

UNITARIANS AND UNIVERSALISTS IN DETROIT

First Unitarian-Universalist Church
4605 Cass at Forest
Detroit, MI 48201
www.1stuu.org

Centennial Celebration of our Sanctuary

April 16–17, 1916 April 16–17, 2016

WELCOME:

We're delighted you've joined us (either in person or by reading this tour booklet) to look back at how Unitarians and Universalists came to Detroit and how we made our way to the corner of Cass and Forest, together

We're going to trace our Unitarian and Universalist roots back 185 years – to the 1830s - when free thinkers first began to dream of a liberal religious denomination in Detroit

WHO, WHICH, WHAT, WHY?

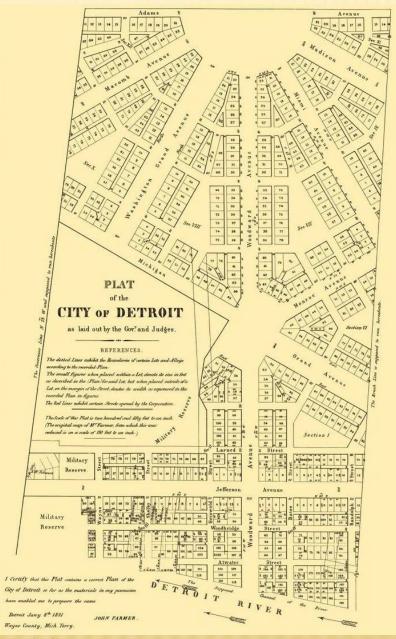
- Who organized first, the Unitarians or the Universalists?
- Which major figures in Detroit's early history were involved in the founding and leadership of our liberal churches?
- What locations did they choose? Why?

WHERE, HOW?

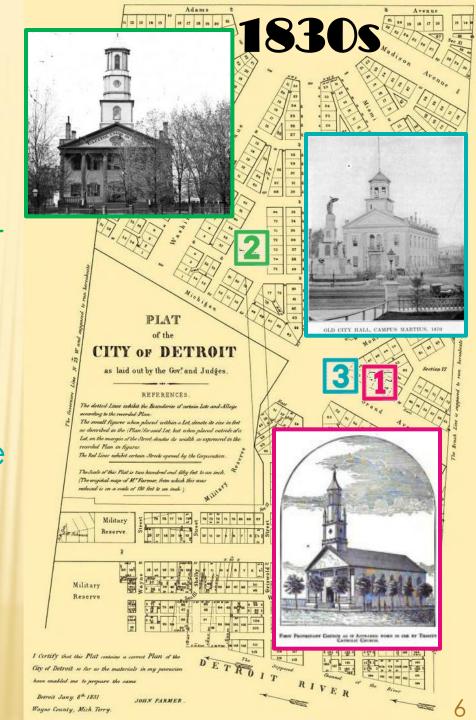
- Where did civil rights martyrs, ground-breaking African-Americans, icons of women's and workers' rights movements, politicians, poets and peace activists worship, meet and organize?
- How long have we actively supported the LGBTQ community?

FASTEN YOUR SEAT BELTS, HERE WE GO!

Detroit - 1831



- 11 1831: Universalists
 purchase a building [NW corner of Bates and
 Michigan Grand Ave –
 now Cadillac Square]
- 21833: Unitarians hold their first service at the Courtroom of the Capitol [now Capitol Park]
- 1836: Universalist circuitriders preach at City Hall [east of Woodward in the middle of "Michigan Grand Ave"]
- * 1836-38: Unitarian "missionaries" visit Michigan



WHO WAS FIRST?

1831

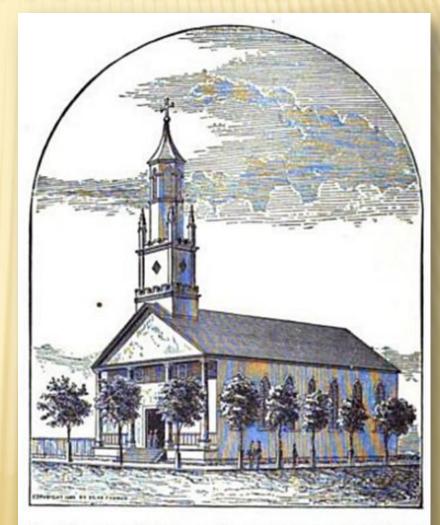
- Yohn Farrar, and two other liberal thinkers, Abraham Caniff and Robert Hilton, purchase a church building from the Presbyterians
- The building is moved to the NW corner of Bates and Michigan Grand Ave [now Cadillac Square] with the expectation of its being used as a Universalist church

1833

- Rev. John Pierpont, a renowned Boston minister, preaches the first Unitarian service in Michigan in the Courtroom of the State Capitol
- At that time Detroit was the state capitol; the building was located at what is now Capitol Park

1831 UNIVERSALIST CHURCH BUILDING

- The church was a plain frame building measuring 80 feet by 40 feet
- The building was sold to the Catholics in 1834
- The steeple pictured was added by the new owners in 1839



FIRST PROTESTANT CHURCH AS IT APPEARED WHEN IN USE BY TRINITY CATHOLIC CHURCH.



Unitarians

- After the service by Rev. Pierpont, an attempt was made to organize a Unitarian society [1833]
- Charles Briggs, the general secretary of the fledgling American Unitarian Association, visits Detroit [1836]
- Unitarian "missionaries" begin arriving in Detroit [1837-38]

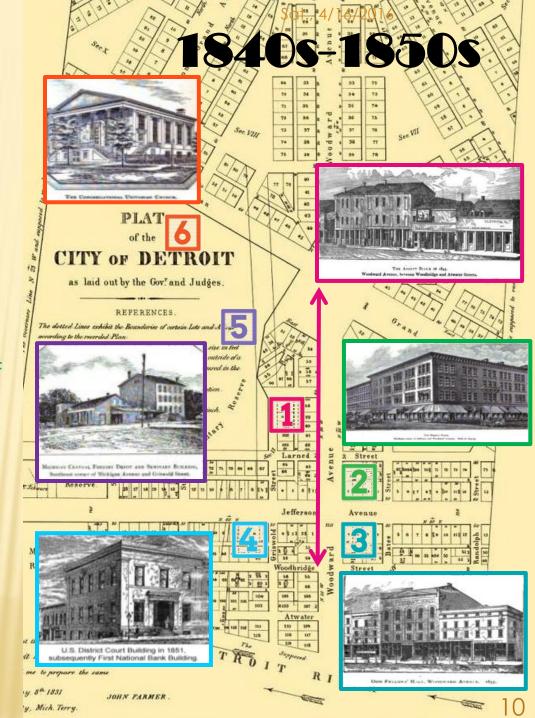
Universalists

- The Universalists were not able to maintain their building and sold it to the Catholics [1834]
- Universalism in Michigan during this time consisted of two dozen small societies organized into a Central Association
- Universalists continued to be served by circuitriders; they preached in other church buildings, schools and halls

1 1846: Unitarians meet in a room over a store on Woodward [somewhere between Fort and Woodbridge]

1846: Universalist congregation is revived **1849-50:** Unitarians hold services at:

- Merrill Hall [NE corner of Woodward and Jefferson]
- 3 Odd Fellows Hall [SE corner of Jefferson and Woodward]
- United States Court Room [SW corner Jefferson and Griswold]
- Old Seminary building [NE corner of Fort and Griswold]
- 1853: Congregational Unitarian Church is built [NW corner of Lafayette and Shelby]



1840S — 1850S

Unitarians

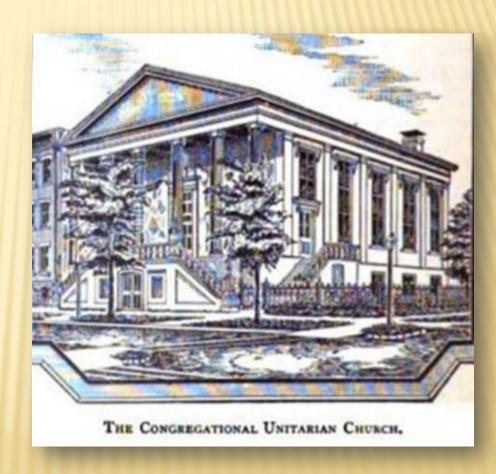
- Boston Unitarians and families arrive to promote the Michigan Central office of the New York Central Railroad [1846]
- Rev. F.W. Holland, Secretary of the American Unitarian Society, preaches in Detroit [winter of 1849-50]
- The Congregational Unitarian Society is formally organized [1850]

Universalists

- Rev. Jackson Stebbins settles in Detroit and revives the Universalist congregation [1846]
- Rev. Stebbins heads west in a covered wagon with his wife, Delecta Ann Farrar Stebbins [1857]
- Without his leadership, the congregation may have foundered; research to date does not reveal references to Universalism in the city of Detroit for many years after 1857

1853 CONGREGATIONAL UNITARIAN SOCIETY

- Congregational Unitarian Church is built [NW corner of Lafayette Ave and Shelby St]
- The church was of Grecian architecture with fluted portico columns and Ionic capitals



18605

- The church is an advocate for abolition and women's suffrage
- Women appear for the first time in the records!
- With the advent of the Civil War, women continued to take a more prominent role, especially in their work to support the troops and their care for returning soldiers
- The first Memorial Day address to the returned soldiers was delivered by a Unitarian minister in Elmwood Cemetery
- Some years after the Civil War a female member of the congregation attempted to vote on a church matter on behalf of her husband in his absence but was denied – "this caused so much feeling that before the next annual meeting the women had won the suffrage question insofar as the Unitarian Church was concerned"

(1876. Detroit - 1876

- 11879: Church of Our Father (Universalist) holds its first service in Whitney's Opera House [NW corner of Fort and Shelby]
- 2 1881: Universalists
 build a new church
 [Grand Circus Park
 at Macomb now
 Bagley and Park]
- 31891: Unitarians build a new church [NE corner of Woodward at Edmund PI]



1879 — 1881

- Research to date has no references to Universalism in the city of Detroit from 1857 until 1879
- At some point the Universalists must have begun worshipping with the Unitarians
- But a large number of Universalists in the Unitarian society had long wanted to start another Universalist society
- Differences of opinion finally led them to start a church of their own
- The Universalists incorporated [1879] and built Church of Our Father [1881]

WHO'S A UNITARIAN AND WHO'S A UNIVERSALIST?

Notable Detroit Unitarians:

- * JOHN JUDSON BAGLEY: tobacco baron then public servant; Detroit Common Council, Detroit Police Commissioner, Michigan Governor
- ALBERT GRENVILLE BOYNTON: Assistant Detroit Attorney; political editor at Detroit Free Press
- ROYAL CLARK REMICK: partner of Charles Merrill, lumberman who utilized careful lumber husbandry and expertly clearing land for farming
- Charles Merrill: lumberman who built the Merrill Block in Detroit with John Farrar; partner of Thomas W. Palmer
- * THOMAS WITHERELL PALMER: State Senator, U.S. Senator, U.S. Minister to Spain, benefactor to DIA; namesake for Palmer Park

Notable Detroit Universalists:

- CHARLES ENDICOTT: businessman; long time business partner of Cyrenius Adelbert Newcomb in a dry goods store
- GILBERT HART: businessman, bank president; moderator of the Unitarian church (before the Universalist society was formed)
- SIMON J. MURPHY: lumberman; leader of the Universalist society; folklore is that the church derived its name from a remark made by Mr. Murphy's son – when they were discussing the subject of a name, the son is said to have remarked, 'Better call it Church of Our Father'"
- CYRENIUS ADELBERT NEWCOMB: businessman; partner of Charles Endicott in a dry goods store; one of the organizers of and contributors to the building of the Universalist Church

1881 CHURCH OF OUR FATHER (UNIVERSALIST)

- The Romanesque-Revival church was designed by Detroit architect Charles H. Marsh
- Constructed of Ionia sandstone and Ohio freestone, with a slate roof supported by open timber trusses
- The structure was novel in design and very different from any other church
- When it was built Grand Circus Park was in the outskirts of downtown Detroit

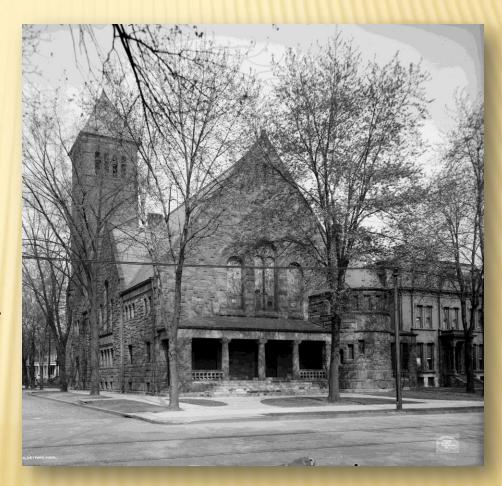


1890 - 1891

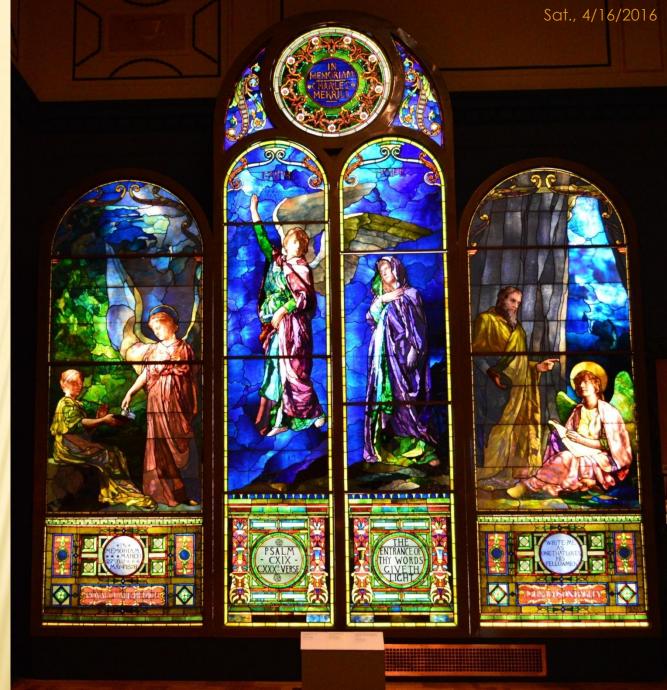
- Unitarians build a new church, far north of the center of the city on Woodward Avenue at Edmund Place
- The new church is dedicated on November 29, 1890
- Three arched windows in the west façade of the building, facing Woodward, contained stained glass designed by John La Farge and dedicated to John Judson Bagley, Charles Merrill and Royal Clark Remick
- Many people thought it might cause the death of the church to go so far out

1891 FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH

- Classic red sandstone rock-faced Romanesque Revival church with gabled facade designed by Donaldson and Meier
- Simple four-bay porch with a shed roof and stone Romanesque columns spanned the first floor on the Woodward face
- Two-story round tower, hiproofed projection at the corner
- Square side porch with stone piers to the rear along Edmund Place



- * 1936: La Farge stained glass windows are removed from First Unitarian Church in anticipation of widening of Woodward
- * 1936-59: The windows are crated and stored in the tower of our current building
- * 1959: The windows are donated to the Detroit Institute of Arts



LA FARGE WINDOWS

- The three windows in the DIA collection were formerly in the west façade of the First Unitarian Church at Woodward and Edmund Place
- The windows were installed for the opening of the church in 1890; they memorialized three former trustees of the church
- The round-arched stained-glass windows were designed by the renowned John La Farge, who is considered a master of stained glass, a contemporary of Louis Comfort Tiffany

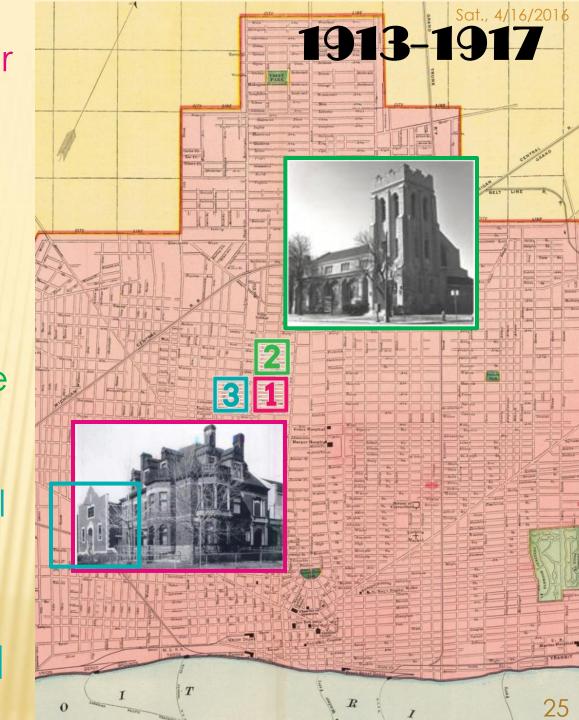
DEDICATED TO UNITARIAN TRUSTEES

- The left side of the windows features a round-arched lancet window, The Helping Angel; dedicated to Royal Clark Remick
- 2. The middle pair of windows depicts Faith and Hope, and is dedicated to Charles Merrill
- 3. The memorial window to the right, Brotherly Love, honors Gov. John Judson Bagley with an image of an angel deciding the fate of a man of faith





- 11 1913: Church of Our Father (Universalist) purchases a house and holds services there while a new sanctuary is built [Cass at Prentis]
- 2 1916: The new church is built in the rose garden [Cass and Forest]
- 3 1916: The social hall is erected on the site of the former carriage house [Prentis at the alley]



1913 - 1917

- Universalists sell their church on Grand Circus Park and purchase the Perry and Clara McAdow house at Cass Ave and Prentis St and an adjoining lot at Cass and Forest [1913]
- Present church building erected at Cass and Forest in the rose garden of the McAdow house [dedicated April 16,1916]
 - Newcomb Memorial Window, representing "The Parable of the Sower," is installed
 - + Ernest M. Skinner 51-rank pipe organ is shipped from Boston and installed
- Social hall erected on the site of the former carriage house and named after Rev. Lee S. McCollester [dedicated April 17, 1916]

MCADOW HOUSE

- Built in 1892-93 on what was then fashionable Cass Ave, at Prentis St
- The 2-1/2 story, hip-roofed, red-brick-and-brownstone building of Renaissance Revival design was built by architect John Scott
- Elaborate gardens were laid out extending north to Forest



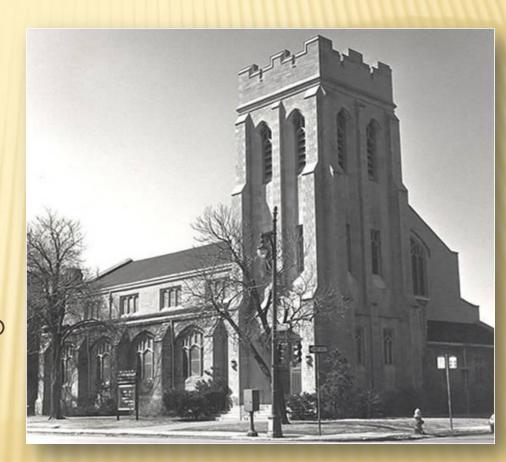
MCCOLLESTER HALL

- Erected on the west side of the McAdow house on the site of the former carriage house [1916]
- Designed by Donaldson & Meier in 2-story, Tudor-style
- Limestone matches the stone of the sanctuary while the red brick closely corresponds to the brick of the McAdow house
- Original south entrance permanently glazed for use as a window
- Ceiling of the hall was lowered and an upper floor of classrooms added to accommodate rapidlygrowing church school [1957]



SANCTUARY AND TOWER

- Designed by Donaldson & Meier in Neo-Gothic style
- Exterior walls are faced with pecked and smooth Bedford limestone
- Three-story crenellated tower with recessed arched entrance, crowned with a finial
- Spur buttresses divide each side of the tower into two bays
- Each floor contains one narrow pointed arch window per bay



SANCTUARY INTERIOR

- The interior reflects the handicraft ethic popular in Neo-Gothic architecture
- The nave is flanked by an aisle on either side, articulated into bays
- Each of the four bays per side contains one large pointed arch window
- The pitched roof of the nave is supported by exposed wood beams and trusses
- The light-colored brick walls appear rough and unpressed to create a handcrafted effect



STAINED GLASS WINDOW AND ORGAN

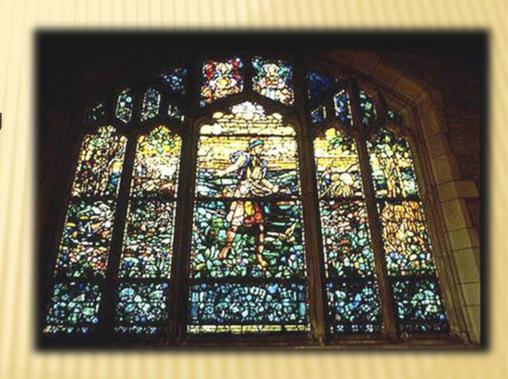
- * A brightly-colored stained glass window punctures the north wall over the balcony in the narthex, brightening the otherwise somber space (Newcomb Memorial Window)
- An organ case stands in the east end of the apse (Ernest M. Skinner pipe organ)





NEWCOMB MEMORIAL WINDOW

- Dedicated on April 16, 1916; it represents the "Parable of the Sower" as told in the Bible's Book of Luke
- Based on an original painting of THE SOWER, by William Willet and Annie Lee Willet
- Inscribed with the scriptural verse of the window's theme and the names of Cyrenius Adelbert Newcomb and Mary Eliza Haskell Newcomb, in whose memory the window was dedicated



SKINNER ORGAN

- Our 51-rank Ernest M. Skinner pipe organ was shipped via train from Boston to Detroit in April of 1915, built that year, and dedicated one year later, in April 1916
- Dedicated to the memory of Simon Jones Murphy and Ann Dorr Murphy, by their daughter, Annie Dorr Murphy (the first meetings of the fledgling Universalist society were held in the Murphys' residence)
- Much of the wood used in this instrument is redwood donated by the Murphys' lumber business operations in the redwood forests on the west coast



SKINNER ORGAN

- Our organ has never been altered, and is one of the earliest examples of Skinner's "allpurpose" organ that is still in its original state
- Dr. Paul-Martin Maki recorded Vol. II, The Ernest M. Skinner Organ Company on our organ to represent the work of Ernest Skinner in JAV Recordings' series of "Great Organ Builders of America"
- Helen Fairchild Larsson played this organ for 60 years, from approximately 1935 to 1995
- We have been fortunate to have Todd Ballou as our music director since 1996



THEMERGER

- * The two denominations had maintained their own churches since the 1880s but ...
- On December 8, 1932, the Unitarians sent a formal letter to the Universalists suggesting that the two congregations reunite for six months
- On December 9, 1932, the Universalists passed a resolution to reunite with the Unitarians for six months
- The Unitarians moved to the Universalist Church and their minister, Dr. Augustus Phineas Reccord, served both congregations
- The temporary union of the two churches worked well, beyond the most optimistic hopes of those who had first conceived the plan
- On October 24, 1934, Articles of Association for Church of Our Father (Unitarian-Universalist) are filed with the Michigan Department of State
- * April 29, 1960, the corporate name of Church of Our Father (Unitarian-Universalist) was changed to "First Unitarian-Universalist Church"
- Our merger preceded the national merger of the two denominations (in 1961) by 27 years

AND SINCE THE MERGER?

- *Who were the civil rights martyrs, ground-breaking African-Americans, icons of women's and workers' rights movements, social activists and educators, feminists and authors, musicians, politicians, poets and peace activists who worshipped, spoke, met and organized at the corner of Cass & Forest?
- *Ron Allen, Jimmy and Grace Lee Boggs (and, vicariously, Ruby Dee, Ossie Davis, Danny Glover), Rep. John Conyers, Alice Cooper, Anne Davidow, Alice Herz, Helga Herz, Viola Liuzzo, the MC5, Millie Jeffrey, Wade McCree, Dr. James and Mildred Robinson, Suren Pilafian, Vic Schumacher ... to name a few

CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

- The church is the only majority white church in Detroit to rent space to people of color [1930-40s]
- Vic Schumacher works with Bayard Rustin to integrate the segregated dining hall while Vic is in federal prison for being a conscientious objector during World War II [1940s]
- Vic marches with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. [1960s]
- Viola Liuzzo attends a United Nations seminar sponsored by the U.U.A. in New York City [1964]; she is murdered by the Ku Klux Klan during the Selma marches [1965]

GROUND BREAKING AFRICAN-AMERICANS

- Judge Wade Hampton McCree, Jr., first African-American appointed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit and the second African-American Solicitor General in the history of the United States, serves as moderator of the U.U.A. [1965]
- Congressman John Conyers speaks on impeachment and the effect of Watergate on American politics [1974] – Mr. Conyers has appeared in our pulpit often
- Josephine Love, a scholar-in-residence at Radcliffe College from 1966-1969, taught piano and introduced African American youth to the arts through personally sponsored field trips to museums, plays, concerts, and other cultural events. She co-founded the Heritage House and Fine Arts Center for Young People, where she served as director, about the same time that her close colleague, Dr. Charles H. Wright, was founding Detroit's African-American museum [1969]
- Dr. James and Mildred Robinson were instrumental in forming the local and national denominational Black Concerns Working Groups and worked tirelessly for diversity and inclusion [1980s - present]

WOMEN'S & WORKERS' RIGHTS ICONS

- Anne R. Davidow argues a ground-breaking women's rights case before the United States Supreme Court [1948] Anne was one of four women to graduate from the University of Detroit Law School in 1920
- Millie Jeffrey travels to Selma to attend the memorial service for Unitarian minister James Reeb [1965] – during her long career, Millie is UAW Director of the Consumer Affairs Department, a Governor Emerita of Wayne State University, and an iconic strategist for civil rights, women's rights, and workers' rights

ARTISTS, MUSICIANS, POETS AND EDUCATORS

- Suren Pilafian designs the WSU campus [1948-63]
- Forest Theater created as a showcase for local jazz and rock musicians and poets [1968]
 - Alice Cooper rehearses, and the MC5 record, in the theater
- Cass City Cinema is founded to focus on small budget films and subjects such as racial and sexual minority groups in a positive, enlightening way [1973]
- Ron Allen co-founds Horizons in Poetry, a monthly reading series and arts collective [1980s]
- Jimmy and Grace Lee Boggs found Detroit Summer, a multicultural intergenerational youth program [1997]

PEACE ACTIVISTS

- Alice Herz immolates herself on the corner of Oakman and Grand River in Detroit to protest the Vietnam war [1965]
- Vic Schumacher organizes a second "underground railroad" during the war in Viet Nam to help young men refusing the draft or deserting the service to travel to Canada through the Detroit crossing to Windsor; at the height of the war Vic had organized about 30 drivers to keep the railroad moving [1970s]
- Helga Herz wins her lawsuit against the German government for reparations for family property seized by the Nazis – she then sells the property, donating the proceeds to the German Branch of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom [2000]

HOW LONG HAVE WE ACTIVELY SUDDORTED THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY?

- Detroit Lesbian Organization meets and holds social gatherings [1960s-80s]
- We select Rev. Richard Hasty, an openly gay minister, as our interim minister [1988-1990]
- We are approved as a U.U.A. Welcoming Congregation; the project is led by our gay board President, Lew Thompson [1997]
- Our experience is informed by our minister whose sexuality changed in the course of her service, transitioning from bisexual towards transgendered [2007-10]
- After the completion of six months of educational programs, congregational offerings, and community outreach and events, our Welcoming Congregation status is renewed [2015]

COMMITMENT CEREMONIES DERFORMED AT FIRST UU

- Cindy Hill & JanisThompson[9/26/1992]
- Mary Galvin & Adrienne Lim [8/3/1998]
- Lew Thompson & Laurin Foxworth [11/18/2000]
- × and others ...



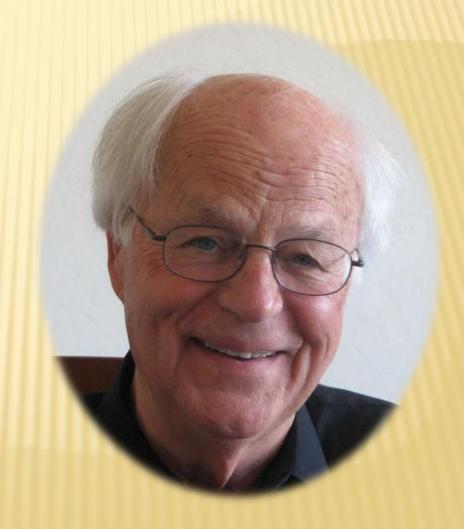
Adrienne Lim [L] & Mary Galvin [R] ceremony (officiated by Rev. Larry Hutchison [R]; with Allison Parks [L])

WHAT BEGAN AT THIS CORNER?

- Friends School [1965]
- Forest Theater [1968]
- Cass Food Co-op [1972]
- Cass City Cinema [1973]
- Dally in the Alley [1977]
- Cultural Center Cooperative Nursery [1979]
- Early participant in Noel Night [1979]
- Kwanza Jazz Concerts with jazz pianist, composer and educator Barry Harris and his Trio[1984]
- Detroit Women's Coffeehouse [1986]
- Detroit Summer [1997]
- UU Community Place [1998]
- Still Point Zen Buddhist Temple [2000]
- Part of the founding team of M.O.S.E.S. [1997]; MUUSJN [2003]

OUR MINISTER EMERITUS

- During Rev. Larry Hutchison's service to our church, UU Community Place was formed [1998]
- It operated as an umbrella organization for neighborhood activism: C.A.M.P. Detroit, Cinema Café, The Learning Center, Black Folks Arts, Digital Video Studio, Detroit Summer, Food Not Bombs, Center for Women's Culture, Detroit Women's Coffeehouse, Kwanzaa Movie Festival, Wisdom Institute for Teenage Mothers, Urban Visionaries, Blue Triangle



WE'RE DROUD THAT WE HAVE ORDAINED FOUR WOMEN

- Rev. Nancy
 Wynkoop Doughty
 [1962]
- 2. Rev. Susann Pangerl [1979]
- 3. Rev. Emmy Lou Belcher [1989]
- 4. Rev. Lynda Ch'anna Smith [2006]



At the Service of the Living Tradition

At Lynda's ordination (with Mary Lou Malone)



TRANSITION

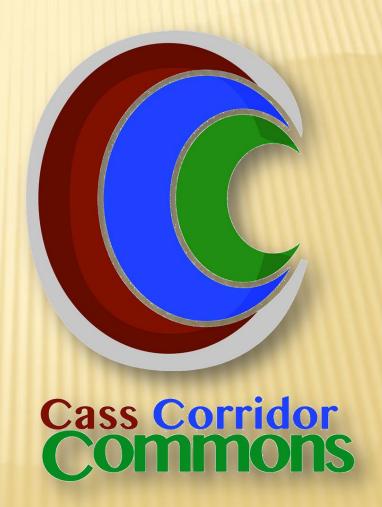
- It was becoming more and more difficult for our congregation to maintain 42,000 sq ft of old buildings and aging fixtures
- In early 2006, a "Future Facilities Task Force" was appointed to study the feasibility of selling a portion of the buildings; retaining the sanctuary, access to lavatories, and meeting space
- After months of research and meetings, including a plan by a local architect to achieve our goals, in July 2006, the congregation voted to proceed to sale
- The properties were put on the market but we were unable to attract a buyer
- The Task Force dissolved in 2007



- By 2010, the Board of Trustees recognized that our financial situation was very precarious; we had funds to keep the building open for about another year
- In a bold move, in 2011, the church issued a Request for Proposals to invite organizations to take over ownership of, or lease, the buildings in order to secure the future of our congregation; we focused on organizations that would work to promote social justice in the community, in line with our mission
- After vetting of candidates, the congregation voted to donate the properties to the East Michigan Environmental Action Council with an agreement that we may worship in the sanctuary in perpetuity
- The properties were transferred to EMEAC via Warranty Deed on April 12, 2012 – and a new era began!

CASS CORRIDOR COMMONS

- EMEAC formed the Cass Corridor Commons, of which we are a member
- EMEAC is committed to cultivating the Commons as a multi-use non-profit and green space in which educational activities, community efforts and business endeavors are created and carried out embodying principles of shared space, environmental justice and social justice principles



WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN DARING ABOUT WHERE WE WORSHIP

- We've picked up and moved church buildings
- We've constructed new buildings at the fringes of established society
- We donated our current buildings to another social justice organization to remain right where we are

WE'YE PERSEVERED AND DROSDERED

- We've bought and sold buildings
- We've organized, disbanded, and then reorganized congregations; merged, separated, and merged again
- We thought outside the box with the result that our current congregation is thriving

THANKS FOR SHARING OUR JOURNEY!

CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE:

- Colleen Dolan-Greene (Chair)
- Nancy Owen Nelson (Worship Committee Liaison)
- Maysel Brooks
- Danny Rebb
- Dan Secrest
- Kathe Stevens
- Dan Wiest

GUEST ACCOMMODATIONS:

Colleen Dolan-Greene

RESERVATIONS:

Dan Secrest

PHOTOS:

Danny Rebb

RESEARCH:

- Gwen Foss
- Glenn Maxwell
- * Marilyn Mitchell
- Danny Rebb
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TOUR GUIDES:

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- Joel Batterman
- Trey Greene
- Glenn Maxwell
- Dan Wiest

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- Al Acker (press release)
- Aletha Oberdier (graphic)



