

# TEN YEARS OF MEMORIES



A BOOK OF REMEMBRANCES BY  
THE CHARTER MEMBERS OF  
THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS OF THE  
CUMBERLAND VALLEY  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY  
OF THEIR CHARTER WITH  
THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION

MARCH 15, 1998 Ñ MARCH 16, 2008

# “Memories of the Early Years”

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Cover Photo: Taken on the day in May, 1999 that we closed on our building at 2 Forge Road, Boiling Springs.

Standing: James Caplinger, Carol Caplinger, Dave Johnston, Ed Franco, Diane Reed, Bruce Henrickson, Tom DeWall, Carole Scott DeWall.

Seated: Kathy Bell, John Jacobsen, Mary Franco, Doug Spencer, Guy Burford (with Sam the dog), Rick Heckman.

## Introduction

Judy Welles and Duane Fickeisen

Judy thought about the idea of putting together a book of memories of “the early years” for about ten seconds before putting out a request to all of our charter members to write their recollections. Sometimes the best ideas are those that hit us on the fly. She knows this because she believes in the wisdom of intuition, and because this little book came together so beautifully.

Of course we have our own vivid memories of those times. Here are a few:

- An excerpt from Judy’s journal on Sunday, March 9, 1997:

*Listening to “A Prairie Home Companion,” so aware that it’s nearly 4:00 p.m. in Carlisle and the wonderful people there are about to begin their monthly worship service... Gospel singers sing “We Shall Walk Through the Valley in Peace,” and I think about the Cumberland Valley, hoping that some day soon I shall walk through that valley in peace.*

*Yesterday’s tears were because I want this so much I can taste it; every molecule in my body says “Yes!” to this new congregation that might be ours to nurture and shape and help to grow. But it isn’t certain yet, and something still might come out of left field to make it go awry. Ben called this morning in response to my phone call yesterday, and he simply said, “Well then, this is the time to pray, isn’t it?”*

*So I sit at my computer on a sunny California Sunday and pray for the people in Carlisle, for their energy, for their devotion to the dream of a new congregation, and I pray that they will open their hearts to us and welcome us among them so that we can begin the good work together.*

- The get-together at the Friends Meeting House on our candidating weekend. Our rental car had a rear-view mirror tag that said “If you love me, I’m yours.” Judy attached it to the top button of her dress for a while, but Duane said it was tacky, so she took it off, even though she knew it was true.

- The bank vice president who approved the mortgage loan on our home after reviewing the facts — “Let me see, you are newly married, you’re coming to share one job for a new congregation not yet chartered, you’ll be paid \$40,000 a year total, you’re coming with

student loans and almost no savings? Well, we aren't going to resell this one, but OK."

- Our funky office on South Pitt Street, often so crowded on Committee Night that we had to use the back yard and the front hall for meetings. Our teenagers helped paint the walls — and spilled *lots* of paint on the tile and carpeted floors. At a meeting of the Membership Committee, Jeanine Goodwin was lying on her back to assuage her back pain, and from down there on the floor she painted the vivid image of the Newcomers Bags, with bright tissue paper, abundant curly ribbons, and fresh-baked cookies at the bottom. A great idea which we still are using ten years later!

- Our first Christmas Eve service, held in Denny Hall. Chris Altieri and Dan Cozort had just traveled back from Guatemala, and they arrived holding baby Clara in their arms. What more was there to say?

- Patti Coolsen hoarding coffee cups and only giving them out to people who would sign up to make coffee on a future Sunday.

- The spring Sunday when we got a call from Dickinson about 9:00 a.m. that the power was off in Denny Hall, so there were no elevators and no air conditioning. We quickly reached Dana Bloomfield, our DRE, and decided to hold the service in the pavilion at Letort Park. She had the children's program partially set up when we were kicked out by a family who had reserved it for a birthday party — so back to Denny Hall we went. We held Nick and Catherine Bloom's Child Dedication service in the warmth, in dim light; it was intimate and lovely.

- Finding glitter on the carpet all over Denny Hall for weeks after a hollowed-out Easter egg filled with it had been broken over Kit Franklin's head. Dickinson College was not pleased.

- The processional of sacred objects as we dedicated this building to our use — including the chalice, a hymnbook, the membership book, and a plumber's helper.

- Yulia Van Doren, at the time barely a teenager, playing professional quality music for us and announcing at one service, "I just want you to know that I didn't pick this hymn." It proved, indeed, impossible for us to sing.



## **Still Feeling It**

Jan Ruby

As I walk around my farm, stand outside on the deck or visit the small grove where UUCV began, I can still see the faces, hear the voices and feel the energy of our many hopes for bringing Unitarian Universalism to the Cumberland Valley. In the beginning, there was a group of friends who believed that we could work together to make our dreams into reality. We believed it with words and ideas and with hard work. We shared a willingness to be engaged with one another on this journey. All of that combined energy and creativity went a long way towards making UUCV a reality.

The day we had our first service on the farm, we had sent out a few hundred announcements to people culled from a list that Carole Scott DeWall had compiled from UU get-togethers that had been held at Green Ridge Village. Those were the days when Ellie, Chappie and Lila were still with us. We expected about 35 people to show up. Imagine our surprise when 81 adults and children arrived at the farm carrying lawn chairs and covered dishes! That was the moment that cinched it for me. Peals of laughter and joyous greetings filled the air as we all found fellow liberal religious thinkers and friends. We had a sermon that day, given by Barclay Baird, sang songs, had religious education run by Kim VanAlkemade, and our first potluck. It took a lot of people to make that day happen. That was the beginning, and we continued to meet on the farm through the summer months until the leaves began to change.

A core group of us, maybe 10 or so people, gathered one evening at the farm and, sitting around my big wooden table, we recognized that something special was happening, we were growing into a community! Together, we decided to put up the funds to keep our fledgling meetings going during the winter months. Diane Reed found us a temporary home in the Quaker Meeting House. We used it in the afternoons, after the Quakers had finished their weekly meetings. I loved that space with the afternoon sun sending long rays of sunlight through the colored windows. The delicious smells wafted in from the nearby kitchen, announcing the potluck that followed every service. Sitting together in fellowship felt so perfect. We struggled, goofed-up and learned about every aspect of making each Sunday service and potluck a reality. In retrospect, for a group of people who were untrained, we pulled it together each week through sheer grit and determination. We usually did an awesome job! When we weren't so great, we talked it out and tried to

do better next time. There was a great camaraderie among the pioneers of UUC. The memories of this time will always remain a very special experience in my life.

Soon after, UUA became involved bringing direction, know-how and financial support. Diane Reed and Matt Ruby became our representatives and we were on the path that eventually led us to the UUCV of today. I miss the people who worked so hard at the beginning, but are sadly no longer with us. Despite their absence, their important contributions and convictions are still felt and appreciated. Helping to start UUCV and being a part of our growth has been an honor.



### **The Leap of Faith**

Diane Reed and Bruce Henrickson

Although it's been ten years since UUCV was chartered, it's actually been fourteen years since its beginnings in the summer of 1994. From those summer afternoon services we evolved into a small group in search of a UU presence in the Carlisle area. Looking back, the leap of faith that we took to form a new congregation was quite extraordinary. Although it seemed almost organic at the time, in retrospect it was extremely gutsy.

You may have heard about the famous kitchen table meeting of the founders at the Reed-Henrickson house with the Joseph Priestley District Executive where we swallowed hard and decided to go for it ("it" being a full service congregation). Looking at today's congregation of 150+ in a wonderful home in Boiling Springs, it is hard to believe that UUCV has come so far. If you haven't already done so, you should read the history of the congregation on the Web site

But it wasn't easy. After the fact, we discovered that we were a bit of a guinea pig for the district and the UUA. Although they provided valuable assistance throughout the process of forming a new congregation, some of their assumptions about financial support from other congregations were optimistic at best. It was a bit like discovering that your parents are not perfect — you love them anyway, but you learn not to believe everything they say. And they did provide a grant to bring Duane and Judy here as our co-ministers, a wonderful gift to the congregation of dedicated professionals who have helped us grow and blossom.

In the process we also learned about the hard work of forming a congregation—organizing services, putting out a newsletter, establishing a viable religious education program, conducting canvasses, and the myriad details that constitute a successful congregation. Volunteer burnout was common, but we were also able to celebrate our many successes.

The founders of this congregation understood and subscribed to the concept that this congregation was founded to be given away to future generations. And the small circle of people who joined hands and brought this congregation to life were committed to opening that circle and making it even wider as UUCV grew. As you move forward through the next decade and beyond, please keep these founding principles in mind. Give the gift of UUCV to others, and ask them to join your ever-widening circle.



### **UUCV Memoir**

Ellen Buller

My first visit to UUCV was on the spur of the moment 10+ years ago. I was enjoying my usual Sunday morning ritual of browsing through the newspaper while enjoying numerous cups of tea. An article on the front page of the religion section caught my eye. It seems that a recently formed Unitarian Universalist congregation was meeting in one of the Dickinson College buildings, and that very morning they were welcoming their first ministers, a married couple who were going to share the ministry.

I had not been a regular church-goer since early childhood, and I had never attended a UU service. The only time I had seen a UU minister in action was at a friend's wedding when the minister's prayer included a plea for sexual fulfillment. I was impressed with the practicality and relevance, and that memory, coupled with the tantalizing description of the congregation and its ministers, whetted my curiosity. I had a quick shower, put my tea in a travel mug, and headed for Carlisle.

I was hooked after my first visit. I loved the intellectual stimulation, the warm acceptance, and the emphasis on stewardship and morality.

UUCV has become a very important part of my life and I look forward to many more years of spiritual growth in this wonderful community.

## One Charter Member's Memories

Dee Deroche

The early days of UUCV in formation come back to me as a time of wishing and hoping, and planning and scheming. We were so excited to be creating a congregation in the “wilderness,” so thrilled by the prospects, and so needy!

Some of my favorite memories are:

- a Building Your Own Theology class with Josh and Linda Rubin, Nancy Quain, and others... we really extended the sessions, getting to know each other through sharing our spiritual stories;
- the mellow, golden light in our gathering space upstairs in Denny Hall;
- and our often foolish struggles to neutralize the words of hymns to avoid offending anyone during services.
- Denny Hall was not conducive to casting the circle, yet the several Solstice and Yule services created there were beautiful and effective.
- The Pitt Street offices were an improvement over home meetings. Cramming the whole choir around the piano for practices was fun.
- I remember debating the pros and cons of renting storefront space in a mall to encourage growth, and the joy of receiving Chalice Lighter grants that helped us prosper.
- Attending GA in Rochester with Diane Reed and our then new ministers was exciting. I was thrilled to carry the UUCV banner in the opening parade where we were recognized as a new congregation.

Seeing how this cherished congregation has grown in numbers and programs is a fresh joy each time I return. And I love how it still feels like home.

Stay strong and welcoming.



## **A Remembrance**

Bob Johnsen

Congratulations on the 10th Anniversary of the Unitarian Universalists of the Cumberland Valley. You have come so wonderfully far since my first meeting with the group of leaders that would organize the new congregation. That was in the winter of 1995-96. Pat Carol, JPD District Executive at that time, and I arrived together at the home of Bruce Henrickson and Diane Reed. I remember it well because there was considerable snow on the ground and Diane or Bruce had cleared a spot for us and marked it with an old chair and our names. Talk about welcoming! ☺

There were about ten leaders present and they told us their story. Many of them had been members at Harrisburg but that was too far to travel on a weekly basis. They had been holding monthly worship services at the farm house of one of the families. They had been providing these worship services to the best of their ability for about a year.

Pat and I told the story of the new “fast start” Sugarloaf Congregation and its vision of a full service congregation with a full time minister in one year and over 150 members within five years. We explained the resources available from the UUA and JPD for pursuing that particular strategy.

While some folks were pleased with what they had accomplished, and enjoyed the intimacy of their group, they were getting tired. Some had concerns about giving up leading worship to a minister. Pat and I explained the role of a minister in a full service church and in Sunday worship. The hour was getting late.

At some point Pat mentioned that they would not have to continue to “play church” (provide quality worship on their own). There was this almost audible sigh of relief. It was obvious that most folks were on the verge of burn-out and that the option of professional ministry and the programs that a full service church could provide sparked their imagination and enthusiasm.

The conversation shifted to “what do we do now?” This was a critical turning point in the development of a new Unitarian Universalist congregation in the Cumberland Valley. Diane Reed and Matt Ruby volunteered to attend the next UUA five-day training for New Congregation Organizers. Matt and Diane came back with a suggested

organizing plan and a process to: 1) include those interested in organizing the new congregation in a Steering Committee, and 2) involve those interested in monthly worship services to organize them for the folks that had been gathered. The Steering Committee applied for and received a Chalice Lighter grant to hire a part-time New Congregation Organizer. I was privileged to be hired and to accumulate many more rich remembrances.



## **I Remember**

Marilyn Durr

I remember... the first meeting of Carlisle-Shippensburg area members of UCH, on a beautiful summer Sunday afternoon in '94 at the Ruby-Baird farm... the once-a-month services-with-potluck at the Quaker Meeting House — me playing the "twangy" piano for singing... meeting Duane and Judy there after Diane Reed found them in California.

I remember sitting at the long desks at Denny Hall with the sun coming in the back windows, and after the service the din of the voices in the coffee room down the hall... painting the window frames of the temporary church office on Pitt Street... folks lugging supplies between Denny and the office. Eventually it was 1998 and we were a church; ninety of us signed the charter. The next year we moved to our own building.

Sometime during those early days, there was a meeting in a lecture hall at Dickinson's Weiss Center. It was announced in the newspapers beforehand that Scott Alexander, at that time the minister of the UUA Church of the Larger Fellowship, would be speaking and those interested in the idea of a UU church in Carlisle were invited. I'm not sure how many were there, but I remember it was a large group. And many who were there became UUCVers.

Having our own church, right here in Carlisle... not having to drive 45 minutes to Harrisburg and back every Sunday... being able to go to evening events with our UUCV friends in our own area was, and still is, such a luxury. The move to our own building in Boiling Springs was "the icing on the cake." The best part, of course, is getting together for worship and fellowship with folks who, because they share our views on the important things in life, are there because they, too, want that same experience.

## **Witness Purpose-Driven Spirituality**

Jeanine Goodwin

Over ten years ago sunlight filtering through the stained-glass windows on the third floor of Denny Hall bathed a congregation of folks with pale puddles of colored light. I am sure there were as many spiritual and non-spiritual backgrounds present as the colors tinting their faces. Most likely, not one could recite a common creed with another, but this band of brothers and sisters had a mission to create a vehicle through which they could serve the community and worship together with open minds and hearts. We gathered together in that varied light with a common interest to promote liberal religion in Cumberland County and a goal of finding a permanent place to call home.

Our troop found and moved to the meeting house in Boiling Springs where people of so many different beliefs, nationalities and orientations stood shoulder to shoulder. We worshipped, scrubbed, coffeed, donated, debated, painted, met, auctioned, and sang our way into being. We brought out the worst and best in one another, and uncovered talents and capacities for patience, tolerance and love we didn't know we had.

It hasn't necessarily been the last stop. While many have come to and found a home, there are those of us for whom UUCV provided a jumping off point, a place where we could make the transition from interior spiritual wastelands and frustrating traditions to new spiritual expression, experience and freedom. As a cradle Episcopalian who now can't get through that denomination's creed, I found at UUCV a warm and challenging community of people and a level of intellectual discourse that helped me explore what really was. Fed and powered by the solid support of that container, I passed through trials, and gained confidence plus priceless social experience and progressed to my next place of spiritual being. Because of this supportive trait, UUCV's membership, membership being “the church” — then, now, and those to come — was, is, and always will be with me.



## **Before There Was UUCV**

Kit Franklin

Alan and I moved to Central PA in January of 1996. We had not been to a Unitarian Universalist church for many years, but when we discovered Lila Phipps and Eunice (Chappie) Chapman, UUs here at Green Ridge Village, my interest was renewed.

Most weeks they took turns driving to the Unitarian Church of Harrisburg, and I joined them. At that time there was a movement at UCH to begin a group in the Carlisle area, and Lila and Chappie supported that idea. It became increasingly important to me, as Lila's vision deteriorated from macular degeneration, but she insisted on her turn at driving. Chappie and I used to conspire to think up reasons why one of us had to drive instead, but that didn't always work.

Even when we were meeting as UUCV in Denny Hall, Lila had to have her turn driving. For me, the epitome of this indomitable little woman was Lila pulling out in front of a car one Sunday after church. The young driver honked and Lila calmly looked into her rearview mirror and said, "Too bad. You're stuck behind a little old lady!"

As the tiny band of UUs got more serious and started meeting monthly in the Friends Meetinghouse, Lila, Chappie and I leaned on a reluctant Alan to join the Steering Committee to give birth to the Unitarian Universalists of the Cumberland Valley. At organizational meetings, the walls of the Friends Meetinghouse were plastered with newsprint covered with demographic information about the Cumberland Valley — demographics that held promise of success for liberal religion in the area.

And here we are, ten years later with over 150 members and many friends. Lila and Chappie are gone now, but did live to become charter members of our local offshoot of UCH. What a relief that the little old ladies of Green Ridge Village no longer had to drive I-81 to Harrisburg every Sunday!



## **Nostalgia**

Alan Franklin

Early in the process by which we, a loosely gathered fellowship, went on to become UUCV, a Steering Committee was formed, and I became a member and took on the task of generating a Social Action program.

Support for Project Share was one of our early projects, as was taking part in the Pitt Street Pride cleanup effort around a house that had recently been renovated for a low-income family.

Another theme for a while was an effort to reach out in a cooperative way to the congregation at Shiloh Baptist, a black church on North Pitt Street, not far from our temporary quarters at the time at the

Friends Meeting House. Some of us attended at least one service at Shiloh, and their choir joined us to sing at one of ours. We tried to organize joint Christmas caroling in the neighborhood around the Friends Meeting with this congregation. The first such attempt was greeted with an ice and snow storm that made travel difficult, and only a few from Shiloh managed to join us at the Friends. But we sang and had cookies, and Matt Ruby organized the gathered children into a little choir singing carols together. I'll never forget Matt with those kids; he had them with eyes only for him, and singing their hearts out.

We tried again for joint caroling with Shiloh for a year or two, but found no real interest in the project. Finally, in the last year or so, we just went out by ourselves, and reaped the reward of people coming out of their houses with plates of cookies, or standing in their doorways to listen, and to applaud when we moved on. Some even came out and joined us as we walked the streets, singing. I feel nostalgic about that caroling, and wish we could do something like that again.



### **Early Volunteers**

Carole Scott DeWall (and Tom DeWall)

As a resident of Carlisle and member of UCH in the early 90s, I often had thought how wonderful it would be to have a UU congregation in my own community. The 45-minute drive was long and I yearned to encounter UU friends in my own neighborhood. Although there was just a handful of us currently attending UCH, I just *knew* there were many dozens more that would find our religious affiliation just perfect for them – if a UU church was nearby.

This view was soon shared by many after a few of us on the western fringe began meeting periodically on Sunday afternoons for wonderful UU services led by Jan Ruby and her then-husband Barclay Baird at their farm. The site was gorgeous and the services very meaningful, so much so that the experience led to both many more attendees, and the formation of a core group to actually establish a UU fellowship. Diane Reed and a few determined others worked tirelessly through the UUA to pave the way for this goal.

I was the UCH board liaison for the “Carlisle Group,” and being unashamedly biased as to the benefit of establishing a nearby congregation, initially found it difficult that so many had reservations about it. (Tom, as the UCH board president, appropriately remained neutral on the subject.) I did understand that UCH would lose some

members to the new location, but the denomination would *certainly* benefit in the long run. (UUCV could relate to this concern when our “child,” the Gettysburg Group, was born.) Eventually, we were supported by UCH financially and in numerous other ways, which has helped pave the way for an expanded UU presence in Central PA.

Tom and I began our volunteer work with UUCV when we agreed to become the co-chairs for Finance and Fundraising. He’d concentrate on budget issues and I on the fundraising, as we both had extensive leadership experience on these at UCH. Together we decided to be the “financial missionaries,” spreading the word of *making and keeping budgets at UU congregations*. Our initial committee was just Duane Fickeisen, Jim Coolson (president) and John Jacobsen (treasurer) and us. Since there was too little room and not enough chairs in the Pitt Street office, we five met outside until it got too dark. Another advantage of being outdoors was that the cockroaches were *inside*, especially in the bathroom, and they were *quite large*!

Diane Reed and her husband Bruce organized the first auction at the UCC church, and we followed up with a few of our own, including the first one in our new building. Our goal was to establish the successful UCH system while incorporating new ideas to suit our young congregation. With the early support of the other seasoned UUs and the willingness of new UUs to join in, the auctions have grown into the success they are today.

Similarly, together we introduced UCH budget planning, canvass and capital campaign processes, including conducting canvass training, finding that educating our growing congregation as to “the UU way” was sometimes a bit challenging. (Some new attendees were surprised, for example, that we needed to have a canvass *every* year.) Soon, though, many new financial leaders rose from our growing membership, and it’s been wonderful to see the evolving improvements during this first decade of UUCV’s formal existence. We’re pleased to have had the opportunity to contribute.



### **A Dream in Our Hearts and Minds**

Ron and Karen Nickerson

We remember UUCV when it was just a dream in the hearts and minds of a small group of dedicated UU’s who had grown weary of the long commute to Harrisburg. As that dream took shape, extraordinary things began to happen.

First there were beautiful informal gatherings at the Ruby-Baird farm, which in turn led to more structured lay led services at the Carlisle Quaker Meeting House on Sunday afternoons followed by delicious pot luck suppers. As participation grew, meetings were held, a steering committee was formed, and Bob Johnsen, a UU consultant, came aboard to guide us as we continued our journey with the leadership of Matt Ruby and Diane Reed. Then the notion that perhaps we could actually become a full service congregation gradually surfaced and with a gigantic leap of faith we plunged forward with a new purpose. Intense excitement and anticipation grew as we began the process of finding a minister who would share our dreams of firmly planting our liberal faith right in the middle of Cumberland Valley.

Much to our delight and amazement we were matched with not one but two ministers, Duane and Judy, who doubled our good fortune. As we plunged forward with renewed vigor, we discovered the wonders of Denny Hall at Dickinson College which not only had a beautiful space complete with stained glass for our services but rooms for RE and coffee hour. Despite the fact we had to carry numerous bulky containers filled with essentials in and out of the building every Sunday, we knew it was well worth it. Even though we called every member of the Harrisburg Church who lived on the West Shore to join us for our first Denny Hall service complete with our new ministers in August of 1997, we had no idea how many would come. We were thrilled when almost one hundred people showed up.

As we gathered together for our Charter Sunday on March 15th, 1998, at the First United Church of Christ in Carlisle, we knew we had been extraordinarily fortunate to have so much energy, enthusiasm, support and dedication from so many to help make our dream come true. Bob Johnsen confirmed that he knew we could succeed even before we did! And as everyone signed the membership book as charter members, we sensed that we had accomplished something that would live on long after we were gone and that was good.

We retired and moved to Cape Cod in the fall of 1998 after living in the Boiling Springs area for over 20 years. We often thought how great it would be if only the Methodist Church were a UU church. It was truly ironic that just after we left, our wistful thinking become a reality.



## **I Still Remember**

Jeanne Neylon

I still remember my very first time at UUCV. We had been receiving the newsletter for a while, and we were interested in what they were doing. Our daughter Linda kept saying we should visit. So finally, we did. It was the first Sunday that they met in Denny Hall. It had been so long since we had had a UU Church close by to attend that when we walked in and were so warmly greeted by Ron and Karen Nickerson, I felt I was home. Everyone was so friendly and welcoming.

One of my memories from when Judy and Duane became the ministers is of Judy trying to teach us all a round, or trying to get us to sing the hymns faster by “windmilling” her arms. Poor Judy! We were a challenging group!



## **My Personal Recollections About Early UUCV**

Janet Spencer

I first attended UU's in Denny Hall, beginning in late 1997, having attended Carlisle Quaker Meeting for four years, but not becoming a member. Very soon I saw that UU's had more fun. I loved the light and color, and the curved tiers of seats looking down to the front of the room where the speakers were.

At first it was hard to get used to all the talking, having grown used to an hour of mostly silence on Sunday mornings. But it was a relief to accommodate myself to the democratic process within the UU group, rather than the Quaker practice of consensus for every decision, which rendered decision-making very slow and tended to build up factions around issues from building arrangements to gay marriage. It was a great relief to take a vote and then live with the outcome.

To have my experience honored in Denny Hall was such a relief. I had come from a contentious Meeting where there was serious dispute between conservative and liberal factions, and where my liberal orientation amounted to a rebellion.

I could feel my body and spirit relax and expand as I took in this new reality, the UU community. Within this community I could actually love every person without having to defend myself. To erase divisions imposed by dividing those acceptable from those not acceptable enabled me to integrate my own self into a new place of peace and happiness and

effectiveness in the world. I signed the membership book after only four Sundays.

Judy and Duane appeared in our midst shortly thereafter, reeled in from California by Diane Reed's magic fishing rod. We were on our way! The move to Boiling Springs was the big leap, made on faith that the congregation could meet a mortgage and build up membership and become an important presence in the community. Ten years later we have shown this to have been a sound decision worthy of our best efforts.



### **It Was a Really Good Time**

Ann Sheehan

I remember hearing from someone — maybe Diane Reed — about a gathering at Jan Ruby's farm late on a Sunday afternoon. So I went and met lots of folks I already knew plus people I wanted to know better.

There was a lay led sermon, followed by discussion, questions and answers, and then — inevitably — followed by food. Everyone brought something to share. It was a really good time.

These Sunday afternoon gatherings continued monthly through the spring, summer and into the fall. Of which year I'm not sure — maybe '95, '96.

When the ground wasn't wet, Dale's wheel chair navigated the terrain really well. Because there was food involved and mom was otherwise not going to cook, and because it was in the afternoon, my son Jonathan often joined in the events.

Diane and others began contact with the UUA about the steps needed to become an official UU fellowship, congregation, whatever.

I was not involved in the official planning but the next significant event I remember is when Diane got back from a trip to San Francisco and reported she'd met the ministers who would be joining us in an official UU way. That event elicited great excitement.

We began meeting at the Quaker meeting house... again on Sunday afternoons, again followed by great food. And there began budget discussions. I think it may have been the first pledge drive. At one pledge drive meeting in the Quaker Meeting House, someone stood up and recounted how she discovered a UU congregation when she worked in the deep South — maybe Louisiana or Mississippi. She

described how that discovery saved her spiritual, not to mention, social life. She asked “How would you feel if a UU group was not available here?”

And so I made my first pledge to a faith based community (unless one counts the Democratic party in Cumberland County). I'm really glad UUCV is here for this community.



## **Coming Home At Last**

Geneva Politzer

When we took sanctuary on the lawn at the Ruby-Baird farm for that first pre-UUCV service [12?] years ago, I knew I had at last come home. Home to a place where I truly felt held in love, where kindred spirits complemented and challenged mine. Home to a place where I wasn't judged by my politics, problems, or pledge. Home, to the family of my choosing.

I remember reading poetry to my lifelong friend Dorlyn in a service celebrating love on Valentine's Day at the Quaker meeting house. Ten years later my family of choice held me in love as I grieved losing her to cancer.

I remember falling in love with ministerial candidates Judy and Duane upon first meeting over pasta at Rillos—UUCV's “first supper.” Surely we were called together not only to question, but to answer “yes” to life, truth, and love. That love was destined to deepen in passing years — through adversity, conflict, growth, prayer, poetry, pain, philosophy, theology, laughter and tears, tears, tears — the arms that never failed to hold me in love, even or perhaps especially when I fell short of the mark.

I remember an astonishing inner encounter as Duane read Rilke in the amber light of Denny Hall's soaring stained glass — that great “aha” pouring forth to reshape my soul.

Judy's plea within those walls to show up, pay attention, tell the truth, and detach from the outcome sounded a life-altering faith breakthrough.

I remember lugging RE supplies up three flights every Sunday; sitting cross-legged on the floor of the makeshift nursery, playing with preschoolers Harry and Hannah and Alex and Michael, and other UUCV babes now entering young adulthood. I remember the ongoing challenge of creating a meaningful curriculum for an age group spanning a decade.

I remember gathering for coffee in a classroom next door with Matt and Kathy, Diane and Bruce, Mary and Ed, and other founding members whose presence remains despite their departures.

I remember anxious discussions on housing our growing family — and a sense of wonder when our meeting house appeared. Were we ready for this mammoth step? Would we make a difference in a wounded world? Would we be welcomed or shunned? The sheer space looked cavernous against our temporary shelters. Would we fill it in a decade?

Indeed we did! With families and friends old and new, with music, celestial music! With worship associates, social action, support groups, lay ministry, committees and more committees. Here we have gathered side by side in a circle of kinship that began a decade ago with a call to step inside.



**UU in Some Early Years — Just a Few Records**  
**From My Sketchy Journal**  
Mary McCarthy

**1996**

**Fri., Jan. 12:** It snowed all day, from about 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., with a little time off around 5. This on top of all the snow on the ground from the last time!

Called Marilyn D, who is much better but still not completely well. She said it will take the trip to Florida to cure her.

Promised to send me a Unitarian booklet. Needless to say, I didn't go anywhere today.

**1998**

**Sun., Aug. 9:** Back to church after three or four weeks of vacation. It does feel like home. All the people there are likable, thoughtful, intelligent. The sermon, by Judy, was about early Unitarian women ministers and the awful way they were treated by the male hierarchy. But at least those males, or their successors, finally came round.

**2001**

**Tues., Sept. 11:** The Day of the World Trade Center

I got a call on a telephone tree from Doug Spencer — prayer meeting at 7:30 at UU. So I got a ride with Margaret and we went. It was very quiet and contemplative, with a chance for anyone there who had

something to say to say it. The most interesting thing was that Ann Sheehan knew the woman who called from the plane rest room on her cell phone to say they were being hi-jacked. I wanted to say that perhaps we might help prevent these things by not acting so arrogant, but nobody wanted to hear that then.

**Fri., Sept. 14:** In eve., to UU for prayer meeting about the disaster. Think Marg drove.

**Sun., Sept. 23:** Marilyn came at 9:30, took me to UU and brought me home. Was this the day I ordered the beads and pendant from Char for Helen? (yes) Time between that and the evening meeting of Serious Stuff, I spent mostly finishing reading the book, *Tales of the Dervishes*, by Idries Shah. The Sufis, which is what the Dervishes are, are Moslems, but the mystical division — often at odds with the more organized religion. The stories are charming and sometimes funny, often enigmatic. They are supposed to have deeper meanings than you see on the surface, but I don't think I discovered those meanings, and nobody else mentioned discovering any.

We got off on Sept. 11, which everybody does these days, no matter what the reason for the meeting. I should take notes because things go out of my head so fast, I don't remember any particular comment I made or anybody else made, though it was all interesting.

The meeting was at Dolly's, and Dan Cozort gave me a ride.

**Sat., Nov. 17:** Out for cookies from A la Tarte for meeting of UU Writers, who came here at 1:00. Susan Helm, Joan Campbell, Char Klein — good meeting. I served A la Tarte cookies, decaf, and juice. During the night I got up to see the meteor shower. Saw one little blip, but nothing else. Decided my night vision just wasn't up to it, and went inside.



## Fond Remembrances

Linda Lentz

It is hard to believe that 10 years have passed. We have such fond remembrances of meeting in the lovely building on Dickinson's campus. Despite that it was not our own church home, we had many meaningful services there. Christmas was an especially pretty time. All the stained glass and wood paneling made it seem very much like a Dickens kind of setting.

Many Unitarian and Universalist ministers shared their talents and their opinions with us during that time. It was truly a time of exploring and risking. Coffee hour down the hall was always crowded but intimate. The big windows all around the room let in the most beautiful light and seemed to encourage a sense of community and well being. It was during that time that Bob and I made friendships that will be lifelong.

We remember the excitement when Judy and Duane joined our congregation. We gobbled them up like a wonderful meal. The years of variety were wearing thin as we were looking for more constancy. With them, we knew we were solid and would go forward with a new mission — not just becoming but now creating a new way of being. We both remember their first sermons. What wonderful images and how truly authentic and sharing they were of their lives and their paths to this place.

And, then the excitement of moving into our own church home in Boiling Springs. At first, it was hard to give up the security of those hallowed halls, but it quickly proved to be just as much of a “hug” as Dickinson had been. The concerts, the pledge dinners, the auctions, the meetings, the classes, the celebrations all started to make this new place a home. And, now a birthday — 10 years! People have come and gone from the UUCV and many more will come and go, but it will always be a part of who they are and their past stories and beliefs.



### **This — a *Church*?**

Leslie Carr

I saw an ad in the Sentinel. Unitarian Universalists. I did not know what it meant and did not look it up. I just appeared on that first Sunday at Denny Hall, herding my four young children up the steps. We were all unchurched, unindoctrinated and rather proudly so. Still, Mom, a spiritual seeker, wanted something more for the kids. Some early attention to the biggest questions, some looking *outward*, some religious education so that we could understand our neighbors just a little bit better. Unitarian Universalists. If I could remember the content of that ad that drew me to Denny Hall, I'd publish it in four newspapers tomorrow.

Light poured into the room from tall windows. People were talking and laughing. The service began in reverence and joy. Still I was suspicious — who or what was being revered? Was I going to have to steal out of there with my impressionable children? People were smiling,

offering remarks, clapping. Clapping? What kind of church was this? Rilke was quoted. Then Mary Oliver. This was *church*? We were asked to think, to question, to listen to one another. The sermon titles for the weeks to come were nothing less than intriguing: “Can I Believe Anything I Want?” and “Don’t Overload Your Backpack.”

Two gay women rose, strolled across the front of the room strumming guitars and sang “Give Yourself to Love,” an old song by Kate Wolf. The church of WHAT? I was getting excited; this was like nothing I knew, nothing I had even heard about. These gathered people seemed reasonable, they seemed moved, they seemed curious. Duane and Judy led the service. There was a current of hope and brightness underlying the whole enterprise. Also — humor, a sanctioned bewilderment, and this talk of “community.” This — a *church*? A *community*? This was something to ponder.

And ponder I did.

A fragment of closing words from those first Denny Hall days:

.... Let there be a season  
when holiness is heard, and  
the splendor of living is revealed.  
Stunned to stillness by beauty  
we remember who we are and why we are here.  
There are inexplicable mysteries.

We are not alone.  
In the universe there moves a Wild One  
whose gestures alter Earth’s axis  
toward love...

(by Rebecca Parker)

Is it Sunday yet?