History of the Unitarian Church of Jamestown
1966 to 2025

By Jeffrey S. Victor, John Anderson and Len Faulk
(Unfinished work in process.)

Rev. Eugene H. Adams: March, 1966— June, 1970

----- (**Date**?) The Social Responsibility Committee organizes community forum discussions on controversial social issues, including criticism of United States involvement in the Vietnam War.
----- (**Date**?) The Jamestown Post-Journal publishes a letter to the Editor from Chairman of the Social Responsibility Committee, Jeffrey Victor, criticizing United States involvement in the Vietnam War, and noting opposition to the war by the national Unitarian-Universalist Association.
----- (**Date**?) Congregational meeting about the anti-war activities of the Social Responsibility Committee, and objections that such activities unfairly represented the church to the public.
----- (**Date**?) Rev. Adams spoke at a meeting of the Jamestown School Board against military recruiters in school, without alternatives being offered for military service being offered in schools.
------ Members of the congregation were split by disagreement between those who wanted to use the church as an organizing vehicle for opposing the war and those who were very uncomfortable with such activism.
----- The church attracted many young adults who opposed the war. In reaction, many older members left the church.
----- (**Date?**) Last fund raising “ham dinner” for community sponsored by church.

Rev. Duke T. Gray: Feb., 1971— Feb., 1974

----- (**Date?**) The new minister, Rev. Duke Gray, tried to cultivate a “new consciousness” through a variety of symbols, including his dressing in colorful clerical gowns during services, encouraging people to hold hands while singing, decorating the church with paintings and having a sort of “People’s Communion” during services. (The latter consisted of bringing food to share with the congregation.)
----- The church began to attract many countercultural young people. They came to church wearing informal clothing (torn jeans, farmer’s coveralls, sometimes even in bare feet). They spoke not of politics, but of a new consciousness. Some young women even breast feed infants during church services. Donations declined.
----- (**Date**?) Some younger members and their friends present the musical “Hair” in the church sanctuary. Rumors spread that some of the actors were nude and some were smoking marijuana.
----- More members drifted away from the church. Some members tolerated these changes, but were not particularly pleased by them and decreased their active involvement in the church. Eventually, most of the “hippie” generation left the church” and joined traditionalistic churches.

----- **Cultural Controversies arose over**:

----- (**Date?**) Decorating the church sanctuary walls with prints of classical paintings, which were quickly taken down by a self-appointed member who objected to such decoration in the church walls.

Someone took the American flag from sanctuary of church and put it in a closet.

-----(**Date?**) A huge “happy face” painted on side of church facing the top of Foote Ave.
-----(**Date?)** The church begins to hold social activities including dinner “pot-luck” meals, square dances and popular music concerts.
-----(**Date**?) Rev. Gray becomes active in the local Welfare Rights organization.
---- (**Date**?) Rev. Gray tries to register the church building as an historical landmark to stop its sale to the city, which wanted to extend Foote Ave.

No Minister: 1974 – 1980 (Hard Times)
----- (**Date?**) **Rev. Josiah Bartlett** is hired as U.U. church consultant, in January, 1976 (the “Vanguard Project”). He recommends sale of the church buildings, because the congregation could no longer afford to heat the buildings.
----- **May, 1979** The old church building and school building (Henderson House) is sold (**for $**) to the city of Jamestown, and was demolished on Sept. 25, 1979.
----- The church organ was sold to the Lakewood Methodist Church.
----- The congregation moves into the minister’s parsonage house and meet in the living room.
----- Attendance at services declines to an average of about 15 people meeting in the living room of the parsonage, most of whom were elderly. By the early 1980s, the church had become moribund.
----- **May 1979** The old church building and school building (Henerson House) are sold (for $) to the city of Jamestown, and was demolished on Sept. 25, 1979.
----- The church organ was sold to the Lakewood Methodist Church.
----- (**Date?**) The money for the sale of the old church is invested in Eastern Airlines stock by the church President and Treasurer, without approval of the church board.
----- (**Date**?) The money from the sale is lost in the stock market, after Eastern Airlines goes bankrupt.
----- (**Date?) Rev. Cynthia Edson** was hired, then, fired after only three months, due to her incompetence. Resentment grows towards UUA administration in Boston, which recommended her to help us survive, while knowing that she already had problems in her work. (**wording and details needed**)
----- (**Date?) Rev. Don Reidell** starts speaking at church in 1977. In1979, Rev. Don Reidell was ordained and in1982, he became the church consultant.
-----(**Date?**) Some members try to start a branch of Planned Parenthood. At a public meeting, the church was picketed by an anti-abortion group, some of whom force entry into the church to stop the meeting. (**details needed**)

Rev. Barbara J. Kulcher (interim): Jan., 1980—1981
----- (**events?)**

No Minister, 1981 – 1997
--- (**Date**?) In a last ditch effort to revive the church, a few members (Gust Stokes, Leonard Faulk and Jeffrey Victor) promoted the idea of using our last reserves of funds to build an extension of the church, to be used as a meeting room and sanctuary.

The effort caused disagreement over whether to build an extension or to move to a new location and build a new building.

(However, the attractive meeting place helped revive the church, because several new young families visited the church to sample it and joined and became active members.)

----- (**Date?**) A dedication ceremony for starting building of church extension took place in 1986.
----- (**Date?**) The T. Richard Parker Award for Social Justice was proposed to the church board by Jeffrey Victor and Leonard Faulk, as a memorial for Dick Parker, shortly after his sudden death in 1984.
----- (Oct. 1985) In 1985, the first Parker Social Justice Award ceremony and took place, during the celebration party for the 100th anniversary of Unitarian church in Jamestown. The first Parker award was given to Anna May Cole for her work providing literacy education to prisoners in Mayville Jail.
----- (**Sept., 1987**) Project to lobby Congress to stop aid to the Contras, during which a paid organizer worked for church to oppose the Reagan government aid to the Contras. (Initial meeting was, Sept.1, 1987.)

There was a break-in at the church, at which only a file of names and telephone numbers of people working against aid to the Contras was taken and deposited on the stairs. It was interpreted as a message that we were being watched.
----- (**Date?**) Member Bryan Willson sat in front of Navy armaments train in California and lost his legs when hit by the train.
----- (**Date?)** Break in and robbery of church TV and VCR.
----- (**Date?**) Group of members drove in van to pro-choice demonstration in Washington.
----- (**Date?**) First "Goods and Services Auction" as a fund raising event. 1990
----- (**Nov., 1993???)** Ceremony honoring "senior" members, including Ruth Sternberg, former secretary to Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson at Nuremburg. And, Milred Woodcock, former librarian, who refused to remove books from the local library demanded by anti-Communist agents of Senator Joe McCarthy. (**Details needed**)

Rev. Martha Munson -- **September 1996 to June 1997**
--- Rev. Martha Munson was hired as church consultant and weekend minister to help members to develop a "mission statement" and plan for growth in membership. Rev. Munson provided workshop training for members of the Church Board in effective church leadership, and for members of the finance committee in effective organizing of church finances.
----- (June, 1997) Some members worked with Habitat for Humanity to restore a house for a needy family.

Carolyn Brown -- Student intern minister, September 1997 to June 1998.
-----(Spring 1998), A women's discussion group, "Wise women in Training" was organized.
----- (Spring, 1998). Adult Education ("Eveningsong") program is initiated during
----- (May, 1998**)** Church dinner with gay and lesbian members of the community to develop tolerance and understanding.
----- (Aug., 1998) The church receives $25,000 from the inheritance of Mary Louise White (a non- member), which was invested in mutual funds in the stock market to replenish the church endowment.
---- (**Date?)** The church sanctuary is named "The Townsend Room", in honor of the founder of the church, Rev. James G. Townsend.

Rev. Jeffrey Matthews Lamb – **Sept. 1998 to June 2000**

----- (Sept.1998) Jeffrey Matthews Lamb is hired initially as a student minister.
----- (Oct.,1988) The congregation, for the first time, hosted the Western New York Cluster Conference having the theme of “Fulfilling the Promise: Making it Real”. The event offered eight workshops and was attended by more than 50 people, who widely praised the food and hospitality offered by the congregation.
----- (Dec. 1998) The congregation develops and passes a new “mission statement” for the by-laws of the church. It reads as follows.

> “The mission of the Universalist-Unitarian Church of Jamestown is to promote and provide a community where diverse people of all ages may explore the meaning of existence, give expression to liberal religious values, and work for a just and sustainable society. As members we covenant to provide programs and a caring community in which all persons are empowered to serve one another, encouraged to pursue spiritual growth, accepted for who they are, and supported in life’s transitions.”

----- (**Date?**) The church received a grant of $5,000 from Bruce Parker for use in the fund of the T. Richard Parker Memorial Award for Social Justice, to be matched by the congregation. Interest from the fund is used as a gift given to award recipients.
------ (Oct. 24) Rev. Jeffrey Matthews Lamb is ordained as a minister by the Unitarian Church of Jamestown, along with the Unitarian-Universalist Society of Northern Chautauqua, on, in a ceremony at the Chautauqua Institution.

John Monroe-Cassel -- Sept. 2001 to June 2003
----- (Feb., 2001) Congregation raised over $1,000. of donations for the AIDS Community Services, in a pot-luck dinner at the church.
----- (**Date?** 2003) Purchase and dedication of a new piano.
----- (**Date?**) Change of name of church to: The Unitarian-Universalist Congregation of Jamestown.
----- (**Date?** 2003) Change of affiliation within the UUA from the St. Lawrence District to the
Ohio-Meadville District.

Church History – 2003-2025
---- (March 12, 2006) First Piano Salon (open to the community); organized by Joyce Rose, who got a NYS arts grant for the event.
----- (April 25, 2010) Dedication of Townsend memorial bench in Jamestown cemetary at Townsend’s grave.
----- (May 16, 2010) Rev. Chris Raible speaks at 125 church anniversary (former minister of the church in1950s.
----- (Sept. 21, 2012) Jazz Concert (open to the community).
----- (**Date?**) First “pot-luck” lunch after Sunday service. (currently once a month).
----- (**Date?**) First summer picnic.
-----(Nov. 2013) First church auction ((open to the community); organized by Joyce Rose and Pat Brininger.
----- (Dec.13, 2013) David Cay Johnston author of books about Donald Trump speaks (open to the community).
----- (Indian Dinner, 2014) Indian Dinner fund-raiser (open to the community); organized by Joyce Rose
----- (Dec. 10, 2017) Establishment of the book box free books for children give-away in front the church.

----- (**Date?**) Halloween free books for children give-away (open to the community).
------(**Date?**) July 14 celebration, free books for children give-away (open to the community)
----- (July 24, 2025) David Cay Johnston author of books about Donald Trump speaks, second time (open to the community)

Names of Past Presidents of the Board. (incomplete)
Michele Victor --- 1993 to Jan. 1997
Carolyn Seymour --- Feb.1997 to Sept. 1998 --
Bruce Anderson --- Sept.1998 to June 2000
Evelyn Walzer --- June 2000 to May 2003
Kristin Chambers --- June 2003 to –