

A History of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Phoenix 1947 – 2017



compiled by
Charlotte Carl-Mitchell
2017

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Editor's note

This history draws from the earlier history written by Frances Bishop, from sermons preached by Fritz Hudson during his ministry at UUCP, from documents in the congregation's archive and collected by Ellie Murphy, articles published in local newspapers and material from the UUA archive at Harvard University.

The Beginning

In the era just following World War II, the American Unitarian Association undertook what it called "A Unitarian Advance." At that point Unitarian churches could be found in only 325 towns in the country, heavily concentrated in the Northeast, with just a few in the Midwest and on the West coast.

The denomination's minister-at-large at that time was the Reverend Lon Ray Call. Trained as a Baptist, Call entered the Unitarian ministry in 1923 and served churches in Louisville, Kentucky; New York City, and Braintree, Massachusetts before entering denominational work in 1933 and becoming minister-at-large in 1941. During the decade he served in that position, he personally founded thirteen churches. The fellowship program he conceived and initiated in 1947 resulted in the formation of 216 lay-led religious societies in its first decade.



Lon Ray Call and Isabelle Johnson

The First Unitarian Church of Phoenix arose out a relationship between Rev. Call and a woman he had first met when both lived in the Midwest, Isabelle Johnson. She had moved from Minnesota to Phoenix in 1943. In 1946, Rev. Call and Mrs. Johnson corresponded to explore whether a Unitarian Church could be founded in Phoenix. Late in that year, Mrs. Johnson placed a news item in a local newspaper announcing the formation of a Unitarian Church and inviting interested persons to phone or write her for further information.

Thirty seven people attended the organizational meeting. It was agreed that Rev. Call would return after the holidays to begin holding services at the Kenilworth School, on Fifth Avenue between Moreland and Culver streets, for an initial period of three months. If after that initial period, fifty families stood ready to join the church, the AUA would commit funds to assist the group to employ a full-time minister.

During 1946, we have been faced with two unprecedented overall wage increases, both imposed under direct governmental sanction."

Unitarians Plan Meeting

The Rev. Lon Ray Call, representative of the American Unitarian Association, will arrive here today to investigate the possibility of establishing a Unitarian church in Phoenix.

Mrs. Isabelle Johnson, is in

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Friday, December 20, 1946

THE STATE'S GREATEST NEWSPAPER

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charge of the arrangements for the visit.

The Rev. Mr. Call will speak at a meeting scheduled for 7:30 p. m. Sunday at the Arizona School of Business Administration, 1846 East Roosevelt street. Residents of the valley interested in the proposed church are invited to attend.

Mr. Call is a minister-at-large

for the Unitarian churches in this country and Canada under the department of Unitarian extension and maintenance of the association. He has held this position since 1941, during which time he has been largely responsible for organizing five Unitarian churches. He also has served during that time as pro tem minister in Duluth,

Spokane, Des Moines and Manchester, N. H.

Mr. Call has a distinguished record in the Unitarian fellowship, having been a member of the association's board of directors and a former vice-president of both the Unitarian Fellowship for Social Justice and the American Human-

ist Association. For six years he was executive secretary of the Western Unitarian Conference with headquarters in Chicago.

During their stay here Mr. and Mrs. Call will be guests of Mrs. Johnson and her daughter, Mrs. Frances Locke, at their home, 1110 West McDowell street.

An article in The Arizona Republic, published Friday, December 20, 1946, announced that a meeting would take place at the Arizona School of Business Administration on East Roosevelt to discuss the creation of a Unitarian church in Phoenix.

In what a newspaper article said was "probably the first Unitarian church service in the state of Arizona" was held at Kenilworth School on Sunday, January 19, 1947. Adult services were held in the school auditorium. Children's programs were held out on the playground: kindergartners in the sandbox, first and second graders on the steps of the fire escape, third and fourth graders on the baseball bleachers. Petitions were circulated at each service for people to request the AUA. to fund the founding of a church. Sixty-six signed those petitions. On Sunday March 2, the membership book of the church was opened for signatures, and on that day, 68 people signed their names in alphabetical order. By June of that year, when Rev. Call moved onto his next challenge 116 people had entered their names.



Sunday services and church school were held at Kenilworth School beginning early in January and on March 2, 1947 the new congregation incorporated as the First Unitarian Church of Phoenix with 57 families as contributing members.

In March 1947, the Rev. Laurence Plank was called to be the first settled minister of the new church. He had served the First Unitarian Church of St. Louis from 1936 to 1945, and before that the First Unitarian Church of Omaha, Nebraska. According to UUA records, he had also served churches in Duluth, Minnesota; Dayton, Ohio and Rochester, New York. Mr. Plank was instrumental in establishing a Sunday evening discussion group at the YWCA. This was sponsored by the church, but was non-denominational and completely inter-racial. These meetings may have influenced the Arizona legislature by constitutional amendment to desegregate Arizona Schools. An ad for his first sermon as permanent minister stated "the church stands for character, freedom and fellowship. Religious liberals are invited to join."

Unitarians Name Pastor

The Rev. Laurance R. Plank, whose Unitarian pastorates have included some of the larger churches of that denomination in Rochester, N. Y., Omaha, Neb., and St. Louis, Mo., was unanimously elected to the pastorate of the Unitarian Church of Phoenix at a meeting yesterday at which the church itself was organized.

The meeting was in the auditorium of Kenilworth School, being used by the church for the time being as the site of its Sunday morning services.

The Rev. Mr. Plank will assume the duties of his new post in April.

Preliminary efforts that have been made during the past two months under the leadership of the Rev. Lon Ray Call of Boston, representative of the American Unitarian Association, resulted in a charter membership enrollment of representatives of 57 valley families.

The Rev. Delos O'Brian, San Francisco, representative of the Unitarian Association on the Pacific coast, spoke at yesterday's meeting and read greetings from denominational officials and from the Rev. Charles A. Kendall, pastor of the Central Methodist Church.

Mrs. Francis J. Moors, of King's Chapel, Boston, also spoke, and brought greetings from the oldest Unitarian church in America to the youngest.

Officers and trustees elected yesterday are: Milton J. Shear, president; Mrs. Isabelle Johnson, secretary; W. L. Straszer, treasurer, and William B. Bishop, Marian Comings, Mrs. David S. Klauder, jr., H. A. Sines, Dwight L. Solomon and James I. Stewart, trustees.

An article published in the Arizona Republic on March 3, 1947 announced Plank as pastor.

The early days were marked by enthusiasm. Committees were formed and the Women's Alliance was organized. A church bulletin was born but not christened until several months later. A church group was on the desert enjoying a picnic, embellished by one of our breath-taking sunsets with row after row of purple mountains in the background. The bulletin was under discussion and suddenly someone, looking at the beautiful sunset, said: "The bulletin should be called 'Horizons'". Thus, Horizons was formally christened.



The first edition of Horizons in 1948

Mrs. Agnes Ericson wrote of Plank in 1966, "He was an eloquent speaker" and Frances Bishop recorded in 1974, "He attracted a large number of people." Sixty nine people joined the church during Plank's time. But Frances went on to say, "Mr. Plank's major fault was that he was too great as a pulpit speaker. He attracted large numbers of people: some were true Unitarians and some were only "Plankites". When Mr. Plank resigned in the spring of 1949 to devote his time to writing, many of his admirers lost interest in the church.



UNITARIAN

A special Easter Service for Religious Liberals of all backgrounds will be held Sunday morning at 11 in the Kenilworth School Auditorium, 1210 N. Fifth Ave.

The minister, Laurance Robbins Plank, will preach on

**"Life,
The Only Victor"**

Sunday School meets at 10:30 This church stands for character, freedom and fellowship. It is a meeting place for inclusively progressive minds. You are invited to participate in this distinctive service of religious liberalism.

UNITARIAN

**A Fellowship of Free
Minds and the Creative
Spirit**

Sunday Morning Service at 11
Sermon by the Minister,
Laurance R. Plank

**MODERN SCIENCE and
THE MYSTIC WAY**

**Kenilworth School
Auditorium
1210 North Fifth Avenue**

UNITARIAN

**A Fellowship of Free
Minds and the Creative
Spirit**

Sunday Morning Service at 11
Sermon by the Minister,
Laurance R. Plank

**"Man's Basic Question
and Answer"**

**Kenilworth School
Auditorium**

Supervised Program for
Children During Church Service
Sunday School 10:30 A. M.
1210 North Fifth Avenue

Laurance R. Plank; 1947 newspaper ads with his sermon titles



Unitarians Get New Minister



JOHN K. FINDLY

John K. Findly is the newly-chosen minister of the Unitarian Church of Phoenix and arrived at his new parish last week.

Mr. Findly is married and has a six-year-old daughter, Sally. His home will be at 204 West Turney avenue.

The minister resigned as director of home projects for the American Unitarian Association to accept the Phoenix pulpit.



Pastor Installed

The Rev. John K. Findly, left, was formally installed as pastor of Unitarian Church of Phoenix this week after 1½ years service with the congregation. He is shown with the Rev. Peter H. Samson, pastor of First Unitarian Church of San Diego, who gave the charge to the minister.—(Republic Staff Photo)

John K. Findly; Findly's 1949 arrival and 1951 installation

There was a controversy at the time between Theists and Humanists in the AUA. The Phoenix church had been predominately a theistic church. In the fall of 1949, Mr. John Findly was called as minister. He had served churches in Carlisle, Massachusetts and Bangor Maine, but before coming to Phoenix had been Assistant Director of the Unitarian Service Committee. In theology and social philosophy, Rev. Findly's liberal humanism presented a contrast to Lawrence Plank's theistic conservatism. He spoke often on social issues of the day and at first the church grew under his leadership. Frances Bishop estimated its membership in that first year at 135 families. Yet in the summer of 1950, while he was attending a Unitarian summer camp, Findley joined other area Unitarians in signing a letter to President Truman protesting U.S. intervention in Korea. Some of the signers of that letter were avowed communists, and once Findley's action became broadly known among his home congregation the tiny church became embroiled in the early days of the Red Scare. Several members, dubbed "the class of 1950" resigned their membership. At least one member lost his job by virtue of his membership in this purported "communist front organization."

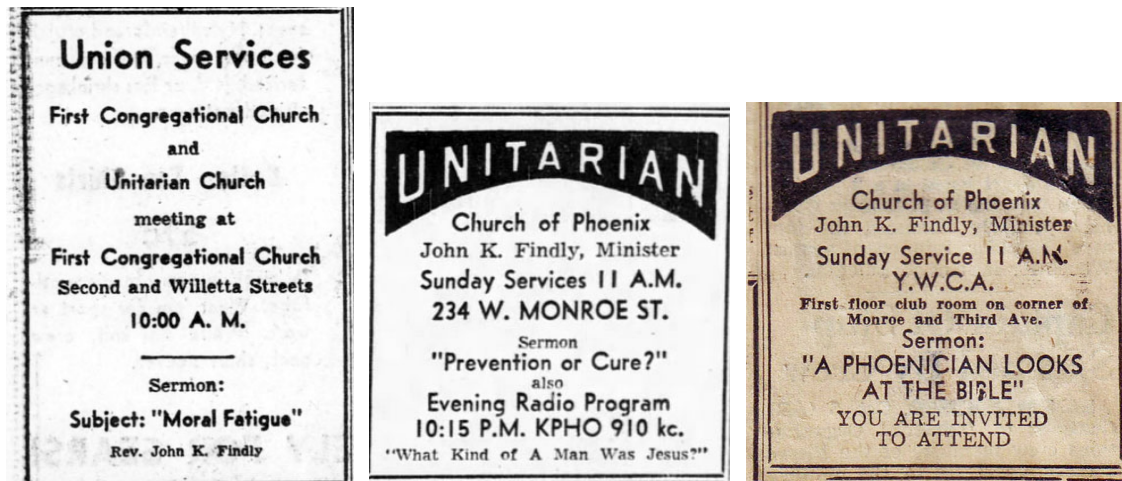
<p>UNITARIAN</p> <p>CHURCH OF PHOENIX</p> <p>John K. Findly, Minister</p> <p>Services at 11 o'clock Sunday morning at Kenilworth School, 1210 North Fifth Avenue.</p> <p>Mr. Findly's Thanksgiving Message</p> <p>"And Forget Not Our Benefits"</p> <p>Supervised play for children over four years of age.</p>	<p>UNITARIAN</p> <p>CHURCH OF PHOENIX</p> <p>John K. Findly, Minister</p> <p>Sunday Service 11 A. M. at New Location</p> <p>Valley Garden Center 1809 N. 15th Ave.</p> <p>Sermon Subject: "Channing—America's Pioneer in Liberal Religion"</p> <p>Supervised play for children over four years of age.</p>
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Ads for services in November and December 1949 showing the changing locations from Kenilworth to the Valley Garden Center.

The unrest had actually begun almost as soon as Findley arrived. In late 1949, the school board decided that the church was not a suitable occupant for its premises and terminated its tenancy at Kenilworth. From December 1949 for the remainder of the 1950 church program year, the group met in the Valley Garden Center at Encanto

Park with children included in the service and then dismissed to hold classes in a nursery school just one block away. The following fall, permission to use these premises was abruptly withdrawn and programs were relocated to the YWCA. According to Frances Bishop, "There was a fine auditorium but only an unpainted basement for children's program. A bare three or four months later, the Y also asked the church to leave."

During this tumultuous time, Findly was active in the community. In April 1950 the church sponsored and he was a speaker at a forum on job insurance for migratory workers and in May on public housing and a united world. Later in May, he gave the invocation and benediction at a citizenship ceremony. He also had a radio show on Sunday nights.



In June, July and August 1950 there were combined services of the Unitarian and Congregational Churches. Middle, an ad from February 2, 1951 showing the move to the YWCA, located at 234 W. Monroe St and advertising the radio show on KPHO.

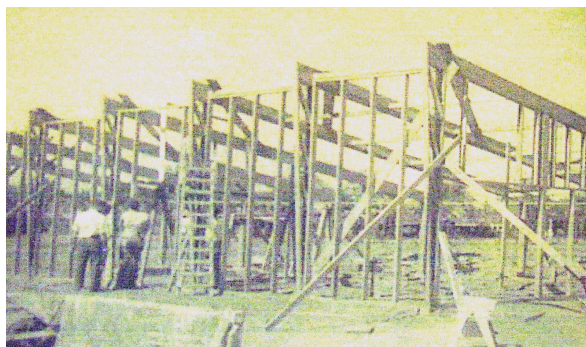
But the controversy continued. A special congregational meeting was called to consider disbanding the church. In her history, Frances Bishop said, "One of the older members, Frank Wilson stood up and, with tears in his eyes, stated that he had never had anything worthwhile in his life that he had not had to fight for and go in debt for. There was a nucleus of a building fund amounting to about \$1100. A vote was taken and by an overwhelming majority the group voted to continue the church and investigate the possibilities of investing the \$1100 in some kind of property that would be our own. Mr. Findly, particularly, was adamant in his conviction that this church must not be allowed to die."



Mimi Muth and Erika Michaud. Right, Isabelle Johnson was president of the board in 1950

Mimi Muth and her daughter, Erika Michaud owned property at 800 East Pasadena, just a block north of Camelback Road and one block east of seventh street, and for a nominal fee of \$10.00 for transferring the title, they "loaned" this property to the church. With the small sum of \$1500 the members erected a temporary but adequate building. A total of 87 men, women and children, virtually the entire membership, labored to build the first church home. During this period there wasn't a religious education program because the children came with their parents to help on Saturdays and Sundays. Even little children as young as 4 and 5 raked the grounds

and pulled weeds. In 45 days during the winter of 1950-51, these people erected a 1,300 square foot building with redwood beams and plywood walls which could seat 125, even 200 in good weather when the side doors could be open.



The first church building in progress and finished showing the side doors

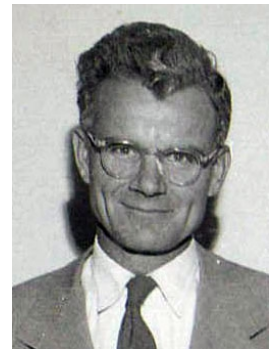
An article published in the February 21, 1951 Arizona Republic noted that "Phoenix Unitarians are building this church in the shade of Squaw Peak with \$1,500 in materials and their own labor. E. R. Michaud, Phoenix cabinetmaker, is designer and construction boss." Frances Bishop recorded that on those Sundays the members met at 9:00am for work, took a break at 11:00 for a short service, sitting on planks supported by bricks in work clothes. One member, in carpenter's hat and canvas work gloves, remarked that it had been a long time since she had worn a hat and gloves to church. After a picnic lunch, work began again and continued to dusk. That spring, John Findley arranged for the Annual Southwest District Conference of Unitarian Ministers to be held there, and the Rev. Stephen Hole Fritchman, then nationally known minister of the First Unitarian Church of Los Angeles, preached the dedication sermon for this new church home.



Left, the inside of the finished building, possibly at the dedication. Right, Sunday School.

In spite of Mr. Findley's dedication and effort, by the late summer of 1951 the members were forced, ostensibly for financial reasons to accept his resignation. The real reasons may have been his Humanism and unsupported accusations of Communist leanings. By this time the church was split not only by the McCarthy persecution but also by a schism within the remaining membership on the question of Theism vs. Humanism. In spite of this, the membership carried on for the next year as a lay church providing its own programming. The membership didn't grow, but another building, this one 1,000 square feet with the first toilets the church owned, was added to the property for the Sunday School.





Left, a second building was built for the Sunday School and restrooms. Center, Frances Bishop was president of the board in 1951 and 1953. J.D. Filson was president in 1952.

Again, the work was done entirely by the members, with the children helping. The building consisted of four school classrooms, with the kitchen and minister's office doubling as classrooms and restroom facilities on the property.

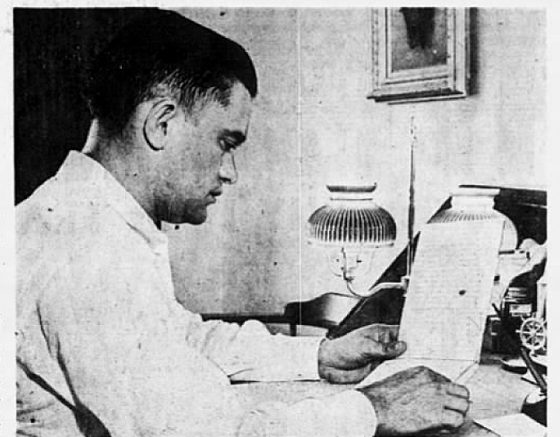


Installation Wednesday

Charles Donelson will be installed pastor of the Unitarian Church of Phoenix during special ceremonies at 8 p.m. Wednesday at the church, 4553 N. 12th Ave. The Rev. Dan H. Fenn of the Tucson Unitarian Church and Howard G. Matson of the Santa Monica, Calif., Unitarian Church will speak.

Also participating in the program will be Rabbi Morton C. Fierman of Temple Beth Israel and the Rev. Cecil L. Prior of the Tempe Congregational Church.

A reception is scheduled after the service. Members and friends of the church are invited. Forrest Kohfeldt will be in charge.



Criticizes Prison Shown here at his desk is the Rev. Charles C. Donelson, Phoenix Unitarian Church pastor, who yesterday, after a personal visit to the state prison at Florence, blasted general conditions there as horrible.—(Republic Photo, Ralph Canning)

'Shame To Arizona'

Phoenix Pastor Charges Prison Violates Christian Principles

Charles C. Donelson, Jr. and articles on his installation and prison protest.

In the fall of 1952, the church called another minister: the Reverend Charles Cooper Donelson, Jr. Nicknamed Don, he had had an interesting background, having served as a student minister at West Bethel Chapel in West Bethel Maine and as minister at the Bell Street Chapel in Providence, Rhode Island and the First Church Unitarian in Athol, Massachusetts where he and his wife had adopted a Latvian boy. Donelson had also been a math teacher and worked in the newspaper business. The Arizona Republic reported that he was to be installed pastor of the Unitarian Church of Phoenix during special ceremonies at the church, 4553 N. 12th Ave on February 18, 1953. In July 1953 several newspapers reported the Rev. Donelson had toured the state prison at Florence and strongly criticized it, calling it un-Christian. In December 1953, Donelson had written a letter to the Arizona Republic in which he complained that the Arizona Council of Churches did not admit Unitarian ministers or Jewish rabbis. He said that encouraged laymen to discriminate and gave as an example the five local country clubs and many resorts that practice anti-Semitism. He encouraged the city leaders to provide justice regardless of race, color or creed. In a follow-up letter, he spoke out against the racism in the city.

According to Frances Bishop, "He was not happy in this pioneer atmosphere." It might have been his dislike of the culture of hate in the community. Part of the reason for that might also have been reflected in an article in the 7 January 1954 Arizona Republic in which it was revealed that the previous summer his family had received telephone threats and that month, his adopted son had run away from home. Other records indicated there was a lack of enthusiasm in the membership for his ministry, that many thought he didn't have the personality or skills to be an effective minister. Membership had fallen to 113 with attendance around 30 to 40 in the fall which increased to 60 after advertising began in December 1953. Rev Donelson resigned in the spring of 1954 and took a position in Scituate, Massachusetts.

To Preach Tomorrow

Backus To Assume Ministry At Unitarian Church Here

The Rev. E. Burdette Backus, minister emeritus of All Souls Unitarian Church in Indianapolis, will assume the interim ministry of the Unitarian Church of Phoenix, 800 E. Pasadena, tomorrow.

He will preach his first sermon on "A Global Religion," at 11 a.m. Dr. and Mrs. Backus arrived this week from San Diego where they have recently resided.

Dr. Backus is a graduate of the University of Michigan and the Meadville Theological School in Chicago. He did graduate work at the Universities of Oxford, England, and Berlin and Jena, Germany.

He served for a number of years as a member of the board of directors of the American Unitarian Association and as one of its regional

vice presidents. He was also on the board of the Western Unitarian Conference and served two terms as president of the American Humanist Association.

An author of several books, he also was on the air every Sunday of the church season while pastor in Indianapolis, and two volumes of his radio talks were published in book form.

Church To Hold Fall Ham Dinner

The annual ham dinner and fall festival of St. Gregory Catholic Church, 18th Avenue



Dr. Backus

UNITARIAN CHURCH OF PHOENIX

800 EAST PASADENA AVENUE


SERVICES SUNDAY, 11 A.M.,

DR. BACKUS Preaching:

"A GLOBAL RELIGION"

Church School at 10:30 A.M.

NURSERY CARE FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS



E. Burdette Backus, D.D., Interim Minister.

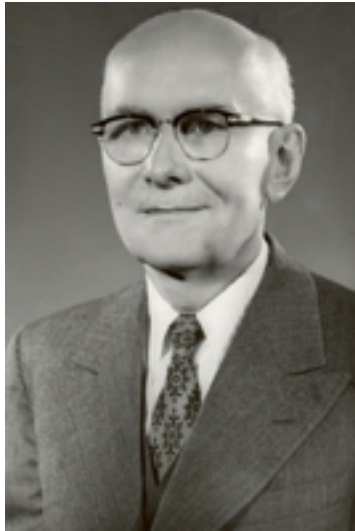
Article and ad from the October 16, 1954 Arizona Republic about Dr. Backus.

There was a desire on the part of the church membership to have a minister big enough for them. Their wish was fulfilled in the person of Dr. E. Burdette Backus. In 1933, he was an original signer of the Humanist Manifesto and founder of the First Humanist Society of Chicago. From 1938 to 1948, he was the much revered Minister of All Souls Unitarian Church of Indianapolis. Dr. Backus was living in retirement in San Diego when the AUA asked him to take an interim appointment in Phoenix. Many members had read Dr. Backus' articles in the Christian Register, forerunner of the Unitarian Universalist World. The matter of Theism vs. Humanism was still a point of considerable controversy within the church and those who wanted Dr. Backus because of his outstanding background as a minister carefully soft-pedaled his humanist interests. He accepted the appointment, came to the church in October 1954 and proved to be a great preacher and spiritual leader, uniting the church. He served as interim minister from October 1954 to April 1955 when he had to resign because of illness. Sadly, he died from cancer on July 7, 1955.



Charles Purtyman was president of the board in 1953; Vernon Robbins in 1954; Bill Bishop in 1955 and Roy Gaintner in 1956

In a remembrance in 1962, Bill Bishop said, "Dr. and Mrs. Backus arrived in Phoenix October 12, 1954, and plunged into the tasks of their new parish with all the ardor of a young couple serving their first church. Early in his Phoenix ministry Dr. Backus saw the possibilities of a great Unitarian Church for Phoenix, and his leadership roused his congregation from the depths of discouragement of earlier failures and frustrations. Early in 1955 Dr. Backus learned that he would soon die of cancer. Facing death, he reassured his grieving friends by a reminder of the impartiality of Nature. He offered his last sermon at Easter, surrounded by throngs of children, and then went back to San Diego to die. He left with us new hope for a great free church, and the knowledge that in serving with him we had touched the hem of greatness and of holiness."



Left, Dr. Edwin Burdette Backus. Right, the 1954-55 Board of Trustees: front row left to right: Sarah Ingersoll, Bill Bishop, Dr. E. Burdette Backus, Bill Patey, Vernon Robbins; back row: unidentified, Dee Filson, Dr. J. Eugene Grigsby, James Hoaglund and Bill Swineford. Robbins was president in 1954, Bishop in 1955.

In the fall of 1955 the members called Dr. Edwin Broome to be their minister. He too had a very interesting background. He had a PhD in Biblical Literature and the History of Religion from Brown University. He had served churches in Dighton, Massachusetts; Pawtucket, Rhode Island and Belmont, Massachusetts before taking a break from ministry in 1949 to be the Chief of Student Exchange and Religious Affairs in the Office of Military Government of the US, Berlin Sector and active duty as a Major in the US Air Force which included a classified mission to Palestine. While in the military he had served as an investigating intelligence officer. He returned to the ministry when he accepted the call to Phoenix. The church started a fund drive for a new, larger building in February 1956 but it must not have been successful nor was Dr. Broome's ministry.

"The Church of the Free Mind"

UNITARIAN

Church of Phoenix
800 East Pasadena Avenue
(Just North of Camelback Road)

★

Service Sunday Evening,
Aug. 28, 1955, Eight o'Clock

**"The Challenge
To Liberalism"**

Speaker: Edwin C. Broome, Ph.D.
Minister of Unitarian Fellowship
Montgomery, Ala.
(A Recorded Sermon)

★

For information concerning Unitarian Church activities phone
AM 5-7590.



Ad for August 1955 service with recorded sermon, Dr. Edwin Broome and 1956 church letterhead

In an autobiographical summary he submitted to the AUA, he said, "In 1955, I received a call from the Unitarian Church of Phoenix, Arizona and received my discharge from military service. Although this represented a substantial financial sacrifice, it seemed wise to make this move in order to re-locate in the active ministry. Unfortunately, it was immediately apparent upon my arrival in Phoenix that it had been a mistake to go to the particular church, due to the extreme humanism and ultra-social radicalism which represented the ruling spirit of the organization." He resigned in the summer of 1956, preaching his final sermon on September 23, and took a position with the Near East Foundation.

Wood To Speak To Unitarians

TEMPE (Special)—Dr. Harry Wood, head of the department of art at Arizona State University, will deliver an illustrated sermon on "A Lesson in Perspective" Sunday, June 10, at 8 p.m. at the First Unitarian Church, 800 Pasadena St., Phoenix.

To illustrate his talk, Dr. Wood will make sketches and modern paintings.

This service will be the first in the summer series of evening services at the Unitarian church.

Indian Religions Subject Of Talk

Dr. Odd S. Halseth, curator of the Pueblo Grande Museum for 27 years, will speak at the 8 p.m. summer evening service tomorrow at the Unitarian Church of Phoenix, 800 E. Pasadena Ave.

His topic will be "Native Religions of the American Indians." Born in Norway, Dr. Halseth has spent most of his adult years among Southwestern Indians.

Articles from summer 1956 about speakers and topics at the church.

Rabbi Plotkin To Talk At Unitarian Church

Rabbi Albert L. Plotkin, Temple Beth Israel, will be the speaker at the 8 p.m. service at the Unitarian Church of Phoenix 800 E. Pasadena Ave., tomorrow.

This is the second of the summer evening services at the church. Services have been changed from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Even with difficulties with the minister, the church continued and hosted a series of speakers over the summer of 1956 that showed the range of interest in the congregation. A report to several ministers in the AUA in July 1956 noted the Phoenix Church had had a series of unfortunate relationships with its ministers since its establishment in 1947. In one instance, the minister was forced to resign because of alleged Communist sympathies, referring to John Findly. In a letter to Broome from the Rev. Frank G. Ricker, director of the Pacific Coast Unitarian Council on July 10, 1956 Ricker said in referring to the Phoenix church, "In 1950 some of the members of the church had lost confidence in the minister. They urged consultation with the FBI as a tool of alarm in their efforts to secure his dismissal. When he did not resign, some of them did. The rest of the membership deeply (and in my opinion, properly) resented the use of veiled references to FBI dossiers and of fear of the FBI as a tool for solving an inter-personal, intra-parish, and professional problem." This reference to the FBI was because Dr. Broome had notified the FBI when a group of church members had started a chapter of the American Humanist Association. There was clearly dissension in the church membership with Broome accusing a group of wanting to keep the church a small social club and the other side accusing him of Gestapo tactics and of turning the church into a monument to McCarthyism. Frances Bishop didn't refer to any of that in her history. This was all she had to say, "Dr. Edwin Broome was called as our next minister. He and his family were never happy in Phoenix and he left at the end of the year." The church was still struggling to find its way.

Frances Bishop said in her history, "Again, distress signals went out to the American Unitarian Association in Boston. They sent us Mr. Charles Wing, another retired minister who was serving churches on an interim basis.

Mr. Wing stayed one year while our pulpit committee was engaged in trying to find a permanent minister.” Charles A. Wing was born in 1883 in Montpelier, Vermont. He attended Dartmouth, Meadville Theological School and spent one year on a Crufts Fellowship at the University of London. He had served churches in New Hampshire, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri and Colorado. He served as a Minister-at-Large for the AUA from 1955 to 1958. He preached his first sermon in Phoenix on November 11, 1956.



Unitarians Hear Wing

The Rev. Charles A. Wing, Norfolk, Va., interim minister of the Unitarian Church, 800 E. Pasadena, will deliver his first sermon at the church at 11 a.m. tomorrow.

Mr. Wing has served pastorates in Concord, N.H., Baltimore, Md., Springfield and Quincy, Mass., St. Louis, and Denver.

He resigned his Quincy pastorate in the fall of 1955 to join the American Unitarian Association staff as minister-at-large. He served in this capacity of special assignments until last summer.

Born in Montpelier, Vt., Mr. Wing attended Dartmouth College, Meadville Theological School, and spent one year at the University of London.

He is living at 2337 W. Whitton Ave.

"The Church of the Free Mind"

UNITARIAN

Church of Phoenix
5101 North Eighth Street
 (One block north of East Camelback Road)

Rev. Charles A. Wing,
 Interim Minister

11 A.M. Sermon
"A Unitarian's
Conception of the
Future of The
Church

Church School 11 A.M.
 Supervised play for toddlers.

Charles A. Wing and an article on his first sermon and an ad from April 1957

In his Founders Day sermon in 1993, Fritz Hudson gave an overview of the first decade of the church, recalling the tremendous tenacity of a fledgling church with uncertain leadership. He said, "Over our first ten years, we were served by six ministers. With Laurence Plank, we made an early mark on our community with our inter-racial forums, but were left in the lurch when he ran off with the church pianist. With John Findley, we barely survived the McCarthy Red Scare, forced to move from one temporary quarters to another under the cloud of being suspected as a "communist front organization," until we built our own building with our own hands at 800 E. Pasadena. With Charles Donelson, we languished. With Burdette Backus, we expanded and received public recognition through his radio show but were stopped in our tracks by his untimely death. With Edwin Broome and Charles Wing, we simply survived. By the time we arrived at our 10th anniversary, we had managed to grow by fits and starts to 176 members but we showed the deep scars of our struggles. And we were looking again for a minister." On March 30, 1957 an article ran in the Arizona Republic with the headline, "Ohio Minister to Speak at Unitarian Services."



The Unitarian Church of Phoenix

5101 North Eighth Street
 (Just North of Camelback Road)

Arthur W. Olsen, Minister

Services Sunday, September 8, 11 A.M.

MR. OLSEN SPEAKS:

"AGENDA FOR LIBERAL RELIGION"

"The Church of the Free Mind"

UNITARIAN

Church of Phoenix
5101 North Eighth Street
 (One block north of East Camelback Road)

ARTHUR W. OLSEN
 Minister

Residence: 3310 E. Mitchell Dr.
 Phone CR 7-8952

11:00 A.M. Service at
Jewish Community Center
1510 East Camelback Rd.

"SOME INGREDIENTS
FOR A
HEALTHY RELIGION"

Church School 11 A.M.
Age Three Up—at the Church
Nursery Through Age Two
at Jewish Community Center

Arthur W. Olsen and newspaper ads from September and December 1957

Frances Bishop reported in her history, "As [the work of the pulpit committee] was progressing we received word that Mr. Arthur Olsen, successful minister of a large church in Toledo, was interested in our church. We were incredulous! What would a man of Arthur Olsen's stature see in us? For one thing, we were at least durable and likely at this point to survive and even prosper." There was controversy about him however in that he was an avowed Humanist. And there was a question as to how well he had been regarded by the Jewish community in Toledo. Since in the church's leanest days the Jewish community had been a strong supporter, it was a matter of great importance to members that they have a minister who could work amiably with the Jewish community. A member contacted the leading Reformed Jewish Rabbi in Toledo and also the President of the American Humanist Association and received glowing recommendations from both which led to a unanimous vote of the congregation (with 4 abstentions!) to approve Olsen's call.

Arthur W. Olsen was born in Gloucester, Massachusetts in 1903. He was active in Unitarian youth groups and decided he wanted to be a Unitarian minister. Having had to drop out of school in the 9th grade to help support his family after the death of his father, he enrolled as a special student at Tufts University's Crane Theological School. He served churches in Lincoln, Billerica and Melrose, Massachusetts before going to Toledo, Ohio and serving in that church from 1942 to 1957. Having been in a large church for so many years, he and his wife, Catherine decided they wanted the challenge of building up a small congregation. He became the minister of the Phoenix church in September 1957.

Frances Bishop said, "It appears that this was a turning point in our growth. For the first time when there had been dissension within the church no one 'picked up his marbles and went home.' We did have a few people who lost interest in the church but their places were rapidly taken by the new people who were attracted to Mr. Olsen. In any case, there was no bitterness and no friction." And for Arthur Olsen, Phoenix was a personal challenge, the chance of his lifetime to see if he had what it took to grow a church almost from scratch.

Olsen arrived in September 1957 and by October of that year, the Sunday morning congregation outgrew the hand- built church on Pasadena. Once again, the Phoenix Jewish community became the church's savior - offering rental use of the auditorium and classrooms at the Jewish Community Center, then at 16th Street and Camelback. Not much later, the adult congregation had to move from the Center's auditorium to its gymnasium, and the classroom space was such that for a period parents had to drop their kids off at the old building at 8th and Pasadena then go to church at 16th and Camelback and then return to pick up the kids back on 8th street. In two and a half years, by May of 1960, active membership had doubled to 369.

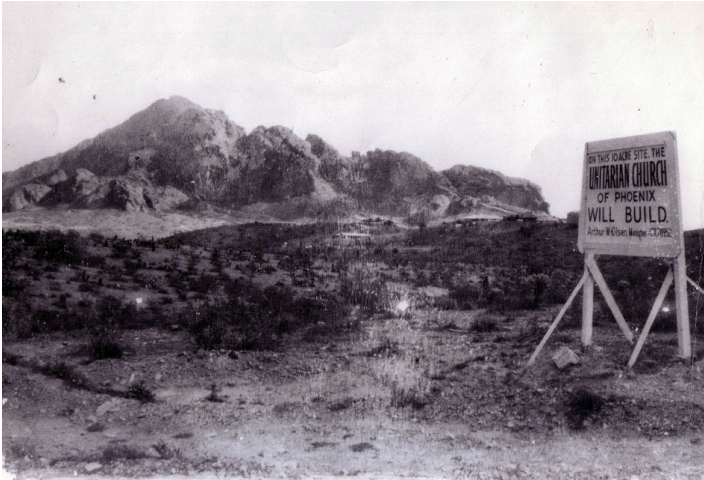


Joe Wilson was president of the board in 1958; Dick Dickinson in 1959; Christ Olsen in 1960 and 1964

Arthur Olsen broke his concept of the liberal ministry and the role of the liberal church in society into four categories. He said it should be a Teaching Church, beginning where people are and answering questions that relate to their needs. It should be an Inspirational Church, inspiring people to move out of comfort, to dare with courage. It should be an Action Church, urging people to stand by their convictions. It should be an Interpreting Church helping people know the history of thought.

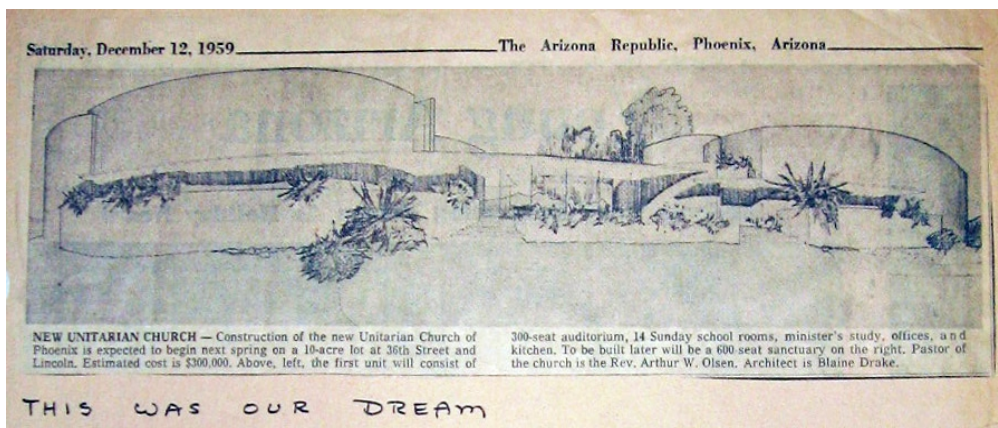
As Francis Bishop tells it, "It soon became apparent, as we came to know him better that Mr. Olsen was a man of tremendous "drive." ... He began talking about a large church to be located on 10 acres on Lincoln Drive, which at that time was not even a through street. ... After we purchased the property, [we] gave directions so

that members could go out and view their new purchase: ... 'Tatum Boulevard to Lincoln Drive; turn west and when road ends walk to the fourth telephone pole. That is the eastern boundary of our church. ... Many ministers have an Edifice Complex: Mr. Olsen had an Edifice Obsession, and the more he talked the more we began to share his dream."



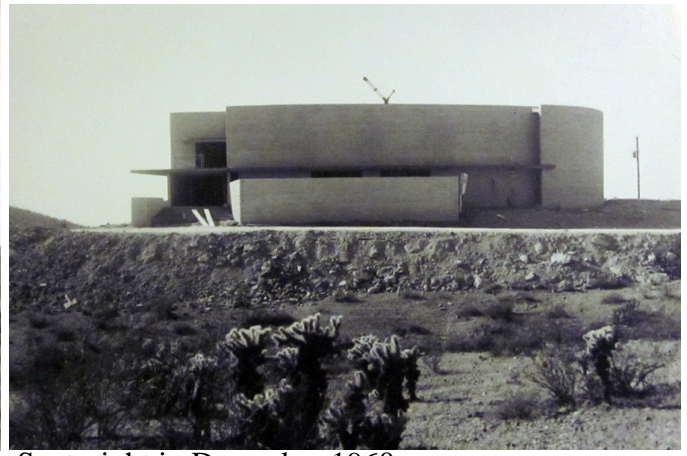
Left, the property on Lincoln Drive. Right, the ground breaking. The ground breaking. Back row, left to right: Dick Dickenson, Ed Heler, Arthur Olsen, two unidentified. Front row: Jack McCloud, unidentified, Art Highland, Catherine Olsen, Elaine Olsen, Blaine Drake, unidentified, Dorothy Filson and John Donaldson.

In 1959 the church purchased ten acres of property for \$40,000. After money was donated for a building, Olsen first talked to Frank Lloyd Wright about designing the building, and found him very enthusiastic, but unfortunately, the famous architect died before making a single sketch. The building committee then turned to Blaine Drake, an early apprentice of Wright's at Tallesin West, and Drake designed the present building.



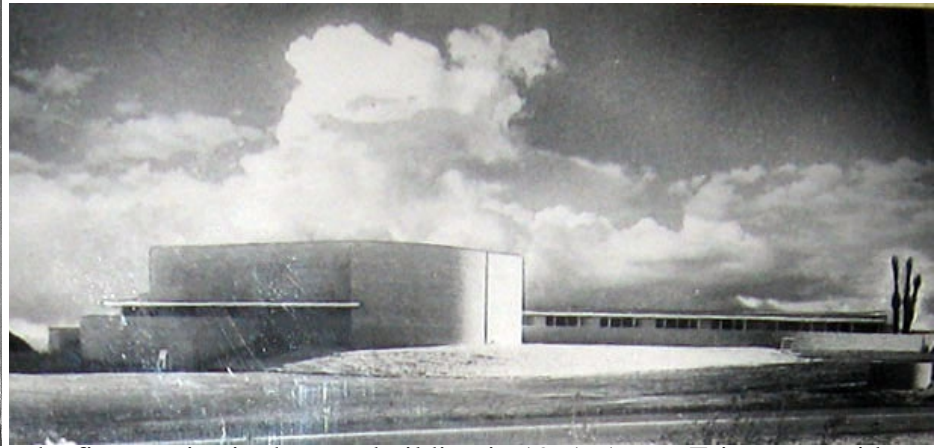
Blaine Drake and a December 12, 1959 article on his original design that included a 600 seat auditorium on the left and an all-purpose fellowship room on the right which was eventually built and is still used as the sanctuary.

The dedication booklet described the new church. "Located on a ten acre desert site in the foothills of the Phoenix mountains.. The main building, which is used as a chapel and social hall, contains 9400 square feet. The semi-circular class room wing to the west contains 5600 square feet...The curved forms express a flexibility and fluidity of design appropriate to contemporary thought in architecture and religion. .. The irregular surface of the concrete slumblock walls is related to the desert in texture and color. .. The buildings are oriented for the best views and sun exposures for the seasons and to eliminate highway distraction and noises. A patio can be used for social functions."



The building being built, left in Sept, right in December 1960.

The first service was held on the fourteenth anniversary of the church's founding, Sunday, March 5, 1961. Mr. Olsen had talked about Lincoln Drive becoming the new "Church Row" and so it would become.



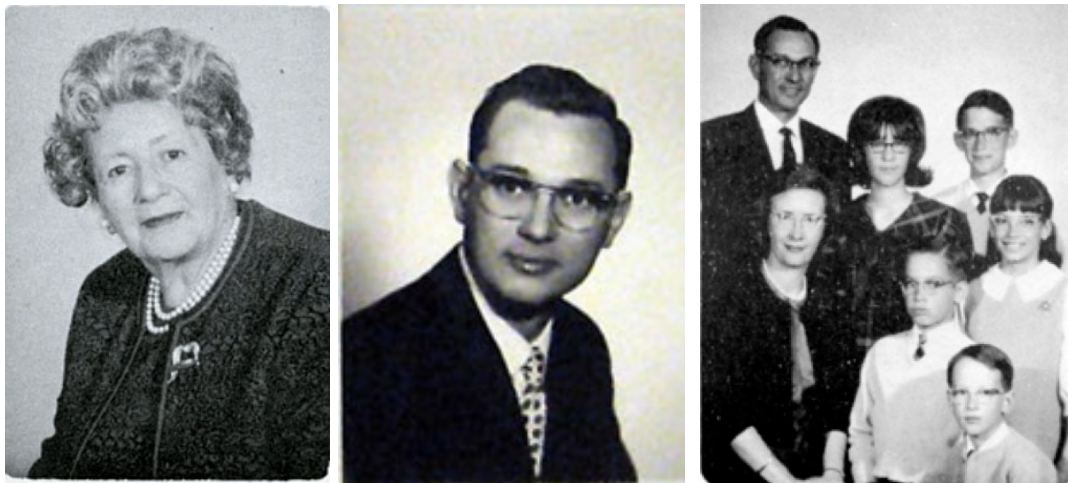
Left, Arthur Olsen greeting members at the first service in the new building in 1961. Agnes Ericson, president of the board in 1961, is standing on the balcony.

1961 was an eventful year. Following the merger of Unitarians and Universalists, the members elected to change the name to the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Phoenix. And that year the UU Early Education Cooperative (EEC) preschool was founded. It had its beginnings in 1957 when a group of younger Women's Alliance members started a mother's study group. Out of that came the non-denominational cooperative nursery school which was housed at the new Unitarian Universalist Church. It was reported that this was the second cooperative pre-school group in the State and certainly the first cooperative pre-school in the Valley. Also beginning in the early sixties, First Church formed a committee to work on racial integration issues in Phoenix. Many members also marched and picketed the State House in favor of a public accommodations law. These efforts, spearheaded by the local NAACP, were ultimately successful.



Ed Heler was board president in 1960; Agnes Ericson in 1961; Hiram Davis in 1962 and 1963

By the fall of 1962, active membership had grown to almost 600 adults. Accredited Director of Religious Education Peg Gooding had been added to the staff to co-ordinate programming for the 436 children and youth. Discussions were underway to add classrooms to the building. Then Arthur Olsen dropped a bomb-shell. After just 5 and a half years of ministry, and still five and a half years from the expected retirement age of 65, he would resign to become the District Executive of the Pacific Southwest District of the UU Association. After Olsen's death in 1986, his son, UU minister Clark Olsen said of his father, "The strengths of his ministries were numerous, but they included preaching, institution-building and enthusiasm for liberal religion. .. He conveyed to others the importance of local UU churches and the denomination as means to strengthen personal and social ideals." In 2001, the Meditation Garden was dedicated to the memory of Arthur and Catherine Olsen. In his remarks, Ray Manker said, "Arthur was not to be cowed by the red-baiters. He became a leader in the community, a spokesperson for sanity. When schoolteachers were being harassed by the red-baiters and fired by schoolboards giving in to their pressure, Arthur and one of the fired school teachers, [1st UU member] Alice Bendheim, organized the Arizona Civil Liberties Union, to begin bringing legal, constitutional support... When Arthur came to Phoenix in September [1957], our struggling, but highly dedicated congregation numbered just over a hundred. When he left [five] and a half years later, the congregation reported to the UUA that it had 564 members."



Alice Bendheim, Ray Manker in 1963 and he and his family in 1968

The church wasted little time in mourning. Arthur left on January 1, 1963. A ministerial search was formed. By the end of March, they had selected a candidate, and by September, Raymond G. Manker had arrived as the eighth settled minister of First Church. Frances Bishop said, "The church, under Mr. Olsen's ministry, had grown so fast that people had not become integrated as members of a "family." Gretchen and Ray Manker were "naturals" for this assignment. Their warm, out-going personalities and their empathic feeling for people broke down many of our personal reserves. And also, it was gratifying, after many years, to have some "preacher's kids" around."

Ray hit the ground running that fall. He was told that his first big job would be to help spin off a new church in Tempe.. By the following fall, 75 members had formed the Tempe church. Ray drove down to preach each Sunday at 9:30am while the first session of children's classes was accompanied by a lay-led adult service at 1st Church. By 11:00 am, Ray was back for the main adult service accompanied by the second session of children's classes. By the next fall, the Tempe church was on its way to employing its first minister, and 1st Church went to two full services at 10:00 am and 11:30 am. The Tempe church became the Valley UU Church now located in Chandler.

Another challenge for Ray was the need for expanded classroom space. And that wasn't easy to come by. It was determined that the roof of the first floor classrooms had not been reinforced to hold the expected second floor. In addition, the debt burden of paying for the building itself began to daunt the spirits of many when the discussion turned to building a new church school wing in back of the existing wing. The work was done however and the new wing was built in 1965 and occupied by January of 1966.



Bill Bagwell, Muriel Osder and Gene Grigsby from the 1968 directory

Meanwhile, the adult program was filling out in many exciting ways. Bill Bagwell as Music Director, worked with Ray to bring Jazz and Poetry together in several services and a youth strings orchestra was formed. Muriel Osder, as chair of the newly formed Adult Program Committee, put together classes offering everything from dancing to philosophy which enrolled 314 persons in 1966. Gene Grigsby, with Ray's encouragement, had begun organizing regular art shows for our walls. John Waddell's work showed up in one of those early shows, which led to a dedication service of his statues "That Which Might Have Been", in the fall of 1965 though their permanent placement here came later.

The same inspiration that produced those statues, however, forced tough choices on Ray and members of 1st Church. In the spring of 1964, Ray participated in a picket line at the State House for an open accommodations law. Some church members became uneasy with the public face 1st Church was coming to wear. Others, however, approved. In the spring of 1965, Ray answered the UU Association's call to join Martin Luther King's March from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama.



Photos from a film made in the mid 60s on the Valley of the Sun, <http://phoenix.org/blast-from-the-past-phoenix-in-the-1960s/>, show a car parked on the side of the building, minimal landscaping, a dirt parking lot and the original sign and slump block mailbox holder.



Wilson Wood was president of the board in 1965; Floyd McCracken in 1966 and 1967 and Archie Walker in 1968.

In 1993, Fritz Hudson summed up the second decade of the church's history: "Now what can we take from our second decade as we move forward in this our fifth? From our first decade, I suggested we would do well to renew in ourselves the indomitable will, in the midst of turmoil and transience, "to build, and build, and build again." From our second decade, I want to suggest that we renew in ourselves the incredible capacity to dream and plan, to see and seize a future larger than the present before us. To see and seize, from our homemade home on Eighth Street, the promise of this beautiful building in the desert foothills took vision enough. But this was not the limit of our vision then. Arthur Olsen, Blaine Drake, Dick Dickenson, and their cohorts saw this "auditorium" as but the first stage of the plant eventually to be constructed on this sight. They saw to the south of his multi-purpose room a 600 seat sanctuary with sloping floor and fixed pews connected by a covered walkway to the south. In its 1964 report to the congregation, the Building Committee noted, it is likely that the Phoenix Church will eventually also serve as a denominational center and possibly be the major church in the state. Blaine Drake's original concept, or its equivalent, will have to be built. "Without a vision," as Proverbs wrote and Arthur Olsen re-wrote many time, "the people perish."



The 1967-68 Board of Trustees

OFFICERS IN FRONT ROW:

Left to right . . . Mrs. Mary Dunten, Secretary
Mr. G. Ellis Gray, Vice President
Mr. Floyd A. McCracken, President
Mr. Alvin R. Finkelstein, Treasurer

Not shown; Mr. Sidney Cohen Trustee
Mr. Emerson L. Kumm Trustee

TRUSTEES, BACK ROW:

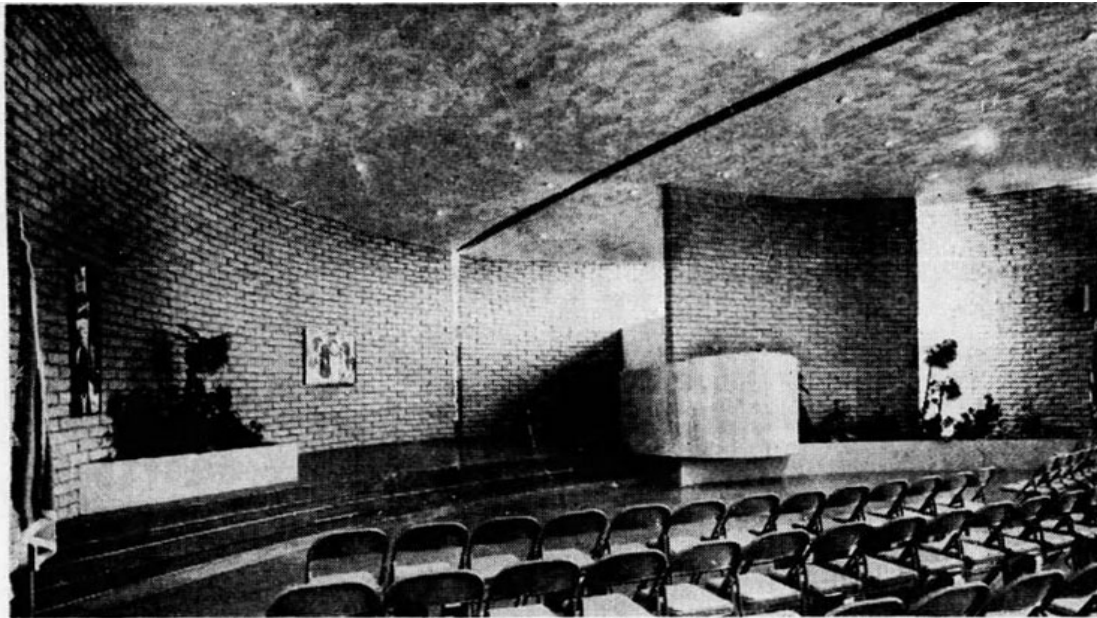
Left to right . . . Mr. George Sangster
Mrs. Shirley Odegard
Judge William Gooding
Mr. Sidney Gray
Dr. J. Eugene Grigsby
Mrs. Muriel Osder
Mr. Archie Walker

At the beginning of the church's third decade it was flourishing. In 1968, the congregation dedicated "That Which Might Have Been," a garden sculpture, created by John Henry Waddell, as a memorial to the four girls who died in the Birmingham church bombing. That same year 1st Church began its long history with Booker T Washington Child Development Center. The Congregation helped to secure a vacant lot upon which the preschool was built. And members served on the Booker T Washington Board and helped as teachers aides. Around that time Mr. Manker and Peg Gooding inaugurated a "growing up ceremony." The Women's Alliance remained a major fundraising resource, especially its Annual Bazaar.



Ray Manker and Peg Gooding from the 1968 pictorial directory

In the 1968 church directory, in A Message from Our Minister, Ray Manker reported, “We enter our 21st year strong and mature. Our Adult Programs are blazing new trails in church programming. . Experiments with our Sunday morning services and our children’s programs indicated an open mindedness essential to growth and change.”



Pulpit dominates sanctuary of First Unitarian Universalist Church, Phoenix

A photo of the pre-renovation sanctuary ran in an April 19, 1969 Arizona Republic article on the UUA.

Change continued. In 1973, the Desert View Learning Center (DVLC) was founded and made the Congregation its home. In 1974, the UU Foundation of Phoenix was established with the goal of providing financial security for the church. In 1975 Oonagh Sykes, later Oonagh Boppart, organized and conducted the first full-year choir, and by 1976 Ed Grobe had become inspired to write a full-length cantata "Princess Unitaria" which was performed here then taken to Claremont California to be presented as part of the Unitarian Universalist Association General Assembly, where Ray was also chosen to deliver the sermon at the main annual worship service of the Association, the Service of the Living Tradition. That was the year Isabelle Johnson died, at the age of 96. Also in 1976, planning began for a wilderness retreat (later realized in the Sierra Ancha Wilderness UU Religious Association SAWUURA). That year Kids Kamp was founded, offering a summer camp based on UU principles to members and the community,



Easter dance service in 1972; right, John Waddell and Ray Manker in 1973

There was a special dance service around the statues on Easter Sunday in 1972. In 1973, John Waddell presented Ray Manker a bust in honor of Ray's 10th anniversary at 1st UU and his 25th anniversary in ministry.

In 1975, the musical talent show/fundraiser Cabaret was started by choir director Oonagh Sykes Boppart. The show, under several different choir directors, continued in the spring almost continuously until 2014.



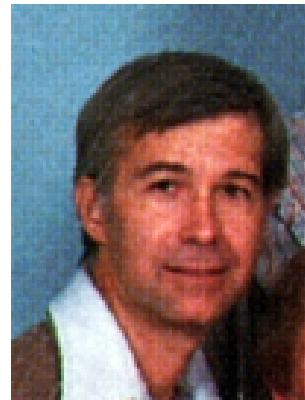
Harry Hobart was president of the board in 1971 and 1972; Virginia Frogge in 1973; Elaine Warner in 1974 and 1975; Gordon Patterson (not pictured) in 1976; and Muriel Osder in 1977 and 1978.

1977 started the fourth decade of the church. In his Founders Day sermon in 1995, Fritz Hudson described the events of that time. "During the late 1970s a group of our members answered the call to respect the interdependence of all existence by purchasing a wilderness retreat, now called SAWUURA, to help us perfect our sense of partnership with nature." He then went on to relate the controversy surrounding the purchase of the property, some members including the minister thinking it was the fulfillment of a dream. For others the land seemed remote and its promised role in church life seemed peripheral. attracting church member resources which might otherwise have gone to support church activities they saw as more central to its mission. Questions arose about a donation for the purchase and a conciliation committee worked to deal with the issue. "Over the period of the conciliation committee's work, a group of 30 or so of these families, including many of the Trustees who had felt at tension with the Minister, began meeting for regular social occasions. "The Group" as they were called, considered avenues for continued involvement in the church and also explored ideas for supplemental independent programming. Eventually, in the winter of 1984, they rented space to hold Sunday evening vespers services once a month at the Society of Friends meeting house 3 miles west of here on Lincoln Drive. In 1985, they applied for admission to the Unitarian Universalist Association as a separate church, the Desert Unitarian Universalist Society of Phoenix." (By 1992 the Desert UU Society of Phoenix voted to dissolve its charter, and many of its members returned to 1st Church.) SAWUURA continues to operate, with a couple of camping events per year, and is led by people from several congregations around the state.



Ray Manker, minister; Donna Corbus, director of religious education; Ellie Murphy and Joanne Michael, co-administrators, and Sally Norman, choir director. Photos from the 1983 directory

Hudson continued, "During the early 1980s many members worked through the UU Service Committee and the Valley Religious Task Force to promote democracy in Central America while providing Sanctuary for its refugees. Ray Manker traveled to such far-off places as Washington D.C. and New York to witness for those efforts before other Unitarian Universalist congregations. Also in the early 1980s, a metropolitan UU committee with several active First Church members fostered the establishment of a new UU congregation in Glendale, now called the West Valley UU Church."



The Hangs and Randy Helms

Barbara Eastman (not pictured) was president of the board in 1979; Muriel Flood (not pictured) in 1980 and 1981 and Randy Helms in 1982. In 1980, 1st UU sponsored a Chinese refugee family from Vietnam, the Hangs. They were in the Valley until 1987.

In 1982, a building fund drive was initiated to pay off the mortgage and take care of some needed capital repair. A joyful mortgage-burning party was held on the patio. Hudson summed up his description of the fourth decade of the church history when he said, "the spirit of our fourth decade within us should be one of humility, a recognition of the fragility of our communal bonds, a recognition of the dangers which excesses in our personal passions pose to realizing our shared dreams. But on the other hand, also locked in our fourth decade, is the clear affirmation, made by majority and minority alike, that our unique faith makes us rather unique people. Even our failures are born of our unique strengths, our need to know the truth, our will to see this world saved in all its facets."



Members participated in 1982 ERA rally, 1983 peace rally, 1987 anti-nuclear rally

The late 1980s started the church's fifth decade. In 1989, a fund drive was successfully completed to cover the expenses of calling a new minister.



The 1982 board and 1983 choir

Above left, photo from the board retreat in the summer of 1982. In front, Frank Kadish; 1st row Casceil Medlin, Miriam Groen, Tish Gauntt, Jean Berry and unidentified. 2nd row Jesse Hise, Siri James, Sarah Ingersol, Donna Lee Corbus, Ellie Murphy, Richard Stallworthy. 3rd row Bob Fernie, David Ouimette, Don Moran, Ray Manker.

Above right, the choir in 1983. Back Row: Jean Lawton, Ed Grobe, Dan Wilkinson, Frank Hermann, Ken Walker and Felice Bews. Next row: Eleanor Mast, Arden Torbert, Sally Norman (Choir Director), Dorothy Johnson, Marie Walling, Siri James, Jay Finkelstein. Next row: Joyce Steiner, Helen Price, Ann Walker, Ellie Murphy, Jerry Whalin. Front row: Faith Parker, Joanne Michael



Jesse Hise was the president of the board in 1983 and 1984; Anne Upshaw in 1985 and 1986; Jeanne Peters (not pictured) in 1987; Hal Howard in 1988 and Joan Laurence in 1989 and 1990.



The Mankers have been at the church for 27 years. Ray Manker is well-known in the Valley for his social and political activism, having been arrested numerous times for demonstrating on a wide range of issues, including against nuclear power plants and for help for Central American refugees.

There was an article in the Arizona Republic on June 9, 1990 on Ray's retirement. It reported there would be a special celebration of life on June 17th to honor Ray's 27 years as minister. The Reverend Bettye Doty became interim minister. Ray was named the congregation's Minister Emeritus.



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Unitarian church gets interim minister

The new interim minister at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Phoenix is the Rev. Bettye Doty. Doty arrived at the church this September from Shaker Heights, Ohio, where she served as interim minister there.

Left, Ray Manker and Bettye Doty in 1990; right, article on her hiring

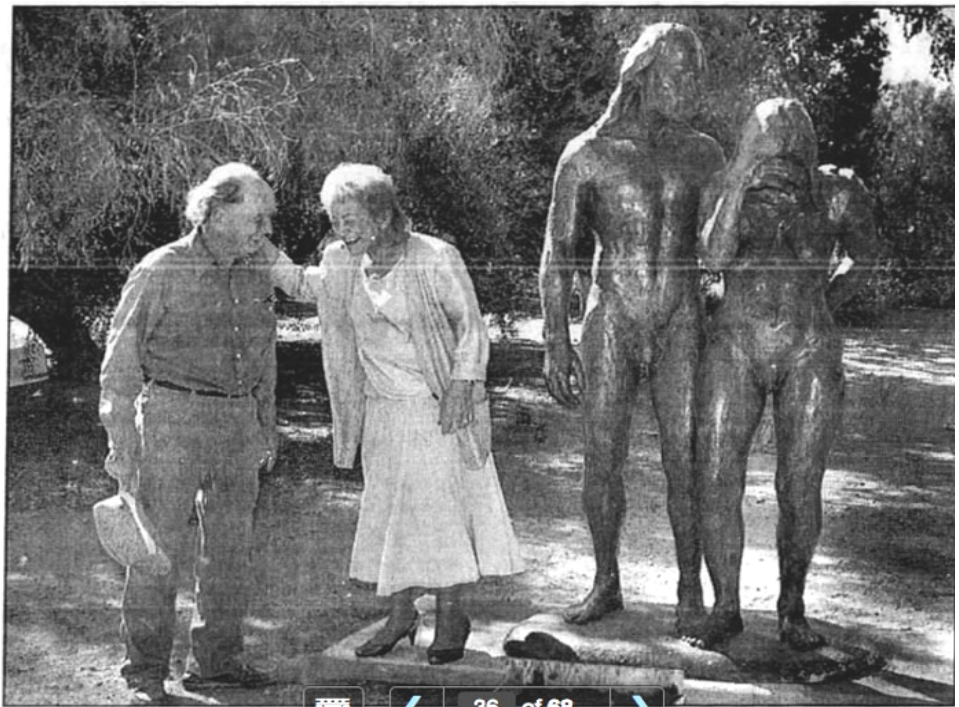
Bettye Ashby Doty had come from an unusual background. Born in 1921 in Indiana, she was raised and had lived the "country club social scene" in Southern California, active in little theater and political volunteer work. She was president of the Young Republican Women and on the Republican coordinating council in Glendale. Then she moved to Marin County, California and found the Unitarian Church there. She was the executive secretary to the minister then became assistant minister. She had always done a lot of counseling. She graduated from Starr King and was ordained as the associate minister of the Marin Fellowship of Unitarians in San Rafael in 1972. She served churches in Marin County and Columbus and Cleveland Ohio and UU Societies in Rockland and Westchester, New York and was the vice president of the Northern Metropolitan District. She had had a connection to 1st Church before becoming its interim. She did her internship in the Phoenix church. In 1977 she had participated with Ray Manker and Alice Patterson in a service there focused on social revolution.



Photos from the 1990 Cabaret

In the welcome brochure from Bettye's year, there was the quote from Thomas Jefferson on all young men dying as Unitarians and "Central to our faith are the principles of a free mind, the dignity of all people, and the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part. We are a congregation engaged in a spiritual search, living out our beliefs in the larger community. The brochure went on to describe our denominational association and seminars and ended with "We are a searching, caring, inclusive, liberal religious community and we look forward to meeting you." The brochure explained Sunday services, the fellowship hour, art exhibits, adult classes and activities, and children's classes. It listed common interest groups like the Women's Alliance, Singles, Men's Focus AA, the Hiking Group, Womanspirit and the Gay/Lesbian Relationship Discussion Group, all of which met at the church. The active membership was noted as 350. Reaching out to the community, members worked with the UU Service Committee, the Social Action Committee, Valley Interfaith Project, and food collections. In addition, the church was a meeting place for other community groups such as the Valley Religious Task Force, the Society for Humanistic Judaism, the Phoenix Early Music Society and the Sierra Club. The staff was the Rev. Doty, Sherri Burke, director of religious growth & learning, Randa McFadden, administrator and Richard Romero, director of music.

ART IN PLACE / Sculptor John Waddell and the Rev. Bettye Doty of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Phoenix celebrate the placement of Waddell's sculpture on the church grounds at 4027 E. Lincoln Drive in Paradise Valley on Tuesday. The work has three titles: *Adam and Eve*, *Expulsion From the Garden of the Earth* and *Agent Orange*. It is the second sculpture group Waddell has placed at the church. The artist counts among his work the statuary at the Phoenix Civic Plaza at 225 E. Adams St.



A November 1, 1990 article showed Bettye Doty and John Waddell and one of his statues on short-term exhibit.

In her interim minister's report in the 1991 Annual Report, Bettye said her job was to find out what needed fixing and with the cooperation of the board, staff and committees, see that it got fixed before the new minister arrived. She noted that Ellie and Bob Murphy and JoAnne Michael had resigned and that she, Bettye had been involved in writing new job descriptions. There was a new format for the newsletter and a new Order of Service. She had done counseling and memorial services including for Frances Bishop, welcomed 52 new members and dedicated three children. She officiated at member weddings and thanked Pauline Gay for acting as Wedding Consultant. Bettye also did a six-week lecture series on Women and Mythology that was well attended.

In preparation for a ministerial search, a congregational survey was done in October 1990. A compilation showed there were 256 members and 60 friends of the society who responded, 204 female, 112 males. The largest age segment, 86 was 40 to 49, the second, 67 were between 60 and 69. Three were over 90! 101 were college graduates; 149 had post-graduate degrees. 151 were married, 56 divorced, 31 single. There were 32 families with children aged 12 to 15, 25 with ages 8 to 11. The median family income was \$37,000. For what role the church should play in the larger community, the largest category, 213 thought leadership in social and community issues. In answer to what theological position was held, 134 said they were Humanist, 57 were Theist, 52 were Naturalists. The highest categories for how important the church was to them personally, 198 said intellectual stimulation, 158 said fellowship with people, 141 said celebration of common values. The part of the service most liked was other music and the type of service, musical programs with a content of UU

values. The top four possible functions of a minister were preaching, pastoral, program development and community activities. The top four personal characteristics were warm and approachable, sensitive to congregational needs, sense of humor and inspirational.



David Potkiewicz/The Arizona Republic:
The Rev. Fritz Hudson (left) and the Rev. Raymond Manker, his predecessor, share a smile at Hudson's installation ceremony.

Left, Fritz Hudson; right, Fritz and Ray at Fritz's installation in February 1992

In 1991, the Reverend Fritz Hudson was called to be 1st UU Church's 11th minister. Fritz was born Frederick G. Hudson in Evanston, Indiana in 1949. He was reared an Episcopalian in Chicago but pursued the Unitarian ministry in college. He received his BA at Cornell College in Mt. Vernon, Iowa in 1971, his Master of Divinity at Harvard Divinity School in 1976, after a two year stint in the Peace Corps in North Africa, and his Juris Doctor at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill in 1981. He had been an educator and community organizer from 1972 to 1979, served as a minister at the UU Fellowship in Wilmington, NC, the UU Churches of the North Hills and South Hills, Pittsburgh, PA and the UU Society of Iowa City from 1976 to 1984. After those ministries he worked as an attorney from 1985 to 1989. In 1990 he did ministerial internship supervisor training at Meadville-Lombard. An article on his arrival stated, "The Arizona church liked his preaching and Hudson liked its history of social action. .. Hudson said his new congregation also wants to improve its internal caretaking. That agenda includes a Friends Indeed program in which members help one another... The church also wants to learn how to process conflict and disagreement better." Those were ironic tasks in light of the controversy that developed later in his ministry.



Dianne Olson was president of the board in 1991 and 1992; Rod Engelen in 1993; Joanne Michael in 1994; Janet McCall (now Bickley) in 1995

In his minister's report in the 1993 Annual Report, Fritz reminded members what the By-laws said his role was: "to be the religious and spiritual leader of the church, to be in fellowship with the UUA, to oversee the activities of all staff and participate in hiring and to be an ex-officio member of all committees except the Nominating Committee and non-voting member of the Board." He said his work with the Board had been to set up the Council system in which all committee and activity leaders meet periodically to plan and coordinate work. He helped with the creation of a Committee on Ministry and Personnel Committee structure so members could share in the oversight of church staff. In support of the UUA he had led Sunday services in Chandler, Glendale and Flagstaff and consulted with the Prescott Fellowship. He led services in 1st Church, conducted weddings and memorials, responded to requests for pastoral counseling. He assisted Unicare in identifying and making

contact with members who had not been active and became aware of their personal stress and isolation. To extend the church's ministry beyond its walls he led an Election Eve Prayer Meeting in favor of the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday, provided invocations at public sessions and served a treasurer of the Valley Interfaith Project.



In 1995, the Jean Berry Memorial triptych painted by Art Committee chair and artist Lucienne Collaer Rusconi, was presented by the Berry family and hung in the church entry. Shade structures were built on the patio, a gift of the Bliklen family. Unitarian minister and author, Robert Fulghum presided over a highly successful Birmingham Project fundraiser. His visit was co-sponsored by the Birmingham Project and the Metro UU Council. The Arizona UU Legislative Committee was formed as ongoing sponsor of UU Day at the Legislature. Fritz spent part of his month's sabbatical leave developing legislative issue partnerships with Arizona Common Cause, Children's Action Alliance, Sierra club and the Arizona Ecumenical Association.



Photos from the 1996 Cabaret.

In 1997, the church celebrated its Golden Anniversary. In addition to a special luncheon, speakers and entertainment, people gave birthday gifts totaling close to \$3,000 all of it earmarked for use by the Dream Force to bring greater community recognition of our UU denomination. A congregational survey was undertaken in the spring of 1997 in an effort to evaluate the health of the congregation. Several members from non-Christian backgrounds questioned the inclusion of Church in our name. The Congregation voted to change its name to the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Phoenix and opted to remove First from its name. Musician Connie Clemons later Jahrmarkt joined first as pianist then as Music Director. In 1997-98, Gail Tapscott was a ministerial intern.



Bill Hall, not pictured, was president of the board in 1995; Ellie Murphy in 1996; Susan Goldsmith in 1997 and

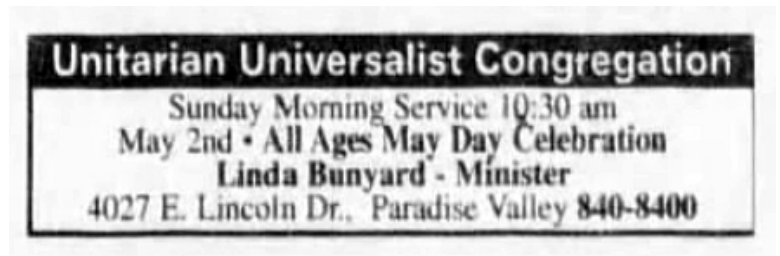
Bob Olson in 1998.

The congregational survey turned up a great deal of dissatisfaction with the congregation's ministry and minister. A committee worked with a consultant to design and conduct a process for the congregation to determine its expectations and whether they were being met. This led to a congregational meeting to determine the future. The congregation decided to retain the minister on probationary status. Shortly thereafter Fritz decided to take a position with a congregation in Lincoln, Nebraska and UUCP began seeking an interim minister.



Jesse Hise was again president of the board in 1999; Betty Sayler in 2000 and 2001; Peter Fears, not pictured, in 2002, and Don Weir in 2003.

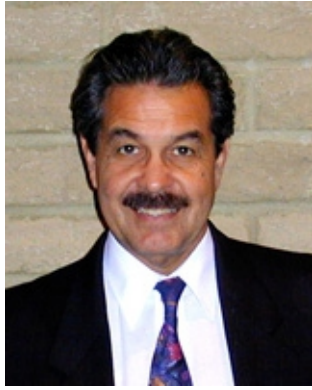
Linda K. Bunyard was chosen to be Interim in 1998 and served until 2000. She had earned a BA at the University of Colorado in 1974 and a Master of Divinity at Starr King School for the Ministry and was ordained in 1991. Before UUCP she had served as Interim or Minister at the UU Church of Joliet, Illinois, the UU Congregation in Eau Claire, Wisconsin and the UU Fellowship of Laramie, Wyoming. She began her ministry at UUCP in August 1998.



Linda K. Bunyard

Under her guidance, the congregation adopted the Mission Statement and the Shared Ministry Covenant, which reflected not only our dreams for the ministry of our congregation but also our commitment to being an integral part of that ministry. A Ministerial Search Committee was formed in the spring. Also in 1999 the front of the sanctuary was remodeled as a memorial to Audrey Engelen.

In her 2000 annual report she said 'the role of an interim minister is that of an 'interventionist.' We must challenge leaders and members to new ways of thinking. The interim asks you what you want to accomplish and then coaches, leads and provides resources. The interim is also a preacher, teacher, pastor and prophet just as a settled minister.' In his 2000 president's report, Jesse Hise admitted that the board chose to work on conflict because the congregation was still recovering from the second major conflict over our professional ministry.



John Burciaga and a photo taken at a Renaissance-themed party in October 2000

In April 2000, it was announced the new settled minister would be John Edward Burciaga. He earned a BA at Southeast Missouri State University in 1958 and his MDiv, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1961. He was ordained as a Baptist minister in 1962 and received certification at Meadville Lombard Theological School in 1965. He served UU churches in Bethlehem, PA, Sandy Springs, GA, Clearwater, FL and was interim minister at Bethesda, MD and Adlphi, MD before becoming the Acting District Executive of the Joseph Priestly District in Wilmington, DE. He became the settled and first Latino minister at UUCP in 2000. In the announcement of his selection he was described as 'warm, friendly and charming – a person who truly loves people .. a very caring man with a passion for social justice, an ethical person who really lives his UU principles.'"



Left, a group at John's installation in Feb 2001 and a together time during one of John's holiday services.

John Burciaga gave this overview of his ministry at UUCP "An important component of ministry during my tenure were initiatives on behalf of migrants. On many occasions they were part of our church services and other on-site special events. We were also leaders of an ecumenical program through the AZ Attorney General's office to protect migrants as well as the elderly in the Phoenix area. I was privileged to receive a special award from the Mexican Consul's office, presented by the Consul himself for the efforts. Also of significance was renewing and strengthening UUCP's Partner Church program, with special help from Linda Lu Burciaga, leading not only to re-connection with our sister congregation in Transylvanian but hosting a meeting of national PC leaders."

Ellie Anderla was president of UUCP from 2001 to 2005, and 2006 and 2007.



In 2000 UUCP officially became a Welcoming Congregation. In 2003, Lisa Casey, our Director of Religious Education for a number of years was succeeded by Kim St. Clair. Having been a high school teacher, Kim further improved the Children's and Adult education programs. During 2004 and 2005, an ambitious building project was initiated for which we raised \$650,000 in pledges to remodel our building and make it universally accessible. We hired an architect and begin the lengthy process of developing the plans and getting township approval. In the spring of 2005, John resigned and moved on to interim ministry in New Hampshire. A search committee was formed to find a new settled minister. A Finance Committee was formed and we succeeded at getting our finances in good working order.



Left, Connie and Jean in Oct 2005; Right, in Dec 2005, the choir re-instituted caroling to homebound members.

The Reverend Jean L. Wahlstrom was chosen to be our Interim Minister in 2005. She earned a BA from Colby College in 1974, worked as a computer software programmer and later earned an MDiv from Harvard Divinity School in 1992. She was ordained in 1993 and served as Associate Minister in Burlington, IA, Interim Minister in Clarklake, ME, Minister at Portland, ME and Interim at Flint, MI before coming as Interim to UUCP in the fall of 2005. In the announcement about her selection she was described as a lifelong UU, a daughter of a UU minister, 52 years old, single who is 'straight but not narrow', capable, caring, soft spoken, gentle and intelligent.



Photos of Jean Wahlstrom and Heidi Parmenter taken in 2006 for the 2007 UUCP directory. Center, Jean joined a caroling group. Right, Jean and Gary Ezzell at her final service on June 10, 2007.

In her September article in Horizons she admitted she was a newcomer to the Southwest, having lived virtually all her life in New England. She too was in transition. While UUCP started the process to find a settled minister, she was also looking for a settled position back East. Meanwhile she would be helping UUCP move forward, which Gary Ezzell said she did. As board president during her tenure, he said, "a major contribution that Jean made as our interim was to encourage us to have faith in ourselves. She supported Smoot's call for us to invest in our future. She supported my efforts to stabilize the renovation team." She worked with the staff, board and committees to deal with the controversies over the building renovation project and the change to our accounting system.

In 2006, UUCP administrator, Karen Metcalf left and was succeeded by Heidi Parmenter. We enthusiastically started on a five-year strategic plan built around the core vision of building religious community. The Board of Trustees moved to a Policy Board structure and the Bylaws were changed to reflect this. In April 2007, group of 57 people, most from UUCP, marched in the Gay Pride Parade and won the "Pride Stroll" Award as the best walking group in the parade. Jean Wahlstrom left in the summer of 2007 to take a position in Syracuse, NY.

The search for a new settled minister was not successful so in May the congregation again hired an interim minister, the Rev. Roberta Haskin for the fall of 2007. She had earned a BA from Edgewood College in 1969 and a MDiv from the United Theological Seminary in 1997. She was ordained in 1997 and served as Chaplain in hospitals in Robinsdale, Edina and Minneapolis, MN. She served as Consulting or Interim Minister in Menomonie and Madison, WI, Marysville, WA, Kitchener, ON Canada, Las Vegas, NV before coming to UUCP.



Left, Roberta Haskin; center Nick Erfle's funeral in September 2007; right, Jane Truran, Sarah Henkel, Heidi Parmenter, Kim St. Clair, Dennis and Roberta Haskin at District Assembly in April 2008.

Roberta came to UUCP in mid August 2007 but was officially “in the pulpit” for the first time at our ingathering ceremony on September 9. In her first newsletter column for Horizons in Sept 2007, she said her main goal was “walking together” with us. Our administrator, Heidi Parmenter started her maternity leave on Aug 24 and wasn’t back to her job until Oct 30 so she had volunteer office administrative staff and a brand new volunteer coordinator, Kate Otting. Almost immediately Roberta had to deal with a tragedy, congregation member and police officer Nick Erfle’s death and the intense publicity around it. She led the televised memorial service at the huge and packed First Assembly of God church on September 24. The audience included the governor and many other important people in addition to our own congregation members. According to board president, Gary Ezzell, “My strongest memories are of Roberta's handling of Nick Erfle's funeral. That was absolutely outstanding. She conducted a UU ceremony in a manner that was inclusive and comforting to all present.” He added, Roberta “also has been a good administrator and leader of the staff. For example, she did personnel evaluations for the entire staff, which had not been done for some time.”



Roberta participated in the Music Sunday presentation of the UU cantata Sources on May 4, serving as our narrator. On May 28, the UUCP staff, Heidi, Kate, Connie, Kim and Jane, took Roberta out to lunch at Arcadia Farms.

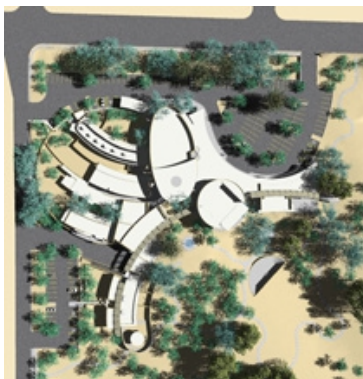
In her interim minister's annual report in 2008 she said, “I have led Sunday services, rites of passage, and covenant group facilitators. I have preached, pledged, offered pastoral care, supervised professional staff, and attended Board and committee meetings. I helped to hire a volunteer and membership coordinator. New committees have been formed, notably Green Sanctuary, and Publicity and Membership have been re-formed..” As a trained interim she said when she came that it was her role to either rock the boat or calm the waters, whichever was most needed. Her husband, Dennis Haskin was also an asset to the congregation. He joined the membership committee and in October started the STARS program, training 39 congregation members in skills of listening to guests and helping them connect with UUCP after the Sunday service. It was a great success and

a big part of why we added 54 new members, a 22% increase from the previous year. He also helped create a comprehensive membership manual. He joined the buildings and grounds committee and helped it create the B&G Manual, as the Strategic Plan recommended. He joined the publicity committee and helped us think of new ways to get the word out about UUCP especially through the website. Roberta and Dennis joined other staff and congregation members of UUCP at the UUA Pacific Southwest District Assembly in Del Mar, California, April 25-27.



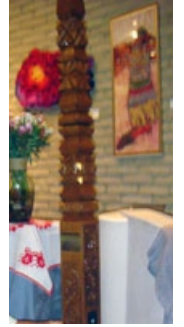
UUCP had 82 people walk in the Pride Parade. on April 12, 2008. Right, Susan Frederick-Gray

In April 2008, the Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray was called to be our first settled woman minister. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Molecular Biology at the University of Wisconsin in 1997 and worked briefly in the field of genetic research in St. Louis, MO and Cambridge, MA. She earned an MDiv from the Harvard Divinity School in 2001. She was ordained in 2002 and served as minister at the First UU Church of Youngstown, OH from 2003 to 2008. In the May 2008 article in Horizons that announced her selection, she said, "I look forward to serving a congregation that is ready to catch fire – a church that is enthusiastic and motivated by their mission and vision for the future, and is excited to share that with others. I am looking for a ministry in a church that is ready to grow (not just in numbers, but in health and its impact on society and the world), so that together we can bring the message of Unitarian Universalism to more people and have a stronger impact in the world. Worship, public witness, and hospitality are all a part of building this kind of growing ministry. I have strong gifts in these areas. I want to develop them further... Let's see what we can do together."



Left, UUCP Master Plan; right, Sources

After extensive work and consultation, Paradise Valley approved the final plans for the building improvements created by our architect, Doug Sydnor. It is a bold vision. In May 2008, the combined choirs of UUCP and Valley UU presented Sources: The UU Cantata, a celebration of the six sources of Unitarian Universalism. Composed by Jason Shelton in 2006, we were one of the first groups in the nation to perform it.



The Sept 2008 Birmingham service; Ernie, Eva, Domokos, Csilla, Gyszi and Paula; the kopjafa

In September 2008 a special service was held to commemorate the bombing in Birmingham in 1963. Paradise Valley mayor, Vernon Parker spoke. In October, our Romanian partner church minister Rev.Domokos Rusz and his wife Eva, and the congregation president Gyszi Littasi and his wife Csilla visited the congregation. The visit was arranged by Paula Kulina and Ernie Garcia, leaders of the Partner Church initiative. The Romanians brought with them a kopjafa, a carved oak pillar. Such pillars were traditionally a grave marker but in more recent times they are used to commemorate special events. In this case it represented the friendship between our two churches.



2009 UUCP Social Action Committee; Connie Jahrmarkt; 2008 and 2009 board president Sarah Carlson

UUCP was the 2009 recipient of the Bennett Award for Congregational Action on Human Justice and Social Action. The UUA website said, "In response to persecution of immigrants, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Phoenix partnered with immigrant rights groups and joined a successful effort for a federal investigation of Sheriff Arpaio of Phoenix, AZ. Rev. Frederick-Gray and fifty members joined thousands in a protest march. Their work includes immigration reform advocacy, support of day laborers, and witnessing against human rights violations. As a denomination that believes we should 'Stand on the Side of Love', the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Phoenix has demonstrated our commitment to this promise."

Also in 2009, membership growth prompted the addition of a second service. UUCP hosted the first ever TransForm Arizona conference. Connie Jahrmarkt, music director, was among the first group of music professionals certified by the Unitarian Universalist Association. That year she also celebrated her 10th anniversary at UUCP.



Left, Rev Susan is joined by UUA president, Peter Morales, second from left, in a protest against Sheriff Arpaio. Right UU clergy and UUCP members join in protest.



Paula Kulina was president of the board in 2010; Jimmy Leung in 2011 and 2012; Linda Bellantoni in 2013 and 2014 and Glen Lockwood in 2015 and 2016.

In January 2010, UUCP hosted the one-act play, 'Dream Act' by James Garcia. The Immigration Task Force helped coordinate activities in response to SB1070, a strict anti-immigration state law that critics said encouraged racial profiling and portions of which were subsequently struck down by the courts. Rev. Susan was arrested and charged with failure to obey after she and five others chained themselves to the driveway, south port entrance to the 4th Avenue jail, in an effort to stop what she believed are immoral neighborhood immigration raids by the Sheriff's Department. According to Rev. Susan's annual report, "The year began with the Unitarian Universalist Association's (UUA) attention focused on Phoenix, Arizona. When SB 1070 was signed into law in April 2010, a national call went out to Boycott Arizona. The UUA already had its 2012 General Assembly scheduled for Phoenix. A national conversation began about whether or not to boycott. At the same time Latino and Hispanic organizations, Human rights groups and religious leaders in Arizona began organizing against the implementation of SB 1070 and calling for action from the Federal Government to issue an injunction against SB 1070. The nation's eyes turned to Phoenix."



Smoot Carl-Mitchell taking down the old sign and standing by the new one. KellyAnn Bonnell

The 2010 Combined Campaign included a three- year capital campaign to address the following building needs: new restrooms, sewer connection, electrical upgrades and a new sign.

Again from Rev. Susan's report, "the ministry within the congregation continued to grow in complexity. We said goodbye to two staff members, Kim St. Clair, DLRE and Jane Armstrong, UU Early Education Cooperative (UUEEC) Director. We added not just a new Justice Director, but hired Victoria Capon as our Interim Director of Lifespan Religious Education. In October, we hired a very part time Office Assistant, Jill Story, and in January, we hired a new UUEEC Director, Kelly Ann Bonnell."



Our 2010 Congregational photo



Special guests at the 50th, left, standing, Jesse Hise, Rev Susan Frederick-Gray, Gretchen and Ray Manker, Ed Bostrom, Sandy Thomson, Peter Drake, Sally Boyd. Seated, Helen Votichenko. Center, the Rev. Linda Lawrence. Right, Sandy Weir

On April 3, 2011, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of our current building. People who were members in 1961 were special guests at both services. Peter Drake, the son of the building's architect, Blaine Drake, joined us. In July, the Rev. Linda Lawrence was made Assistant Minister. She was to provide pastoral care, occasionally lead worship, and direct Membership and Adult Faith Development Ministries. Sandy Weir was hired to lead our Arizona Immigration Ministry (AZIM), working with human rights partners in Arizona and helping to organize the Justice GA.



The symbol of Justice GA, the candlelight vigil, Smoot in new bathroom and Anne Byrne.

In 2012, General Assembly, Justice GA, is held in Phoenix with a focus on immigration issues. In her annual report Rev. Susan said, "we answered a call to serve beyond our walls. I worked half time leading the Arizona Immigration Ministry (AZIM) a partnership between UUCP and the UUA to make the June 2012 Justice GA in Phoenix a successful convergence for immigrant and human rights. Justice GA exceeded expectations. The concluding witness a candlelight vigil outside Maricopa County Tent City Jail calling for its closure, was incredibly powerful."



Chris Crass, Susan Frederick-Gray, Walt Emrys Staton, Ari Clemenzi and Linda Wells

A powerful partnership for immigrant rights developed in 2012 between Unitarian Universalists led by UUCP, Catalyst Project, and SURJ, Standing Up for Racial Justice.

Also in 2012, we started Community Nights, a weekly Thursday night potluck. The new bathrooms were finished. And Anne Byrne was hired as Director of Children's Ministries in June, integrating the oversight of our UUEEC preschool, the children's ministry program, and our summer Kids Kamp.



From left, Benjie Messer, Emrys Staton and Katie Resendiz

In 2013, UUCP began monthly themes for services and programs. The UU Foundation began support for a development program. And Benjie Messer was hired as music director. A standing Stewardship Committee was formed in 2014. The sanctuary and lobby were renovated with new chairs, carpeting, paint and video screens. UUFoundation began the legacy giving society Chalice Keepers. Choir director Connie Jahrmarkt resigned. In 2015, Linda Lawrence and Anne Byrne resigned and Emrys Staton became our Intern Minister and Katie Resendiz the Director of Children's Ministries. A decision was made not to operate the EEC preschool but to let it become its own nonprofit. A Vision Task Force began work. Margaret Herrick left the UUF a substantial legacy bringing the total in the fund to over \$1 million. Cluster ministries began a pulpit exchange. The music program expanded with several small groups to bring more variety to our music program.



Left, Rev. Susan and some of her campaign staff, Jim Allen, Jan Kaplan and Cherie Stafford. Right, the November 13, 2016 Arts & Crafts Fair.

In 2016, Rev. Susan was invited by the UUA Presidential Search Committee to run for UUA President. When her nomination for President became public, we ended our Associate Minister hiring process and were given permission to hire Emrys Staton, our Ministerial Intern, to serve as full time Director of Justice and Pastoral ministry. A successful Stewardship Campaign enabled an expansion of staff and programs. We also embarked on the planning for a Major Capital Campaign to make our building more efficient and accessible. A new Vision was adopted by the Congregation in June. An Arts and Craft Fair returned in the fall after a several year hiatus.

There was a new approach to children's education too. Kindergarten through sixth graders experience the congregation's monthly theme through art, music, conversation, cooperation, and play. In contrast to the demands of the school week, Sunday School at UUCP offers faith development through a studio approach. Each Sunday, students are offered a choice of 3 studios. In a given month this may include painting, sports, music, tie-dye, storytelling, and craft, each providing a unique approach to the monthly theme. Every studio is designed to give children the opportunity to demonstrate leadership, express opinions, and experience community.

On March 2, 1947 a group incorporated as the First Unitarian Church of Phoenix with 57 families as contributing members. Seventy years later, in 2017, we have 413 members and 298 non-member friends. We have an average weekly attendance of 336 and 85 currently enrolled in religious education. We are a healthy,

financially secure congregation living out its mission of welcoming all in building a religious community called to share journeys, grow in spirit, and advance justice. We honor those whose vision got us to this point and look forward to the future.



Our 2016 congregational photo



Our outside banners