

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Eastern Slopes

UUFES History 1979-2003

By Roderick Forsman - Revised and Updated March 2003

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Foreword

I am pleased to offer this revision and updating of my earlier edition of Two Decades of UUFES: A History of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Eastern Slopes 1979-1999, (March, 1999). A great deal has happened in this Fellowship, and it is important to keep track of changes so that we have the means of looking back to see and understand where we have come from as a religious community. A written history affords that opportunity for each of our current members

and friends. Its value is especially significant, I believe, for all those whose participation in UUFES is of recent origin.

The enjoyment I have experienced in doing this project has been greatly enhanced by its bringing into vivid memory all the names, faces and personalities of those who created the story of UUFES. I am thankful that some of them are still active participants in this community. Alas, some have died, others have moved away, and still others I have no idea of their whereabouts or well-being.

As in the first edition, I have titled this A History rather than The History to acknowledge the fact that any interpretations, slants and selectivity imposed upon the material covered reflect one person's vantage, mine. I am sure also that there are significant omissions, all inadvertent, and I apologize for any matters that should have received attention.

Special mention must be made of, and appreciation expressed to, C. Russell Miller who more than anyone else clearly deserves the title Founding Father of the Fellowship. Part I of the present report is Russell's "Early History of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Eastern Slopes," with some editing on my part.

Part I: Prelude to a First Annual Meeting

The first Annual Meeting of the Fellowship was held on June 27, 1982. How UUFES had reached that decisive point is described by C. Russell Miller in the following "Early History" referred to above:

A. Predecessor - 1960's

In the 1960's my wife and I with our children were vacationing at Lovewell Pond in Fryeburg, Maine. We were members of the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, New Jersey.

A North Conway newspaper item mentioned a meeting of a Unitarian Fellowship of the Eastern Slopes. I believe this was about the summer of 1964 and the meeting was to be held at the residence of a dentist (Dr. Spear) on the West Side Road, North Conway. We decided to attend. (As a matter of interest it could very well be that the late Kenneth Dole was also present at that meeting. Ken became a Treasurer and Honorary member of the current Fellowship.)

In talking with individuals within this small group, we learned that a few years before, some parents came together to try and provide a more liberal religious education for their children. Apparently these were new families in the North Conway area and many were summer visitors. Most had previous contact with Unitarianism. Meg Brown was the leader of the group. She and her husband operated the House of Color Gift Shop in Intervale, New Hampshire, off Route 16.

During subsequent summers, we made a point to attend meetings of this group when we could. Everything was informal and generally consisted of discussions under Meg Brown's leadership.

There was an attempt to provide something in the way of a Sunday School for any children present, usually in an adjoining room. There appeared to be no official recognition by the Unitarian Association at that time. They had adopted the "Unitarian Fellowship of the Eastern Slopes" name which continues today with "Universalist" included.

Some of the meetings were held at the House of Color and at the Little White Church in Eaton, New Hampshire, as well as in private homes. I recall at least one meeting at the Eaton church when a Unitarian minister from Pennsylvania spoke to us. Our casual involvement continued in the 1960's until the Fellowship finally disbanded when the Browns separated and Meg went to California. Thus the first attempt at a Unitarian Fellowship of the Eastern Slopes ended.

B. Phoenix Rises - 1979-1980

The Miller family became permanent residents of Fryeburg in June of 1973. Lacking any UU church nearby, we attended the local Congregational church for a while and then decided to drive to Norway, Maine and South Paris, Maine where the two churches of Universalist backgrounds had a joint pastorate. We were, however, seeking something more.

In December of 1979 our chance meeting with Irene Coburn, Northeast District Executive of the UUA prompted us to see what could be done to re-activate the Universalist chapel in North Fryeburg. The chapel (1838) had been closed after many years as a community church. Its legal status was continuing and since it was less than two miles from our home we thought it a possibility for reinvigoration as an active UU Society. (There might be good foundation that title to the chapel could be claimed by the UUA since it was originally built by Universalists.) The chapel was being cared for as an historical building. Obviously, to maintain its status as a church and exemption from local property taxes, it maintained a skeleton slate of officers and held an Annual Meeting. The church building was opened up by request for weddings, funerals, etc. A small bank account for the Universalist Parish of North Fryeburg helped provide for upkeep and repairs to the building.

Seeing in the newspaper a notice of an Annual Meeting of the Chapel at the home of Mrs. Harold Thurston, Jr. in Stow, Maine, my wife, Janet, and I decided to attend. At the close of the very brief meeting we raised the subject of using the Chapel as a new UU Fellowship. The reaction of the few present was not favorable, primarily because the Chapel had been closed only finally after a long and frustrating period of trying to keep active with dwindling membership and resources. There was definitely not a mood to reverse the situation. It should be realized that this had been a community church for many years. (The officers were not Unitarian Universalists, and I would understand, also, that when the UUA merger took place, the remnants of older Universalist families did not aspire to join with the Unitarians.) By now, we were motivated to try and form a UU Fellowship on our own that could be the resurrection of our predecessor Fellowship of the Eastern Slopes. Something needed to be done as a matter of fulfillment.

In May of 1980 we placed a box advertisement in the weekly "Reporter" newspaper of North Conway. The ad was entitled, "Looking for a Family?" and made the point that a family experience could be the result if interested people would join together in a UU Fellowship. The format of the ad was obtained from the UUA at Beacon St. in Boston. It had a picture of a peace

dove. Two immediate responses encouraged us to set up a meeting at our home on Fish Street in Fryeburg. On Sunday, June 22, 1980 at 3:00 p.m. six individuals were at the Miller residence. In addition to the writer and wife, Janet, they were: Judith H. Soule of Silver Lake, NH (She was the first to arrive); Judith and Robert Johnson of Jackson, NH; Rev. William Saunders, Minister of the Brunswick, Maine UU Church and the Extension Minister of the Northeast District of the UUA. Rev. Will Saunders offered the unique idea of having a Fellowship that could be associated with both the Northeast District and the New Hampshire/Vermont District. Anticipated members would be drawn from Maine and New Hampshire. He readily concurred with the adoption of our predecessor's name and the acronym UUFES. At any rate, the start was made as a result of our discussion together at that meeting on the afternoon of June 22, 1980. We decided to meet every two weeks on Sundays.

C. Formative Years - 1980-82

From the summer of 1980 through the fall of 1981, meetings took place in private homes. We tried to contact potential members. We had no officers or formality of a service. These were mostly discussions and sometimes taped sermons were played. During this period, the Carlsons of Fryeburg became participants. Win Carlson was the Business Manager at Fryeburg Academy and they had previously had a contact with Unitarianism in Scituate, Massachusetts.

The Lyle Richardsons of Bald Hill in Conway were interested attendees, having been active in the Wrentham, MA Unitarian Church.

Judie Johnson had been active in the Marblehead, Mass. Unitarian Church and her husband was of a liberal persuasion.

The Millers retired from Ridgewood, NJ where for fifteen years they were members of the Unitarian Society there. Janet was a "Lifetime Unitarian" from Reading, Mass. and I came out of a Congregational background. Judy Soule, formerly of the Lynn, Mass. area, was also a "Lifetime Unitarian" Also, during this period, Judy Soule's mother, Marilyn McKenna, retired to Albany, NH from the Washington, DC. area where she attended UU churches (She was able to play recordings of some of A. Powell Davies' sermons.). On October 4, 1981, the Sunday meeting was held at the Soule-Lee residence at Silver Lake, NH. This was the meeting at which a slate of officers was adopted. Previously a Nominating Committee (Marilyn McKenna, Lyle Richardson, Judie Johnson) had been put together. The first elected officers of the new UUFES were:

President - Judith Soule Secretary - C. Russell Miller Treasurer - N. Linda Richardson

The participants in this organizing meeting were: Judie Johnson, Linda and Lyle Richardson, Marilyn McKenna, Judy Soule, Janet and Russ Miller. Each family unit was asked to contribute five dollars and a bank account was to be established at the White Mountain National Bank in North Conway. A search began for an appropriate meeting place.

By the time of the Nov. 15, 1981 meeting at Marilyn McKenna's home, Judy Soule had obtained a sample set of Bylaws of an established UU Society and this was the basis of our own Bylaw

consideration. At this meeting our UUFES Bylaws were drawn up and those present voted to proceed to have the Fellowship become a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association and of the New Hampshire/Vermont District. Also at this meeting, a membership book was contributed by Judy Soule and signed by those present. The signers were in the following order: Judith H. Johnson, Janet P. Miller, Marilyn F. McKenna, Robert O. Johnson, Russell Miller, Judith W. Soule

At the December 27, 1981 meeting, six additional became members by signing the Membership Book. They were: Holly Ann Johnson Linda Richardson Lyle M. Richardson Elizabeth C. Carlson Winthrop L. Carlson Mildred P. Boyle

With this total membership of twelve and a contribution of twenty five dollars, it was decided to make formal application to the UUA for affiliation.

January 10, 1982 - We were visited by the Rev. David Robbins, Minister of the Franklin, NH Unitarian Church and NH/VT District Minister of Extension. He was accompanied by Ruth Macey, member of the Starr King UU Fellowship of Plymouth, NH and she was one of the founders of that Fellowship in 1980 (the first new Fellowship in New England for a long period of time).

February 7, 1982 - Judy Soule reported that notification had been received from the Secretary of the Board of Trustees of the UUA that the Board had accepted and approved our application at its meeting on January 29, 1982. Our Treasurer reported that a savings account was opened at the White Mountain National Bank and that a checking account would require a minimum balance of \$250.00.

February 21, 1982 - President Soule reported that she had received our Certificate of Fellowship from the UUA and also a report of the NH/VT District Trustees in which the UUA Board's action in accepting UUFES in Fellowship is recorded.

April 4, 1982 - At a meeting at the Richardson's home in Albany, NH, Kenneth and Evelyn Dole, Susan Kuemmerle and Roderick Forsman were present. (Rod was to become our first Lay Minister.)

April 18, 1982 - Met for the first time at the Sun Room of the North Conway Memorial Hospital.

May 30, 1982 - Deane Starr, NH/VT District Executive was present and agreed to arrange for a District loan of \$250 to enable us to open a checking account. Also, the District was to furnish us with a \$100 grant for a series of advertisements.

During the month of September, 1982, a series of ads was placed in the weekly "Reporter." The ads were obtained from the UUA and the cost of each of the four was \$16.50, financed by the \$100 District grant. As an example, one of the advertisements was a sketch of a centipede with the question, "What has 100 legs and 50 ideas?" Answer, "50 Unitarians."

It was during the year 1982 that the District provided us with a part-time Minister, Rev. J. Chandler Newton of Raymond, NH. This was funded by the District for a specified limited number of weeks and he would conduct the service once a month with a sermon. By the time of the Annual Meeting in June of 1983, it could be said that we were an active UU Fellowship. For example, the Secretary reported for the prior year that there had been 20 regular meetings. At five meetings, members conducted the program and presented a topic. Rev. Newton conducted six services. Three services were conducted by guest ministers (Rev. Starr, Rev. Schmauch, Rev. Bertram Steeves). There were six occasions when taped sermons were used. There were three Executive Committee meetings during the year and one Special Business Meeting. All regular meetings were held at the Sun Room. The first annual Meeting of the Fellowship was held on June 27, 1982 at the Miller residence in Fryeburg.

(Note by R.F.: A final portion of Russell's account has been omitted here which goes on to summarize highlights of Fellowship growth through 1997. In a concluding paragraph he notes that he had relied on memory for some of the information, and implied that there might be an inaccuracy here or there as a result. There did appear to be one inaccuracy regarding the date of adoption of the Bylaws. According to the record, the first Bylaws were adopted on October 4, 1981, not November 15th as he had stated. However, it was on that second date that Article IV was amended to change the district membership: "This fellowship shall be a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association and of the New Hampshire/Vermont District." The next six signers of the Membership Book were as listed earlier, but the dates of signing were as follows: Holly Johnson, Nov. 19; Lyle and Linda Richardson, Nov. 23; Elizabeth and Winthrop Carlson, Dec. 20; and Mildred P. Boyle (Janet Miller's mother), Dec.20.)

Part II: Principal Activities Through June, 1998

A. How and Where We Have Held Worship Services

After nearly two years of meeting in members' homes, the Fellowship secured the use of the Sun Room at Memorial Hospital in North Conway, and met there twice a month (2nd and 4th Sundays) starting April 18, 1982 at 4 p.m. Among the early guests were Barbara and Malcolm Reed of the Reading (MA) Unitarian Church on July 11th and August 8th. On September 5 we shifted to the first- and third-Sunday schedule which was maintained until 1997, when activities were added for the second- and fourth-Sundays.

Discussion began in September, 1982 between president Marilyn McKenna and the Rev. Deane Starr, Executive Secretary of the NH/VT District, regarding the possibility of the District's providing us with a part time minister. The Rev. J. Chandler Newton, District Extension Minister, met with the Executive Committee on November 3rd to learn of our needs, and conducted his first worship service for us on November 21, 1982. His once/month services were partly subsidized by the District. We moved our meeting place to "The Chapel" (later renamed the Henderson Room), downstairs in the Conway Village Congregational Church on June 19, 1983. With a few exceptions, our "long distance minister" Rev. Chandler continued to provide one service a month, with the other service led by either a guest speaker or a UUFES member, through June, 1986.

A note on attendance: During that period it averaged 7.4 through the end of 1981. In calendar '82 the average was 10, and in the first half of 1983, 8.3. These figures are possible because Russ Miller kept record, neatly typed, Sunday by Sunday, with the names of those in attendance.

Having accepted the presidency at the Annual Meeting in June, 1984, Roderick Forsman began leading most of the services on those alternate Sundays when Rev. Chandler was not here. He had earlier conducted the services on 10/3/82, 1/2/83, and 7/17/83. Rod was a school psychologist and active UU who had moved to the area in 1980 from Plattsburgh, NY where he was on the faculty of the State University of New York College. The sermons he read were ones sent him by The Rev. Robert Senghas, minister of the First Unitarian Universalist Society, Burlington, VT. This pattern continued through June, 1986 when Chan's Extension Ministry with us ended. During the year '86-'87, Rod moved more and more into the "pulpit role", and there was also increased participation by other members and friends as well as guest speakers.

Rod's role as lay leader/minister was formalized at the Annual Meeting on June 7, 1987 (and was eventually to continue to his retirement in June, 1998.) Russ Miller moved to appoint Forsman as Lay Leader "to serve on an annual contract which will automatically renew each year unless either party gives notice by April 1st. . . and in consideration of an annual 'honorarium' mutually agreed upon." Since 1985, at least one service per year has focused on the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, both to publicize its highly effective programs and to urge membership in the UUSC and/or financial contribution for its support by us as individuals.

In November, 1989 permission was received to use the Henderson Room at 8:30 a.m. There had been persistent dissatisfaction over the years with the 4 p.m. meeting time, especially during the winter months. However, there were still the problems associated with "sharing" these quarters with other users from the preceding week. For example, a day-care program consistently left the room covered with furnishings, toys, etc. which all had to be moved out of the way in order for any semblance to be achieved of a worship space. As I recall it, early in the summer of '89, carpenters started work at the rear of the Henderson Room to install storage space for foodstuffs for a new food pantry program.

This development further increased our awareness of shortcomings in our worship-service space. Subsequently, at the Annual Meeting in June, 1989 it was decided to delay adoption of a budget until the fall, pending outcome of our looking for an alternative location, which might mean significant change in rent. A Site Location Committee was appointed, composed of Warren Witherell (south), Rod Forsman (Conway area) and Russell Miller (Maine) to scout out possibilities. None was found, but the process had been started. Nearly two years later we did secure the use of Runnells Hall in the village of Chocorua, commencing September 15, 1991. The change also allowed us to move the meeting time a half-hour later to 9 a.m. The Fellowship has continued to meet there with great satisfaction through the present time.

Happenstance notes made at our last service in the Henderson Room on Labor Day Weekend, 1991, recorded the following persons present: Margie (that's with a hard 'g') Fennell, Phyllis Hatch, Marilyn McKenna, Wardner and Frederika Gilroy, Foster Gilroy, Dave Fisher, Erma Perry, Sylvia and Warren Witherell, Russell and Janet Miller, a homeless man, Richard

Doregthy, and lay minister Rod Forsman. Incidentally, my recollection is that the attendance at one of the services that summer was four.

A further note on attendance. Accurate records have not been kept consistently, but it is accurate to say that attendance at worship services steadily grew over the years. By 1997 we were numbering two dozen or more per worship service. Special occasions saw this number jump into the high thirties or low forties.

B: Membership Records

Membership in the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Eastern Slopes is specified in its Bylaws (as amended) as follows: "Any person sixteen (16) years of age or older who is in sympathy with the purpose and program of this Fellowship may become a member by signing the membership book. Membership is open to all qualified persons regardless of race, color, sex, affectional or sexual orientation, or national origin."

[A lengthy list of membership has been omitted here.]

C. Annual Budgets 1982 and 2002

One source of information about who we are and what we have been doing is our annual budgets. From its adoption of Bylaws in October, 1981 to the following June 30, 1982, the fledgling Fellowship operated without a budget. It had receipts of \$510, of which \$250 was a loan and another \$100 a grant from the District. The balance came in from pledges. Disbursements in that period were \$55. The following full year 1982-83 showed total receipts of \$396.28 and disbursements \$288.17. Most of the latter (\$190) was for room rental.

The operating budget adopted for 2002 (\$52,740) offers a dramatic view of Fellowship growth overall in those 20 years, and specifically in what has been budgeted:

Administration \$1500 Advertising 2000 Caretaker 50 Caring & Sharing Fund 200 Child Care 700 Clergy of the Eastern Slope 100 Contingency 800 General Assembly 1000 Hospitality 200 Insurance 375 Library Contribution 50 Member Delegate 1400 Membership Expenses 100 Mileage 1000 Minister Compensation 26,265 Minister Expenses 500 Phone 400 Religious Education 4200 Rent 1500 Savings & Investments 1000 Search Committee 1000 Social Concerns 600 Speakers 1800 UUA Fair Share 2400 NH/VT District Dues 600

Numbers do sometimes tell a story!

D. Religious Education Programs

Despite continuing efforts over the years to "grow an R.E. program for children", we have been hampered by the fact that few of our UUFES families have had younger children at home. Judie Johnson and Deborah Frock, to mention only the two primary persons, have invested enormous interest and energies into R.E. development. Our District R.E. consultant, Cindy Spring, has also provided her services, support, and curriculum materials.

We have offered several Adult R.E. programs. Rod Forsman gave a talk on "Late 18th and Early 19th Century Origins of Unitarian Universalism" in December, 1986. Enough interest was kindled by this talk to undertake a three-part series on "Origins of American Unitarianism" in the spring and early summer, 1987. Rod also led an 8-session adult series titled "What Unitarian Universalists Believe: Principles For a Living Faith." A video-based program, it basically discussed the newly adopted UU Principles and showed how to apply them to our personal and congregational lives. Meetings were held on the second Sunday of each month, beginning in October, 1987 and lasting through May, 1988. Ken and Evelyn Dole of North Conway generously provided their home for the series.

In February and March, 1997 Dave Fisher led a 4-session discussion group sparked by the book *Salted With Fire: Unitarian Universalist Strategies for Sharing Faith and Growing Congregations*. (edited by Scott W. Alexander, 1994, Skinner House Books). Participants explored views and experiences of Unitarian Universalism, evangelism, and how we can be more actively involved in our spiritual growth.

A more formal workshop series on "Building Your Own Theology" was offered in November, 1997 through June, 1998 by Dave Fisher and Rod Forsman. The sessions were held in participants' homes, including those of Lydia Miller, Sally Wheeler, Nancy Sheridan, and Charlotte Van Hof. (If there are others I have forgotten, my apologies.)

Eleanor Jenkins, friend of the Fellowship (became a member in 2002), led a group of women in *Cakes For the Queen of Heaven* in the fall, 1996.

E. The Bylaws: Original, Reviews and Revisions

Judith Soule, who was the first president of UUFES, corresponded with the Extension Consultant of the UUA in the summer of 1981 and obtained several samples of Bylaws. By early August the organizers of the "Phoenix UUFES" had finished an initial draft and submitted it to the UUA for review and suggestions. One of the main questions they had was which district to affiliate with. The organizers came from western Maine and also Mount Washington Valley, NH. Partly the question hinged on how the two states' laws compared regarding incorporation for tax-exempt status. Even the possibility of dual membership had been considered. The original Bylaws were adopted on October 4, 1981. With some uncertainty, the decision was made to affiliate with the Northeast District of the UUA. Upon reconsideration of that choice, apparently influenced by Judy Soule's personal contacts with other UUs in the NH/VT District, Article IV of the Bylaws (Denominational Affiliation) was amended on November 15, 1981 to affiliate with the NH/VT District of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

I could not locate in the Minutes of any meetings just when, prior to a May 20, 1989 re-typing, that three further changes were made to the Bylaws: (1) Article III, Section 4 added an Associate Membership category for "Unitarian Universalist ministers who have shown an interest.. . Such membership shall be without vote or expectation of financial or other participation." This was probably done after Chan Newton ended his part-time ministry with us. He had signed the book as a member, but we did not wish to hold him to the requirement of making financial contributions in order to maintain membership. (2) Article VI, Section 1 added the office of Vice

President. This change made unnecessary the Section 5 of that article, which provided for the Executive Committee to appoint a temporary chairperson to preside over meetings which the president is unable to attend. (3) Section 5 was therefore deleted. In a special business meeting on October 15, 1989, voting on a motion by Phyllis Hatch, the existing Section 3 of Article III was canceled and replaced in its entirety by a new Section 3, reading as follows: "Those members who are not active members (i.e. those members who have not made a financial contribution within the year) shall become associate members. Persons may be dropped from membership only on death or by a request in writing."

A later development arose which was to have major consequences for the Bylaws. The concept of long range planning was introduced to the Executive Committee in late 1993. The Committee embraced the concept enthusiastically and appointed 5 members to a Long Range Planning Committee: Kathryn Burnell, Rod Forsman (Secretary), Edith Gimpel, Bob Johnson, and Mal Reed (Chairman). The Committee developed a Mission Statement which was adopted by the Fellowship in 1994. They then went on to conduct a questionnaire survey to explore the Fellowship's priorities and goals. The findings were reported on 10/1/95. The LRPC was asked in January, 1996 to review our current Bylaws and to make recommendations for changes to improve the functioning of UUFES. After several meetings of the LRPC a single-page list of recommended changes was given to the Executive Committee on March 15.

On April 17, 1996 the Executive Committee approved putting the recommendations before the Fellowship at its Annual Meeting in May. Earlier that same day the membership itself had changed the Bylaws to meet annually in May instead of June. Meeting on May 19th, members approved the numerous proposed changes to the Bylaws. The most significant ones were: (1) voting members shall have made a financial contribution within the current fiscal year; (2) the associate membership category was dropped; (3) membership termination is effected by written request; (4) the Executive Committee is renamed the Governing Board; (5) this Board is expanded to five members by the addition of a Chairperson of Religious Education; (6) several standing committees are created, including Religious Education, Membership and Publicity, Finance, Social Justice. The previously existing Nominating Committee is now listed with these new committees, and is appointed by the Board (not elected at Annual Meeting) as are the other committee chairmen and members.

Other revisions have been made each year at annual meeting since 1999. Denominational affiliation now includes the NH/VT District of Unitarian Universalist Societies (omitted earlier presumably as an oversight). The quorum is now 40% instead of 20%. A Proxy vote on pre-published agenda items is available. Religious Education is now recognized as Lifespan Religious Education, and the fifth position on the Governing Board has been changed from Chairperson of Lifespan Religious Education to Member-At-Large. The standing committees are now Lifespan Religious Education, Membership, Program, Social Concerns, Ministerial, Long Range Planning, Finance, and Nominating. The minister is a non-voting ex officio member of all committees except the Nominating Committee.

F. Social Events and Retreats

Our annual meetings have usually been the occasion also for a memorable potluck meal, making it very much a "social event". The initial one in this now-long series took place at Bouldacres, the residence of Janet and Russell Miller in Fryeburg, Maine on June 27, 1982. Over the years the pot lucks have been hosted by Ken and Evelyn Dole ('83), the Millers ('84), Bob and Judie Johnson ('85 and '87), Sylvia and Warren Witherell ('86 and '88), and Marilyn McKenna ('90 and '91). We moved our worship services to Runnells Hall in September of 1991, and concurrently our social events have benefited from the convenience of the kitchen facilities there since then.

Despite our wide individual differences as UUs in response to the whole Christmas Season phenomenon, we have almost always managed to capitalize on its heightening of our sense of community. The Johnsons hosted the Christmas party in '84. My records are absent of information about holiday gatherings for several years, but I do recall that they occurred. Following the 12/19/93 worship service we gathered for the first of three wonderful annual potluck meals hosted by Beulah and Fred Vancor in Wolfeboro. Since '96 we have gathered for a Christmas Brunch at the Whittier House in West Ossipee.

The First Annual William Ellery Channing Brunch was held at Runnells Hall following the Easter Sunday service on April 3, 1994. It was superbly organized and coordinated by Barbara Reed who has been masterful in her accomplishment of directing such events. The brunch has been held annually since, but variously renamed. Another of Barbara's projects has been the organizing of "Dinners For Six/Seven/Eight" to brighten the dark days of winter during January through March. These are "small, intimate social gatherings (which) will foster the interchange of ideas and sharing of fellowship between UUs in a purely social setting - nurturing the mashed potato concept' noted by your president in the last issue" (of the newsletter *Inclinations*, Feb, 1997). The reference Barbara makes is to an excerpt from Bruce Marshall's *Taking Pictures of God*:

What I want in church is a place where there are suppers on Sunday evenings and they serve you mashed potatoes! Never have I heard it expressed more succinctly: the comfort role of the church community. Mashed potatoes are warmth and nourishment and safety and support. It would be a shame if our lives have become so busy and important that we don't have time to offer mashed potatoes to each other.

Hosts supply beverages, and the randomly-assigned guests bring the food.

Fellowship-wide retreats have served that vital "social" purpose as well. The first one I know of came at the generous invitation of Doug Leathem to his Kezar Lake lodge, the weekend of September 27-28, 1997. It was an overnight affair combining business (Board and committee meetings) with pleasure: a potluck supper, canoeing, nature walks, pancake breakfast, good music and singing, a video on UU history, board games, and lots and lots of warm fellowship.

G. Clergy of the Eastern Slope

We have participated over the years in the activities of the Clergy of the Eastern Slope by having one of our members attend the group's regular meetings. Marilyn McKenna represented us in earlier times, and later, Kathryn Burnell. Each year we budget a line item for CES. Also,

numerous UUFES members participate in the annual Crop Walk that is sponsored by the Clergy. We are the only local denomination whose name closely reflects the Clergy of the Eastern Slope, the difference being that we pluralize "Slopes".

H. Special Funds

As reported in the May, 1997 issue of Inclinations, a UUFES Memorial Fund has been established, as follows:

The purpose of the UUFES Memorial Fund is to provide a permanent remembrance of persons dear to us. At the time of an individual's death, friends may be invited to give to the Memorial Fund amounts they would otherwise expend on flowers or other nonpermanent remembrances. Or, perhaps a member would like to make a contribution to commemorate a birth, an anniversary, a graduation, or a marriage. All gifts - including permanent, non-monetary gifts - will be recorded, with the donor noted, in a permanent record book. The name of the person in whose memory the gift is given will also be recorded. All gifts will be acknowledged by the UUFES treasurer and notification will be sent to the next of kin of the person memorialized. Donors may condition or restrict their gifts to serve a particular purpose, pending Governing Board approval. The Governing Board will be responsible for management of the Memorial Fund.

There are also two other dedicated funds not available for any other but their stated purposes. The Peggy Erskine Caring and Sharing Fund, and a Social Action Fund.

I. Self Study: Surveys and a Workshop Retreat

Note was made earlier (I.E.) of the work of the Long Range Planning Committee. In early 1994 the LRPC convened an all-day session to develop a mission statement. Eighteen members worked through the whole day at the Ossipee Concerned Citizens Building led by the Rev. Kitsy Winthrop of the Springfield (VT) UU Church. The LRPC subsequently reviewed and polished the draft, which was then approved by the Executive Committee. The mission statement expressed how the Fellowship defines itself and its purposes.

Using the vision statement as a guide, the Committee constructed and administered a questionnaire which was mailed out to 20 members and friends. It sought to learn what the Fellowship community wished to accomplish in the future regarding the specifics of change and growth. The results of its analysis were reported to the Executive Committee on October 1, 1995.

A few of the more interesting findings were: very high interest in adult RE; desire for a full time minister by the year 2003; priority of attracting new members, especially those with young children; lukewarm feelings about having every-Sunday programming, particularly because it would require higher levels of pledging; and very strong interest in maintaining high-quality sermons.

A second all-church questionnaire was prepared, disseminated and evaluated by the Public Relations Committee, ably led by its chairperson Cindy Foster. The results of the survey were

reported in April, 1998. Cindy and Connie Jan Sears, a committee member, were commended for the tremendous effort they gave the project. The findings provide an interesting basis for comparing the results of a later survey only four years later, showing significant changes:

1. A majority of members are female, over 50, and retired. 2. The numbers of persons identifying themselves religiously or philosophically were: 20 Humanists, 18 Naturalists, 16 Eclectics, 12 Ethical Christians, 10 Agnostics, 1 Theological Christian, 1 Atheist. 3. Even split between wanting an ordained vs. lay minister. 4. Regarding the type of person who would be leader: 24, "facilitating type" who should be a spiritual leader; 23, intellectual leader; 16, a community builder; 13, a social activist; 11, a facilitator; 8, a provider of pastoral care. 5. All respondents said they would increase their pledge to support a new minister. Potential increase of pledges ranged between 10% to 120%. 6. A majority favor a change to weekly meetings, but not weekly services. All favored the alternate Sundays being used for public-issues forum, adult education or book discussion. 7. Most adequately served at present are fellowship and spiritual growth, with needed improvement in social activism and pastoral counseling. 8. The aspects of church most important to members are intellectual stimulation, community and worship service. Adult education and social action are mid-way. Children's program was last.

Independently of this survey, about 20 members and friends met on Saturday, March 29, 1998 for a pancake breakfast, followed by a workshop lasting past lunch, to identify and prioritize concerns for the Fellowship's future. The number of votes for specific priorities was: Leadership, 17; Voice of Conscience in the Community, 12; Finding a Building for Services and to Support Community Affairs, 12; Increasing membership and Sustaining Spiritual Development, 10. A detailed report was published with the May, 1998 issue of Inclinations.

Social action/social justice projects have held central interest for many of our members for a long time in true UU tradition. Several members are significantly involved in social justice issues as individuals in their respective communities. Our ability to move forward more energetically in this realm was given a tremendous boost in 1997 by an anonymous donation of \$2,000, and a pledge of two more annual contributions of that amount for a total of \$6,000 (the Social Action Fund; see II.H.).

J. A Future Home For UUFES

Hopes for a future church building of our own was expressed formally as far back as the Annual Meeting in June, 1983 when \$100 was budgeted for a "Building Fund". Minor amounts were budgeted and paid into the fund thereafter, just to keep it alive on the books. Then, in the Annual Meeting of 1986 we assigned a small savings account and two CD's (totaling \$1603.77) to the Building Fund, augmented by another \$2000 we had received during the year from the dissolution of the White Memorial Universalist Church of Concord, NH. As if to emphasize our intent, we transferred another \$500 to that fund from a NOW account. A future home of our own was on our minds.

At the Annual Meeting in May, 1998 the Governing Board reported that they had removed the Building Fund from the operating budget and made it a stand-alone fund. Three years later the question arose whether in fact the monies in that fund were formally "dedicated" as such.

Although the Board and membership alike considered that fund to be dedicated, it had not been formally declared so. Russell Miller moved to change the term "Building Fund" to "dedicated funds". The motion passed and they are now so designated. At the same time, the Fellowship voted to create an ad hoc committee "to investigate the past history of the dedicated funds (Building Fund), any potential problems, and to make recommendations to the Governing Board regarding policies and procedures pertaining to them" (Minutes, Annual Meeting 2001, Action 9A.). This committee has not yet reported its progress in this task.

The designated Building Fund is currently in the form of dividends and cash held by Salomon, Smith, Barney. As of mid-January, 2003, its value was in excess of \$6,000. However, another \$28,000 not specifically designated is fully available for the purchase of a parcel of land currently being considered (more on this in Part V, Section H.)

At one time, in the late fall of 1990, the Fellowship did become quite interested in a potential purchase. The Executive Committee was authorized to negotiate a one-year lease with option to buy the former Post Office Building in Center Conway, NH. This transaction did not materialize. However, having our own building is definitely an active priority.

Part III: Passages and Memorials

Margaret Borden "Margie" Fennell died September 21, 1994 following a long illness. Margie joined the Fellowship March 3, 1986 and was an active member until her death at the age of 83. It is my understanding that while she was living in Lexington, MA she was superintendent of the largest-enrollment of UU Religious Education programs in the U.S. Margie combined a highly independent spirit, intellectual keenness and wry sense of humor. Roderick Forsman conducted the memorial service for her at the Gibson Center in North Conway on October 1, 1994. She was well known and loved by a large circle of friends outside UUFES as well.

Sylvia Rehder Witherell, beloved wife of Warren F. Witherell, died in Concord, NH on April 26, 1996, just one day shy of her 84th birthday. She had succumbed to pancreatic cancer. A service for the celebration of her life was held on May 18, 1996 at the Chickville Church in Center Ossipee. She had been a member of this Fellowship since March 31, 1985. Sylvia's loving and kindly nature, her warmth of spirit and reliable good humor remain vivid in the memories of those of us privileged to know her. The beautiful chalice which adds significantly to our worship services was given to the Fellowship by her family as a memorial.

Janet Parker Boyle Miller died of lymphoma cancer on November 11, 1996 at the age of 79. She was a "Founding Mother of the Fellowship" and beloved wife of C. Russell Miller. Our Fellowship lost a cherished friend and vibrant personality in her passing. Her indomitable spirit and zest for life were in full display to the last. A service for the celebration of her life was held in the North Fryeburg Universalist Chapel on June 22, 1997, led by Roderick Forsman. The UUFES Memorial Fund was generously given a gift of \$1000 from Russell in her memory.

Although not formally a member of UUFES, Donald W. Wilson actively participated in the life of this religious community with his wife, Louise. Don died November 21, 1987 in Fryeburg,

ME. A memorial service was held on November 27th at the North Fryeburg Universalist Chapel, Rod Forsman conducting.

His widow, Louise Dickinson Wilson, died on February 26, 1999 at the age of 93. She had been in failing health for several years. Louise was born in Holyoke, MA on January 27, 1906. She was a graduate of Mount Holyoke College. After receiving her Masters in Library Science degree from New Haven State Teachers College, Louise was a librarian in the Hartford, CT school system for many years before she and Don moved to Sandwich, NH. They moved to Fryeburg, ME in 1982. Louise loved the small size and intimacy of UUFES as she knew it years ago.

"Foster Wardner Gilroy, son of Wardner and Frederika Gilroy, died at his home, June 4, 2002 after a long illness. He was born August 12, 1951 in Huntington, NY. After obtaining his B.A. degree from Hofstra College, Foster earned his J.D. degree from Western New England Law School and was a representative to the Student Bar Association. After the death of his wife, Charlene Kemp Gilroy, he made his home with his parents in Highland Park in Fryeburg. He is also survived by his first wife, Linda Bauer Gilroy of Melville, NY" (Inclinations, July, 2002). A Service of Remembrance was held at the Brighton Medical Center in Portland, ME on 10/29/02, conducted by Roderick Forsman. Foster's father was receiving rehabilitation services at the Center for injuries suffered in a fall several months earlier.

The courageous life of Peggy Erskine ended July 13, 2001. A Memorial Service to celebrate her life was held at Runnells Hall on July 17th, presided over by Rev. Dan Schatz. Many of Peggy's "friends and family members delivered moving tributes to the indomitable spirit of a woman who faced multiple challenges throughout her life, whose curiosity and intellect were boundless, and whose concern for others shone through, despite her own suffering. How fitting it is that UUFES President JoAnne Rainville announced at the end of the service that our fund for those in need has been officially designated as the 'Peggy Erskine Caring and Sharing Fund.' She will be sadly missed" (Inclinations, August, 2001).

LaVonne Wright, beloved wife of Edward Wright, died in December, 2001 as a result of a fall down a stairway at a restaurant while she and Ed were in Rome, Italy. A memorial service conducted by Rev. Schatz at Runnells Hall heard tributes and touching reflections from Ed and their two sons and one daughter. LaVonne will be remembered, in part, for her gentle spirit and keen intellect. Prior to her retirement, she had been a registered nurse, a special education teacher, school psychologist, special education director, and lawyer.

Marilyn F. "Mac" McKenna died unexpectedly at her apartment in Hanover, NH. Mac was a Founder of this Fellowship, the third person to sign the membership book on November 15, 1981. She had served four terms as President, 1982-84 and 1989-91. She "retired" from the Census Bureau and moved to Albany just months before the fledgling Fellowship formed. Along with her leading role in UUFES activities over several years, as well as in NH/VT District affairs, she also was active in civic affairs, serving as town clerk, tax collector, and moderator for Albany. Her liberal voice permeated all of these activities. At Kendal, her assisted-living facility in Hanover, she was a highly visible volunteer.

Part IV: Annual Slates of Officers - OMITTED

Part V: 1998-Present

The end of the 1997-98 Fellowship year was a major turning point for UUFES. Roderick Forsman conducted his last worship service as lay minister on June 21st. He had led his first UUFES service on October 3, 1982, over 15 ½ years earlier. His formal role as lay minister had begun July 1, 1987. The retirement occasion was followed up with a lively gathering at the Reeds' home in Freedom.

Over all those years, the worship services had benefited from sermons written by some of the denomination's best ministers. Sermons were selected for their variety of views, issues, and quality. They were available to Rod either through personal correspondence, subscription or in published collections. Among the more frequently appearing sermon authors were: Robert Senghas, Richard S. Gilbert, John Hay Nichols, Terry Sweetser, M. Susan Milnor, John Cummins, John Buehrens, and John W. Cyrus.

The ending of Rod's lay ministry was a point of transition to professional ministry. At the Annual Meeting of UUFES in May, 1998, Dr. F. David Fisher was welcomed as Acting Minister by unanimous vote. The Governing Board was instructed to negotiate a written contract with him. Dave stated that he intended his tenure as minister to be for one year, "to be extended if necessary to two years." The final motion of the Meeting was an expression of appreciation to Rod Forsman for his thirteen years of service to UUFES.

Looking back four years later, the transition proved to have served as a powerful stimulus for the planning and reorganizing of our programs, and energizing a broader participation by the membership. Starting September, 1998 the Fellowship began meeting every Sunday. Worship services are held on the first and third Sundays. Lifespan religious education and social justice programs are held on the alternate Sundays. Fifth Sundays are the occasions of intergenerational services. There are more frequent special events. The number and variety of social events has increased. The Program Committee under the dynamic leadership of Dick Cary created an exciting calendar whose offerings were planned out well in advance. The speakers have given us a diverse array of high-quality topics and abundant mental stimulation.

A. Ministry

In September, 1998, Dr. F. David Fisher began his tenure as Acting Minister. Dave is a retired psychiatrist who had earned a Masters in Divinity degree from The Starr King School, prior to deciding to enter a medical career. The high point of UUFES' transition to professional ministry was Dave's ordination by the congregation on January 10, 1999, bestowing on him the title Reverend. This event was historic not only for Dave, but also for UUFES. It was our first ordination. Several distinguished guests participated in the joyous celebration: Rev. Jim Norman, District Executive of the NH/VT District; S. Arnold Shields, District President; Rev. Art Vaeni, Minister of the Starr King Fellowship in Plymouth (and a guest seminarian speaker when we were meeting in the Conway Village Congregational Church), Rev. Christoph Schmauch, President of the Clergy of the Eastern Slope; Rev. Kathy Merrick, Minister of the Lovell (ME)

UCC; Rev. Dr. Duncan Howlett, Minister Emeritus of All Souls Church, Unitarian, Washington, D.C.

Dave served us effectively for two years. This was the maximum tenure that he had promised. His sermons enriched our understanding of Unitarian Universalism, deepened our appreciation of UU Principles, sensitized us to gender issues, and called us to higher levels of caring and civility. His pastoral services were deeply appreciated. As a reminder to him of his hours of service to UUFES, Dave was given a "literal" hourglass which he promised he would not use for Scrabble games. Dave has moved to the Fort Lauderdale area with his partner, Paul Alpert. He is deeply missed by all.

The Search Committee, under the able chairmanship of Malcolm Reed, brought two ministerial candidates forward to conduct services in July, 2000: Deane Perkins on the 9th, and Daniel Schatz on the 23rd. At a Special Meeting of the Fellowship on August 6, 2000, a majority of the membership voted unanimous approval of the Governing Board's recommendation to call Daniel S. Schatz to be our next minister, on a half-time basis.

Dan began his ministry with the Fellowship in mid-September with a sermon exploring adventures - of our free faith, of thought, and of our life together as a community. A light luncheon replaced the usual refreshment hour following the service.

In order to better support that adventure together as a community, a group met with Jim Norman (D.E. for the NH/VT District) on November 21, 2000 to articulate the respective responsibilities of the minister, the congregation, and shared responsibilities. The group consisted of representatives of the Governing Board, Ministerial Committee, and Dan Schatz. Recognizing that the bottom line of successful community is open communication between the minister and all members of the congregation, the following list attempted to synthesize their ideas into coherent form:

Responsibilities of the Minister:

- Lead worship, including sermon, 1st Sundays of the month
- Help lead and construct 3rd Sunday services
- Provide professional pastoral care (such as getting to know the congregation, visitation, counseling, being on-call)
- Maintain strong denominational ties (including NH/VT District, UUA, worldwide)
- Offer resources and, where appropriate, suggestions to Governing Board and Committees
- Provide ceremonial services (such as "match, hatch, and dispatch" a.k.a. marriage, birth and death)
- Represent UUFES in the community (e.g., Clergy of the Eastern Slope)
- Continue on a path of professional and spiritual growth

Congregational Responsibilities:

- Participate in the life of the congregation (such as attend services, offer support and care to one another, committee work, social events, enjoy UUFES)

- Make policy decisions for UUFES (including bylaws, long-range planning, physical facility, etc.)
- Finances (such as budgeting, canvassing, and fundraising activities for financial support of professional staff and other expenses)
- Create 2nd, 4th and 5th Sunday services
- Provide for lifespan religious education (children and adults) and childcare
- Social action projects
- Take care of administrative/secretarial tasks (for example, UUFES telephone, newsletter, web site, Sunday bulletins, UUA and NH/VT paperwork and dues)

Shared Responsibilities:

- Communicate honestly with one another; manage interpersonal conflicts
- Provide leadership, mutual moral support
- Plan for the future
- Spread the word of UUFES
- Integrate new members
- Adult religious education

Dan's Ordination to the Unitarian Universalist Ministry was held on October 28, 2001 at the Lake Ossipee Conference Center in Freedom. The ordination sermon was delivered by The Reverend Dr. Kenneth Torquil MacLean, former UUA Trustee-At-Large and Minister Emeritus of the Cedar Lane (MD) Unitarian Universalist Church. That is the church of Dan's childhood UU upbringing. The ceremony was followed by a dinner enjoyed by the large gathering present, which included many eminent dignitaries.

Dan's contractual commitment was changed from half-time to 2/3rds time in the late fall. Dan announced in March, 2002 that he would be leaving UUFES at the end of July to begin a fulltime ministry to a larger congregation in Pennsylvania. This news came as a shock to nearly everyone, who had come to love Dan and to look forward so eagerly to his excellent sermons and musical performances. A going-away party was hosted by the Reeds after the Sunday service on July 21st.

The Fellowship promptly addressed the question of whether to hire an interim minister, or to "go it alone" with lay leadership during the interim that a search committee would need to find desirable ministerial candidates. On May 22nd, 21 members of UUFES met with Rosemary Smurzynski, Acting District Executive, for an informational forum about Interim Ministry. She presented the pros and cons very clearly, and expressed her belief that hiring an Interim is the preferred option.

The Governing Board held its July monthly meeting, well-publicized, in the evening of the 23rd so that members could attend and express their views pro and con. Prior to discussion of the Interim question, JoAnne Rainville presented information she had gained from a Search Committee Workshop at UUA Headquarters in Boston. The amount that we have budgeted for a 2/3 time minister is far short of the UUA guidelines. There was vigorous discussion about

strategies for finding a minister whom we can afford, as well as the option of digging deeper in our pockets to get closer to the guidelines.

According to President Elizabeth Rhymer's report printed in *Inclinations* (August, 2002), "the meeting ended with a brainstorming exercise, listing the pros and cons of hiring an interim minister. At the end of the evening, most attendees were leaning toward "going it alone" this year, putting money saved toward other UUFES goals such as land/building acquisition & future minister salary, and pressing forward with our search for a permanent minister. Some of the reasons people were not enthusiastic about hiring an interim were the cost, some doubts that we'd find a suitable part-time candidate, and a feeling that the tasks that an interim could help us with we're already doing or have done. However, I received at least two 'pro interim' emails from members who were not able to attend the meeting. The Board will continue to discuss how we will proceed at our next Board meeting, August 27th."

And continue to address it they did! An Interim Ministry Poll was sent out to all members and friends. An astounding 75% of members responded, as well as a number of friends, for a total of 41 replies. Some people wrote simply with their vote of yes or no. But the majority wrote at length, explaining their vote as well as their feelings about ministry in general, getting our own home, membership, and many other issues. Each member of the Board studied these detailed replies carefully. In a letter sent to all members and friends, which included a verbatim compilation of the comments and votes received (with identifying attributes removed), the Board stated "What struck us as we read your words is the truth of everyone's opinions, even when those opinions were the opposite of what others had said. We have taken every reply to heart and we honor your sincerity and dedication to UUFES" (Board letter, 9/29/02).

The results of the poll were nearly an even split pro and con interim ministry. At its September meeting, the five Board members discussed the poll results at length, then set aside their own personal opinions in order to take a good look at what they felt was best for UUFES at that time, given the congregational feedback and the Board's understanding of the overall picture. The decision was made not to hire an interim minister. In its letter dated September 29, 2002, the Governing Board listed some of the reasons it came to this decision: "(1) Hiring an interim when half of the congregation is opposed to having one would be detrimental both to the minister and to the congregation; (2) It would take a few months to get one, using up part of the one-year term s/he would serve. This would significantly delay the search for a called minister; (3) The Program Committee has lined up excellent lay and professional speakers for months ahead, and it is believed that this quality can be sustained or improved over the next year or more; (4) Given the dual pressing needs of ministry and housing, both of which are expensive, the lower expenses without an Interim will save money that can be put toward the dual goals; (5) Excellent committee leadership and energetic committee activity are maintaining the strength of UUFES as a lay-led fellowship while the search is on for a called minister. The hope is for a called minister in the pulpit by the fall of 2003."

Meanwhile, the awareness was growing among the congregation that we are continually ministering to one another, in very significant ways, in all of the activities in which we participate. One important type is the Small Group Ministry, sometimes known as covenant groups. The primary goal of these groups is to promote intimacy and spiritual growth in a

supportive setting apart from Sunday services and committee meetings. Examples are the two Evensong groups and their spinoffs, Seanachie and Et Tu (see discussion of these in Section C below), the Circle of Eight dinner groups, and basically any of the social gatherings.

B. Social Life

The Spring Breakfast/Brunch, placed on the calendar just after Spring Solstice and before May Day, has become an annual event. It is sometimes called the William Ellery Channing Brunch, and usually takes place at Whittier House in West Ossipee. There was a special version of the brunch held on April 16, 2000 as a potluck Seder, in keeping with our ongoing exploration of the world's great religious traditions. Masterminded by Paul Alpert, Dave Fisher's partner, each participant family was given a recipe to prepare which would be an authentic item in the traditional Seder meal.

In the fall of 1998 (September 12-13) we gathered again at Doug Leathem's beautiful Kezar Lake lodge, this time with a worship service on Sunday morning, followed by a discussion of the UUA program "Fulfilling the Promise", lunch, and review of UUFES' Five-Year Plan.

A highlight in the social calendar has now become a tradition: the Annual FirstSunday-In-July Picnic at the "Reeds' on the River" in Freedom, NH. Barbara and Malcolm Reed share their beautiful surroundings on the Ossipee River and manage always to provide ideal weather too for the event.

"First Fridays" at Runnells Hall were initiated on December 7, 2001. These are community-building evenings with a potluck dinner, followed by various activities: music; game playing like cards, board games, and the like; conversation; sometimes a presentation such as Debby Cary's February talk and slide show on her experiences in Kuwait from 1993-1995. The First Friday Potlucks are a regular event.

The Snowfest every March is hosted by Bob Young, whose property backs up to the National Forest and the trail going up to South Moat Mountain. Sometimes with a co-host, Bob puts on a wonderful meal. His home-baked breads and pea soup are without parallel. People bring their "skinny skis" and snowshoes, and enjoy nature and each other. Last year (2002) the rain and sleet kept everyone indoors, but people's spirits were not dampened in the least.

A reading group, Books and Issues, was also organized by Bob Young and ran for a few years. However, the level of interest declined to a point where it was no longer worth doing.

Several of our members participate in the social and educational activities of the Inclusive Moose, an area group which works to combat homophobia and gender discrimination. They sponsor films and book discussions, and enjoy dinner events.

The Ferry Beach Retreat on the first or second weekend of September has become a highlight of the church year. During each of its past four times the weather has been perfect. "Ferry Beach" is a Unitarian Universalist Conference Center with lovely facilities located in Saco, ME. The most recent Retreat was described in Inclinations as: "Community building and reconnecting with

other UUs [usually another congregation is there also]; Indulging in amazingly scrumptious food; Enjoying perfect weather and a gorgeous beach; Participating in Joan Sherman's birthday (her daughter, Carrie, was with us to help celebrate); Joining Joel [Rhymer] for a never-to-be-surpassed nature walk in Ferry Beach State Park; Cheering for Ellie and Mary's [Rhymer] hula hoop routine at the talent show; Seeing Naomi [Lubkin] wide-eyed as she watched the talent show; Flying kites with Mal [Reed]; Meeting Milford U-U's and their new minister, Barbara Liscord; Creating pastel pictures with Joan [Sherman] and stenciling with Barb [Reed]; Swing dancing with John [Hancock] and Erica [Hunter]; Finding fairy houses with Willie [Mork]; Star gazing with Bob Fisher." Several of these scenes are available for viewing on our website www.uufes.org.

C. Lifespan Religious Education

- October 1999 to February, 2000: Five-Part Series "Ethics: An Exploration in Personal Morality". (#1) Authority - Can We Be Good Without God?, led by Dave Fisher and Barbara Reed. (#2) Motivation - Doing the Right Thing For the Wrong Reason, led by Brenda Taylor and JoAnne Rainville. (#3) Responsibility - The Difficult Art of Doing Good, led by John Hancock and Kathryn Burnell. (#4) Situation - What is Going On Here Morally?, led by Peggy Erskine and Dave Fisher. (#5) Does the End Justify the Means?, led by Judie Johnson and Bob Young.
- The series which followed this was "Honoring Mother Earth: Experiences in Native American Spirituality", led by Doug Leathem.
- Fall, 2000: Three-part series on our Unitarian Universalist philosophy, called "Say Your Unitarian Universalism".
- January Through June, 2001: Members of UUFES gathered each 2nd Sunday to determine Our Philosophy of Religious Growth and Learning, our goals, and ways we might measure those goals. The end product, summarized below, is subject to change and growth just as are the individuals who participated. It is intended to serve as a guidepost for planning future lifespan religious education offerings:

Definition of Religious Growth and Learning: Religious growth and learning is a lifelong process of discovery - discovering who one is, what one believes (which can and will change) and learning how to be effective in community.

Goals For Religious Growth and Learning: Spiritual (Grow spiritually as well as numerically/Develop questioning minds/Expose all ages to many ideas as they relate to religion and expand upon them/Put our religious concepts into practice/Find freedom to seek our own goals in our own ways, without intruding on others' searches). Community building (Come to a greater sense of ourselves as a group/Build a membership of different age groups/Have greater interaction amongst age groups/Come to greater diversity/Make friendships, forming a caring community). Organizational (Increase ministerial involvement in religious education/Utilize UU curricula for children and adults in the best way, gauging the interests of the congregation).

The remainder of this document (see *Inclinations*, September, 2001) spelled out specific Methods of evaluating our experiences so that we can learn from our efforts and improve the quality of religious growth and learning at UUFES.

- Evensong: An eight-week series of gatherings in which participants explore their spirituality through sharing thoughts, experiences, doubts, and beliefs. In practice, this was reduced to a six-week series. At each meeting, the group followed an order of service with the central event being a sharing time during which everyone listened attentively and without interruption to each other. Evensong offered people the opportunity to listen, to speak of what mattered to them, and to be with one another in respectful ways. Barbara Reed organized and led the two different series held thus far, the first group in Fall, 2001, and the second in Winter, 2002. Both groups decided to continue meeting beyond Evensong. The first, called Seanachie, meets twice a month on Thursday evenings. The second, calling itself Et Tu, meets monthly on Thursday forenoons. Each meeting is organized around a discussion theme such as friendship, laughter, love, hate, guilt, reverence, touching, death, etc.
- A Women's Spirituality Book Group was launched in Fall, 2002.
- October, 2001 Through May, 2002: Every 2nd Sunday featured a sermon by six of our members and a minister on one of the UU Principles. The series was introduced by an overarching introduction by The Rev. Dr. Duncan Howlett. The following presentations completed the series: Dick Cary - "The Inherent Worth and Dignity of Every Person" Dave Fisher - "Justice, Equity and Compassion in Human Relations: Our Tradition and Post-9/11 Options" Rod Forsman - "Valuing Others and Encouraging Spiritual Growth" Rick Friend - "A Free and Responsible Search for Truth and Meaning" Ed Wright - "The Right of Conscience and the Use of the Democratic Process in Our Congregations and in Society At Large" Rev. Mary Edes - "A Humble Walk; A Lofty Goal" Brenda Taylor - "Respect For the Interdependent Web of All Existence of Which We Are a Part"
- February, 2002: Three weekly sessions presented by Rev. Schatz on "A Faith of Questions - Understanding Unitarian Universalism."
- Monthly "Movies With the Minister" were part religious education, part socializing - a wonderful mix.
- A curriculum workshop series on The Welcoming Congregation began in November 1998, led by Dave Fisher. This is a UUA-produced program designed to heighten our awareness of the destructiveness of homophobia, and the need for UU persons and congregations to openly embrace the humanity of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered persons. Many of our UU folks have felt their lives changed by this workshop. A year later, the Fellowship voted affirmatively on 12/5/99 to become a Welcoming Congregation.

In addition to these adult activities, of course, there is the ongoing program for children. The Lifespan Religious Education Committee has made significant progress in providing a quality program for our children. Of course, a program can accomplish little if there are no participants, or sporadic participants. This has been a problem which has thwarted the good efforts of our R.E. leaders over the years. That problem has lessened significantly. There are twelve children represented among our member families, ranging in age from about 2 to 15 years, and most of them are in attendance fairly regularly. Diana Talkington is our paid staff person who works mostly with the older of the two age groups, while a different volunteer each week works with the younger of the groups. A young man, Don Swift, has been hired to provide child care. The L.R.E. Committee has been very busy in planning the curriculum for children's religious education and assuring its quality.

Two recent chairpersons have stepped down. Joy Maidment was regrettably unable to continue in that position after she took over from Deborah Frock. Deborah had chaired the committee for several years. In the last three years of her tenure, which ended December, 2001, Deborah had been serving simultaneously as L.R.E. Committee Chair, teacher, and acting Director of Religious Education.

D. Fundraising and Grants

In May, 2000 UUFES received a grant of \$3,300 from the Lewis Downing Trust (from the Concord NH UU Church) to assist us as we grow the Fellowship. A few months later, President JoAnne Rainville received word that the Fellowship was receiving a grant of \$2,000 from the District Chalice Lighter Program. In their announcement they stated: "Being a small congregation which has moved in just a few years from a lay-led group to ordaining one of your members and providing a small salary for that person, we believe you have exhibited potential for a congregation. We note that you have gone from twice a month services to weekly services and have a strong program committee. Just when things are moving forward your minister is ready to retire. If you can bring flame to these embers perhaps we can have another strong congregation in our district. We offer this help to bring a regular part-time minister in for the professionalism this provides. We are particularly interested to note the geography of our two-state district and the location of our present congregations seeing that a UU presence in the area of the Eastern Slopes would allow a liberal presence to many presumably in need." Grants are not given without the considerable effort of individuals who prepared the application materials. Recognition is due to Doug Leathem who promoted the Chalice Lighter Program, and to JoAnne Rainville, Brenda Taylor, and John Hancock for preparation of the application.

In spring, 2001, the UUA awarded UUFES a \$5000 grant in matching funds for fundraising, specifically to be used for outreach. The advertising line in the 2001-02 budget was increased to \$6000. The plan was to conduct three radio campaigns of daily ads, each one about two weeks in length, spaced out over the year (early fall, early winter, spring). Again, this came about through the tireless efforts of JoAnne, Brenda, and John. As an aside, all grant-writing activity, Governing Board meetings, and the meetings of several committees during the two-year presidency of JoAnne Rainville were held at the home of JoAnne and Brenda. For everyone involved, that home became "UUFES Central".

The Annual Yard Sale held late June netted \$1400. In August, JoAnne, Brenda and Kathy made an on-the-spur-of-the-moment effort to clear out some more items from the inventory, and sold another \$230 worth. Beth Bonanno spearheads the sale each year. Roger Burnell (Kathy's father-in-law) generously loans his home and driveway for storing sale items before the sale and space on the sale day. His prime location in Conway Village helps make the sale a success. The previous summer, sale receipts were \$1132 which, when matched by the UU Funding Group, brought in a total of about \$2,265.

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee sponsors a Guest At Your Table Program each fall. The Social Concerns Committee conducted a service for GAYT on October 27, 2002, led by Sandra Carr and JoAnne Rainville. Fifteen members/families were signed up, raising a total of \$720 for the UUSC.

Barbara Reed initiated a one-person fundraising project in March, 2001 which is ongoing. She designed a stained-glass medallion which is produced by an artist in Maine. It is a circular window-hung piece featuring a flaming chalice against a mountainous background that represents the "eastern slopes"; thus, it may be thought of as our logo. Several members have bought one. It makes a lovely gift. Barbara also has tiles, teeshirts and notepaper with the flaming chalice logo. These are sometimes on display at Sunday services. Profits go to UUFES.

Each year the Social Concerns Committee sponsors a book donation service in late April. The one in 2001 collected a huge selection of books - from gardening, poetry, philosophy to children's literature - which were then donated to the Chocorua Library. Each book bore a nameplate that advised readers it was a gift from UUFES. The collection, worth about \$1700 retail, allowed the librarian to select books of her own choosing, for a like amount of money, per a matching grant policy.

The annual pledge drive conducted last April made an effort to visit members in their homes in an ALL UUFES CANvass. The canvass raised a pledge amount of \$44,984, a 19% increase over the previous year and a new record. The mean pledge amount was \$1000; the median, \$670; the range, \$100 to \$4500. Over 91% of the 46 member units pledged, as did three nonmembers.

Finally, mention should be made of how UUFES has dealt with the familiar tradition of "passing the plate." Nearly every year at Annual Meeting the issue comes up, a motion is made, and soundly defeated. This scenario itself has become the tradition. At the last meeting in 2002, the motion "to pass the plate during morning services" received one vote in support.

E. "Vision Quest"

During the first two weeks of March, 2001, the Long Range Planning and Finance Committees teamed up to conduct interviews of about ½-hour each with nearly all UUFES members and friends. The goal was to provide an opportunity for each person to speak honestly and confidentially in their own homes about what they feel is right or lacking in the Fellowship, as well as expressing their visions for our future. The essence of all their thoughts and opinions were presented at a Vision Quest service held on March 18th.

F. Mission Statement

A Mission Statement attempts to portray how a Fellowship defines itself and its purposes. Two years ago the Governing Board noted that our existing Mission Statement had been articulated more than 7 years earlier, in 1994, when the membership was much smaller. It was clearly time to reexamine our mission and formulate our statement of it to reflect accurately what UUFES wants to be and to accomplish. A large turnout of members and friends met in the late fall, 2001 to begin the process of revision. The rich output of their efforts that day was given to the Long Range Planning Committee to fashion into coherent form.

The LRPC presented its final version to the Board the following February. The Board accepted that version and placed it on the warrant for Fellowship action at the Annual Meeting, May,

2002. After a brief discussion of the congregation's central role in determining the main elements of the Mission Statement before them, it was adopted unanimously:

The mission of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Eastern Slopes is to be a welcoming congregation of people of good will who unite: · To encourage and support spiritual and intellectual growth in children, youth and adults · To be a living model of respect for diversity and differences, encouraging the free expression of thoughts, ideas and beliefs · To provide a caring community in which individuals and families come together in friendship, respect and joy · To act on our Unitarian Universalist principles to improve our community, locally and globally, through social action and outreach

G. A Marriage

This past year witnessed the marriage of two UUFES members, Erin K. Wright and Howard Stanten.

H. Efforts Toward a Future Home

At a Special Meeting on December 6, 2002, Dick Cary and Rod Forsman presented information about what the Long Range Planning Committee has accomplished in its efforts toward the goal of a future home for UUFES. The two of them and Rick Friend have visited the UU societies at Durham, Plymouth, and Sanford (ME) to see how they acquired their church buildings, size and space characteristics, costs of construction and maintenance, and financing. A retired architect, Dick has sketched preliminary plans for what UUFES would need as we grow. He has estimated a total of 4000-6000 square feet, to include a 40' X 40' sanctuary and a fellowship hall which would house a dining area, kitchen, library, minister's study, bathrooms, and children's R.E. space.

A key element in planning is location. Last year Rod made a map of our catchment area of Western Maine and N.H., and placed pins in the specific locations where members and friends reside. The result made evident one clear fact: our present location at Runnells Hall in Chocorua is the geocenter of the wide demographic spread of the congregation. Conclusion: we need to try to keep our location as close as possible to where we are now.

It turns out that a former member of UUFES, now living in Massachusetts, owns land off Route 113, east of Runnells Hall. Rod has been corresponding with him for nearly two years. The Committee has presented some different options to him, and the one currently approaching the negotiation stage is a 5.02 acre parcel on the north side of Route 113, about 6/10 mile east of Runnells Hall. Test pits were dug late last fall, and possible site locations have been considered.

A straw vote was held among the two dozen or so attending the meeting, and the vote was unanimous in favor of proceeding with our present efforts.

I. Search Committee Congregational Survey

Yet another congregational survey was carried out in December 2002 because of the Search Committee's need to offer fully up-to-date information about UUFES to prospective ministerial candidates. Fifty people responded. Females outnumbered males 2:1. Almost half of the respondents are 60 or older. Almost half hold post-graduate degrees. Only 16% are lacking the bachelor's degree. 56% are married or have a live-in partner. There are 10 children in the religious education program. Family income ranges between <\$20K to over \$150K. The most frequently chosen reasons for continuing to attend UUFES are: UU beliefs, fellowship, and worship. These three elements plus spiritual growth and celebrating common values were selected as the most important aspects of congregational life. The majority want the minister to preach twice/month. Of the 16 specific item components of a service, the six selected most frequently as important are: sermon, 44; candles of concern, 36; chalice lighting, 33; children's story, 30; coffee hour, 28 (!); and singing by congregation, and meditation, 25 each. Almost 80% want a fixed format of Sunday Service with variations for special Sundays.

The remainder of the survey items dealt with content and objectives of the worship service, ministerial functions, and ministerial administrative role and leadership style