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A History of the First Unitarian Church of San Jose, California

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A HISTORY OF THE FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF
SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
San Jose State College

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
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Introduction

The history of the First Unitarian Church of San Jose reveals the church as a microcosm in the macrocosm of Unitarianism and Protestantism in the United States during the last century. Certain themes and tensions have established themselves as they have arisen and been repeated in the history of the San Jose church against the background of Unitarianism and Protestantism in San Jose, in California and in the United States.

The most prominent tradition in the San Jose church has been the maintenance of and insistence upon intellectual freedom. At no point in the church's history has theological controversy and dissension arisen within it, although discord has had its place in the history of American Unitarianism. With the exception of the San Jose Council of Church Women, the church has been excluded from membership in community and national Protestant church councils and associations. This has occurred, of course, because of the doctrinal rejection of the divinity of Christ. In the course of its history, the intellectual freedom of the San Jose church has been threatened by political controversy. Indeed, the survival of the church's integrity has at times involved the loss of membership and financial support as well as considerable criticism from the local community.

A major tension throughout the San Jose church's history has revolved around the question of the social responsibility of the church to the community. Whether the role of the minister and the church in the community should include active participation in community affairs and efforts to

ameliorate the social and economic welfare of the community have been vital questions. The effort to maintain liberal intellectual and religious freedom has not been synonymous with the effort to free the community from social and economic ills in the history of Unitarianism, despite the heritage of Theodore Parker's social activism.

Another problem of social responsibility, unique to the post-World War II world, has involved the growth of the suburban community, and the resulting challenge to the urban church. For the San Jose church, the choices develop of whether the church should follow the move of the middle class to suburbia, whether it should foster the growth of new churches in suburban areas, or whether it should concentrate on maintaining its relationship with and responsibility to its downtown parish in an attempt to cope with the growing problems and needs of urban society. The question has been raised often in the history of the San Jose church; but the consensus of opinion of the congregation has always inclined towards the latter two alternatives.

This work is a study of the First Unitarian Church of San Jose, its history, and its efforts to meet the problems of an urban community.

The first Unitarian services in San Jose were held in City Hall in November 1865, before an audience of one hundred people. The Reverend Charles Gordon Ames had been invited to speak by Mr. and Mrs. B.F. Watkins, Santa Clara county residents who belonged to the San Francisco First Unitarian Church. They had canvassed the Santa Clara area to support the work of the Reverend Thomas Starr King and the Reverend Henry Bellows for the United States Sanitary Commission, and through these efforts the Watkins had decided that there was a need for liberal religion in San Jose. Ames, profoundly impressed by his travels through the war-torn South on his way to California, devoted his sermon to the freedom and dignity of all men. This first sermon established the century-long theme of the San Jose First Unitarian Church, and the 1965 HOST project to bring Selma, Alabama teenagers to San Jose for a summer represented the natural outgrowth of Ames' views. The HOST project caused controversy within the community and within the congregation, just as the views of Charles Gordon Ames had a century earlier.¹

San Jose promised to be a ripe field for Unitarian missionary endeavor. Employed as the American Unitarian Association's roving missionary in California, Ames' work in San Jose was made easier by the fact that many of the city's outstanding leaders were liberal, progressive, pioneering citizens who did not subscribe to the orthodox, Protestant evangelical churches

¹Henry W. Bellows to Mrs. B.F. Watkins, San Francisco, July 1, 1864; Sidney A. Peterman, Centennial Sermon, November 1, 1965; Records of the First Unitarian Church of San Jose.

then in San Jose - the Methodist Episcopal Churches, North and South respectively, the Presbyterian and Baptist Churches, and the African Methodist Episcopal Church of Zion.² Among the first subscribers to the early Unity Society were such staunch supporters of the woman's suffrage movement as Mrs. B.F. Watkins and Mrs. A.T. Herrmann. B.F. Watkins was a leading agriculturalist in the county, coming from New England in 1851, and was credited with planting the first orchard of navel oranges in California. A leading civil engineer in the state, A.T. Herrmann constructed the road to Lick Observatory on Mount Hamilton and served on the board of the Alum Rock Commissioners. The first doctor in San Jose, Benjamin Cory, the outstanding architect Levi Goodrich, the prominent bankers T.E. Bean and J.L. Knox, J.A. Cottle, a trustee of the Homestead Association, J.J. Owen, editor and publisher of the San Jose Mercury, and J.E. Brown, Republican state legislator and founder of the first San Jose Free Library, all lent their support to Ames and the Unity Society. Throughout the church's history, the bulk of its membership would continue to be drawn from the educated, professional strata of the community.³

By 1865, San Jose was well-established as the metropolis of Santa Clara valley. It had been transformed from a sleepy Spanish adobe to a vital

²San Jose Daily Evening Patriot, July 7, 1866, p. 3; October 20, 1866, p. 3.

³Frederick Hall, The History of San Jose and Surroundings (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft & Co., 1871), pp. 304, 327, 378; The Santa Clara Valley (San Francisco: Alfred C. Eaton, 1895), p. 303; The Homestead Association, 1869, San Jose Pamphlet Collection, Bancroft Library; San Jose Mercury, October 15, 1866, p. 2, September 23, 1869, p. 1; San Jose Mercury Herald, April 7, 1934; San Jose Mercury, Centennial edition, June 17, 1951; The Santa Clara, I, April, 1893; The Pioneer, XIV (December, 1899), 165-166; H.S. Foote, ed., Pen Pictures of the Garden of the World (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1888)

trading center in 1849 with the invasion of the California argonauts and the first state legislature. Incorporated as a city in 1850, San Jose claimed a population of 3000. Most of the inhabitants had come to capitalize on the gold rush and the seating of the capital in San Jose; they easily outnumbered the small Mexican community. French immigrants were predominant in developing the rich agricultural resources of the valley, while a contingent of Chinese coolies built a ramshackle Chinatown in San Jose during the construction of the railway to San Francisco in the 1860's.

The removal of the state capital and the notorious Legislature of One Thousand Drinks in 1851 caused a brief slump in the city's development, but expansion revived in the late 1850's. By 1863, the city boasted of seventy-seven merchandise houses, forty-four bars and six churches. Agriculture formed the base of the economy, but the city also had silk, flour, lumber and woolen mills. The New Almaden mines employed some four hundred San Joseans. The educational facilities far exceeded the needs of a population of 7000. Institutions for higher education included Notre Dame College for women and Santa Clara College for men, both Catholic institutions. Renowned for its substantial, palatial homes and lush tropical gardens, the city, under the control of the conservative, wealthy class, built a \$200,000 court house, a city park, a water and sewage system, and several school houses. In 1869, the completion of the transcontinental railway connected San Jose with the rest of the nation.⁴ The railroad, however, proved to be of little value to Charles Gordon Ames. Establishing a church

⁴Amaury Mars, Reminiscences of Santa Clara Valley and San Jose (San Francisco: Artistic Publishing Co.), 1901, pp. 46, 164, 205, 260; Oscar Winther, "The Story of San Jose, 1777-1869," California Historical Society Quarterly, XIV (March, 1935), 151-169; San Jose Mercury, July 30, 1868.

in Santa Cruz in 1866, Ames made monthly trips to San Jose for the next three years, coming across the Santa Cruz mountains on horseback.

Ames moved to San Jose in 1869, and during his years there he became a controversial figure in the community because of his theological and social views. Although a reformer supporting temperance, abolition, female suffrage, and anti-imperialism, Ames devoted his preaching to the "great and eternal" themes. He wrote several articles for Bret Harte's Overland Monthly and delivered a series of addresses in the hall of the San Francisco Mercantile Library Association. He continued to act as roving missionary for the AUA, speaking in Mariposa, Napa, Stockton and Sacramento, and for a nominal fee, he also gave lectures on temperance.⁵ The San Jose newspapers did not fail to give notice to Ames' activities outside the church. In announcing a speech Ames was to give, the Santa Clara Argus commented, somewhat sarcastically, "We say speak, instead of preach, for the reason that we are not advised of the character of the discourse to be delivered, whether political or religious."⁶ Ames, however, viewed social activism as a natural outgrowth of his liberal theological views. He attended the 1870 Woman Suffrage Convention in San Francisco, and participated in the writing of the Constitution of the California Woman Suffrage Association. Taking issue with the reports of the Daily Alta Californian, the San Jose Daily Mercury defended Ames' role in the convention:

⁵Santa Cruz Sentinel, September 5, 1868, p. 2; The Christian Register, XCI (April 18, 1912) 363, (April 25, 1912) 388; Charles Gordon Ames, "A Touch of Nature", Overland Monthly, II (April, 1869) 359; Ames, "A Political Outlook", Overland Monthly II (June, 1869) 545; Daily Alta Californian, April 23, 1869, p. 1; Ames, A Spiritual Biography (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.) 1913, pp. 147, 186; Fay F. Dean, "History of the First Unitarian Church of San Jose, California", unpublished manuscript, 1937, pp. 7-8.

⁶Santa Clara Argus, October 24, 1868, p. 3.

The Alta reporter, who entertains a personal spite against Mr. Ames for some unexplained cause, in speaking of a Board of Control in the Woman Suffrage Convention, says: "The Rev. C.G. Ames was especially earnest as a canvasser, the desire on his part being to keep Mrs. Laura DeForce Gordon off the Board of Control. In this, as the result will show, he was successful." The fact is Mr. Ames quietly cast his own vote and made no attempt to influence others in the matter. He is an almighty mean man who lies just for the lust of lying and that only.⁷

Obviously Ames' pioneering work was not unmarked by criticism, but that which he received in San Jose and Santa Cruz characterized the controversy not only between the Unitarian and orthodox Protestant Churches, but between the three factions within the Unitarian denomination. In San Jose, Ames was attacked from two extremes, those who criticized him for not realizing that the gospel of love was being "stultified" by the institutionalization of the orthodox churches, and those who were convinced "that Mr. Ames has really no Christian convictions, and that his admirers should not continue to insult the religious feelings of the country by ascribing to him the title of Reverend."⁸ The pioneer years of the Unitarian Church on the Pacific Coast were characterized by the fact that most of the outstanding leaders on the Coast, such as Thomas Starr King and Charles William Wendte, were members of the Free Religious Association. Influenced by the philosophy of Theodore Parker, the members of the FRA rejected all theological concepts, Christianity included, for ethical theism, unlimited spiritual freedom, and social activism. Established in 1867, the FRA formed to protest the limits which the Channing and Emerson proponents in

⁷San Jose Daily Mercury, September 15, 1869, p. 2, January 31, 1870, p. 2, February 1, 1870, p. 3.

⁸Santa Cruz Sentinel, October 10, 1868, p. 2; San Jose Daily Evening Patriot, February 1, 1867, p. 2.

the AUA had attempted to impose on its entire Unitarian ministry.⁹

In San Jose, no move toward the organization of a church was made until May 29, 1870, when the Unity Congregation formed to adopt a constitution and by-laws. Though most of the original members of the Unity Congregation would have designated themselves Unitarians, the 1870 Constitution stated that the aims of the congregation would be

the promotion of religion, fraternal fellowship and the attainment of knowledge.

Persons of every religious faith and of whatsoever opinions are invited to join this Society and participate in furthering its objects by signing this Constitution.¹⁰

Because no profession of faith was demanded, the constitution itself established the church's freedom from theological controversy. In addition to the work of Ames himself in the community, the Unity Society gained acclaim by virtue of the many social activities sponsored by the women of the congregation, their participation in suffragette activities, the Political Equality Club, and the Free Library Association.¹¹

Ames left San Jose in 1872 to accept a church in Germantown, Pennsylvania, and thereafter, the Unity Society slowly gained familiarity with the chronic problems affecting the growth and development of Unitarianism on the Pacific Coast. The most difficult problem was that of finding ministers, trained at Harvard Divinity School and Meadville School of Theology, who were willing to give up the solid comforts of the eastern and New

⁹For a detailed account, see Earl Morse Wilbur, A History of Unitarianism in Transylvania, England, and America (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 1952, Chapters 21-23; Arnold Crompton, Unitarianism on the Pacific Coast: The First Sixty Years (Boston: Beacon Press), 1957, Part III.

¹⁰Constitution and By-Laws of the Unity Congregation, May 29, 1870, Records of the First Unitarian Church of San Jose.

¹¹Mary Bowden Carroll, Ten Years in Paradise (San Jose: Popp & Hogan), 1903, pp. 29, 75.

England Unitarian churches. Many who did journey out to California came out for reasons of health, and occasionally, of insanity. California during the latter part of the 19th century had hardly begun to outgrow its pioneer origins of excitement, lawlessness and amorality. Those ministers who were well ensconced in New England and eastern mores made as hasty a return to the East as possible.¹² It also happened that those ministers who made the most substantial contributions to Unitarianism in California left to achieve greater fame within the AUA, or to accept calls to more successful or more challenging churches. Ames went on to edit The Christian Register from 1877 to 1880, accepted the ministry of the Disciples Church in Boston, participated on the Council of the National Conference from 1877 to 1878, and served as Director of the AUA during the years 1877-78, 1890-93 and 1893-1896. His wife also achieved prominence by initiating the Woman's Alliance on a national basis, and by her part in suffragette activities and the founding of the Children's Aid and Associated Charities in the United States.¹³

The last problem, one which still persists in the Unitarian church today, involves the indifference of second generation Unitarians, and the brief forays made by converts from orthodoxy into the Unitarian church on their way to religious indifference or back to their original orthodox churches. No analysis has been made of the problem of the indifferent second generation, but a tracing of the San Jose church's families will show that only a very few children raised in the church continued to participate

¹²Crompton, p. 127; Ames, Spiritual Biography, p. 186.

¹³Ames, Spiritual Biography, p. 223; The Christian Register, October 15, 1931, p. 803.

as adults. In part this may be due to the nature of Unitarian religious education which encourages an examination of all faiths, leaving the students free to judge the merits of any particular religion and to make their own choice for themselves. Converts to Unitarianism rarely stay in the church for more than one to five years. The intellectual approach to religion provides an opportunity to re-examine orthodox dogma and doctrine, but at the same time, the intellectuality frequently fails to provide a substantial enough religious base to hold together a congregation rather than a temporary audience.¹⁴

Immediately after the departure of Ames, the Unity Society faced the problem of ministerial supply. J.L. York of the Board of Trustees took the pulpit from August to December, 1872, when the services of Reverend J.L. Hatch were secured. Hatch left in June, 1873, after having divested himself of a series of lectures on the "Moral Character and Religious Views of Eminent Americans."¹⁵ The Unity Society was fortunate to then acquire Reverend David Cronyn as minister. Cronyn, who stayed with the Unity Society from November, 1873, to January, 1877, was a graduate of the Meadville Theological School and a member of the FRA. He was outspoken in his theological and social views and established the liberal standing of the church in the community. By 1877, he felt that the Unity Society had achieved a position of strength and stability, and he left to accept the challenge of establishing a new church in San Diego.¹⁶

¹⁴Crompton, p. 106.

¹⁵Dean, p. 9.

¹⁶Crompton, p. 91.

The next decade contained slack years for the Unitarian cause on the Pacific Coast. The effect of the depression in the 1870's was to aggravate the social discontent in California over the Southern Pacific railroad monopoly, labor unrest, and the Chinese problem. The power of the Southern Pacific extended to municipal politics, businesses and agriculture. In 1880, the farmers who had not been killed at Mussel Slough by agents of the Southern Pacific were incarcerated in the San Jose jail for eight months.¹⁷ The diminished evangelical fervor of some of the San Jose Protestant churches led many members of the Unity Society to return to their original denominations. A small core of the Unity members retained their interest in the society, and during the four week engagement of Reverend Clarence Fowler, they filed formal articles of incorporation and purchased a lot at 63 South Fifth Street, for a future building. Services were then being held in Music Hall. During the years 1882-1887, however, no real organization such as that enjoyed by the Society from 1870-1877 was attempted and the pulpit was filled sporadically by a series of supply ministers.¹⁸

A resurgence of enthusiasm and organization on the part of the established Pacific Coast churches prevented the old Unity Society from totally disintegrating. In 1885, the Pacific Unitarian churches held their second meeting and voted to organize permanently with the establishment of a central conference office. With the arrival of Reverend Charles W. Wendte

¹⁷John W. Caughey, California (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc.), 1953, p. 449; George W. Mowry, The California Progressives (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1951, pp. 11, 15, 17, 19.

¹⁸Dean, pp. 10-11.

as the Pacific Coast secretary for the AUA in February, 1886, the conference became a reality.¹⁹ At the November, 1886 meeting of the Pacific Conference in San Francisco, Wendte proposed the means by which the conference could coordinate its efforts to expand. After a minimum of debate, the name of the conference was changed to the Pacific Coast Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches. The AUS's Pacific Coast representative would serve as secretary of the conference, and the conference would act as the central authority in assuming responsibility for missionary activity on the Coast. Southern California, Northern California and the Pacific Northwest areas were encouraged to assume initiative and control in local districts by holding subconferences.²⁰ Though the Western Conference withdrew from the AUA over the question of religious liberalism versus Christian theism in 1887, the Pacific Conference did not become involved in the schism to any great extent. There was some dissension over the new title of the conference, but Wendte, despite his membership in the FRA, preferred to accept the stipulation of "Christian" in the title for the sake of organization and expansion.²¹

The Unity Society did not let the Pacific Conference forget its continuing, though nebulous, existence. Mrs. B.F. Watkins was on the Conference Committee for the 1885 Pacific Coast Conference, and at the 1887 Conference in San Francisco, a rejuvenated San Jose Society was projected.²²

¹⁹Crompton, p. 97.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 114-116.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 122-123.

²²Proceedings of the Pacific Coast Liberal Christian Conference Held at San Francisco, November, 1885 (San Francisco: C.A. Murdock & Co.) 1886; San Francisco Daily Morning Call, November 22, 1887, p. 2.

In December, 1887, the Reverend Grindall Reynolds, secretary of the AUA, and the Reverend Wendte visited San Jose. Meeting at the home of Mrs. E. O. Smith, one of the charter members of the Society, Reynolds and Wendte suggested holding a public meeting to revive interest in the Unity Society. The following Sunday, Wendte and the Reverend Horatio Stebbins of the San Francisco First Unitarian Church lectured in the San Jose Odd Fellows Hall, exploring the possibilities of re-establishing a vital Unitarian congregation in San Jose.²³ Their efforts resulted in the re-activation of the Unity Society, and a minister was called within six months.

²³Dean, p. 11.

The first four years of Reverend Nahum Adolphus Haskell's ministry were marked by progress, excitement and controversy. A graduate of Harvard Divinity School, Haskell came from Camden, New Jersey in June 1888, to accept the pastorate of the San Jose society. In two weeks, a new constitution and by-laws were adopted by the congregation of sixty-four people, with the new preamble reading, "In the love of truth and the spirit of Jesus Christ, we, whose names are hereto appended, unite as a church for the worship of God and the service of man." The following year, November, 1889, new articles of incorporation were filed and C.T. Settles, mayor of San Jose from 1884-1885, was elected President of the Board of Trustees.¹ The stimulus of Haskell's energetic ministry led the congregation to undertake the building of a church three years after his arrival. A second lot, at 160 North Third Street, was purchased, and on September 23, 1891, the cornerstone of the new church was laid, with addresses being given by A.V. Morehouse of the Masonic Grand Lodge of California, Reverend Thomas Vann Ess, the AUA Western Field Secretary, Reverend George C. Dodson and Reverend C.W. Wendte.² Bids for the construction work, as outlined in architect G.W. Page's plans, were opened on October 13, 1891.³ Resembling a Transylvanian Unitarian Church, the

¹Dean, pp. 11-12.

²Dean, p. 13.

³"Specifications of the First Unitarian Church, G.W. Page, Architect," Records of the First Unitarian Church of San Jose.

building was completed by September, 1892, at a cost of \$29,551.85.

The dedication service on September 25 drew one of the largest audiences in Unitarian history, approximately one thousand people crammed into the building and overflowed into Third Street and St. James Park.⁴ Though the congregation was less than 100, a large number of activities were enthusiastically supported, including a choir, a Sunday School, a kindergarten, a Young People's Fraternity, the Assembly (similar to a Layman's League), the Women's Auxiliary, the Women's Aid Society, the Women's League, the Social and Dramatic Club, the Library Circle, and the Upward Club.⁵

The building of the church had brought widespread attention from the community, but the events of December, 1892, brought the church to the fore-front of controversy in San Jose. From the pulpit of the First Baptist Church of San Jose one Sunday morning, the Reverend J.H. Garnett read his congregation one of the most surprising sermons they had ever heard during their membership in that church. With great clarity and fervor, he announced his total rejection of Trinitarianism and his conversion to Unitarianism. Before the congregation could recover from this shock, Garnett had already been installed as the associate minister of the nearby First Unitarian Church by Haskell, Reverend C.W. Wendte and Reverend Horatio Stebbins.⁶ It was a great, but brief, boon to the Unitarian cause in California. Garnett brought with him the paper he had

⁴Dean, pp. 13-14.

⁵The Advance, I (December, 1892), 4 .

⁶Pacific Unitarian, I (December, 1892), 33, (January, 1893), 76-77,80.

published for the Baptist church, changed its name to The Advance, and devoted the entire first issue to a justification, in the face of extensive criticism, of his conversion.⁷ Garnett referred to himself as a Biblical rationalist, intent on making the important distinction between Christian dogma and Christian doctrine.⁸ When the San Jose Evangelical Pastor's Union was formed, excluding the Unitarian church by requiring the espousal of the Apostle's Creed as the basis for membership, Garnett wrote an extensive editorial protest.⁹ The fervor created by Garnett's conversion extended beyond San Jose, and by the spring of 1893, Haskell and Garnett had succeeded in establishing two new Unitarian congregations, in Los Gatos and in Santa Clara. Garnett and Haskell ministered to the Los Gatos People's Church from March to November, 1893, when the services of Mrs. Catherine Norris were secured. After Mrs. Norris' sudden resignation in May, 1894, the People's Church acquired Garnett's services as pastor on a part-time basis.¹⁰

The depression of the 1890's did not leave the church untouched, and despite the many gains made by Haskell and Garnett, the congregation was becoming increasingly bogged down by the huge debt incurred in the construction of the new building. Haskell hardly appeared discouraged in February, 1893, when he requested the community to donate \$15,000 - \$20,000, a request which he stated was not unreasonable. The sum was not

⁷The Advance, I (December, 1892), 1-2.

⁸Pacific Unitarian I (August, 1893), 296.

⁹The Advance, I (March, 1893), 1.

¹⁰The Advance, I (May, 1893), 5; Pacific Unitarian, I (August, 1893), 303, (November, 1893), 22, (June, 1894), 247; Los Gatos News, May 4, 1894.

only intended to cover the building debt, but also to purchase a new organ and the remainder of the church lot. The construction of a library building was also included.¹¹ His request apparently was not met with enthusiastic response, and he resigned in August, 1893, to take a church in Denver, Colorado. Garnett continued in his stead, combining the full-time ministry in San Jose with his work in Los Gatos, and his position on the executive committee of the Pacific Unitarian which had absorbed The Advance.¹² A last major campaign to pay off the \$15,000 church debt was enough of a failure to convince Garnett to return to the more comfortable and friendly fold of the Baptist church.¹³ Reverend W.M. Jones, a Universalist minister, agreed to fill the pulpit, and in September, 1894, he formally accepted a call to the church as minister. During his ministry of eleven months, the church paid off \$2,000. more of its debt and sponsored the May meeting of the Pacific Unitarian Conference.¹⁴

Despite the fact that finances were still a major depressant factor, Haskell agreed to return as minister in August, 1895. No improvement was noted for several years. A member of the congregation wrote to the Pacific Unitarian in the spring of 1896: "Much time has elapsed, many changes have taken place and a period of deep despondency in the part of the Church has been undergone since any formal report has been sent in

¹¹The Advance, I (February, 1893), 1-2.

¹²Pacific Unitarian, I (April, 1893), 158, (August, 1893), 302.

¹³Pacific Unitarian, March, 1894, p. 151; Dean, p. 13, 16.

¹⁴Pacific Unitarian, June, 1894, p. 248, September, 1894, pp. 344-345, June, 1895, p. 244; Dean, p. 17.

from here¹⁵

By 1899, the depression had lifted, and bonds for \$15,000. had been floated to cover the church debt. By this time, however, the church faced equally serious problems relating to congregational polity and power, the role of the minister, and the responsibility of the church to the community.¹⁶

According to the 1888 Constitution, administrative authority was centered in the Board of Trustees, with the Board and the minister being elected by the congregation. Congregational participation in the affairs of the church was limited by the fact that the trustees served as chairmen of all committees, and rarely called on members of the congregation to work on the committees. Consequently, in dealing with the affairs of the church, the minister was held responsible by the Board of Trustees, and not by the congregation in part or as a whole, except on the occasion of the annual meeting. The Board assumed that the functions of the minister were within its jurisdiction, though it did not find it necessary or desirable to include the minister as an ex-officio member of the Board. Thus the minister's opportunities for communication with the Board and with the congregation were seriously limited in administrative affairs, and the congregation's full support of the activities of the church and of the minister was hindered by the lack of congregational participation in the government of the church.

This situation became particularly disturbing during Haskell's second ministry because of the tension created by the financial strain.

¹⁵Dean, p. 17.

¹⁶Ibid.

In June, 1898, Haskell requested that the Board of Trustees pay at least part of his salary, and unable to pay him, the Board voted to request his creditors to hold off until the bonds for the church indebtedness were floated.¹⁷ The extent of the financial strain is revealed in the minutes of the April 2, 1900 annual meeting: "After much discussion, in which it was claimed by some that it was not a pastor's report but a speculative financial report, not belonging to the duties of a pastor..."¹⁸ It is also evident that the duties of the pastor, outside the realm of financial problems, were being called into question. Haskell felt that the minister and the church had a responsibility to the community beyond religious and charitable concerns.

San Jose in the 1880's and 1890's was no less subject to municipal and state corruption than the rest of the country. Muckraking articles in the San Francisco Call named James Rea as the political boss of San Jose, claiming that he ran the city council, the San Jose Mercury and the Railroad Commission. The Executive Committee of the Santa Clara County Republican Club, which was trying to undermine Rea's power, included two prominent church members, C.T. Settles and Colonel Philo Hersey.¹⁹ Because of the extent of the corruption, Haskell asked the church to back him on the school issue and on the controversy over Rea's control of the local government. The Board of Trustees, meeting August 13, 1898, voiced

¹⁷Records of the First Unitarian Church of San Jose (hereafter cited as Rec.), Minute Book, June 26, 1898.

¹⁸Rec., Minute Book (hereafter cited as M.B.), April 2, 1900.

¹⁹San Francisco Call, July 11, 1892, p. 8, July 14, 1892, p.8 August 5, 1892, p.8.

their approval of his views. They did state, however, that it was not the function of a church body to take a stand on public affairs.²⁰

During this period, resignations from the congregation and the attendant withdrawal of financial support brought the church to its nadir, with all frustrations being centered on Haskell. In August, 1899, the beleaguered minister tendered his resignation. On a motion from Niles Wretman, the Board voted not to accept his resignation, and granted him a month's leave of absence, without salary.²¹ The following spring, the congregation voted 53-36 to retain Haskell. Because calling a minister required a 2/3 majority vote, there then followed a debate on the legality of re-electing a minister with less than a 2/3 majority. It was finally decided to declare the election legal, and at the same time, to accept Haskell's resignation. On May 23, 1900, the Board accepted Haskell's resignation, without compensation. It was also resolved,

that owing to the depleted state of the treasury, the insufficiency of the income and general inharmony prevailing in the church, we regard it as expedient to close the church services from May 27, 1900, until such time, as in the opinion of the board of trustees, it can be opened under more favorable circumstances.

The resolution was not passed, but a month later, after receiving a letter from Haskell demanding the public reinstatement of his honor before he would tender his final resignation, the Board of Trustees, in despair, resigned as a whole with but one exception.²²

The interested intervention of the AUA did not contribute to the

²⁰ Rec., M.B., April 13, 1898

²¹ Rec., M.B., August 18, August 26, September 26, October 1, 1899

²² Rec., M.B., April 10, April 29, May 8, May 23, June 5, June 22, 1900

reunification of the church. On a visit to San Jose in September, 1900 AUA Field Secretary George W. Stone advised, for reasons that are not wholly clear, that the resignation of all female Board members would be the only way the church would be able to raise the money to meet the interest on the bonds. The ladies, Mrs. Knox-Goodrich, Mrs. E.O. Smith, and Mrs. A.T. Herrmann, duly complied.²³ The desired financial results were not achieved, and the debate on whether Haskell would resign with or without compensation, with or without honor, continued until the end of May, 1901, when the Board finally resolved to accept his resignation with respect for the services he had rendered them.²⁴

This was not the end of the relationship between Haskell and the church, however. By May, 1902, the bonded indebtedness of the church had been reduced to \$10,000, and an income was assured by the rental of the church facilities to the True Life Church on alternate Sundays for \$900. a year. Inspired by their financial progress, the members of the congregation invited Haskell to return. Under a year of his ministry, the church income increased from \$100 to \$200 a month, with the Sunday School and the Ames Alliance, which had joined the national organization of the Unitarian Woman's Alliance in 1901, showing substantial gains.²⁵ These successes were undermined in September, 1903, when both Haskell and some members of the Board of Trustees again resigned. The remaining members of the Board wrote the AUA Field Secretary and were immediately inundated

²³Rec., M.B., September 16, September 27, 1900

²⁴Rec., M.B., May 26, 1901

²⁵Rec., M.B., May 1, May 13, May 31, 1902, April 1, April 8, 1903;
Pacific Unitarian, June 1902, p. 7

with letters from members of the congregation who, after Stone's last visit and advice, were convinced that he was an enemy of the church. The Board agreed, and more resignations were received from the congregation. Far more drastic, Stone reported the insult to the A.UA and the AUA responded by withdrawing its annual appropriation to the church.²⁶

This last action brought the church to a new nadir in its affairs. As a beginning in pulling the church back together, the members of the Board of Trustees withdrew their resignations and sent a conciliatory note to Stone. Though only thirty-four members of the congregation were present at the annual meeting in April, 1904, it was decided to hire the Reverend Anthony Mills as pastor, guaranteeing him a paid vacation. The pastor was made an ex-officio member of the Board, and Article X of the By-laws was amended to require 60 days notice for the termination of a pastor's services by action of either the congregation or the pastor.²⁷ Though this provided for a smoother relationship between the Board and the minister, the minister's activities were still subject to restriction by the Board. Two weeks after the April 18, 1906, earthquake, Mills asked the Board's permission to do relief work in Oakland and San Francisco. The earthquake had caused some \$2,000,000 property damage in the center of San Jose, with 19 people dead, but this did not begin to approximate the damage and destruction in San Francisco and Oakland. The Board granted Mills four weeks' leave to help in the more devastated cities,

²⁶Rec., M.B., September 12, October 3, 1903.

²⁷Rec., M.B., November 14, 1903, April 5, September 10, 1904, April 3, 1906.

but with the provision that he return each week to hold Sunday services.²⁸

Serious consideration was given to the church property. Alternatives were to sell the property to the Hayes brothers of the True Life Church and publishers of the San Jose Mercury, or to deed the property to the AUA. Finally, Niles Wretman and Colonel Philo Hersey, who were to prove to be the mainstays of the church, persuaded the members to allow the sale and deeding of the church property to the AUA.²⁹ This by no means ended the church's financial problems, as the church still had to request \$150 from the AUA for church repairs after the earthquake plus \$150 monthly for operating expenses. Still the church could not pay Mills his salary, and in June, 1906, he resigned.³⁰ Enough stability and faith in the church had been regained, however, that the Board did not hesitate to ask Stone to aid them in finding and establishing a new minister.³¹ The church was on the eve of a twenty-three year period of relative peace and prosperity.

²⁸ Rec., M.B., April 30, 1906; J.M. Guinn, A History of California (Los Angeles: Historic Record Co), 1907, I, 250.

²⁹ Rec., M.B., June 20, December 30, 1905, January 26, 1906.

³⁰ Rec., M.B., April 30, June 17, 1906.

³¹ Rec., M.B., August 9, 1906.

During the period, 1906-1929, the First Unitarian Church of San Jose gave serious attention to several ways of assuring its continued existence. Financial collapse was avoided by the cautious financial direction and personal investments of Niles E. Wretman and Colonel Philo Hersey and the spirited money raising functions of the Woman's Alliance. The major effort was directed toward the building of a stable institution which would attract a larger following from the community and better serve its interests. In the event that this did not prove possible, there were three alternatives. The idea of selling the church remained a constant possibility as the cost of maintaining the church plant frequently exceeded the church's income. The AUA in 1917 and 1918 supported a federation of the San Jose and Palo Alto churches, and the Santa Cruz and Alameda churches as a means of survival and solvency. The third alternative, considered periodically from 1920 to 1940, was that of uniting with the First Congregational Church of San Jose.

In tempo with the rest of the nation, the church responded to Progressivism, vigorously supported World War I, and fell into moderate conservatism and complacency during the late 1920's. Politically, San Jose city government was still dominated by the corrosive influence of the Southern Pacific. The Progressive years in California, under the governorship of Hiram Johnson, were short-lived. By 1913, the fundamental reforms of the Progressive platform had been achieved. Without a continuing reform program, the Progressive leaders were unable to sustain their electoral appeal. With both wages and unemployment increasing, the tension

between labor and capital was becoming explosive, and the radical element in the labor movement had a deadening impact on Progressivism. After 1916, the state legislature was again under the influence of the powerful state corporations, and by 1926, state government was conservative, somewhat corrupt, and adamantly anti-labor. The character of Progressivism also changed with the United States' entry into World War I. Having brought God and democracy to the people on a city, state and national level, reformers carried their righteousness to war to save the world.¹

American Protestantism and Unitarianism were also transformed in this period. During the latter half of the 19th century, religion became a symbol of status and respectability. The late 19th and early 20th century reformer looked to the abolition of sin and evil without reference to the causes of political corruption and social discontent. The administration of churches was assumed by the laymen, particularly businessmen. The churches were responsive to the Social Gospel, but the effect of World War I was to change reform into righteousness in religion as well as in politics. After the war, the churches recoiled from their hysteria and turned inward during the 1920's. Dignity in worship was emphasized with experimentation in increased ritual, and religious education was given new importance with trained leadership and an experience-centered curriculum. The laity in American churches, partly in response to Bruce Barton's The Man Nobody Knows and similar popularly-written religious literature, chose to divorce Christian ethics from social

¹Mowry, Pp. 199-200, 209, 289, 292-293

problems. On a national and international level, pacifism and ecumenicalism were beginning to pick up momentum in the churches.² The San Jose church was not immune to these changes, and the activities of the Layman's League and the Woman's Alliance indicated the varying extent of interest in the affairs of the community, while the actions of the ministers and Board of Trustees' building-use policy controlled the image of the church in the community.

Reverend A.J. Cruzan's 1906-1908 ministry was smooth and relatively uneventful, allowing for the establishment of a church program. Cruzan, originally a liberal Congregationalist, had held two churches in Hawaii, 1888-1898, and had been a member of the "Committee of Thirteen" which had drafted the new constitution for King Kalakaua. Under Cruzan the size of the congregation, which had only forty paying members by November, 1906, increased to ninety-seven, while his Sunday services drew as many as 400 people.³ In his annual report of April 2, 1907, the minister noted the limited age of the congregation, as indicated by the scarcity of weddings and funerals in the church, and suggested that the By-laws be amended to facilitate increased and diverse membership.⁴

Mrs. Cruzan, also an ordained minister, worked towards the development of a substantial religious education program, and by April 1907, she

²Clifton E. Olmstead, Religion in America (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.; Prentice-Hall, Inc.), 1965, pp. 112-116, 121, 129, 137-150.

³Files of the Unitarian-Universalist Association, Boston, Mass.; Rec., M.B., September 10, November 1, 1906, January 1, 1907.

⁴Rec., M.B., April 2, 1907

directed a Sunday School with forty pupils and five teachers.⁵ The interests of the Ames Alliance turned to community concerns in the spirit of the early Unity Society under Mrs. Cruzan's direction. Although continuing to make charitable contributions, the Alliance publicized resolutions concerning community needs, such as the appointment of a matron to the city jail, and supported the efforts of the Political Equality Club. Its most outstanding contribution was the organization of the first Day Nursery in San Jose.⁶

As President of the Board of Trustees, Colonel Hersey maintained the financial stability of the church, often at the expense of his own bank account. He established a House Committee with authority to rent the church at its discretion at whatever rates the Committee decided upon. The True Life Church continued to rent the church facilities, while more frivolous activities, such as dancing classes, were barred from the building.⁷

Cruzan's resignation in November, 1908, to become the AUA's Field Agent on the Pacific Coast did not upset the stability of the church as Mrs. Cruzan agreed to serve as supply minister until a new minister could be secured.⁸ In February, 1909, the church candidated Reverend Oliver Porter Shrout. Shrout, who had been ordained in the orthodox Christian Church in 1878, was a recent convert to Unitarianism, just as

⁵Ibid.

⁶Rec., M.B., Alliance, May 15, November 12, 1907; Dean, p. 31.

⁷Rec., M.B., December 5, 1907, January 8, February 6, 1908; Dean, p. 21.

⁸Rec., M.B., September 10, 1908.

Cruzan had been. Reverend Earl M. Wilbur, AUA Field Secretary in California, wrote W.S. Orvis of the Board of Trustees cautioning the church that converts in the ministry tended to have an overly strong reaction against the old denomination, affecting their performance in the new denomination.⁹ The Board hired Shrout the following month. After his conversion to Unitarianism in 1908, Shrout had not planned to preach again, but he agreed to accept the San Jose pulpit upon the condition that he be allowed to preach only what he believed.¹⁰

One of the least expected achievements of Shrout's ministry was that of financial independence. Representatives of the AUA made two visits to the church to suggest ways of getting the church out of debt, ending the need of yearly appropriations from the AUA. By November, 1909, the church was over two months in arrears in paying Shrout's salary, and it was not unexpected the next year when the AUA suggested the sale of the church and moving to a less expensive plant.¹¹ The True Life Church was not interested in purchasing the building for \$25,000, and the attempt to sell the church went no further.¹² In early 1917, the problem was opened for consideration again. John J. Jury, a trustee, suggested that the church could gain more attention and support in the community by more aggressive advertising, sponsoring open forums of interest to the

⁹Dean, p. 46; Rec., Earl M. Wilbur to W.S. Orvis, Berkeley, February 18, 1909; Pacific Unitarian, August, 1920, p. 182.

¹⁰Pacific Unitarian, August, 1920, p. 182; Rec., M.B., March 14, April 16, 1909.

¹¹Rec., M.B., July 1, November 4, 1909, October 16, 1910.

¹²Rec., M.B., November 3, December 1, 1910.

general public, showing movies, and holding mid-week services.¹³ An AUA representative, Mr. Reuss, visiting in April, 1917, agreed with Jury that more aggressive advertising was necessary. It was Reuss' impression that the congregation was primarily composed of born Unitarians and personal admirers of Shrout, and that more people, particularly young people, should be brought into the church. Despite the near-poverty of the church, Mr. Reuss suggested that the congregation was suffering from self-satisfaction, and that a more efficient organization, as well as increased advertising, would help in gaining subscriptions. In a report to President Eliot and Charles Murdock of the AUA, Reuss recommended the merging of the San Jose and Palo Alto churches, and the Alameda and Santa Cruz churches.¹⁴

The AUA acted on Reuss' recommendations and proposed the federation of the churches for reasons of economy in January, 1918.¹⁵ Rather than accept the idea of federation, the church doubled its efforts, possibly more strongly unified by the activities of Shrout and the congregation to meet the challenge of World War I. In March, 1918, Shrout's salary was increased \$300 a year. When the True Life Church was \$600 in arrears for its rental of the church facilities in January, 1919, the Board considered ways of economizing rather than accept True Life's offer of its organ in lieu of payment. A plan for a personal member canvass was

¹³ Rec., M.B., February 11, 1917.

¹⁴ Rec., M.B., April 26, 1917; Rec., Ruess to President Samuel Eliot and Charles Murdock, San Jose, April 26, 1917.

¹⁵ Rec., M.B., May 3, October 4, November 1, 1917, January 3, 1918

proposed in February, 1920, which proved to be so successful that the church became debt-free and independent of the AUA within a month's time.¹⁶

The church was influenced to a certain degree by the Progressive movement in California from 1910 to 1915. The congregation considered topics such as the industrial church and social hygiene, and the building-use policy was liberalized to the extent that the Socialist Party and a Negro poet, Mr. Jones, were allowed use of the church facilities. While a Sunday was given to the cause of child labor, Mr. Mundwell, the "Boy Evangelist", was refused the pulpit.¹⁷ The Ames Alliance maintained a WCTU matron at the San Jose Depot, and endorsed a congressional bill for civil service pensions. Its most ambitious undertaking was the support of a housing project for the unemployed in west Santa Clara during the spring of 1915. Jobs were also secured for those in the housing project; within the first three weeks of the project, permanent employment was located for twenty-two people, while temporary jobs were found for ninety others.¹⁸

Unitarianism succumbed to the fever of World War I with the rest of the Protestant churches in America. In San Jose, both Shrout and the Alliance took reform progressivism to war by contributing their efforts to the patriotic Santa Clara Council of Defense during World War I. Shrout offered his services as speaker, while the Alliance appointed Mrs. M.W. Kapp

¹⁶ Rec., M.B., March 19, 1918, January 2, 1919, February 12, March 22, 1920; Pacific Unitarian, August, 1920, p. 183.

¹⁷ Rec., M.B., April 2, 1912, January 5, 1917.

¹⁸ Rec., M.B., April 6, 1915; Rec., M.B., Alliance, November 15, 1917.

to act as representative to the Council.¹⁹ Two AUA war-time programs, Belgian Relief and the War Work Council, received the full support of the church. The church followed the programs suggested by the War Work Council designed to interest men in enlisting in the armed services, though it did not take up the other effort of the Council, that of helping servicemen to re-integrate themselves into civilian life through the securing of jobs and housing.²⁰ The Alliance sewed clothes for Belgian Relief, and worked en masse at the Red Cross once a week.²¹ Shrout's death in May, 1920, brought an end to the longest ministry the church had enjoyed.

Reverend Charles Pease, Shrout's successor, created a vital image of the church in the community and a new concept of Unitarianism. A trained constructive psychologist, Pease was an adherent of New Thought. New Thought had been the forerunner of Christian Science in that its founder, one Phineas Parkhurst Quimby, had healed Mary Baker Eddy in 1862 and had led her to develop the similar religious philosophy of Christian Science. New Thought, as Pease defined it, was the attempt to unfold the Christian consciousness, through psychology, and to reinterpret the Bible in terms of modern consciousness. Pease's great aim was to incorporate New Thought into Unitarian thought as an expression of metaphysical idealism.²²

Writing for the San Jose Evening News, Pease presented a liberal

¹⁹ Rec., M.B., March 7, 1918; Rec., M.B., Alliance, November 15, 1917.

²⁰ Rec., M.B., March 17, 1918, February 6, 1919.

²¹ Rec., M.B., Alliance, August 23, November 1, 1917.

²² Rec., M.B., June 28, November 11, 1920; Dean, p. 23; Rec., Pease to Eliot, San Jose, December 25, 1921; Olmstead, p. 121.

ideology. Protesting the prejudices of the post-World War I years, he used the activities in St. James Park as an example of true democracy where soapbox opinions were delivered on religion, history and politics without fear of remonstrance or violence.²³ Pease supported the labor unions at a time when they were being constantly defeated; he suggested that capital and management would benefit from a consideration of the laborer as consumer.²⁴ In the interests of world peace, he also urged San Jose to inform Senator Hiram Johnson of its support of the 1922 Four Power Treaty.²⁵ Walter Bachrodt, city superintendent of schools, described Pease's effect on the community:

The country is undergoing a rapid change. It is becoming broader and is becoming liberated from prejudices of creed. Dr. Pease has had a tremendous part in effecting the change in San Jose.²⁶

Pease also enhanced the church records by his receipt of a letter from Chief Justice William H. Taft refusing an invitation to speak at the church, and a telegram from Charlie Chaplin expressing his appreciation of the interpretation Pease had written of Chaplin's movie, "The Pilgrim."²⁷

The church took a proper interest in public affairs, although social activism was not the natural outgrowth of this interest. The Board of Trustees did send a telegram to Congressman Arthur Free supporting the Dyes Anti-Lynching Bill, while the Alliance informed the City Council of

²³ Rec., Pease notebook, pp. 14, 37.

²⁴ San Jose Evening News, April 27, 1922.

²⁵ San Jose Evening News, April 29, 1922.

²⁶ San Jose Mercury Herald, December 27, 1923.

²⁷ Chief Justice Taft to Pease, Washington, D.C., August 11, 1922; Charles Chaplin to Pease, Hollywood, April 23, 1923.

its opposition to the Council's granting licenses for any form of gambling. Representatives of the Law Enforcement League and the Anti-Saloon League were invited to speak to the congregation, and Pease and Mrs. A.T. Herrmann served as delegates to the Community Council.²⁸ The building-use policy of the church was broad in that it allowed both the Socialist League and the Protestant Patriotic Propaganda League the use of church facilities.²⁹

Church finances continued to improve during Pease's ministry, and in 1922, his salary was increased from \$150 to \$200 a month. The Alliance raised \$600 for the church in excess of its charitable contributions. The financial outlook was so bright that AUA Pacific Coast Field Secretary Reverend Carl Wetherell felt compelled, with somewhat more justification than Reuss had had, to warn the congregation against becoming complacent, and suggested that a truly progressive church would pay its minister \$3000 a year, not \$2400, and would have a large Sunday school. Colonel Hersey countered the effects of Wetherell's statements by announcing directly afterwards that he had made a provision in his will which would enable the church to continue for years. Upon his death in September, 1923, it was revealed that he had left \$2500 in P.G. & E. shares for the maintenance of church services. The bequest was put in trust with the AUA and still yields approximately \$200 a year in dividends.³⁰

Pease's departure for Spokane, Washington, in January, 1924, raised

²⁸ Rec., M.B., October 21, 1921, October 5, 1922, December 6, May 3, 1923; Rec., M.B., Alliance, March 3, 1921.

²⁹ Rec., M.B., September 9, 1920, September 8, 1921.

³⁰ Rec., M.B., March 21, 1922, September 6, 1923.

several questions regarding the church's immediate future. It was at this juncture that the First Congregational Church proposed consolidation. Before the committee appointed by the Board to confer with the Congregationalists, however, the Congregational church decided against consolidation by one vote.³¹ The Board of Trustees resolved to postpone calling a new minister until September, 1924. With Hersey's death and Niles Wretman's resignation as President of the Board after twenty years, the Trustees decided to take time to ascertain church potentialities, reorganize its affairs, and complete repairs on the church costing nearly \$5500.³²

Reverend Cyril Wyche assumed the pastorate on September 21, 1924. A graduate of Harvard and Union Theological Seminary and a veteran of World War I, Wyche encouraged the completion of the rehabilitation of the church exterior, and established programs for the Sunday School, the Young People's Club, and an adult class.³³ Though the nature of the debate was not clear, there was some tension between Wyche and the Board of Trustees. On July 2, 1925, it was reported that "after some discussion of means of getting a better adjustment of the minister of the Church, Brockenshire and Hill were appointed to have a frank talk with [the] minister."³⁴ No satisfactory agreement was reached, and in September, 1925, Reverend A. Warfield Slatten of the Berkeley Church was asked to act

³¹Dean, p. 23; Rec., M.B., January 3, February 7, 1924.

³²Rec., M.B., April 3, April 17, 1924, March 5, 1925.

³³Dean, p. 23.

³⁴Rec., M.B., July 2, 1925.

as moderator at a meeting to consider recalling the minister. At the meeting, the Board voted to retain Wyche.³⁵ A part of the controversy may have involved congregational polity, as in March, 1926, the Board attempted to encourage more congregational participation by ruling that church committee members would be drawn from the congregation, although members of the Board would continue to act as committee chairmen.³⁶ Wyche did distinguish the church, shortly after tendering his resignation on March 4, 1926, by participating in a public debate with Reverend Knight of Grace Baptist Church. The event was climaxed by Knight's stormy departure from the platform in the midst of the debate.³⁷

The Woman's Alliance attested to its role as being crucial to the life of the church during Wyche's ministry. Its annual report for 1923-1924 demonstrates the extent of its activities:

During this time we have held fifteen business meetings and two special meetings of which seven were luncheons, and five socials at members homes.

We have contributed donations and clothing to the Colored Girls School, Five dollars to Child Welfare, Food to Day Nursery, (local), Ten Dollars a year for five years to the "School in the South" maintained by Unitarian women, and become a member of the Unitarian Temperance Society.

Special guests have been entertained, Mrs. Minna Clark Budlong, National Secretary of Unitarian Women, Mrs. Alice Ames Winter, Past President of National Federated Women's Clubs,..., Mr. William I. Lawrance, National Director of Religious Education, and Mrs. Cora Harris, Director of Associate Alliance of Northern California.

In November, 1923 a Bazaar was held, at which \$308.85 was realized.

³⁵Rec., M.B., September 24, 1925.

³⁶Rec., M.B., March 17, 1926.

³⁷Rec., M.B., March 4, March 17, 1926.

The church Organist and Soloist are maintained by the Alliance. Each month a social of some sort is given to promote sociability and financial aid. A May Party for the young folks was financed and managed. Ten dinners have been furnished the Layman's League which have net us from \$2.25 to \$15.00.

Once a month a paid luncheon is served at regular Alliance meetings...a collection is taken, the average being collected \$5.00...

Our sick and shut-in members are called upon, and flowers and dainties left, birthday and Christmas cards sent.

The Treasurer reports for the year are as follows:

Total receipts	\$653.48
" disbursements	<u>\$488.81</u>
Balance on hand	\$164.67

Paid up membership is 60. 38

In 1925, the Alliance voted to join with the Layman's League in paying for the Sunday School leaders, gave \$300 to the church for need repairs, contributed \$125 towards the minister's salary, and brought its organ fund up to \$141. The Alliance was, in fact, so totally enamoured with its financial wizardry that it even instituted a penny drill in which every member relinquished all her pennies at each meeting, and encouraged its members to try door-to-door salesmanship with subscriptions to women's magazines. It also maintained its interest in public affairs by sending State Senator Sanborn Young a letter endorsing the narcotics bill then being put before the state legislature.³⁹ The same year Mrs. A.T. Herrmann, a charter member of the original Unity Society, resigned from her twenty year post as Treasurer of the Alliance. Tribute was paid her not only for her contributions to the Alliance, but for her continued participation in the National League of Women's Service, the Pioneer

³⁸Rec., M.B., Alliance, "Report of the San Jose Unitarian Alliance for Associate Alliance of Northern California, October, 1923-October, 1924."

³⁹Rec., M.B., Alliance, January 15, February 5, March 5, October 1, 1925.

Society, the WCTU, the League of Women Voters, the Day Nursery, the Red Cross, the Chamber of Commerce, and thirteen other organizations.⁴⁰

The ministry of Dr. William I. Lawrance, following Wych's, reflected the conservatism and complacency of the United States in the late 1920's. Dr. Lawrance, a graduate of Antioch, Harvard Divinity School and Meadville Theological School, had distinguished himself during his fifty years in the ministry. He had served as co-director of the AUA mission in Japan from 1891 to 1894, and during the years 1910-1925 he was Director of Unitarian Religious Education in the United States and Canada, and had authored, among other works, Social Emphasis on Religious Education.⁴¹ Because of his background and because of the new emphasis on religious education in the United States, Lawrance stressed the importance of the Sunday School and its effectiveness under the supervision of a paid rather than a voluntary staff. Under the direction of his daughter, Miss Mary Lawrance, a strong religious education program evolved.⁴² Lawrance also instilled dignity and new ritual into the affairs of the church. Observing the frantic fund-raising activities of the Woman's Alliance, both Dr. and Mrs. Lawrance suggested that the Alliance should seek greater enrichment by becoming less commercial, in spite of the new popular concept of Christ as the first business executive.⁴³ The church interior was rehabilitated, and paid for by a \$1500

⁴⁰Rec., M.B., Alliance, April 3, 1924

⁴¹Rec., M.B., Alliance, p. 129; Dean, p. 24.

⁴²Rec., M.B., Alliance, April 5, July 7, 1928.

⁴³Rec., M.B., Alliance, November 1, 1928; see also Barton's, The Man Nobody Knows.

loan and the proceeds from a series of lectures given by Stanford professor Edward Hulme to the Layman's League.⁴⁴ Indicative of the new spirituality and formality of the Lawrance ministry were the rededication services which were held when the building renovation was completed. The last similar service had occurred in April, 1906, when a ribald "Service of Rejoicing on the occasion of the Cremation of the Mortgage on the First Unitarian Church of San Jose, California" had been celebrated.⁴⁵

The conservative tone of the church became evident in Lawrance's work for the unification of the Congregational and Unitarian churches in San Jose. Although the ecumenical movement was then underway in Europe and the United States, it is evident that the conservatism of Lawrance's ministry brought the church, as an individual unit, closer to Congregational theology, notwithstanding the practical gains to be made by such a union in San Jose. Lawrance's efforts met with some success in that the two churches held joint services and adult discussion groups during the summer months. Cooperation ended, however, in September, 1929, when the church balked at the Congregationalists' insistence that morning services be held at the Congregational Church.⁴⁶ The Board of Trustees, respectful of the dignity of the pastor, voted against renting the church facilities to the Rosicrucian Society on Sunday evenings, and a new building-use policy was established: "It was the sense of the members

⁴⁴Rec., M.B., March 17, August 18, 1927.

⁴⁵Pacific Unitarian, November, 1927, p. 167.

⁴⁶Pacific Unitarian, September 27, p. 135; Rec., M.B., August 4, 1927, April 12, 1928, September 14, 1929.

that no meetings of a radical nature, or any objectionable to Dr. Lawrance, be allowed to use the building."⁴⁷

Indicative of the church's withdrawal from community affairs is seen in the outcome of the amendment to the Constitution creating an Advisory Council whose function would be to study the relation of the church to the community and to make recommendations to the Board of Trustees. When the report was delivered the inward strengthening of the church, not its relation to the community, was the major emphasis of the report, possibly reflecting the divorce of Christian ethics from social problems during the late 1920's. The suggestions put forth by the Council contained no mention of the community but called for a church history, the integration of the Sunday School and the Young People's Society into morning services, more work for the Young People's Society in the affairs of the church, and adult discussions.⁴⁸

In January, 1928, Lawrance submitted his resignation, but was prevailed upon to remain with the church until May, 1929. He insisted that half his salary go toward decorating the church, while he and Mrs. Lawrance increased their subscription to the organ fund to \$500.⁴⁹ Little effort was made to replace Lawrance, and in December, 1929, the members of the congregation voted to defer calling a minister. Dr. Carl Holliday, a San Jose State College professor of English, conducted services from

⁴⁷Rec., M.B., January 14, 1928, May 5, 1922, April, 1906.

⁴⁸Rec., M.B., March 20, May 7, 1928.

⁴⁹Rec., M.B., January 6, March 4, July 2, 1928; Rec., Lawrance to Dr. Henry M. Gay, President, Board of Trustees, San Jose, February 8, February 28, 1929.

December, 1929, until July, 1930.⁵⁰ The gradual withdrawal of the church from the concerns of the community and its increased financial well-being left it ill-prepared for the problems with which it was confronted during the Depression and World War II years.

⁵⁰Rec., M.B., December 6, 1929; Dean, p. 24.

The depression years in California, 1929-1941, were marked by political conservatism and corruption and violent farm labor agitation. Because of the weakness of the Republican and Democratic parties in the state and the predominant representation of rural counties in the state senate, the agricultural lobbies were able to yield extensive power in the state legislature.¹ During the series of agricultural workers' strikes in the 1930's, the powerful farm interests were also aided by the court's willingness to use the criminal syndicalism law to incarcerate the leaders of the strikes.² The law had been passed in 1919 in a wave of reaction against the strikes occurring on the waterfronts, in restaurants, in automobile machine shops and agencies, and against the violence generated by the radical labor movement such as the famous McNamara and Mooney-Billings bombings in Los Angeles and San Francisco.³ The agricultural workers' strikes affected all of the Santa Clara Valley in the 1930's as did the extensive political corruption which filtered down from the state level. San Jose, still a relatively small community, was labelled the "sodom of this coast," its government being under the

¹Clarke A. Chambers, California Farm Organizations (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1952, p. 174; Earl Pomeroy, The Pacific Slope (New York: Alfred A. Knopf) 1965, p. 243.

²Caughey, p. 482.

³Ernest J. Hopkins, What Happened in the Mooney Case (New York: Brewer, Warren & Putnam), 1932, p. 5.

control of Boss Louis Oneal, a prominent lawyer.⁴ The atmosphere of the city was such that it allowed the lynching of two suspected kidnappers by the outstanding citizens of the community. John M. Holmes and Thomas H. Thurmond were hung in St. James Park on November 26, 1933 as the suspected kidnappers and murderers of Brooke Hart, son of department store owner Alexander J. Hart. Not only were the men lynched, but photographs of them, dead, suspended and pantless, were taken and sold as souvenirs.⁵

The lynching was only one symptom of the insecurity wrought by the agricultural workers' strikes and the changing complexion of the laborers during the 1930's. Until the depression years, migrant labor in California had been supplied by the Japanese and Mexican communities. The arrival of the "Okies" and "Arkies" during the depression added a new dimension in that these men, regarded with suspicion by the community, were white and therefore expected to be treated with more respect and fairness than had been meted to the Japanese and Mexicans, particularly in regard to wages.⁶ These men were taken in hand and organized by the Cannery and Agricultural Workers' Industrial Union, a Communist organization.⁷ In 1932, the C. & A. I.W.U. sponsored strikes in Mountain View, Sunnyvale, and Santa Clara Valley, all of which were defeated by the vigilantism of the Associated

⁴Henry E. Miller, "The Sodom of This Coast," San Jose Pamphlet Collection, Bancroft Library.

⁵The San Francisco Chronicle Reader, William Hogan and William German, ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Co.), 1962, pp. 119-127; Patterson Antiques, Los Gatos, interview with owner, March 2, 1966; George Kohl, interview, February 11, 1966.

⁶Chambers, pp. 3, 32.

⁷Ibid., p. 33. The order of Communist authority: Communist International - Red International of Labor Unions - Trade Union Unity League - C. & A. I.W.U.

Farmers of California.⁸ The Associated Farmers had been organized by the agricultural interests to combat the strikes, and received financial support from the Southern Pacific and P.G. & E. as well as other agricultural groups and corporations.⁹ The C. & A. I. W. U. was broken in 1933-1934 when the union leaders were convicted under the criminal syndicalism law; the courts remained quiet in regard to the equally violent methods of the Associated Farmers.¹⁰

The First Unitarian Church of San Jose tended to withdraw from the problems of the political and social dislocation which pervaded the community, though both Reverend Alva John Shaller, the minister from 1930-1933, and the Layman's League attempted to take some action. The Layman's League was moderate in its approach, while the church was generally too financially depressed and apathetic to comment on Shaller's more radical activities, except by excluding him from the Board meetings.¹¹ Unitarianism itself was undecided on the ways of meeting the depression. Officially the denomination took a moderate stand, while The Christian Register, under the editorship of Albert C. Dieffenbach, supported socialism and looked to Russia as "a cooperative commonwealth true to the teachings of Jesus."¹² The Layman's League did consider the problems of unemployment

⁸Caughey, p. 512.

⁹Chambers, pp. 37, 45.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 34, Caughey, p. 512.

¹¹Rec., M.B., September 22, 1930, February 8, April 17, 1932, March 6, 1933, April 6, 1931.

¹²The Christian Register, "Resolutions of the Philadelphia American Unitarian Association Fourth Biennial Conference," November 5, 1931, pp. 847-848; Robert Moats Miller, American Protestantism and Social Issues, 1919-1939 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 1958, pp. 84-85.

and relief, and donated gasoline to the Unemployment Relief Council. Though well aware of the problems of the migrant laborers, its main efforts were directed solely towards the small farmer in its support of the California Grange's "production for use" program and in its formation of the Cooperative League for the saving, drying and distributing of fruit. It also considered the city's acquisition of the San Jose Water Company, but did not go beyond requesting the San Jose Mercury to publish the salaries of the public utilities executives, a request the Mercury refused although it had published the salaries of the public school officials and teachers.¹³

Shaller, a card-carrying member of the American Labor Union, took an active part on the Free-Tom-Mooney Committee. Tom Mooney and Warren Billings had been convicted for the bombing and killing of ten people during the Chamber of Commerce "Preparedness Day" Parade in San Francisco on July 22, 1916. It became increasingly evident that their trial and conviction were based on fraudulent and incomplete evidence, but despite the requests of President Wilson on their behalf, neither Billings nor Mooney could secure a re-trial.¹⁴ Twice in 1930, the Billings Pardon Hearing had failed in the State Supreme Court. After the report of the subcommittee of the Wickersham Commission in 1932, the Free-Tom Mooney Committee, sponsored by Shaller in San Jose, held rallies and petitioned Governor Rolph for new pardon hearings.¹⁵ But justice was not the only

¹³Rec., M.B., Layman's League, November, 1931, March 14, 1933; Chambers, p. 87; Rec., M.B., Layman's League, September 13, 1932, June 6, 1933.

¹⁴Hopkins, pp. 13, 192, 215, 249; Pomeroy, pp. 217-219.

¹⁵Hopkins, p. 255; Rec., Leaflets of the Free-Tom-Mooney Committee, October 26, 1932.

factor involved; a large area of the community was not concerned with innocence or guilt, but with the suppression of all radical labor leaders and agitators. The AUA, which had consistently supported labor's demands, took a pro-Mooney stand, as did Shaller, while the Pacific Coast Conference and the San Jose church did not.¹⁶

During Shaller's ministry, the Woman's Alliance, notwithstanding its resolutions on the World Court Protocol and the Grant Hudson Motion Picture Bill HR9986, accomplished little.¹⁷ Although the Alliance primarily concentrated on financial support of the church, its success was limited, and in March, 1933, the Board informed Shaller that no member of the church was willing to pledge anything beyond June, that the church was \$500 in debt, and that a \$300 insurance bill was due. Shaller remained voluntarily and unpaid until September, at which point he resigned from the church and the ministry, and went into the more profitable business of selling insurance.¹⁸

By the time of his resignation, finances had apparently improved, and Reverend Ben F. Wilson assumed the ministry in September, 1933.¹⁹ Wilson was the brother of Berkeley's Socialist mayor, J. Stitt Wilson who described their joint careers:

Brother Ben went to school as a lad in knee-britches to me when I was a schoolmaster in my late 'teens. Later we went to Northwestern University. . . . We entered the Methodist ministry together and later resigned to engage in social evangelism. We preached the gospel of social and economic

¹⁶ The Christian Register, September 7, 1931; Miller, p. 242; Leora D. Surryhne to author, March 18, 1966.

¹⁷ Rec., M.B., Alliance, July 30, 1930, February 5, April 2, 1931.

¹⁸ Rec., M.B., March 6, 1933; Dean, p. 11.

¹⁹ Rec., M.B., September 18, 1933; San Jose Mercury, October 23, 1933.

justice in every state of the Union and in the Canadian provinces. We went to England together and for three years associated with the great leaders of the British Labor Party.²⁰

The Wilson brothers had worked with Ramsay MacDonald in forming the British Labor Party and had taken part in the election campaign which resulted in MacDonald's becoming Prime Minister. Upon returning to the United States, Ben Wilson had become a Unitarian minister in Erie, Pennsylvania. In 1932, he had toured Russia as a member of the American Social Science Commission to Russia.²¹ A supporter of Upton Sinclair's EPIC (End Poverty in California) and of the great Soviet experiment, Wilson's tenure caused a drop in membership, and to meet the objections to his radicalism, the Board of Trustees ruled that Wilson could not use the church Sunday evenings until the Pulpit Committee approved of the nature of his services, and only if he would pay his own expenses. Because he also favored the Townsend Plan, Wilson attracted a Roman Catholic following in the church.²²

During Wilson's ministry, the church was primarily concerned with meeting its expenses. Niles Wretman reported to the AUA in 1936:

During the depression period, we found it best to urge all of the members and friends to pay as they were able to urging that if sufficient money was not forthcoming, the church would have to close down, the policy being to 'pay as you go, and if you cannot pay, don't go.' The minister cooperated in this plan, and from March 1st to December 1st, we have been able to pay him \$564.18.²³

²⁰Berkeley Daily Gazette, August 27, 1940, pp. 1, 13.

²¹Ibid.; San Jose Mercury, August 26, 1940.

²²Surryhne to author, March 18, 1966; Helen Dimmick, interview, February 6, 1966; Rec., M.B., October 12, 1934; Reverend Richard Knost to author, March, 1966.

²³Rec., M.B., Wretman Annual financial report to AUA, December, 1936.

In April, 1934, the Central Section of the Pacific Coast Conference met in San Jose, at the invitation of the Board of Trustees, to consider the permanent values of religion and the present world crisis. The Board also brought in speakers on public ownership and Germany, and went on record, two months after the San Jose lynching, in support of the Wagner-Costigan Anti-Lynching Bill.²⁴ Both Wilson's long illness and the financial struggle held the church in a state of apathy, however, and the question of church's fate was again raised.

In 1937, the church facilities were rented to the Calvary Temple Church, while an offer to purchase the building by the Christian Church was ignored.²⁵ Another offer, from the International Church of the Four-Square Gospel, was considered and rejected in 1940.²⁶ After Wilson's death in August, 1940, the Congregational Church, whose last summer exchange with the church had been in 1934, again proposed consolidation.²⁷ Wretman wrote AUA Pacific Coast secretary Ernest Caldecott of the difficulty of getting either a Sunday minister or an audience, and Reverend George Marshfield, candidating in March, 1941, wrote Caldecott that the San Jose congregation was old, part-time, stagnant and condescending toward young ministers. Elmo Robinson, a trustee of the church, suggested that the church should take up the consolidation proposal as the Congregationalist minister, Reverend Stephen Peabody, was theologically and

²⁴San Jose Mercury News, April 7, 1934; Rec., M.B., April 3, 1939, March 21, 1935, January 7, 1934.

²⁵Rec., M.B., August 23, 1937.

²⁶Files of the Pacific Central District, Wretman to Reverend Ernest Caldecott, San Jose, November 27, 1940. (Hereafter cited as PCD.)

²⁷Rec., M.B., June 4, 1934, September 19, 1940.

socially liberal.²⁸ Caldecott urged the church not to make this move without extensive consultation with the ALA, leaving Wretman to conclude, in his sombre pessimism, that the church could either bring itself to hire a young minister or remain with a supply minister and eventually dwindle out of existence.²⁹

The church's concern for its own existence continued through the war years, and its major efforts were directed towards regaining its strength and financial stability. Little cognizance of the war appears in the church records, except for occasional discussions of the damage being done to the church kitchen facilities by the soldiers encamped in St. James Park. In August, 1941, Reverend Clarence J. Hansen was appointed and the church experienced an exhilarating and totally ineffectual romance with the Ideal of the World Community. Hansen presented the ideology of the World View and the Ideal of the World Community: The universe is a cosmos of organically related parts and all-embracing unity, the center being a creative consciousness. Man, an organically related part, is united to the universe, and the brotherhood of man is a reality since all men are interrelated. The world is moving toward a new order, and men must prepare themselves, through the establishment of an anti-sectarian World Community Church, to be world citizens.³⁰ Responding to Hansen's youth and idealism, the Board of Trustees willingly changed

²⁸PCD, Wretman to Caldecott, San Jose, December 16, 1940, Reverend George Marshfield to Caldecott, San Jose, March 18, 1941, Caldecott to Wretman, Los Angeles, May 6, 1941; Rec., Elmo Robinson to Mrs. Leora Emig, San Jose, March 13, 1941; Robinson, interview, October 18, 1965.

²⁹PCD, Wretman to Caldecott, San Jose, April 22, 1941.

³⁰PCD, Reverend Clarence J. Hansen to Caldecott, San Jose, August 14, 1941.

the name of the church to the World Community Church, although it hesitated to subscribe to Hansen's idea of the church as a fellowship of people striving to realize the power of God in life by following in Jesus' footsteps.³¹ After six months, Hansen noted, with great disillusionment, that the church remained unmoved by the world view and clung to its institutional orientation, and in January, 1942, he submitted his resignation.³² The Board of Trustees, taken by complete surprise, called a special meeting, and decided finally to accept his resignation without bringing it before the congregation.³³

The church then engaged Reverend Rol Welbourne Benner, Dean of Starr King School for the Ministry, to give a series of lectures commencing in April, 1942. Hansen's World Community Church sign came down and up went Benner's: "The Humanist Pulpit - Auspices of the Unitarian Fellowship of San Jose Presents Rol Welbourne Benner." Benner was assisted by Richard Knost, a Universalist student at Starr King, who acted as director of parish activities.³⁴ Relations with Benner became strained when it became known that part of Benner's salary was specifically designated for room rental in San Francisco. Benner was using the room for an experiment in consultation to devise new means of ministerial counselling to use as a way of approaching the psychological burdens brought on by

³¹San Jose Mercury, August 30, 1941; Rec., M.B., August 14, 1941, December 3, 1941.

³²Rec., M.B., January 18, 1942; San Jose Mercury, August 30, 1941; PCD, Hansen to Caldecott, San Jose, January 18, 1942.

³³Rec., M.B., February 3, 1942.

³⁴Rec., M.B., April 8, 1942; Knost to author, March, 1966.

World War II and its aftermath. The church regarded this activity with a jaundiced eye, and Benner offered to give it up.³⁵ Before this became necessary, however, a personal tragedy led him to resign from Starr King and from the San Jose pulpit in April, 1943.³⁶

Richard Knost agreed to become minister in Benner's place on the condition that the church apply for membership in the California Universalist Convention. The name of the church was changed, to the happy relief of Niles Wretman, to the Unitarian-Universalist Church. After ten years of neglect, the church building was badly in need of repair. The AUA agreed to match the funds raised by the church for repairs and to contribute towards the minister's salary, and Hy Baggerly, editor of the Los Gatos newspaper, willed \$1000 to the church for redecoration of the chancel. Trained at the Eastman School of Music, Knost and his wife changed the church services with both music and increased ritual, the formality of the services being complemented by the redecoration and rearrangement of the rostrum and sanctuary.³⁷ Although the AUA contributed heavily toward the redecoration during 1944-1945, it frankly informed Wretman that it was anxious for San Jose to achieve financial independence so that the money could be used elsewhere.³⁸ Church income was augmented

³⁵ Rec., Reverend Rol Welbourne Benner to the Board of Trustees, Berkeley, August 3, 1942.

³⁶ Robinson, interview, October 18, 1965; Knost to author, March, 1966.

³⁷ Knost to author, March, 1966; San Jose Mercury, December 12, December 15, 1944.

³⁸ Rec., M.B., AUA Representative George Davis to Wretman, Boston, April 6, 1944, Mrs. Carl Holliday, Secretary, Board of Trustees, to Davis, San Jose, February 5, 1945; Rec., M.B., May 29, 1944.

by the rental of its facilities to a Jewish group and to the Christian Church. The arrangement with the Christian Church was brought to an abrupt end, however, when a neon "JESUS SAVES" sign appeared to grace the front of the church.³⁹

Knost found church polity to be seriously lacking. With the formal Sunday services, he hoped to build a sound religious core which would act as a springboard to a united effort to get the church back into the mainstream of Unitarian-Universalism. Pointing to the need for better organization and active committee work, he deplored the lack of congregational support and participation in the affairs of the church. By now a habitual response, the Board reacted to Knost's comments by excluding him from their meetings. Just as they had permitted Shaller to dine with them before a meeting, they allowed Knost fifteen minutes to make remarks or suggestions.⁴⁰ Knost was unable to goad the congregation into starting a religious education program, but he continued to work with the youth group he had activated under Benner, and initiated a forum in which eight other churches participated. He also agreed to advise a group of San Jose State College Students who had organized themselves as American Youth for Democracy. In this advisory capacity, he survived all of one meeting—the purpose of the meeting being to organize an investigation of the Home of Benevolence for capitalistic exploitation. Upon hearing this, Knost immediately disbanded the group and later ascertained that the AYD was part

³⁹Surryhne to author, March 18, 1966.

⁴⁰Knost to author, March, 1966; Rec., M.B., March 24, 1944, February 23, 1945.

of the Communist Youth Front operating out of New York City.⁴¹

Just as Pease had attracted a Christian Scientist following and Wilson the Roman Catholics, Knost drew his own peculiar following, the Rosicrucians. The Rosicrucian Order had established its headquarters in San Jose in the 1930's, and had enjoyed great financial success. Knost viewed the Order as nothing more than a money-making gimmick, and welcomed the contributions its members made to the life of the church. Hy Baggerly, who willed the \$1000 to the church, printed The Church in the Home on a biweekly basis, while Dr. Harvey Miles, a fellow Rosicrucian, was responsible for the conversion of the church parlors into badminton courts and the initiation of Friday recreation nights. The Friday badminton and ping-pong sessions brought in additional membership and income for the church, and created quite a different image of the church in the community.⁴²

The church did not engage in any war work activities, and as a consequence, lost some of its membership to the wartime activities in San Jose, including the United Service Organization, the Veterans Hospital, Civilian Defense and the Red Cross.⁴³ Knost himself devoted much of his time outside the church to the improvement of race relations during and immediately after the war. Antagonism towards the Japanese and the Mexicans was revived and intensified in California during World War II. Working with Reverend Stephen Peabody, Knost was a charter member and the

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Robinson, interview, October 18, 1965; Surryhne to author, March 18, 1966; Reverend Nathaniel Lauriat to author, December 29, 1965.

⁴³Surryhne to author, March 18, 1966.

first president of the Interracial Council. He was also briefly active in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, but he withdrew his support when he became convinced that the San Jose chapter had fallen into the hands of the migrant laborers led by Emma Stern, a locally known Communist. At the war's end, he became chairman of the Japanese-American Committee which undertook the rehabilitation of Nisei families interned during the war years.⁴⁴

Knost resigned on September 1, 1945, to go to the Universalist Church in Brewster, Alabama. Though one of his major reasons for leaving was financial, he also wanted to be in a church which had some continuity. In his view, the church had fractured its image in the community with its rapid changes, from radicalism to universalism via the world view and humanism, during the last fifteen years.⁴⁵ The church had suffered no little internal damage during these years, too. When Reverend Nathaniel Lauriat arrived in 1945 to assume his first ministry, he was greeted by a lively congregation consisting in its entirety of "fourteen old faithfuls, all white-haired, and as many younger nuts."⁴⁶

⁴⁴Pomeroy, p. 286; Knost to author, March, 1966.

⁴⁵Rec., Knost to Mrs. Leora Emig, President of the Board of Trustees, May 12, 1945; Knost to author, March, 1966.

⁴⁶Lauriat to author, December 29, 1965.

World War II transformed San Jose into a sprawling industrial, suburban complex. The end of the war did not bring the end of war-time prosperity as California did not demobilize; rather, it continued to benefit from an increasing number of government contracts. In 1951, California received 13.2% of all military contracts, in 1959, 24%, and by 1962, the Pacific Coast as a whole was the recipient of 46% of Department of Defense contracts for research and development. Although southern California received the lion's share of contracts, "The growth of industry extended well beyond defense and beyond southern California. . . . Even San Jose produced computers as well as dried prunes and canned cherries."¹ Population tripled in California from 1940 to 1960, and from 1950 to 1960, San Jose's growth rate of 121% was the highest of all metropolitan areas in California and the Far West. After 1940, California politics confounded tight party organization because of the ease with which political leaders migrated back and forth between the Republican and Democratic parties. Governor Earl Warren's 1943-1953 moderate, non-partisan approach to politics was the only means by which the support of both parties could be gained. Municipal government continued to be influenced by powerful corporations; it has been reported that Food Machinery Corporation at one point was manipulating the San Jose City Council with

¹Pomeroy, pp. 297, 302.

great ease.² Totally unprepared and singularly ill-equipped for its sudden, gargantuan growth, San Jose could only helplessly watch itself spread in all directions, leaving the center of the city increasingly deserted and deteriorated. St. James Park, once the city's central park, became haunted by those old men that senior citizens' organizations never seem to reach, and as the businesses and the city and county governments moved out to capitalize on the new suburban areas, the churches and even the Young Men's Christian Association followed suit. Those churches which remained downtown faced the challenge of adjusting to the very real problems of urban existence.

By 1945, "crisis theology" pervaded American Protestantism, and neo-orthodoxy provided one approach to the problems of post-World War II life. While embracing the God of Jonathan Edwards, neo-orthodoxy demanded that man assume his responsibility and obligation to work for the progress of humanity. That the kingdom of God would never be realized on earth or in time was not relevant; man's salvation and man's tragedy lay in the necessity of his striving for the impossible. Unitarianism responded to neo-orthodoxy, though not to the fierce theism of crisis theologians, and a revival of ritual worship and new piety occurred in the churches, bringing the tradition of Theodore Parker's social activism to bear full fruit during the next twenty years.³

Reverend Nathaniel Lauriat, strongly influenced by neo-orthodoxy, revitalized the church during his 1945-1951 ministry. His appearance

²Ibid., pp. 303, 308, 322; Lauriat to author, April, 1966.

³Olmstead, pp. 158-160.

was the exact counterpart of his driving, energetic nature:

Nat was very young, casual and informal. He put his feet on his desk, smoked his pipe,..., tried to be calm, and to see the affairs of God and man in their true perspective, and he would fall off to dreaming.⁴

A graduate of Harvard, Harvard Divinity School and Meadville Theological School, Lauriat confronted the church with the challenges of the post-war world.⁵ The major problems of the war's aftermath, Lauriat believed, demanded new vigor on the part of all churches if they were to exist as meaningful institutions rather than wither into mere shells of spiritual isolation. In speaking at the Pacific Coast Triennial Conference in 1946, Lauriat stated that the "imminent fragmentation of the world" had to be prevented, and that it was the duty of religion "to secure enlightened control of atomic energy and to assure removal of social and economic conflicts through intelligence and cooperation."⁶ Both the minister and the congregation were to advance the cause of the Free Church through meeting the major problems of the nation: labor strife, race relations, unemployment, disarmament and atomic energy.⁷ The church, he wrote, "must establish and spread an effective public sentiment and movement to provide San Jose with the services and institutions and services needed for life as an urban center."⁸ In terms of advancing the liberal cause, Lauriat stressed the need of an "effective

⁴Ralph J. Moore to author, February 12, 1966.

⁵San Jose Mercury, August 13, 1945.

⁶Oakland Tribune, May 10, 1946, p. 10.

⁷Rec., M.B., September 28, 1945.

⁸The Church in the Home, October 7, 1949.

organization, serving individuals personally, influencing and organizing public information and opinion, and seeking to persuade a liberal and progressive attitude to the whole community."⁹ During his stewardship, Lauriat worked to achieve these aims through the Woman's Alliance, the Layman's League, Channing Club and the AUY, and by his own participation in community organizations. He also contributed to the strength of denominational Unitarianism by re-organizing the Pacific Coast Unitarian Conference, reestablishing the Palo Alto Church, and aiding in the formation of the Los Gatos Fellowship.

The first object of Lauriat's ministry was to attract a larger membership. He attempted to interest the community by the selection of sermons carrying a wide and diverse appeal, and by the development of a religious education program. Building a religious education program proved to be a formidable undertaking as there were very few children of church school age in the congregation at the outset of his ministry; this, as well as the transportation problems suffered by a downtown church, contributed heavily to the failure of the 1946-1947 church school. Lauriat instituted a new approach by offering an evening series on religious education for parents. The meetings drew the largest attendance from non-members and Lauriat hoped to bring them into the church through their participation in the formulation of an experience-centered religious education program. Under his direction, church school attendance had climbed from seven to thirty-five children by December, 1948.¹⁰

⁹Rec., M.B., Annual Meeting, March 30, 1951.

¹⁰Rec., M.B., Religious Education Report for 1946-1947; PCD, Report of Regional Director Frank G. Ricker on San Jose, Berkeley, December 20, 1948.

The efforts toward gaining a larger membership were also dictated by financial need. In May, 1945, AUA representative Florence Baer had done an analysis of church finances. Her work revealed that only twenty-six members, or less than 1/3 of the legal membership, contributed to the church. Added to this was the fact that the largest support came from the oldest members and this source could not be depended upon to continue for more than the next ten years.¹¹ The church received AUA appropriations to pay the minister's salary, and through the efforts of Elmo Robinson, some Universalist friends of the church contributed to the religious education program. The U.S. Navy's use of the building in 1948 brought in a large income; but the rental of the building to the Jewish Synagogue, Alcoholics Anonymous, a student eating co-op, the Civic Symphony Orchestra and several Nisei groups was primarily a community service.¹² The idea of selling the church building, again recommended by the AUA, was considered when the city of San Jose announced its interest in purchasing the property for a new civic center in the St. James Park area, an interest which was short-lived.¹³ By use of the "Every Member Canvass" and by the 50% increase in membership, however, the church again became financially independent, and in 1950, raised Lauriat's salary

¹¹Rec., AUA representative Florence Baer to the Board of Trustees, San Jose, May 1, 1945; PCD, Lauriat to George Davis, AUA Director of Department of Church Maintenance and Extension, San Jose, late 1946?

¹²PCD, Lauriat to Davis, late 1946?; Rec., Elmo Robinson to Dr. Carl H. Olson, Universalist Religious Education, San Jose, August 12, 1945, AUA Representative Lon Ray Call to Niles Wretman, Boston, May 31, 1946.

¹³Rec., Florence Baer to Board of Trustees, San Jose, May 1, 1945; PCD, Ricker Report on San Jose, Berkeley, December 20, 1948; Rec., M.B., June 28, 1946.

which had started at \$2400 in 1945 to \$3300.¹⁴

The minister actively encouraged the growth and interest in the community by the church groups. Seeking national affiliation with the Association of Unitarian Youth, the high school Gnats Club participated in the 1947 Asilomar Conference and in the 1948 California Bay Area Association of Unitarian Youth Conference. At the Association of Unitarian Youth conference, resolutions were passed supporting a new United States economic policy for the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe, the unification of Germany, increased United States support of the United Nations and disarmament, non-affiliation of Franco's Spain with North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the United Nations, and the recall of Truman's ambassador to the Vatican. In San Jose, the Gnats Club conducted a study of racial, religious and national minority groups.¹⁵ The Layman's League also gained national affiliation and instituted a citizens' training program to study the history and problems of Santa Clara County. In conjunction with the Current Affairs Committee, the League also considered election issues, San Jose's potential and future, and Santa Clara Valley water conservation.¹⁶

Under the direction of Lauriat and his equally energetic wife, the Woman's Alliance converted itself into a thoroughly committed organization after Regional Director Frank G. Ricker had reported that the Alliance consisted mainly of old ladies who did nothing but sit and contemplate

¹⁴Rec., M.B., February 1, 1950.

¹⁵Rec., pamphlet on the Asilomar Conference, August 25-31, 1947, Resolutions Written at the California Bay Area AUY Conference, April 14-16, 1950; Sunnyvale Standard, April 7, 1950, p. 6.

¹⁶Rec., M.B., March 20, 1947; Sunnyvale Standard, April 7, 1950, p. 6.

ways of raising money.¹⁷ By March, 1946, the Alliance had affiliated with the Interracial Council and the San Jose Council of Church Women, and had contributed to Russian relief, International relief, and the Central Valley water commission. The Alliance brought the church's influence to bear on the San Jose Council of Church Women through Lauriat's revision of Article II of the Council's constitution to permit participation of non-Christian groups, and through Mrs. Lauriat's service as President of the Council in 1949.¹⁸ Mrs. Lauriat further enhanced the work of the church by being on the executive committee of the Santa Clara County Citizens' Advisory Council, organized to study the problems of the general welfare of the citizens of the county, and by her presidential tenure with the League of Women Voters.¹⁹ Finally, the Alliance aided in the settlement of the S. Vasilevskes family from Latvia under the Unitarian Service Committee's project for the resettlement of professionals. The Unitarian Service Committee secured a job for Professor Vasilevskes at the Mount Hamilton Lick Observatory, and the Alliance undertook the project of housing, clothing, and supplying the Vasilevskes family upon its arrival in San Jose.²⁰

The other major organization which Lauriat directed was the Channing

¹⁷PCD, Ricker report on San Jose, Berkeley, December 20, 1948.

¹⁸Rec., M.B., Annual Meeting, March 21, 1946; The Church in the Home, November 13, 1949; Rec., Revision of Article II of the Constitution of the San Jose Council of Church Women, October 21, 1948.

¹⁹San Jose Mercury Herald, April 25, 1950, p. 9; San Jose Evening News, March 31, 1951, p. 3.

²⁰Rec., Resettlement Project, 1949; Rec., M.B., 1949 Annual Report of the Woman's Alliance.

Club. With the exception of Knost's one hour with American Youth for Democracy, little effort had been made to organize the student population at San Jose State College, an obvious field for fruitful exploitation. Lauriat did not conceive of the Channing Club as a denominational unit so much as a seminar to study and discuss all areas of student interest. The 1948 program consisted of a series of historical surveys of the development of Western thought on the nature of life. The group attended the first Channing Club Federation of the Bay Area Conference in October, 1949, and made use of the church basement for a student eating co-op. To reach college age students, Lauriat also served on the advisory board of the San Jose State College YW-YMCA.²¹

Besides revitalizing the San Jose church, Lauriat made a substantial contribution to the growth of Unitarianism on the Pacific Coast. Elected President of the Pacific Coast Unitarian Conference in May, 1946, he undertook a thorough reorganization of the Conference, then in a prostrated condition from depression poverty and war-time conditions and restrictions. Noting the new life and increased activity in all Unitarian churches, Lauriat was encouraged by the good morale and growing strength of local congregations. He authorized new by-laws for the Conference, helped organize the Northwest Area Committee, attended the 1947 AUA May Meetings in Boston, and acted as chairman of the 1947 Asilomar Conference. When he left office in 1948, the conference had been re-established, and Lauriat's major suggestion for the incoming President was the revival of

²¹Rec., M.B., February 2, 1947; Rec., pamphlet and Lauriat Report on First Channing Club Federation of the Bay Area Conference at Inverness, California, October 28-30, 1949, "Freethinkers Program for Forty-Eight," 1948.

the defunct Pacific Unitarian.²² Lauriat also served on the Starr King Board of Trustees, and from 1947 to 1950, he worked as part-time minister in Palo Alto, speaking on Sunday evenings as well as devoting two days a week to the Palo Alto group. By 1950, the Palo Alto society was strong enough to hire its own minister, Reverend Danforth Lyon.²³ Lauriat acted as advisor in the formation of the Los Gatos Fellowship, the first fellowship to be organized in California, in 1949. The founders of the fellowship were from the San Jose church. Originally opposed to the fellowship at the time because of its possible weakening effects on the church, Lauriat nevertheless gave the group his full support.²⁴ He also participated in the pulpit exchange of the Unitarian ministers of the Central Coast district.²⁵

In 1950, the Unitarian and Universalist denominations asked all churches of both denominations to vote on a merger plan. The San Jose church had had no connection with Universalism except through Knost and Elmo Robinson, but already bearing the name Unitarian-Universalist, the congregation approved the plan for consolidation. Lauriat explained the church's reason for approval: "As for the Unitarian-Universalist proportions of our church, we refuse to make any distinctions, but the Church is

²²PCD, Pacific Coast Conference of Free Church Fellowship, Report of the President, 1946-1948; San Jose Evening News, March 3, 1951, p. 3.

²³Rec., M.B., October 12, 1947; San Jose Mercury, April 3, 1950; Sunnyvale Standard, April 7, 1950; Alfred S. Niles, "The Early Years of Palo Alto Unitarian Society," unpublished manuscript.

²⁴Files of the Los Gatos Fellowship, Mrs. Merritt Cutten to Reverend Richard Weston, Menlo Park, undated; San Jose Mercury, April 3, 1950; Sunnyvale Standard, April 7, 1950.

²⁵San Jose Mercury Herald, April 22, 1949, p. 8.

historically and basically Unitarian and assumed the dual allegiance on principle." The Universalists were unhappy to learn that the principle did not carry over into equal financial support for both denominations.²⁶

As the representative of the church in the community, Lauriat's participation in various local organizations was exhaustive. His most idealistic undertaking was the People's Hospital cooperative venture. As O'Connor Hospital and San Jose City Hospital were not equipped to meet all the needs of San Jose, Lauriat, Judge Robert Beresford, then city attorney, and others decided to form a cooperative hospital to serve the community, particularly those who could not afford O'Connor or San Jose City Hospital. Although Lauriat was disillusioned by the failure of the People's Hospital to materialize, the venture did have the effect of goading O'Connor and San Jose City Hospital into improving and enlarging their facilities. Lauriat was vice-president of the San Jose Ministerial Association, worked for the Committee for Education in Alcoholism and the Conference on Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency, and served on the Board of Directors of the Santa Clara County Mental Health Service and Society. In the field of race relations, he was active on the Board of Directors of the Council for Civic Unity and in the Santa Clara County National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Lauriat was particularly concerned with race relations in San Jose as he felt that the city was completely inept in its attempts to integrate the hordes of people

²⁶Rec., Lauriat to Miss Susan Andrews, Universalist Religious Education, San Jose, September 27, 1946; San Jose Evening News, April 15, 1950, p. 5.

pouring into the area during the post-war years.²⁷

To achieve his goal of establishing a liberal minority center in San Jose, Lauriat showed no hesitation in discussing controversial issues, particularly those relating to the separation of church and state. The major issue taken up during the Lauriat ministry in the late 1940's was the "released time" religious education program in the public schools. In March, 1948, the United States Supreme Court reversed the decision of the Illinois State Supreme Court in the *McCullum vs. the Board of Education of Champaign, Illinois*, stating that Champaign's use of the public school classrooms for religious education violated the First and Fourteenth Amendments. In a concurring opinion, Justice Felix Frankfurter stated that the whole "released time" program was probably a violation of the principle of separating church and state, not only because of the use of public schoolrooms in some communities, but because of the pressure that was brought to bear on children at an age when conformity was an important value.²⁸ By the time the case reached the U.S. Supreme Court, the Methodists and Episcopalians, the Protestant journal The Christian Century, and leading educators such as John Dewey had joined with Unitarians, Reformed Jews, Ethical Culturalists and Humanists in

²⁷ Rec., M.B., November 2, 1947, March 11, March 26, 1949; Rec., "Youth Survey of San Jose Prepared for the San Jose Ministerial Association by the Juvenile Protection Program, Department of Cities, of American Baptist Home Mission Society," June 1, 1949; San Jose Mercury Herald, September 30, 1948, p. 6; San Jose Mercury News, June 18, 1950, p. 30; San Jose Evening News, March 3, 1951, p. 3; Lauriat to author, April, 1966.

²⁸ Joseph L. Blau, Cornerstones of Religious Freedom in America. (Boston: Beacon Press), 1949, pp. 225-246.

opposing released time.²⁹ The California Enabling Act of 1943 provided that local school boards could release students one hour a week, on the written consent of parents, to receive religious education outside the school buildings. In San Jose, the released time program was being conducted by the Catholics, the Council of Churches, and the Evangelical Protestants "to create Reverences which are essential to a Christian society -- Reverence for God, Reverence for Man, Reverence for Property," and to check juvenile delinquency, reduce religious illiteracy, and promote good moral character.³⁰

Notwithstanding the nobility of purpose of the released time program, Lauriat did not see that it could be accomplished in the space of one school hour a week any more effectively than it could be achieved in the church schools. He contended that the program violated the principle of separation of church and state in that it employed "the prestige of the Public School and (once the parents' consent is secured) the police power of the state to achieve its ends." As the public school constituted a basic democratic instrument where all children were treated equally, Lauriat argued that the released time program undermined the effectiveness of democratic experience for children by sectarian indoctrination, and by the division of children who did and did not participate in the program.³¹

²⁹Ibid.; Rec., Lauriat sermon, "Do We Want Sectarian Religious Education in Public Schools? A Critical Examination of the San Jose Released Time Program," January 25, 1948; San Jose Mercury, January 17, 1948.

³⁰Rec., Lauriat sermon, January 25, 1948.

³¹Ibid.

Lauriat also opposed the state's extension of the Welfare Exemption Taxation Law to schools below collegiate level owned and operated by non-profit religious, hospital or charitable organizations. In terms of groups who would benefit from Welfare Exemption, the Catholic parochial schools comprised 53%, the Protestant schools 40%, and charitable schools 7%. Lauriat based his opposition to welfare exemption on the grounds that while the parochial schools would expand, the tax base for the public schools would be narrowed. The fact that California was the only state in the union that had not so broadened its welfare exemption laws was irrelevant. Lauriat failed to mention one very relevant and practical point: because of Unitarian denominational poverty, as well as principle, both released time and welfare exemption laws presented a threat to the cause and growth of Unitarianism. If Unitarianism could reach a higher percentage of children and hold them, the churches would not be as vulnerable to the problem of travelling converts.³²

Lauriat's interest extended to political movements. The attempt to organize a protest movement against American military aid to Greece and Turkey proved to be as disillusioning to Lauriat as the cooperative hospital venture had been. Lauriat chaired one committee meeting to discuss the immorality of American military aid to Greece and Turkey, immoral because the 1946 elections in Greece had been fraudulent and thus the government did not represent the majority of the people, and the newspaper criticism of the one-sided nature of the debate was such that the group abandoned

³²Rec., Lauriat sermon, "What Are the Issues Involved in Proposition 3," undated.

all effort to form a protest movement.³³ Two years later, when the San Jose State College YMCA asked that a Communist speaker, Dr. Phillips, be allowed to speak at the church, Lauriat was more careful, and in conjunction with the Board of Trustees, insisted that the program would have to take the form of a two-sided debate.³⁴

The Levering Act, passed by the California Legislature on October 3, 1950 brought the "McCarthy Era" to California. Requiring all state employees to sign a loyalty oath, it was just the beginning of an ugly issue threatening all California educational and religious institutions. Lauriat's statement in March, 1950, forecast the direction Unitarianism would take when the loyalty oath directly affected the church. To demand the oath, Lauriat argued is "to admit the bankruptcy of truth and democracy and I, for one, am by no means ready to surrender so easily to totalitarianism."³⁵

Anxious to return to the hub of the universe, Lauriat resigned from the church in the summer of 1951 to accept the Unitarian pulpit in Northampton, Massachusetts. After six years of his ministry, Lauriat was confident that the church had built a strong enough foundation to withstand and profit from a change in ministry. As a thorough New Englander, he sought respite from the Californians.³⁶

³³San Jose Mercury Herald, March 27, 1947, p. 6.

³⁴Rec., M.B., November 5, 1949.

³⁵The Church in the Home, March 10, 1950.

³⁶Lauriat to author, December 29, 1965, April, 1966.

Reverend Harold Shelley's ministry during the height of the McCarthy Era was seriously challenged by the issues of Communism and intellectual freedom. Despite the achievements of the church from 1945 to 1951, the change in ministry again raised the questions of congregational polity, the minister's role, and the responsibility of the church to the community. During the interim between Lauriat and Shelley, the effective organization created by Lauriat suffered from the loss of his enthusiastic leadership. Shelley's first and most challenging task upon assuming the pastorate of the church was that of re-organization, requiring an immense amount of adjustment on both his part and on the part of the congregation. A graduate of Meadville Theological School, Shelley had been the minister of the Unitarian Church in Tacoma, Washington, and had worked closely with Lauriat, with no love lost between them, on the reorganization of the Northwest Area during the reactivation of the Pacific Coast Conference from 1946 to 1948.¹ Lauriat and Shelley had totally different approaches to denominational and church life and administration in that Shelley insisted on orderly organization as a basis to undertaking, while Lauriat enthusiastically tackled any undertaking on the assumption that organization would develop somewhere along the way. With Lauriat's departure the church's whirlwind existence blew itself out; before it could take off again, Shelley insisted that the

¹San Jose Mercury, June 30, August 7, 1951.

congregation have all its affairs and relations in order.

In rebuilding the church organization, the congregation first amended the 1946 By-Laws beginning with the definition of the function of the Board in Article V, Section 2, giving the Board control of the church's property, business affairs, and administration, including the appointment of all committees. A Church Council was created by Article VII, consisting of the minister, the chairman of the Board of Trustees, the religious education director, and the presidents of the Layman's League, the Woman's Alliance and the Young People's organization. The Council's purpose was to consider the general welfare of the church and to make general recommendations to the Board of Trustees. In Article IX, the minister was given charge of all meetings in the church, with the stipulation that he would have to have the approval of the Board for any non-religious meetings. It was further provided that the final decision in matters of policy and procedure remained with the Board or a legal meeting of the congregation.² The role of the minister was more completely defined by the Board of Trustees at a later meeting: "It was the sense of the Board that it was considered the ultimate responsibility of the minister to see that committees function properly and officers perform their duties, and that all essential tasks be taken care of."³

As the congregation did not readily assume the responsibilities of lay leadership, Shelley found that the "ultimate responsibility" assigned to him by the Board included everything ministerial to janitorial. At

²Rec., By-Laws of the Unitarian-Universalist Church of San Jose, Adopted March 19, 1946, Amended, 1952.

³Rec., M.B., February 8, 1952.

his first annual meeting in March, 1952, Shelley stated that the work of the congregation involved planning, policy, and the execution of both, and that although he would participate in the development of plans and policies, his ministerial duties did not allow him the time to follow through on the execution of either.⁴ Shelley's 1951-1952 emphasis on training the congregation in democratic technique and responsibility did not bring any noticeable results. The Board did make a slight change in its control of administration: once the Church Council chairman had been appointed, the chairman, and the Board chairman would jointly appoint committees. Nevertheless, Shelley reported in March, 1953, that the Church Council was weak and that he was carrying the responsibility of doing janitorial, secretarial and committee work.⁵

Despite these problems Shelley suggested to the Church Council in June, 1952, that the church should undertake a program carrying its principles into the active life of the community. One of the first efforts of the church was to explore the possible relationships that could be formed between the church and the Los Gatos Fellowship, and the church and the Council of Churches in order to make united efforts in community work.⁶ The religious education program had been allowed to lapse during the summer after Lauriat's departure, but in the fall of 1951 it was slowly revived with a non-denominational emphasis to draw

⁴Rec., M.B., Annual Meeting, March 7, 1952.

⁵Rec., M.B., Council, January 30, 1953; Rec., M.B., Annual Meeting, March 13, 1953.

⁶Rec., M.B., Council, December 30, 1951; Rec., Mrs. Merritt Cutten, Los Gatos Fellowship, to Reverend Harold Shelley, Los Gatos, October 21, 1951.

the children of unchurched parents. The object of the program was "to give children group participation in religion...to introduce them to material meaningful for their age and which will aid them in arriving ultimately at a religion for themselves and in being creative members in democratic society."⁷ The church also offered activities designed to appeal to the community such as art sessions and exhibits, a modern ideas discussion group, and Friendly Platform meetings to discuss community issues.⁸

The Woman's Alliance, Channing Club and the newly formed San Jose chapter of the Unitarian Fellowship for Social Justice, all with national affiliation, undertook community-oriented programs. Concentrating on the Unitarian Service Committee, the Alliance pressed for improved legislation that would help the American Indians with rehabilitation and self-government programs. The Alliance also took an active interest in the migrant ministry sponsored by the Council of Churches. The post-World War II attempts of the National Farm Workers' Association to organize again brought the problems of the migrant laborers to the attention of the community. In January, 1953, the Alliance heard the Executive Director of the California Federation for Civic Unity and the President of the San Jose Community Service Organizations speak on migrant labor. Although he did not speak, Caesar Chavez, National Farm Workers' Association leader of the 1965-1966 Delano strike, was also present. The

⁷ Rec., Frances W. Wood, AUA Division of Education, to Shelley, Boston, October 19, 1951; Rec., M.B., Annual Meeting, March 13, 1953.

⁸ The Church in the Home, February 17, June 1, 1952, December 6, 1953.

following month the Alliance formed a committee to investigate the Alviso situation where several farm corporations were acting to prevent the County Health Service from giving any form of assistance to the migrant laborers. The 1952 activities of the Channing Club included a UNESCO project for India as well as participation in San Jose State College activities during Religious Emphasis Week.⁹ The Unitarian Fellowship for Social Justice made a beginning in 1954 with two ill-attended meetings, one on comic books and the other on Universal Military Training.¹⁰ The Layman's League went completely out of existence, having been exhausted by an overload of church repair work. Shelley believed it was the responsibility of the men in the congregation to reactivate it, and those who were interested bogged down in disagreement over whether it should be a "Kiwanis-type" or social justice organization.¹¹

Shelley's participation in community organizations was limited by his "ultimate responsibility" to keep all the affairs of the church in running order. He did belong to the World Affairs Council and the Parent Teachers Association, and was active on the Council for Civic Unity editing the Civic Unity Reporter. A member of the California Federation of Civic Unity, the Council worked with migrant labor, organized civil rights efforts, attempted to protest and educate the public on the injustice of the McCarran-Walter Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952,

⁹Rec., M.B., Council, June 27, March 30, 1952; Rec., M.B., Alliance, January 8, 1953, February 5, 1953.

¹⁰Rec., Walter A. Wannerstrom, Unitarian Fellowship for Social Justice, to Shelley, Boston, November 29, 1952; Rec., M.B., Annual Report, 1954-1955.

¹¹Rec., William Loring, Jr., Unitarian Layman's League, to Shelley, Boston, May 7, 1953.

and undertook a project to inform Northern California Indians of their property and water rights and water registration, as well as to encourage them toward greater community participation.¹² The AUA and its affiliates consistently supported the work of the United Nations and UNESCO, and Shelley defended these organizations to the public with the complete support of the congregation.¹³

The full impact of McCarthyism reached the church early in 1953, and the editorial in the San Jose Weekly Mayfair in March, 1953, indicated at once the deadliness and the ludicrousness of the atmosphere generated by the McCarthy scare:

The chairman of the congressional committee on un-American activities wanted to investigate Communism in the churches. Headline Hunter Franklin Roosevelt, Jr. a congressman from New York, screamed bloody murder and wanted the chairman ousted.

Well, why should the church be exempted from the red hunt?...

Here in San Jose, a year or two ago, a pastor and his wife were shipped back East because of the wife's too public yapping in behalf of causes known to have a slightly pinkish cast. Not too long ago there was a row in the same church because certain members made the church available for a group which met to protest the scheduled hanging of the Rosenbergs.

Reds go EVERYWHERE...¹⁴

The Rosenberg controversy in the church was brought on by the appearance on January 17, 1953, of an advertisement in the newspapers announcing a meeting at the church to discuss clemency for the Rosenbergs. Certain board members, fearing that the community would associate the clemency

¹²Civic Unity Reporter, December, 1953.

¹³San Jose Evening News, May 27, 1953; Rec., Report on the Voting for the Submission of Resolutions to the Annual Meeting of the American Unitarian Association, 1953, "American Unitarian Association 129th Annual Meeting, May 25, 1954 Agenda."

¹⁴San Jose Weekly Mayfair, March 26, 1953, p. 2.

group with the church, called an emergency meeting. Board President Mrs. Grace Watson had first called Shelley who advised against making a public issue of it by either calling an emergency meeting or cancelling the clemency group's meeting at the church. That Sunday, Shelley was surprised to find the Board, unannounced to him, holding the emergency meeting in his study. Dead silence met him when he entered the study, but it was soon broken by vitriolic debate and strong personal criticism of him. Although Mrs. Watson insisted that the clemency group be refused use of the building, it was finally decided to demand an ad in the paper in which the clemency sponsors disaffiliated themselves from the church; Shelley, in the meantime, suggested that the Board might attend the meeting to ascertain for itself whether it was Communist-inspired or not.¹⁵ In a letter to the Board of Trustees, Elmo Robinson, who personally believed that the Rosenbergs should be executed, supported the stand taken by Shelley:

The Unitarian Church has more than one function. But surely one is to undertake certain civic services which as individuals we would be too weak or too timid to shoulder. These days of hysteria in high places are times which try men's patience and courage. If leadership is needed anywhere today, it is in the preservation of the practice of free discussion of public affairs. Were our resources as a Church greater, it would be best to present these discussions under our own auspices; in lieu of that we can occasionally play host to some other group which is taking an initiative that should have been courageously ours in the first place.

What I expect from my minister and my trustees in situations like the present issue is a bold, firm, united stand for free and open discussion of public issues which have an ethical and/or religious

¹⁵Rec., M.B., January 18, 1953; Shelley to author, March, 1966; San Jose Mercury, January 17, 1953; San Jose Evening News, January 19, 1953; PCD, Shelley to Ricker, San Jose, January 26, 1953.

import. This I believe to be in the best tradition of Unitarianism.¹⁶

Other members of the congregation were not in agreement with Robinson's concept of Unitarianism, and in a joint letter of resignation to the Board, they stated that they were withholding their physical and financial support of the church "until such time, or if, the Church returns to the religious principles for which we believed it stood at the time we joined."¹⁷

The fear of Communism was mixed not only with the conflict over the nature of Unitarianism, but with the issue of congregational polity, and those Board members who were opposed to holding the clemency discussion did not tender their resignations until after a restrictive building-use policy had been adopted. Personal tensions were so taut the affair took on no small degree of irrationality. Despite Shelley's statement that he strongly condemned Communism and had made a deliberate effort to protect the church in the community by neither preaching or writing on public issues nor privately or publicly discussing the Rosenbergs, rumors were spread to the effect that he was a Communist under the surveillance of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Mrs. Watson, President of the Board of Trustees, had gone past the point of pure exasperation and could only act by maintaining utter silence: in her official capacity, she refused to open the Annual Meeting in March, 1953.¹⁸

¹⁶ Rec., Robinson to the Board of Trustees, Saratoga, January 20, 1953.

¹⁷ Rec., John, Irma & Delmar Humfeld, Mrs. L.E. Wolf to the Board of Trustees, San Jose, May 23, 1953.

¹⁸ Rec., Shelley to the Board of Trustees, San Jose, January 28, 1953; Shelley to author, March, 1966.

The attack on Shelley was traceable to the fact that the Board had assigned him the responsibility of church rentals without establishing any policy about the nature of the organizations which might be allowed use of the building. Shelley had asked the Board to take over the responsibility when he first assumed the pastorate, and he now insisted that the Board set a building-use policy and take church rentals into their own hands. He also recommended that the use of the building be given to non-affiliated groups, and supported the proposed policy that Hattie Porter Hall "should be made available for open discussion to all groups provided representatives of both sides of controversial subjects are invited."¹⁹ The Board ruled, nevertheless, that no unaffiliated groups would be allowed to use the building, and the Channing Club immediately adopted the resolution that Hattie Porter Hall should be made available to all groups whatever their affiliation.²⁰ It was finally decided that the building could be used by non-affiliated groups if they were specifically recommended by the Board of Trustees.²¹

What was left of the intellectual freedom of the church after the building-use decision did not remain unchallenged by the politicians. In June, 1953, the California legislature passed a law requiring all agencies claiming tax exemption to sign the loyalty oath. Shelley, hardly inclined

¹⁹Rec., Shelley to Ricker, San Jose, January 26, 1953; Rec., Shelley to the Congregation, San Jose, February 14, 1953; Shelley to author, March, 1966; Rec., M.B., March 13, 1953.

²⁰The Church in the Home, March 1, 1953.

²¹Rec., M.B., February 6, 1953; PCD, Shelley to Ricker, San Jose, March 26, 1953, Mrs. Grace Watson to Ricker, San Jose, April 7, 1953; San Jose Mercury, March 8, 1954.

to undergo another Rosenberg debacle, immediately took the lead. He called a special meeting of the Board and the Congregation, and proposed that the church oppose the loyalty oath. The Board unanimously accepted his proposal, and the congregation voted 35-9 against signing the oath. In writing to all the California Unitarian societies, Regional Director Frank Ricker put forth some of the issues involved, particularly the question of whether the church was not compromising itself by accepting tax exemptions in the first place. His official protest to the California State Franchise Board contended that the loyalty oath provision violated the First Amendment and the freedom of conscience and speech, and that whatever the constitutional validity of the oath, it was a totally ineffectual instrument.²² The PCUC established a Fund for Religious Freedom under Ricker's direction, and the cause of the California churches protesting the loyalty oath was adopted in the May resolutions of the 1954 Annual Meeting of the AUA:

Whereas: California has amended its constitution and enacted laws requiring a "loyalty oath" of all churches claiming tax exemption; and

Whereas: Such constitutional amendment and laws violate the traditional separation of Church and State and seek to establish State control over present and future actions and utterances by the Church in matters of conscience; and

Whereas: This constitutional amendment and these laws are contrary to the American tradition and an abuse of the taxing power;

Therefore Be It Resolved: That the American Unitarian Association go on record as condemning this constitutional amendment and these laws as an attack on the freedom of religion and as

²²PCD, Ricker to all California Unitarian Societies, Berkeley, January 22, 1954, Ricker to the California State Franchise Board, Berkeley, March 15, 1954.

supporting efforts to test their constitutionality in the courts.²³

The problem confronting the San Jose church was agreeing on the most effective means of opposing the loyalty oath since the refusal to sign it would entail raising enough money to pay property taxes. On the advice of AUA General Counsel Frank B. Frederick, Niles Wretman and Ralph Moore, the newly elected President of the Board, suggested that the oath be signed and its legality tested later. Wretman, having grown no less pessimistic during his long years with the church, and Moore were of the opinion that even litigation would be useless. They believed that only the organization of a movement, faint possibility that it was, might prove to be an effective means of having the law repealed.²⁴

The church was among the six of thirteen Unitarian churches in California who decided not to sign the oath and to pay taxes, and the American Civil Liberties Union was engaged to handle the case. In September, 1954, the California State Supreme Court refused to consider the mandamus action filed by the church, and the following month, Frederick wrote that the AUA wished to hire its own counsel to work with the ACLU in opposing the oath. The church paid its first installment of taxes with a statement of protest, claiming that the oath violated the First and Fourteenth Amendments of the United States Constitution, and Articles I,

²³"American Unitarian Association 129th Annual Meeting, May 25, 1954 Agenda."

²⁴PCD, Frank B. Frederick, AUA General Counsel, to Ricker, Boston, February 26, 1954, Frederick to Shelley, Boston, March 3, 1954, Niles Wretman to Reverend Frederick Eliot, AUA President, San Jose, March 31, 1954.

IV, and XVIII of the California constitution.²⁵ The AUA retained the San Francisco firm of Landeis and Weigel, which decided that the case could best be handled by filing a brief in the State Supreme Court as amicus curiae in support of the First Methodist Church of San Leandro and the First Unitarian Church of Berkeley vs. Russell C. Horstmann, Assessor of Alameda County, on appeal from the judgement of the Alameda Supreme Court. The California State Supreme Court ruled 4-3 against the churches. The case finally reached the U.S. Supreme Court, the decision being given on June 30, 1958, in favor of the churches as the Court found the oath unconstitutional and unenforceable. Six months later the State Franchise Board refunded the taxes paid by the church, and the congregation's celebration took the form of a series of discussions on how to spend the money with all due speed.²⁶

The stand of the church on the loyalty oath caused no division within the church, as might have been expected after the clemency debate. The congregation willingly accepted its responsibility to act for all the liberal forces in the community. Muted by their hierarchies, many churches in the San Jose area expressed their appreciation of the action taken by the Unitarian church. Tiring of the financial strain on his family and believing that the church would benefit in a change of ministry

²⁵PCD, Shelley to Ricker, San Jose, March 18, 1954, Ricker to all California Unitarian Societies, Berkeley, September 17, 1954, Frederick to Frederick J. Wood, Treasurer of Board of Trustees, Boston, November 10, 1954, Statement of Protest to the Santa Clara County Tax Collector, December 9, 1954; Frederick to Stanley A. Weigel, Landeis & Weigel, Boston, December 13, 1954.

²⁶Brief of the First Unitarian Church of San Jose as Amicus Curiae, S.F. No. 19507, in the Supreme Court of the State of California; "Rec., M.B., February 27, 1959.

at a time when it stood united, Shelley resigned in July, 1954.²⁷

Apparently inspired by its action on the loyalty oath, the six months' following Shelley's departure showed the congregation in quite a new light. Reverend Robert Murray Pratt, who had a reputation for patching up torn congregations and churches, was called in as interim minister. While Pratt wished to strengthen the church through increased membership and a religious education program, a number of members of the Church Council literally agitated for greater participation in community affairs and even considered breaking off from the church to form a fellowship. Whether Pratt resigned or was discharged is not clear, but by the spring of 1955, the church was again in the market for a minister. In a questionnaire, the congregation indicated its preference for a minister who lived by the courage of his convictions, provided that they were religiously, politically and socially liberal.²⁸

²⁷San Jose Mercury, September 11, 1954, p. 11, December 5, 1954, p. 29; Rec., M.B., Annual Report, 1954-1955; Rec., Reverend Robert Pratt to Walter Sorenson, San Jose, March 17, 1955; Reverend Sidney Peterman to author, April, 1966.

²⁸Rec., Questionnaire on ministerial preferences, April, 1955.

In the last decade, 1955-1965, the church has represented the principles of Unitarianism in the community and has dedicated itself to a social commitment which pervades the church to an extent unprecedented in the church's history. Dissidence, division and dissatisfaction are still very much a part of all the church's affairs, but a continuous dialogue between the minister, the congregation and the Church Council has usually led to constructive solutions rather than demoralisation and resignation. Reverend Sidney Peterman, a native of Gilroy, California and a graduate of San Jose State College, agreed to accept the pulpit in December, 1955. A clinical psychologist during World War II, Peterman received his B.D. from Starr King School for the Ministry in 1949, and further pursued his studies at Meadville, Stanford, Berkeley and the University of Oregon. From 1948-1955, he led churches in Eugene, Oregon and Columbus, Ohio.¹ The growth and the unity of the church during the last ten years have been fostered by Peterman's encouragement of the constant questioning of the goals of the church, congregational policy, the role of the minister and his relationship to the congregation and the community, and the social commitment of the church. The functions of the church, in Peterman's view, were those of offering a church school, worship experience, moral and ethical stimulation to motivate social action, and adult education or intellectual stimulation. Despite the

¹San Jose Mercury, December 17, 1955; PCD, Peterman vitae sheet.

shaky financial condition of the church during the first few years of his ministry, Peterman has insisted that the problem is never that of the church's survival, but of the congregation's willingness to assume the responsibility of commitment, direction and decisive action.²

One of Peterman's conditions for accepting the pastorate was the congregation's formation of an effective Church Council. By April, 1956, the rearrangement of the church's administrative structure had been completed with the gradual abolition of the Board of Trustees and the re-allocation of its functions to the Council and committees. More democratic in intent, the Council form of church government placed the responsibility for the church more directly in the hands of the congregation, and although not a decision-making body, the Council was to coordinate programs, exchange and share information, and keep the morale of the minister and the congregation high. Policy changes and decisions were to be made by the congregation. The minister was relieved of the "ultimate responsibility" for church administration and affairs; and he was made an ex-officio member of all Council committees.³

The Board of Trustees was completely dissolved by April, 1958, with all its functions being assumed by the executive committee of the Council. But congregational polity continued to undergo re-evaluation and change.⁴ Peterman suggested in January, 1959, the creation of a long range planning

²Rec., Peterman to Penny Calrow, San Jose, February 24, 1957; Rec., M.B., March 8, 1957.

³Rec., M.B., Annual Report, 1955-1956, May 20, 1956, February 25, 1957, April 26, November 24, 1958.

⁴Rec., By-Laws, Articles V, Section 1, VI.

committee to establish direction for the church through an examination of its policies and goals. It would be the purpose of the committee to analyze the role of the church in the community and to judge whether it would be more effective as a suburban or downtown church. The committee was also to determine where the church could be of service to special groups such as senior citizens and college students, and to establish the relative emphasis to be given to worship, religious education, community service and philosophical discussions. Finally, the committee would examine the church's relationship to other Unitarian churches and fellowships, and suggest the extent to which the church should participate in denominational affairs. In April, 1964, the committee presented a study of the church's growth noting that membership had increased 118% since 1957, a higher percentage than experienced by the other churches in San Jose. As the congregation agreed on the recommendation to remain a downtown church, the committee began, in 1965, to meet with the City Council to consider plans for urban renewal in the St. James Park area.⁵

After a re-examination of the functions of the Church Council and the minister in the early 1960's, it was re-asserted that the Council should act as a means of communication and liaison for the committees. In April, 1962, a Church Personnel Committee was established to act as liaison for the employees of the church, including the minister, the sexton and the secretary, and the congregation. The role to be played by the minister and the church in the community was assessed in July of 1961:

⁵Rec., M.B., January 19, October 9, 1959, April 24, 1964, January 29, 1965.

...there appears to be feeling the Church may not be participating in community activities to the extent we perhaps should; questions were raised as to whether or not the Minister has participated in community activities to the extent which would promote growth; the Minister and the Membership Committee should coordinate their activities closely and should be particularly conscious of the need for follow-up; the Public Affairs Committee is our major representative to the community; it should plan a vigorous program;...its Chairman is authorized to speak at public meetings for the committee as authorized by its members.

It was also decided, in Article XI of the 1958 By-Laws, that neither the members nor the minister nor any guest speaker could represent the congregation on any public policy without a 3/4 affirmative vote of the congregation. At the same time, the building-use policy was completely liberalized, allowing any group representing any political or ethical point of view to use the church facilities as long as such groups did not use the name of the church in any advertisements.⁶

The major innovation of the church was the conversion of the sanctuary into a church-in-the-round. Fostered by Peterman, the following outline of his proposals was presented to the congregation:

The area of worship in a liberal church can be deepened and extended greatly by three changes in our present set-up.

- a. There should be a greater use of the aesthetic richness of our time and past times in terms of use of other than organ music in addition to our organ and in terms of symbolic representation of the great religions out of which man has found so much spiritual growth.
- b. There should be greater use of our contemporary understanding of the nature of group participation and sharing in worship service by rearranging our sanctuary so that instead of the row after row of chairs arranged as the old fashioned lecture hall there will be a "church-in-the-round."

⁶ Rec., By-Laws, Article X, 1958; Rec., M.B., October 9, 1959, May 18, July 20, 1961, April 26, 1962, January 29, May 7, 1965; Rec., Richard Dearborn to the congregation, San Jose, October 22, 1963.

c. There should be a greater use of our own talent in the creating of materials such as hymns, readings etc. for our worship service so that we see worship as an experience in which our own creative abilities can be rightfully put to play.

After a series of round table discussions at a special congregational meeting on March 8, 1957, the church decided to go ahead with the plans. There was some speculation as to the advisability of bringing the minister down off the rostrum to the same level as the congregation, and there was also the question of whether people could worship while staring each other in the face across the circle, but these appeared to be minor considerations in view of the gains to be made by closer communication in the worship experience. The estimated cost of the renovation amounted to \$10,000, and heeding Peterman's advice not to borrow the money from AUA for once, the loan was taken from the First National Bank. The church-in-the-round, the Church Council and the round table method of discussion at congregational meetings all served to give the church a greater unity of experience and purpose.⁷

A new approach to financing was instituted in the early 1960's.

Recommending that the church hire a professional canvasser for the 1962 campaign, Peterman suggested that the purpose of the canvass should not be limited to raise money, but to get greater member participation and commitment. Although the Finance Committee decided against hiring a professional canvasser, a pamphlet, Open the Doors Wider, was published expressing the opportunities, needs and goals of the church, and the pledge

⁷San Jose Mercury, March 21, 1957; Rec., M.B., March 8, September 16, September 27, 1957; Rec., Frederick Wood to First National Bank, San Jose, November 4, 1957.

campaign was conducted on a personal visit basis by the members. The canvass calls in 1962 and 1963 produced an interesting analysis of the problems confronting the church in its attempt to attract a larger membership and increased financial support. In reporting on his calls, John Thomas stated that although the people he called on were liberal and in the mainstream of Unitarian thinking, they were not church-minded. Acknowledging that Unitarianism was ideologically revolutionary, Thomas pointed out that

...in organization and format it is barely to be distinguished from any horse and buggy church of the last century or early 20th century. We recognize the increase in knowledge that has resulted from research, but not the change in living habits resulting from urbanization, electronic communication, physical mobility, and the shattering of the large family and sense of community of the stable small town.

Culture, intellectual life and social action were all offered outside the church, and many people used the church just while in transition from orthodox religion to a non-church going existence. Thus, Thomas concluded, the only thing the church had to offer was its Sunday services, and of the people he interviewed, all expressed an interest in communing with the great outdoors, not with the Sunday morning organized congregation.⁸ Hopeless as the situation seemed, the financial gains made by the church from 1956 to 1965 were phenomenal. Income received in 1956-1957 was \$7,480.31, while by 1964-1965, it had increased to \$21,627.07; the church budget in 1956-1957 ran at a deficit of over \$1000, but by 1964-1965, despite the increased expenditures for salaries, repairs

⁸ Rec., Peterman to Council, December 12, 1961, R.W. Austand to Howard Hauze, San Jose, February 2, 1962, John C. Thomas, Summary of Canvass Calls, 1963.

and activities, there was a surplus of some \$300.⁹

One of the major reasons for the great financial leap was the majority support in the congregation for the goals of the church. A 1963 questionnaire answered by 101 members of the congregation revealed both the diversity and the common aims of the congregation. Of the 101 members, forty-five were professionals, thirty-two housewives, twenty-five semi-professional, managerial and clerical, and six skilled and unskilled labor. Of these, thirty-eight had done graduate work, twenty-eight were college graduates, twenty-two had completed some college work, while twenty-six had completed high school or less. Politically, 50% were liberal Democrats and 25% were Republican, though only 9% claimed to be conservative Republicans. Of those who listed themselves as radicals, only two were registered Socialists, and 16% claimed no political affiliation. Indicative of the fact that Unitarians produce indifferent second generations, and of the number of converts in the church, was the questionnaire's revelation that only five of the 101 people had come from a Unitarian-Universalist background. In regard to common aims, the majority supported remaining a downtown church and publicly identifying with stands taken on all issues involving Unitarian liberal principles.¹⁰

Religious education in the church was greatly strengthened by the adoption and execution of a curriculum philosophy for the whole program and for each individual class. Written by Peterman, the curriculum philosophy is based on children's readiness to understand certain concepts

⁹ Rec., Financial Analysis, 1956-1965.

¹⁰ Rec., Questionnaire, 1963.

of experience and history:

The primary objective of a Children's Program or a Church School in a Unitarian Universalist Church is to help the child commit himself to the natural processes by which human personality is created, nourished and transformed...There is a fundamental theological thesis behind the curriculum of a liberal church school. This is that man's final commitment is not to any given value system, contemporary or from the past; rather it must be to the process by which value systems are developed.

To nurture commitment to the process by which values are created rather than to any given value system there are three essential modes of experience. These must be clearly understood and followed if sharing is desired rather than indoctrination.

First, there is the concept of "readiness"...The curriculum is based on the development of a child beginning about the three year old level and continues through the junior high age. Religious-ethical concepts are not presented to the child until the child is ready to grasp them and put them to work in his own life.

Secondly, the curriculum should be an "experience-centered" program, not a system of indoctrination of belief or values...Maximum opportunities for children to actually experience how others worship and ascertain what others feel worthy of reverence are essential for the child.

Thirdly, historically, religion has most significantly achieved its task when it uses as its fundamental units human personalities. Not seeking to thrust the child into "worshipping" Jesus or the Buddha, Moses or Ikhnaton, we can help them to appreciate such persons and lead them into the worship of that which assists such persons as these to grow into the fullness of humanhood.

The program was further implemented by retreats taken periodically by the minister and the teachers, as well as meetings between parents and teachers, to re-evaluate and examine the religious education program. The success of the program was attested to by the registration of 242 children in the church achool during 1963-1964.¹¹

The congregation took a number of liberal stands in the community, and continued its opposition to the released time program for religious

¹¹Rec., Curriculum Philosophy, May 22, 1956; Rec., M.B., April 24, 1964.

education. In September, 1956, the Public Affairs Committee was appointed by the Council to join with other religious agencies in a united front against released time. The congregation drafted a resolution against released time, and the following month, Peterman publicly protested the program.¹² The work of the House on Un-American Activities Committee in San Francisco in the spring of 1960 led to a resolution criticizing HUAC. In an effort to counteract the influence of the HUAC film "Operation Abolition," the church sponsored a showing of the film "Operation Correction."¹³ In return for the work done for the church by the ACLU during the loyalty oath controversy, the Public Affairs Committee campaigned in early 1959 to enroll members in ACLU. The church also sponsored a public meeting in conjunction with the ACLU in May, 1959, on the nature of treason and the Powell case. As is shown in the minutes of the Council meetings, the liberal building-use policy was not entirely indicative of any real change having taken place since Lauriat permitted Dr. Phillips to speak at the church.

On April 20, 1959, the Council decided

That to take a liberal religious stand is the purpose and intent of our church, realizing that in any controversy there are strong opinions pro and con and thereby criticisms and condemnations of our action, and that this opportunity for discussion of "Treason" should be made available PROVIDING an unbiased chairman can be found. . . . To permit a biased meeting. . . is not consistent with integrity of our group.
Motion: that the Council invite the ACLU to hold the proposed meeting May 15 at the Unitarian Church; in cooperation with our Public Affairs Committee; that is, if a discussion with both sides represented adequately.

¹² Rec., M.B., September 24, 1956, January 19, 1959, April 29, May 7, 1960; San Jose Mercury, May 5, 1960.

¹³ San Jose Mercury, May 2, 1960.

By May 11, 1959, the Council had grown even more cautious, and arrived at the following statement:

1. Mr. Powell, and all panel members, are to speak of the nature of the civil rights involved in the issue and not to the content of the news articles written by him.
2. The meeting is not sponsored by the First Unitarian Church of San Jose, but the church has offered a meeting place for the airing of what the Church Council believes to be a significant issue involving civil rights.
3. The opinions expressed by the speakers and the government's brief do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Unitarian Denomination, the congregation of the First Unitarian Church of San Jose or its minister.
4. A specific statement is to be made regarding the precise state of the Powell case in the Federal Courts as it relates to treason, sedition, and a request for indictment. Stipulations 2, 3, 4 are to be read by the chair at the beginning of the meeting.¹⁴

The Public Affairs Committee also cooperated with the American Friends Service Committee in the publication of a pamphlet on all the social justice groups in Santa Clara County.

The church consistently supported fair housing. In January, 1963, the congregation resolved:

That the First Unitarian Church of San Jose hereby firmly supports the Fair Housing Ordinance proposed by the San Jose Human Relations Commission and that a copy of this resolution to be transmitted to the San Jose City Council.

When the question of fair housing was raised again in 1964 with the placement of Proposition 14 on the ballot, the church worked actively to have the anti-fair housing amendment defeated, and drafted a resolution of opposition.¹⁵

Confusion similar to that of the Powell case arose again in October,

¹⁴Rec., M.B., April 20, May 11, 1959.

¹⁵Rec., M.B., May 17, 1960, April 24, 1964.

1965, when notices by the Students for Democratic Society and the Committee to Oppose U.S. Intervention in Vietnam were mailed in the church newsletter. Several members of the congregation protested this use of the newsletter, fearing that the church would be associated with these groups. In keeping with the building-use policy, and contrary to the caution exhibited in the Powell case, the Council decided that any group representing any point of view would be permitted to include material in the newsletter. The only provision was that the group would have to fold, staple and stamp the newsletter.¹⁶ The far less controversial Santa Clara Friends Outside was granted permission by the Council to print notices in the newsletter and to collect food in the church halls.¹⁷

The Social Justice Committee worked in a capacity similar to that of the Public Affairs Committee, but did not officially represent the church in the community. The committee primarily presented speakers on major issues such as Universal Military Training, planned parenthood, civil rights, welfare, the high cost of dying, and when possible, had the programs broadcast on local stations such as KRPM. The Adult Education Committee sponsored programs on non-social justice issues such as world peace and dis-armament, and the feminine mystique.¹⁸ Both the Woman's Alliance and the Channing Club remained inactive until 1964-1965, while the Liberal Religious Youth became an auxiliary in February, 1962.

¹⁶ Rec., Mr. and Mrs. Robert Moen to Frank Brandt, Council Chairman, San Jose, October 13, 1965; Rec., M.B., October 14, 1965.

¹⁷ Rec., M.B., November 11, 1965.

¹⁸ Rec., Monroe Watkins to Representatives Charles Gubser and Dewey Short, Senators William Knowland and Thomas Kuchel, San Jose, January 15, 1955; Rec., M.B., October 19, 1961, January 15, February 15, 1962, July 18, October 17, 1963, January 31, 1964; Church in the Round, November 5, 1961.

One of the strongest auxiliaries of the church was the Servetus Club, initiated to provide social activities for single people past college age.¹⁹ Supplementing the Adult Education program were the seminars offered by Peterman on religion and philosophy.²⁰

The most ambitious project undertaken by the church in the last ten years was the 1965 summer HOST program. The civil rights movement in America presented a challenge to all churches to act on the principles inherent in Christianity and constitutional democracy. Since World War II, Unitarianism had consistently supported civil rights and an end to discrimination in education, housing and employment. In the San Jose church, Knost, Lauriat and Shelley had all worked for the improvement of race relations in San Jose, and the 1964 Stebbins Institute at Asilomar was entirely devoted to the one theme of the role of the religious liberal in the civil rights movement.²¹ The death of Reverend James Reeb during the March, 1965, Selma, Alabama demonstrations led Peterman to organize a spontaneous delegation of Unitarian ministers in Northern California to fly to Selma and join the demonstrators. The effect of the demonstration on all those who took part was incalculable, but Peterman attempted to express his impressions in a letter to Representative Don Edwards urging the passage of a civil rights bill:

(When I saw Walter Reuther walking hand in hand with the Greek Archbishop and both of them with difficulty holding back the tears, I got some idea that there can be victory

¹⁹ Rec., M.B., October 19, 1961, February 5, 1962; Rec., Peterman to Reverend Aron S. Gilmartin, San Jose, January 13, 1966.

²⁰ Rec., M.B., November 16, 1961, June 3, 1962.

²¹ San Jose Mercury, August 17, 1964.

for humanity without defeat for any human being). . . There was a feeling which I heard best expressed as the statement that we were attending the "First Ecumenical Council." This was a very real feeling that struck you as you infiltrated the police lines and entered the colored living areas. In the singing there was a lot of the old evangelical Protestant hymns and I found myself resisting singing words I didn't believe until I noticed that the rabbi whose hand I was holding was singing a song with the line "soldiers of the cross" with the same depth of feeling as the Colored Baptist minister on the other side.²²

The march to the County Courthouse in Selma and then to Montgomery was just a beginning and technically did not represent more than the victory of the power of the federal government over the state of Alabama. The real challenge lay in bringing about a revolution in attitude in all the cities and churches in the nation which would not only bring about the passage of a civil rights bill, but which would grant the Negro dignity, respect, education and opportunity equal to that enjoyed by white America in the north and south alike. As a small, but symbolic start in bringing about this transformation, Peterman and Russell Cline conceived of the idea of bringing Selma to San Jose.

The "Help Our Selma Teenagers" or HOST program was organized to bring forty Selma teenagers to spend the summer of 1965 in San Jose. Although the project originated in the church, it became a community inter-faith, interracial project. In this way, the teenagers had the opportunity to stay in homes of different races and faiths. The project was at once a symbolic gesture, an incentive to San Joseans to look to their local racial problems, and an opportunity for the Selma teenagers, all of whom had participated in the demonstrations and who had never been outside

²²Rec., Peterman to Representative Don Edwards, San Jose, March 17, 1965.

the South, to experience some of the possibilities for a future colorless, classless society and to encourage them to continue their fight for freedom and equality in the South. The arrival of the Selma bus at the church on June 15 was a triumphant moment for the HOST participants and the teenagers, and was highlighted by a message from Governor Brown. And, appropriately enough, the Santa Clara County White Citizens Council met on the same day to renew their dedication to the cause of racial superiority.²³ The summer brought both rewards and frustrations. The pre-arranged jobs in Salinas and Gilroy did not materialize and other jobs for the group were hard to find; at the same time, television and radio appearances gave them the opportunity to publicize their cause. Meeting with Negroes in San Francisco and reading about the violent eruptions in Watts, the difference between the nonviolent, Southern, rural Negro and totally frustrated Northern Negro was realized, and the Selma teenagers were also subject to the more subtle forms of Northern discrimination, as well as the more overt ones of being taunted in the streets and barred from certain San Jose churches.

The evaluation of the program at the end of the summer was enthusiastic, and both the teenagers and the HOST participants recommended it be continued. At the same time, the teenagers restated their determination to stay in the South, and suggested that the HOST participants could do more for their cause by working for racial equality in San Jose, and not by coming South. An indication of the progress made and the distance yet to go was seen in the comment made by one of the HOST participants,

²³Rec., M.B., April 22, April 30, June 10, 1965; San Jose Mercury, June 14, 1965; Santa Clara Sun-Times, June 16, 1965.

who said that after having been with the Selma teenagers all summer, she could look now at a group of Negroes on the street and be aware that they had both names and individual personalities.²⁴

After the exhilaration of the HOST program, the church experienced something of a depression during 1965-1966. Although membership had climbed to 237, 15% of the pledges were in arrears and the church was running at a deficit of \$2200. Concentration was given to increased membership, continued building renovation, and plans for the celebration of the church's centennial year. In January, 1966, the HOST program became an official auxiliary of the church, and a resolution was drafted supporting the work of all civil rights organizations.²⁵ Renewed spirit and determination were shown at the April 29, 1966 congregational meeting with the adoption of the minister's eight point program. One of the major challenges still facing the church, despite its tremendous growth in the last ten years, is that of assuming leadership as an effective urban church in San Jose. With the exception of the loyalty oath, the church's effect on the community has been negligible. The minister's program for 1966-1967 includes recommendations for increased membership and support, stronger and more diversified leadership, and greater congregational participation in the worship service and the general conduct of the ministry. All these should contribute to the planned series of meetings on the theme of "challenges, opportunities and difficulties of

²⁴San Francisco Chronicle, June 22, 1965; Rec., M.B., June 10, September 24, 1965; Aurelia Dickerson to author, August, 1965; HOST evaluation meeting, August, 1965.

²⁵Rec., M.B., January 28, 1966.

city churches within the Unitarian denomination," stressing problems inherent in urban San Jose and solutions found by other churches. Only in meeting the challenges of an urban church will the First Unitarian Church of San Jose assume its rightful place as a liberal and effective leader in the community.²⁶

²⁶ Rec., M.B., Congregational meeting, April 29, 1966.

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