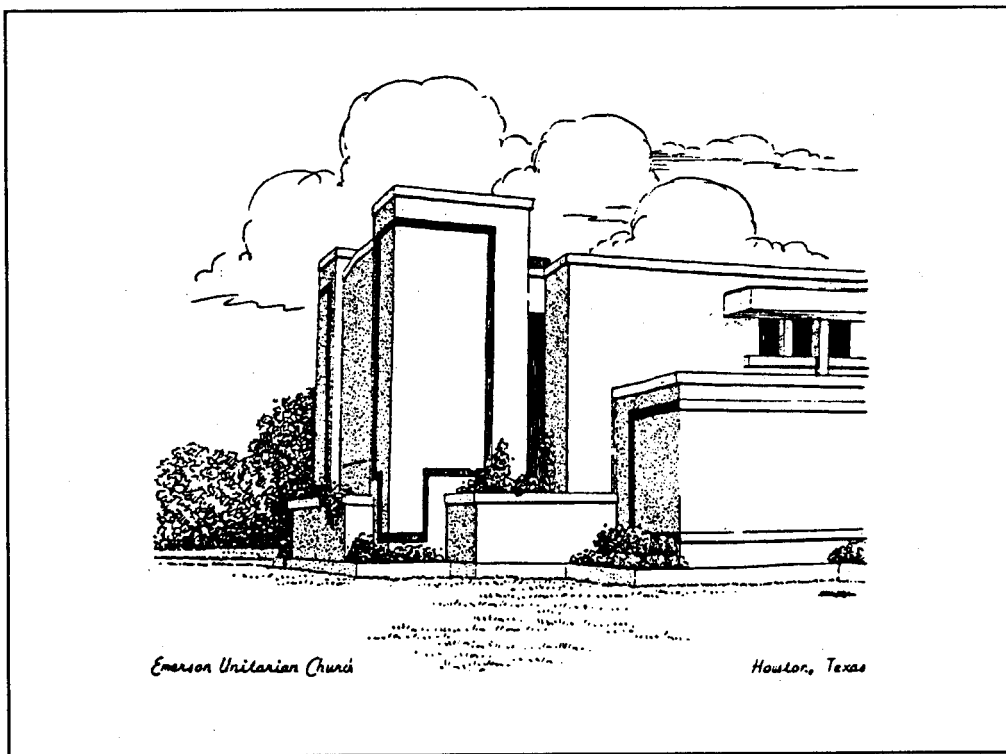


# The History of Emerson Unitarian Church Houston, Texas

## Volume II — 1981-89

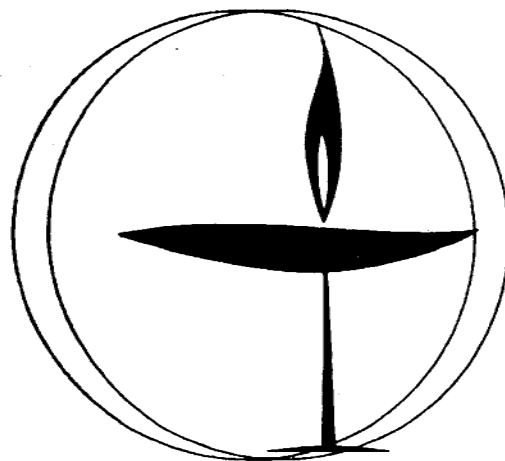
by  
Mary Pedersen



**Emerson Unitarian Church**  
1900 Bering Drive  
Houston, Texas 77057  
1993

## DEDICATION

To all the members of Emerson Unitarian Church,  
from the stalwart charter members  
to the newest names on the roll



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## INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME II

This second volume of the history of Emerson Unitarian Church covers the third decade of the church's existence. Intended as a sequel to the history of the first twenty years written by Alice Cowles in 1981, it begins where Volume I ended, and concludes with the arrival of Reverend Jan V. Knost in February 1990. A chronology is included that covers highlights of the time period from 1990 to the end of 1992.



Emerson Unitarian Church began 1981 with the congregation well settled in our beautiful sanctuary with an expanding membership, a fine music program and a canvass drive that had surpassed its goal by nearly \$4000. The new decade would see many changes, not all of them favorable, as the church labored to carry its message forward in circumstances that would soon be considerably less friendly than those of the preceding twenty years.

Beginning in 1984 Houston suffered a prolonged economic slump lasting the rest of that decade and into the next, making it clear that things would never again be the same. As the city's economy painfully began to diversify from its historic dependence on petroleum related industry, Emerson Church experienced its share of the impact resulting from the layoffs, transfers and tight money endured by so many of our members.

At the same time the increasing religious, political and social polarization that characterized the decade underscored Emerson's unique position as both a liberal church in a conservative, Bible Belt city, and a relatively traditional church in a liberal denomination. Coping with these two conditions, the church would experience the most profound change in its history, with a subtle counterpoint of innovation and continuity proving the dominant theme of the 1980's.

## Chapter One: TRANSITION IN THE PULPIT

As his custom had been, Dr. Schulman continued to serve on numerous denominational bodies as well as local interfaith organizations while maintaining his reputation as a premier Emerson scholar. In 1981 he was elected to a six year term on the Board of Trustees at Meadville-Lombard, one of the major Unitarian Universalist seminaries in the country. In 1983 he was elected treasurer of Meadville and chosen to serve on the Investment and Finance Committees. At about the same time Frank won a \$350 prize from the UU Society for Alcohol Education for the best sermon on alcoholism. He regularly attended the UUA General Assembly, the Southwest District's Summer Institute at Lake Texoma, where he frequently gave some of the sunset talks, and the Prairie Group, a theological study group for UU ministers in the midwest and south central states.

On the local scene, a lasting legacy of Dr. Schulman's 25 years here is surely the respect his work in various interfaith organizations earned for Unitarian Universalism in this conservative, Bible Belt city. In July 1981 he was elected to the Board of Houston Metropolitan Ministries. In December 1982 he gave the invocation at the dedication of the new sanctuary built by our friends at the Congregation for Reformed Judaism, who had held their worship services in our sanctuary for several years. Now that they had a home of their own, they made it clear that Emerson members would always be welcome.

Frank found a number of other ways to enhance the visibility of the cause of liberal religion as well as our own congregation. In August 1983 Frank testified in Federal District Court against Harris County in a civil liberties case protesting the display of a creche on government property the previous Christmas, citing the constitutional prohibition against establishment of religion. To his surprise he had to assume the role of plaintiff when the original complainant dropped out. In October 1983 he gave the opening and closing devotions for KHOU-TV for a week. His five minute "Words of Inspiration" radio talks, originally sponsored by a church member, were continued as a public service by the classical music station for sixteen years until the station owners changed the format away from

classical music in March 1986. In 1987 Frank joined several other Houston religious leaders in planning the liturgy for the first Holocaust Remembrance Service held April 28 at Congregation Emanu El. As of this writing (summer 1993), the service continues yearly and was hosted by Emerson Church in 1989.

Dr. Schulman's reputation as an Emerson scholar brought him numerous lecture invitations from the denomination. In 1981 these included the Minns Lectures, a series of four given at First Parish of Concord, Massachusetts, Emerson's home. His title was "New Insights into Emerson." That same year he was chosen to serve on the committee planning a special commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Emerson's death. The observance was held in April 1982 in Boston. Once again Frank journeyed to First Parish in Concord, this time to preach and take part in other commemorative events. In September he travelled overseas to Edinburgh and Sheffield to give the Billings Lecture on Emerson sponsored by the UUA.

In August 1984 Leonora Montgomery, who was pursuing a PhD in religious studies at Rice University, was hired as half-time Parish Assistant in charge of adult education, youth groups, program development and parish calls. She received her PhD from Rice the following May and in July 1985 informed the Board of her decision to follow a calling to the Unitarian Universalist ministry. Her studies at Rice had already fulfilled the course requirements. She remained on our staff while completing her Clinical Pastoral Education at Hermann Hospital, and then left for Tulsa to begin her internship under the guidance of Reverend John Wolf at All Souls.

In 1986 President Don Miner and the Board of Trustees established a Ministerial Advisory Committee, later known as the Ministerial Relations Committee. Dr. Schulman submitted a list of names to the Board, who then selected the committee members. In addition to Don, these were Walter Kaye, Dick Mullineaux and Judy Williams. Later, George Binder replaced Don Miner, who moved to England. One of this committee's first tasks was to assist Leonora Montgomery in completing her preparation for the ministry, especially her Clinical Pastoral Education and the UUA Fellowshiping process.

Leonora finished her internship serving in several European cities and as New Congregation Organizer for the Netherlands Fellowship. She was approved by the denominational Fellowship Committee in October 1986. The congregation enthusiastically voted to ordain Leonora, and the service was held in Emerson's sanctuary on January 11, 1987. Among those in attendance were retired Emerson (and First Church) Minister Reverend Horace Westwood, Reverend John Wolf and Reverend Janet Newman of All Souls in Tulsa, Dr. George Rupp of Rice University (formerly Dean of the Harvard Divinity School), City Councilwoman Eleanor Tinsley (whose son is married to Leonora's daughter), Reverend Byron Miller from Northwoods/Bay Area, Reverend Doug Reisner of the Houston Fellowship, Reverend Robert Schaibly of First Unitarian Church and Father Rivers Patout, Chaplain of the Houston Seaman's Center. It was a most memorable and unique occasion as the Emerson congregation ordained one of its own most active members to the Unitarian Universalist ministry.

Later that year the congregation voted to name Reverend Leonora Montgomery Associate Minister. She added pastoral duties as well as conducting worship services to her continuing work with adult education and program development. When Dr. Schulman resigned, the Board asked Reverend Montgomery to stay on to assist the interim minister. As we headed into the ministerial transition, she recommended the formation of a "para-ministry" to assist the interim minister in some types of parish calls, such as those to shut-ins or nursing home residents. By March 1988 Dorothy Rice had a proposal ready for the Board's approval. At about the same time the Board decided to formalize the work Gwen Essinger had done through the Alliance for several years and established the Caring Committee, which provides solace to bereaved church families by arranging refreshments after funeral or memorial services. Gwen was the group's first chair, and both committees have had major roles in Emerson's ministry ever since.

In April 1989 Reverend Montgomery was selected as the candidate for the first full-time called minister to the Bay Area Fellowship's pulpit. That congregation voted to call her as their Minister on April 30.

In late March 1987 Dr. Schulman announced to the Board of Trustees his intention to retire within the next year and a half. The Board immediately contacted Southwest District Executive Russ Lockwood and arranged a special meeting with him a few days later. Reverend Lockwood described the UUA's recommended search procedure and strongly urged that we choose an interim ministry in consideration of Frank's long tenure. He said we would need to establish two committees: a Transition Committee to select and work with the interim minister, and a Search Committee to select and present a new permanent minister for the congregation's approval. We would also need to make a comprehensive survey of the congregation and prepare a packet describing our church for prospective candidates.

Board President Mike Bercu called a congregational meeting for April 5 following the church service. Dr. Schulman read to the congregation the same announcement he had made to the Board three weeks earlier and then excused himself from the meeting. Dick Mullineaux of the Ministerial Relations Committee provided some background leading up to Frank's decision and presented the details of the retirement proposal his committee had negotiated with Dr. Schulman. Following discussion of the proposal, the congregation decided that more time was needed to absorb the news and study the details. Another congregational meeting was held the following week, at which the proposal was approved unanimously.

The Board immediately moved to form the two committees recommended. At the April 20 Board meeting Frank Schulman's resignation as of June 30, 1988 was officially accepted "with deep regret." In May the Board approved the names submitted by the Ministerial Relations Committee for appointment to the Transition Committee subject to congregational approval of an interim ministry.

A second Board meeting was called for April 29 to consider more thoroughly the question of an interim ministry. Past President Don Miner reviewed the reasons Russ Lockwood had given for choosing an interim minister and said he had since talked to a number of other people with experience, all of whom recommended this course of action.



Interim ministers are specially trained to help the congregation work through the transition, aid in the healing of any divisions, and provide support to the Search Committee during the selection process, which can be quite lengthy. The Board agreed and called a congregational meeting for May 31 to present the proposal. Russ Lockwood was present to answer any questions. Judy Williams presented the interim ministry proposal on behalf of the Ministerial Relations Committee and the Board; the congregation approved it. By the end of 1987 the members of both the Transition Committee and the Permanent Minister Search Committee had been selected. The Search Committee members were presented at a congregational meeting in early December for the congregation's approval. They were:

#### TRANSITION COMMITTEE

Bob Hopkins  
Glenda Matney (chair)  
Helen Nagel  
Dori Ripple-Beran  
David Tidholm

#### PERMANENT MINISTER SEARCH COMMITTEE

Liz Babcock  
Wallace Bond  
Tom Matney  
Mary Pedersen  
Shirley Quisenberry  
Bill Roberts (chair)  
Michelle Sorenson  
Ramon Williams  
  
Alternates:  
Barbara Hopkins  
Leonard Meltzer  
Jill Rose  
Joy Tesh

Russ Lockwood was a guest at the February 1988 Board meeting and discussed with the Trustees and the Ministerial Relations Committee the church's hopes and expectations of a new minister. Meanwhile, plans proceeded for many events relating to Dr. Schulman's retirement and the quest for an interim minister. In May the Board agreed to buy back the manse from the Schulmans at a price eventually set at \$143,000 (\$28,000 cash and a 15 year

10.5% mortgage of \$115,000) to come from the Endowment Fund. Dr. Schulman had accepted a call to a small congregation in Horsham, England. Since the Schulmans didn't plan to stay there permanently, it was arranged that they would leave their furniture in the manse for the interim minister to use. In May Glenda Matney presented the name of Reverend Arthur Jellis on behalf of the Transition Committee. The Board approved the selection and President Anna Louise Bruner appointed Larry Huelbig to write the contract.

As the end of June approached, an ambitious schedule of events commenced to insure that the Schulmans departed assured of our affection and high regard. In mid-April a fund raising dinner and concert of Frank's favorite classical and baroque music was held. A second banquet for Frank's friends and colleagues in the larger Houston community followed in May. Both dinners were under the expert direction of Emerson member Helen Nagel with the assistance of David Jackson, director of the Houston Club.

On Friday, June 24, the congregation held a "Texas Farewell" covered dish dinner party for Frank and Alice in Westwood Hall. Lively entertainment by Tom and Jacquie Roach and bright Texas decorations accented the upbeat theme. The guests of honor were certainly in the spirit of the evening, arriving in western dress. Who ever thought we'd see Frank at church in jeans, a bolo tie and huge belt buckle? After the meal, an impressive array of gifts was presented on behalf of the congregation and by individual members, including numerous original art works and a scrapbook of letters. Other gifts included a scholarship fund in Dr. Schulman's name for Meadville-Lombard and two mahogany flaming chalice plaques, one of which hangs on the rear wall of the sanctuary while the other travels with the Schulmans. The announcement was made that the library had been named in Frank's honor and that the newly formed weekend Alliance group would henceforth be known as the Alice Circle.

The Schulman Library, already one of the best religious libraries in the Southwest District, was further enriched by 100 additional volumes chosen in Frank's honor by Wallace

Bond and Leonora Montgomery. Topics included ethics, theology, UU history, religious history, women and religion, church operations, world religions and religious reference materials. Frank also generously donated a number of books from his own library to the church.

Dr. Schulman's final worship service as Minister of Emerson Unitarian Church was held Sunday morning, June 26, 1988. The choir, which normally would be on summer break by this time, sang some of Frank's favorite music. At his request soprano Sumiyo Ender was invited to sing Mozart's Alleluia motet, "Exultate Jubilate." Two of Frank and Alice's sons, Chris and Matthew, attended. David Emerson, great-grandson of Ralph Waldo Emerson, also attended along with his wife and presented Frank with a gift from the Ralph Waldo Emerson Memorial Association. The congregation of Bering Drive Church of Christ next door sent their greetings and a package of notes from their members.

After all this excitement the next few weeks seemed very quiet and subdued, but not for long. Following a summer of imaginative and inspirational worship services organized by Pat Hammons and her Summer Worship Committee, the time came to welcome our Interim Minister and his wife, Arthur and Marion Jellis. On August 20, 1988, the UU Network put on a potluck supper at Emerson's Westwood Hall. About 280 people from as far away as Huntsville turned out to welcome the Jellises to Houston as well as to get better acquainted with each other.

Reverend Jellis conducted his first worship service at Emerson Church on September 4 and proclaimed Sunday, September 11, as Homecoming Sunday, when all the church's usual activities would resume. His sermon that Sunday was entitled "These are the days that must happen to us" and sketched out the possibilities of the year ahead. He said, "As Unitarian Universalists we may expect the unexpected" and inspired most of the congregation to look forward to the challenges ahead.

As Interim Minister Reverend Jellis helped the congregation adapt to the inevitable changes, expected and otherwise, resulting from a change in the pulpit. First and most obvious was his Massachusetts accent, which soon became a Jellis trademark. He also

introduced us to the Green Hymnal, which contained “degenderized” hymns (except Christmas Carols. Some things are sacrosanct even to the UUA.) He astonished many of our members with the speed at which he learned nearly everyone’s name. His ideas stretched our minds, whether in evening discussion sessions in Westwood Hall or in the pulpit on Sunday morning. In February 1989 he held a series of three Thursday evening discussions on religion and social issues that we might want to consider for the future direction of the church. Most important, he gently but unmistakably broadened both our religious philosophy and our concept of what the UU ministry could be, and proved an effective representative of the UUA.

At the April 1989 Board meeting Leonora Montgomery reported that she had visited the Schulmans and they were enjoying Horsham. Frank had been offered an appointment as Chaplain-Tutor at Manchester Unitarian College, Oxford University. Most members who knew Frank considered him well suited to this type of endeavor.

Meanwhile the Search Committee had been hard at work. At the November 1988 Board meeting chair Bill Roberts raised the question of membership qualifications, pointing out that we would probably want strict enforcement when the time came to vote on a new minister. The Board agreed on the necessity of having complete records of contributions and publishing membership qualifications in *The Emersonian* several weeks in advance of any anticipated vote.

In April 1989 Bill Roberts told the Board that the search for a new minister was likely to extend beyond the time originally estimated, and that the committee did not want to be rushed on so important a task. Arthur Jellis agreed to stay one more year, which could be shortened to six months with 90 days notice.

The end of the search was closer than anyone realized. By September the Search Committee had reached a decision and during the Sunday morning service on October 8 Bill Roberts announced the selection of Reverend Jan Vickery Knost of San Antonio, Texas as the Search Committee’s unanimous choice for the congregation’s consideration. In his

report to the congregation at the Annual Meeting held January 28, 1990, Bill described the “border to border and coast to coast search” that considered a total of 30 possible candidates, and the committee’s extensive consultations with district and continental UUA Ministerial Settlement personnel. Bill also praised Arthur Jellis who “without exerting any pressure or bias concerning any candidate, was continuously helpful and supportive in an advisory capacity, offering solace all the while to a wondering congregation.”

A week full of activities followed to allow as many members as possible to meet Reverend Knost. On Sunday, November 5, Reverend Knost conducted his first service at Emerson Church. His wife Lorna and two of their four children joined him in mid-week so they could become acquainted with us. After the Sunday service on November 12, the congregation voted to call Reverend Knost by a majority of over 98%. He began his ministry here in mid-February 1990, and moved his family to Houston the following summer.

January and early February 1990 were full of farewell events for Arthur and Marion Jellis, who had made many friends and had a profound impact here during their short tenure of 18 months. Arthur had decided to retire from the ministry for medical reasons. When these New Englanders left in February for their home in New Hampshire, they departed with our enduring affection and deep gratitude for a job well done.

## Chapter Two: OTHER STAFF CHANGES

No single event better underscores the evolution of Emerson Church during the 1980's than the complete turnover in church staff that occurred during that time. The first of these changes actually began somewhat earlier when Travis Gunnels, our sexton for 19 years, was suffering from cancer of the liver and became too ill to work. The Board kept him on the payroll until his death in July 1981. Meanwhile we tried out several other candidates, none of whom proved satisfactory. After years of seeing sextons come and go (and even having to bail one of them out of jail), Gerald Moran, who had worked for us briefly in 1983, was hired in 1985, thus finally solving a long standing problem. He quickly impressed many church members with his excellent work, dependability and his calm, cheerful attitude. An effort was made to secure for him the cleaning contract for the YMCA as well, but they insisted on making their own less expensive (and, to us, less satisfactory) arrangements.

In 1983 Catherine Newman, our long time secretary, retired and moved to California. She had begun her secretarial duties as a volunteer, becoming a paid staff member when the church could afford it. She was honored at coffee hour April 17 and presented with gifts by the Alliance as well as the Board of Trustees on behalf of the congregation. In May, Fran Roberts, who had been treasurer since 1976, asked to be relieved, and the Board commended her for her long service. Steve Davis was appointed treasurer and served for about six months until moving out of the area. Linda Weinberg followed as treasurer until July 1985 when Susanna Painter assumed the post. Meanwhile Jan Boss served as secretary until October 1985 when Susanna became both secretary and treasurer. In May of 1988 Susanna was named Operations Manager by the Board and given more administrative responsibility, especially important during the ministerial transition. As described in chapter 3, Alice Schulman was succeeded as RE Director by Nancy Slugg in 1984.

The music program had grown steadily since Gwyn Richards, Assistant Dean of the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University, had been hired as Music Director in 1980. At his recommendation Gary Smith was hired as Organist in 1981. Choir membership

increased, including a number of Shepherd School voice students, making possible a larger and more complex repertoire. In addition to the usual Sunday services two major works were presented by the Emerson Choir under Mr. Richards' leadership: the Vivaldi Gloria in April 1982 and Haydn's Creation two years later. In February 1983 the Alliance sponsored a "Magical Musical Evening" featuring the Shepherd School Singers and the Soleil String Quartet, also working with Gwyn Richards.

In June 1983 Gwyn submitted a detailed proposal for the future development of the music program to the Board of Trustees which outlined more musical productions of this kind. He also recommended the hiring of four paid section leaders for the choir in the conviction that this would enhance both confidence and ability among our other choir members. The Music Committee's budget request for 1985, prepared in September 1984, included such a line item. But the Finance Committee, nervous over an unaccustomed budget shortfall, deleted that item and reduced several other Music Committee requests before referring the budget to the Board and, eventually, to the congregation.

Following the October 1984 congregational meeting to approve the proposed 1985 budget Mr. Richards resigned as Music Director effective December 15 citing his differences with the Board and, presumably, the congregation over the direction and scope of the music program. With the backing of the Music Committee he also protested the manner in which the budget was prepared and presented to the congregation. At an emergency Board meeting called to discuss these objections it was decided that committee chairs are entitled to be notified in advance of the congregational meeting when cuts or other major changes in their requests are deemed necessary, that the proposed budget should be distributed to the membership at least a week before the congregational meeting so it can be studied carefully, and that full discussion, questions and amendments at the meeting should be encouraged. Sensing they had underestimated the congregation's support for the music program, the Board voted to restore the cuts in the Music Committee's budget, but Mr. Richards declined to withdraw his resignation. The impact on the fall canvass drive as well as the music program was considerable. Although we managed to finish the year with a slight surplus, the fund drive again fell short by about \$11,000.

January 1985 began with the Kilgore Memorial Concert in memory of charter member and long term benefactor Dr. Hartman Kilgore, who had died the previous May. The Kilgores had generously supported many church efforts, particularly music, and had given some of the money for the organ when the new sanctuary was built. Their daughter Fran Roberts and her husband Bill were staunch choir members. Gwyn Richards had recruited Ruben Gonzales, first chair violin of the Houston Symphony Orchestra, and organist Clyde Holloway of the Shepherd School as featured artists. Advance ticket sales were fairly good and publicity energetic, but freezing rain on the night of the performance reduced door sales sharply and the concert, though an artistic success, barely broke even.

Also in January 1985 Jerry McCathern, the performing arts manager of the Houston Festival and a member of First Unitarian Church, was hired as interim Music Director and the process of rebuilding the music program began. However, in May Jerry withdrew his name from consideration for the permanent post of music director, citing his heavy responsibilities for the Houston Festival. A few days later Music Committee chair Eva Haufrect received a letter from Dorothy Rosenberger, an experienced Houston voice teacher. She was leaving her post at another Houston church and wished to offer us her services. Her qualifications were excellent and the Board agreed with the recommendation of the Music Committee that she be hired. In the years since she has steadily rebuilt the music program while dealing amiably with three ministers of markedly differing styles. In addition to her fine musicianship Dorothy displays an uncommon patience with untrained amateur singers and the remarkable ability to bring out the best of whatever talent they possess. As one choir member said, "It's like getting a free voice lesson twice a week."

In November 1986 Gary Smith resigned after five years of faithful service as Organist. By this time he had become Assistant Dean of Rice's Shepherd School of Music. The following March Geralda Barker was hired as Organist upon recommendation of the Music Committee, and the music program, after an unsettling and eventful two and a half years, seemed assured of a stable, promising future.



In August 1988 one of the Music Committee's fondest dreams was realized when an anonymous Emerson family donated the funds for a harpsichord. It was constructed by well-known craftsman Gerald Self of San Antonio, with the case being made in France. The harpsichord finally arrived at Emerson Church in September 1989. A dedication recital by Nicholas Weber was planned for November 20 and builder Gerald Self invited to attend. When Weber fell ill, local artist Rachel Pharr and her bassoonist husband, Bernard Kolle, stepped in most ably. Dorothy Rosenberger took lessons from Pharr and has become a serious harpsichordist, and has enhanced our services frequently ever since. The Houston Harpsichord Society has held several concerts in our sanctuary.

### **Chapter Three: TOWARD LIFE SPAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

The church school program, always one of Emerson's strongest points, continued to set a standard for the denomination with its involvement in three areas, including family support and community service as well as education. In addition, the adult education program grew significantly in quality, scope and participation level during the late 1980's, a trend that has continued unabated to the present. Adult programming is rapidly achieving qualitative parity with the children's Sunday School, an accomplishment all the more remarkable for being largely a volunteer effort with a minimal budget.

#### **Children's Program**

By 1981 the church school had grown to the point that Nancy Slugg was hired as an assistant to Director Alice Schulman, the Religious Education (RE) Committee and the Youth Activities Committee. Her other duties included helping the Adult Education Committee upon request and supervising the sexton. Accomplishing these tasks in a paid work week of only 18 hours revealed a cheerful, understated efficiency that proved to be one of Nancy's most valuable assets in the nine years she would spend on our staff.

Both the Schulmans and the Religious Education Committee had long believed that the church should actively support families with courses and reference materials on a wide variety of parenting issues in addition to Sunday School classes. One such effort was the UUA's course "Parents as Resident Theologians", offered for the first time in 1985, which assists parents in handling children's questions on religious issues. Parents learn not only to tailor their responses to the child's level of understanding, but more importantly how to satisfy the need behind the question without falling back on the "pat answers" so typical of more orthodox denominations.

In addition, for some time the RE Committee had recognized the need for a church sponsored sex education course for our teenagers. RE's curriculum subcommittee studied several options, including the UUA's "About Your Sexuality", and eventually selected an

intensive, marathon weekend program developed by Methodist minister, education professional and family therapist Reverend Wayne McClesky. For the next few years a cordial collaboration between Reverend McClesky and Emerson's RE Department provided an effective, informative and responsible sex education program for students in grades 6, 7 and 8 as well as a separate program for high school students in alternate years. One welcome though unanticipated result was an enhanced sense of fellowship among our teens greatly benefiting our two youth groups. By the time Reverend McClesky moved out of the area in 1983, our own members were able to take over the program. Later collaboration with Planned Parenthood added materials on pornography, rape prevention and AIDS, keeping our course relevant and current.

In September of 1986 Jane Joseph approached the RE Committee with a proposal to start a support group for parents of teenagers. Thus began PG 13, a group currently numbering eight to twelve couples and individuals which meets once a month more or less regularly to share the joys and challenges of raising their families.

Under the guidance of both Alice Schulman and Nancy Slugg our curriculum included topics then unfashionable in many UU churches such as Bible study, UU history and the spiritual dimension of life. Regular worship services were also a part of the Sunday School curriculum at all levels. Each class above kindergarten was responsible for creating one worship service each year related to its curriculum topic. Under Jacquie Roach's leadership with the assistance of her husband Tom, the Youth Choir enhanced Easter and Christmas services both in the RE wing and the main sanctuary. In September 1988 the Chalice Club was established at Leonora Montgomery's suggestion. This group consisted of Sunday School students who learned, on a voluntary basis, a number of traditional religious prayers and songs, Bible excerpts such as the 23rd Psalm and the Ten Commandments, our church covenant, the UUA's Principles and Purposes, and similar items.

Another factor considered carefully was a logical progression through the curriculum from preschool through high school based on the child's developmental level. Classes for the youngest children are centered on the idea of making the church a friendly place and

developing courtesy and cooperation. As the child grows, the curriculum keeps pace with his/her emerging religious awareness, tying that in with an appreciation for the natural world and relations with other people.

The curriculum subcommittee wrote the materials for a number of classes, such as the Values and Decisions curriculum used for the 7th and 8th grades. During the 1980's, however, the committee noticed a marked improvement in the quality and relevance of many of the materials offered by Boston, and in recent years we have used more and more of their material. In the fall of 1986 RE adopted a new UUA high school curriculum called "Life Issues For Teens" (LIFT), a discussion format that encourages thoughtful consideration of important life decisions our young people will be facing. This curriculum also replaced the sex education class for high schoolers, though we continue to offer the section for junior high age students. At all levels, the curriculum is constantly revised and updated as we try to provide to our youth the tools they will need as adults in these uncertain times.

In the late 1970's the LRY in many congregations had fallen into considerable disrepute for questionable activities stemming primarily from abdication of adult leadership and responsibility. In the spring of 1982 the UUA took steps to rebuild a continental youth organization. To that end the Common Ground Conference was held in Brunswick, Maine, just after the General Assembly that June. Emerson LRY President Andrew Schulman was elected delegate to that conference. The LRY and the Board of Trustees covered most of his expenses. The outcome of the conference was a new denominational youth organization called Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (YRUU). The new beginning notwithstanding, Emerson's two youth groups continued to function almost completely independently of the continental organization throughout the 80's, and chose to retain their old LRY and Schweitzer Club designations.

We had continued to share our RE wing and classrooms with our Woodland Hall tenants. Discussions took place throughout 1981 with Woodland Hall over their plans to add more grades and the consequent need for more space. However, these negotiations faltered and then collapsed quite abruptly in the spring of 1982 when the school closed,

leaving us with a deficit of \$11,000 in the operating budget. While the Board scrambled to fill this funding gap another tenant was sought, and on July 25, 1982, the Board agreed to a two year rental contract with the Post Oak YMCA for their preschool day care program. One unfortunate result of this change proved to be the demise of Summer House, our version of the one week vacation Bible school. Renting to Woodland Hall had not interfered with this project because they did not require the use of the classrooms in the summer months. But the Y, pointing out that summer was their busiest time, objected to vacating the classroom space needed for Summer House, even for a week. In the summer of 1983 we tried moving Summer House to various corners of Westwood Hall, but this proved unsatisfactory. In addition, a declining enrollment and comments from a number of working parents that they needed more than a one week, half day program indicated that support for this project was diminishing, and the RE Committee reluctantly dropped it. Some of the flavor of Summer House was carried over to Discovery Club, a one hour Sunday morning summer program for children aged two through eight.

From the early 1980's it was Emerson Church's great good fortune to have the congenial, energetic leadership of Alice Schulman and Nancy Slugg backed by a large and active RE Committee. Both Alice and Nancy regularly participated, frequently in leading roles, in district and continental conferences and workshops, gaining the respect of other religious professionals throughout the denomination while enriching our own program. At the end of 1983 Alice resigned as RE Director to pursue an advanced degree in public health. After due consideration the Board hired Nancy Slugg as Director the following May. By the end of the year Jacquie Roach was hired as her assistant; this partnership would continue until June of 1989. Nancy fostered closer ties both with Boston and with colleagues at other Houston churches, UU and otherwise, through the Houston Interfaith Religious Educators Association. Jacquie's talents were especially evident in her leadership of the Youth Choir, which took a new lease on life in her hands, and the musical enrichment she and her husband Tom brought to Family Worship.

Continuing RE programs included Family Worship, begun in 1980, an informal 20-25 minute worship service at 10:30 Sunday mornings conducted by participating families and occasionally other church groups or members. On one occasion Emerson member Robert Parker, one of two UU astronauts, spoke about his experience aboard the Space Shuttle. Walter Kaye sponsored the Scouting Religion in Life program on a regular basis, and in early 1985 a similar program for children aged seven to eleven called Love and Help was initiated. Dr. Schulman continued to hold Affirmation classes for 7th and 8th graders every few years. The Junior Finance and Helping Hands Committees continued to sponsor the Richmond State School project centered on Nancy Ford, Heifer Project International, the Clara Barton Camp for Diabetic Girls and other efforts chosen and funded by the Sunday School students. As always, the Halloween Carnival was one of the high points of the Sunday School calendar, raising money for UNICEF with the enthusiastic help of the whole congregation.

In the mid 1980's RE began searching for a new service project that could involve all ages in a more direct, immediate manner than those we were already doing. At the suggestion of Tom and Jacquie Roach we joined the Box Project in July 1986. The Box Project provides assistance to needy families on an individual basis, allowing for a sense of personal connection between the donors and recipients. We were paired with the Clays, a large rural family in Belzoni, Mississippi that spanned three generations and included five adults with 19 children in a full range of ages. Once a month we shipped clothing, household items, school supplies and whatever else they needed, usually including small gifts for whoever had a birthday that month. At Christmas students, teachers and RE staff would draw names of Clay family members and purchase Christmas gifts. Letters and photos went back and forth. More than once they urged us to "stop by some time", apparently unaware that we lived a little further away than the next county! Within a few years the three oldest children were attending a nearby junior college, leading us to hope that this family just might break the poverty cycle. By the end of the decade, however, shipping costs had become such a drain that the committee regretfully decided to terminate this project and concentrate on efforts closer to home.

The single disturbing trend in the RE department during the 1980's was a declining enrollment. At the end of May 1982, enrollment stood at 216, somewhat lower than the 1975 peak of around 240. As Houston's economy worsened young families were among the first to be affected, and many of them were forced to seek jobs in other parts of the country. Another factor was a trend toward smaller families. Shared custody arrangements in split families meant that an increasing number of our students attended only every other Sunday at best. By the middle of the decade the RE Committee found it necessary to combine various age levels to maintain viable class sizes and efficient use of our volunteer teachers. It became a considerable challenge to anticipate the age distribution of next year's enrollment and adjust accordingly while still making certain that regularly attending students neither missed nor duplicated significant curriculum topics. The Director's Report of June 1987 noted a year end enrollment of 171, the lowest since 1973 and 70 below the 1975 peak. The next two years saw a slight improvement as the figure climbed to 185, but as of this writing the difficulty remains a stubborn one with disquieting implications for the future.

### **Adult Education**

For most of the decade the main emphasis of the adult education courses offered was religious, ethical or cultural. Both Dr. Schulman and later Associate Minister Leonora Montgomery taught a variety of courses on Old and New Testament, theology, and Unitarian Universalism. Several Emerson members contributed their talents: attorney Larry Huelbig taught classes on ethical issues in current events (he also chaired the Adult Education Committee for two years) and Shirley Coster taught art appreciation. Outside speakers were also invited. Musicologist Nancy Bailey of Rice University taught several music classes, including, in the fall of 1985, one in conjunction with Houston Symphony Orchestra performances. Following established practice, these courses were usually held for several Sunday mornings in the spring and fall, with two or three topics offered each time. The committee also conducted periodic surveys of the congregation to determine topics of interest and the most convenient time slots.

In the late spring of 1985 the committee began a "Sunday Morning" discussion with a wider range of single session topics featuring different speakers each week. It ran all summer until the regular adult education program began in late September, following the usual format. In July 1986 the Sunday Morning discussions resumed, continuing until October 5. Also in July a Wednesday evening "coffee and discussion" group was started by Ray Lemmon, which a month later became "Tuesday Evening" to avoid conflict with choir practice. This program, similar to Sunday Morning, continued nearly a year with a total of 47 speakers. Steady attendance and the 1987 Adult Education Committee survey both vindicated Ray's hunch that the time had come for a weekly evening program.

In late June 1987 the Adult Education Committee teamed up with the Denominational Affairs Committee to present and discuss the Univision tapes on Tuesday evenings; the Sunday Morning program continued. Despite the interest shown, this program was not repeated because by autumn the tapes were being shown on cable TV through Access Houston.

The early spring of 1988 saw two new adult education offerings. With the ministerial search process in mind, chairman Judson Bryant arranged a coordinated five week discussion course that, in his words, "covered subjects which would be considered by church members during the transition period between Frank Schulman's retirement and the settling of a new permanent minister." One class on music in religion was taught by Nancy Bailey, two classes on church and covenant by Dr. Leonora Montgomery, and two sessions on worship and liturgy by Dr. Schulman. In early April Ray Lemmon instituted a monthly "First Tuesday" evening discussion series which also enjoyed a long run to August of 1989. Sunday Morning resumed for June and July, then started up again in September. In October 1988 the committee began an eight week course on heaven and hell based on F. Forrester Church's two books, *The Devil and Dr. Church* and *Entertaining Angels*.

In February 1989 the Adult Education Committee sponsored a two part discussion of the frequently difficult and ambiguous issue of ethics in foreign affairs. The first was a class



conducted at church by Bill Cunningham, a 30 year veteran of the U. S. Foreign Service who was then at the Center for International Studies at the University of St. Thomas. This was followed by attendance at a presentation by former CIA Director William Colby at the University of St. Thomas.

Later that spring, under the chairmanship of Karla Back, the ten week UUA course "Building Your Own Theology" was offered, with Leonora Montgomery as leader. The last session was a report and discussion led by Walter Kaye on The Committee on Goals—UUA 1967, giving a 22 year perspective on that report. A four week Tuesday evening series on hospice care was also held with the help of Mindy Lawrence, interim minister Arthur Jellis and several outside speakers.

As in previous years, the Adult Education Committee offered a Sunday Morning Forum that covered a wide variety of topics and continued until October 22. On September 24 the topic was the congregational survey conducted by the Permanent Minister Search Committee with chairman Bill Roberts as speaker. October 8 the discussion centered on the UU's for Freedom of Conscience and the method used by the UUA to define its position on political issues. In late October "Building Your Own Theology II" began, another ten week course continuing from the one offered the previous spring.

Virtually all of these programs were self-supporting and generated within the committee, with the budget being used largely as seed money. Babysitting was usually provided, especially for the Sunday morning programs. As the decade ended, Emerson's adult programming had achieved nearly the same level of quality and variety as the children's program, both gradually building toward the UUA concept of Life Span Religious Education.

## Chapter Four: EMERSON IN CONTEXT

### Denominational Affairs

During the early 1980's Emerson Unitarian Church was relatively isolated in the denominational sense despite the presence of several other UU societies in the area. Although the Board of Trustees usually was willing to assist other congregations when asked, there was little interaction otherwise. Many Emerson members felt estranged from the policies and political direction of the UUA, and both Dr. Schulman and a majority of the congregation were content to practice our own vision of Unitarianism in our own way. By the end of the decade, however, changes both in Boston and in our membership led to a closer, more cooperative relationship with the continental organization and with other UU societies in the Houston area.

In his report to the congregation at the Annual Meeting in January 1982, Denominational Affairs chair Dick Mullineaux said the committee continued to monitor the activities of the continental and regional organizations and noted a shift toward more religious activities and away from what he described as an "over-emphasis on special segment social concerns." Dick urged the church to continue to increase our contribution to the UUA's Annual Fund as long as this trend continued until we reached parity with other churches of our size. He also recommended that more Emerson members participate in denominational activities.

Gradually, we began to broaden our denominational view. In September 1981 the Board, at the instigation of Alice Schulman, voted to amend the church covenant, changing the word "man" to "humanity", so that it would read "In the love of truth and in the spirit of Jesus we unite for the worship of God and the service of humanity." Upon its presentation at the January 1982 Annual Meeting the congregation agreed to this amendment. In 1982 the Houston area UU societies jointly published a pamphlet describing the five area societies and the activities available at each. The following year this action would lead to the formation of the Houston Area Unitarian Universalist Council, which eventually became the Houston UU Network.

Despite the difficulties we began to experience in meeting our own operating expenses, on several occasions Emerson Church agreed to promote UU growth by helping other congregations financially. In February 1983 the Board agreed to loan \$20,000 to First Jefferson Church of Fort Worth to help finance their new sanctuary; later that same year Frank Schulman asked that one open offering be designated for the Unitarian Church in Fall River, Massachusetts, which had been destroyed by fire. Closer to home, in June 1985 the Board granted a request from the Northwoods Fellowship for a loan of \$13,000 from our Endowment Fund for their new building. In October Northwoods asked for \$15,000 more, having run into unexpected problems with their long term financing. This loan was approved by the congregation at the budget meeting. Northwoods finally obtained their mortgage and repaid the entire sum by the end of the year.

In January 1983 Reverend Robert Schaibly was installed as Minister of First Unitarian Church. Dr. Schulman and a number of other Emerson members attended. In the summer of 1983 the Houston Area UU Council was formed, with Tom Matney as our representative. Denominational Affairs Committee chair Shirley Quisenberry reported that George and Barbara Gravely represented Emerson at two Houston area Saturday workshops on the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC). The committee also hosted a dinner where Board members and representatives of many committees were able to learn first hand of the work of the UUSC from the Associate Director for International Programs and from the Development Director who were visiting from Boston.

In October Dr. George Rupp of Harvard Divinity School was invited to give the Kilgore Lecture. He presented Emerson Church with a stone from the room where Ralph Waldo Emerson lived in Harvard's Divinity Hall, originally built in 1826 and just recently remodeled. That November we had our first joint Thanksgiving Day service with the Congregation for Reformed Judaism. Thus began a custom that continued until 1991, usually with First Church's participation, and occasionally that of Bay Area.

In 1984 the Board of Trustees voted to contribute \$1000 to First Church's Endowment Fund in honor of their 70th anniversary. Upon request of the Denominational Affairs

Committee, the Board also decided to invite the Southwest UU Conference to hold its annual meeting at Emerson; the date eventually agreed upon was April 1986. The committee also hosted three parish covered dish dinners featuring slide presentations, a UUA Board member from the Southwest Conference, and Dr. Larry Egbert of Dallas on the work of our United Nations office.

In April 1984 the Board agreed to a request that Emerson Church nominate Dr. William Schulz for UUA President at the June 1984 General Assembly with the understanding that we would not be further obligated. The Denominational Affairs Committee eventually decided to cast all seven of Emerson's votes for Sandra Caron for President and Bill Donovan for Moderator when the election was held at the 1985 GA.

At the 1984 General Assembly in Columbus, Ohio, a resolution was adopted supporting the concept of union services for gay and lesbian couples. Many Emerson members objected on several grounds, including the points that such unions are not legal and lack the usual marriage commitments and obligations, the weakening of the family unit as the core of society, and most of all the undemocratic manner in which the UUA Board of Trustees forced the issue onto the agenda against the wishes of a majority of the member societies. The Denominational Affairs Committee discussed the issue but was unable to agree on a response. Nevertheless, a letter to UUA headquarters enumerating these points was approved at Emerson's October Board meeting over the objections of the Denominational Affairs representative.

In February 1985 a Cluster Conference was held at Camp Manison for the Houston Area UU Council. Glenda Matney was instrumental in organizing this event which included 17 Emerson members. During much of the year the Denominational Affairs Committee was involved with the other Houston societies in studying the feasibility of starting another congregation in this area. The Emerson Board of Trustees eventually decided it would be preferable to encourage the growth and enhancement of those societies already in existence. The committee also sponsored a parish covered dish dinner, "Candidate's Night", to present

the positions of the candidates for President and Moderator to be elected at the General Assembly in June. Emerson sent three delegates to that Assembly, which was held in Atlanta.

In April 1986 Emerson hosted the Spring Conference of the Southwest District. Elizabeth Babcock was in charge of this ambitious project and carried it off well. However, this was virtually the only Denominational Affairs activity that year. Shirley Quisenberry had retired as chair after serving three years, and the committee was inactive until Mike Martin assumed the chair in 1987.

In April 1987 the Board endorsed Mike's candidacy for SWUUC's Board of Trustees and he was duly elected. The Board also voted \$400 to defray expenses for RE Director Nancy Slugg to attend the General Assembly. With GA being held relatively close by in Little Rock, a record 13 people from Emerson attended, and 14 attended the SWUUC meeting in Baton Rouge. In each case we had more delegates than votes! The Denominational Affairs Committee commissioned a banner designed and made by Susan Ammerman, Laurie Hammons and Mary Pedersen to be carried in the General Assembly's opening and closing services. The committee also organized, along with other church groups, a series of lectures on UUA affairs by prominent ministers and hosted a meeting of the UUA Commission on Appraisal.

In early 1988 the Houston Area UU Council was renamed the UU Network, and Emerson's Board of Trustees ratified the groups' bylaws. In July the Board approved three delegates to this group; its first major activity was a picnic held at Emerson in late August coinciding with the arrival of our Interim Minister, Reverend Arthur Jellis. The Network was also heavily involved in planning the 75th anniversary celebration of First Unitarian Universalist Church, coming up in early 1989.

As 1989 began Emerson gave careful consideration to an appropriate gift to First Church for the occasion, and decided on a \$1000 donation from our Endowment Fund to theirs. The Board also encouraged additional contributions from individual Emerson members. Letters were sent to all EUC members who formerly belonged to First Church,

and an announcement was placed in *The Emersonian*. Other anniversary plans called for UUA President Dr. William Schulz to preach at First Church on February 12, starting a week's observance ending with a party sponsored by the UU Network on Saturday the 18th, and a service featuring former Ministers Horace Westwood and Webster Kitchell on the 19th. In a letter from Reverend Bob Schaibly thanking Emerson for our part in the celebration, he noted the closer feeling between our two congregations after several years of relative isolation.

Reverend Schaibly was not alone. Reverend Leonora Montgomery, writing in the November 6, 1988 issue of *The Emersonian*, remarked on the greater cooperation and communication she observed in the UU Network. She credited the group with getting us on Access Houston, sponsoring the Singletarians (a singles group that spanned all Houston area societies), and rejuvenating the monthly gathering of area UU ministers. Reverend Doug Reisner had just been settled at the Houston Fellowship and Reverend Don Vaughn-Foerster as Minister of Northwoods. Bay Area and College Station were both searching for ministers, and Bay Area was also planning a new building. At the January 1989 Board meeting Leonora reported that at least 10 Emerson members attended First Church's Christmas Eve midnight service, and several First Church members appeared at our Christmas Day service (Christmas fell on a Sunday). At the end of January seven women from Emerson attended the Southwest Women in Religion Conference in San Antonio, and we sent four delegates to SWUUC's Annual Meeting in Plano in April. In the spring of 1989 Judy Williams was elected to the continental Board of Trustees of the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation for a four year term. Our Interim Minister, Reverend Arthur Jellis, quietly and gently encouraged our greater participation in denominational events, both at the local and continental levels, during his 18 month tenure with us.

Our increasing participation in denominational activities, at least locally, coincided with a time of especially tight money at Emerson Church. Gay Ann Gustafson assumed the chair in 1989, and the committee met the challenge by holding the first Denominational Affairs (DA) Folly in October. For the next few years this event, featuring lunch and

entertainment, raised money to defray registration expenses at district and local conferences for Emerson members. The committee hopes the time will come when conference expenses will be funded by the operating budget, allowing them to stage DA Folly for fun.

### **The Kilgore Lecture**

The Kilgore Lectureship (originally the Emerson Lectureship) was founded in 1978 by Dr. and Mrs. Hartman Kilgore to provide funds for lectures on religious and related topics. The first was held in 1980 and the lectures continued yearly throughout the decade except for 1985, when, as already described, a memorial concert was held instead in Dr. Kilgore's name. Frequently the lecturer also preached at the Sunday morning worship service. The list below contains many of the leading figures in the denomination:

- 1980 Dr. James Luther Adams, Professor Emeritus at Meadville-Lombard  
Theological Seminary
- 1981 Dr. Walter Donald Kring, former Minister of Worcester, Massachusetts  
and All Souls Church in New York
- 1982 Professor Robert Richardson of the University of Denver, member of the  
Committee for the 100th anniversary of Emerson's death
- 1983 Dr. George Rupp, Dean, Harvard Divinity School
- 1984 Reverend Roy Phillips, Minister, Unity Church in  
St. Paul, Minnesota
- 1985 Kilgore Memorial Concert with Ruben Gonzales,  
Concertmaster of the Houston Symphony Orchestra,  
and Organist Clyde Holloway, Shepherd School of Music, Rice University
- 1986 Dr. John Hayward, chair, Department of Religious  
Studies, Southern Illinois University, formerly of Meadville-Lombard
- 1987 Dr. F. Forrester Church, Minister, All Souls Church of New York,  
prominent UU author
- 1988 Reverend Robert Fulghum, author and former UU Minister
- 1989 Reverend Khoren Arisian, Minister, First Unitarian Society  
of Minneapolis, Minnesota

Dr. Kilgore's death in May 1984 prompted numerous contributions totalling nearly \$4000 in his memory to both the Kilgore Lecture Fund and the Kilgore Choir Fund, ensuring that culture and scholarship would be an ongoing part of the church for years to come. In the fall of 1985 the Board decided to form the Kilgore Lecture Committee, officially consisting of three Board appointed voting members serving staggered three year terms, plus the minister and president ex officio. It has been the practice to include Dr. Kilgore's daughter Fran Roberts as a more or less permanent member.

### **Local Outreach:**

#### **Community Service, Public Relations and Membership**

At the 1983 Annual Meeting the congregation approved the establishment of a Community Service Committee consisting of five members plus the minister and president. The first chair was Wallace Bond. A few months later the Board charged the committee with supporting the programs of Houston Metropolitan Ministries and publicizing within the church the community service efforts of individual church members and groups. In *The Emersonian*, in early 1983, Wallace noted that church organizations, especially the Alliance and RE, were involved in numerous service projects including the Blalock Southwest Nursing Home, the Women's Center, recycling, the UNICEF Carnival, Richmond State School, and Pyramid House.

In the spring of 1985 the committee secured the Board's approval to participate in the work of Children's Committee 10, a group that seeks to reduce violence in Northern Ireland by pairing Catholic and Protestant teenagers who then spend seven weeks with an American family during the summer. Tom and Jacquie Roach wished to sponsor two children through this program and asked the church's help in raising the \$1400 required for air fare and expenses. The Community Service Committee organized an Irish Pub Nite fundraiser for the project. With the congregation's enthusiastic support over \$1800 was raised. The very next morning Continental Airlines announced that as part of the promotion of their new Houston to London nonstop service they would provide free air



transportation for the 100 or so Northern Irish youngsters coming to Texas for the Children's Committee 10 project. The church gave some of the money raised to Tom and Jacquie to offset their expenses and donated most of the rest to Children's Committee 10. The Belfast teens were warmly welcomed by the congregation and grew very close to the Roach family.

Everyone was eager to repeat this experience the following year, but changes in the focus of Children's Committee 10 and dissatisfaction with its management prompted Tom, Jacquie and others to organize their own group called Shamrocks and Bluebonnets. The 1986 Irish Pub Nite netted over \$2000; other fundraisers and contributions brought this figure to nearly \$3700. A total of five teenagers were the guests of the Roach family. Jud and Betsey Sevy hosted two more, as did Jill and Milton Rose. As before, all those participating enjoyed a wonderful experience. Sadly, the difficulties of running a project like this on both sides of the Atlantic prevented Tom and Jacquie from continuing it.

In the Annual Report of January 1987 chair Mike Bercu described two other efforts of his group. The first was the publishing of a Community Projects Directory listing the community service efforts of individual Emersonians. The second was a major new undertaking headed up by Karen Avery through the Houston Metropolitan Ministries. We began supporting the food pantry at Mount Vernon United Methodist Church in the Fifth Ward. Every month non-perishable food items, clothing and cash contributions are collected and delivered to Mount Vernon. Our church is their major, and frequently only, source of support. As the project gathered steam the following year, Karen involved other church groups, including the LRY and Helping Hands Committee from RE, in weighing and delivering the donations. In 1988 Mrs. Anderson, director of Mount Vernon's Social Services Center, visited Emerson and spoke at the Sunday morning service.

In 1987 Tom Matney revived the Emerson blood drive, which had been discontinued in 1981 because of low support. That October 32 Emerson members donated blood to M. D. Anderson Hospital. In the years since blood drives have been held several times a year jointly with our neighbors at Bering Drive Church of Christ.

Other activities included a Volunteer Services Fair after church organized by the Singles group, which spotlighted the community efforts of individual church members, complementing the Directory compiled previously. In 1989, the Community Service Committee sponsored a special service honoring their work.



Until the mid 1980's our public relations efforts consisted mainly of Dr. Schulman's weekly five minute radio show "Words of Inspiration" on KLEF (the classical music station), weekly listings in the Houston newspapers, and the publication of pamphlets Frank had written. In early January 1986 the Public Relations Committee, with Anna Louise Bruner as chair, tried a bulk mailing to 5000 homes selected through a computerized mail service. Incoming chair June Price continued this project, which included three of Frank's pamphlets: "Are Unitarians Christian?", "Basic Theology", and "Religious Education in Unitarianism." In October 1986 another mailing announced Guest Sunday and invited recipients to our services.

In 1986 the committee also sent press releases to both the *Chronicle* and the *Post* and to the public service departments of 13 radio and TV stations publicizing the Harvard Glee Club concert on Palm Sunday, and one of our adult education courses "Biblical Ancestors and Heroes" taught by Dr. Don Benjamin of Rice University in October and November. Other beneficial publicity included an article by Louis Parks in the August 30 Houston Chronicle on Unitarianism complete with photos of both Frank Schulman and Bob Schaibly of First Church. It had a prominent place on the front page of the Religion section and brought in a number of visitors. The committee also publicized Leonora Montgomery's ordination in January 1987.

In 1987 committee work was accelerated under David Bartholomew's leadership. Early in the year the committee hosted a meeting with Judy Green, Director of Public Relations for the UUA. The committee also secured the Board's approval to join with other UU societies in buying a set of Univision tapes which were shown on Access Houston starting

in October, and running through 1988. David also videotaped several special events, including the 1987 Kilgore Lecture by Dr. F. Forrester Church. The committee sent press releases about the lecture to seven TV stations, three radio stations and the newspapers, both of which printed articles with photos. In 1988 the committee assisted other church groups with video projects and publicized Reverend Robert Fulghum's Kilgore Lecture appearance and the Network potluck supper in August. A videotape library was established as part of the Schulman library.

In 1989 the committee, under Mike Martin's chairmanship, improved the sign out in front of the church. At the request of our new Minister, Reverend Jan Knost, they also took on the task of improving the format of the newsletter. This project would take up most of their energy for the next year.



In 1981 the Membership Committee was included in the church budget for the first time. It continued the previous practice of sponsoring new member evening socials approximately every two months in the homes of committee members. The Schulmans, the president and representatives from the Alliance and Finance Committee were also invited.

The evening socials were continued in one form or another for the next several years. In 1986 the "New U" courses were begun, a series of four classes (usually held weekly) for acquainting new members with Emerson's programming, organizational structure, and Unitarian Universalism. Representatives from the Board of Trustees and various major committees and organizations also attended; these courses were usually held at the church. In 1988 the Newcomer's Potluck replaced the evening social and the "New U" classes continued.

## Chapter Five: FACILITIES AND FINANCES

### The Property

By the 1980's Emerson Church had built what most members considered a spacious, comfortable facility. Meetings and social events continued to be centered in Westwood Hall, the oldest of our buildings. Sunday School classes were held in the three RE modules, the pre-school wing and the Schweitzer Room. This area was also rented during the week, to Woodland Hall until mid-1982, and thereafter to the Post Oak YMCA preschool day care program. The sanctuary held not only regular worship services, weddings and funerals but other appropriate events such as the yearly Kilgore Lecture and occasional musical concerts.

In early 1981 the Alliance expressed an interest in remodeling the Westwood Hall kitchen. Glenda Matney and Mary Liz Weichert researched this project and in September brought an estimate and proposed contractor to the Board. The work was finished by year's end at a cost of \$27,000. A plaque in the kitchen honors several former Alliance members. At about the same time the upstairs conference room was refurbished for the Schweitzer Club and LRY for use as a game room.

The next project was imposed on us by the City of Houston. Noting the growth in our area and the resulting increase in traffic, the city improved and repaved Bering Drive, widening it to four lanes, adding gutters and a sanitary sewer, and converting the drainage ditches into a storm sewer. Even with a discount granted to church property, our assessment for the improvements came to \$10,411, payable over eight years, based upon a property valuation of five million dollars.

In 1984 the need arose for substantial roof repairs to three of our buildings, including the sanctuary, and the replacement of outworn, outmoded office equipment. By spring the office equipment had been purchased using funds from the Service Auction and a contribution from the Alliance. In June Building Committee chair Bill Stamper reported

that the roof leaks in the sanctuary and RE area could be repaired, but that Westwood Hall's roof needed to be replaced. Initial bids ranged from \$14,000 to \$30,000. Later estimates placed the cost closer to \$53,000. This sum required congregational approval, which was voted in May 1985, allowing the work to proceed.

As Houston's, and consequently Emerson's, economic woes continued in the following years, our capable Building Committee labored to keep our facilities in the best condition possible within a very modest budget. Their combined skills and experience helped us through a very difficult time and managed to stave off major repairs for several years longer than might have been the case otherwise. Ann Pickens, Building Committee chair during the critical years of 1988 and 1989, was especially effective, saving us an untold amount in her close supervision of the repairs to the sanctuary roof.

In 1988 the Alliance again stepped forward, allocating money for two major service projects: improving the acoustics in Westwood Hall and enhancing general accessibility for the handicapped. A wheelchair ramp was soon added to the south parking lot, but the acoustical problem in Westwood Hall required a good deal more study and was eventually addressed the following year when Bill Stamper and Ann Pickens presented the Building Committee's recommendations. They considered the central necessity to be carpeting in all areas of Westwood Hall except the kitchen. When they also recommended repainting, estimating a total cost of \$4000, the Alliance agreed to pay \$1000 with the rest coming from the Building Reserve. Judson Bryant, a member with considerable experience in the building trades, urged the Board to have the exterior walls of the sanctuary steam-cleaned and sealed to prevent water leakage, but this would wait nearly two more years. Meanwhile, the manse required \$5500 worth of leveling because of foundation problems.

In November 1989 Ann Pickens, supervising the work in Westwood Hall, found that the old paint would have to be removed before repainting could begin, and informed the Board that the costs would be about \$4300, considerably higher than originally estimated. President Larry Huelbig enumerated other urgent needs such as new office equipment and several other major repairs. He was convinced that despite the best efforts of our Building

Committee we needed to begin immediately a comprehensive study of our physical plant, prioritize a list of problems and begin addressing them in a systematic fashion. The Board voted to proceed with the Westwood Hall project and establish a committee to formulate a long range capital improvement plan.

In early December disaster struck. The painting of Westwood Hall had been completed and the flooring contractor was preparing to install the new carpet when an unsupervised worker using a mechanical sander ground through some of the original floor tiles, sending up clouds of asbestos fibers. Under both EPA and OSHA regulations Westwood Hall had to be sealed immediately until the asbestos was removed at a further cost of some \$30,000. The next few weeks taxed the ingenuity of the Food Committee and coffee hour hosts, who suddenly found themselves cut off from their supplies and unceremoniously bundled over to the Schweitzer Room. In addition, the 7th-8th grade Sunday School class was forced into the same space because their classroom, being one of the few not rented to the YMCA, had been used to store furnishings moved out of Westwood Hall during the recarpeting. These items could not be returned until the asbestos was eliminated. With the good-natured adaptability that is one of the hallmarks of our congregation, we managed to keep everything on track until Westwood Hall reopened at the end of the year, but this episode underscored Larry Huelbig's contention that major building repairs could no longer be postponed.

### **Long Range Planning**

The original purpose of the Long Range Planning Committee was to study building needs. It was created in 1981 with Tom Matney as chair when our rental tenants, Woodland Hall School, wanted to expand, adding more grade levels. The committee looked into the possibility of enlarging the RE wing for them. But Woodland Hall had other problems as well, and the school closed rather abruptly in 1982.

The committee then turned to other aspects of long range planning, and conducted an extensive survey of the membership concerning future goals. In the Annual Report of

January 1983 the committee recommended a wide variety of objectives for the Board's consideration, including a regular cleaning and maintenance schedule for all buildings, scheduled grounds maintenance, modernization of office equipment, a full time professional secretary, and an assistant minister to be given charge of youth programming and adult education. The Long Range Planning Committee stressed the aim of strengthening the adult educational program until it reached parity with the children's RE program. Further, the committee recommended stronger staff support for the Public Relations Committee, lead singers for the choir, and an annual audit of church finances. The committee also endorsed the concept of the newly formed Community Service Committee.

In 1985 the Long Range Planning Committee was expanded to include all past Board presidents who were still active in the congregation. Another survey was prepared focusing on responsibilities, procedures, communications, the budget process and use of the Endowment Fund. Eventually the committee recommended that the Board tighten up budget procedures, adding quarterly reports to the congregation and a more readable format to the changes already adopted by the Board in October 1984 following the fracas over the music budget. In the spring of 1986, the committee made a number of recommendations to the Board regarding church growth, including the organization of neighborhood groups by zip code. They also suggested some changes in the bylaws, moving the election of the Board president and vice president to the December Board meeting, and setting the Nominating Committee at six members plus the minister and president ex officio. All three recommendations were eventually adopted.

In October 1988 the Long Range Planning Committee met to study the UUA's Congregational Long Range Planning manual and its usefulness to our congregation. They considered much of it potentially helpful but decided it would be best to hold off any further recommendations pending the arrival of the new minister. A year later the group was pondering three items: the Board of Trustees requested the development of a long range capital improvement plan and optimal use of current space, computerization of church records and publications, and a new job description for the committee. They proposed to continue the long range planning function but would also take a more active advocacy role,

initiating concerns to the Board as well as accepting requests from them. To underscore this wider role, the committee proposed to change its name to the Council of Past Presidents.

### **Finances**

By 1983 there were signs that Houston was beginning to feel the economic woes already experienced by the rest of the country. After several fund drives that exceeded announced goals, 1984 began ominously with an unexpected \$18,000 shortfall. At the time we expected that continued growth would solve the problem. It would not become apparent for several months that an economic recession had begun in Houston. Few could foresee the extent of its effects; none of us could have believed that it would be so stubborn. The next several years would be lean ones for Emerson Unitarian Church.

The disarray in the music program following the resignation of Gwyn Richards had its effect on the fund drive for 1985, which again fell short by \$11,000. In May 1985 the sanctuary mortgage of \$263,000 was due. The Finance Committee recommended that the interest rates required for a commercial twenty year mortgage made renewal of the mortgage from the M.D. Anderson Foundation the preferred route. Ultimately a ten year note for \$260,000 to the M.D. Anderson Foundation was signed.

The ten year payoff of the mortgage represented a much higher rate of equity buildup than would be achieved with a twenty year mortgage. This rate of increase in assets on top of the substantial Endowment Fund accrued over the years was deemed inappropriate in light of the current economic difficulties. Therefore, on recommendation of the Finance Committee, the Board proposed the transfer of \$12,000 yearly from the Endowment Fund to the operating fund to assist in making the higher mortgage payments until the mortgage was paid out. More encouragingly, the Investment Committee informed the Board that the Endowment Fund had now grown large enough to justify the use of some of the annual increase in value for carefully selected projects that would enhance the growth and religious quality of the church. Suggestions were solicited from the membership.



In 1986 church finances continued to be rather flat, starting with a \$2000 deficit that was met with funds from the Service Auction. Furthermore, the YMCA had requested a reduction in their rent, citing the effect of Houston's economic problems on their programs. After investigation the Board reduced the Y's rent from 50¢/square foot to 40¢ and signed a new contract. The lead singers for the choir were funded by the Endowment Fund on the grounds that they contributed to the growth and quality of the church; this would continue through 1990. In October the Board formed a Rental Committee to study rental policy. Clearly expecting the financial crunch to continue, President Don Miner told the Board that extra fundraisers would likely be needed in 1987.

We began 1987 with the by now customary shortfall in the canvass drive, which would have been even worse had not the Canvass Committee requested an additional one-time-only contribution from members to close the gap. At the Annual Meeting in January 1989 Finance/Canvass chair Gary Knutsen projected another deficit and gave some unsettling statistics. Half our pledged income for 1989 came from 48 households while 68 households made no pledge at all. Collections in 1988 averaged 88%. Things did not improve; in September President Larry Huelbig presented figures gathered by the Ushers Committee on attendance and open offerings in the last three years. Both showed a sharp drop in 1989. When the summer months were factored out, the attendance was much steadier, though the offerings were still way off. In October Gary Knutsen said pledge income was running 12% behind last year. Only 58% had been collected so far, compared with 70% at the same time in previous years. By the end of the year only 78% of pledged income had actually been paid, compared to over 90% in most years and 88% in 1989. The fall canvass drive for the 1990 budget had been very disappointing, probably because it was seriously, if unavoidably, overshadowed by developments in the ministerial search process.

In September 1989, when the fund drive process would normally begin, the seemingly protracted search was causing understandable restlessness and some apprehension among our members, who were unaware that the Search Committee had in fact already selected a candidate. Negotiations were at a very delicate stage and the committee had to keep

quiet. The fact that the candidate chosen, Reverend Knost, had not contemplated any resettlement until we approached him further complicated matters. It seemed only fair that the announcement of his selection be made simultaneously in his church and ours, but this meant an additional delay while he laid the groundwork to soften the impact on his San Antonio congregation. Candidating week itself ate up most of the time remaining before the year end holidays came up, and the canvass drive was simply overrun by these other momentous events. In any case, it was clear that the \$267,935 budget the Board had approved for 1990 was out of reach, and Finance chair Gary Knutsen recommended going to a zero based, bare bones budget for 1990.

Predictably, the 1990 Annual Meeting was a lively one. Gary presented a no frills revised budget about \$30,000 lower than the original proposal. All salary increases and committee expenses were eliminated; committee chairs were told they would have to raise their own funds. Much discussion of possible remedies followed, including a registration fee for Sunday School classes, an idea already considered and rejected by the Religious Education Committee. The amended budget was eventually adopted. More positively, there was a general sense of anticipation over the arrival of the new minister mixed with relief that the uncertainties of the past 18 months were over. Incoming President Bob Hopkins predicted that this mood would create a resolve to overcome our difficulties and generate confidence in the future of Emerson Church.

By far the brightest part of our financial picture in this decade was the Service Auction, which is held every other year and has set a new record each time. During the 1980's five Service Auctions brought in well over \$27,000, most of which was used for extra-budget items. As important as that was, it does not begin to touch on the camaraderie, cohesiveness and just plain fun that is a big part of every Auction. The congregation knows very well the immense debt it owes to Jane Joseph, who has chaired this project most successfully with her superb organizational skills and infectious energy.

## Chapter Six: SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

In addition to the educational, cultural and religious programming of the church numerous fellowship opportunities are offered. By far the most enduring of these is the Women's Alliance which, as seen in these pages, provides essential support to the church in countless ways. During the 1980's the Alliance continued its customary monthly meetings on the second Thursday morning of each month from September through May, featuring social and educational programs, service projects for both the church and the community, and a fundraising event each spring. One of the Alliance's major projects during the 80's was the Blalock Southwest Nursing Home. Begun in 1974 by Gwen Essinger and greatly appreciated by the residents, this project consisted of a monthly birthday party for all nursing home residents with birthdays that month, including small gifts for those honored and home baked cake for all. The Alliance's recycling project, also begun in the mid-70's, continued (with a few interruptions) throughout the decade. The money raised was passed to the Grounds Committee to buy plantings and landscaping materials. In 1982 the Alliance's recycling funds were combined with a donation from Helen Hedley to install lighting in the Religious Garden.

In 1983 the Alliance began supporting the Houston Women's Center, primarily with donations of clothing and similar items. Other service projects concentrated on the needs of the church, such as mirrors for the bride's room, the refurbishing of the bathrooms and kitchen in Westwood Hall, and the recarpeting of the Schweitzer Room. In 1988 the Alliance gave money for wheel chair ramps and designated handicapped parking spaces; in 1989 they offered \$1000 toward the refurbishing of Westwood Hall.

For some time Alliance members had been aware of the need to accommodate working women unable to attend Thursday morning meetings. In April 1988 a second Alliance group was founded that would meet once a month on Saturday mornings in Westwood Hall. It was a success from the start, with some members attending both groups. By July the Saturday Alliance had been renamed the Alice Circle in honor of Alice Schulman, and had taken on a focus and character uniquely its own.

In October 1982 an attempt was made to revive the Layman's League. Although not immediately successful, the eventual result was the Men's Breakfast Club begun in early 1987 by Walter Kaye and Don Miner. It meets monthly in Westwood Hall for breakfast followed by a program, usually by one of the members.

In October 1989 the Men's Breakfast Club voted to support the Hospitality Apartment Project begun in 1968 by Joe Hightower and others at our neighboring congregation, the Bering Drive Church of Christ. As Tom Matney wrote in the October 8, 1989 *Emersonian*, "This project provides free temporary housing and concerned friendship for medically indigent families who must come to Houston for treatment in the Texas Medical Center." It is supported by 15 other churches. There are 21 one bedroom or efficiency apartments operated entirely by volunteers at a cost of five dollars per day each.

A third highly successful social organization during the 1980's was Friday Niters. Originally known as the Couples Club, it was begun in the mid 1970's. Those who sign up (both singles and couples) are assigned to a small group that meets for dinner in members' homes. The dinners are on a potluck basis and hosting duties are rotated. In the 80's Friday Niters met five times a year on the third Friday night of every odd month except July.

As its name implies, the Small Group for Spiritual Growth is of a somewhat different character. It was founded in December 1984 by Leonora Montgomery, who was then Parish Assistant. This group met twice a month on weekday mornings to discuss readings on religious, theological and philosophical issues. In early 1989 Small Group II was formed along the same lines to meet evenings, allowing working people to attend, and it is the only one still in operation at this time.

The singles group continued its weekly restaurant lunch following the Sunday service as well as 20 to 40 other activities every year including weekend trips, parties and dinners, dances, and attending concerts, theater and movies. In late 1987 a group for older singles, covering all five area UU societies, was founded and named "Singletarians" the following

autumn. In August 1988 Young Adult Unitarian Universalists was formed for both married and single people in an effort to attract younger people. None of these groups survived past the early 90's.



## CONCLUSION

Despite all the momentous events and inevitable surprises of the 1980's, the concluding paragraph Alice S. Cowles wrote in her history of the church's first twenty years still holds true, and bears repeating here:

“The pages of this history reflect the great devotion, labor, and integrity of individual members of Emerson Church and of their minister. The names of the congregation will change, but with this solid foundation Emerson Church takes its place with the respected churches of the Unitarian Universalist denomination and the community.”

The beginning of Reverend Jan V. Knost's ministry in early 1990 provided a natural break in the ongoing story of Emerson Church, and the passage of time since gives some perspective on the events of the ten years from 1981 to 1990. The common theme of both histories is the devotion, trust, and optimism characteristic of this congregation. May that theme continue for the next ten years.

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- 1981 Walter Kaye, President  
Barbara Hopkins, Walter Kaye, George Owens (to 1982)  
Ruth Brown, Pat Fogle, Dick Mullineaux (to 1983)  
Wallace Bond, Mike Condit, Gwen Essinger (to 1984)
- 1982 Dick Mullineaux, President  
Ruth Brown, Pat Fogle, Dick Mullineaux (to 1983)  
Wallace Bond, Mike Condit, Gwen Essinger (to 1984)  
Jack Stoffer, Don Tesh, Ramon Williams (to 1985)
- 1983 Mike Condit, President  
Wallace Bond, Mike Condit, Gwen Essinger (to 1984)  
Jack Stoffer, Don Tesh, Ramon Williams (to 1985)  
Tom Biddle, Jack Eckart, Halina Turner (to 1986)
- 1984 Jack Stoffer, President  
Jack Stoffer, Don Tesh, Ramon Williams (to 1985)  
Tom Biddle, Jack Eckart, Halina Turner\*(to 1986)  
Margaret Kaye, Shirley Quisenberry, Bob Rice (to 1987)
- 1985 Jack Eckart, President  
Tom Biddle, Jack Eckart, Don Miner (to 1986)  
Margaret Kaye, Shirley Quisenberry, Bob Rice (to 1987)  
Mike Bercu, Ray Lemmon, Bill Stamper (to 1988)
- 1986 Don Miner, President  
Margaret Kaye, Shirley Quisenberry, Bob Rice (to 1987)  
Mike Bercu, Ray Lemmon, Bill Stamper (to 1988)  
George Binder, Anna Louise Bruner, Don Miner\*\*(to 1989)
- 1987 Mike Bercu, President  
Mike Bercu, Ray Lemmon, Bill Stamper (to 1988)  
George Binder, Anna Louise Bruner, Don Miner (to 1989)  
Eva Haufrect, Larry Huelbig, Bill Roberts (to 1990)
- 1988 Anna Louise Bruner, President  
George Binder, Anna Louise Bruner, Rudy Weichert (to 1989)  
Eva Haufrect, Larry Huelbig, Bill Roberts (to 1990)  
Wallace Bond, Leonard Meltzer, Michelle Sorenson (to 1991)
- 1989 Larry Huelbig, President  
Eva Haufrect, Larry Huelbig, Bill Roberts (to 1990)  
Wallace Bond, Leonard Meltzer, Michelle Sorenson (to 1991)  
Gay Ann Gustafson, Bob Hopkins, David Tidholm (to 1992)

\* Halina Turner resigned and was replaced by Liz Babcock; Don Miner was elected to fill out her last year.

\*\* In 1986 Don Miner was elected to a full three-year term in his own right. When he moved to England, he was replaced by Rudy Weichert.

Note: The immediate past president remains on the Board for one year.

## CHRONOLOGY: 1990 THROUGH DECEMBER 1992

### 1990

President: Bob Hopkins Past President: Larry Huelbig

Board of Trustees: Wallace Bond, Leonard Meltzer, Michelle Sorenson (to 1991); Gay Ann Gustafson, Bob Hopkins, David Tidholm (to 1992); Will Irwin, Mary Pedersen, Brad Raffle (to 1993)

- January: Long Range Planning Committee became the Council of Past Presidents and began formulating a capital improvement plan.
- February: Interim Minister Arthur Jellis retired and moved to New Hampshire with his wife Marion. Reverend Jan Knost began his ministry. Neighborhood gatherings were held to enable him to get acquainted with the congregation.
- March: Joe and Debby Watters donated 250 green hymnals subject to Music Committee approval. Larry Huelbig began negotiations for a new contract with the YMCA.
- April: The Board allocated \$11,000 for the purchase of new computer equipment as recommended by the specially appointed Task Force on Computer Use. The new newsletter format was being developed by the Public Relations Committee. Larry began negotiations with contractors Tackett & Lodholz for the building renovation project.
- May: Reverend Knost presented a Pastoral Assistance program.
- June: Jane Joseph supervised the repair and sale of the manse. The new computer equipment was installed. Emerson hosted a meeting and reception for Jun Yamamoto, son of the Chief Priest of Tsubaki Grand Shrine of Tokyo. Yamamoto and Hitoshi Iwasaki were named honorary members of Emerson Church.
- July: Susanna Painter resigned as Operations Manager effective September 1.
- September: Norma Chandler was hired as Operations Manager, Susanna Painter became Program Secretary. The Policy for Committee Selection was adopted by the Board. Newsletter production in a new format began on the new office equipment. Jan Knost's Installation Service was held September 30.
- October: Emerson participated in the Crop Walk for the first time. We had more walkers and raised more money than any other denomination represented. The first Fellowship Dinner was held at the Golden Palace, organized by Jane Joseph and Liz Babcock. Dr. Niles Eldridge was the Kilgore Lecturer.

November: The UUA launched a Romanian Sister Church project as Romania's repressive Communist government collapsed; Emerson joined by the end of the year. Canvass chair Will Irwin conducted a highly successful fund drive with pledges eventually totalling \$230,000.

December: Nancy Slugg resigned as RE Director; Edie Catrett was hired as interim Director while the position was advertised. The Houston Interfaith Clergy Fellowship was formed. The Montgomery Fund was dissolved and a final gift of \$5000 made to the church. The Montgomery family requested that the congregation raise a matching amount and purchase a new sound system for the sanctuary. Joe Taylor endowed a fund for an annual musical concert in memory of his son David.

### 1991

President: Mary Pedersen Past President: Bob Hopkins

Board of Trustees: Gay Ann Gustafson, David Tidholm, Ramon Williams\* (to 1992); Will Irwin, Mary Pedersen, Brad Raffle (to 1993); Bill Hammons, Jane Joseph, Jan King (to 1994)

\*one-year term replacing Bob Hopkins' third year.

January: The 30th anniversary of the church was celebrated with a potluck supper and periodic retrospectives by past presidents over the next several months as part of the Sunday service.

February: Emerson was being sued by Buffalo Flooring for \$2067 due on the recarpeting of Westwood Hall; we contended that they owed us \$30,000 for the asbestos mess. Lead singers funding was moved back into the operating budget (this had been funded out of the Endowment for several years).

March: Financial procedures were tightened up at Treasurer Ned Stroud's recommendation. The first Omega House concert (organized by Dean Shank) was held, raising about \$1000. Elisabeth Glaser and Shirley Coster formed the Arts Committee, which displays the work of local artists in Westwood Hall. Emerson receives a gallery commission on any works sold.

April: Sue Brewer of Community Service asked the Board to formulate policy on homeless assistance. Community Service planned to begin a Food for Seniors program on a trial basis.



- May: The Service Auction raised over \$9000, enough to match the Montgomery donation for the new sound system and fund the lead singers for the rest of the year. The Board approved Larry Huelbig's renovation proposal and called a congregational meeting for June 2 to approve the funding. The Board also approved the purchase of a Minolta 5400 heavy duty copier on a 3-year lease/purchase arrangement.
- June: Edie Catrett was hired as permanent RE Director. The congregation voted \$150,000 from the Endowment Fund for the renovation proposal. The Buffalo Floor lawsuit was settled for \$19,000. The Board approved a ministerial internship starting January 1992; the intern to be Kathleen Ellis. Henry Cisneros agreed to give the Kilgore Lecture.
- July: The renovation work began. The library was moved to the foyer of Westwood Hall; the work was done by the Glasers and Hopkinses. The bookstore was moved to a closet in Westwood Hall and the old cabinet discarded.
- August: Elsa Kaim endowed a yearly memorial concert in memory of her husband Bob with a gift of \$10,000. The rolling bulletin boards were replaced by wall bulletin boards made by Otto Glaser to Gay Gustafson's specifications.
- September: The renovation work was completed and the new sound system installed. The Lullabye Lounge was furnished jointly by the Worship and RE Committees with a contribution from Jan Knost's Discretionary Fund.
- October: Diana Compton arranged a mayoral candidate's forum on children's issues held at the church shortly before the city elections. A backup countertop copier was purchased. Laurie Hammons, originally hired as a clerical assistant to Edie Catrett, was named Assistant RE Director. The second Fellowship Dinner was held at the Doctor's Club. The Council of Past Presidents proposed that the congregation name Dr. Frank Schulman Minister Emeritus.
- November: Henry Cisneros reneged on his commitment to give the Kilgore Lecture ten days before it was scheduled; we were unable to get a replacement. Upon recommendation of the Board and the Council of Past Presidents, the congregation voted to name Frank Schulman Minister Emeritus.
- December: Tom Matney donated a nine foot Steinway concert grand piano for the sanctuary in memory of his wife, Glenda. Emerson hosted a social justice workshop for the Southwest District at the request of District Executive Dwight Brown. Frank and Alice Schulman returned for the first time since he resigned in June 1988. Frank preached the sermon at the December 15 service and was named Minister Emeritus. Herman Naeseth started a recorder group, RE had a "Mitten Tree" to collect warm clothing for needy school children. The Adult Education Committee bought a TV/VCR with the proceeds of the book sale. Will Irwin reported a second successful fund drive.

## 1992

President: Will Irwin Past President: Mary Pedersen

Board of Trustees: Otto Glaser\*, Will Irwin, Gregor Riesser\*\* (to 1993); Bill Hammons, Jane Joseph, Jan King (to 1994); Laura Agrons, Stan Hutchison, Joe Watters (to 1995)

\*one year term replacing Mary Pedersen's third year

\*\*finishing Brad Raffle's term (resigned)

- January: Community Service chair Sue Brewer proposed that the church take part in the Private Sector Initiative, a program that renovates the homes of needy people. The Board agreed that Community Service could sponsor this project. Kathleen Ellis began her ministerial internship. A new Handbook of Church Activities, the first since 1986, was completed.
- February: Dick Mullineaux agreed to chair the Commission on the Church in a Changing World. An Audio-Visual Committee was proposed. The Steinway piano given by Tom Matney was dedicated.
- March: Bay Area's new building was dedicated with 22 Emerson members in attendance. A new computer was purchased for Reverend Knost.
- April: The second Omega House benefit raised nearly \$1300 (Tom Matney provided matching funds). The PSI project was begun by Community Service. A congregational survey was conducted by Gabe and Betsy Gelb, professional marketing consultants.
- May: A new rental contract with the YMCA has been signed. Mary Pedersen was appointed Historian and Archivist, and Alice Cowles named Historian Emeritus.
- June: Ray Lemmon donated funds for a fax machine for the office. Laura Agrons formed a Newsletter Task Force. Otto Glaser was asked to obtain insurance for the harpsichord, grand piano and computers. Emerson Church agreed to nominate John Buehrens for President of the UUA, and is willing to nominate Carolyn Owen-Towle for the same post if asked.
- July: Emerson agreed to take part in the UU Network Growth Steering Committee, represented by David May. Priscilla Freeman Larson, daughter of the late Bromley Freeman, wished to endow a lectureship on social issues. It was named the Westwood Lecture.
- August: The mortgage on the sanctuary, due in May 1995, was paid off by the Endowment Fund. The church will repay the Endowment at the same rate as the mortgage payments. The Youth Adult Committee was formed at Edie Catrett's recommendation. Laura Agrons's Newsletter Task Force recommended the formation of a Publication Committee to assist with the newsletter.

- September: The Westwood Lecture was renamed the Freeman-Westwood Lecture. A fundraising dinner was held at the home of Elsa Kaim and raised \$2000 for the Romanian Sister Church project. A new rental policy was adopted and the Board was considering changes in the membership procedure.
- October: The first Freeman-Westwood Lecture was given by Sarah Weddington, the lawyer who argued the Roe vs. Wade case. Rebecca Parker of Starr King was the Kilgore Lecturer. The first "New Member Class" was held at the suggestion of Ann and David May. The third Fellowship Dinner, held at the Houston Center Club, had a record attendance of 211. The Board appointed a committee to consider revising the covenant and membership procedures.
- November: Wirt Road had the groundbreaking for their new building, 12 Emerson members attended. The new Memorial Gift brochure was presented. Carol Groppe estimated \$235,000 pledged in the canvass drive. The Music Committee and Worship Committee recommended purchasing the new hymnals soon to be published by the UUA. The first Kaim concert featured musician-lecturer Dr. Maurice Hinson.
- December: Jacquie Roach was hired as Youth Choir Director for the spring of 1993. RE announced plans to try a two-hour Sunday School program starting in March 1993. Gwen Essinger donated a computer for RE. The Public Relations Committee increased the church's visibility considerably in the newspapers, Yellow Pages, cultural programs and on KUHF radio. The Alliance manned the Hunger Hot Line one day a week.