The youth group of the Church (Liberal Religious Youth) played a leading role in these efforts. In 1959, the Arlington LRY received a first place award given by *Parents' Magazine* in recognition of community service for its program to help pave the way for integration.

An inter-racial social group for teenagers was formed by the Community Council for Social Progress with active leadership from Church members. Through "United Us," one report stated, teenagers of both races "have played together, watched movies and eaten popcorn together, and gone swimming together. . . . Our young people have contributed most signally to this first great step toward brotherhood and human understanding in public education in Virginia."

Robert Eldridge, whose parents were members of the Church, was one of the first black students slated for transfer to a white junior high school in 1957. The School Board refused to approve the transfer on the grounds that this student was not ready for integration. Members of the Church contributed a scholarship to help defray his expenses at an integrated private school. Subsequently, he was assigned to an integrated public school where he made an excellent record.

However, prejudice remained. Mrs. Robert Eldridge, Robert's mother was arrested by police at a Church picnic in a public park in Arlington.



The charge at the time of arrest was "conduct tending to incite a riot," evidently on the assumption that the mere sight of a black person quietly eating dinner with white friends in a public park would inflame to riotous behavior those who might witness such a violation of "the Virginia Way of Life." The Church took over Mrs. Eldridge's defense. The charge was later reduced to disorderly conduct, and the case, when it came to trial, was thrown out by the County Court judge, who found Mrs. Eldridge neither "disorderly or turbulent."

### **Other Social Concerns**

Meanwhile Ross Weston was speaking out on other social issues. In 1952, he roundly denounced from the pulpit the decision of a Virginia court judge that federal employees could not serve on the County Board. Mr. Weston was fined for contempt of court and given a suspended sentence. His congregation supported him in appealing the case, and the affair made headlines nationwide. The Unitarian Ministers Association, protesting that freedom of the pulpit was at stake, set up a defense committee, and other Unitarian churches, individuals, and organizations, as well as churches of some other denominations, joined in raising funds for an appeal. A year later, the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals reversed the lower court's decision.

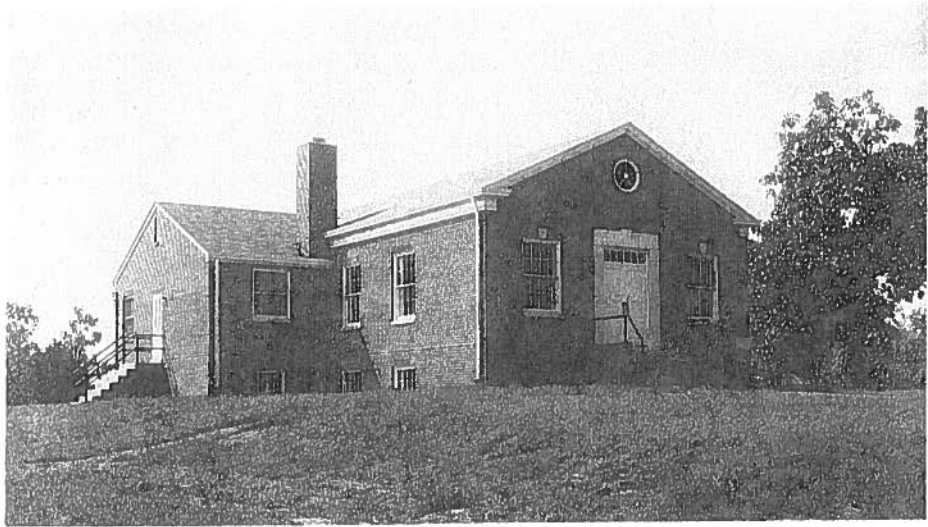
When the District of Columbia Tax Court ruled that the Washington Ethical Society was not entitled to the tax exemption for religious buildings, Ross Weston testified in the Society's behalf at the appeal hearing. This decision too was reversed.

After critical comment from the pulpit on traditional burial practices, a Memorial Society was formed in 1953 to discourage traditional elaborate and expensive funeral arrangements, and to facilitate simple, dignified procedures more in accord with liberal religious convictions.

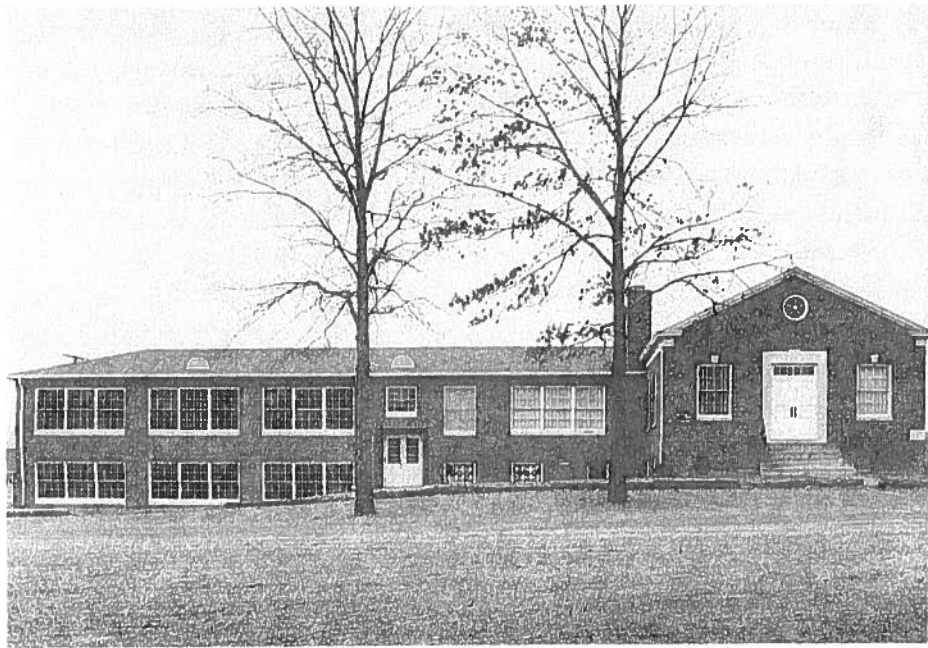
At the 1958 May Meetings of the denomination, a resolution submitted by the Arlington Church touched off a historic debate. The resolution proposed changing the name of the denomination's publication from *Christian Register* to *Unitarian Register*. Newspaper publicity, nationwide, debated the question. "Are Unitarians Christians?" The resolution expressed, though not without dissent, the humanistic trend prevailing in Arlington and in the denomination. The motion passed, and the word *Christian* was dropped from the *Register's* title.

### **Community Reaction**

With such activities, the Church inevitably attracted the attention of tradition-bound persons in the community, particularly the extreme



**Original Building 1949.**



**New wing added 1952.**

racists. When Rabbi Emmet A. Frank of Temple Beth El, Alexandria, was invited to occupy the pulpit, a telephone call just before the service warned: "Get the children out. We're going to blow up the place!" The Church was emptied, but no bomb was found and Rabbi Frank delivered his sermon the following Sunday to a jam-packed attendance. For a month, men of the Laymen's League checked the premises each night and stood guard for prowlers.

There were other threats of violence. The Arlington Defenders of State

Sovereignty and Individual Liberty, a segregationist group, distributed two circulars attacking Ross Weston. One suggested: "Hunting with firearms or bow and arrow is prohibited in Arlington County, but the use of the horsewhip is still legal and most effective." However, Ross Weston was not molested.

When the Governor's commission on school integration made its report, the Arlington Church held the first public meeting in the area to discuss the Commission's recommendations. Again an unidentified voice over the phone warned: "We're going to break up the meeting!" Several known extreme racists did attend, but evidently they were discouraged by the sight of the standing-room-only crowd of Unitarians and their friends who jammed the auditorium, its entrances, and hallways. There was no disturbance.

What did happen, as the Church demonstrated its concern for democracy and brotherhood, and its readiness to pioneer in social as well as religious matters, was that a liberal, dynamic congregation was attracted. New members came who welcomed the fellowship of other men and women who were guided by a social conscience and believed that religion must find expression in action. These were trying days, particularly in the era of McCarthy persecutions, and many in the congregation found strength in the sense of solidarity of the congregation and inspiration in Ross Weston's preaching.

The influence of the Church was increasingly felt in the community. A member of another church asked the Unitarian representative on the Arlington Council of United Church Women about a matter of social concern: "What will the Unitarians do? You know we look to you for leadership in the field of human rights."

### **Service Projects**

Action was not confined to protests and efforts to break the bonds of old prejudice. There were many humanitarian projects, such as collecting clothing for Koreans, for refugees dislocated by the Nazis, for migrant workers in the United States, and frequently for the needy in the metropolitan area.

Two projects early became established as traditions — the Thanksgiving donation of canned goods brought by the children of the Church School, and the Christmas "Mitten Tree," which the children delighted to decorate with their bright warm gifts. Public welfare officials of the county each year expressed their deep appreciation of these practical contributions for those in need.

A memorable Church service project was the help given to Hungarian refugees. Following the crushing of the revolt of the Freedom Fighters

in 1956, Mr. Weston suggested aid to the Hungarian refugees who had been forced to flee their country. Immediately, more than \$2,000 was contributed, as well as two tons of clothing. Then the Church became one of the first in the area to sponsor and relocate refugees.

What happened was characteristic. On 12 hours' notice, the Church mobilized to welcome three young Freedom Fighters and a family who had fled from Hungary. Practically the whole congregation had a hand in caring for them. Home hospitality was provided; within two weeks jobs and living quarters had been found for the young men and an apartment rented and furnished for the family. With the help of local merchants all were outfitted with clothing, and the Church provided funds until they could become self-supporting. All were soon making their own way.

In the months that followed, their adjustment was made easier by the warm friendliness of the congregation. One of the young men remarked, after he had acquired some English, "We like to come here. It is such a happy church." Another said, "In your church all are the same. You know that the mechanic is needed, just as the doctor or professor." So was learned a lesson in the essence of Unitarianism.

#### **For Adults: Education and Recreation**

In 1950 the Planning Committee had listed among Church goals: "liberal, intellectual, and religious discussion; education and recreation for adults and children." The objectives for adults were realized in a wide range of activities, most of them continued in later years.

A series of discussion meetings to introduce newcomers to Unitarianism and to the Arlington Church was begun by Ross Weston shortly after his arrival, and continued each year, even when the Church had no minister.

Seminars, adult discussion groups, talks, and informal classes flourished. The topics were and still are too numerous to mention — from religions of the East, to the latest findings of psychiatry, and from world crises to the teachings of Jesus. As a community service, distinguished speakers have discussed public questions of current concern in meetings open to the public. Book discussion groups have appeared regularly on the Church calendar since the early years.

Beginning in 1954, a memorable Church event was inaugurated, the annual "retreat" — a week-end gathering in the fall at some mountain resort, where members relax, exchange ideas on religious values and philosophy and on current problems, and acquire a deeper understanding of their Church and of each other.

The first retreat was a test of the congregation's mettle. Some 60

members had planned to reach Blue Ridge Summit on Friday evening, but Hurricane Hazel struck that afternoon, the winds were terrific, and the radio warned of hazardous driving conditions, with trees blown down across the roads. Next morning practically every "retreater" drove the 90 miles in time to be in place when the program began at 9:15 a.m. These conferences have continued annually to enrich the life of the Church.

On the lighter side, there have been numerous groups for recreation. A square dance group, begun in the first years of the Church, flourished for a long time. Bridge and chess groups became fixtures. The coffee hour after each service, begun in the 1950s, continues to promote friendship and a sense of "belonging" which is hard to come by in a large church with the constant turnover that is inevitable in the Washington area.

### **More Unitarians . . . More Staff**

The early progress of the Arlington Church was convincing evidence that the time was ripe for expansion in the Washington Metropolitan area of Unitarianism. To give encouragement to such a movement, Dr. A. Powell Davies in 1950 established the Greater Washington Association for Unitarian Advance, later known as the Greater Washington Association of Unitarian Universalist Churches, or G.W.A. All Souls and Arlington were the first members, with All Souls taking the lead in supplying financial and other assistance to struggling new groups.

In 1955, Arlington ceased to be the lone Unitarian Church in Northern Virginia, when the Fairfax and Mount Vernon centers were established. The Fairfax Center was an offshoot of the Arlington Church, and when it was recognized as a church and called a minister in 1957, Arlington lost some able leaders in this expansion, but continued to grow.

Meanwhile, increasing numbers in the Arlington congregation were requiring more personnel. In 1951, the Church had a stroke of good fortune when Paula Striebe was engaged as part-time Church secretary. She still holds the secretarial post as of this writing in 1972, and anyone who has had any duty connected with the Church office has reason to appreciate her ever-efficient, friendly, devoted service.

In 1955, as Executive Director, Colonel Robert J. Irish, took over a multiplicity of administrative duties. His genial approach and his efficient concern for all aspects of Church operations greatly improved administrative services and lightened the load on the minister and financial officers of the Church.

A year later, a full-time paid director of the School of Religion, Eileen Day, was engaged. And in 1959 an assistant minister was installed.

Robert Reed, inspired by Ross Weston, had gone from the Arlington Church congregation to Meadville Theological School to prepare for the ministry. After his arrival, the office of Executive Director was dropped.

## Chapter 3

### RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

#### Early Beginnings

The excitement of the first dozen years in the life of the Arlington Church came in no small part from the growth of the Church School. The School began in the fall of 1948, a few months after the fellowship had voted to become a church. Classes were held in the Kate Waller Barrett School, where the adults also met for worship services. Within three weeks, 83 children were enrolled, with 15 volunteer teachers, 12 classes, and 15 members of the Youth Group.

In the following years, though space for classrooms was never adequate and classes had to be held in rented quarters in the public schools for several years, enrollment soared. By 1954 it was over 500. By 1959 it had reached 660, with a full-time professional director, a volunteer teaching staff of over 50, and 20 other helpers. For several years the Arlington Church School was the largest in the denomination.

The growth of those first years reflected the make-up of Arlington's population. Young couples were flocking to the area, seeking the advantages of suburbia in raising their families. Many of the parents had drifted away from orthodox churches and were beginning to feel the need of some form of religious experience for their children. It was often this search for religious education for their children consistent with their own beliefs that led the parents to the Unitarian Church.

#### Program

While the Church School in general followed the curriculum of the Education Department of the American Unitarian Association (later the Unitarian Universalist Association) Arlington added other courses of interest to children and constantly enriched the program with creativity and imagination. Many fresh ideas gave zest to a curriculum which encouraged the child to find meaning in common things and happenings, to appreciate the beauty and orderliness of the universe, and at an older age to become acquainted with the religious beliefs of others and his own Judeo-Christian heritage.

In the upper classes students discovered the meaning of Unitarian principles to the individual and the values of Unitarianism in a changing world, and discussed the application of these principles in their own lives and to the problems of the world.

A pioneering course on sex problems was begun in 1954 for eighth and ninth graders, a precursor to today's courses on human sexuality.

### **Teachers and Staff**

This type of religious education requires a new approach on the part of teachers — as seekers with the children, seekers to find the meaning of existence, understanding of our responsibility toward our fellowmen, and our relationship to the universe we live in. In 1953 staff members attended the teacher-training conference at Pocono Pines sponsored by the Joseph Priestley Conference, which included Arlington. They returned to inaugurate a training seminar for teachers from Unitarian churches in the area (three at that time).

This project became a continuing one. The annual teacher-training workshop, a library for teachers and parents, and meetings for parents have all contributed to the Church School's success. Junior and senior high school students have served as assistants in religious education classes, giving effective help in relating to younger children.

When the Church School enrollment passed 600 in 1956, the first full-time director was secured. Much of the success of the school has depended on the leadership of those who have filled this position: Eileen Day, 1956-60; Robert Czapiewski, 1960-61; Sydney Weaver, 1961-62; and Blanche Werth, appointed in 1962.

Each year since 1961 the Church has celebrated a gala Teacher Recognition Day to express gratitude to all the devoted workers who carry on the religious education program.

### **Special Activities and Organizations**

In activities outside the classroom the interests of different ages have been met by a variety of groups.

Liberal Religious youth for members of high school age dates back to the first year of the Church. The lively LRY program combines sociability, serious discussion of the problems of youth in this modern age, and service to the Church.

For younger teens the Junior High Group was organized in 1957, and later the 7-Ups for seventh graders. All these organizations have given their members a happy combination of fun, experience in planning and executing programs, service to the Church, and opportunity to join in social service projects.

The Junior Choir and teen-age drama groups have contributed to the pleasure of adults as well as younger members.

In 1966 a series of Family Life Programs was inaugurated for better understanding of some of the problems of the family in this modern world. Problems of both small children and teenagers have been explored, particularly with the aim of better communion between the generations.



The young people carry on several traditions that are cherished in the church. Each year the LRY has conducted the regular worship service on Youth Sunday, helping to bridge the generation gap in communication. The Church has been rightfully proud of the thoughtful, searching statements its young people have made, and the sense of responsibility and concern for brotherhood they have expressed.

The Thanksgiving gift of canned food for the county Welfare Department and the Christmas Mitten Tree have already been mentioned.

#### **Gift to the Children's Chapel**

A beautiful gift to the Children's Chapel (now known as the Ross Weston Room) was the mural by Kathleen Bruskin completed in 1957. This is a visual symbol, sensitively presented, of the living contributions of seven major religions of the world.

## Chapter 4

### EXPANSION: THE CHURCH PLANT GROWS

Through the 1950s Northern Virginia's population was burgeoning; the area was a mecca for families with young children. Public schools were overflowing and the Unitarian Church School reflected the community trend. The congregation was scarcely settled in its first church home when it became necessary to go on double services to accommodate the enrollment in the Church School. Soon, still more space was needed, and the Church began renting classrooms in a nearby school.

#### Forecasts and Decisions

In 1950, the Planning Committee reported a church membership of 243, and warned that, given the area's rapid population growth, it was quite possible to imagine a membership of 1000 in due time. Even with a more conservative forecast, the committee saw no way of accommodating the anticipated numbers at the present site, and recommended that the congregation purchase land further out, where a larger tract would be available. A congregational meeting endorsed this solution. But the vote was close, the Korean War discouraged ambitious undertakings, and presently another meeting rescinded the plan to move and voted for expansion on the present site.

#### Addition of the Religious Education Wing

Accordingly, in 1951, the congregation voted to add a religious education wing to the original church building. Again the American Unitarian Association helped, by suspending interest on its loan. The Greater Washington Committee for Unitarian Advance (GWA) contributed \$5000, the congregation raised over \$12,000, and another loan was secured.

The new wing, designed by Earl Bailey, architect of the first church building, included about a dozen classrooms, an extension of the auditorium (now Reeb Hall), a study and office, and a larger kitchen. Again, construction was strictly utilitarian, but there was general rejoicing that all the congregation, children and adults, would at last be united under one roof.

However, the problem of space remained. Double services had to be continued.

#### "The Time Has Come . . ."

Within two years it became clear that the question of providing for

a larger congregation could not be postponed. In 1956, the Chairman of the Board said in his Annual Report: "The growth of our church has been uninterrupted over the first decade of its life. We have come from a handful of thoughtful, liberal, like-minded persons meeting in rented quarters to a vigorous, thriving, and increasingly mature Church, of more than 1500 participating men, women and children."

The following year, Church membership had reached 722; there were also non-members who took part in Church activities. Once more the chairman urged: "Our greatest opportunity is to maintain the momentum of our growth."

The congregation responded to the challenge and in April, 1957, voted to build a third unit, to be the main building of the Church, housing the auditorium, social hall, and offices, and leaving the existing structure for the Church School. The ensuing fund drive, with Sherrod East's expert direction as chairman, was superbly organized and carried out by an able and devoted group of canvassers, and by 1958 pledges for a building fund of \$150,000, to be paid over a period of three years, were in hand. A loan was secured to supplement this amount.

### **First, More Land**

The original plan had been simply to add the main unit to the existing building. But this would mean severely reduced parking space, which was already inadequate. So the Church was faced with one of the facts of modern life: the size of the congregation is limited by the number of cars that can be parked.

Fortunately it was possible to acquire several small pieces of land, enough to make a continuous tract, irregular in shape and contour, along Arlington Boulevard from the original site to George Mason Drive. In this transaction, the house east of the Church was purchased, chiefly for the sake of its deep lot, and thus the Church acquired a parsonage. By 1959, the Church owned approximately four acres of choice land and could proceed with building plans.

### **Design For A Liberal Church**

The Board appointed Charles M. Goodman, an outstanding Washington architect well known for sound design and creative imagination, to design the new church building. He at once requested a meeting of the congregation to learn the wishes and hopes of the members. On one of the hottest evenings of the summer a hundred members gathered to offer their views. With true Unitarian diversity the preferences ranged from "an architectural style which would express the inspiring tradition of Unitarianism in Virginia" to "free form and no stained glass, a

building to represent our cleavage with the past."

But Mr. Goodman made it clear that he was not seeking advice on design; he was asking: "What does the Church mean to you? What are your goals and aspirations? What happens to you when you come here?" The congregation did its best to tell him.

Other guidance was sought from the membership. The Board of Religious Education and five special committees made recommendations for the auditorium, the social hall, the kitchen, music, and special activities. The Committee on Physical Planning coordinated these specifics and advised the architect.

When the plan was finally presented, Mr. Goodman noted that he had sought a design to express a discipline "in which reason displaces dogma and warmth enhances the fellowship of men." A square shape was chosen for the auditorium with seating on three sides of the pulpit to give the sense of worship as an experience in which every individual has a share. The roof and the clerestory windows were designed to suggest "looking out at the world rather than up at the mystic sky," and "protection but not exclusion from the surrounding environment." The architect recommended that the new unit be built near George Mason Drive, to take advantage of a beautiful wooded knoll on the newly acquired property.

A congregational meeting on May 1, 1960, approved the plans unanimously. When bids had been secured, it was evident that the whole new unit as planned could not be financed within the estimated sum available (approximately \$235,000). It was decided to build the auditorium unit immediately and to complete the plans later by adding an extension which would house the social hall, offices, library, and kitchen. The bell tower too was a hope deferred.

The unit to be built immediately was designed with pews for 372; with chairs in every foot of additional space about 600 could be accommodated.

### **Realization**

Building operations were beset by frustrating delays, chiefly because the prestressed concrete method which the architect had prescribed was still experimental in the Washington area. But at last the new structure was finished and in 1963 the children's Christmas Eve pageant was held there — the first service in the new building. On March 22, 1964, the Church was formally dedicated, with Dr. Dana Greeley, President of the Unitarian Universalist Association, preaching the sermon.

The Arlington minister, Rev. Edward H. Redman, wrote in an introduction to the service:

The dedication of our new church auditorium marks the culmination of years of hope and determined effort on the part of many people. Full credit cannot be given or assigned, for it no doubt began when a small group of devoted Unitarians decided the time had come to establish a church in northern Virginia.

Aided by a strong lay leadership and, in turn, by the ministerial leadership of the Reverend Gilbert Phillips and the Reverend Ross Allen Weston, the Unitarian Church of Arlington, Virginia built and outgrew, only to build and outgrow again, the facilities which had been so sacrificially won.

Since 1957, a whole series of efforts at fund raising and planning, with congregational deliberation and support, have brought us to the partial realization of our hopes and dreams. In a sense, the dedication of our new auditorium is like a commencement, for we again turn our attention to the future that in due course, what could not now be completed shall come to be.

But we are happy and proud for what we have already accomplished. We pray that it shall be a place of inspiration and joy for all who enter, that they may find expressed in words, shapes, and sounds, the values which we all would serve for the sake of the wider community, of all mankind, as well as our own free fellowship.

The congregation has increasingly enjoyed the new building for its simplicity and dignity, and for the clerestory windows that lead the eye out to sky and trees. As one member said, "It is the first church I ever saw that led you to look out instead of shutting you in."

The new church unit has been recognized by architects as well as by laymen as a distinguished contribution to the architecture of the area. The American Institute of Architects, in its 1965 *Guide to the Architecture of Washington, D.C.*, published for architects, lists the building as one of 30 significant Northern Virginia structures — one of two Virginia churches included. It received the Metropolitan Washington Board of Trade Award for architectural excellence, and is listed in *Architecture of Virginia: An Official Guide to Four Centuries of Building in the Old Dominion*. Published by the Virginia Museum, this guide names 223 buildings in the state selected for excellence in architecture.

### Gifts

A number of gifts specially designed for the pulpit area have enhanced the beauty and dignity of the auditorium, notably the candelabra given by Mrs. Mary Stewart Chamberlain in memory of her husband; the planter, from contributions made in honor of Mrs. Mimie Rose; and the lectern, gift of Mrs. Ray H. Coffman in memory of her husband. The cushion covers for the wall benches, which have added warmth and color to the interior, are the gift of Col. and Mrs. Robert J. Irish, and two pulpit chairs were provided by the Day Alliance.

Members of the Church worked innumerable hours inside the building and on the grounds, painting, clearing out trees and brush, laying stone steps, and in many other ways bringing order, beauty, and convenience

to the church plant. No adequate record of this labor can be made, but two projects call for special mention: the site plan which John Ruffner, a professional architect and chairman of the Committee on Physical Planning and Standards, prepared with the help of his sons; and the beautiful azalea garden, designed and executed by Mr. and Mrs. Carl Gibboney as a memorial to Mr. and Mrs. George Collier and to others remembered for their part in the life of the Church.

A landscape master plan by Bernard J. Friese, landscape architect, was approved to ensure orderly future development of the church property. This plan was made possible by Gerald Pagano's more-than-generous offer to paint the outside woodwork on the Religious Education Building, in order to free the funds necessary for a professional landscape plan.

### **Music in the New Church**

Music in the new church building brought the culmination of years of development of the music program of the Church. Mrs. Ruth Fuller (Mrs. Robert) was the Choir Director four years through May 1952, and Mary Jane Phillips was organist and pianist from September 1947 to November 1949.

Early members recall without nostalgia the first decrepit reed organ, which was kept in operation only through constant overhauling by mechanical minded members of the choir. In those early days, every choral number was touch and go — would the choir and organ make it to the end.

In 1952 came the turning point. Vera Tilson was installed as Director, a paid organist was secured, and music began to assume a place in the church life which was to become more important every year.

The 1953 annual report noted that "need for a new organ has been discussed" — a discussion that never flagged until the new church auditorium was completed and one of the finest organs obtainable — a Holtkamp pipe organ — was built for it. In the intervening years, the Music Committee was indefatigable in raising funds, some members of the Church donated money for individual pipes, and the balance of the organ's cost (\$32,000 in all) was met from the capital building fund.

Investment in so excellent an instrument seemed an extravagance, but it was one which the Church has not regretted. Superior organists have been attracted by the opportunity to play so fine an instrument, and Nancy Walker Marchal, who became organist in 1965, brought out its possibilities to the full.

An Organ Dedication Service was held on October 18, 1964. The

words repeated by the congregation then express what the organ has meant in subsequent years.

As we have dedicated and committed a portion of our lives, and this building, to the service of mankind, so, too, we would dedicate this wonderful organ. We delight that it shall speak to us in moments of gladness as well as in moments of sorrow, with sounds of strength and beauty. Sunday by Sunday, and on many special occasions in our lives, we shall expect from it both resounding and subtle reminders of the common concerns, the common aspirations, the common joys and the common sorrows which bring meaning to our lives and enhance our life and fellowship together.

The same words might be applied to the whole musical program. That program has constantly profited from the skill and devotion of Vera Tilson, her superior training as a singer, her enthusiasm and imagination and her passion for excellence, as Director. She assembled a choir of talented and disciplined volunteers which has brought beauty to every worship service. The selections for Sunday mornings have been as varied in background and rich in content as the Unitarian religious heritage and contemporary Unitarian thinking.

With the cooperation of the Music Committee, Mrs. Tilson has arranged and directed many special concerts and other exciting musical events, hailed by music critics for distinction in program and performance. Outstanding productions have included Aaron Copeland's "Tender Land," and Benjamin Britten's adaptation of the old English miracle play, "Noye's Fludde," which besides lead singers from the choir, engaged some 90 children, varied instruments from the pipe organ to the recorder, a modern dance group, and English handbell ringers. After the first performance, a well-known Washington newspaper critic advised his readers to "run, not walk" to make sure of tickets. "Noye's Fludde's" cast was integrated.

A contribution to the community as well as the Church has been the unique choral reading when all who care to participate are invited to join in singing a well-known choral masterpiece. Many from other choirs as well as individuals who simply like to sing have joined in these "public readings" — the first, Haydn's *Creation*, and later Mozart's *Requiem*.

Critics have not only praised the music presented at the Church, but have noted that the setting is ideal, with the view of oaks and pines through the windows. The distinguished music critic of the *Washington Post* described the Church as "a place where music should be."

## Chapter 5

### CHANGE

#### **Ross Weston Resigns**

In the fall of 1959, when the building fund for the main Church had been pledged and plans were being drawn, Ross Weston announced his resignation to become minister of the Evanston, Illinois, Unitarian Church. He left in January.

In the decade of Ross Weston's ministry the Arlington Church had enjoyed the excitement of pioneering. Its growth had been spectacular and it had gained a place of leadership in liberal causes in the community. Now it was challenged to maintain the momentum of the ten years of Ross Weston's dynamic leadership.

The assistant minister, Robert Reed, carried on capably for a short time, then accepted a call to become minister of the Bloomington Illinois, Church. While the Pulpit Committee made an intensive search for a candidate, the Pulpit Supply Committee provided for services with a succession of stimulating guest speakers, committees cooperated to keep all programs going, and details of plans for the new building were worked out with the architect.

The Funds Committee sought to counteract the serious setback which the building fund suffered when Ross Weston left Arlington. The committee's efforts were heroic, and in time successful.

#### **Taking Stock**

The Pulpit Committee issued a questionnaire to all members and friends on the church mailing list, to gather data on the make-up and outlook of the congregation for guidance of the committee and information of prospective candidates. Some 445 replies were received, giving this picture:

- *Membership* — Of the respondents, 8 out of 9 were officially members of the Church.
- *Age* — The median age was about 41, with one out of four below 35; one in ten, 55 or older.
- *Education* — For highest level of educational attainment, the median was some graduate work beyond the bachelor's degree. There were 2 with less than a B.A., 33 with professional degrees, 88 master's degrees and 30 doctorates.
- *Occupation* — Men, 2/3 in professional work, over 1/4 in administrative and managerial positions, 10% in miscellaneous occupations. Women, 139 listed as homemakers, 63 in professional work, 13 doing



clerical work, 24 in miscellaneous other work or retired. The United States Government was the chief employer. Almost 1/5 of the group had tours of duty or frequent trips overseas; about 40% had never been overseas.

- *Reasons for Coming to Church* — Most frequently checked reasons were: "to be enlightened; I learn here." "To be inspired; I gain strength and courage here." "For companionship, 'the fellowship of kindred minds.'" Other statements checked less frequently were: "for guidance; I gain here insights into universal truths." "For spiritual nourishment." "To worship — in my own meaning of the term." "To rally with my fellow fighters for a better world" (checked by many men and few women). Low on the list were: "for esthetic enjoyment." "To be comforted: to recuperate from the battles of life."

- *Participation in Church Organizations* — Almost 3/4 of the respondents were currently or had recently been active in some of the 36 organizations and committees listed in the questionnaire. A sixth devoted more than three hours a week to church work.

- *Emphasis* — The Sunday morning sermon was listed first by a wide margin as the activity most important to the respondents as individuals, the Church School and the Youth Group ranking second. For third place, there was a tie between the religious services as an aesthetic experience and the community leadership activities of the minister. Regarding the significance of the Church in their lives, 200 respondents checked "One of several significant elements." Over 100 checked "Means a great deal to me; very important," and about the same number indicated no deep feeling.

- *Philosophical Outlook* — The group proved to be predominantly humanist, but diversified. Asked to check one or two choices out of five statements, they made these choices: "Man is wholly responsible for his destiny without the aid of any supernatural power" (208). "There is an inherent direction toward the achievement of goodness (which may be called God) in the natural process" (183). "Jesus, a great teacher, taught valid ethics which are a guide to moral living today" (166). "Doctrinal assumptions are unjustified because man does not know the answers to ultimate questions and should reserve judgment on them" (105). "Goodness is achieved in the long run by a purposeful supernatural entity which I call God" (81).

- *Support for Church* — The median pledge to the annual operating budget was about \$140; to the capital building fund for the new church unit, the median was about \$350.

This, in brief, is a summary of the characteristics of the Arlington Church in 1960.

## **Edward H. Redman Comes to Arlington**

On June 19, 1960 the congregation voted to invite Rev. Edward H. Redman to become minister of the Church. Mr. Redman was a graduate of Meadville Theological School and held a master's degree in philosophy from the University of Michigan. His first ministry was at the Unitarian Church of Virginia, Minnesota, followed by nearly 18 years at the Ann Arbor, Mich. Unitarian Church. In the war years he headed the Willow Run area Recreation Project for industrial workers in behalf of the Unitarian Service Committee.

Mr. Redman took up his duties in Arlington in September, 1960. With him came Robert Wolf, on leave from his studies at Meadville Theological School, to serve for a year as ministerial intern, an arrangement most helpful for the Arlington Church.

### **Activities Inaugurated**

With Mr. Redman's arrival church activities soon were in full swing. His sermons were philosophical and scholarly, and he inaugurated a seminar on the philosophy of religion, sharing some of the material that was soon to appear in his book, *Religion's New Frontiers*.

He had long been an advocate of civil rights, and he encouraged members of the congregation to cooperate with the open housing movement, particularly in seeking pledges from people in the community expressing readiness to welcome respectable people of any race or creed into their neighborhoods. Northern Virginia Fair Housing was given office space in the church.

In June, 1962 the Nashville-Washington March for Peace group was given the use of facilities in the Church for sleeping and meals. The following year, the Social Action Committee mobilized participation of Church members in the Freedom March in Washington. Many Arlington members marched and were in the multitude that heard Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" address at the Lincoln Memorial, and hospitality was arranged by them for out of town participants.

The Church, by resolution of a congregational meeting, urged the School Board to close the one all-black high school in Arlington and transfer its teachers and students to other schools, and the Social Action Committee was instrumental in bringing Federal pressure to bear on the Arlington School Board to proceed more vigorously in desegregation of the schools.

In the community, activities and organizations for human rights were multiplying. The Social Action Committee performed a useful service in gathering pertinent facts and keeping the congregation informed of

opportunities to work for equality and brotherhood. In 1964, Church members took part in an intensive voter registration campaign in black neighborhoods.

When James Reeb, who had been assistant minister of All Souls Church, was murdered after taking part in human rights demonstrations in Selma, Alabama, March 9, 1965, the Arlington Church was one of many which held memorial services, and the auditorium in the religious education building was named Reeb Hall in his memory.

Within the Church, Mr. Redman helped to initiate summer services with guest speakers. These summer services have been enthusiastically continued.

An outgrowth of the minister's orientation sessions for new-comers was the Couples Club, a social group for better acquaintance among younger couples. Singletarians was organized to offer similar opportunities for a hitherto neglected group, the unmarried adults of the Church.

### **Reverses**

The great event of the early 1960s was the completion of the main Church unit. The congregation had enthusiastically supported and sacrificed for that undertaking in order to meet expected growth in membership. But that growth failed to materialize.

In 1965, the Board of Trustees appointed a Long-Range Plans Committee to make a thorough study of the situation. The findings showed that Arlington Church membership, attendance, and church school enrollment, after reaching peaks in 1960, had declined to the levels of 1955 or below. That decline was unique among Unitarian Churches in the Greater Washington area, and ran counter to the continued growth of Arlington County in population and public school enrollment.

Some argued that the Arlington Church was suffering from a slowdown in growth that was evident in other churches in the area. Some questioned the validity of membership statistics of previous years. But the fact remained that the number of pledging units had fallen below the 1960 level. With the new church building, expenses had risen and financial obligations had out-stripped the congregation's support. With great reluctance the Board concluded that new leadership was imperative.

A congregational meeting was called for February 13, 1966, to consider the Board's recommendation that Mr. Redman's ministry be terminated as of August 31, 1966, his salary to be paid until December 31 or such time as he might take another position. The meeting endorsed the Board's recommendation by a vote of 196 to 174.

### Toward Recovery

This was a traumatic experience for the Arlington Church. Some members who had found Mr. Redman's ministry satisfying left the Church and formed an independent group, with Mr. Redman as part-time minister. Others took up the burden of keeping the Church moving during the search for a new minister. An *ad hoc* committee, broadly representative of the membership, undertook a study of the congregation's attitudes and aspirations, and of community factors relating to its growth, as a guide for future policies. One conclusion was that Arlington County was fast becoming an urbanized community and a fresh approach was needed to attract new members from the area.

Once more a survey was made, in 1966, by the Pulpit Committee for guidance in seeking a minister. Among the questions asked was one concerning the religious orientation members desired for their minister. Since respondents might check more than one preference, the 301 replies gave the committee no clearcut mandate, but they showed the diversity of the members' thinking, as indicated by the preferences checked by the respondents:

- 173 *Humanism*: man is wholly responsible for his destiny without the aid of superhuman power.
- 144 *Ethical Christian*: Jesus, as inspired teacher, taught valid and eternal ethics which are a guide to moral living.
- 133 *Naturalistic theism*: there is an inherent direction toward the achievement of goodness (which can be called God) in the natural process.
- 97 *Agnosticism*: refusal either to believe or disbelieve doctrinal assumptions on the ground that man does not know the answer to ultimate questions and should reserve judgment on them.
- 13 *Supernatural theism*: goodness is achieved in the long run by a purposeful, supernatural entity (God.)
- 12 *Atheism*: there is no possibility of achieving any conception of a divine being and therefore none exists.
- 10 *Mysticism*: belief that the universe can be understood through intuition better than through reasoning.
- 32 *Others*

The returns also indicated that the most important aspect of the minister's work — far more important than his particular theology in the view of the respondents — was the quality of his sermons. The strongest preference was for sermons that "are intellectually challenging" (221 votes); next, sermons that "revolve around practical ethics" (175); "are concerned with problems of the state, the nation and the world" (165); "emphasize the significance of the way I live with those near me" (142).

The respondents gave the highest rating to a minister who "supports political and social movements on a highly selective basis (1143 votes on a weighted basis); next, one who "aggressively and actively participates in political and social reform movements" (weighted vote, 717); with diminishing votes for "primarily concerned with the interests of his congregation" (659); and for one "who expresses social and political concerns in a moderate, quiet manner and who tries to avoid extensive public controversy" (584).

The Pulpit Committee diligently canvassed the field of candidates. The Pulpit Supply Committee arranged for guest speakers at the Sunday morning services, and rising attendance testified to the success of their efforts. Orientation meetings for newcomers were continued. Committee members and others gave such generous and effective service that the Church emerged from this trying period with renewed strength.

Not least was the work of the Fiscal Affairs Division. The every-member canvass early in 1967, under Sherrod East's experienced leadership, brought an increase of 121 pledges, and a gain of \$27,730 in anticipated revenue. It was a strong, vigorous congregation which met on February 5, 1967 and voted to confirm the Pulpit Committee's choice of Rev. Robert C. Clarke, Unitarian Minister of Exeter, New Hampshire, to fill the Arlington pulpit.

## Chapter 6

### THE TWENTIETH YEAR

#### Challenge to a New Minister

The Arlington Church offered a challenge to any minister. An early Chairman of the Board of Trustees had once dubbed it "the Church of the Perpetual Crisis." Characteristically, members have been independent-minded, and deeply involved and vigorous and articulate in supporting their individual views, whether the subject be the budget, the minister's theology, or the color of the outdoor church sign. This sense of personal involvement created a dynamic and exhilarating atmosphere, but differences of opinion often led to conflicts that dissipated energy and sometimes divided the congregation.

Robert Clarke came to Arlington in the spring of 1967 at the beginning of the church's twentieth year. He had studied at Northwestern University in Evanston, served two years in the Army during the Korean War, and in the 1950s had worked in insurance and building and loan companies.

In 1958, when he was married and had two children, came his decision, endorsed by his wife, to study for the ministry. He completed work for the bachelor's degree at Millikin University, Decatur, Illinois, and in 1964 received the divinity degree from McCormick Seminary in Chicago. During this period he served as student-minister in a Presbyterian Church and as a seventh-grade teacher in a Roman Catholic School. Soon after graduation from the Seminary, he was accepted into fellowship in the Unitarian Universalist Association, and became minister of the First Unitarian Church of Exeter, New Hampshire. From that pastorate, he came to Arlington.

Rev. Clarke was installed in Arlington October 14, 1967. Dr. Dana Greeley, President of the Unitarian Universalist Association, gave the principal address at the installation ceremony. Among the dignitaries who welcomed Rev. Clarke to Arlington was Dr. Joseph L. Fisher, member of the Arlington Church, Moderator of the Unitarian Universalist Association, and member of Arlington County's governing Board.

Bob Clarke brought to the Arlington Church a varied experience and a genuine tolerance and respect for the opinions of others. He described himself as a theist, but his was a theism infused with humanism and his sermons presented a wide range of religious philosophy with sensitive understanding. He was not dogmatic nor combative, and soon his quieting and stabilizing influence was felt throughout the Church.

## **Momentum Regained**

The chief characteristic of the Church in the twentieth year of its existence was its atmosphere of vigor and cooperation. Lay leadership was energetic and imaginative. Lost momentum was regained as established programs were continued, and committees were active in searching for new ways to make the church more meaningful to its members. Membership increased from 549 active members in 1966 to 630 two years later. Average attendance at Sunday morning services — the most dependable measure of interest — rose from 281 to 435. Registration in the School of Religion totaled 406 in 1966, dropped to 350 the following year, and by 1968 had more than made up the deficit with an enrollment of 417, plus 32 babies in the nursery. However, this was still well below the peak enrollment of 728 in 1959. The decline reflected the changing demography of Arlington County, which no longer had a population of predominantly young families.

In 1966 the financial picture as reported by the Fiscal Affairs chairman had been gloomy. In spite of severe pruning of the budget the year's expenditures had exceeded income by about \$4,000, and it was made in 1967. But by 1968, the picture had changed. An intensive campaign raised the number of pledges from 340 to 410, and increased the pledge base from about \$80,000 to \$90,500. The year 1967-68 ended with a substantial cash surplus, the first after four years of deficits. Some 25 percent of the pledges that year were from new members. Altogether there was reason to congratulate the minister and the many hard-working members who had manned the pledge drive and brought it to success.

The annual bazaar in the fall of 1967 reached a record high both financially (with \$2,905 profit) and in the spirit of fun and cooperation that made it such a success.

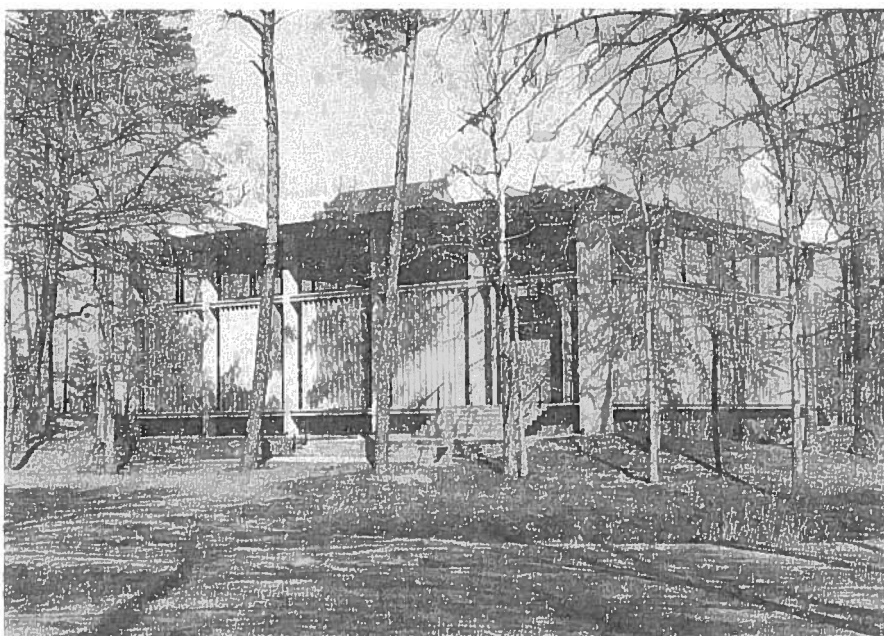
As the twentieth year came to a close, the Treasurer listed the combined assets of the Church buildings and land, equipment and cash reserves at \$555,400. Taking account of liabilities, mortgages, notes, etc. the net worth of the Church was estimated at \$269,572.

The budget told a similar story of growth. In the first year (1948-49) the little pioneering congregation had supported a budget of \$7,179. The twentieth Annual Report (1967-68) showed total expenditures of \$87,631.

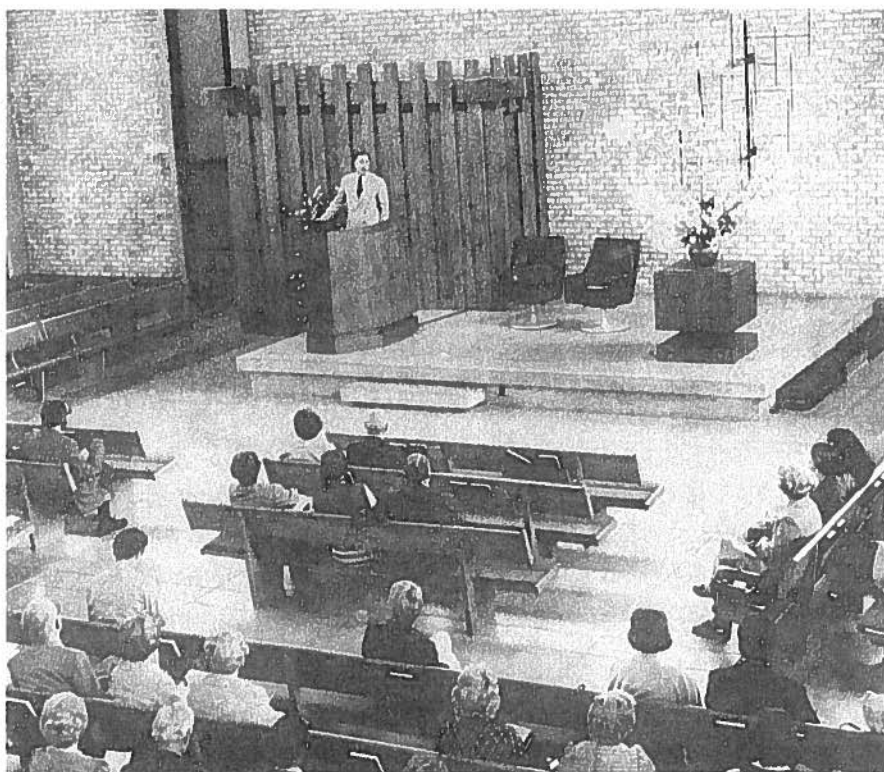
## **The Church Program: A Profile**

An overall picture of the Church in 1968 shows the same energy and devotion that had brought about a healthy financial situation invigorating the whole life of the Church.





**Church Sanctuary 1964.**



**Service in the Sanctuary, Bob Clarke at lectern.**



Rising attendance at the Sunday morning worship services testified to the response to Bob Clarke's preaching. He took seriously the definition of Unitarians as "a company of seekers," he challenged his hearers to do their own thinking; he raised questions rather than making pronouncements; and he drew on the widest possible range of sources — from the Bible to Confucius to the latest news report — to point up ethical and moral questions.

The Women's Day Alliance chose as its theme for the year: "Appreciating the joy of life and living effectively." That theme might stand for many of the other phases of the Church program as well. A special committee was appointed to encourage multi-cultural activities that would enrich the lives of both participants and onlookers.

As always, music gave a special dimension to the church program. Children's choirs made an appealing contribution to services at Thanksgiving and Easter, and the adult choir continued to inspire Sunday morning congregations with the beauty and discipline of its singing. There were fall and spring concerts, and organ recitals and musicales enlisting outside talent to supplement the choir and organ. Once more, singers of the community as well as the Church responded enthusiastically to the invitation to a public reading — this time of Mozart's *Requiem*.

Christmas even brought a high point in the year's music: Respighi's *Laud to the Nativity*, performed with soloists, instrumentalists, and dance. The choir made and sold a record of *Sacred Anthems*.

The Dramatarians put on two highly professional productions, *Animal Farm* and *Never Too Late*. In the Church School the fifth and sixth grade wrote their own dramatizations. LRY (Liberal Religious Youth) gave three one-act plays, notable not only for excellent production, but for the numbers involved and the camaraderie the project promoted.

Do-it-yourself-art for children was encouraged in several art workshops. The inter-racial Christmas workshop again welcomed participants of all ages and was rated a most successful contribution to the community. Classes in modern dance were arranged for adults and for children, and several dance programs were given.

The Social Responsibilities Committee publicized problems and opportunities for service. The committee helped develop the Shaw Work Incentive Plan to get summer jobs for under-privileged boys of the Shaw Junior High School in Washington. Committee members worked with nearby Unitarian Universalist Churches and with the UUA Social Responsibility Department representative in Washington, and alerted Arlington Church members when action seemed called for, particularly in civil rights and open housing. Lists of activities for volunteers were

prepared and the Board of Trustees authorized "positive support" to the Poor Peoples Campaign scheduled for the coming summer.

Adult education flourished. The annual "retreat," which had lapsed for a time, was revived with rewarding dividends of lively discussion, mountain scenery, and good fellowship. Programs of the Women's Alliances, the Laymen's League, the Candlelight Forums, and the Book Club and Great Decisions Group stimulated interest and discussions on vital topics. The Bookstall offered relevant publications. Orientation groups for newcomers met for a know-your-church course. The Family Life Program attracted parents and children, involving the School of Religion, the LRY, the Junior Youth Group, and the Family Life Committee. This series of discussions was extremely helpful in promoting understanding of pressures that today's children encounter in their daily lives.

Several programs were arranged to create better understanding of the Unitarian Universalist Association — always a difficult problem since so many members were new not only to the Arlington Church, but to the denomination itself. One meeting discussed the UUA Goals Committee Report, with Dr. Philip R. Giles, Executive Secretary of the Joseph Priestley District Conference, as speaker. There were other meetings on "Negro Power in the Unitarian Church" and on resolutions for the General Assembly. Dr. Joseph L. Fisher, member of the Arlington Church, was Moderator of the Unitarian Universalist Association (the highest elective office in the denomination), and the Church — quite aside from its pride in his distinguished service — profited from his insights in denominational affairs.

Church leaders were keenly aware of the need to draw new members into the life of the Church and make them feel at home as quickly as possible. The coffee hour after each Sunday service, a long established ritual, continued as a time for animated discussion, for welcoming new members and giving warmth to old associations. Neighborhood coffees brought small groups together, and the annual Church picnic, held on the beautiful grounds of the Mount Vernon Unitarian Church, helped to create a sense of the "Church family." The Couples Club, the Singletarians, the Bridge Club, and Clams (Chatter, Laughter, and Munching Society) all promoted sociability and fellowship — often, it should be noted, making some practical contribution to the Church treasury or furnishings.

The Memorial Society continued to give help in planning funeral arrangements marked by dignity and simplicity.

In this twentieth year, the Church made progress toward carrying out the detailed plans which the congregation and Board of Trustees had

approved as guidelines for orderly development of the Church grounds. One instance: the Laymen's League mobilized a work-party of muscular and expert volunteers who installed a badly-needed stone walk leading up to the east entrance of the Church.

The Women's Alliances balanced stimulating programs with service projects for the Church and the community, making dresses for children at Junior Village, sewing for the Church bazaar, contributing funds to buy chairs for the pulpit, helping finance the Christmas Workshop, serving dinners for the Laymen's League, and supporting low-income housing.

Dr. Charles W. Culpepper, member of the Church, offered the Church a choice tract of land, his homestead, at a very favorable price, for the site of a retirement home. A committee was appointed to look into possibilities of the project, and an inquiry was sent to Arlington Church members and other Unitarians in the area to discover the extent of interest and what type of facility was desired. And so, under the patient and tireless chairmanship of Carl Gibboney, began the long-drawn-out, often frustrating task of clearing legal and financial hurdles to realize a dream — the dream of creating stimulating and congenial surroundings for older people in Arlington. (More on this project will be found in Chapter 7.)

### **The School of Religion in the Twentieth Year**

The School of Religion in 1968 defined its goals:

To help the child reach beyond his immediate concerns into the cultural, religious, and social world-at-large, to help him see and find a greater meaning in his life and in life as a totality; to waken a sense of wonder and curiosity about the world around him; to make him a human being capable of enriching the lives of others; to teach him the values of the democratic process; and to give him a sense of responsibility toward himself and his fellow-human beings, and a desire to share the love and respect that make mankind one.

The staff and the Religious Education Committee sought to implement these guidelines in terms of today. Concern for the ecology was introduced into the curriculum: "How can we shape our universe for the benefit of all?" Upper grade classes learned understanding of other faiths through exchange visits, speakers, and films. High school students took up problems they had to cope with in their own daily lives, such as drugs and dating. The School of Religion was asked to help in developing a new ethics unit for the Beacon Curriculum for five- and six-year-olds.

Particular attention was given to strengthening the volunteer staff's preparation for teaching. There were conferences for inexperienced teachers, conferences for experienced teachers; training sessions arranged by the Joseph Priestley District and Middle Atlantic Region, by

the UU Churches cooperating in the Greater Washington Association, and by the Arlington Church School itself. The experiment in cross-age teaching, the training of teenagers as teachers' assistants, was continued with marked success. And not least of the support given to teachers was the guidance and encouragement of the Director of Religious Education, Blanche F. Werth.

Practical applications of religion were demonstrated in activities that had become traditional: the Halloween Trick-or-Treat collection for UNICEF, the Thanksgiving gift of canned goods for the needy, and the Christmas Mitten Tree.

The Junior Youth Group's program of skating, bowling, cookouts, and theatre-going offered wholesome recreation and friendship.

LRY members enthusiastically decorated and refurbished a room assigned to them in the Religious Education Building. Members earned money through a paper drive to send representatives to conferences, and recognized their relationship to the denomination by contributing bake-sale proceeds to the UUA. Hospitality was arranged for 250 teenagers for a weekend conference. And through the year, the LRY continued its lively program of fun and serious discussion.

The nursery for children under two years became much more than a place to park small children during Sunday morning worship service. It was a cooperative project; the mothers worked with professional guidance to provide experiences that would help the children develop socially and personally. Mothers and fathers redecorated the nursery's quarters, and a mothers group, formed to bring creative activities to the children, went on to educate themselves on the child's needs. (Later, a cooperative pre-school was to develop from this project.)

### Conclusion

All year the Church hummed with activity. The Information Chairman, reporting at the annual meeting, reviewed the various brochures, announcements, news letters, etc., that had carried word of Church programs and concluded: "The year was wild, as the church calendar will show, but it was great." The *Arlingtarian* predicted: "Our Church stands on the threshold of a banner year."

The minister summed it up in his report to the annual meeting:

Our Church is on the move. We are growing in numbers and in strength, and, most important, in the effectiveness of our total ministry.

Such successes as we have enjoyed are not due to the efforts of any one person or group of persons. The quality of our lay leadership and support is, without question, the finest with which I have been privileged to work. There can be no substitute for human resources — and these we have in great abundance.

Much remains to be done. This must always be so. But it's been a productive and gratifying year. The year ahead promises to be better still.

# Chapter 7

1968-1974

Any updating material that follows the painstaking and thorough research, reporting and writing of Ruth Tryon cannot avoid a sense of anticlimax. The first twenty years of the Church demonstrated all that is human, from babyhood through adolescence. That the Church survived traumatic events, led in the quest for social justice in Northern Virginia, and continued to grow is a tribute to both its professional and volunteer leadership.

The vitality of spirit that is the Unitarian Church of Arlington has continued to produce innovation in many ways, with each accomplishment making its mark within the Church itself, the immediate community, the greater Washington area, and the UUA nationwide.

Ruth Tryon was involved in many facets of social and church life beyond this history. Her contributions included the County Council for Social Progress and aid for Hungarian Refugees; and her accomplishments, first woman chairman of the Board of Trustees, and success in obtaining a bank loan for construction of the Religious Education wing.

## **Housing for Elderly — Adversity Overcome**

For sheer cliff-hanging drama the story of the struggle toward completion of a residence for senior citizens would be difficult to top in fiction. More times than can be recorded here victory has been snatched from disaster. As of this writing the project seems to be a healthy one with the home scheduled for occupancy sometime early in 1975.

It all started in 1963 when three heads were put together to discuss the possibility of providing housing in Arlington for senior citizens of modest means. Then minister Edward H. Redman, Dr. Charles W. Culpepper and Earl B. Bailey agreed on the need and that the Unitarian Church of Arlington should take the initiative. For some years thereafter the idea lay dormant.

Some time was spent in study of the need and possible support for a facility for the elderly. Eventually, articles of incorporation of the Arlington Retirement Housing Corporation were drawn up and approved. The Board of Trustees voted that the church would sponsor the project, but would not assume any financial responsibility.

Perhaps the most unusual feature of the undertaking concerned the land to be used for the building. Dr. Culpepper, longtime horticulturist with the Department of Agriculture before his retirement, owned the most unusual tract of land in Arlington. The five acres occupy most of

the block partially enclosed by Pershing Drive, North Second Street and North Henderson Street, only one block from the Church on the other side of Arlington Boulevard.

That tract, which also was the site of Dr. Culpepper's home, is the living demonstration of his horticulture magic. Like Luther Burbank, he spent his lifetime experimenting with plants, and that meant spending a lot of time down on his knees cross-pollinating his flowers. As Dr. Culpepper's abilities to continue massive gardening declined the tract became almost a wonderland, a jungle in Arlington containing even an impenetrable bamboo thicket. Many Church members have bought his products during church bazaars. His jonquils especially have brightened many a yard in Northern Virginia.

From the beginning Dr. Culpepper wanted his land used for the project. But many obstacles lay in the way. Eventually, these were overcome, the culmination entailing sale of the land, appraised at \$500,000, to the corporation for \$300,000. A two-year option on the land was obtained by the corporation in July, 1971.

That two-year period was provided to enable the corporation to obtain a zoning exception in the individual house area and to arrange Federal Housing Authority (FHA) guarantees for the loans necessary. Zoning hearings ordered by the County Board brought out opposition, mainly from the neighbors, but there was also objection from a wide spectrum of county residents, citing conservation arguments. That pitted the humanists against the ecologists.

Another factor as explained by Carl N. Gibboney, president of the Corporation, was that "Land has become so scarce and valuable in Arlington County that it can't be used for individual housing." Actually, in 1971, the directors had found a site further out, near Leesburg, but then Dr. Culpepper made his offer.

A zoning change was granted April 1, 1972. Then there was a race for time by the architects, Bailey and Pye, to finish the drawings by the year's end deadline to submit them to FHA for approval. By some intense negotiations and dedicated work by a civil servant the approval was forthcoming at 9 p.m. Saturday, December 30!

Meanwhile, the opposition coalesced and sued the Church. One contention was that Dr. Joseph L. Fisher, church member and UU moderator, a member of the Arlington County Board had a conflict of interest. That contention was thrown out by the court. What with tighter money, rising interest rates and increased costs of building materials, a series of crises in financing were faced and overcome, including one \$300,000 loan from the First Virginia Bank for the land, considered as

a public service. But the most important factor was that construction was underway in 1974.

In March, 1974, Gibboney received a singular award from the Greater Washington Area (GWA) of Unitarian Universalist Churches. For the first time the annual Meritorius Layman Service Award was made to a person whose contribution was mainly to the community rather than to the denomination. It was presented at the GWA banquet by GWA Chairman of the Board of Trustees, William H. B. Clarke.

The hand lettered, illuminated 18 inches by 24 inches certificate stated the nature of the award and recognized his promotion of beauty and brotherhood in his community. The major description of Gibboney's work was given by Arlington Church member and chairman of the selection committee Richard A. Buffum, winner of the award in 1972. In the absence of Dr. Fisher his wife Peggy read the message from the Moderator.

It said, "Along with so many others I am delighted that you are honoring Carl Gibboney this year. Carl has been a leader in the Arlington Church for many years, a mainstay in both light winds and heavy.

"His dedicated and persistent work for the Arlington Retirement Home has been a model of citizen initiative and effort. His whole county is indebted to him for breaking the ice in this matter. It is proving much easier now in Arlington to bring forward other facilities for older persons."

In all of the vicissitudes of launching the project, Gibboney was ably abetted by the vice president, Malcolm "Mac" Smith, whose devoted services through the years have strengthened many of the church's programs.

### **Membership and Budget Grow**

In 1969 the Church decided to hire an Associate Minister. After interviewing numerous prospects George C. B. Tolleson was chosen and began his duties on October 1, 1969. Mr. Tolleson left to become a school teacher in March, 1972.

His replacement, with the title of Minister of Education, was W. Steve Anderson, whose principal duties were the planning and conduct of the School of Religion. Mr. Anderson left in March, 1974, to pursue a career in Transactional Analysis.

Chosen by the Church to serve in the position was Mrs. Katherine B. Inglee of Belmont, Massachusetts, where she was serving as Minister of Education in the First Church of Belmont. Married and the mother of a daughter, she earned a degree of Bachelor of Divinity. She assumed her duties June 1, 1974.

During the period of 1968 to 1974 the membership of the Church

rose steadily until early in the 1974-1975 fiscal year it stood at 724. The period also saw a rising level of pledges to the Church, making possible a budget of about \$125,000. Although the pledges leveled off for the 1974-1975 period, a surplus was reported, and much of that was placed in high interest-bearing accounts. Since the mortgage interest rates on the church and the parsonage were less than those paid on savings and other accounts at the time, a favorable balance was realized.

### **The Elevator**

For many years Church members were made aware at irregular intervals that the Church edifice presented a formidable physical barrier for those who have difficulty walking or are confined to wheelchairs. Informally, a "ramp fund" was initiated and the proceeds from sales of used books were ear-marked for that purpose. By mid-1973, after a year of segregating those funds it had amounted to more than \$500.

Then the matter came before the Board of Trustees formally. It was decided that, instead of a ramp, an elevator be installed. That lift is now in operation from a point in the rear of the Church auditorium to the social hall below. Entry for handicapped persons is from the roadway into the social hall, with no steps involved.

### **Social Responsibilities Committee**

The Social Responsibilities Committee exists to initiate, sponsor and support specific social action programs. By its nature the more members the committee has the more effective it is. Its four subcommittees are identified with specific areas of action.

The Support Subcommittee, for instance, provides for financial assistance and other support to community groups such as FLOC (Described below), Meals-on-Wheels (which serves low-cost hot meals to shut-ins who cannot help themselves), Homebuyers and Fair Housing.

The Low-Income Housing Subcommittee has appeared before interested official bodies of Arlington and elsewhere and has presented its position in writing on the general housing situation numerous times. It was also instrumental in establishing a Revolving Low-Income Housing Assistance Fund in which no-interest loans are extended to welfare recipients or other low-income persons who have critical need for money to pay security deposits or back utility bills. It works closely with the Division of Social Services of the Arlington Department of Human Resources.

The Prison Reform Subcommittee and the Human Ecology Subcommittee, both highly active, round out the area of social responsibility.



### **For Love of Children**

During this period of 1968 to 1974 FLOC (For Love of Children) entered a void in child welfare in the District of Columbia and the Greater Washington Area. As a non-profit, voluntary agency, it has been busy alleviating the plight of homeless and neglected children. Its need became even greater when the scandal-ridden Junior Village of the District of Columbia was closed.

FLOC fostered the development of group foster homes under a contract with the D.C. Department of Human Resources. As of spring, 1974, 27 of these homes were scattered throughout the metropolitan area. In each home salaried, full-time house parents provide continuing loving parental care to four children. In the case of handicapped children there is one per home.

Two homes in Arlington were monitored by the FLOC group of the Unitarian Church of Arlington. Torill Floyd, committee chairman, reported that the homes provide an almost magic touch, for the children respond to the love they are given. The benefits are obvious, she stated.

FLOC also engages in preventive work, helping families stay together, through personal contact between a family and a FLOC group, such as the Arlington Church, with rent supplements and other financial aid from the FLOC budget. FLOC has also been acting to create social change, promoting a more humane child welfare system in D.C. The closing of Junior Village in the District of Columbia can be attributed largely to the efforts of FLOC, with an assist from the newspapers.

The Memorial Society of Arlington continued to grow. In 1974 it could boast almost 600 members, some from outside the Church, representing about 300 families. Membership received a boost when it was decided to publish a monthly bulletin. The society encourages its members to consider various alternatives to traditional funerals and to make their preferences known to their families and to funeral directors. Members are kept up-to-date on funeral reform developments in a monthly bulletin. Activities of the society also received help by having the national headquarters move to Washington.

### **Human Sexuality Teaching Introduced**

An innovative course with the potential for controversy was begun in the School of Religion. Human Sexuality teaching had originated elsewhere in the Unitarian denomination. Dr. Alfred Skolnick and his wife Sally studied material published by Beacon Press and the results claimed by other churches already teaching the course. They reported to the Board of Trustees in March of 1972, proposing that the course be offered.



**Russell Woollen, lower left, Vera Tilson, lower right, with the choir.**

There was concern that there would be controversy about the proposal, but it failed to materialize.

The Skolnicks established guidelines for our church, aiming at the 12-14 age group. With Board approval the first class was scheduled for the fall of 1972, with a limit of 12 participants.

An adult class was organized. Instead of instruction, however, it more resembled a seminar, with many kinds of material available for study. James and Helen O'Hear conducted a junior high class, while Stephen and Annette Spector conducted both a junior high class and separate senior high class. The adult group was conducted by Adrian and Sally Recinos. The Skolnicks monitored the whole program.

### **The Choir Goes to Europe**

Musical activity at the Church kept at its high level throughout this period, with Vera Tilson's leadership attracting enough singers so that on many Sundays both services featured the adult choir.

A climax that would be hard to beat was reached in the summer of 1971. After months of letters to Europe and recruiting participants a tour to well known spots and smaller musically inclined cities and towns was arranged. The tour group was made up of choir members, some family members, other church members, the Traldy Instrumental Quartet and Bob Clarke.

The questionable delights of charter flights were experienced at the

outset. A 10 p.m. departure from Dulles International Airport turned into 4:30 a.m. Arrival therefore in London was afternoon. Sleeplessness added to the five-hour time zone change created something akin to zombies. Fortunately, there was a two-day period in London scheduled to make the adjustment.

Stops on the trip were made at Straford-Upon-Avon, Birmingham; Bexhill-On-Sea, England; Amsterdam and Sneek, the Netherlands; Cologne and the Rhine River in Germany; Strasbourg, France; Luxemburg; and Brussels, Belgium. Along with the Traldy Quartet, the choir gave several concerts and enjoyed home stays at some of the stops.

## Chapter 8

### WE GATHER, WE FINANCE, WE IMPROVE

#### Kim Beach — Ten Years and Counting in '88

As the Unitarian Church of Arlington celebrated its fortieth year, the Minister, the Rev. George Kimmich "Kim" Beach had his own anniversary — ten years in this pulpit. After assuming the position of Minister in September, 1978, he was installed on October 29, 1978.

Kim Beach, born June 6, 1935, in Richmond, was raised in the First Unitarian Church there and moved to Cleveland, Ohio at age nine. He married Barbara Kres Beach, also from Cleveland, and they have two grown sons, Geoffrey and Eric.

Dr. Beach's formal education began at Oberlin College (A.B. '57). From there he went to Harvard Divinity School (S.T.B. '60; Th.M. '65). He also attended Case Western Reserve University, and in 1985 — after his sabbatical period for study — earned his D. Min. from Wesley Theological Seminary. One outcome of his D. Min. studies was the formation of the Church's Peace Initiatives program. Beginning in 1961, Kim has served as Minister of UU churches in Buffalo, New York, Marblehead, Massachusetts, and Austin, Texas, and in an "urban ministry" in Cleveland, Ohio.

Kim Beach's interests covered a wide spectrum. He initiated All Church Sundays, with children joining in part of the services, on a monthly basis. He gave special attention to membership by promoting expanded programs for integrating new members into the congregation and giving a course in UU history several times a year. In 1986 he proposed forming the Long Range Planning Committee and promoted its recommendations for increased staff and for expanded and improved buildings. As a result special funds were raised in 1988 for the purpose of calling an assistant minister by the end of the year.

Dr. Beach taught two adult courses a year. The most popular was "Credo: Building Your Own Theology." Another popular course was based on the James Luther Adams Book, *The Prophethood of All Believers*, which Kim edited and Beacon Press published in 1986. His study guide to the book was published in the new All Souls Resources series in 1988. An Affirmation Class for tenth to twelfth grade students was originated by Dr. Beach, using the booklet, "Catechism With an Open Mind," which he wrote for the course. At the end the class takes a field trip to Boston to the UUA headquarters, UU historical places and to meet UU "greats."

Another activity initiated by Kim Beach was the Ministerial Internship



**Reverend Robert C. Clarke, Church Minister 1967–1977.**



**Dr. George Kimmich Beach, Church Minister 1978–present.**



**Vera Tilson, Music Director 1952–present.**

program through which ours has become a "teaching church" as part of the training of ministerial leadership in the denomination. Kim had responsibility for supervision of the interns, who also worked with the Intern Advisory Committee. We have ordained four of the six interns (a seventh arrived in the fall of 1988), and all have gone on to serve UU churches. We also ordained our long time church member Janet Newman upon completion of her studies for the ministry.

Active in the community and the denomination, Kim served for two years as President of AMEN (Arlingtonians Ministering to Emergency Needs) and as chair of the Collegium Association for Liberal Religious Studies. He worked with church members to promote the formation of the UUA Committee on Purposes and Principles, and to write a proposed statement which became the basis for the new Principles statement, adopted by the UUA in 1986.

### **Membership Remained Stable**

Statistics can be dry, but the statistics of the Unitarian Church of Arlington can also be revealing. A study of these figures was basic to some of the recommendations made by the 1987 Long Range Planning Committee.



**James Nelson, former intern, at his 1981 Ordination, with Barbara Beach and Russell Woollen.**



A look at the membership numbers reveals that in 1947, the last year of the Fellowship, there were 99 members; in 1950, two years after becoming a church, the number had risen to 238. From 1956 to the present (1988) membership remained fairly stable, between 600 and 800. The 1988 UUA Directory listed the church at 684 members, with 304 children registered in the Religious Education Program and 513 pledging units. The church mailing list, including both members and friends, in 1988 was around the 1,000 level.

### **Finances Rose Steadily**

Church income, far from remaining stable, has risen steadily. From 1955 to the 1987-88 budget year the total yearly income rose from \$32,200 to an estimated \$318,100.

A mortgage of \$65,000 was obtained in 1979 by refinancing the parsonage, which by this time was rented for income.

A successful way to finance church improvements has been to issue member notes and to conduct special fund drives. One issue of member notes for \$10,000 was floated in 1981 and another for \$34,900 in 1985.

In March of 1984 the Board voted to create and maintain an Endowment Fund which has been growing steadily under careful management.

A proposal was made to the membership in 1984 to sell the parsonage in order to strengthen the church's finances. The proposal was defeated, the vote 250 for selling (309 were needed to pass) and 131 against.

### **Memorial Gifts**

When the main church auditorium structure was completed, it was apparent that procedures were needed for handling and expediting the giving and receiving of special gifts and memorial contributions and allocating their use for the enhancement of church buildings and grounds. A Memorial Gifts and Bequests Committee recommends the disposition of all such gifts that are received.

Many needed capital improvements for the completion of furnishings and beautification of buildings and grounds have been made possible with the funds. A "Memorials" booklet describing and identifying objects of art, furnishings and landscaping acquired with gift and memorial funds was published in 1985. A Landscaping Memorial Fund was initiated with donations of securities.

The opportunity for contributions or bequests as memorials is included in a leaflet which describes giving to church endowment funds. The committee consults with the family when contributions are received in

memory of the deceased to ascertain their choice of or acquiescence to a specific memorial.

### **Major Capital Improvements**

In the period from 1974 to 1988 there were many projects approved and consummated to correct the ailments of an aging physical plant, and there were some new projects.

The refinancing of the parsonage in 1979 permitted the implementation of portions of the site plan; namely, the completion of the Social Hall, Library, sidewalks and parking lot island, the furnishing of the office of the Director of Religious Education, and improvement of the sanctuary sound system.

Saving energy was the aim of efforts in 1980 and 1981. The Education Building furnace was converted to use gas as well as oil; Reeb Hall was insulated, some storm windows installed and efforts were made to improve timers and thermostats.

A playground designed by well-known Robert Leathers, valued at \$50,000, was given by the pre-school to the church. More than 100 volunteers, including church members, worked four days to complete the project in 1982.

Major roof repairs were made to the two church buildings between 1983 and 1985.

Two large illuminated signs identifying the church on the adjacent streets were installed in 1984.

A professional sound system for the hearing-impaired was installed in 1985 enabling them to hear the services through the regular public address system, and in 1988 the Day Alliance financed a vastly improved sound system for the whole sanctuary.

A great improvement for the comfort of those attending summer services, summer weddings and other functions in the sanctuary was the installation in 1987 of air conditioning.

### **The Church Meets the Computer**

After long consideration a computer system was purchased in December, 1982. This proved to be inadequate for the church's needs. In December, 1986 a larger IBM-compatible system was installed and computerizing of the accounting system was begun. The computer is widely used for other purposes as well, such as mailings, membership, canvasses, and the annual services auction.



## Chapter 9

### THE ARTS

#### Music — A Bright Star in the Community

Vera Tilson conducted her first choir rehearsal October 30, 1952. Since then she has made the adult choir a true congregational experience, training church members and friends to sing with high standards and to participate regularly.

By 1976 the choir had grown in numbers so that, with some members doing double duty, there was choir music at both Sunday services. In practice, the Director of Music works closely with the Minister and the staff in developing Sunday morning worship services. There are no paid singers in the choir. However, instrumentalists and soloists are hired as needed for concerts, special Sunday services and Christmas Eve. Notable was the appearance of Jessye Norman, then a student at Howard University, as soloist for a performance of Maurice Durufle's "Requiem Mass." She became a renowned singer in Europe and at the New York Metropolitan Opera.

Vera Tilson's talent for programming continues to delight the church and community with twice-yearly concerts that attract large audiences and generate critical acclaim. The June, 1986, performance of Haydn's "Creation" with dinner served during the intermission, was memorable and elicited a laudatory review in the *Washington Post*. Every concert is taped. Some have been duplicated and are for sale.

Dean Vander Schaaf became the church organist in 1973 when Nancy Walker Marchal resigned after nine years' of talented service to the Sunday morning services, choir rehearsals and Sunday afternoon organ recitals. Dean, a masterful artist at the keyboard for the same events, served until 1980 when he moved to Florida.

The Church music program continued in its high caliber mode after Russell Woollen, for many years keyboard artist with the National Symphony Orchestra, became the organist in July, 1980. In addition to playing the organ, piano and harpsichord, Russell Woollen is a nationally acclaimed and frequently performed composer. Some of his works have become part of the choir's repertory. Woollen's program notes prepared for the Sunday Order of Service enhance the musical part of the worship services.

The choir has performed in other churches, in other cities and at various local celebrations. Performances during overseas travels have been in England, The Netherlands and Germany in 1971, in Scandinavia in 1977 and in Spain in 1982.

Continuing the precedent of the first 20 years, operas have furnished entertainment with the presentation of the "Happy Prince" by Malcolm Williamson in June, 1974; "Let's Make an Opera — The Little Sweep" by Crozier-Britten in December, 1977; "Knights in Shining Armor" by Malcolm Williamson, for children; an abbreviated version of Menotti's "Amahl and the Night Visitors" with the dancers in December, 1985; and "Dido and Aeneas" by Henry Purcell in June, 1988.

Other church music groups have included the Folk Music Group and the Recorder Players.

### **Youthful Voices Join In**

A Junior Choir for grades four through six was formed in January, 1955, as part of the School of Religion, with volunteer directors and accompanists. By 1963-64 the choir was singing twice a month for adult services and, as the Unitarian Songsters, took part in the production of Benjamin Britten's "Noye's Fludde," and the December 1968 performance of Carl Orff's "The Christmas Story," which was broadcast Christmas Eve over the Columbia Broadcasting Network.

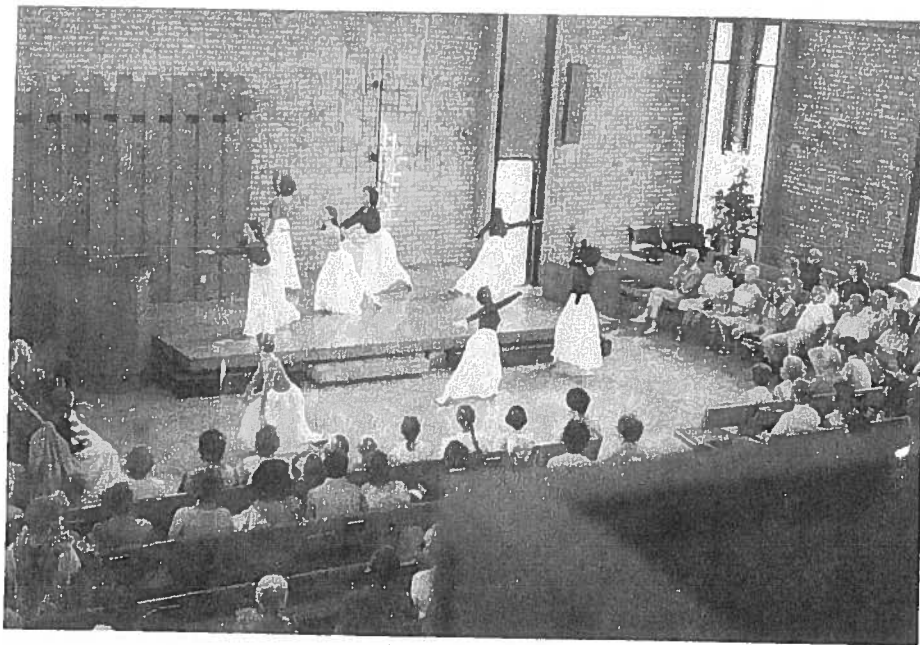
In 1972-73 Vera Tilson assumed direction of the then-called Youth Choir, and it became part of the Church's music program. Since 1987, paid accompanists play for the weekly rehearsals and performances for the School of Religion. In addition to their performances at Sunday services every three weeks, the Youth Choir has performed at installations, ordinations, and some adult choir concerts. Outside appearances have included nursing homes, retirement residences, Washington Cathedral, and the Kennedy Center.

### **Visual Arts**

At a workshop held in December, 1982, the need was expressed for a visual arts program aimed at providing a standing committee to advise on artistic improvements proposed for the Church, and at building the congregation's awareness of the work of church members who are artists.

A Visual Arts Committee was formed and its initial project was the commissioning of Catherine Kapikian, a nationally recognized artist and Director of the Center for Religion and the Arts at Wesley Theological Seminary, to create an artwork for the sanctuary. The resulting two wall hangings titled "You and I" and "We and Thou" were dedicated in October, 1984. They were paid for from memorial funds.

Since November, 1983, a wall in the Social Hall has been designated as an Artist of the Month panel for artist members to display their work. The artists introduce themselves with brief biographical sketches which appear beside their mini-shows.



**Arlington Unitarian Dancers.**



**The Junior Choir.**

### **We Go Hi-Tech with Television and Videotapes**

In the 1980's our Church entered the video age. Videotapes provided a medium for education and entertainment, for archival records, for putting the Church on the air, and for cooperation with the regional UNIVISION committee to combine videotapes from Washington area UU churches and national UNIVISION for local television viewing.

Volunteers trained and certified by Arlington Cable TV have videotaped many events including dance performances, workshops, an oral history panel for the archives, an ordination, the All-Virginia UU Conference vespers at Jefferson Memorial, and a wedding — this last a new source of revenue. A 1985 documentary on Culpepper Garden won the Ammy award presented by Arlington Cable TV for "Excellence in Community TV."

Videotapes are shown at New UU orientation sessions, as part of activities fairs, and to promote fund drives.

### **The Arlington Unitarian Dancers**

It was in the 1960's that programs of modern dance for worship, recreation and mental and physical development were introduced. Under highly respected professional leadership and direction the first classes for children and adults were conducted by instructors under the supervision of Erica Thimey, well known director and choreographer.

Beverly Smith Kitson founded and directed, from 1980 to 1983, the Arlington Unitarian Dancers. This dance group participated monthly in church worship services, was represented on the Worship Services Committee, and performed in the opening service of the UUA General Assembly in Philadelphia in 1981.

In 1983, when the Kitsons moved out of the country, Sandra Kammann was engaged as Dance Director. She continued the program of classes for children and adults and, in consultation with the Minister and the Director of Music, planned the monthly participation in Sunday morning services. Other performances have included memorable spring recitals, and appearances at area churches and community functions.

## Chapter 10

### RELIGIOUS EDUCATION INVOLVES ALL AGES

When the Church was formally organized April 1, 1948, the meetings were held Sunday evenings in the Pershing Drive Christian Church. There was a church auditorium, and a pipe organ, but no facilities for Sunday School. At the beginning of the school year the Church moved into a school building where there was an overabundance of space. That first year 83 students enrolled.

With that healthy beginning, enrollment showed an astonishing increase, rising to 728 at the end of the 1958-59 fiscal year. The enrollment at the end of the 1980-81 fiscal year was 194, right where it was 30 years earlier. There has been a gradual increase to 304 for 1987-88.

The Church never wavered in its support of Religious Education (RE). There was always an RE director and a working Religious Education Committee, which in more recent years was called the Religious Education Council with active and vigorous leadership. From 1985 there was a team of two RE directors, Judy Fisher and Jane McKeel. It is believed that this arrangement is unique in the denomination.

The RE classes are held simultaneously with the church services. The services had to be increased to two in the early 50's because of the size of the Sunday School. Having Sunday School and Church meet at the same time is very convenient, but the adults and the children need a feeling of being connected. As a solution it was decided that beginning in 1979-80, the first Sunday of the month was to be set aside as All Church Sunday, when the first part of the service is planned for everyone. There is special music and stories for the children. Thus the adults and children worship together for a short time.

From the beginning the question arose, "What do we teach the children?" In the early enthusiastic days the curriculum was influenced by the noted UU educator, Sophia Fahs. Many teachers taught their classes in the way and using the subject matter with which they felt most comfortable. The curriculum was informal. Those days eventually disappeared. Now there is a specified curriculum which is under constant review by the RE directors and the RE Council.

In recent years the Curriculum Committee of the RE Council designed a comprehensive, integrated curriculum plan which emphasized Unitarian-Universalism in grades one through four, Christian heritage in grades five and six, and World Religions in grades seven and eight. There is much overlapping of ethical values and learnings from year to year, but the focus of the content broadens as the child matures.

The Directors of Religious Education (DRE's) working with the active curriculum committee have revised and written several year-long curricula, including one for five-year-olds called "Stories of Our People" (an expansion of the earlier "Adventures of God's Folk"), a curriculum for grades one and two entitled "Myself, My Family, My Church," and an Old Testament curriculum for grades five and six, "Living the Promise."

A large Children's Worship Committee (ten members in 1987-88) plans and delivers four chapel services every week except on All Church Sunday. Children from kindergarten through grade four worship together, and students in grades five through eight meet in the chapel together. The 15 minute services include a chalice lighting with opening words, stories, music, poetry, litany, meditation, silence and a closing ritual.

The RE Directors have multiple and endless duties. The central one, that which makes it all work, is the recruitment and training of teachers. Most of the teachers are parents, and their training is a continuous process. Training sessions not only help the teachers to teach more effectively but also give them a chance to meet each other, to socialize and to exchange experiences. One refrain frequently heard among teachers is how much *they* learn from this exhilarating commitment.

The church nursery, located next to the social hall in the main building, is the meeting place for infants and children under three. While a baby-sitting service for the very young, it also includes a program for one and two year olds that was developed by Dr. Edward Bridge during the late 60's.

Some RE activities are aimed at high school-age youth. The Youth Group has its own meeting times and activities such as fund raising events, an annual retreat in the mountains, sleepovers, seminars, movies and picnics. The Teen Seminar is a youth-led Sunday morning class. Teens choose their topics and leaders, usually from their own ranks. Discussion topics have included shyness, values, leadership training, teen suicide, and personal expression.

The Church is following the trend in colleges of encouraging the enrollment of adults in the education process. The courses offered are varied and change with the times. Courses may run for several weeks or for one session only, and are either free or offered at a nominal fee. The instructor may be a member or friend of our congregation, or someone from the larger community. Topics for adult education fall into one of five categories: Religious and Spiritual, Applied Psychology, Life Skills, Contemporary Issues, and Creative Expression.

## Co-op Preschool Serves Community

A neat solution to the problem of many churches, putting classroom and other facilities to good use during the workweek was found by the Church when it entered into an agreement to make space available for a preschool. In 1969 the Arlington Unitarian Cooperative Preschool (AUCP), a nonprofit organization, was created. It was administered and maintained by parents who originally were active in the Sunday nursery program as well. Although housed in church buildings, the preschool is an independent entity.

The school operates two classes of two and three year olds, two classes of three-and-one-half to five year olds, a pre-kindergarten enrichment class, and a children's cooking class.

Over the years the school flourished and expanded to its current size of 50 and three salaried teachers. Dr. Edward M. Bridge, a retired pediatrician and church member participated actively in the development of the program until his death in 1984. The attractive functional playground of the school built by the AUCP parents and church volunteers in the early 80's has been dedicated to him.

The school follows the "modified Montessori" educational philosophy. This means that the classrooms contain a large amount of Montessori-type equipment, and that the program emphasizes the individual child's choice of activity. To this basic Montessori approach, the AUCP has added traditional extras such as housekeeping and block corners, circle activities, creative arts and music.

AUCP, which offers enrollment priority for church members, is a cooperative in that it is governed by a board of parent volunteers. Parents act as "teachers' aides" in the classrooms, enabling them to participate in their children's early education. Parents also contribute some 200 hours annually to clean and maintain the classrooms and playground.

## Chapter 11

### SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES — CARING BEYOND OUR WALLS

The Social Responsibilities Committee provided a structure within which the interests and concerns of members and friends of the church were identified, individual and community action was encouraged and recommendations were made to the Church Board for financial support for social action organizations and activities. In 1986-87 the Committee surveyed the social concerns of church members and identified nuclear disarmament, homelessness and low income housing, and sanctuary-refugee concerns.

On-going projects relating to these issues and others include support of the Northern Virginia Women's Medical Center, work with Offenders Aid and Restoration, aid to migrant farm workers, involvement with fair housing, and support for Meals on Wheels and books for prisoners. Politically, the Church has continued action to encourage Arlington to provide some housing for the homeless. As a result of this community effort, Sullivan House was opened to help homeless families.

Mention must be made of Culpepper Garden, the church sponsored retirement home whose beginnings were described earlier in this history. The home has continued to flourish and to help meet the community's need for affordable housing with security and support services for the elderly.

#### **Vietnamese Refugees — Help Begets Help**

It took seven years for one Vietnamese refugee family that we helped, to come full circle and to help another refugee family. It all began in April, 1981, when the Church at its annual meeting, in a formal resolution, supported the sponsoring of a refugee family. A special appeal produced \$5,199 donated by 157 individuals, plus many items of clothing, furniture, linens and utensils. In addition there was \$300 for each of the five family members from a Department of State fund.

The principal agency processing the entry of the refugees was Catholic Charities. The Church's Refugee Committee asked them for assistance in locating a family with children. The family of Phong Lam including his wife and three children aged 5, 2 and 1 arrived at National Airport on August 1, 1981 with their worldly possessions in three plastic bags. One year later, through their own industry and with supportive assistance from many church members, they were on their financial feet, a happy saga.



Finally, after six years of working and learning and saving, they realized two great dreams; they took the oath of allegiance to the Constitution as U.S. citizens, and they bought and moved into their own home. Bravo!

Then, seven years after his arrival in the U.S., Phong Lam sponsored the family of an old childhood friend, Khoa Thu Huynh. Both had been lieutenants in the Vietnamese Army. Khoa, accompanied by his wife and five children, arrived in the U.S. in June of 1988. Phong covered the first month's food and lodging in his own house — the helped, helping. Subsequently Khoa was assisted by other agencies and this church's Refugee Committee.

### **Sanctuary for Undocumented Central American Refugees**

In 1982-1983, there was a new wave of refugees fleeing persecution and "death squads" in El Salvador and Guatemala. In the winter of 1982-83, the Church offered office space and a telephone for about six months to a newly created refugee agency serving Central American refugees in Arlington — El Rescate.

The Sanctuary movement then sweeping through the churches of America was based on the ancient heritage of the Christian Church that there was a moral duty to provide refuge for persons fleeing persecution by tyrannical governments. Responding to this moral duty, a proposal was placed before the Board and adopted by a vote of the membership on April 15, 1984, that the Church should declare itself a Sanctuary.

The resolution read, "In accordance with the historical tradition of the church as a place of refuge or safe haven for persons fleeing persecution and oppression and in fear of their lives, the Unitarian Church of Arlington declares itself a *Sanctuary* from such conditions in any foreign country, for undocumented refugees."

In the fall of 1984 a refugee family from El Salvador was housed in the Church for a week, and was given follow-up housing and social services care for several months. Another refugee seeking sanctuary was welcomed in a special worship service, at which the Church made public declaration of its commitment to help undocumented aliens from Central America.

### **Sheltering the Homeless**

Providing shelter for the homeless became a primary activity of the Social Responsibilites Committee in 1985 and 1986. This included acting together with other Arlington churches in providing shelter on a rotating basis for those in need.

Organization of the effort began with a number of intensive meetings

with the Church Board. The Church volunteered to house up to 30 persons a night for one week a month, November through March. Involved were over 100 church members and friends as well as other churches in providing counseling, food, clean linen and shelter from 7 pm to 7 am.

Between 12 and 24 people, including working men and women as well as families with children and emotionally distressed individuals, were sheltered each night at the Church.

## Chapter 12

### WE MEET, WE PONDER, WE CELEBRATE

While Sunday services are the central focus of the church, our eclectic mixture has led to many additional groups and gatherings. Beginning in the early 70's and reflecting the diversity of our heritages, are communal celebrations of Thanksgiving, Winter Solstice and an annual Seder dinner.

Several purely social activities have been tried over the years including a Couple's Club, Circle Suppers (small groups meeting in homes on a rotational basis), ongoing Round Robin Bridge, and the Prime Rib Dinner and Dance. These have functioned as long as someone was interested in sponsoring them. One long-running social group has been CLAMS (Chatter, Laughter and Munching Society) whose name describes its activities. Another continuous group is the Singletarians, an organization that provides singles with an opportunity to become acquainted with other church members, and activities such as brunches, picnics, hikes, theater outings and TGIF's.

Members and friends also meet for educational purposes such as the Great Decisions Group which each year since 1970 has discussed an 8-week curriculum of foreign affairs topics, Day and Evening Book Groups that come and go as interest dictates and Candlelight Forums which met periodically for many years with a speaker or panel on a timely subject. Other groups that have enjoyed brief popularity include "Odyssey" — a discussion group for single adults, and consciousness-raising groups. At one time there were four C-R groups, three for women and one for men. By 1978 they had disappeared.

The Spring Retreat, begun in 1974, is one gathering that has not disappeared. The first one was held at Camp Letts, the second at Graves Mt. Lodge, but since 1976 it has met at Big Meadows Lodge and Campgrounds. While the Fall Retreat, which has flourished since 1954, is essentially for adults, the Spring Retreat is aimed more at entire families and includes evening get togethers, a picnic supper and a "do-it-ourselves" worship service Sunday morning.

During the early and mid 70's church-coordinated Extended Families were very popular, involving over 200 members and friends at their height in 1973. Originally there were 13 families formed loosely into neighborhood groupings, while also taking into account a mix of ages. Each family was led by facilitators who had loosely defined coordinating functions. Most families gathered for various social or recreational activities, while some also performed services for the church. Over a 5

to 6 year period new families were formed, old families grew and some disbanded. Gradually the program faded away, leaving behind many informal groups that had stronger bonds than before.

### **Men's and Women's Organizations**

A Women's Alliance was organized and active when the Arlington Fellowship of the District of Columbia All Souls Unitarian Church became the Unitarian Church of Arlington, Virginia, April 1, 1948. The Alliance met monthly in the homes of members for lunch and a program. In January, 1949, a Women's Evening Alliance was organized for career women and mothers unable to attend daytime meetings. This group also met in homes until that fall when the church building (Reeb Hall) was ready for occupancy.

Both groups affiliated with the denomination's General Alliance, which became the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation (UUWF) in 1963 after the 1961 merger of Unitarian and Universalist churches. By 1949, men of the Church had organized a chapter of the Unitarian Laymen's League. These three groups played a prominent part in managing, sustaining and furthering the Church and its activities.

Besides leadership and womanpower, the Alliances were the source of many contributions to the physical plant. The first one, in 1949, was a "magnificent ten-burner kitchen range." Dishes for the kitchen were furnished by the Evening Alliance. A noteworthy contribution by the Laymen's League was the slate walk and steps built up to the east entrance of the sanctuary.

The Day Alliance has had a long association with Church Women United in Arlington, whose membership comes from other churches, with whom it finds common ground in its support of social causes.

Changing interests and demographics in the mid 1970's brought a decline in membership in the Evening Alliance and the Laymen's League, and their eventual dissolution. The Laymen's League was dissolved nationally by the early 1980's. Membership in both the Arlington Day Alliance and the continental organization, UUWF, was eventually opened to men. The Day Alliance offers to all members and friends of the Church opportunities for daytime sociability and fellowship, luncheons with interesting speakers, and twice-yearly chartered bus trips.

The Day Alliance is responsive to requests to meet needs not anticipated in the church operating budget. Security improvements to the Education Building, partial funding of the ministerial intern program, the air conditioning engineering study, and the 1988 upgrading of the sanctuary sound system are examples. The Alliance raises its funds



**At Ordination of Janet Newman. Janet is followed by Kim Beach, Natalie Hall and Norma Veridan.**

through dues, bake sales, Memorial Service receptions, arts and crafts sales, and similar projects.

### **Questionnaires — We Identify Ourselves**

There have been a number of questionnaires through the years which have helped our Church determine who we are theologically and where we are going. One assessment in May, 1976, was a study of life values. Church members rated self-respect as the most important principle and salvation last of the 18 values rated.

One lengthy study took place during the period 1976-78 as part of the Church's participation in the Sharing in Growth program of the denomination. An exhaustive questionnaire was tabulated in the fall of 1976. Response to a theological question showed that 30% of our Church's respondents considered themselves theist or deist and 56% considered themselves to be humanist, agnostic or atheist. This relates interestingly to a 1966 Survey on Beliefs and Attitudes in which, when asked if they defined their religion as Christian, 43.4% said "yes" while 56.6% said "no."

### **Denominational Affairs**

Greater participation in the affairs of the Unitarian Universalist Association and its regional and local bodies marked the second 20 years of the Church. The Denominational Affairs Committee's purpose is to provide liason between our Church and the other units of the denomination:

- The Greater Washington Association of Unitarian Universalist Churches (GWA), is comprised of churches of the Washington metropolitan area.
- The Joseph Priestley District (JPD), includes churches from Philadelphia southward to Northern Virginia.
- The Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), includes societies in the U.S. and Canada.

The Committee appoints (with Board confirmation) the UU-United Nations Envoy, GWA and JPD delegates and coordinates and supports church participation in the annual UUA General Assembly, conferences and camps.

### **Architecture Award**

When the main sanctuary was built the American Institute of Architects in 1965 listed the building as one of the thirty significant Northern Virginia structures. In February of 1984 the Institute gave the Church the Test of Time award, an award that is made 20 years after a structure is built and given only if the building is still used for its original purpose and if it is well maintained.

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As the Unitarian Church of Arlington, Virginia, celebrates its 40th anniversary and faces the last decade of the 20th century, it can hold its head high. With a membership of 684, it has made an indelible mark on Arlington, Northern Virginia, and the greater Washington area. The Church has become a solid part of the community, its influence in social justice a part of local history. It is a present force to be reckoned with, and its membership presents a potential ready to be tapped.

## Appendix

### Ministers of the Unitarian Church of Arlington, VA

1948-1949	.....	Gilbert A. Phillips
1950-1960	.....	Ross Allen Weston
1960-1966	.....	Edward H. Redman
1967-1977	.....	Robert C. Clarke
1978-	.....	George Kimmich Beach

### Special Assistants

1955-1959	.....	Robert J. Irish, Executive Director
1959-1960	.....	Robert Reed, Assistant Minister
1969-1972	.....	George C. B. Tolleson, Associate Minister

### Ministerial Interns

1960	.....	Robert Wolf
1981	.....	James Nelson*
1982	.....	Susan Van Dreser
1983	.....	Helene Wolff*
1986	.....	David Johnson*
1986-1987	.....	Wendy Jerome*
1988	.....	Connie Sternberg

\*Interns later ordained in the Unitarian Church of Arlington.

### Directors of Religious Education

1949	.....	Ruth Porter
1950	.....	Helen S. Whittlesey
1951	.....	Kelton Virnelson
1952	.....	Helen S. Gerteis
1953-1954	.....	Carolyn D. Martin
1955-1956	.....	Lisa Hall Lupton
1957-1960	.....	Eileen Day
1961	.....	Robert C. Czapiewski
1962	.....	Sydney Weaver
1963-1969	.....	Blanche Werth
1970	.....	Phyllis Leonard
1971-1972	.....	Mary M. Brown
1973-1974	.....	W. Stephen Anderson
1975-1976	.....	Katherine B. Inglee
1977	.....	Claudia Blake
1978-1984	.....	Norma Veridan
1985	.....	Margaret C. Fisher
1986-	.....	Judith Fisher & Jane McKeel

### **Directors of Music**

1948-1952 . . . . . Ruth Fuller  
1952- . . . . . Vera Tilson

### **Pianists - Organists**

1947-1949 . . . . . Mary Jane Phillips  
1949-1950 . . . . . Joy Tod  
1950-1952 . . . . . Robert Boggess  
1952-1954 . . . . . Mrs. Porter  
1954-1956 . . . . . Mrs. Barron  
1956-1957 . . . . . Shirley Jackson  
1957-1960 . . . . . Joy Tod  
1960-1961 . . . . . Ruth Allen and Joy Tod, alternating  
1961-1963 . . . . . Florence Miller  
1964 . . . . . Ernest Ligon  
1964-1973 . . . . . Nancy Walker Marchal  
1973-1980 . . . . . Dean Vander Schaaf  
1980- . . . . . Russell Woollen



# **Chairpersons, Board of Trustees**

## **Fiscal Year Ending**

1949	William N. Mansfield
1950	George A. Collier
1951	Scott P. Crampton
1952	Robert H. Estabrook
1953	Ruth W. Tryon
1954	Carl N. Gibboney
1955	Ray H. Coffman
1956	Joseph L. Fisher
1957	William R. Sidle
1958	L. Wade Lathram
1959	Sherrod East
1960 (portion)	Martha Gertwagen
1960	Theodore W. Taylor
1961	Theodore W. Taylor
1962	Gerrit C. Conger
1963	Robert S. Roe
1964	Robert S. Roe
1965	Richard A. Buffum
1966	David Tilson
1967	Alexander L. Peaslee
1968	Ralph E. Spencer
1969	Paul C. Scott
1970	Mary M. Brown
1971	Thomas T. Helde
1972	Jane T. Shepard
1973	Nelson C. Simonson
1974	Michael D. Serlin
1975	Richard Barton
1976	James O'Hear
1977	Sally T. Recinos
1978	Sally Skolnick
1979	T. Michael Hall
1980	Karl Jonietz
1981	Sunny Cook
1982	Harry R. Van Cleve
1983	Gordon W. Hatheway, Jr.
1985	Natalie Hall
1985	Alice McLellan
1986	Mary Lathram
1987	Louis Ferrand
1988	Barry Finkelstein
1989	Christine Morrison

## Recipients of the Unsung Hero Award

The Unsung Hero Award was first established in 1978. Its purpose is to honor someone who has made significant contributions to the Church of time, thought, or compassion over many years, although usually with little fanfare. Individuals with official positions are not normally eligible for the award on the basis of their official functions.

### Recipients to Date:

1978	Malcolm Smith
1979	Jerry Schleeper
1980	Helen Coles
1981	Alice McLellan
1982	Yves Maroni
1983	Mary Lathram
1984	Rose Rovin
1985	Marian Yarger
1986	Wade Lathram
1987	Marion Greenwood
1988	Walter Gonnoud

## Church Members\*

1947 . . . . .	99	1968 . . . . .	679
1948 . . . . .	146	1969 . . . . .	Missing
1949 . . . . .	144	1970 . . . . .	686
1950 . . . . .	238	1971 . . . . .	673
1951 . . . . .	Missing	1972 . . . . .	675
1952 . . . . .	329	1973 . . . . .	687
1953 . . . . .	362	1974 . . . . .	712
1954 . . . . .	447	1975 . . . . .	713
1955 . . . . .	552	1976 . . . . .	693
1956 . . . . .	655	1977 . . . . .	705
1957 . . . . .	738	1978 . . . . .	649
1958 . . . . .	706	1979 . . . . .	630
1959 . . . . .	771	1980 . . . . .	631
1960 . . . . .	792	1981 . . . . .	623
1961 . . . . .	743	1982 . . . . .	651
1962 . . . . .	646	1983 . . . . .	663
1963 . . . . .	615	1984 . . . . .	661
1964 . . . . .	678	1985 . . . . .	635
1965 . . . . .	622	1986 . . . . .	637
1966 . . . . .	599	1987 . . . . .	656
1967 . . . . .	604	1988 . . . . .	684

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\*Legal members, as reported annually to UUA.

## Enrollment in the School of Religion

1949 . . . . .	83	1969 . . . . .	439
1950 . . . . .	160	1970 . . . . .	402
1951 . . . . .	190	1971 . . . . .	312
1952 . . . . .	243	1972 . . . . .	301
1953 . . . . .	273	1973 . . . . .	278
1954 . . . . .	369	1974 . . . . .	210
1955 . . . . .	506	1975 . . . . .	Slight decline
1956 . . . . .	611	1976 . . . . .	236
1957 . . . . .	600	1977 . . . . .	230
1958 . . . . .	664	1978 . . . . .	201
1959 . . . . .	728	1979 . . . . .	234
1960 . . . . .	660	1980 . . . . .	213
1961 . . . . .	Slight decline	1981 . . . . .	194
1962 . . . . .	Not available	1982 . . . . .	201
1963 . . . . .	536	1983 . . . . .	218
1964 . . . . .	580	1984 . . . . .	224
1965 . . . . .	480	1985 . . . . .	235
1966 . . . . .	406	1986 . . . . .	250
1967 . . . . .	350	1987 . . . . .	275
1968 . . . . .	417	1988 . . . . .	304

## Total Church Income and Pledges

<b>Fiscal Year Ending</b>	<b>Pledges</b>	<b>Total Income</b>
<i>Five-Year Intervals:</i>		
1955 . . . . .	\$ 24,700 . . . . .	\$ 32,200
1960 . . . . .	47,900 . . . . .	59,200
1965 . . . . .	61,800 . . . . .	72,400
1970 . . . . .	94,800 . . . . .	108,200
<i>Annually:</i>		
1975 . . . . .	114,600 . . . . .	136,500
1976 . . . . .	120,400 . . . . .	145,200
1977 . . . . .	126,100 . . . . .	152,400
1978 . . . . .	125,500 . . . . .	151,900
1979 . . . . .	135,600 . . . . .	161,100
1980 . . . . .	138,900 . . . . .	177,100
1981 . . . . .	154,700 . . . . .	198,900
1982 . . . . .	180,400 . . . . .	223,700
1983 . . . . .	189,400 . . . . .	236,000
1984 . . . . .	196,300 . . . . .	240,200
1985 . . . . .	212,400 . . . . .	261,700
1986 . . . . .	227,900 . . . . .	275,000
1987 . . . . .	251,200 . . . . .	296,400
1988 . . . . .	272,300 . . . . .	325,900

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