A CENTENNIAL HISTORY OF THE UNITARIAN CHURCH OF JAMESTOWN, NEW YORK

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Dedicated to the Memory
Of T. Richard Parker
May 10, 1925-Sept. 11, 1984

JAMES G. TOWNSEND, D.D.

The Unitarian Church of Jamestown was founded in 1885. Now, in 1985, the congregation is celebrating the 100th anniversary of that event.

This history is part of that celebration. It is in two sections. The first was written by the late Clara Carpenter, daughter of one of the founding members and a participant herself since childhood. As a personal account of the founding and development of the church, it is irreplaceable. It was written for the 75th anniversary, in 1960. The second part, written by Patricia Appleyard Parker, covers the period between 1960 and 1985. Both necessarily leave much out, including many events and the names of many people who have been prominent in the ongoing drama of the Unitarian Church of Jamestown. But it is hoped that together they will convey a feeling of the life of the church during its first century of existence, and provide a record of the milestones it has reached.

BY CLARA CARPENTER
THE OLD UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY

The liberal movement in religion in this vicinity had its beginig in the organization on March 8, 1858, of a group known as the Universalist Society in Jamestown. We find in this society the names of men and women who contributed largely to the development of their community. Among Harry R. Lewis's papers were found the secretary's records covering the period from 1858-1881. Familiar names that appear in these records are: Orsell Cook, Erastus Crosby, Tyler Field, John A. Hall, William W. Henderson, Richard Lewis, C.R. Lockwood, Abram Martin, Phineas Palmiter, Moses Smith, James L. Sprague, William H. Tew, Harvey W. Tew, Charles Weeks, Daniel Winsor.

The first trustees of the Universalist Society in Jamestown were Lewis Taft, William H. Tew, William Clark, Austin Ruggles and James L. Sprague. The first place of meeting was Jamestown Academy Hall at the corner of Spring and Fourth Streets. The following is taken from the certification of the corporation: "We, the undersigned members of the Universalist Congregation of Jamestown, New York, do hereby certify that pursuant to notice duly given, according to Section Third Act Entitled 'An Act to provide for the incorporation of religious societies' passed April 5th, 1813, the male members of full age of said society or congregation met at the Academy Hall in the said village of Jamestown on the 8th day of March 1858, for the purpose of forming a Universalist Society and to elect trustees for the same."

The first minister was the Rev. E.W. Reynolds. On Dec. 26, 1858, the congregation met following the religious service to consider the purchase of the property known as the Wilcox lot on the corner of Third and Spring Streets, for a church building. The congregation voted in favor of this purchase and Orsell Cook and William H. Tew were appointed a committee to secure the property. The following is taken from a secretary's report of Dec. 24, 1858: "It was agreed that the ladies of the society would pay for the purchase of the said lot." The name of this organization was "The Ladies Society for Good Work."

The Rev. W.E. Reynolds received $900 a year to preach one sermon a Sunday. He was released because of poor health on May 8, 1859. In considering his release the congregation expressed many opinions. "All present evidenced the greatest respect for the Rev. E.W Reynolds and were unanimous in expressing their preference for him but knowing the poor state of his health many thought he would not be able to perform his duties as pastor satisfactorily to himself and for the greatest benefit to the society, as it is in its infancy and needs a pastor who has strength of body as well as of mind and much labor is to be performed out as well as in the church. Others thought he might by not preachig but one sermon a Sunday be able to get along, while another class deemed one sermon a Sunday too little, but all conceded that one sermon such as they usually have from the Rev. E.W. Reynolds was enough for an ordinary man for a whole week."

Reynolds was followed by the Rev. Edward Smiley, who preached one sermon a Sunday, receiving but $300. On Aug. 26, 1860, the congregation met to consider "setting a table in the Fair Grounds during the approaching Fair." On Sept. 16, 1860, the Rev. Edward Smiley resigned and the Rev. I. George was engaged to preach. He began his duties on Oct. 7, 1860, but the records do not show the length of his service.

There were other groups of Universalists in Chautauqua County. Reference is made to the possibility of the Rev. W.E. Reynolds preaching in Frewsburg and other nearby places. On June 1st and 2nd, 1859, the Chautauqua Association of Universalists met in Jamestown and Tyler Field and Charles B. Albert were delegates from Jamestown.

No church edifice was ever erected on the lot at the corner of East Third and Spring Streets. The secretary's report shows no record between 1861 and 1866. On March 18, 1866, a meeting of the society was held at Tew, Sprague and Company's store to consider selling the property and after the debts were paid to invest the balance in a mortgage. It was sold to Mrs. Martha Andrews, wife of Lewis Andrews, for $1,300.

From 1866-1875 there must have been a cessation of activities though annual meetings were held for the election of trustees and other business. In 1874, they considered hiring the Rev. B. Brunning to "revive the cause" but so little interest was manifest that the matter was given up. In 1875, the Rev. S.L. Rosipaugh became minister at a salary of $1,000. This salary was subscribed by the various members. He served three years and in 1877 the society was meeting in what was called Universalist Hall. It was voted to spend $200 for a carpet and chairs. On July 1, 1879, the Rev. G.W. Kent became the minister. He later became an active Unitarian minister and served for many years in New Orleans. On Jan. 5, 1880, the society met in Universalist Hall to again consider the building of a church and a committee was appointed to canvass for two weeks on lots, prices and funds. But in January 1881, a meeting was called to consider discontinuing the active organization of the society and notice was sent to Elliott Hall that the society would surrender possession of Universalist Hall and the trustees were authorized to dispose of the personal property of the organization.

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THE FOUNDING OF THE PRESENT CHURCH

It was four years later that the history of our own church begins. As the story goes, Alonzo M. Kent and Elial F. Carpenter met Dr. James Graham Townsend on the street one day and asked him if he would be interested in forming a liberal church. Dr. Townsend had been a Methodist clergyman, holding prominent pastorates in that denomination. He became too broad and free in his theological views to longer enjoy his old associations and so withdrew from the Methodist Church. He had many liberal friends in this community.

In October 1885, a meeting was held in Allen's Opera House, the present site of Shea's Theater (Editor's Note: in 1985 Little Theatre), and was well attended. Dr. J.G. Townsend spoke briefly, stating that for a long time he had noticed the widening gulf between the churches and the people and had desired to establish a "people's church." He said the name Independent Congregational Church was used because the church was independent of all other church organzaitons and because the government was democratic.

The meeting was organized with William W. Henderson chairman, and Charles H. Brown, secretary. The name Independent Congregational Church was formally adopted. The following trustees were elected: Mrs. A.M. Kent, Mrs. O.E. Jones, Mrs. Mark Martin, Edward L. Hall, W.T. Falconer, S.B. Hoyt, Mrs. M.L. Fenton, Mrs. John T. Wilson, Harvey W. Tew, C.W. Scofield, William W. Henderson, N.R. Thompson, E.F. Carpenter, A.E. Pierce, and C.E. Weeks.

Charles H. Tew was elected treasurer and F.B. Bush secretary. The salary of Dr. Townsend was fixed at $2000 and he was to provide his own parsonage. That night over 100 signatures to the paper declaring the intention of the signers to attend the church were received, making in all nearly 230.

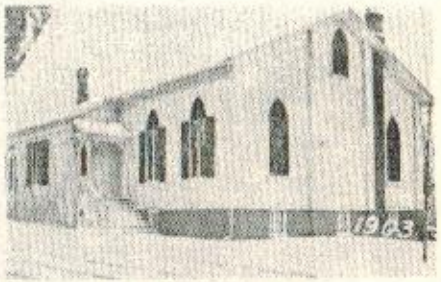
ALLEN'S OPERA HOUSE

The Rev. L.H. Squires, who became minister on Jan. 1, 1893, wrote an article for the *Christian Leader* of Boston entitled "An Object Lesson." It described the church as he found it. In this description he said: "Perhaps Dr. Townsend builded wiser than he knew. When first coming out from the orthodox fold he disclaimed being either Unitarian or Universalist. He took no sectarian name and adopted no creed. He summoned the people to the formation of a liberal Christian church on an independent basis and the people came. Now perhaps it is pertinent to inquire whether it is at all likely that such a society could have been gathered in the name of a sect? At three different times, Universalists have undertaken work here but without avail. I have asked the question of candid and observing people here, 'Would this church have done as well if it had been organized as a Universalist or Unitarian movement?' The answer was always and confidently 'No.'"

Meetings were held in Allen's Opera House for a little more than a year at which large congregations were invariably present. The membership was between 300 and 400. A Sunday School was organized in connection with the church and the classes were held on the opera house stage and in the boxes. On pages 124 and 125 of the first record book that has been preserved is an article by Dr. Townsend appearing in the *Buffalo Express* of Oct. 3, 1885, stating his beliefs and why he left the Methodist Church.

In 1886, this church was incorporated as the Independent Congregational Church. A committee composed of Dr. Townsend and F.B. Bush was appointed to complete the charter and send it to the State Capitol. It is unfortunate that the records of the original organization and membership have been lost.

THE FIRST M.E. CHURCH, 1885



I.C. CHURCH, 1903

THE PURCHASE OF THE CHURCH BUILDING

In the summer of 1886, the church located at the junction of East Second and Chandler streets and formerly occupied by the Methodist organization was purchased at a cost of $5000. It was refitted and funished at an additional expense of about $8000. Five hundred opera chairs were placed in the amphitheater auditorium.

The women of the church purchased and installed an excellent tracker organ at acost of nearly $4000. It was necessary to build an addition to the church on the south side for the organ. It was at first pumped, by hand, by boys from the church who worked behind a curtain and occasionally peeked out. Later electricity replaced the hamd pumping. It was build by Johnson & Co. of Westfield, Mass., and is the 677th they built. This has long been considered one of the best organs in the city. Miss Isabel Harrington was the first organist.

At the first Sunday service in the new church Dr. Townsend peached both morning and evening on salvation and there were large audiences at both services. The press notice states that after the service there was a call for money and within half an hour $7986.25 was subscribed. In the evening nearly $2000 was given.

The dedicatory service of the church was held Sunday, Nov. 31, 1886. Dr. Townsend preached the sermon. He remained as pastor for nearly three years. During that time excellent work was done and the church was placed on a sound foundation.

A Lakeside School of New Theology was organized and meetings were held first in Lakewood and later in Bemus Point at an open amphitheater built especially for the school. A more complete history of the Lakeside School of New Theology was written and delivered to the County Historical Society by Clayburne Sampson in 1947. A copy is to be found with the church records.

For a time a liberal paper Christian paper was published. On Jan. 15, 1888, Dr. Townsend read in the church his creed consisting of 26 articles.

Dr. Townsend's work was so strenuous that his health failed and he was obliged to resign. Dr. Townsend was liked by all and there was keen disappointment that he was obliged to leave. In the period before his return to Jamestown in 1891, he was in Pittsburgh where he organizaed the First Unitarian Church in 1890.

HENRY FRANK

LYMAN H. SQUIRES

On June 20, 1889, the former Universalist Society of Jamestown met in the parlors of the Independent Congregational Church. Abram Martin was chosen chairman and Harry W. Tew, secretary. In addition to the above, the following members were present: Mrs. M.L. Fenton, Miss Lizzie Field, Harry R. Lewis, Miss Laura Lewis, Mr. and Mrs. John T. Wilson, Mrs. C.E. Weeks. The clerk of the society, Harry R. Lewis, reported that in the National Chautauqua County Bank was $1201.50 belonging to the society. It was voted "to turn this fund to another fund to be subscribed by the Independent Congregational Church of Jamestown provided and upon the express condition, however, that the fund so subscribed by said I.C. Church (which it is commonly called) of Jamestown should be sufficient when added to said fund of $1201.50 to liquid all the indebtedness of said I.C. Church." There is no record of the liquidation. The motion was made by H.R. Lewis, seconded by John T. Wilson and all present voted aya.

Dr. Townsend was succeeded by the Rev. Henry Frank, who for two years or more had been pastor of the First Congregational Church of Jamestown. He continued as pastor of the Independent Congregaional Church for a little more than two years. While the Rev. Henry Frank was minister, large audiences attended services. An Emerson Club was organized, which awakened considerable interest in literary work.

The Rev. Mr. Frank resigned in 1891 and Dr. Townsend was again called as pastor and remained nearly one year, after which the society was without a minister and during this time heard many candidates. Though there is no record we think the Rev. Mr. Tuckler was here for a time. He is remembered by some of because with his eastern accent, of the "tuckey supper" he talked about and held for the Sunday School.

A corn festival with supper at 25 cents was served in church on Sept. 15, 1891. The following is the bill of fare:

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Corn Hulled, with Milk
Corn maketh men cheerful — Zak. IX, 17
Corn Mush, with Milk
They did eat of the old corn of the land — John V, 11
Corned beef with Pickles
And he took the calf which he had dressed and set it before them.
Genesis XVIII, 8
Corned Tongue, Celery
Give them their meat in due season. P. CIV, 22
Corned Bread
Eat bread and let thy heart be merry. 1 Kings XVI, 7
Corn Johnny Cake
There shall be a handful of corn on the earth P. LXIII, 16
Corned Pork with Beans
After that the full corn in the ear. Mark IV, 28
Corn Blanc Mange, with Peaches and Cream
The first fruits also of thy corn. XVIII,4
Corn Loaf Cark
Corn Chocolate and Corn Cocoanut Cake
David dealt to everyone a cake of bread.2 Samuel VI, 19
Coffee
When will the new moon be gone that we may sell corn?
Amos VIII,3

* * *

Even the advertisements on the menu were in keeping with the festival: "Turn the cornea of sight and listen to our corn-tralto voice which corncertedly offer to your corn-sideration furniture suitable to all corndi-tions. Patent Rocker is upholstered in corn-colored plush. Price are hard to beat. You corn't do it, you know. — Chase and Son, 24 Main St.

The most convenient hotel in town. Corner of south Main and Taylor Streets. Corner rooms on corn-dtion you pay $2 and $2.50 per day. Corned Beef, Corned Tongue, and the best of every other corndiment when called for. — Humphrey House

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In October of the same year, an old-fashioned husking bee was given.

A course of meetings was held in March 1892 under the charge of several prominent Unitarian clergymen: Dr. D.W. Morehouse, F.R. Slicer, J.M. Scott. In May 1892, another course of meetings was held under the charge of Universalist clergymen: E.L. Rexford of Boston, J.K. Mason of Buffalo, W.H. Houghton of Titusville, Pa.

These meetings were held by invitation of the church to ascertain if the people might decide to unite with either of these denominations. As no decision was reached, it was agreed that the society would hear candidates alternately from the Unitarian and Universalist denominations and when a pastor should be found upon whom they should be united, they would go with whichever denomination he represented.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

After a canvass of about six months, a unanimous call was extended to the Rev. L.H. Squires, a Universalist of New Haven, Conn. He began his service Jan. 1, 1893. Mr. Squries was soon elected superintendent of the Sunday School. He introduced a graded course of lessons. Promotions were to be made each year according to age and members graduating into the adult class were gviven a letter of fellowship in the church.

The following were officers for the year: The Rev. L.H. Squires, superintendent; N.R. Thompson, first assistant; Mrs. Elliott Fenton, second assistant; Miss Blanche Sprague, secretary and treasurer; Mrs. Fred Davis, librarian; Miss Justine Stearns, first assistant librarian; Smith Ormondroyd, second assistant librarian; Miss Anna Blakeslee, pianist.

SAMUEL W. SAMPLE

WILLIAM A. PRATT

It was during the first year the Rev. L.H. Squires was here, on April 5 and 6, 1893, that the presentation of Longfellow's "Dream" was given in Allen's Opera House. More than 100 took part, many in the church and some from outside. It was a success in every way and the church cleared $4000 from it.

On April 28, a largely attended parish meeting was held at which the minister presented a plan of parish organization. This was necessary as the records of the former organization and the list of membership had been lost. The plan of organization proposed by the Rev. L.H. Squires was read and, after consideration, on motion of M.L. Fenton was unanimously adopted. This plan of organization is found in the old record book on pages 2-9. It contains the following declaration of faith:

"We believe in the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of all Mankind, the spiritual leadership of Jesus Christ, the necessity of personal Righteous-ness, the triumph of good over evil, and the ultimate Holiness and Happiness of All Souls."

The board of trustees, at this time, consisted of a moderator, clerk, treasurer and six other trustees.

On Saturday, July 8, 1893, the Liberal Christian Guild held a lawn fete on the church lawn. The Jamestown Worsted Mills Band furnished music. The press report says, "The flower booth was presided over by the young ladies of the Terpsichoreans society and it was difficult to tell which was the more admired, the fair proprietors or their flowers."

At the annual meeting for 1894, the Rev. L.H. Squires reported the church affiliation to consist of 200 families. He requested that if he were to be pastor for the coming year his salary should be reduced to correspond to the smaller income received by most of the congregation, on account of the hard times. He also urged that women be given representation on the board of trustees.

The following trustees were elected: C.W. Morgan, J.A. Parker and Mrs. Harriet Chase, the first woman trustee.

At the annual meeting, the following church societies gave reports: Liberal Christian Guild, Mrs. F.E. Gould; Terpsichoreans, Miss Josephine Price; Boys Lyceum, the pastor; Unity Club, Mr. Bush; Sunday School, Miss Blanche Sprague; Sunbeams, Miss Clara Carpenter.

The Rev. Mr. Squires was re-elected minister for another year.

A Washington birthday celebration was given by the men of the parish on Feb. 22, 1894. More than 400 were served at supper and at the entertainment, the auditorium was filled so that extra chairs had to be brought in. Total receipts were $120 but the expenses were nearly $100. As most of the provisions were furnished, there was a net profit of $25. I have heard it rumored there really was a deficit.

On March 12-19, 1894, a series of revival meetings was held in the church. Sermons were preached during the week by the Rev. L.H. Squires, the Rev. M.H. Houghton of Bradford, Pa., the Rev. E. Hathaway of Sherman and the Rev. Stanford Mitchell of Boston. Dr. C.C. Albertson held a revival service in the Methodist Church at the same time but in spite of this, our meetings steadily increased in members. Dr. Townsend preached on the closing Sunday and 52 names were added to the roll of membership, according to the entry by Mr. Squires in the church record book.

On Memorial Sunday, 1894, James M. Brown Post GAR and Encampment 95 UVL were present and on June 17, 1894, the lodge of Elks attended service in a body.

During summer vacation of 1894, the steel ceiling in the auditorium was put in by the Kinnear & Gage Comlpany of Columbus, Ohio, at a cost of $140. The ceiling was painted and decorated by H. Chase of this cityat a cost of $64. The sides were papered by W.C. Abbott of Jamestown, who was doing the frescoing of the new Episcopal Church. The weight of the steel ceililng is 2,800 pounds. The total expense was between $500 and $600. A subscription was raised and the Liberal Christian Guild assumed the blance of the debt.

The Rev. L.H. Squires resigned to go to Rochester in September 1895. He was succeeded by the Rev. S.W. Sample. There were no church records kept during his ministry but we remember that he preached to large congregations. His daughter, Mayme, had a beautiful contralto voice and sang in the choir.

UNITARIAN AFFILIATION

Mr. Sample was followed by the Rev. William A. Pratt, who was minister from November 1897 to June 1900. It was during this time that the church affiliated with the Unitarian denomination. The record says, "At the annual quarterly meeting in April 1898, the society by a unanimous vote, a large number being present, adopted the following: 'Holding to our incorporate name — Independent Congregational Church — to express our form of church government and the freedom of the individual worshipper but believing that a closer fellowship is desirable with the churches of the United States that have with us a common aim and purpose, it is resolved that we hereby adopt the platform of the National Conference of Unitarian and other Christian Churches, which churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding in accordance with his teaching that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man, and enter into fellowhship with the Unitarian Church of the United States.' This bond of union is not substituted for out present faith and covenant but adopted as a simpler expression of the same."

Mr. Pratt was a scholar and an excellent preacher. Mrs. Pratt's singing was an enjoyable addition to many church services. It was at this time that Lionel Robertson was the church organist. During the Rev. Mr. Pratt's pastorate in 1899, the first rummage sale was held and it was the original one in the city.

Mr. Pratt left on June 10, 1900. For several years he returned almost annually for a visit. One June 17, 1900, the Rev. Walter A. Taylor began his work as minister. Mr. Taylor was formerly assistant minister of the First Unitarian Church of Brooklyn, N.Y. At this time Charles Morgan was president of the board of trustees, Martin Merz was secretary and Mrs. Mamie Donelson was our organist.

That summer a Sunday School picnic was held at Long Point.

During Mr. Taylor's ministery many noted speakers came to the church. Our nearness ot the Chautauqua Assembly Grounds made some of these speakers available. On Aug. 4, 1901, the Rev. Edward Everett Hale preached in the church. Ernest Thompson Seton and Jacob A. Riis also spoke in the church while Mr. Taylor was here.

WALTER A. TAYLOR

MIDDLE EAST-CANADA CONFERENCE

On Feb. 11 and 12, 1902, a meeting of the Unitarian Conference of the Middle East and Canada was held here. Among the speakers were the Rev. J.T. Sutherland and the Rev. O.W. Morehouse. The following addresses were given at one session: "In the Moral and Intellectual Life of the Community, by the Rev. Leon A. Harvy; "In the Social Life of the Community," by the Rev. E.M. Wilbur; "In the Spiritual Life of the Community," by the Rev. T.C. Brockway.

The Rev. W.A. Taylor made the comment that this was the best meeting ever held in the church in his time. The committee from the church in charge of the meeting was F.B. Bush, chairman, Martin Merz and G.A. Bentley.

Another midwinter meeting of the Unitarian Conference of the Middle East and Canada was held on Feb. 10 and 11, 1903. The Rev. W.C. Gannett and the Rev. J.T. Sutherland again spoke. On May 24, 1903, a service commemorating the centennial anniversary of the birth of Ralph Waldo Emerson was held. The address was given by Frank H. Mott. In 1905, the Rev. William Channing Brown, who was in charge of the Unitarian Headquarters at Chautauqua, spoke at a quarterly meeting on his experiences in raising the $150,000 collected among our churches and what was to be done with the money. The Rev. W.C. Brown spoke on several other occasions.

The Adelphian organization was active at this time. The young ladies gave a lawn fete on the church grounds in August 1905 to raise money for necessary repairs to the Sunday School piano and singing books.

On Sunday, August 11, 1907, the Rev. Samuel M. Crothers, who lectured at the Chautauqua Assembly for a week, preached at the closing service of the church year. Sunday, October 7, of that year was observed by the church and Sunday School as their 21st anniversary. This is the anniversary of the coming into the present church in 1886. The Sunday School services consisted of appropriate exercises followed by an address on "The Sunday School on the Opera House Stage Twenty-One Years Ago."

An annual meeting was held in the church Jan. 8, 1909. The following statement and appeal were given:

"The estimated current expenses for the year 1909 are $2,000. The Liberal Christian Guild, Adelphians and Sunday School pledge $750. Income from collection and subscription $900. There will be a deficit of $150 on the past year. There are no other debts."

THE MEADVILLE CONFERENCE

The Meadville Unitarian Conference organized in 1903 grew out of a little winter conference which Mr. Taylor used to try to gather from Meadville, Dunkirk and other nearby churches. All through the early years the church was helped by the presence and interest of the officers of the American Unitarian Association; professors of the Meadville Theological School — Dr. Christi, Professor Doan, Mr. Southworth, Professor Hutchen, Professor Brown and Mr. Barber; and neighboring ministers — Mr. Brockway of Dunkirk, Mr. Wilbur of Meadville, Mr. Boynton of Buffalo, and Dr. Slicer of New York. In 1911 David Star Jordan preached in the church.

The Sunday School secretary's book for the year September 1912-July, 1914, was found when the Channing Club was redecorating Emerson Hall. A record of each service was carefully given. At the top of the page was the weather and at the bottom the attendance aand collection. We find familiar names: Gustavus A. Bentley, Floyd Bushey, Carlotta Ward, Mr. Soltag, Mrs. Gertrude Wilcox, Edward Bootey, Harry Holroyd, Bertha Weeks, Inez Butts, Miss Randall.

At the Christman exercises on Dec. 22, 1912, "We Three Kings of Orient Are" was sung by Joe Denning, Frederick Lawson and Norman Whittle.

At the annual meeting of the church on Jan. 12, 1912, we find in the Sunday report the list of officers: superintendent, The Rev. Walter Taylor; first assistant, Mrs. J.G. Wicks; second assistant, Lucia Henderson; secretary, Floyd Bushey; honorary secretary, E.R. Bootey; treasurer, W.E. Bushey; honorary treasurer, Harry L. Briggs; librarian, Mrs. W.A. Taylor; assistant librarian, Jennie Lewis; pianist, Inez Butts; first assistant, Eva Kiley; second assistant, Ada Heliwell.

Mr. Taylor's name will always be remembered in connection with the early years of the Associated Charities. His interest came directly through the work of Mrs. Wiltsie and the city poor department. About 1916, one of the first Boy Scout troops in the city was formed by Edward W. Holroyd and William Bushey. A number of English people coming to Jamestown found through Mr. Taylor a home in the Unitarian Church.

RED CROSS AUXILIARY

During the war, on April 4, 1917, the first church auxiliary of the Red Cross was formed in this church with 12 charter members, though only 10 names were necessary. The following were charter members: Lucy F. Taylor, Lucia C. Botsford, Rhoda F. Root, Edna H. Blomquist, Ethel W. Curtis, Frances L. Ahlstrom, Juliet Simmons, Eva B. Terry, Alice Breed, Helen J. Hale, Helen R. Randall, Annie E. Gates.

The following officers were elected: chairman, Lucy F. Taylor; secretary, Rhoda F. Root; treasurer, Lucia C. Botsford.

Mrs. Blomquist was chairman of the work comittee. The other members were Mrs. Ahlstrom and Mrs. Curtis. The membership increased so that at the time of the Christmas drive in 1917, there were 394 members. To the auxiliary belongs the credit of being the first to volunteer to keep the Red Cross tent open for securing memberships. Dr. Eliza Bottin conducted a First Aid class in connection with the auxiliary from July 16-October 9. Many members of the Unitarian Auxiliary assisted directly in the work of the Chautauqua County Chapter. Mrs. Blomquist and Mrs. Curtis were on the buying committee during the first months. Mrs. Curtis later had charge of the workroom. In the Red Cross parade of May 18, 1918, the following marched: Miss Simmons, Mrs. Blomquist, Mrs. Ahlstrom, Mrs. Taylor, Miss Thrasher, Miss Sherman, Mrs. Westrom, Miss Doris Holroyd. At the Liberty Loan parade Oct. 5, 1918, eight marched, among them Mrs. Sampsell, Mrs. Noble, Mrs. Taylor and Miss Thrasher.

The following is a record of garments completed by March 18, 1919: 300 petticoats, 790 pajamas, 151 underdrawers, 151 undershirts, 8 convalescent robes, 4 surgical sheets, 29 pillow cases, 12 fracture pillows, 5 rest pillows, 310 wash cloths, 273 sleeveless jackets, 86 scarves, 1,191 pairs of socks, 29 helmets, 48 wristlets, 29 tray cloths, 113 napkins, 106 handkerchiefs, 74 flannel bandages.

UNITARIAN CHURCH, 1960

THE REMODELING OF THE CHURCH

The Rev. Walter A. Taylor's pastorage ended March 30, 1919. The church was without a minister until October 1919 when the Rev. J. Franklin Burkhart came. In the development of the church at this time Arthur W. Kettle and Walter H. Edson took an important part. It was during Mr. Burkhart's pastorate that the church was remodeled.

The church building was in need of extensive repairs. Something had to be done and from that need developed the beautiful church which we have today. The entrance was changed from the north side where there had been a vestibule with entrances, one from the east end, one from the west, to the west side, the position it occupied when the church was first built. The opera house chairs were replaced by pews and the platform was moved to the east instead from the south side, in front of the organ.

The architect was a Mr. Phillips from Warren. The cost was about $40,000. Ten thousand dollars of this was paid from the sale of a house which had been willed to the church by Norman Thompson (sale price $7,000) and from another bequest. The balance was financed by bonds sold to members of the church and friends. On the building committee were Arthur W. Kettle, Walter H. Edson, Mrs. Ethel Wicks Curtis, and Miss Nell Farman.

Services were held in the YWCA and later in the basement of the church when that was finished and the upstairs had not yet been completed. A marriage by the Rev. J. Franklin Burkhart in the basement of the church on May 19, 1922, was the first wedding in the remodeled church. During his pastorate a council of 50 members was formed but was not very active. He organized the Laymen's League which was active for a time. Mr. Burkhart left to go to Charleston, S.C., in December 1922, before the dedicatory services of the remodeled church.

J. FRANKLIN BURKHART

WALTER ALBERT SMITH

ALFRED E. VON STILLI

The church was without a minister for three months until March 17, 1923, when the Rev. Walter A. Smith became minister. The dedication services of the remodeled church were held April 10, 1923. In 1923, the Townsend Room was named in memory of Dr. Townsend. Emerson Hall had been previously named. The Liberal Christian Guide had, sometime previously, changed its name to the Women's Alliance to conform to the name of women's organizations in most Unitarian churches. The Evening Alliance was formed in 1924. It was a reorganization of the Adelphian Society and later changed back to the name of Adelphians. During this time Ruth Draper was brought here for two evening readings and the Denishawn Dancers for one night. This latter entertainment netted the church $800.

Mr. Smith left in 1925 and the Rev. Alfred von Stilli came in December 1929.

THE UNITARIAN CHURCH OF JAMESTOWN

In 1926, the name was legally changed from Independent Congregational Church to Unitarian Church of Jamestown, N.Y. New bylaws were adopted in January 1926. In October 1926, the Board of Religious Education was formed. The delighful children's services by Mrs. von Stilli at the beginning of each Sunday service were much enjoyed.

Mr. von Stilli left in January 1929. The church was without a minister and heard different candidates until October 1929 when the Rev. Charles G. Girelius became minister. During the two years of his pastorate the Townsend Club, a young people's group was formed.

From October 1931 to June 1933, the Sunday School, Channing Club, Alliance and Adelphians met regularly and formed almost the entire life of the church. The Rev. Cornelius Heyer, minister of Adams Memorial Unitarian Church in Dunkirk, held services here a portion of the time on Wednesday evenings. A forum was organized in the winter of 1932-33. It met every other Sunday evening. Such topics were discussed as: Unitarianism, Humanism, Law Enforcement, Hitlerism, Science in the last 10 years.

So great was the discouragement at that time that a meeting of the congregation, discontinuing the church was even considered. Mrs. Oliver Chase, the first woman trustee, arose and gave a spirited talk. She said that too much work had been done in the past by devoted members for the members to even think of discontinuing. The church continued.

CHARLES G. GIRELIUS

ROBERT S. HOAGLUND

JOHN A. LEININGER

The Rev. Robert S. Hoaglund, through the assistance of the Rev. George F. Patterson, became minister of Nov. 5, 1933, and served until Aug. 1, 1937. In 1935 the church was obliged to refuse the offer of Mrs. Martha Fuller Prather's will, of the property at 863 Prendergast Ave. for a parsonage because of the expense of repairs. On June 14, 1936, at a congregational meeting, the title of minister emeritus of the Unitarian Church of Jamestown, N.Y., was bestowed upon the Rev. Walter Alexander Taylor. The 50th anniversary of the dedication of the present church building was held on Nov. 21, 1936, with the Rev. Charles R. Joy of the American Unitarian Association giving the address.

The Rev. John A. Leininger was the minister from Sept. 1937 until April 1, 1939. At his installation service the sermon was delivered by the Rev. Federick May Eliot. On March 13, 1938, a congregational meeting was held to take action upon the offer of the American Unitarian Associaton to advance funds for repairs and to discharge the bonds and mortgage then existing against the church and to issue a new mortgage in the amount of $12,000. The offer was accepted. As part of the repairs the stucco was removed from the outside of the building. This stucco was put on when the church was remodeled in 1922. Siding was used in place of the stucco. An Emerson Club was formed from the Twonsend Club by a group of young people. In this group we find the names of Carol Himes, William Simpson and Hall VanVlack.

The Rev. Frank L. Porter-Shirley began his pastorate Sept. 1, 1939. We recall his delightful vesper services, a get-together of the congregation where unique, homemade simple games were enjoyed. We were able in 1939 t convert our furnace from coal to gas.

In March 1942, we were grieved by the death of Mr. Porter-Shirley. He had been in poor health for some time. Dr. Everett Moore Baker, at that time executive vice president of the American Unitarian Association, represented the association at the funeral. Dr. Albert Nicholas Kaucher had preached here March 8 and 15 during Mr. Porter-Shirley's final illness. He took part in the funeral services held in the church. Mr. Porter-Shirley was buried in Sunset Hill Cemetery.

Dr. Kaucher was immediately elected minister and served from April 1, 1942, to November 1, 1946.

FRANK L. PORTER-SHIRLEY

ALBERT N. KAUCHER, PH.D.

The Rev. Karl A. Bach and Mrs. Bach visited us on a cold winter Sunday in 1947. Mr. Bach preached that Sunday. He came as our minister in the spring of 1947 and his family followed in the summer. Mrs. Bach was our organist during his ministry. While he was here the auditorium and vestry of the church were redecorated. The painter employed was N.W. Dininny. A concrete floor was laid in Emerson Hall and the downstairs was also redecorated by many hours of work done by the men of the church.

In April 1955 the annual meeting of the Meadville conference was held in our church. The conference dinner was served in the Masonic Temple. During this ministry the constitution was changed to the effect that if a trustee had served three consecutive terms, he or she is inelibigle for re-election until after an interim of one year. It was while Mr. Bach was here that the coffee hour was introduced.

During the church year 1953-54, owing to serious injuries suffered by Mr. Bach in an automobile accident on Aug. 2, 1953, services were held on Sunday evenings, led by ministers of the Meadville conference as arranged by Dr. Killam. Laymen of the church conducted services during February, including Miles Bouton, William Simpson and Gustaf Sundin. Mr. Bach resumed the pulpit in September 1954. After he resigned in Feburary 1957, laymen of the church conducted most of the services until June. These speakers included Ralph W. Austin, Lester Berglund, William Farnick, H.A. Graham and Milton Sigworth.

The Rev. Christopher Raible became our minister in June 1957. Mr. Raible preached as a candidate April 19 and was called as minister begining his ministry in June. He was ordained and installed Oct. 19, 1957. Mr. Raible is renewing our energy. He prepares and sends excellent and useful weekly bulletins, "The Jamestown Unitarian"; he makes weekly religious broadcasts from radio stations in Warren and Kane, Pa. And he has conducted courses in Unitarianism and World Religions. He takes an active part in the community, especially in the field of mental health. He also teaches regularly at Jamestown Community College. The Sunday School has grown. The attendance at church is increasing, largely due to his excellent sermons.

KARL A. BACH

CHRISTOPHER RAIBLE

One of the lifelong members of our church, Miss Lucia Tiffany Henderson, died Oct. 29, 1956. In her will she left half of her estate to the Unitarian Church of Jamestown. With this money we were able to pay off the $12,500 mortgage on which only a small amount had previously been paid. Her money also made possible the purchase of the property at 102 Chandler St., which was dedicated and named in her honor on Nov. 8, 1959. It is being used for the Sunday School classes, church office and meeting rooms.

The church has had other gifts over the years from members: Mr. and Mr. Norman Thompson, Miss Lizzie Field, and Miss Gertrude McLean of Jamestown, Joseph Blomquist, formerly of Jamestown, and Mrs. May P. Mitchell of Warren, Pa.

There have been many money-raising events. There were plays such as the "Old Deestrick Schule," and "The Husking Bee,"lawn fetes on our church grounds, with Japanese lanterns, ice cream and homemade casked. In the early days, the ladies of the Guild served dinners at the Chautauqua County Fair in the old Marvin Park where Washington Street is no. How tempting the meal must have looked served on their long, best white tablecloths brought from home! There have been many fairs and many dinners called socials, some featuring turkey, stuffed and roasted at home, and then brought to the church to be carved by the men. Herbert Sundholm and John Westrom excelled at this. Later as we came to have sufficient stoves, they were roasted in the church.

At times organizations in the city have found a place to meet in our church. The first kindergarten in the city — a private one, before our public schools had kindergarten — held its sessions in the basement of the church.

Picnics were an annual event for the church and Sunday School. Steamboats have been chartered to carry picnickers to Long Point with their well-filled baskets. Picnics have also been held at Van's Forest (Dr. Hall G. Van Vlack's), Lake Erie State Park and the Hundred Acre Lot.

The Sunday School has been active the entire time from the sessions held in the boxes and on the stage of Allen's Opera Hose to the present meetings in the church and the Lucia Henderson House. It has helped to continue the church.

Over the 75 years from its enthusiastic beginnings to the present day, liberal religion has had a valuable influence in this community.

1960-1985

By PATRICIA APPLEYARD PARKER

In 1960, the Unitarian Church of Jamestown was 75 years old. At that time, Clara Carpenter, who as a child took part in the first services of the liberal religious movement that would become the Unitarian Church of Jamestown, wrote a history of the first 75 years.

No attempt has been made to revise that account.

Now, in 1985, the Unitarian Church of Jamestown has completed its first century. The past 25 years have been momentous ones. During this time, the church and its congregation have been involved in the historic events of the 1960s and 1970s, the century-and-a-half-old church building has been demolished, services have been moved to the former parsonage and a shrinking congregation has made hiring a minister unfeasible.

Nevertheless, the Unitarian Church of Jamestown has survived and is looking forward to another hundred years as a liberal religious presence in this predominantly conservative community.

When Clara Carpenter wrote her history, Christopher Raible was minister. This competent young man had come to us directly from the Starr King School of Theology in California. In 1960, Miss Carpenter reported that the congregation was growing, a Sunday School building had been purchased with money left by Lucia Henderson, the mortgage had been paid off through the same means, and the church was thriving.

The congregation voted for consolidation of the Unitarian and Universalist churches in January 1960 and the merger took place in May 1961. The name of the local church became The Unitarian Church of Jamestown, a member of the Unitarian-Universalist Association.

The Lucia Henderson house, the former First Covenant Church parsonage, across the street from the church at 102 Chandler St., was used for Sunday School during this period. Evening meetings took place in the large parlor, which was dedicated Jan. 28, 1962, to the memory of the Rev. Walter A. Taylor, minister from 1900 to 1919. The house itself had been dedicated Nov. 6, 1959.

Mr. Raible became prominent in the community during his four and a half years in Jamestown, in part because of his interest in mental health and his defense of school libraries during an anti-communist book-burning campaign. His special projects as minister included a Great Religions of the World course, which had a large attendance.

On Sept. 27, 1961, he resigned, effective Feb. 15, 1962, to become minister of a new Unitarian Church in Milwaukee.

His wife Pat gave birth to their first child on Christmas eve, 1961.

During the period between ministers, members of the congregation and outside guests led Sunday services. Among those who spoke were City Judge Lester W. Berglund, Achilles Livada, William Arrison and Donald Bube, all members, and JCC President Albert W. Baisler.

J. ROBERT BATH

The Rev. J. Robert Bath was installed as minister Sunday, Oct. 8, 1962. He was a scholarly man in his 50s and came to us from First Parish Unitarian Church of Bridgewater, Conn. Mr. Bath was minister until Jan. 16, 1966, when he left to become minister of the Dunkirk Unitarian Church. Mr. Bath also taught philosophy at Jamestown Commuity College from 1966 to 1972.

Again members and outside speakers filled the pulpit between ministers, a pattern that was to be followed frequently during the coming years.

For many years a holiday dinner and bazaar were held in the church. The event in December 1965 served 252 adults and 57 children, and made $1,048, of which $630 was profit.

One memorable event of Mr. Bath's ministry and a harbringer of things to come was the civil rights march on Selma, Ala. in 1965, in which Unitarian minister James Reeb was killed. He was a friend of Mr. Bath, who was interviewed about him the the local newspaper.

In 1965, church member and board chairman George Baldwin proposed that the church buy the old Melhuish house at 1225 Prendergast Ave. to use as a parsonage and also as a possible place to meet if the church should finally be demolished to make way for the extension of Foote Avenue. On Jan. 12, 1966, the church applied for a mortgage on the house of $16,600 at 5.5 percent for 20 years from the Bank of Jamestown.

The large brick house on a wooded plot was purchased and work began to prepare it for the new minister and his family. Two thousand dollars was alloted for a new kitchen and other improvements and work parties of volunteers began to prepare the house for its new residents.

The first family to live there was the Rev. Eugene H. Adams, his wife Carol, and their two young sons, John and Richard.

Mr. Adams and his family came in March 1966 to meet the congregation, which voted to accept Mr. Adams. Carol Adams and their two young sons, John and Richard, moved into the parsonage in June, while he traveled to Iron Curtain countries with a group of Unitarian ministers from June 26 to Aug. 12. The family was welcomed at special services in June 1966, followed by a reception at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Glen Ebersole.

EUGENE ADAMS

The decade that followed was one of great upheaval, in which the Unitarian congregation became intimately involved in history. The civil rights movement, the women's liberation movement, the Vietnam war and the changing lifestyles represented by the youth culture all became part of the life on the church.

Mr. Adams and other members of the congregation belonged to a group called the Committee for an Elightened Foreign Policy, which opposed the war in Vietnam, and was the center of considerable controversy. On Nov. 15, 1967, he asked the Jamestown School Board to consider a program of draft counseling for high school students.

Other events of this period were a communitywide march and service at the Presbyterian Church after the murder of Martin Luther King in 1968 and an all-night peace vigil at the park across from the church. One member of the congregation was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago and talked about police overreaction to events there. Others went to Washington for a massive civil rights march.

Many people took part in a communitywide effort for local black and white people to become friends. The Unitarian Church had exchange services with the AME Zion Church several times during this period.

Among the controversies in the church that arose was one over a production of the musical "Hair," which was given three times in the sanctuary. Several members objected afterward and said they felt there should have been more discussion before permission was given.

Another was over some people not wearing shoes to church.

At a board meeting on June 12, 1969, Mr. Adams suggested that many of our problems resulted from a conflict of philosophy over whether the church should take positions on social problems or members should fulfill their moral commitments in activities outside the church.

The Unitarian Church had always had a large turnover in its membership. At the beginning of the 1960s, there were many families with four or so children who swelled the Sunday School. In the normal course of things, many of these people moved away. The new influx of members had fewer children or none, and Sunday School registration began to fall. In addition, like so many other groups dependent on volunteers, the church began to suffer from the fact that many of the women who could have been expected to be the backbone of its life took paying jobs. Some members were lost because they became dissafected with the stands taken by other members on various issues.

In spite of these problems, the Unitarian Church continued to thrive under Mr. Adams' leadership.

DUKE T. GRAY

In 1966, Mr. Adams conducted a religion in life adult education series. In 1967, public debates were held at 8 p.m. Sundays under the Social Responsbility committee. Topics included: Abortion, the War on Poverty, the effect of Supreme Court decisions on law enforcement, and the question of whether the United States should withdraw from Vietnam. On Feb. 16, 1967, the Social Responsibility Committee backed liberalization of the state abortion law.

Mr. Adams continued services during the summer and regular picnic meetings were held for several years at the Hundred Acre Lot.

In June 1970, Mr. Adams resigned to return to the church at Medford, Mass., which he had served previously.

The Sunday School building, Henderson House, had been increasingly felt to be too expensive to keep up. In addition, people had been worried about the safety of children crossing the street. Consequently, the building was offered for sale. On Nov. 4, 1970, it was sold to Milton Faulkner and Thomas Roselli for $6,000, who rented it to JCC students. It was later sold to First Lutheran Church and demolished to expand their parking lot.

After this, the Sunday school was moved back to the church basement. Moveable partitions were put up to separate classrooms and an effort was made to keep it going.

Duke T. Gray was accepted by the congregation as minister of Feb. 28, 1971. He was a young man with a strong interest in ritual and became a leader in the liturgical movement in the Unitarian Church. He published a booklet of rituals entitled "The Book Of Celebration" while he was in Jamestown. He also is remembered for his colorful robes, the tenebras service, the Chinese gong and his experimental use of incense during services.

His fondness for posters lead to the placement of two large signs on the church: one on top of the porch said "Let The Sun Shine In" and one high on the south side of the building, which could be seen by people driving up Foote Avenue, said, "Have A Happy Day." These signs were put up with considerable difficulty. Not all members of the congregation thought them appropriate.

UNITARIAN CHURCH, 1985
1255 Prendergast Ave.

Other interests of Mr. Gray were welfare rights and the black power movement, both of which put him into controversial situations. He was active in the Jamestown Action Group and the Jamestown Community Center.

Another feature of Mr. Gray's ministery was the public Friday night suppers served regularly in Emerson Hall.

Mr. Gray joined in protests over the shootings at Attica prison during the uprising there, when he circulated a protest from the state Unitarian-Universalist ministers among the congregation. He also protested when it appeared to him that local police had overreacted to a disturbance in Allen Park.

Jeanellen Ryan, a young woman who was interested in becoming a professional religious education director, took over the Sunday School during this period and put some much-needed life into it.

Mr. Gray resigned Feb. 21, 1974, to go to First Unitarian Church of Toronto, one of the largest in the denomination.

After Mr. Gray's departure, it became apparent that there was no longer enough money to pay a minister. Services were continued with paid outside speakers and sometimes members of the congregation. Then heating prices skyrocketed and, like many local churches, the Unitarians began to hold winter services in the more easily heated basement.

The Foote Avenue extension that would require the demolition of the church had been proposed in 1973 and caused much unhappiness in the congregation. Opposition had been general and so had indignation at the environmental impact statement that there would be no effect on religion from the new road. But by May 1977, the mood had changed and the congregation voted to sell the church building and to take charge of its demolition. On May 18, 1979, Mayor Steven Carlson announced that $75,000 would be paid to the Unitarian Church.

After much searching, a purchaser for the priceless old tracker organ was found. The Lakewood United Methodist Church bought it for $6,000, lovingly restored it and incorporated it into their modern church. A farewell concert was played in August 1979 at the Unitarian Church by three outstanding local organists, Richard Corbin, Brian Bogey and Jack Hemmik.

The building was demolished Sept. 25, 1979. It was a heartbreaking day for Jamestown Unitarians. Many of them must have wept, as did board chairman T. Richard Parker.

The congregation then turned their attention to the former parsonage, which was to be used for services with Sunday School on the second floor.

BARBARA KULCHER

The congregation decided to hire an interim minister and in January 1980 voted to accept Barbara Kulcher, a 1979 graduate of Bangor Theological Seminary in Maine. Mrs. Kulcher, a Canadian, served for 18 months. Many members of the congregation drove to Hamilton, Ontario, when she was ordained at Divinity College Chapel at McMaster University.

During the winter of 1982, Dr. Cynthia Edson was interim minister for a short period.

In the fall of 1982, the Rev. Donald Reidell of Buffalo became consultant minister of the church, with the Rev. Kitsy Russell of Rochester also speaking one Sunday a month. Mr. Reidell continues in this capacity.

Since moving to 1225 Prendergast, the congregation has engaged in many discussions about what direction to take. A proposal to build a church addition to the building was rejected. Other ideas for remodeling have been considered and turned down, as have suggestions for building elsewhere or selling the building and renting meeting space. But services continue, with members performing all the functions of the operation. Membership has fallen to 49, and the church's status is effectively reduced to that of a fellowship.

Because of its nature as a free church and because of the many periods during which there has been no minister, the Unitarian Church of Jamestown has been dependent for its survival and character on its membership. The history of the church is a reflection of the often conflicting concerns and the deeply held convictions of many people, a fact which has been both its strength and its weakness. Many people have made contributions to its life, devoting hours of time and their best efforts to furthering causes they believed in. It would be impossible to name them all or to list the contibutions of each one to the ongoing drama that has been the Unitarian Church for the past 25 years.

On Sept. 11, 1985, T. Richard Parker died at the age of 59. He had been president of the board of trustees a number of times and a member of the board regularly for the past 30 years. Much of his time had been devoted to keeping the Unitarian Church and liberal religion a living presence in Jamestown. The board decided to establish a memorial in his name that each year would honor a person in the community who had contributed to the cause of social justice. This would, in effect, honor all Unitarians who have contributed to the church over the years. The award will be presented during the celebration of the church's centennial this fall.

MINISTERS OF THE JAMESTOWN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

The Rev. Elhanan W. Reynolds, 1858-1859
The Rev. Edward Smiley, 1859-1860
The Rev. Isaac Geroge, 1860-?
The Rev. Stephen L. Rosipaugh, 1857-1878
The Rev. George L. Kent, 1879-1880

MINISTERS OF THE UNITARIAN CHURCH OF JAMESTOWN

The Rev. James G. Townsend, D.D., 1885-1888, 1890-1891
The Rev. Henry Frank, 1888-1889
The Rev. Lyman H. Squires, 1892-1895
The Rev. SamuelW. Sample, 1895-1897
The Rev. William A. Pratt, 1897-1900
The Rev. Walter A. Taylor, 1900-1919
The Rev.J. Franklin Burkhart, 1919-1922
The Rev. Walter Albert Smith, 1923-1925
The Rev. Alfred E. von Stilli, 1925-1929
The Rev. Charles G. Girelius, 1930-1931
The Rev. Robert S. Hoaglund, 1933-1937
The Rev. John A. Leininger, 1937-1939
The Rev. Frank L. Porter-Shirley, 1939-1942
The Rev. Albert N. Kaucher, Ph.D., 1942-1947
The Rev. Karl A. Bach, 1947-1957
The Rev. Christopher Raible, 1957-1962
The Rev. J. Robert Bath, 1962-1966
The Rev. Eugene Adams, 1966-1970
The Rev. Duke T. Gray, 1971-1974
The Rev. Barbara Kulcher, 1980-1981