

THE SECOND TEN YEARS

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Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the Rappahannock

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It's Charter Sunday. A day of special celebration!

This marks the day we first became officially affiliated with UUA. We even have the tee shirt to prove it.

Our affiliation with UUA was a really big deal to us in 1999 because it meant we had completed all the benchmarks required—we had 35 members who signed the book saying that they wanted to join together to create a liberal religious body of inquiring minds. Quite an accomplishment for rural conservative NN of Virginia! Becoming a part of UUA also meant we had written a Covenant we all could agree on. And we know how difficult it can be for even two UU's to agree.

Why don't we read our Covenant together right now. Please open to your bulletin where it is written for you to look at every week.

I'd like to take you for a walk down memory lane today, with the aid of a slide show to remind us all of where we've been together. You'll see on the slide back here the smiling face of someone who is familiar to and loved by us all. Look at that contented grin, with the pipe clenched in his teeth. Doesn't he look pleased! This was our very first president, Andy Kelsey.

Becoming a part of UUA also meant we had formed a governing structure to help guide our newborn Fellowship. Andy Kelsey—a pagan, a former spy, and married to a reader at the Episcopalian church—Andy was our first president. We were on our way.

It's fitting that we go back even further in time—to our first baby steps. You probably all know the story by now. We try to retell it every year at this time.

In the beginning, two UU's met and decided to put an ad in the newspaper to see if there were other closet non-believers out there who might like to get together for UU services. And here they are—David Daugherty and Susan Fallin. And, of course, David's service dog.

They didn't have a building so they met in each other's homes at first, most often at David Daugherty's home. Here is a slide showing David's lovely home on the River. As you can see, there were only half a dozen people, but even then we had a chalice to light our way—of course, it was only a small candle back then. The bowl that is holding the chalice is this one—hand made by Jim Richards for our little group.

After awhile, there were too many people to meet in homes. So we had to move to a large spot. Does anyone recognize this building? Right! The Kilmarnock library. And see that pleasant lady pouring the coffee? Yes, that's Adele Failmezger—a huge fan of our Fellowship and a major force in moving us down the path to today.

The Library provided us a large enough room but it was not particularly warm and inviting. We needed a place that felt more like home.

So, Frank Elliott looked around and suggested we move to the Woman's Club in White Stone. As you can see from the picture, we enjoyed many wonderful services and potluck lunches there. We began inviting outside ministers and other speakers to come on Sundays to enhance our home-made services. This picture shows the former minister from Williamsburg. Remember Rudy Gelsey?

We weren't too good at producing a Sunday service in the beginning. We often forgot to print a bulletin. We struggled with the sermons we were learning how to write. We finally had a piano so we could sing. The piano. I use that term loosely. Eight of the keys did not produce a sound. The rest of the keys were dreadfully off-key. But that was okay, our singing was pretty dreadful as well.

As our numbers grew, so did our ability to produce really good Sunday services. We eventually were able to afford a nice electronic keyboard that made our singing sound much better.

We got by on borrowed song books – thanks to the Williamsburg UU church. And when we decided we needed new books of our own, with enough so everyone could use one, we all bought a song book or two or three. If you look in your song book right now, you'll see the name of the UUFR person who paid for it.

It got to the point that we were outgrowing the Women's Club facility. Also, we wanted to have more programs during the week that we just couldn't do at the Women's Club. So, we began dreaming of a Home of Our Own.

What you're looking at right now is not a group of singing waiters. It's a group of singing waiters that also play the comb. That was our Board of Stewards putting on a thank-you dinner for the members of our congregation who had pledged money to help raise the roof for our new Home of Our Own. After the dinner they entertained with a stirring rendition of "My Favorite Things." Later I understand they toured the country, starting a new craze for comb bands.

Lots of work, lots of raising money, lots of looking for just the right property. Here it is—a wooded 2 ½ acre parcel with an abandoned house and shed and lots and lots of trash and brush. So, we rolled up our collective sleeves and cleaned it up. And we moved an old boat, slashed away brush from various hurricanes, carried off rusted furniture, old tires—you name it, it was here. And so began our Phire and Phlings—see all of us in our overalls and boots, wading through poison ivy and briars, hauling out the

junk and trash and burning it or carting it away. Here's Larry Graves offering a comb to Lynda Weber to comb her singed hair when she got too close to the fire.

Eventually, we invited the area fire departments to help us light our biggest chalice ever and burn the house to the ground. What a glorious fire that was! Right where we are sitting right now was where the house stood. Under our feet are the ashes of that fire.

What you're looking at here is a once beautiful majestic tree. As you can see, it is now a dead sculpture, or The Stump, as I've heard it referred to. The Stump was the tree that stood very close to the house we burned down. We've kept the stump here, right outside the window, to remind us of our beginnings.

We raised the money to put up the structure you're sitting in now. William Rose and his crew assembled the building. Then we took over. I'm going to run through a series of slides here, showing you just some of the people who worked and bruised themselves and covered themselves with dirt and sweat.

Here's Don Lowrey and Jim Panzetta pulling wire for our electric.
Fran Schelling stuffing wire down the holes in the sanctuary.
Sue Adriance and Kathleen Brooks nailing up electrical boxes.
Marge Bradwick sweeping out all the sawdust.
Bob Weekley setting fire to huge piles of brush.
Cliff and Fran Schelling building the back steps, behind the meeting room.
Brown Mobley painting the sanctuary.
Bob Weekley painting all the ceilings in the building.
Here's Terry Smith completing rebuilding the pump for the septic system.
Mitch Gallon installing the trim.
Tom Kinney enjoying yet another barbecue sandwich from Rocket Billy's.
Caroline Shifflett toting her wheelbarrow of stones.
Bob Adriance hauling rock.
Lynn Langley digging the drainage ditches.

Finally, we were ready for doors and sinks and doorknobs and lights.
We had a baby shower for our new baby building. Here's Sue Adriance sniffing a dirty diaper at the shower, trying to name the smell. Yes, you're right. Unitarians are strange animals.

And, who can forget the Kitchen Committee. Here they are, meeting in the living room at Judy McLean's home. Judy, Pirkko Graves, Elaine Weekley, Melinda Maddox

Through the heroic efforts of this committee, we had the design and cabinet choice for our new kitchen. Jean Ward donated a brand new oven we had coveted but couldn't afford, in the memory of our friend, Richard.

We had a meeting to test drive several choices of chairs. Here's Frank Elliott and Audrey Brainard doing a bottom test. The majority opinion was these comfy blue jobs you're sitting on now.

Lorie and Don Lowrey spent days and days researching carpet. And, I suspect, she has spent hours and hours running around behind us sloppy eaters, cleaning up the carpet. Thanks, Lorie.

Our very first piece of art came from Cyndi Simpson—a question mark. If this doesn't say Unitarian, then what does?

Lorie Lowrey's magnificent quilts hang in our foyer and here in the sanctuary.

Lynn Langley and Sharon donated our wonderful piano that makes us all sound so much better.

The Art Group donated this amazing chalice—a copy of the chalice used in UUA services.

So, that's where we came from.

This next set of slides is where we are today.

We have our monthly dinner discussion groups—Phood and Philosophy. In this slide we are sitting on the sun porch at the home of Barbara and Vern Haynes, drinking wine and talking.

This motley crew is our Imagine That! art group—Sue Adriance, Marge Rowden, Barbara Haynes, Fran Schelling, and Lynda Weber.

The next slide shows our book discussion group, meeting in the Kilmarnock library. Elaine Weekley, Lolly Riley, Pirkko Graves, Ann Kelsey.

Our yearly leadership retreat—here we're sitting in the North Carolina Outer Banks home of Brown Mobley hammering out yet another thorny issue.

Here's Cliff Schelling leading his Build Your Own Theology series.

And, who can forget our monthly potlucks—yum! Yes, that's Larry Graves going back for yet another piece of dessert.

Here's Kathy Duhon, in her after-service talks on the origins of all things Unitarian.

Here's Diana Jamison with her Covenant Group—our newest very popular series.

These people are our students from the English as a Second Language program we conduct here every Saturday. They're saying, "Hello, my name is Jesus. This is an apple."

Here are Lorie and Don Lowrey working in the Hands Across Middlesex warehouse, representing UUFR.

This is Bob and Jane Duryea, sitting in an Interfaith meeting, where they attend and represent UUFR.

Here is Pam Collins, carrying all that food to her car to take to the food kitchen for the needy. She and Eve Jordan push us to remember those who are hungry by bringing food for our food box in the foyer.

And, of course, our final slide, that is showing all of you and your treasures at our first annual yard sale. That's Hank Stupi, sleeping in the chair, no doubt exhausted after leading this mighty effort. Way to go, Hank!

That's the end of our slide show. I hope you enjoyed it. I could have gone on for hours, showing you all the amazing activities we here at UUFR are doing.

But now it's time to look to the future. And the future at UUFR is you. All of you. And, most especially today, our newest members. Before we officially recognize our newest members, I'd like to ask David Rowden, who is part of the Vision and Planning Committee to say a few words about our future.

Charter Sunday Presentation from Vision & Planning

Sunday, May 10, 2010

by Dave Rowden

Two years ago, Marge and I were standing here on Charter Sunday, as new members. Another couple had adopted us, and now, looking back, I'm amazed at how involved we've been, how many people we care about, and how many people obviously care about us. It is a wonderful journey that we hope has just begun.

Over the last six months or so, Caroline Shifflet, Cliff and Fran Schelling and I have been serving as your Vision and Planning Committee. We have strived to describe as best we could, the identity of our Fellowship. Who are we and what should we mean to our communities? Toward this end, we have developed the new Cover for the Order of Service, and a new brochure describing our fellowship. So who exactly are we?

Our members have always had a reputation, for thoughtfulness, intelligence and acceptance. And now that we have a home of our own we need to look forward toward our future.

Looking forward, the vision of the Board of Stewards which I think we all share, is that this fellowship will develop a reputation in the Northern Neck for living our values, and providing programs that improve people's lives.

If you look at the front of your Order of Service or the front of the new brochure, you will see a statement that:

"We are a caring community dedicated to spiritual exploration, critical thinking, and social service."

So how do we demonstrate these values ?

We begin by **caring** for our members and friends, with a number of activities and programs:

- A new member orientation program, ,
- Provide informal mentorships, (much like the one Marge and I experienced)
- Establishing child care,
- Creating a memorial grove,
- Continuing an ongoing process for understanding member needs as well as
- Continuing our covenant groups and
- Our Caring Circles.

Spiritual exploration will include

- Meditation,
- Yoga,
- Labyrinth walks and
- Sermons like "Wise Heart", which will explore Buddhist Psychology.

We will address **critical thinking** through

- UU for Kids,
- Socrates Café
- Phood and Philosophy and the
- Development of new programs that reflect our mission and which reflect the kind of significant community need, that we feel our fellowship is uniquely competent to provide.

We will continue our **social service** with

- “English As A Second Language”
- Food for the Hungry and with the different ways we contribute to
- The Haven,
- YMCA,
- Free Health Clinic,
- Interfaith,
- The Bay Center
- Hands Across Middlesex
- Hands Across Mathews
- Hands Across Northumberland and the
- Boys & Girls Club.

This is a lot to accomplish, but given what we have already accomplished, I’m confident that by this time next year we will all be as amazed looking back then and I am today.

I’d like to ask our President, Bob Weekley, to recognize our newest members.