

*Exploring the Response
To Racial, Gender and
Other Oppressions in the
History of the
Unitarian Universalist Church
at Washington Crossing*

Highlights
1916 to 2005

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AN ARCHIVAL ACCOUNT OF JUSTICE MAKING

1916~1936

“As I left [the religious revival led by Evangelist Billy Sunday], I resolved I would oppose such activities. I was sufficiently disturbed by the antiquated religious views and the highly emotional atmosphere to decide that a more reasonable and scientific point of view in religion needed to be put before the city.”

~William R. Amberson, founding member of the First Unitarian Church of Trenton, 1916

How we were challenged

1920-1933 ~ The fledgling church went through four resident ministers.

1928 ~ The Women’s Alliance, interested in social equality, promoted social and fund raising events for the church and sponsored speakers and lecture series.

1933 ~ A 7-year period of no resident ministers began. Membership dwindled.

How we responded, taking action

1919 ~ The Nominating Committee chair reported to the Trustees, “Your committee has given consideration to a suggestion that to some may seem novel . . . recommendation of *two women to the Board*, along with two men. Ella Cook and Anna Hughes were elected to fill the two positions.

1936-1938 ~ After two unsuccessful ministers under whom membership dropped, the church completely fell apart. Stalwart members determined to keep the organization together met in homes.

The struggle outside

In the early 1900s, women pressed for equal rights while immigrants suffered poor treatment and exclusion. Four women arrested for picketing the White House in behalf of women’s suffrage were sentenced to six months in jail (1917).

Mexican-American segregated schools in Texas stressed domestic science and manual labor; Chinese were used to build railroads; Indians were forced to march to imprisonment in Florida, and the Ku Klux Klan grew large and strong (1920). In the same year, the 19th Amendment gave women the right to vote.

In 1924 a U.S. law limited immigrants and excluded Japanese.

The Nation of Islam was founded in 1930.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt named Francis Perkins, Secretary of Labor in 1933. She was the first woman to serve in a presidential cabinet. That year the Nazis erected their first concentration camp. By 1945, eight to ten million prisoners were interned in concentration camps; at least half were killed.

In 1935, anti-Semitism in the U.S. prevented raising the immigration quota for Jews from Germany.

In 1949, our church revised its Bylaws to expand beyond the Christian covenant of its founding Bylaws: *"to upbuild in the hearts and minds of its people the high ideals of a rational, progressive and exalting religion as expressed by Jesus and other great religious leaders"* and to include among its guiding principles: *"Universal brotherhood, undivided by nation, race or creed..."*

How we were challenged

1940's ~ Through much of the 1940's, one of the most pressing problems facing the church was to secure a permanent minister. The absence of a physical facility was a problem; alongside this was the difficulty of the church trying to win back old members and attract new ones.

How we responded, taking action

1947 ~ The commencement of the church year in 1947 began on Sunday, September 21, the day the Freedom Train had visited Trenton. This Sunday was later designated as Freedom of Religion Day.

1948 ~ The weekly services of the congregation were now held in the YWCA to enable the church to enlarge the scope of its activities, like establishing a Sunday school.

1949 ~ The First Unitarian Church congratulated the newly established Princeton Fellowship. At the 1949 annual meeting, a collection was taken for the legal aid committee of the NAACP. Finally, membership laws were revised to allow any person of at least 16 years of age to become a member, as well as give the Board of Trustees the authority to remove membership of a person under a majority vote.

The struggle outside

Ending the Great Depression and looking forward to America's role on the foreign scene, Franklin D. Roosevelt began long-awaited labor and education reforms, yet also made fateful wartime decisions the country would long mourn.

In the late 1930's, minimum wage laws for women and minors took affect alongside anti-segregation laws in defense related industries. In 1938, the Supreme Court ordered the University of Missouri Law School to admit Negroes; almost a decade later, in 1946, segregation of Mexican students in California was declared a violation of their 14th Amendment rights. Jackie Robinson became the first African-American major league baseball player in 1947 and one year later, the first woman officer was sworn into the Army.

WWII, however, inspired a wave racist and unethical policies and sentiments. In order to test war weapons, plutonium and radiation experiments were performed on indigent patients and mentally disabled children.

The establishment of Japanese-American internment camps sadly echoed Jewish concentration camps in Germany. The end of the war culminated with the horrifying release of atomic bombs in Japan.

Many returning veterans were rewarded with the U.S. "GI Bill of Rights" which would finance their college education.

AN ARCHIVAL ACCOUNT OF JUSTICE MAKING

1950~1959

Vera Hancock's letter to the Rev. Martin Luther King on March 5, 1956, expressed the church Board's "sympathy with your undertaking [the Montgomery bus boycott] and our hope that your strength will be unflinching and your courage unflinching. The very small contribution does not represent in any way what this Board would like to send you. We are but a small and struggling church . . ."

How we were challenged

1950's ~ Three ministers served the First Unitarian Church of Trenton during this decade, and the congregation moved twice, first to Academy Street, then bought a building at 489 West State Street, Trenton.

How we responded, taking action

1956 ~ Vera Hancock, Social Action chair and Board member, led the church in its response to civil rights. To Martin Luther King Jr., she wrote, "We think that in the midst of the grievous occurrences in your city, certain things stand out with a clear and inspiring light. The fact that in face of such pressure as has been exerted against them, Negroes in Montgomery have stood together in such numbers and so unswervingly, is certainly cause for admiration, especially from those of us in the North who are not called upon to meet such grave opposition."

The Social Action Committee considered a project to develop "closer cooperation with Trenton's Negro churches."

The Church Bowling League president had invited our church to send a team. Since many ABC leagues were segregated, the league was asked about that before our church formed a team.

The struggle outside

During the last decade, many Negroes from the South moved north, and by the mid 50's, ominous signs of unrest had burst into a courageous struggle for civil rights.

In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education* ruled that segregation in public schools violated the 14th Amendment and ordered desegregation. The Black Panther party formed. The next year, Rosa Parks, by sitting still, sparked a massive Montgomery bus boycott. Boycott leader, Dr. Martin Luther King gained national prominence. Emmet Till, 14, was brutally beaten to death in Mississippi, his assailants found not guilty.

In 1956, Southern Congressmen called on states to resist "by all lawful means" the Supreme Court ruling against school segregation. Arkansas called out state National Guardsmen to prevent integration in Little Rock, and President Eisenhower responded with federal troops to escort nine Black students into the high school. Congress enacted a Civil Rights Act in '57, the first civil rights legislation since Reconstruction, which prohibited discrimination in public places based on race, color, religion, or national origin. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was founded.

By 1959, Virginia's Supreme Court ruled state laws against integration unconstitutional and desegregation of its public schools began.

“In racial discrimination, the human being himself is not considered; his peculiar smile goes for naught, his peculiar laughter, tears, his peculiar gestures, expressions, his peculiar talents, interests, opinions, temperament and emotions—all go for naught. The person who is the object of racial discrimination becomes but a faceless mass of life. Only the physical aspect is seen, but the humanity of the face is not...”

~Excerpt, Rev. Carl Bierman’s Sermon of March 3, 1963

How we were challenged

1963 ~ The Trenton Council of Churches told the Board of Trustees in July that it did not feel that Unitarians should participate in its Council because Unitarians were not Christian. It did, however, welcome Unitarian cooperation with projects they have planned.

1963-1964 ~ In the second year of the Social Action Committee, a decision was made to undertake a Trenton area literacy project as a constructive effort to “break the vicious cycle of discrimination.” However, “results of the literacy project were disappointing,” said the Committee chair. The main reason for this was the drop out of the group’s teachers.

The struggle outside

The first half of the 1960’s was an intense period of civil upheaval that led to radical changes in the nation’s political and social thought. From the staging of Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee’s first sit-ins (1960) and the rise of the Black Muslim movement (1961) to the Birmingham bombings and the assassination of President Kennedy, civil reform was desperately wanted. Dr. Martin Luther King gave his legendary *I Have a Dream* speech (1963), and UU minister James Reeb, beaten by whites for participating in the Selma march for voting rights, died. Under President Lyndon B. Johnson, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 passed, finally allowing African-Americans to vote. Malcolm X was assassinated.

In 1965 as well, Betty Freidan published the *Feminine Mystique* and the Women’s Movement was launched.

How we responded, taking action

1963 ~ The UU Commission on Religion and Race asked for volunteers to join in the March on Washington, DC, August 28. The Board referred this to the Social Action Committee.

1964 ~ The Board of Trustees was asked to answer to the UU Commission on Religion and Race questionnaire about the church’s goals relevant to problems of integration. The Board decided to respond to the Commission’s factual questions only.

The Social Action Committee began tutoring children in Cadwalader School, Trenton.

1965 ~ Race Relations Sunday was observed. Contributions from the service were made to the Freedom Fund administered by the UU Commission on Religion and Race. The Commission requested assurance from the church that our bylaws included an unmistakable statement as to open membership of our church. The question was discussed at the Board meeting.

1965-1966 ~ The church’s Fair Housing Group planned with the Council on Human Relations to promote better-integrated housing for low-income groups.

AN ARCHIVAL ACCOUNT OF JUSTICE MAKING

1966~1968

“We shall presume that we are against racial, social and religious discrimination. But being against discrimination does not, sad to say, always reach to condemnation of discrimination. Being against, we must ask ourselves, how are we against? That is the important question, and the only one which shall really mean anything.”

~Excerpt, Rev. Carl Bierman’s Sermon of March 3, 1963

How we were challenged

1966 ~ The church formed a development committee to proceed with negotiations to sell the properties at 483,485, and 489 West State Street to the Trenton Lutheran Housing Corporation for \$130,000.

1967 ~ The New Jersey Area Council of UU Churches, in response to widespread unrest and injustice in Trenton, hired John Young as its community organizer. House of Soul opened on North Clinton Street under his direction and, with volunteer support, provided education and recreation programs for children, high school students and seniors, also legal and social services.

1968 ~ The Church sent a \$23 donation to express sympathy to Coretta Scott King for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s death.

The struggle outside

The civil rights struggle for African-Americans violently progressed and gave encouragement to others seeking equality: women and Native Americans. Whites battled blacks in riots in 16 cities.

The National Organization for Women (NOW) was founded, the largest women’s rights group in the U.S. (1966).

Thurgood Marshall became the first Black to sit on the Supreme Court (1967) and Mohammed Ali refused the Vietnam draft which resulted in his heavyweight title being revoked.

In 1968, Dr. King was assassinated in Memphis. Racial riots occurred in 125 cities. Sen. Robert Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angeles. The Kerner Commission report cited white racism as the major cause of civil disorders by blacks.

In the same year, The American Indian Movement (AIM) was founded in Minneapolis.

How we responded, taking action

1966 ~ Jean Davis was the first woman president of the Board, serving through 1970. The church joined the New Jersey Area Council.

Rev. Bierman and the Board president sent letters protesting the UUA’s unwise selection of Hollywood, FL, as the site for the UUA annual meeting when the city had segregated housing facilities.

1967 ~ A congregational group concerned about the Vietnam War sponsored, with the Trenton Council of Churches, a series of six discussions about the war, open to the public.

The Social Action Committee supplied manpower and direction to found the Metropolitan Fair Housing Center.

1968 ~ Our church volunteered to house and feed 50 marchers participating in the Poor People’s March in May, 1968.

Some 80 persons attended the first sessions of the Negro History study series at the church, led by Walter Culbreth, Social Action chair. The series was started to build rapport between the white and black communities of Trenton.

The church donated a stove to the House of Soul, and 19 church members donated \$250.

“Carl Bierman was an extremely dynamic, socially conscious, astute, beautiful man. Congregants were between a rock and a hard place because they wanted to address urban problems. There were other problems too, so you had this complex set of tensions. I think Carl did a tremendous job with limited resources, with the tensions, with the mammoth problems that existed in the urban area, and given the size of the church.”

How we were challenged

1969 ~ The Black Affairs Council was established by the UUA General Assembly last year, to receive \$250,000 for four years. When UUA financial support fell short this year, the UUA proposed a mandatory church assessment to fund the Council; those not complying would receive no UUA services. Support for the Black Affairs Council was disbanded.

The Trenton Public Schools superintendent invited John Young, House of Soul advisor, to work on his behalf to quell a student demonstration. Although Young was successful, later the school filed a complaint. Young became the first person to be tried and convicted under a new state “Intruder Law.” The NJ Supreme Court found him guilty and fined him \$500.

1970 ~ The plans for building a new church in Ewing Township generated tension between members who embraced the move and those who felt leaving Trenton showed unwillingness to cope with urban problems.

The Board decided to move Sunday services and church school to the Fisk School in Ewing as closing the sale of the Trenton property neared.

The struggle outside

Ending the 60’s, the country saw Nixon succumb to a plan requiring contractors on federally supported projects to set minority hiring goals (The Philadelphia Plan). In New York, blacks were among the many oppressed demonstrators in the Drag Queen Riot in Greenwich Village. The organization United Indians of America gained attention when they spoke out against the nation’s Founding Fathers.

Former Governor Wallace of Alabama urged governors to defy orders of the federal government. The Commission on Civil Rights said presidential policy on school integration is inadequate (1970).

How we responded, taking action

1969 ~ The House of Soul served dinners weekly to 50-60 elderly for a small fee that did not cover the expense.

Walter Culbreth began a 12-week series of talks on Negro history.

Pat Groth, Social Responsibilities chair, expressed disappointment that only 13 of the 131 adults in the congregation had invested time in social action this year. “The UU church has traditionally been at the head of

liberal thought and the heart of social action. If we ignore either head or heart, the body will die. I think our heart is in trouble.”

1970 ~ The House of Soul closed. Reasons given were fires during the summer, staff resignation, and the unsuccessful attempt to rehabilitate drug addicts that resulted in theft, physical danger, and their taking over the house.

AN ARCHIVAL ACCOUNT OF JUSTICE MAKING

1971~1977

Population Statistics by Race, City of Trenton: The 1960 census reported that of 114,167 residents, 88,315 (77%) were white, 25,638 Negro, and 1,803 Latino. Ten years later, the census reported that of 104,638 residents, 64,305 (61%) were white, 39,671 Negro and 3,776 Latino.

The UU church moved out of Trenton in 1972.

How we were challenged

1971 ~ Some House of Soul programs moved to the East Trenton Civic Center. By May, the Council of Area Churches had suspended funding of the programs.

1972 ~ Sunday services relocated to the Jewish Community Center for the period January to June.

1974 ~ Congregational meeting: Some women objected to Carl Bierman's remarks about women's liberation. More talk backs are wanted, especially on controversial topics.

1975 ~ William Amberson, charter member, spoke at the first service, October 5, in the new building.

1976 ~ Revitalization of the Women's Alliance after being inactive for five years was discussed.

The struggle outside

Congress passed the Equal Rights Amendment for women and sent it to the states for ratification (1972). The amendment died ten years later when it failed to achieve ratification by a minimum of 38 states.

Frank Robinson of the Cleveland Indians was the first black manager in major league baseball (1974).

William Ryan wrote Blaming the Victim (1976), a book about systematic American denial of the causes of poverty and powerlessness.

Public Works Employment Act provided \$4 billion for projects in distressed areas with 10% of the money reserved for minority businesses. (1977)

How we responded, taking action

1972 ~ Because the new church will be in Ewing, the Social Responsibility Committee decided to work with the Ewing League of Women Voters in developing low and middle-income housing in the township.

1973 ~ Vera Hancock, Social Responsibilities chair, reported the YMCA prison reform program was a success. The most earnest prisoner complaint was lack of training. Trenton State prisoners had started a newspaper with the church's financial assistance.

The committee initiated action to involve area churches with corrections. A Threshold program planned to work with each prisoner to help him acclimate to prison release. The church funded two prisoners' attendance and three church members became Threshold counselors.

1976 ~ A meeting was held to form a women's committee; five years had passed since a women's group had met.

“Bea West, wife of the Trenton State College president, Iona Myers, Jane Powers and Chan Davis were part of the Women’s Alliance. The Alliance raised money, contributed to the Clara Barton Diabetes Camp, invited lecturers on major issues of the day. Their funds bought many pieces of furniture, drapes, kitchen equipment, etc. for the church. Women raised all the money.”

How we were challenged

1978 ~ Carl Bierman announced his resignation to be effective in April. He had served since July, 1962.

1979 ~ Social Responsibilities Committee chair reported little activity over the last two years, asked support in revitalizing the committee.

1980 ~ In a survey, 53 church members identified a needed improvement as “a fresh,

better reassessment of the church’s potential for social action.”

Annual meeting: Two proposed bylaws changes were defeated: Removal of the age requirement for membership and change of the church’s name to First Unitarian Church of Greater Trenton. In 1981, the name was changed to the Unitarian Universalist Church at Washington Crossing.

How we responded, taking action

1978 ~ A Women’s Alliance representative on the Board’s term will be two years as unanimously voted with a Bylaws revision.

1979 ~ Deborah Pope Lance, first woman minister of the church, was installed February 23.

1980 ~ Ruth Samsel is the first lesbian and the second woman elected Board president.

Betsy Young, chair, announced Social Responsibilities supports the Forum emergency foods program and Womanspace, participates in recycling and informs members about legislation relating to social issues.

1981 ~ Vera Hancock bequeathed \$500 to the church to benefit the Hopewell Township community.

The struggle outside

In the University of California Regents vs. Bakke case, the Supreme Court struck down the racial quota system of the University’s Medical School. Allan Bakke, a white applicant who said he was passed over by the school in favor of less qualified minority applicants, was admitted. Birmingham, AL, elected the first Black mayor and the Supreme Court upheld voluntary “affirmative action” programs. (1978)

Miami, FL, race riots occurred when four city police officers charged with beating to death a black insurance executive were acquitted. 18 persons died and property damage reached \$100 million. (1980)

President Reagan was shot and seriously wounded; his would-be assassin was found not guilty by reason of insanity. Sandra Day O’Connor, the first woman justice on the U.S. Supreme Court began her term, favoring abortion rights for women. (1981)

The challenges facing our congregation

1982 ~ At a Church Growth Workshop in November last year, the identified inhibitors to growth of our church were limited outreach to the community, lack of short and long range planning, and difficulty maintaining communication with the community and neighboring churches about social issues.

1983 ~ Rev. Deborah Pope-Lance left the church after serving five years. Guest speakers filled in for over a year.

1984 ~ When the fee for participation increased, the Board decided not to participate in the annual Heritage Days in Trenton.

1985 ~ The SR Committee for the first time participated in the Pennington Crop Walk.

The congregation supported the UU nationwide response to Rev. Jerry Falwell's remarks that questioned the authenticity of Bishop Desmond Tutu's leadership against apartheid. A petition to support Bishop Tutu was presented to him on his visit to the U.S.

How we responded, taking action

1982 ~ Rudy Turner, one of few African American members, chaired the Internal Communications Committee, then the Nominating Committee. "Rudy Turner was unobtrusive, 'still waters run deep', low key, and got things done. He was a scholar of the Bible and self-effacing," said a member.

SANE, a national peace organization to provide education and action for peace and disarmament worldwide, designated the church as an official Peace Site. Possible activities to be carried out at this site were forums, film series, children's workshops on nonviolence, vigils, military draft counseling, and providing space for other peace groups. Vera Hancock's bequest established the site that bears her name. In 1983, Barbara Sigmund, mayor of Princeton, spoke at the Peace Site dedication.

1984 ~ Social Responsibilities chair, Rudy Turner collected \$168 for African Drought Relief, funds for the Forum Christmas dinners, WomanSpace, Trenton Area Soup Kitchen and a scholarship for a Trenton High School senior.

The struggle outside...

Twenty years after the beginning of the Civil Rights movement, the early 80's was still full of shocking events. More than 250,000 Americans converged on Washington, chanting "Jobs, Peace, and Freedom" to commemorate the 1963 march. In 1983, a congressional committee finally condemned the WWII internment of Japanese Americans and recommended compensation. Harold Washington became the first black Mayor of Chicago, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday was declared a national holiday.

The Civil Rights Commission voted to end the use of numerical quotas in employment promotions of African Americans, and the issue was upheld in federal court the next year. Dr. Kathryn Sullivan became the first U.S. woman to walk in space (1984). Philadelphia police tried to subdue the radical group Move by dropping a bomb on its headquarters, causing extensive fires and 11 deaths. The U.S. curbed trade with South Africa, adding pressure on the apartheid government to change its racist policies. (1985)

AN ARCHIVAL ACCOUNT OF JUSTICE MAKING

1986-1990

"I am most proud of being associated with WGGLI (The Working Group for Gay and Lesbian Issues). When a man said at an early meeting, "You know, I don't even know what to call you," that was sort of a breakthrough. He didn't want to hurt anybody. We were trying not to say anything wrong. I didn't know if it was a good thing or bad thing to say 'gay' or not. So there was this great gulf in the learning curve until we were able to communicate openly.

~ Michelle Hunt, church member 1985-present, in 2003 interview

How we were challenged

1989 ~ Rev. Peter Jenkins resigned as minister after 4½ years service. For 13 months, guest ministers followed.

1990 ~ Rev. Linda DeSantis was installed as the 16th minister of our church.

The Health and Disabilities focus group began working to make the church barrier free.

How we responded, taking action

1987 ~ Peter Jenkins, minister, and Bob Griffiths initiated a group to address gay and lesbian needs. At the time, no gay church members were "out". While the two were planning, Wendy announced at a Sunday service that she was lesbian. Soon after, Ruth Samsel and Barbara Livingstone came out. Some straight members volunteered to join the group. Through discussion, they learned about each other's life experiences, fears and hang ups and explored how to work through homophobia issues.

1988 ~ Betsy and John Young received a Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Humanitarian Award for their untiring support of WomanSpace.

Social Responsibility Committee contributed to The Forum Project, Crop Walk, Trenton Area Soup Kitchen, Mount Carmel Guild, Isles, Mobile Meals, St. Michael's Hispanic Seniors Program. The Trenton High Scholarship was increased to \$1,000. The committee for the first time participated in Loaves and Fishes.

1989 ~ Julie Jenkins, the minister's wife, started the first women's group to study women's history and organized a 'Cakes for the Queen of Heaven' group.

Social Responsibility divided into working groups: abused women, environmental concerns, gay and lesbian issues, health and disability, national and international affairs, Peace Site, scholarship, urban affairs and UU writing table.

WGGLI had a successful Homophobia workshop for church leaders and participated in a march to support AIDS

The struggle outside...

The late 1980's brought resolution to many issues: The U.S. Supreme Court upheld affirmative action giving hiring preference to minorities; immigration reform gave legal status to immigrants settling in the U.S. before 1982 and penalties were toughened for employers hiring illegal aliens. Asians comprised half of all legal immigrants. (1986).

Under President Reagan, a national apology was presented with \$20,000 to each internment camp survivor from WWII. (1988)

In 1989, the Supreme Court struck down a plan to set aside 30% of contracts for minority-owned companies in City of Richmond vs. Groson.

David Dinkins was elected the first black mayor of New York, City and Virginia's Douglas Wilder became the country's first black governor.

Discrimination against the disabled was banned under the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990.

AN ARCHIVAL ACCOUNT OF JUSTICE MAKING

1991-1992

“The Welcoming Church process wasn’t always easy for me to accept, but I agree it is a good thing. I remember when a lesbian couple attended Kirkridge. One of the women shared how she had been discarded by her family and that having the Kirkridge group singing Happy Birthday to her was the first time since she came out that a ‘family’ sang to her! This touched my heart, and I felt differently after that. The congregation felt uncomfortable at first, but grew with the change. It caused some members to leave the church.”

- Mary Ann Sprenkle, church member 1964-present, in 2003 interview

The challenges facing our congregation

1991 ~ UUCWC celebrated its 75th anniversary and approved the Project 2000 report which included roof repair and building a new structure. Last year’s membership grew 38%.

Michelle Hunt, Board president, sent this letter to the congregation: “This is a difficult letter to write as it will cause concern and distress in our community; however, this is an issue we must find the courage to face together as it involves the long-term health of our congregation. Recently, four members and friends of our church sent letters to the UUA’s Department of Ministry concerning our former minister, Peter Jenkins. The letters allege various acts of misconduct on the part of Peter Jenkins while he was minister of this church.

1992 ~ Michelle Hunt accepted an invitation to serve on the UUA Committee on Clergy Abuse. UU Magazine published an article on UUCWC as an example of positive handling of clergy sexual misconduct.

How we responded, taking action

1991 ~ Nationally, the Unitarian Universalist Association developed the Office of Gay and Lesbian Concerns to foster the concept of a Welcoming Congregation. Such a congregation would be tolerant of sexual minorities and proactive in reaching out and accepting them into the church community. In August, UUCWC became the fourth church in the nation to be officially designated a Welcoming Congregation.

A new Committee on Racial and Cultural Inclusivity (RACI) was formed to raise awareness of societal diversity, make an intentional effort to reach out to people of color and make them feel welcome.

1992 ~ Social Action Committee expanded its programs and became a member of the Interfaith Organization for Community (IOC) which rehabilitates housing in South Trenton.

WIGGLI changed to WIGGLBI to include bisexuals. Group members served as consultants to other churches interested in becoming a Welcoming congregation.

The struggle outside...

Clarence Thomas won confirmation to the U.S. Supreme Court in spite of sexual harassment charges initiated by Anita Hill, a law professor and former colleague. (1991)

Four white policemen were indicted that year by a Los Angeles grand jury in the beating of Rodney King, a black motorist. The videotaped beating was widely seen on TV. In 1992, the policemen were acquitted of all serious charges in the beating. The jury verdict triggered widespread looting and violence. 52 people died, and \$21 billion in property was damaged. Later, a U.S. grand jury indicted the officers on federal charges.

The Journey Toward Wholeness initiative at the UU General Assembly protested the Quincentennial Celebration of Christopher Columbus (1992).

AN ARCHIVAL ACCOUNT OF JUSTICE MAKING

1993-1995

“Ministry to those who have been sexually abused has been very satisfying. Every Thursday evening, the Rev. Fred Ward and I have held a therapeutic support group for survivors of sexual abuse. I have also been contacted by those sexually abused by clergy of other denominations and by ministers who are considering serving congregations where instances of clergy sexual abuse have occurred that wish to discuss the special needs of such congregations.

~Rev. Linda DeSantis annual report, 1994

How we were challenged

1993 ~ On November 6, the Washington Crossing Visitors’ Center was overrun with state troopers and counter-demonstrators as the Ku Klux Klan, skinheads and neo-Nazi groups brought a campaign of hate called ‘Gay Bash ‘93’. Before the event, our church announced it would be a “no hate zone” and would witness for peace and justice. The zone was widely publicized in area news media.

In response to the AIDS pandemic, Rev. DeSantis let Hospice workers know she was available to officiate at memorial services for those who have died of AIDS.

1994 ~ Rev. DeSantis spoke on a General Assembly panel on congregational response to clergy sexual abuse. She and Michelle Hunt worked with the NY Metro district ministers and our church to develop Codes of Ethics concerning sexual misconduct.

Sharon Reilly advised the Board of plans to create a new church for UU members in Burlington, Monmouth and eastern Mercer County.

1995 ~ A new sanctuary and classrooms were dedicated after considerable financial and physical effort by the congregation.

How we responded, taking action

1993 ~ A Rudy Turner and John Young Award was established to recognize achievements of a person or group committed to UUCWC’s social justice work.

WIGGLBI became a standing committee at a congregational meeting through a bylaw change. The committee sponsored a lecture series: “Everything You Want to Know About Being GBLT,” “Feeling Good About Being Gay,” “AIDS: Not a Gay Disease,” “If You Were Me, Would You Come Out?,” “Homosexuality and Spirituality,” and “Celebrating Our Relationships.” The group became Interweave after UUA chose that name for its organization to include transgender persons.

The congregation lessened its social action, but continued donations to Womanspace, Loaves and Fishes, TASK, a Trenton High scholarship and IOC. The Racial and Cultural Inclusivity Committee sponsored second series of cultural exchange forums and trips to multicultural events.

The struggle outside...

Janet Reno was confirmed as the first woman U.S. Attorney General. Homosexuals were permitted in the U.S. armed forces under the “Don’t Ask; Don’t Tell” policy. (1993)

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that pro-life protesters can be barred from getting too close to abortion clinics and can be sued for blocking access. (1994)

Louis Farrakhan, Nation of Islam leader, organized the “Million Man March” to Washington, D.C., to encourage black men to take more social responsibility and strengthen black families. U.S. Supreme Court rulings endanger affirmative action programs. (1995)

AN ARCHIVAL ACCOUNT OF JUSTICE MAKING

1996~1998

“It seems to me that we are too inbred. We are more like a religious organization ministering to each other and not caring about the outside world. Our self-examination in seeking the spiritual is fine, but I feel it’s not enough for a full UU experience. What we now call Social Action used to be the concern of the whole congregation and not just a small group of hardworking people on a committee.”

~Letter excerpt, church member 1992-2002, January 14, 1997

How we were challenged

1996 ~ Pam Shadzik reported Social Action has not met since the last Board meeting. Although a few more persons have expressed interest, there is still concern that the committee is ineffective and needs major support.

1997 ~ The Women’s Alliance, now called the UU Women’s Alliance Federation, has dwindled to seven members from 30, and has decided to disband after 81 years of service to the church.

How we responded, taking action

1997 ~ Carol Erb, coordinator of Aid for Friends, said the church assembled 400+ meals monthly and more than 150 volunteers helped in the project begun last year.

1997-1998 ~ Lucy Klaus-Li, RE director, began the Weaving the Fabric of Diversity series, a pilot program led by six facilitators, attracting 15 participants. It was repeated.

1998 ~ A Social Action membership drive yielded no new members, but community donations continued. A HomeFront furniture collection and tutoring/dinner program for homeless families began and became the social action project with most participation.

Interweave and two other committees held an AIDS Awareness weekend of speakers and discussion. UUCWC and four other congregations attended.

The struggle outside

1996 was a year of resisting equal opportunity. The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals suspended the affirmative action admissions at the University of Texas Law School. Californians passed Proposition 209 forbidding consideration of race, sex, or national origin in hiring or school admissions. President Clinton transformed the American welfare system by signing an act that allows states to require welfare beneficiaries to work and puts time limits on benefits.

Washington State voters in 1998 eliminated all preferential treatment based on race or sex in government hiring and school admissions. Matthew Shepard was killed in a gay hate crime. Racial profiling in New Jersey caused shooting on the NJ Turnpike.

At the same time, advances occurred. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that states may not stop local governments from passing legislation protecting homosexuals from discrimination. Madeleine Albright was named Secretary of State, becoming the first woman to hold that office. (1996)

During these three years, major works on anti-racism were written: *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (Haney); *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice* (Kivel), *Killing Rage: Ending Racism* (hooks); *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* (Tatum); *Teaching/Learning Anti-Racism* (Sparks & Brunson); *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Takaki).

AN ARCHIVAL ACCOUNT OF JUSTICE MAKING

1999~2001

“We arrive from many paths, with many stories, and we rejoice in the richness of our diversity. So if you are young or old, male or female, you are welcome here. If you are partnered or unpartnered, you are welcome here. If you are gay or straight, lesbian, transgender or bisexual, you are welcome here. Whatever the shade of your skin or the shape of your features, the place of your birth, your physical or mental abilities, you are welcome here. We welcome and invite all here to help create the beloved community for which we are always striving.”

~ Welcoming statement for UUCWC Sunday services created by Lydia Morrow, 2000

How we were challenged

2000 ~ Board of Trustees rejected a request for sponsorship of a member’s Eagle Scout Service Project because of the Boy Scouts of America’s discrimination against gays.

How we responded, taking action

1999 ~ Journey Toward Wholeness (JTW), a task force initiated to address racism, piloted a UUA curriculum, “Language of Race.” The next year, JTW continued congregational education with multiple showings of the video “Color of Fear.” Paul Tuerff began writing reviews of books about racism.

Annual meeting: The congregation voted to complete the National Organization on Disability Commitment form to become an Accessible Congregation.

2001 ~ The Board of Trustees endorsed the JTW task force becoming a Transformation Team and funded the 80+ hours of UUA training to prepare the Team to educate and organize the church community to achieve the goal of becoming an anti-racism, multicultural congregation. JTW sponsored a Jubilee I to help congregants examine personal and institutional aspects of racism.

The Accessibility Task Force was host to an interfaith conference on accessibility with the Hopewell Valley Clergy Association.

2001-3 ~ Interweave sponsored an annual Rainbow Cabaret to make the GLBT community and their allies more visible. Proceeds were donated to the community.

The struggle outside

Unrest and governmental control as well as progress marked the end of this decade. Seattle protesters demonstrating against globalization disrupted a World Trade Organization meeting (1999). In 2000, other protests opposed the U.S. Justice Dept.’s detaining of persons of Arab descent and Muslims and the U.S. Navy using Vieques Island as a bombing range.

Prison statistics revealed that the U.S. has the highest incarceration rate in the world with 460 per 100,000 persons imprisoned. African Americans in Tulia, TX, were arrested and convicted for drugs with no evidence or witnesses (1999).

Vermont became the first state to legally recognize same-sex civil unions for gay and lesbian couples. In the 2000 census, Americans for the first time could indicate more than one race in their heritage.

September 11, 2001, will be remembered for an attack on the United States by 19 Arabs at the behest of Islamic extremists in Afghanistan. Two airplanes crashed into the North and South towers of the World Trade Center, a third crashed into the Pentagon, and a fourth was forced down in southern Pennsylvania by its passengers. It was aimed at the U.S. Capitol or the White House. Some 2,981 persons died, surpassing the toll at Pearl Harbor. The U.S. government responded by abridging constitutional and academic freedoms. In return, it was accused of undermining scientific enterprise that has fostered the nation’s technical superiority.

“We on the Transformation Team started thinking we knew a lot about racism in the first years, only to discover that we didn’t know much. We attempted to go out and ‘inflict’ ourselves on the outside world, then began to understand we first had to work within our church. Our congregation is rooted in the value of being a colorblind church; we don’t see color or race. We will not be able to cling to that value if we want to embrace the goal of being white allies.”

~Anita Arnold, Transformation Team first chair, in 2003 interview

How we were challenged

2003 ~ JTW Transformation Team completed 82 hours of training and created a new mission:

We, the Anti-Racism Transformation Team of UUCWC, acknowledge and accept responsibility for the devastating effects and presence of persistent, systemic, institutional racism within ourselves, our congregation and the world. Because we care about living the UU principles, specifically to honor the inherent worth and dignity of each person, and to work for peace, justice, equity and compassion for all, we commit to a long term process to combat racism by advocating for and shaping an anti-racist, anti-oppressive cultural within our church and community; educating ourselves about the nature of racism in order to thoughtfully and spiritually promote effective and strategic responses to racism; learning from each other by sharing personal and spiritual experiences; and inspiring support and guiding the congregation through personal and structural changes to transform our church into a diverse, inclusive, multiracial, multicultural community.

How we responded, taking action

2002 ~ Social Action Committee coordinated monthly social activities with children. Ongoing projects were Aid for Friends, HomeFront tutoring, Rescue Mission collection, Womanspace and Women’s Place. The HomeFront model after-school care program was presented a UU Service Committee John Luther Adams Award.

2003 ~ JTW expanded its library holdings to 28 anti-racism books/six videos.

The NY Metro district accepted UUCWC as a Chalice Lighter congregation to raise funds to implement a five-year plan to make our church building accessible.

The struggle outside

Struggle and progress particularly for gays marked the early 21st century. Rev. Charles Stephens spoke at the New Hope (PA) Town Council meeting supporting an ordinance to protect gays from discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations. The ordinance passed. (2002)

The United States invaded Iraq. JTW members protested the war and helped develop a paper to answer common questions for the Coalition for Peace Action.

JTW member Russell McTague spoke at a rally at Montclair UU Church to kickoff a campaign to legally recognize same-sex marriage. (2002)

Unitarian Universalist minister and theologian, Thandeka wrote *Learning To Be White: Money, Race and God in America*.

In 2003, the Supreme Court in Lawrence v. Texas ruled that sodomy laws in the U.S. were unconstitutional. The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled that barring gays and lesbians from marrying violated the state constitution.

The U.S. Supreme Court upheld the Affirmative Action program at the University of Michigan law school, but struck down the university’s undergraduate system that awarded extra admission points to minority students. (2003)

How we were challenged

2004 ~ UUCWC ratified a statement of support for same sex couples to marry and filed a religious amicus curiae brief supporting the seven couples in the Lewis vs. Harris case with the NJ Supreme Court. Rev. Charles Stephens conducted same sex ceremonies in New Paltz, NY, despite threat of arrest.

In November, 2003, the Board of Trustees appointed a Welcoming Statement Task Force to change the church's Welcoming Statement. The controversial effort created conflict. Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender members and their allies feared this mandate might indicate the church no longer welcomed them. After months of deliberation, the Task Force proposed two types of statements: a greeting and a statement of commitment (to a Peace Site, a Welcoming Church for GLBT, a Journey toward Wholeness stand against racism and other oppressions, and Accessibility for those who are mentally or physically challenged).

Although many GLBT members continued to be active, Interweave attendance remained low.

How we responded, taking action

2004 ~ In April, a UUCWC group mobilized for the National March for Women's Lives in Washington, DC.

JTW sponsored a second Jubilee II training in June and two Sunday services. Five other services also supported the JTW mission. A Popcorn and Opinions film series on racism and other oppressions was initiated. Six films were shown.

2005 ~ Rev. Charles Stephens and six members attended Central Jersey Regional Equity meetings to develop grassroots support for affordable housing, tax reform and immigration.

UUCWC became the home of two anti-racism libraries, the NY Metro District library and its own, stored in a cabinet built by Sandra Garrison. The libraries' holdings and Paul Tuerff's book reviews were listed on the district's website to widen access.

With funds from its Chalice Lighter Appeal, the Accessibility Task Force upgraded the fire alarm system, developed an evacuation plan, and installed an incline chairlift to make the church more welcoming to physically challenged persons.

The struggle outside

The U.S. government disregard for citizen rights accelerated during this period. After initiating a war with Iraq (2003), the U.S. abuse of Iraqi prisoners was revealed. The Supreme Court curtailed the President's restriction of the rights of terrorism detainees.

President Bush urged Congress to pass a Constitutional amendment barring homosexual marriages. (2004)

Mark Crispin Miller, New York University professor and commentator for the NY Times, TV and radio, documented election day fraud

and voter suppression by race and class in *Fooled Again: How the Right Stole the 2004 Election and Why They'll Steel the Next One Too (Unless We Stop Them)*.

Hurricane Katrina devastated Gulf Coast states exposing the plight of those living in poverty. The federal government's disaster response received sharp criticism for its inadequacy. (2005).

President Bush acknowledged that spying without a warrant on residents suspected of terrorist activities had begun in 2002.