# A Study of Growth and Decline in The Unitarian Church of Winnipeg, 1964-1977

A Thesis Submitted To The
Graduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences
In Partial Fulfillment Of The
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Master of Arts

Department of Religious Studies

by

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## Preface

The writing of this thesis was a difficult task. It required a mixture of objectivity, honesty and sensitivity in large quantities. The perceptiveness of the conclusions will be judged by others. It is to be hoped that what has been said has rung faint bells of truth, that knowledge and understanding of the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg has been gained.

One note of explanation. It will be noticed that at times the words "Unitarian Universalist" are used and at other times simply the word "Unitarian" seems to suffice. This is because the designation "Unitarian Universalist" is the word more generally used continentally when discussing matters pertinent to this religious group, but in Canada generally, and in Winnipeg specifically, "Unitarian" is more commonly used. I have tried to use "Unitarian Universalist" when talking about the general aspects of the whole religious group, and "Unitarian" when the remarks more specifically related to the Winnipeg or Canadian situation.

I would like to thank my Master's advisor for persevering along with me and making many helpful suggestions; all the respondents who so generously gave of their time and shared part of their memories with me; Stefan Jonasson who assisted me with some of the Icelandic background; Mrs. Dick for her skill in being able to change scribbles into professional pages; and my husband for his unfailing support through the dark times.

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## Chapter I

## INTRODUCTION

Contained within these pages is the story in narrative form of both growth and decline in one particular Canadian church during the 1960s and 1970s. It examines and comments on some of the possible reasons for its successes and failures and sets it into perspective in the larger national and continental context.

This introductory chapter will concentrate on outlining the subject under study, indicating the spheres of relevance to which this thesis pertains, reviewing and commenting on the relevant literature, delineating the three sets of polarities that are central to the thesis and describing the method that will be used. Chapter II will begin the narrative with an outline of the church as it was prior to the period under study. It is this period that contains some of the seeds of future problems. Chapter III will examine the era when it became clear that the promise of growth was a false promise and that the church was somehow "off the track." Chapter IV investigates the era when many attempts were made to get the church back on the track, none of which were ultimately successful. Chapter V continues the story into the period when the church struggled to survive and to understand what had gone wrong. Chapter VI will draw conclusions from the story, emphasize the importance of the polarities and relate them back to the spheres of relevance.

The church under study is the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg, located on the corner of Sargent Avenue and Banning Street. It is the

only Unitarian church in Winnipeg. Its antecedents date back to 1891 when people of Icelandic origin adhering to Unitarian Christian beliefs established a Winnipeg church. Various mergers with other Icelandic and then English Unitarians followed, culminating in a final merger in 1945. This church has the characteristics of a "post-traditional" church.[1] It is a church that had its roots in Judeo-Christian history and has grown out of the Protestant Reformation. It has moved, for the most part, out of the circle drawn by Christian belief into a more humanistic religious articulation. It contains within its membership[2] individuals who consider themselves Christian in religious orientation and also those who adhere to a humanistic, theistic, agnostic or even atheistic religious perspective.

During the 1950s the church began to grow at more rapid rate. This continued into the early and middle 1960s, and then rather abruptly it began to decline. This thesis attempts to discover what caused the church to decline. It looks at various elements of church life, its programs, its sense of mission, its finances, its health, and what kind of image the member/participants perceived the church as having. It also posits three sets of linked polarities that had a strong influence on the church.

The time period under study will be from 1964 to 1977.[3] There are several reasons for choosing these years. First of all, all of the ministers who served this church in its present location, since its final amalgamation in 1945, fall within this time period. Secondly, it is within this time period that drastic changes in church growth and participation were being felt not only in the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg, but also in most churches and synagogues in Canada and the United

States.

There are three spheres of relevance pertinent to a discussion of this thesis. The first is an awareness and understanding of the North American Unitarian Universalist religion within which this Canadian prairie church makes its religious home. The second is an elucidation of the North American religious cultural reality in existence just prior to and during the 1960s and 1970s. The third sphere of relevance brings into consideration the studies on church growth and decline that have been carried out by researchers in many disciplines.

Unitarianism and Universalism were established on the North American continent by theological liberals in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.[4] Joseph Priestly, a Unitarian minister and scientist, the discoverer of oxygen, left England for the American colonies when the reaction against his religious and political views became dangerous to his life and to that of his family. He gave lectures and encouraged those with Unitarian views to organize formally. Shortly after, in 1798, the first church which carried the name "Unitarian" was erected in Philadelphia.[5] It was not until 1819, however, following William Ellery Channing's Baltimore sermon, that the name Unitarian was perceived as representing a distinctive religious perspective.[6] The Unitarians had a strong beginning in New England.[7] Its clergy were highly educated and many of its membership were drawn from the wealthy and cultured segment of the New England population. They stressed the use of reason in religious inquiry and upheld the innate goodness of the human being.

The Universalist strand of the present-day Unitarian Universalist religion also owed much to the religious migration from England. John Murray, a minister converted to Universalism in England, had come to the new world to escape severe religious discrimination. He was prevailed

upon to preach about his particular beliefs and his eloquence and hopeful message caused Universalism to spread. In the case of the Universalists, members were gathered in the most part from the working class, being people from the trades or involved in agricultural endeavours. Their clergy were mostly from the same class, with little formal education. They stressed the love and grace of God in granting all people eternal salvation from their earthly sins.

There were many similarities between the Unitarians and the Universalists. Both were optimistic about God, human nature and salvation. Both were "open and inclusive in their attitudes toward the world's varied religions and scriptures."[8] Both used democratic procedures in their organizations. Their liberal religious perspective on life found them championing the same causes; abolition of slavery, emancipation of women, the right to religious freedom, to name a few. Merger between the two groups was suggested as early as 1865,[9] but it took almost a century for the social, cultural and economic differences to diminish. After a long and careful procedure, merger finally came in May, 1961. Many feel that the process by which merger was brought about involving studies, meetings, plebiscites requiring strong approval by a significant majority (75%) of local Unitarian and Universalist congregations, was "a model of democracy in action"[10] and "the most significant thing about the merger."[11]

In Canada, the first Unitarian church was established in Montreal in 1832, under the religious leadership of David Hughes, a minister newly arrived from England.[12] Over the years religious leadership came both from the British Unitarians and from the newly emerging American Unitarians. The congregation that grew in Montreal attracted a broader repre-

sentation of the population than had been the case in New England. That is, people from a wider spectrum of social classes were involved. The first Universalist congregation was legally constituted in London, Ontario in 1831. The Universalists had a strong rural base in eastern Canada and for most of the 19th century attracted more members than the urban Unitarians.[13] As in the United States, the exclusivity of the two groups faded and there were many instances of Unitarians and Universalists acting and worshipping together. The Canadian Unitarians and Universalists were included in the continental merger of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) in 1961. Also in May of 1961, the Canadian Unitarian Council was formed to deal with matters pertaining more specifically to Canadian needs, such as national social concerns and publicity.[14]

It was hoped that the merger would strengthen the liberal religious message both Unitarians and Universalists had been proclaiming. The purpose of the UUA as set forth in Article II of its new By-laws read in part:

> The Association, dedicated to the principles of a free faith shall: Support the free and disciplined search for truth as the foundation of religious fellowship; Cherish and spread the universal truths taught by the great prophets and teachers of humanity in every age . . . Affirm, defend and promote the supreme worth of every human personality, and the use of the democratic method in human relationships . . .[15]

Unitarian Universalism is a religion that draws its religious inspiration from many sources, supports the integrity and ability of each individual to develop his or her own constellation of religious values on which to base life's meanings and takes the use of the democratic process in all areas of church involvement seriously. A study carried out in 1976 revealed that in spite of the individualistic thrust of the

religious search, Unitarian Universalists all favour a remarkably similar religious paradigm.

Using the Rokeach Values Survey, a study was undertaken to determine in just what sense Unitarian Universalists were "religious" and whether there was a distinctive pattern to their way of being religious. The study indicated that this religious group has a high level of homogeneity with regards to their values, higher than that of other religious groups tested.

> The study identified a distinctive Unitarian Universalist paradigm of values marked by a high ranking of the terminal values, (self-respect, wisdom, inner harmony, mature love, a world of beauty, and an exciting life) and the instrumental values (loving, independent, intellectual, imaginative and logical) which, taken together, show an orientation towards self-competence rather than morality and stress personal realization, individual self-fulfillment and self-actualization.[16]

It goes on to show that the religious value system of Unitarian Universalists is clearly different from that of Christians, Jews and persons claiming no religious affiliation. There is, then, a unique and specific value system that can form the basis for a sense of purpose, that can elucidate life's meanings. The study results echo an excerpt from a denominational commission:

> For us . . . the search for meaning in our personal and social lives, the experience of handling our joys and tragedies, the search for profound and satisfying human relationships, the pondering of our place in the total scheme of things, the awareness of the separation between our potential and our actions--our aspirations and our achievements--all of these we believe to be truly religious. Together they suggest to us a common commitment to the expansion of the quality of life. This roots our theology, our thinking about religion, both in life and in man's self-transcendence.[17]

This homogeneity of religious values is one characteristic of the Unitarian Universalists that can be lost sight of in the highlighting of

the individual religious search. There are other unique characteristics that need to be mentioned.

It is a religious group with a very high percentage of converts. That is, the majority of Unitarians have come, and continue to come, from other religions. In Robert Tapp's recent study of the religious, personal, political and social beliefs of Unitarian Universalists, he arrived at an overall percentage of 89% converts, which, as he comments, "would normally only be found in a new religious movement, not one that is almost two centuries old [on the North American continent]."[18] This continual influx of new members without a corresponding retention of second and third generation Unitarian Universalists makes it extremely difficult to maintain a sense of continuity. And for reasons as yet not understood, there are few second or third generation Unitarians. Perhaps the change-oriented nature of this group does not encourage continuity.

A third universal characteristic of this group is that the contribution made to, and the impact on, the larger community is disproportionate to its size. In Kilbourn's book Religion in Canada, Unitarians are classified as "others" along with Jews, Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus but the comment is made that

> In Canada the importance of [these] religion[s] is not felt because they are so few. But in the case of Jew and Unitarian the impact is all out of proportion to their size, for they are almost completely urban and they are usually found among the intellectual leaders of the community. They are expert in the use of newspapers, radios and television and lead the way on many moral and social fronts.[19]

Canadian Unitarian historian Phillip Hewett makes a similar remark:

> The consensus among social historians both in Britain and the United States has been that the contribution made by Unitarians to the public life of those countries has been far in excess of what might have been expected from a group of such modest size. The

same has certainly been true in Canada.[20]

This characteristic is a source of pride to Unitarian Universalists. It is not clear, however, whether the time that is given to general social action drains off both time and commitment from their individual religious communities. Tension can result from independently carrying out the actions evolving from one's own religous values while wanting to give continued cooperative support for one's convenanted community.

In a more general sense observers have classified Unitarian Universalists less kindly as an "irreligious group"[21] or as religiously marginal.

> . . . We are dealing with religiously marginal persons who see their own religion as different from the religion of the vast majority of their neighbours. On a number of occasions denominational literature has described this movement as a fourth faith evolving out of, but distinct from, Judaism, Catholicism and Protestantism.[22]

The concept of a fourth faith has been examined or alluded to by many observers of the religious scene from different viewpoints.[23] It connotes a more universal, less traditional, faith moving away from the accepted orthodoxies and one that is at home on the secular plane. The observers are not referring to the Unitarian Universalists specifically when they mention the fourth faith, but the Unitarian Universalists have associated with this designation as one way of emphasizing the difference of their religious stance. Their religious purpose is not to be seen as identical to that of the Jew, Catholic or Protestant. Demarath and Hammond suggest it is one of the results of "harboring deviant religious values in a secular context."[24] It is at the juncture of religion and culture that Unitarian Universalists can be said to foster deviant

religious values, as they uphold the worth of many modern secular values and insist that these can be affirmed within a religious, albeit non-traditional, context. The sacred and the secular strands of life they see as being interwoven and interdependent.

The Unitarian Church of Winnipeg makes its home within this religious group but also exists within the larger religious cultural framework of the North American continent. This second sphere of relevance illuminates the secular as well as the religious backdrop to this church's story.

A review of the literature shows that there are many parallels to be seen when surveying the religious development of the United States and Canada from the middle of the twentieth century onward. In the United States there was generally a renewed interest in religion and in particular in the religious institutions that could provide some security and restore meaning following the shock of WW II.

> The 1950s were ushered in on a wave of post-World War II recovery. . . . in the churches there were also important changes. It was a decade of religious revival . . . the period was marked by rapid church membership growth, especially in the booming new suburbs.[25]

The Canadian post-war response was similar to that of the Americans, as Canadians also turned to the churches for the stability they were wanting.

> Greatly as it took Canadians by surprise, the return to the church was not the result of a sudden mass impulse. In retrospect it seems obvious that the sobering experiences of the depression and war years had raised questions for which Canadians would seek answers from the churches.[26]

This similarity of religious development and change continued into the sixties and has been commented on by writers from many different disciplines. In fact, changes were occurring in every area of public

and private life. In the United States it almost seemed as though "the center would not hold."

> The decade of the sixties was a time, in short, when the old foundations of national confidence, patriotic idealism, moral traditionalism, and even historic Judeo-Christian theism, were awash.[27]

In Canada the changes were causing the religious institutions to lose their influence on other aspects of Canadian life.

> Previously a 'Christian country', Canada became, by Act of Parliament, 'merely a country founded upon principles that acknowledge the supremacy of God'. Public schools . . . began to drop religious instruction . . . . Departments of Religious Studies began to appear on University campuses and Departments of Theology began to dwindle.[28]

and

> The position of the church in Canadian society had unquestionably changed and in some ways diminished. The church was no longer the keeper of the nation's conscience, and few Canadians seemed to regret its dethronement.[29]

Religious development and change in both the United States and Canada generally lost its sense of turmoil and excitement in the 1970s. In its place was a kind of world-weariness, certainly a desire to lighten the strains that had been caused by the turbulent sixties.

> In the 1970s there has been a marked change. The upheaval and turmoil of the 1960s have given way to what appears to be disillusionment, cynicism, and a groping for direction. . . . . There has also been a turning inward to personal rather than social concerns. . . . . This change in mood has not left the churches unaffected. Social activism, so visible in the 1960s, has virtually ceased among both Protestants and Catholics.[30]

While these parallels provide a general picture of the religious cultural development that took place over the decades of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, it is not the whole picture. Many writers have been careful to point out that while Canadians and Americans do share the North

American continent, along with the Mexican nation, there are observable differences that have affected the religious development of the two nations.[31]

One of the differences is tied up with the question of national identity. Americans have more of a sense of who they are. Will Herberg, in his book Protestant-Catholic-Jew, repeatedly emphasizes the common values, both religious and secular, to be found in "the American Way of Life" that constitute the "common religion" of American life.[32] In Canada there is ambiguity in the sense of identity. Some would hold to the old dictum, "'Canada, the double negative'--not American, not British, but a peculiar amalgam of both,"[33] and others would point to the two founding nations, Britain and France, as the amalgam from which a national identity should be derived. Canadian identity is developing, but does not have the sharp, clear edges to be found in the American identity. This ambiguity has led to a tentativeness and cautiousness in developing in any distinctly different direction, whether it be social, political or religious.

This has led to a second divergence. Grant's assertion that "Canada is the product of two counter-revolutions"[34] as opposed to the revolutionary development of the United States has meant that there has been a brake applied to the proliferation of sects that have occurred in the United States. Canadians have been occupied with preserving what they have rather than developing other religious directions.

Another difference has been the centralization of Canadian growth, in both the religious and the secular domain.[35] This has resulted in more control being exercised over regional development.

> . . . in the Canadian economy, divine and otherwise, the rule has been public enterprise, not free enterprise . . . Canandians found it more natural to con-

> solidate than to compete, to enlist the state as a backer, and to create coast-to-coast institutions that reflect regional realities but are capable of shifting some resources from the 'haves' to the 'have nots'.[36]

So a religious community in one part of Canada would accept the necessity of sharing its resources with those communities that have a greater need. There would also be more compliance with decisions made at the regional and national levels of the religious organization.

A fourth difference has resulted from occupying the northern part of the continent and having to learn how to survive in an often cold and cruel land. This has reinforced the Canadian tradition of "peace, order and good government," has caused authority to be appreciated more than freedom, "which in turn has discouraged the recurring splits and schisms of the American frontier."[37] Thus religious freedom is subordinate to the conforming order of the religious institution. The geographical isolation of much of Canada, particularly on the prairies, becomes translated into a distaste for any further isolation and consequently a deterrent to religious dissension.

Finally, Canada has not perceived itself, as has the United States, as being the new "chosen land," nor have Canadians seen themselves as the new "chosen people." A "new Jerusalem" is not expected to materialize on Canadian soil.[38] Therefore in Canadian religious organizations and communities there is not the excitement, determination or sense of high holy purpose associated with having been chosen.

A religious organization developing on Canadian soil should exemplify most of these differences. Some variations however, will be found because of the anomalous position of the Unitarian Church within the Canadian religious context. For example, the organizing principle

of the Unitarian church is congregational which means that no central authority can dictate the policies each local church will follow. Also, the human and financial resources of the national Unitarian organization are small and do not result in as much national cohesiveness as would be found in mainline churches. Finally, the deterrent of isolation on religious dissension does not have as strong an effect on Unitarians, as by their religious stance they have already chosen to be isolates from the religious mainstream in Canada.

The Canadian Unitarian particularities, the Canadian differences and the general parallel development of Canada and the United States are all part of the second sphere of relevance that informs an understanding of the changes that occurred in the Unitarian church of Winnipeg.

The third sphere of relevance considers perceptions gained from the research into church growth and decline. The interest of sociologists, historians and theologians in this field of research is fairly new, taking place for the most part over the past three decades. Partly because of the fairly recent interest in this area--several decades is, after all, a short period in the development of most religious groups--and partly because of the lack of any agreed-upon cause(s) for growth or decline, this area of research is still in its infancy. One thing most researchers do agree upon is the complexity of this area.

> He who would understand church growth must always assume multiple causes for each spurt of growth or period of retardation.[39]

and

> Single cause explanation of the [religious] trends--for example, secularization (however defined), demographic shifts, rejection of the social activism of the mainline churches in the 1960s, decline of strictness in these same churches, and so forth--attract attention. But to explain general trends

> by any one of these factors alone oversimplifies an exceedingly complex set of relationships. Thus we look not to single factor explanations, but to the impact of multiple factors whose interrelationships we cannot trace out or understand.[40]

In spite of this perceived complexity, studies have been undertaken to try and bring about a better apprehension of church growth and decline. A recent book edited by Hoge and Roozen[41] discusses three such studies. Three denominations in the United States--the United Church of Christ, the United Methodist Church, and the United Presbyterian Church--commissioned studies that would examine reasons for declines in their churches. These studies have gathered statistical information from hundreds of local churches within their denominations, examining hundreds of variables. Because their conclusions were reached on the basis of strong statistical data, there is not an exact parallel with the thesis but some of the conclusions are relevant. The study done by the United Presbyterian Church reports that when it compared growing congregations with rapidly declining congregations it found that the growing congregations were characterized by stronger pastoral leadership, stronger and fuller programs in most areas of church life and more responsibility for membership recruitment being accepted as a goal by the lay leadership.[42] Pastoral leadership, however, was not seen as directly causing growth but as providing member satisfaction and congregational harmony.[43]

The study done by the United Church of Christ congregations also had some results worth mentioning. Once again, it was found that clergy leadership was important for member satisfaction and congregational harmony.[44] Also, there was a positive correlation between membership growth and the church's budget.

> The data reviewed here suggests that a growing membership base is as important as any other

> factor in insuring the financial health of the congregation. An increasing budget appears to be a by-product of a growing membership.[45]

The third study, commissioned by the United Methodist Church, compared trends in church membership, baptisms and church school enrolment for ten denominations for the years 1950 to 1975.[46] The research concluded that it would be necessary to examine contextual causes rather than internal ones to explain the similarities in trends.[47] That is, social and intellectual influences to be found in the local or national environment [ contextual factors] may be more important than the effect of internal forces [institutional factors].

Research studies conducted on vital religious communities in the United States [Catholic, Protestant, Jew and non Judeo-Christian-related religious groups] found two distinct and different ways used to cope with the problems of living religiously in a changing and conflicting culture. One emphasized continuity and traditional beliefs and community forms in a time of change; and the other accepted and celebrated modern scientific and technological advances and taught individuated valuing.[48] They found that sometimes the second way led to a decline in organizational activity because members'self-interest had been threatened by social activism. But the comment is made that, "there is something unseemly and basically wrong about a church that is happy and thriving while the culture is in agony."[49] This agony of the culture within which the churches operate has caused a crisis within some of the middle-of-the-road churches according to another study, and has resulted in movement away from the cultural mainstream toward a more conservative, traditional expression of religion.[50] It has caused what Hoge calls "a collapse of the middle," and inability to deal competently with the two

conflicting and competing world views, the traditional and the secular.[51]

In the case of the Unitarian Universalists there has been little research done and the general comments made are quite often contradictory. The examples cited refer to growth occurring in the early sixties.

> . . . the long term trend toward secularization in American life is, we suspect, a major factor in the survival and recent acceleration in growth of the Unitarian movement.[52]

but

> . . . one of the seeming ironies of this allegedly secular age is that the churches have at least retained their numerical strength while such irreligious groups as the Unitarians . . . have, if anything, fallen behind in the competition.[53]

The first quotation is statistically accurate, in that the Unitarian Universalist movement was growing through most of the sixties.[54] Perhaps the second quotation should be viewed as prophetic, since the decline in numbers began the following year. In any case, the comments made were general ones, with no accompanying specific growth or decline data.

All these studies bear witness to the multitude of perspectives that can be taken in studying church growth and decline. Because of the complexity of variables, the difficulty in equating different denominations' definitions for membership, and many other diverse problems, the forest may have been lost sight of among all the individual trees. That is to say, the very specific minutiae of the factors being analyzed may have resulted in an unintentional trivializing of the larger picture of church growth and decline. Or else, there has been a concentration on one specific tree, one part of the puzzle only, that has tended to give a simplistic answer.

Most of the research mentioned so far has dealt mainly with the

growth aspect of church growth and decline. There have been other suggestions put forth, (Besides simply the opposite of the reasons for growth), for some of the decline.[55] The best known of the commentators on decline in the churches is Dean Kelley. He holds that the "liberal" churches that have declined have done so because they are not fulfilling the need people have of their religious faith to help them make sense out of their lives. According to Kelley, commitment to one's faith needs to be demanded,[56] with strict disciplines observed regarding the keeping of the faith and with exclusionary power given to the leaders.

> . . . in or out: upon this distinction the survival of any serious group depends. If it fails to separate out those who are not in earnest about its purposes, it may go on--for a while--as a group but its real purposes do not go on. They will deteriorate quickly under such neglect and so eventually will the group itself.[57]

In other words, if a church is too tolerant and accepting it will not grow. Only by maintaining an exclusive and specific religious stance will growth occur. A criticism of Kelley's hypothesis is that the strictness principle tries to create community "by simplistic clarity and by avoidance of the ambiguity that is at the heart of the human experience."[58] Other research negates some of Kelley's hypotheses regarding the relative increase of "conservative" and "liberal" churches but admits to widespread decline.[59] McGavran suggests that the lack of growth in what he refers to as "the midst of widespread receptivity"[60] is due to a too simplistic approach.[61] Smylie reasons that the decline of the control of the WASP (White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant) and the WASP's search for "identity, leadership and meaning in a new age in history" have contributed to the decline.[62] A study conducted by Bibby in Cnaada found that mainline religious groups fail to socialize religiously their offspring, thus bringing about heavy losses in the second

generation.[63] As can be seen, there is as little agreement among the reasons for decline as there is for growth.

The third sphere of relevance is full of divergent views and either overly complex or overly simplistic answers. Yet all researchers are trying to understand what is happening on the religious scene. Fresh approaches need to be tried to unravel this knot.

One researcher in the area of church growth and decline comments that, "while denominational growth patterns have received considerable attention, examinations of growing and declining congregations within denominations have been few in number."[64] Examining a single congregation gives particularity to the research on church growth and decline and will provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics of church life. We will follow one church through almost two decades and will examine some of the sets of polarities that affected it and comment on the interconnectedness between the polarities.

The Unitarian Universalist faith places a high value on the individual, and on the individual's right and responsibility to search out his or her own religious values. While freedom of religious belief is upheld, there is also the desire to provide a religious community wherein those searching for religious meaning can receive support and nurturance, learn tolerance for those in the community whose experiences and thoughts have led them to different conclusions, and celebrate together the mystery, the commonplace and the sublime occasions that constitute life's fullness. This set of polarities, the right of the individual to religious freedom and the desire for religious community, has been difficult to keep in balance.[65] It has affected the ability to project a unified religious vision to the larger society. It has complicated the

decision-making process, both institutionally and locally. It has caused confusion regarding where to draw the line between individual rights and values and support of and loyalty to the religious community. It can be achieved, as evidenced by the complex, but successful merger of the Unitarians and Universalists in 1961. Both the rights of the individual and of individual congregations were held in balance with the desire to provide a mutually satisfactory religious community for both Unitarians and Universalists. It requires enormous effort and commitment to maintain such a balance however, and if both ends of the polarities are not equally articulated and worked on, if individuals do not voluntarily yield some of their own power to ensure the strength and viability of the religious community, imbalance results. As was suggested earlier (see p.8), part of the problem may come from Unitarian Universalists' propensity for spending their time and energy and commitment in realizing their religious values outside of the thre religious community. The effect of this set of polarities on the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg will be examined in each time period under study. It will be seen that an imbalance did have negative consequences for the group.

One point most people in North America would agree on is that change is an ever-present reality. Unitarian Universalists have embraced this fact and affirmed it as a positive element. Change and innovation are theoretically welcomed as a means of renewing religious inspiration and of remaining open to fresh religious insights. At the same time that change is being supported there is an opposite pull toward a need for stability and continuity in the life of the religious community. There is a need to examine and affirm liberal religious roots, to know and understand the religious road that has been travelled so that future direction is building on what has been of value. But sometimes change

and innovation come at the expense of a sense of continuity and stability. What was theoretically approved of turned out to be in practice less easy to achieve. Other denominations in the third quarter of this century were also affected by this set of polarities and their resulting tensions. But because of the close identification Unitarian Universalists made with the secular culture's attraction to change and likewise to individualism, it became difficult to separate out Unitarian Universalism as different from secular meaning-making institutions. Instead of being on the cutting edge of change they found themselves becoming invisible and no longer unique. Their acceptance of the move toward a more secularistic world view caused them to become complacent and to neglect the need to "furnish strong and understandable myths and community forms that give power and meaning to life,"[66] to affirm their religious base.

Now the linkage between individualism and change becomes important. Support of change means willingness and ability to adapt an institution's (or church's) structure, technology and behaviour. But before these can be adapted, some changes in assumptions and values need to be made.[67] Because of an almost dogmatic commitment to individualism, it has proved difficult to reach common agreement on new or redefined assumptions and values. A connection is also found between the need for religious community and the desire to have stability and continuity in that community. For a religious community to provide depth of religious meaning it is required to have a religious purpose that takes cognizance of its historic wellsprings. When the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg attempted to provide a religious community without continuity or stability, it was rejected by most of the member/participants.

The linking of the third set of polarities is more implicit than

explicit in the history of Unitarian Universalism. Congregational polity has been a given in both denominations since their inception. That is, it is up to each congregation to choose its own religious leadership, manage its own affairs and devise its own statement of religious purpose. This has put much responsibility and power into the hands of the lay leadership. They do not require the permission of any higher religious authority to call a minister (or fire him or her), change their constitution, or change their statement of religious purpose. On the other hand, the religious leader is valued for his or her high level of educational and ministerial training and is expected to provide the intellectual and religious stimulus from which each congregant can formulate his/her own set of religious values. The minister is expected to be "the leader" and still promote congregational polity as the final authority. At one level, as an individual, the minister is the equal of all other members, and on another level, within the organizational structure, he or she is employed as the religious spokesperson who articulates the community's religious vision.

There is a paradox in that the minister is expected to lead and yet is not the "religious authority." The minister speaks authoritatively out of education and experience, but the final authority in religion is the individual. A second paradox is that both leaderships, in different ways, represent the voice of the community. Often there is conflict with each leadership expecting of the other something that is unrealistic. The minister may feel that the lay leadership is not fulfilling its management responsibilities; the lay leadership may feel the minister is not providing an appropriate religious direction. It may be that the religious direction calls for different management

responsibilities or that better insight into the religious aspirations of the community needs to be expressed.

Congregational polity does mean, however, that both leaderships must work in a yoked harness. Several scenarios can result if the two leaderships are not in harmony. One is that both become embroiled in a power struggle, each convinced that the other is misrepresenting or misusing the intentions of the religious community, but neither side checking to see if that is so. A second situation that can develop is that members of the religious community, but not those who are part of the lay leadership, may begin to take sides with one or the other polarity, with the intention of correcting the imbalance.

This is one of the situations that faced the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg. When the community felt that congregational polity was not being followed, it negated what was being attempted by the two leaderships. The member/participants withheld their money, their involvement or their presence, sometimes all three. As Lyle Schaller has said, "The easiest power to acquire is the power of the veto; the hardest power to acquire is the power to initiate and implement."[68] If the initiation and implementation of programs and the sense of religious purpose do not result in a direction being taken that meets the needs of the congregation, they will react negatively.

The connection between this third set of polarities and the other two is complex. First of all, the lay leadership are representative of the religious community as it is, manages its plant and directs its programs. They are also concerned that both individual freedoms and stability are protected. Secondly, the minister is representative of the religious aspirations of the religious community, both as it is

and as it could become if the religious vision and purpose is applied. The minister also explicates the historical roots that provide for a sense of continuity. The lay leadership's interest in change and innovation tends to be related to how it will affect them as individuals, while the minister's interest in change and innovation tends to be related to affecting change for the religious community as a whole. Of course the religious leader, as an individual, also supports individual freedom and the importance of change. Sometimes the lines get crossed and the religious leader's need for religious freedom and change becomes confused with freedom and change for the entire community. Sometimes the lay leadership perceives change as threatening both individual freedom and stability, when its implementation would improve both. When either lay or religious leadership tries to be the sole "voice of authority" with regard to individual freedom conflict arises. If lay leadership and religious leadership with their different perspectives cannot find a common ground from which to relate to each side of the other polarities--individual freedom, change, religious community and continuity and stability--trouble will set in. This is complexity indeed.

A variety of sources will be used to determine the effect these polarities had on the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg, as well as to present an overall picture of the church as it made its journey through the periods under study. The major source is thirty-six documentary interviews that were conducted with a representative sample of thirty-two member/participants who had been involved during the different periods under study, and all four of the religious leaders.[69] The interviews were taped and then analysed for content and affect. The results of the interviews were correlated with the second important

source of information. This was a series of church documents and files pertaining to meetings that were held, correspondence sent and received, and programs and other events that occurred during the time period studied. Other books, manuscripts and pamphlets that contained relevant information were also reviewed.[70] The knowledge gained from all these sources was then collated and the story of the church began to take shape. To maintain as much objectivity as possible, the various sources were checked against each other. The reliability of all the data was a variable, and was interpreted in light of the full range of material available and the outcome of events.

In preparing this thesis certain methodological complications must be addressed. The complications are caused by the fact that this thesis does not neatly fall under the category of any single academic discipline. There are historical perspectives to be considered in setting the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg into its Canadian and North American religious context, and yet this is not a thesis that takes only a historical viewpoint. This is a thesis that takes into consideration sociological research done on church growth and decline and yet it cannot be said to be purely within a sociological discipline. Aspects to be found in Social Psychology, such as the impact of a religious community on an individual's religious values, are interpreted and discussed, but are not the sole focus of this study. Of necessity there is discussion of the theological background and views that differentiates this church and its institution from those of other faiths, although theology is not the backbone of the research. There are definitely connections to the field of ethics, as the relationship between one's religious commitment and one's actions is under investigation. It cannot,

however, be contained only within this academic designation.

Finally, most importantly and more precisely, it is through readings and studies in the field of Religious Studies that this thesis has come to fruition. Because this is a "studies" area rather than a "discipline" it borrows all or any methods that are suitable to the subject under investigation.

As Wilfred Cantwell Smith has said, "method should be developed out of the particular problem that one is considering, not vice versa, and it should be ephemeral, subordinate and fundamentally dispensable."[71] In another article he states that trying to find out the 'truth' about anything "requires . . . that non-engagé objectivity and neutralist observationism, be replaced with an existential concern, a wrestling with the implications for oneself."[72] Since this 'particular problem' touches so many disciplines and involves the personal reflections about people and events, it has been decided to use the narrative mode for the major portion of this thesis in order to maintain objective balance and yet present a "lived" story.

The narrative form is suitable for this subject matter. First of all, narrative has played a significant role in telling the story of religions. It provides a means of giving more than a one-dimensional picture of the search of a group for the meaning in life. Secondly, in this study it allows for an easier interplay between the intellectual and emotional constituents to be drawn out of the memories of people variously involved in this church story. Thirdly, it grants more scope in a thesis that is steering a difficult course between the history of a religious community, the sociological vantage point of a religious group, and other psychological, ethical and theological considerations.

Finally, the narrative mode allows more freedom to explore the meaning of this religion for those people who have chosen to be a part of its religious community. The research centers mainly around the interviews conducted with individuals variously involved at different stages of this part of the church's story. The research, or rather, the researcher, listens to the piece of truth, knowledge, feeling and history from each person's memory and involvement and fits the pieces together with other documentary material to give an overall picture of the religious community.

One further complication must be mentioned with regards to method. This involves the status of the researcher herself. The researcher comes within the category of an "observer participant,"[73] that is, she is a member of the group she is studying. This has advantages in that access to archival, undocumented, and "sensitive" material has been fully available along with assistance in locating misplaced files and in translating documents written in Icelandic. Also, because of membership in this group, the willingness of respondents to share their memories of past events with the researcher was evident. There is, however, the danger that the researcher's own perspective may have influenced her hearing and interpreting of the information given, or that she may have influenced the respondents. As much as was possible, this difficulty has been checked by the researcher's skills, qualifications and experience in counselling and interview techniques. This has enabled her to make judgements regarding the realistic quality of the responses and be aware of the effect of any influence that may have been felt.

This thesis, then, looks at a church that underwent many changes during the 1960s and 1970s. It suggests three sets of polarities that were

instrumental in effecting the changes. It further suggests that an imbalance in the polarities caused the religious sense of purpose to be ineffective.

At the church level this research will provide evidence to support the reasons for growth or lack of growth and will supply the community with historical and social data that was in danger of becoming irretrievably lost. Except for several informal histories of local Canadian congregations there has been little formal research done of this post-traditional church to set it into a national religious and cultural context,[74] and this thesis will help to fill that gap. It will also expand the body of literature available on Unitarian Universalist religious development which, because of its change-oriented religious style, may furnish insights into the future of modern religious institutions in this present age of flux and uncertainty. Finally, it adds to the small body of research on individual churches that can do much to illuminate the intricate problem of church growth and decline.

Footnotes - Chapter I Introduction

1. This 'post-traditional' label has been applied by Robert Tapp in his book Religions Among the Unitarian Universalists; Converts in the Stepfather's House. "This label seemed to give further definition to the clear meaning of Unitarian Universalism . . . as a religious movement that was no longer Christian and that was, indeed, moving yet further away from its Christian origins." Robert B. Tapp, Religion Among the Unitarian Universalists; Converts in the Stepfather's House (New York: Seminar Press, 1974), p. 21. This designation is quite accurate with the added postscript that there were at the time of this study, and still are today, Unitarian Universalists who consider themselves 'Christians' although the religion definitionally no longer belongs within that religious designation.

2. There are no creedal requirements for membership in this church. In fact, some individuals who have been actively and intimately involved with the church for years have chosen as a matter of personal conscience not to become "signed" members of the church. That is, they have not formally signed the membership book but have participated in activities and on committees. They are barred only from holding a position on the Board of Management and in voting on legal matters. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, with the exception of legal church statistics, which include only signed members, both signed members and those participating without formal membership will be considered and will be designated as "member/participants."

3. For information about the time periods see Appendix A.

4. A small but scholarly body of historical and social scientific research is available on this religious movement. For example: Earl Morse Wilbur's A History of Unitarianism, 2 vols. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1945); Conrad Wright's The Liberal Christians: Essays on American Unitarian History (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1970); Ernest Cassara's editing of Universalism in America (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971); Russell E. Miller's The Larger Hope: The First Century of the Universalist Church in America, 1770-1870 (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1979); George Huntston Williams' American Universalism (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971): Robert B. Tapp's Religion Among the Unitarian Universalists; Converts in the Stepfather's House (New York: Seminar Press, 1973) and Phillip Hewett's Unitarians in Canada (Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1978). This thesis will use Hewett's book as its major Canadian reference.

5. Wilbur, Vol. II, p. 396.

6. Ibid., pp. 423-35.

7. "The Unitarian Universalist Merger" in Report of the Commission on Appraisal to the Fourteenth General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Boston: Unitarian Universalist Associ-

ation, 1975, p. 5. The comment is made that, "when the American Unitarian Association was organized in 1825, some 150 liberal Christian churches became Unitarian. Among them were many of New England's strongest and most historic congregations."

8. Ibid., p. 4.

9. Ibid., p. 6.

10. Ibid., p. 9.

11. Ibid., p. 13.

12. Hewett, p. 23.

13. Ibid., p. 70. A census in 1851 showed the Universalists claiming a membership of 7000 while the Unitarians had only 1200.

14. Ibid., pp. 262-63.

15. "Unitarian Universalist Merger," p. 14.

16. Robert L. H. Miller, "The Religious Value System of Unitarian Universalists," in Review of Religious Research 17: No. 3 (Spring 1976), p. 189.

17. Unitarian Universalist Association, Report of the Committee on Goals (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1967), p. 8.

18. Tapp, p. 13.

19. A. C. Forrest, "The Present" in Religion in Canada, ed. William Kilbourn, p. 66.

20. Hewett, p. 312.

21. Nicholas Jay Demerath and Phillip E. Hammond, Religion in Social Context: Tradition and Transition (New York: Random House, 1969), p. 183. The Unitarians here are put in the same grouping as the Ethical Culture Society and the American Rationalist Federation.

22. Robert B. Tapp, Religion Among the Unitarian Universalists; Converts in the Stepfather's House (New York: Seminar Press, 1973), pp. 38-39.

23. Martin E. Marty, in New Shape of American Religion terms this fourth faith "religion-in-general." This is similar to Will Herberg's "common religions" Protestant-Catholic-Jew. Duncan Hewlett, The Fourth American Faith (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p. 52 simply refers to it as the "fourth faith."

24. Demerath and Hammond, p. 172.

25. Jackson W. Carroll, "Continuity and change: The Shape of American

Religion," Religion in America: 1950 to the Present (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), p. 6. This point is also made by Marty who comments: "The revival of interest in religion in the 1950s once again made religion an aspect of culture worthy of intensive analysis." Martin E. Marty, The New Shape of American Religion (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), p. 108.

26. John Webster Grant, The Church in the Canadian Era: The First Century of Confederation (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), pp. 160, 163.

27. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), vol. 2, p. 600.

28. Tom Sinclair-Faulkner, "Listing Where the Spirit Bloweth," The Christian Century (July 1978), pp. 698-99.

29. Grant, pp. 203-04.

30. Carroll, p. 7.

31. See Grant, The Churches and the Canadian Experience, Kilbourn Religion in Canada: The Spiritual Development of a Nation, Hewett, Unitarians in Canada, Sinclair-Faulkner, "Blowing Where the Spirit Listeth," Christian Century.

32. Herberg, Chap. V, in passim.

33. John Webster Grant, The Churches and the Canadian Experience (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1963), p. 123.

34. Ibid., p. 123.

35. In discussing ways in which our religion and religious history differs from the United States and the fact that the whole thrust of Canadian history has been from the centre, William Kilbourn comments: "The role of the churches in helping our people survive . . . has been a crucial one, and there are few true parallels to this in modern American history." "Epilogue" William Kilbourn ed. Religion in Canada (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968), p. 123.

36. Sinclair-Faulkner, p. 698.

37. A. C. Forrest, p. 123.

38. Prime Minister Trudeau and, from a different perspective, others wanting Canada to demonstrate the possibility of a peaceful nuclear-age coexistence may change this image, but it was not the case in the decades under study.

39. Donald A. McGavran, Understanding Church Growth (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Erdman, 1970), p. 138.

40. Carroll, p. 37. A recent study done by the United Presbyterian Church concurs with this. "Our study . . . clearly demonstrates that there is no single cause or simple pattern of causes for growth. Rather growth comes from a fairly complex pattern of factors. United Presbyterian Church, A Summary Report of the Committee on Membership Trends (New York: United Presbyterian Church, 1976), p. 12.

41. Dean R. Hoge and David A. Roozen, Understanding Church Growth and Decline: 1950-1978 (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1979).

42. United Presbyterian Church, pp. 12-13. This is a shortened summary of the major characteristics only.

43. Wade Clark Roof, Dean R. Hoge, John C. Dyble and C. Kirk Hadaway, "Factors Producing Growth or Decline in United Presbyterian Congregations," in Understanding Church Growth and Decline, p. 222.

44. In the concluding section McKinney comments: "Clergy leadership proves to be a key factor in accounting for member satisfaction and congregational outreach." William J. McKinney Jr. "Performance of United Church of Christ Congregations in Massachusetts and in Pennsylvania" in Understanding Church Growth and Decline: 1950-1978 ed. Dean R. Hoge and David A. Roozen (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1979), p. 246.

45. McKinney, p. 246.

46. Ruth T. Doyle and Sheila M. Kelly, "Comparison of Trends in Ten Denominations, 1950-1975" in Understanding Church Growth and Decline: 1950-1978, pp. 144-159.

47. Ibid., p. 159.

48. John E. Biersdorf, Hunger for Experience: Vital Religious Communities in America (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), pp. 136-37.

49. Ibid., p. 137.

50. Wade Clark Roof, Community and Commitment: Religious Plausibility in a Liberal Protestant Church (New York: Elseuier North Holland Inc., 1978).

51. Dean R. Hoge, Division in the Protestant House: The Basic Reasons Behind Intra-Church Conflicts (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1976), pp. 40-46.

52. Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark, Religion and Society in Translation (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965), p. 257. Grant also reaches a similar conclusion, although his is based on "increased religious pluralism" rather than secularization. John Webster Grant, The Church in the Canadian Era: The First Century of Confederation, p. 180.

53. Demerath and Hammond, p. 183.

54. In a paper presented to the 1979 UUA General Assembly the membership figures for 1964 were 164,474. By 1968 the figures had risen to 177,431. Peter Raible and Milton Holmen, "Population Trends in the Unitarian Universalist Association since merger (1961)" (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1978), p. 11.

55. Researchers who share at least a part of Kelley's position are C. Peter Wagner and Donald A. McGavran. Dean M. Kelley, "Comment: Is Religion a Dependent Variable?" in Understanding Church Growth and Decline, 1950-1978 with a foreword by Martin Marty. (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1979).

56. Dean M. Kelley, Why Conservative Churches are Growing (New York: United Methodist Board for Global Ministries, 1975), p. 58.

57. Ibid., p. 178.

58. Robert A. Evans, "Recovering the Church's Transforming Middle" in Understanding Church Growth and Decline 1950-1978, p. 305.

59. The United Presbyterian Church study (1976) is a good example.

60. McGavran, p. 104.

61. Ibid., p. 104.

62. James H. Smylie, "Church Growth and Decline in Historical Perspective," in Understanding Church Growth and Decline, 1950-1978, ed. Hoge and Roozen, chap. 3.

63. Reginald W. Bibby, "Why Conservative Churches are Really Growing: Kelley Revisited," in Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 17, pp. 136-37.

64. McKinney, p. 225.

65. Hewett comments on the tension between these two values. "Perceptive spokesmen . . . have repeatedly pointed out the difficulty of building an effective community life on the basis of a radical respect for individuality . . . It can be resolved only where full recognition is given to the values expressed both in individuality and in community." Hewett, p. 3.

66. Biersdorf, p. 138.

67. c.f., Lyle E. Schaller, The Change Agent (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1972), p. 34, and also, John Webster Grant, "A Decade of Ferment: Canadian Churches in the 60s," in Religion in Canadian Society, p. 210.

68. Lyle E. Schaller, Community Organization: Conflict and Reconciliation (Nashville, Tenn., Abingdon Press, 1966), p. 123.

69. See Appendix B for list of interview respondents and interview dates.

70. See Appendix C for a fuller explanation of the method.

71. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "The Methodology of the Study of Religion: Some Misgivings," in Methodological Issues in Religious Studies, ed. Robert D. Barid (Chico, California, New Horizons Press, 1975), p. 15.

72. Smith, "A Human View of Truth," Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses. 1 (1971), p. 13.

73. Maurice Duverger, An Introduction to the Social Sciences (London: Allen and Unwin, 1964), pp. 216-222.

74. The exception is, of course, Phillip Hewett's book, Unitarians in Canada.

## Chapter II

## THE WAY WE WERE

The present-day Unitarian Church of Winnipeg has roots that go back almost a century and combines the liberal religious search of peoples of different ethnic backgrounds and experience. The First Icelandic Unitarian Church of Winnipeg was formally organized on February 1st, 1891. Some of the Icelandic immigrants were very liberal in their religious views and had proposed that sectarian [Lutheran] views be abolished and that the religious organization that was being established on the prairies--the Lutheran-New Iceland Synod--be simply called the Christian Church.[1] These pioneers were more attached to the life and moral principles of Jesus and less willing to become involved in a specific Lutheran doctrine. The Icelandic ministers who were promoting this religious stance stressed the humanitarian and ethical teachings of Christ as a supreme example of the ideal way of life.[2] They also stressed the need for a spirit of inquiry and freedom in matters of religion bringing human reason to bear on biblical scriptures. When it became obvious that this religious viewpoint could not exist within the Lutheran camp, the Icelandic Unitarian Church of Winnipeg emerged.

In 1921 the union with another Winnipeg group of dissenting Icelanders from the Lutheran Tabernacle Church resulted in the building of a new church on the corner of Sargent and Banning,[3] (the building that is still used today) and a new religious designation, which in

translation was: "The First Federated Church of Unitarians and Other Liberal Christians."

The ministers who took up the religious leadership were Icelandic in ethnic origin and received their theological training either from the United States (the Meadville Theological Seminary in Chicago) or from Iceland (the Divinity School of Reyjkavik).[4] Church services and church meetings were conducted in the Icelandic language. In 1932, when their minister the Rev. B. Kristjansson returned to Iceland, the congregation was unable to finance the hiring of another minister. The economic depression meant that the members' financial resources were exhausted from job attrition, escalating costs and the need to provide food and shelter for themselves and their families.

There were also in Winnipeg in the early 1900s settlers from the United States and Great Britain whose views sat uncomfortably within the existing Protestant churches. An advertisement in a local newspaper called on those of liberal religious views to attend a meeting.[5] After several meetings it was decided to organize formally. The church was duly constituted in May 1904 and was called The All Souls Unitarian Church of Winnipeg.[6] By 1913 the congregation was in its own building. They continued to be served by ministers who had received their theological training at Meadville Theological Seminary in the United States. This church suffered a reversal in financial stability in the late 1920s eventually resulting in the congregation having to rent and then sell their own church[7] and to move in to less expensive rental facilities. In 1929 they formally changed their church name to "The Unitarian Church of Winnipeg"[8] and held their meetings at the Icelandic Unitarian Church building on Sargent and Banning.[9] The stated purpose of this church was

> . . . to maintain regular services of Christian worship in this community, and to upbuild in the hearts of its people the high ideals of a rational, progressive and exalting religion in the love of God and the service of mankind.[10]

The last minister of All Souls Unitarian Church was hired in 1929. The Reverend Philip M. Petursson was a minister of Scottish and Icelandic heritage, who had received his theological training in the United States at the Meadville Theological School. In 1934, following meetings between the two congregations, it was decided to try the sharing of both a building and a minister. In order to make this possibility more feasible, Petursson, who had agreed to accept the challenge, was sent to Iceland for the better part of a year to study and to improve his mastery of the Icelandic language. In 1935 he returned and became the joint minister for both congregations who continued to share the building of the First Federated Church at the corner of Sargent and Banning. For the next ten years each congregation kept its own identity and held its own services. Separate church boards were responsible for their own programs and financing. English services were held in the morning and Icelandic services were held in the evening. One area where there was overlapping was with the young people, as many of the second generation Icelanders spoke English as their first language. This actually was not something completely new, the young people from both churches had been holding joint socials from time to time since the 1910s.[11] While the organizational structure and worship services may have been kept separate, the people from the two congregations were starting to become acquainted with each other and in 1945 [1944] the merger of the two churches was completed.[12] The name this merged church chose was The Unitarian Church of Winnipeg.[13] The Icelandic Winnipeg Unitarians had in other facets of their lives been integrating through the years into the English-speaking Canadian

society and their children and grandchildren were being raised as English-speaking Canadians. While at the beginning services were still conducted in English and Icelandic, many of the Icelanders attended the English services held in the morning. The number of church services held in Icelandic gradually dwindled and finally ceased.

The new church Board of Management had officers on it representing both the original congregations--and most aspects of church life were integrated. The Ladies Aid was perhaps the exception. It remained, and is so today, a group of Icelandic women, held together as much by their ethnic homogeneity as by their willingness to provide countless services for church functions.

Article 3 of the Constitution of the new merged church community was the covenant, stating beliefs held in common.

> We believe in:
> The Fatherhood of God
> The Brotherhood of Man
> The Leadership of Jesus
> Salvation by Character
> The Progress of Mankind onward and upward forever

These five points were commonly expressed by other Unitarian churches in both Canada and the United States at this time.[14]

In 1951 major renovations were made to the interior of the church and also to the house next door which had originally been purchased for use as a manse, but not used as such for decades. In 1956 the church house was officially named 'Unitarian House' and was designated for church school purposes.[15] The church school population could no longer be contained within the church basement. By 1963 the church membership was recorded as 300--120 of whom were of Icelandic origin.[16]

The merger of the two congregations had resulted in growth and the church seemed to be on the right track. A place and a religious purpose

were available for those in Winnipeg who wanted to participate in a liberal religious journey. The picture that is presented of the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg's religious community prior to the actual period under study is one of a comfortable and stable church with a sense of unity and purpose. The church had integrated the different ethnic backgrounds of the two original Unitarian churches and was growing slowly and confidently. The members recall that it was a "warm, friendly, comfortable place where you could hear radical ideas in a traditional structure"[17]; it was a church that pointed out "new reservoirs of knowledge and helped in relating this knowledge to our spiritual needs"[18]; that presented a "philosophical approach to Christianity."[19] While it was a church that reached out to religious liberals in all parts of the city, it had a good proportion of its membership drawn from the neighbouring community.[20] This helped it to be accepted as a church like other churches, a place where people came together to worship God and to draw religious inspiration from a commonly held Judeo-Christian heritage. As many members said: "I always came home feeling the better for having gone."[21]

This is not to suggest that there were no problems. The church had always been short of money and had in fact been accustomed to outside financial support from both the American Unitarian Association and the British General Assembly until 1946.[22] Due to the minister having some personal family income, the church had never had to pay the full real cost for ministerial services. For that matter, other services were seldom more than minimally covered, with 'special appeals' being necessary when any major financial difficulty occurred. The one large bequest made to the church during the late 40s[23] was sometimes borrowed

against for current expenses.

There were no overt signs of difficulty between the Icelandic community and the English community but there was a melting away of Icelandic names on committees, on the Board of Management and in the membership book, as the years after merger passed. Certainly there was no longer the demand for Icelandic language services, but also the close-knit Icelandic community could no longer remain separate within the walls of the church. For others it was a reaction against the slow but perceptible move out of the Christian fold.

An additional problem was the fact that since this was the only Unitarian Church in Winnipeg it required, for some, much additional time and effort to attend church. This was not a typical neighbourhood church, and a high level of commitment and attraction to the liberal religious purpose was required to make the distance to the church worthwhile.

During 1945-64 the religious and moral leadership of the minister was a focal point. By 1964 Petursson had been the minister for 35 years. He was perceived as being somewhat paternalistic, gracious, friendly and warm, a "tower of strength"[24] to the members. His sermons and statements on matters of social concern were often considered newsworthy[25] and were sometimes a rallying cry for those religious liberals--Unitarians and others--who felt that some aspect of religious freedom in the public domain was being challenged.

For example, Petursson encouraged church members and the general public to join him in the protest against allowing sectarian religious instruction in the Manitoba public schools. The headline of an article in the March-April 1963 edition of the Canadian Unitarian reads: "Unitarians in Winnipeg Battle Sectarian Teaching in Schools" (p. 4). It

could be said that he was a good role model for the religious and moral stance that Unitarians held to be central. That is, he carried out in actions what his words said, he encouraged a spirit of religious inquiry and combined religious inspiration with secular concern for the condition of the world. Petursson commented that his theological approach was heavily influenced by the writings of Robert Ingersoll, an agnostic humanist,[26] but the congregation in general perceived the church as still being consistent with Christian teachings.[27] Certainly the format of the Sunday services and the celebration of high holy days were similar to what one would have experienced in a liberal United Church of the same time period. A church brochure issued in 1951, however, emphasized the progressive elements of the religion rather than its traditional structure and heritage.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

> Unitarian churches are dedicated to the progressive transformation and ennoblement of individual and social life, through religion, in accordance with the advancing knowledge and the growing vision of mankind. Bound by this common purpose and committed to freedom of belief, Unitarians hold in unity of spirit a diversity of convictions.[28]

Most people saw little change in the church during most of this period, in the kinds of people who attended, the structure of the organization, the activities or the outreach. The atmosphere, the buildings and the programs remained relatively constant.

For a minority there was puzzlement and some concern for the growth in membership. One ex-member who had been very active during this period commented that toward the beginning of the 1960s (and the end of this period) "strange people joined . . . Jewish, agnostic, young people . . . people who we knew and were surprised they would be interested in the church . . .

some just 'using' the church for their own purposes."[29] Before this it had been mainly converts from mainline Protestant churches who joined, but now people with no religious affiliation or coming out of Jewish or an Eastern religious perspective were appearing. There were a few whose political biases, such as Communism, gave a suspicious cast to their attendance and participation. Petursson's preferred political preference was for the NDP brand of socialism and this plus his Ingersollian humanism may have accounted for the influx of a greater variety of personalities into the church community. On the whole it continued to be a church where "you had to think for yourself."[30]

The church programs of this period were of two kinds--outreach and "in church." The outreach programs reached out not only in the sense that they connected with those who were non-Unitarians, but also in that the programs were amalgams composed of Unitarians and others who were reaching out. A good example of this was The Unitarian Service Committee (USC) which, while initially started by Unitarians in the 1940s as a national social service project, very quickly grew larger than its sectarian beginnings and was virtually independent of Unitarian control by the early 1950s.[31] In many of the cities, however, it continued to be staffed mainly by Unitarian volunteers. The Unitarians who volunteered their time and energy from the Winnipeg church saw the USC as an organization that represented Unitarian ideals and were proud to be able to serve it.[32] As a USC pamphlet proclaimed, "when we are asked what Unitarianism means . . . we tell about the Unitarian Service Committee--our faith in action."[33] In other words, behaviour was more important than belief.

Another example was the Manitoba Mortuary Association (now called

The Funeral Planning and Memorial Society of Manitoba) which was spear-headed by Unitarians but was also supported by non-Unitarians. The impetus for the Manitoba Mortuary Society came in large part from a sermon delivered by the Reverend Petursson entitled "Burial Practices." The response to this sermon was strong and positive. The church board endorsed the Reverend Petursson's suggestion that an open meeting "be called of persons interested in a Memorial Association with purpose [sic] of establishing such a group."[34] The Manitoba Mortuary Association was established in 1956. The Association's aim was to provide a service by which individuals could signify their intentions regarding the disposal of their body after death and their request, if any, for any funeral or memorial service. As the present (1983) brochure states: "The dead are not honored by going into debt for an elaborate funeral. . . . Sensible decisions are difficult at a time of emotional stress. Save your next-of-kin the agony of trying to decide what you might have wanted."

This seems to be a pattern for Unitarians in Canada in the social service area and one that is congruent with their commitment to improve the lot of humankind regardless of religious preference. It also points out their willingness to take an anti-traditional stance.

The "in-church" programs were mainly of a social nature and helped to create a cohesive bond based on the interests of the members of the church. There were parties, plays, discussion groups and a popular Icelandic tradition, the "Tumbola" (in translation meaning "fair deal") a fair that was held annually. In the 1940s and 1950s the young people in the church were actively involved in the "West End Sahara Club," an inter-faith coalition of young people's groups in the West end of Winnipeg. Representatives from each church sat on a council that

planned social events which were held in a different church in the area each week. This provided a drawing card for the youth of the church and was well attended.[35]

For people belonging to or participating in church activities and services there was a sense of purpose in what was happening. There was "a sense of rightness . . . a good feeling,"[36] a "sense of community."[37] The church committees had enough members, the church school program Sunday mornings had little trouble finding teachers, and people turned out for planned events. A striving toward the religious goal of "freedom and progress and well-being for mankind"[38] was a commitment of Winnipeg Unitarians. As several members commented, it increased their "involvement in life."[39] Most respondents perceived the church prior to 1964 as being a healthy body. Personified, the "person" was deemed intelligent, open to new ideas and forms, and had a purpose in life. The church provided a place and a space for those who were on a religious search, who were trying to clarify their own religious values, who wanted to have discussions and interactions with others without what they perceived to be the strictures found in more traditional churches with definite creeds and dogmas. The emphasis was on thinking out one's own religious views freely with the stimulation of religious inspiration from many sources. The testing of one's views against the religious ideas and experiences of others in the community was affirmed. It was a commonly held view that "no one needed to be shut out because of their [religious] views."[40] Some members felt that their religion emphasized the positive aspects of Christianity, taking original sin and hellfire out of the church.[41] For others, it helped them keep a sense of religious integrity. As a member of this religious community said, "you could retain a sense of religious purpose without having to surrender

to orthodoxy and traditionalism in religion."[42] Both acceptance and challenge were found here by the members. The "comfortable pew" was not putting many to sleep. The purpose of being part of this religious community was to search out life's meanings within a structure that was familiar and secure yet not restricted by creedal authority; and to do so with fellow seekers who used reason and tolerance on their quest.

There were some who felt that the church was rather elitist and snobbish, implicitly suggesting that if you were truly intelligent you were a Unitarian. While the intention of the Unitarian religion was to be inclusive of all peoples regardless of sex, age, education, religious orientation or race, the majority of its membership came from the educated middle class.[43] In Winnipeg the majority of members have or have had a profession rather than a trade and involve themselves in activities that will increase their intellectual capacities and perception of the world around them. As one respondent, who became involved in other social organizations exclaimed, "I discovered that there were many intelligent people who were not Unitarians."[44] Most of the members and friends of this church, however, were pleased with the way things were going and felt proud to be associated with the liberal religious aspirations and actions they observed taking place in this religious community.

At the end of 1963 the minister recognized that after 35 years of service to the church he was wearing out,[45] that his sermons no longer had the conviction and intensity of earlier years and therefore were not providing the stimulation that someone with more vigour could produce. He tendered his resignation effective August 31, 1964. Some of the enthusiasm and sparkle had gone out of the religious purpose. As one respondent commented, "it was dried up around the edges."[46] But al-

though the church was beginning to chafe gently under slightly weary religious leadership, there was excitement at the potential that continued growth and new leadership suggested.

In this pre-study period, the first set of polarities, the importance of individual freedom of belief and the desire for religious community, were kept in good balance. The responsibility of being a church member meant sharing in the life of the church, in its activities and worship. The responsibility of being a Unitarian church member meant that each person developed his or her own religious values from life experiences and cognitive queries and conclusions.

Even though the two original congregations had each gone through times of trial and tribulation, there was existing in the church, by the end of Petursson's ministry, a strong sense of stability and continuity. After all, he had successfully ministered to them, separately and together, for thirty-five years. The continuity of his service gave many a comfortable feeling. On the other hand, some of the ideas he advanced and the religious values he supported were considered innovative and or radical. But the structure and pattern of the church organization and activities were familiar and stable and acceptable. The form remained relatively constant, but the content had shifted. That is, the new people who joined were looking for a different perspective on religious ideas but felt comfortable with a structure similar to the religious groups they had left. These people also wanted a stable religious community for their children, one that would inform them of their Judeo-Christian heritage but would also acquaint them with the religious aspirations and perceptions of the other world religions.[47] When reflecting on the second set of polarities, the acceptance of innovation

and change being the norm while at the same time requiring that continuity and stability be honoured, the balance was good but not ideal. In the early 1960s when the numbers of new people attending increased in proportion there was an uneasy feeling in some of the members' perceptions of what was happening. The familiar, stable and acceptable pattern was beginning to shift as the variety of the new people's backgrounds and input made its impact felt. The excitement at the continued numerical growth masked a sense of disquiet at the continued growth and change of diverse ideas and actions. On the whole, however, these polarities kept a healthy tension, each adapting and accommodating to the fluctuations of the other.

There is no doubt from the responses of member/participants who were interviewed, but that the member/participants were pleased with the tenor of the church, the services, both religious and social, in which they participated, and the religious inspiration they received.[48] Most of the lay leadership were congregants who had had many years of association with the church and were respected by the church community. The Board and committees each had specific tasks to do, and did them competently. Petursson's religious leadership was vouchsafed because of his popularity, integrity and ability to provide both continuity and religious inspiration. In spite of the competencies to be found in both lay and religious leadership, however, there are some weaknesses to be observed in this set of polarities. It is difficult to assess the strength of the Board, as the Chairman's remarks to the Annual Meetings were delivered verbally and so were not included in the printed reports.[49] Petursson was the one who was the connecting link and the one who gave a summary each year of over-all member participation and church events. He was

willing to take on committee tasks[50] and take over committee responsibilities.[51] All this was praiseworthy but may have led the Board and committees to expect such "parenting" from future ministers. There was certainly not adequate preparation for the more visible and aggressive role the Board would be taking in the future. Given the fact that the merged congregation was attracting more and more people, it appeared that they had a winning combination in place. The Board would continue to trust the firm but benevolent guidance of the minister and act on his advice. In one sense, then, there was a relinquishing of some of the power of the Board that could have provided more confidence in the management of church affairs. The imbalance in this set of polarities would cause difficulties in the future.

In general, however, by the end of 1963, the future of the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg looked rosy. The membership was growing steadily, the Board and committees were performing their functions adequately and the minister was bringing to a close a long and conscientious ministry. It seemed possible that the religious message of the Unitarian Universalists, so closely allied to the secularist and individualist push of North American culture would attract many people disenchanted with the more traditional messages of the Jewish and Christian religions. The upward trend in membership experienced by the mainline churches and synagogues in the 1950s had reached a plateau or had begun to decline by 1964.[52] The Unitarian Universalist churches in general and the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg in particular had not yet shown a reversal. The balance of the sets of polarities influencing the church were not yet creating any cause for great alarm. The religious purpose of the church seemed to be in keeping with the tenor of the times.

Footnotes - Chapter II The Way We Were

1. W. Kristjansson, The Icelandic People In Manitoba (Winnipeg Wallingford Press, 1965), p. 278.

2. Ibid., p. 282.

3. Kristjansson, p. 356.

4. Ibid., p. 364.

5. P. M. Petursson, "The Unitarian Church of Winnipeg, 1891-1966) Unpublished paper reprinted with revisions from The New Icelandic Canadian (Spring 1967, Winnipeg Viking Press, n.d.), pp. 3-4. See also Hewett, p. 135.

6. Ibid., p. 4.

7. The mortgage on the church was owned by the American Unitarian Association (AUA). When the congregation was unable to carry the mortgage, it was sold. All Souls Unitarian Minute Book, pp. 100-01. UCW Archives.

8. Ibid., pp. 104-05.

9. Ibid., p. 92.

10. Ibid., p. 102.

11. Interview with Mrs. Marjorie Farmer, a member of All Souls Unitarian Church, Winnipeg, May 1978.

12. There is some historical confusion here. Petursson gives 1945 as the date of merger. But UCW Board Meeting Minutes record the two groups began meeting together--as a board--February 9, 1944. Icelandic Unitarian Church Board meeting Minute Book, p. 27. UCW Archives.

13. Actually, it was legally called the First Federated Church of Unitarian and Other Liberal Christians, but was known as the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg in its internal memoranda, and in its advertising. Board Meeting Minute Book of the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg (English congregation) p. 177, UCW Archives.

14. Hewett, pp. 113, 115.

15. UCW Board Meeting Minutes, August 23, 1956. UCW Archives.

16. Kristjansson, p. 368.

17. Tapes 1, 32. When a quotation from a tape is used it is intended to inform, clarify or add emphasis to the point under consideration. Each tape has been listened to several times to make sure that any response used, is used in context.

18. Tape 15.

19. Tape 8.

20. UCW membership records.

21. Tapes 6, 32.

22. UCW (English congregation) Board Meeting Minute Book, pp. 140, 170; First Federated Church Board Meeting Minute Book (in Icelandic) pp. 166-67; Hewett, pp. 146, 161-62, 185.

23. The Stefansson estate bequest was $15,000.00. The exact date of the bequest is unknown.

24. Tape 26.

25. The Canadian Unitarian, March-April 1963, p. 4.

26. Tape 36.

27. In the 1955 Board Meeting Minutes (p. 11) it is recorded that new members were given a subscription to The Christian Register magazine.

28. Church brochure, 1951. UCW Archives.

29. Tape 8.

30. Tape 1.

31. Hewett, pp. 214-16.

32. Tapes 3, 5, 13, 14, 25.

33. Hewett, p. 215.

34. UCW Board Meeting Minute Book, Jan. 22, 1956, p. 14. UCW Archives.

35. Tape 9.

36. Tape 14.

37. Tapes 16, 24.

38. Minister's Report to the UCW Annual Meeting, 1963. UCW Archives.

39. Tapes 1, 2.

40. Tape 9.

41. Tapes 13, 24.

42. Tape 8.

43. Tapp's study indicates that 68% of Canadian Unitarians have partial or complete University graduate status, p. 9.

44. Tape 9.

45. Tape 36.

46. Tape 23.

47. Tape 30.

48. Tapes 1, 2, 6, 8, 9, 13, 14, 17, 22, 24, 29.

49. At least this was true for the 1962, 1963 and 1964 Annual Reports. UCW Archives.

50. For example, he had been in charge of setting up the church library. The 1963 library report stated: "Mr. Petursson having established the library firmly, gave up the chairmanship and became our chief selection advisor." Clifford A. Patrick Library Report to the Annual Meeting, Jan. 27, 1963. UCW Archives.

51. When the USC Winnipeg Branch, run by The Winnipeg Unitarians, were unable to fulfill their commitment due to ill health of committee members, it was Petursson who organized the emergency packing session. USC Winnipeg Branch Report to the Annual Meeting, Jan. 27, 1963.

52. A Summary Report of the Committee on Membership Trends. (New York: The United Presbyterian Church, 1976), Graph A. p. 5.

## Chapter III

## THE JENKINS ERA - A NEW PACE

January of 1964 found the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg at the beginning of a transition. The Reverend Philip Petursson, who had been minister and friend to Winnipeg Unitarians for thirty-five years announced his plans to resign in August of that year. There were mixed feelings about the resignation. The church was growing under his leadership and was comfortable and secure. The past had been difficult but survivable, and the present state of affairs was viewed with optimism. The future seemed to hold a place for the vision of these religious liberals. There was sadness from some that Petursson would not be leading them into this place, and acceptance and appreciation from others that he had expended so much of his energy, enthusiasm and wisdom in helping them achieve as much as they had. From others there was relief that the old was passing gracefully away, allowing new religious directions to occur. The pulpit committee that was convened to search for a new minister received a list of available ministers from the UUA and, with a strong recommendation from Petursson, within two months had decided on the Reverend William Jenkins as their candidate.[1] Petursson saw Jenkins as just the person needed for Winnipeg Unitarians at this time. He understood Canada and Canadians, had dynamic preaching ability and was a "go-getter." Jenkins accepted the call in May, with a written guarantee for a salary much higher than had been paid to Petursson.

It was considered quite a coup to obtain the services of Jenkins,

as he had been the minister of the large and successful First Unitarian Church of Toronto for 16 years and was credited with providing the inspiration and the stimulation that took the church from being a small group in 1943 to that of a thriving congregation with its own building in 1959. A long-time member of the Toronto congregation recalled that in his sermons and discussions he spoke in the vernacular of the times, appealing to a wide range of people.[2] He was ambitious, both for himself and others, and helped members, sometimes forcefully, to take their share of responsibility.

The splendid isolation forced on the Winnipeg congregation because of its geographical location meant, however, that the search committee were unaware of the bitter fighting and uncompromising--some would say rigid--stand that Jenkins had taken prior to his resignation in 1959. But they did know that after his resignation he had moved to a church in Rochester, New York, where once again he had been the force behind the construction of a large church building for the congregation.[3] He had returned to Canada in January 1963 to become the minister to the Hamilton, Ontario, church. He had taken a one year contract with the possibility of becoming the CUC executive secretary, but due to personality conflicts and regional reorganization this fell through and left him available to accept the call to the Winnipeg church.[4] There was no doubt that he was impatient for growth in the Canadian Unitarian movement and would encourage such growth in Winnipeg. Jenkins took over the leadership of the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg in September, 1964.

Jenkins was a very different minister from Petursson. He was highly intellectual in his sermons, was a provocative and stimulating preacher[5] and aggressive in his desire to move the church on to bigger and better things. Many new people came out to hear him. He enjoyed

the controversy caused by the clash of ideas and encouraged the congregation to participate in discussions. The personal warmth and interpersonal interest that was one of Petursson's hallmarks was not as evident in Jenkins. The intensity and concern so clearly communicated in his sermons was not often felt in individual discussions and encounters.[6] And while the "intellectual breath of fresh air" threatened to give some member/participants a bad cold, there was nothing boring or stale happening. He had a decisive manner and was perceived by some as being more like a "successful business man . . . and one with influential friends"[7] than a minister. All in all, he brought a jolt and a shock to many after thirty-five years of Petursson's ministerial style.

The image that emerges of the Unitarian Church of this period presents a different picture to that of the time preceding it. Definitely there was the image of more activity, of new things happening, of it being a "thriving outfit,"[8] of progressive, productive people with more committees and structure.[9] A high energy level existed and self-confidence grew as people who had stature in the larger community became involved in church activities.[10] An even more humanistic and rationalistic religious emphasis was appearing.

There were mixed feelings about this new image. Some of the members felt like "back-benchers who were continually being talked down to,"[11] and felt uninvolved, and there were others who admitted they didn't understand a lot of the subject matter but still "enjoyed the interaction."[12] For most there was a sense of excitement at the burgeoning expansion.[13] The new atmosphere of intellectually provocative ideas was bringing in more people who enjoyed the challenge of heated discussions and saw the possibility of being on the cutting edge of change.

New books and articles on political science, sociology and religion were critiqued and sometimes challenged, and member/participants were invited to take part in the debate.[14] The religious community was being educated as well as being urged to deepen the meaning of life and act accordingly. For the most part, however, the talks provided information and inspiration to individuals and did not result in any outward-reaching community action.

In spite of the rapid pace that was being set, not everything was perceived as changing. There continued to be a high quality of organ and vocal music and the church still had an open religious stance, where individuals could hold divergent religious views and be respected for them.[15] There was seen to be a core of people who faithfully supported church concerns regardless of their own particular feeling for changes that had occurred with which they did not agree.

Change was indeed a key element during this period. Two months after Jenkins arrived in Winnipeg he recommended changes to both the Board and committee structure.[16] The changes would increase the accountability of the committees, increase the number of Board members from 9 to 12 and also increase their responsibilities. As Jenkins wrote in an Annual Report to the church: "I believe . . . in the experimental approach . . . if old methods don't work, let's experiment with new ones."[17] The lay leadership was open to experimenting with untried methods, even if there may have been some puzzlement regarding what had been wrong with the old one.

Canadian Unitarian historian Phillip Hewett comments:

> Controversial changes began to arrive unannounced. One Sunday morning the congregation arrived to find that all the pews had been sold and replaced by chairs at the insistence of the minister in

> consultation with only a few leading members. During the same year, 1966, the name on the signboard outside was suddenly changed to read UNITARIAN CENTRE.[18]

In fact, discussion of removal of the pews had come up at the Board level as early as March 1965. The matter was reviewed for the next 18 months and then agreed to "in principle."[19] But it was probably Jenkins' note of "strong disappointment . . . [at the] hesitation over replacement of the pews . . . and [the feeling of] a certain lack of decision on the part of the Board . . . with regard to moving ahead" that pushed the Board into taking action.[20] In the past, if a concern came up at a Board meeting and there was not strong approval for it, usually the suggestion was dropped or procedurally tabled. Changes happened slowly and cautiously, with the minister approving, the Board agreeing and congregational waters having been tested. But now there was stronger pressure from the minister to move in the direction he prescribed as soon as possible.[21]

There was a new pattern to the way many changes now occurred: consultation between minister and Board, a brief gestation period, then action and sometimes simultaneous notice given to the congregation of change, or else--as in the case of the pews and the sign--the visible difference was obvious. There was not any indication in reading Board minutes that the Board felt it was being pushed around or manipulated, but just that it was handling the affairs of the church the best it could, and following the advice of its religious leader. After all, he had the experience and expertise of successfully guiding the Toronto congregation to an increased size and an improved stature in the larger community. There was somewhat the sense of holding the reins to a team of rather head-strong horses and holding them rather gingerly.

Church programs continued, but there were some differences. People remembered good speakers on social issues at the church. There also was good use made of the church library. The library was a fairly recent addition to the church. Thanks to a fund started to commemorate the life of an active church member,[22] one of the rooms in the church was refurnished in 1962 and books were both donated and bought to begin a library. Because of the sermons and talks that were given in the church, the library committee purchased books relevant to issues that were being addressed from the pulpit, and people borrowed these books with regularity.[23]

The Ladies' Aid continued to fulfill the needs of the older Icelandic women in the church and to donate money to the church from fund-raising projects. In the spring of 1964, however, a new women's group was formed called the Women's Alliance. For several years this group provided a meeting place for some of the younger women of both English and Icelandic backgrounds. They also had fund-raising projects, but on the whole the purpose seemed more social than service oriented. By the time Jenkins had left Winnipeg, this group had ceased to exist. The women who had started the group had either left the church or had lost interest. There does not appear to have been much attempt made to integrate new member/participants into their group. Also, women were moving into leadership roles within the church, and, like the men, having to divide their time between family responsibilities and full-time jobs.

The USC continued to be perceived as the most important church program in terms of having an impact on the larger community.[24] Even after the basement was partitioned and the USC moved to the firehall half a block away, it still "gave us a sense of mission,"[25] a sense of

pride in contributing to the welfare of those less fortunate.

Arising out of the new intellectual atmosphere were Book Clubs, Theatre Discussion Groups, Play Reading Groups. All in all in this respect, the church followed the pattern of the earlier period, that is, there were more "in-church" activities than there were programs designed to have an impact on the larger community.

The church was being led in a much more humanistic direction, as evidenced by the change in the church sign from "church" to "centre" and by changes in the high holy days. Equal emphasis was given to non-Christian celebrations such as the winter solstice and the Jewish Hannukah during the month of December. Along with changes in content came changes in form as church services were held that centered around a talk and discussion afterward with no accompanying hymns and prayers. The old was not completely replaced; the old style worship services were also held, but the new style was finding a home.

In October of 1966 the 75th Anniversary of the formal beginnings of Unitarianism in Winnipeg was recognized by a series of events including an art show, a tea, a banquet and special speakers for two Sunday services.[26] The events were a success and added to a feeling of optimism.

Because of the increased number of people attending church services, by the end of 1965 it was necessary to hold double services on Sunday mornings. Also, in October of 1966, the Board had voted to build a new church building that would include modern and varied facilities for the growing religious community. In May of 1967 an ad-hoc committee composed of Board representatives and members from the congregation-at-large, recommended hiring a leading architect to design a church building.

The completed architectural plans were innovative and consistent with a church that expected continued growth. In March of 1968 the Board moved to hire a business consultant "to conduct a major fundraising campaign in the fall."[27] On the surface, everything was proceeding smoothly.

One of Jenkins' major strengths lay in helping congregations obtain new buildings. He had conducted successful building campaigns at two of his past church appointments and both congregations had benefitted from the new physical plants. And certainly there was need for major changes in the existing structures to accommodate the anticipated continued growth of members. The Board meeting minutes and Annual Meeting reports continually mention over-crowded facilities, insufficient space, unsatisfactory upkeep of both buildings and general dissatisfaction with the viable space in the buildings.[28] This need for more or better space was happening to Unitarian groups in other parts of Canada. As Phillip Hewett states: "Much of the energy of churches and fellowships alike went into providing themselves with adequate buildings. All across the country the story was repeated."[29]

But one month after the decision to hire a business consultant had been taken, Jenkins handed in his resignation. It is impossible to know what would have happened had Jenkins stayed longer, but underneath the apparent swift growth and new humanistic approach there had been signs of financial difficulty within a year of his arrival. Board meeting minutes contain many comments about deficit budgets, financial difficulties and unpaid bills. For example, in May 1965 with regard to an outstanding bill of $150 owed to the church soloist the Board minutes record, "It was agreed that the chair and treasurer send her a cheque as soon as money is available."[30] The deficit position resulted in every

avenue for available monies being explored. The Board began to look more closely at a longstanding church bequest known as the Stefansson estate (mentioned previously in Chapter II). Attempts were made to gain information as to the ways in which the principal money ($14,260.92) and not only the interest might be used.[31] It was discovered that none of the trustees of the estate any longer lived in Winnipeg and none were any longer connected to the church. When the trustees were located money was borrowed against the bequest ($2500.00 by June 1965), and by April 1966 the Stefansson Estate trustee had released the remaining principal for the use of the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg.[32] In June 1966 the unanimous recommendation of the Finance Committee to the Board was, "that the Stefansson Estate money be used as a building fund and not be used for current expenses including maintenance or renovation of present building."[33] But by the fall of that year the pews were out and the chairs were in and the majority of the Stefansson money was spent.[34] The chairs were a good deal more comfortable than the pews and would allow for a variety of seating arrangements that would in turn allow for more flexibility in church services. It does not appear that there was the intention to mislead the congregation, but because of the method of Board operation and the selective communication that went on between the Board and the congregation, there was a good deal of misunderstanding and partial information being exchanged. This led to hurt feelings --particularly on the part of many of the Icelandic members[35]--and did not contribute to a sense of shared community.

While there had bene quite an increase in numbers of people participating in church activities,[36] financially, the church was not much better off than it had been in 1964.[37] The total budget for 1964 as

reported to the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) was $19,500, and in 1968 the figure reported was $21,594.[38] This is a small increase for a church that is intending to raise money for a new church that was to cost more than $250,000. Granted that raising money for a building comes under a different category than annual pledges to support one's religious community, it still does not completely compute, as the new jargon puts it. Unfortunately some of the church's financial records for these years are either completely missing or incomplete so it is impossible to do more than guess at what happened. Respondents mentioned that while there were a lot more people coming to the church some did not stay very long, or else did not involve themselves in anything other than the Sunday Services.[39] A guess would be that the level of commitment was low while the excitement at the novelty of this kind of church was high. There was good entertainment and stimulation to be found here. Low commitment combined with excitement over novelty did not result in willingness to make financial contributions to support such novelty.

While financially the church was on shaky ground, in other ways it was perceived as quite healthy. As an organization it provided a purpose in life for its member/participants and had more pep to it.[40] For some there was too much emphasis being given to the intellectual life of the community and not enough to the spiritual and social action aspects. It was like a person who was healthy but swell-headed.[41] Several respondents commented on the increased pace of community life, finding it rather feverish and frenetic.[42] There were additional respondents whose perceptions told them that this religious body had only partial health. It was a person "on the defensive . . . part of the person atrophying."[43] It also appeared to many that the health had deterio-

rated from its vigorous beginning.[44] Taking the comments as a whole, it was obvious that this religious "person" was perceived as healthy at the beginning of the era with definite changes occurring that some saw as positive and others as detrimental. It is towards the end of the period that stress or tension is causing some uneasiness in the "body."

With the change in religious leadership and the visible increase in Sunday services attendance, by both adults and children, there was a large measure of hope that the sense of mission, the sense of religious purpose, would be re-kindled from the slightly stale holding-pattern it had been in during the final years of Petursson's ministry.[45] For more than half the people interviewed in this time period this sense of hope was not fulfilled. For many, there was an initial upsurge during the first year or two but it was not sustained.[46] It was perhaps like the response some people have at eating Chinese food. The taste is delicious and quickly one feels replete and satisfied. Within an hour or two, however, hunger is back and also puzzlement at how one could possibly be hungry after such a recently splendid meal.

One person who had been present and involved during all of the various eras and is still active today, commented: "Jenkins encouraged change but not a sense of mission . . . that was inhibited."[47] Change was encouraged intellectually and individually more than it was collectively, and a sense of mission must come from the collective spirit or sense of purpose that is or can be alive in the religious community. Only then will the sense of purpose communicate itself to others and affect their life course. Others had a more personal response and had not felt accepted as part of the religious community, therefore were not able to connect any sense of mission to what was happening at the church.[48]

A person whose initial contact with the Unitarian community had come from University courses was more interested in discussing her own and others' attitudes and philosophies of life and wanted "fellowship, not religion." She found the church used words that were liberal but that the people did not act like liberals. Disappointment grew as she heard people in the church community talking belittlingly about each other. This was not in keeping with her concept of an ideal ethical community, one that would attract others to it.[49] One respondent who did not remain with the church put it rather bitterly: "We needed a rejuvenated church--we're supposed to be searching for the truth, not building buildings."[50]

There was certainly a large minority that had a 'feeling of rightness' at what was going on in the church, who had a sense of continuity, of working toward something,[51] and a leader in the Winnipeg Jewish community at the time told Jenkins, "Winnipeg would not be the place it is without a Unitarian Church . . . you hold a focus for freedom and liberty that is very important."[52] So there was some impact being made on the larger community.

Perhaps the statement made by a respondent with more than 50 years involvement in the religious community comes closest to summing up an over-all impression of the sense of mission in this era: "Yes, there [was] a sense of mission but it was no longer directed toward the group, but in the direction of the man himself and what he wanted."[53] In other words, a sense of mission must ultimately be tied to a purpose that extends beyond any one individual's interpretation--it must have an appeal that is universal in character--that can be owned by each and every one in the religious community.

In other denominations all across North America, the health and relevance of their religious message and purpose was also being questioned. The increase in church attendance that had steadily risen during the 1950s, hit its peak in the early 1960s and then slowly started to slide. People no longer seemed to hear the word, heed the message or need the support and direction that churches and synagogues were providing. The emphasis that the culture had put on the secular and on the individual was being re-assessed, as the consequences of such an emphasis were observed. The Unitarian Church of Winnipeg, like other Unitarian Universalist churches across the continent, continued to promote the importance of the individual and of each person's search for religious meaning. The need for religious community was lessened as this first set of polarities became imbalanced.

In the previous period there had been a fairly even balance kept between the need for individual freedom of belief and the desire to belong to a religious community. That is, the importance for each person to search heart and mind and accept the religious beliefs that best fit one's understanding of life and still allow that right to others was balanced with the need to explore and worship life's miracles and mysteries together. There was a shift during this era. For msot respondents there was an over-emphasis on individualism, and some felt this was a good thing, since "individual freedom is the crux of Unitarianism."[54] For most, however, the heavier emphasis on individualism meant a loss in the sense of community. "The imbalance started [during this time]. . . the talk-back after the sermon brought up more diversity than unity. . . . it was as though there was [sic] two or three armed camps."[55] When the individual aspect of the Unitarian religion was over-emphasized, the aspect of be-

longing to a religious community became less important for a larger percentage of the participants. If one believes that individual freedom of belief is ultimate, the danger is that, taken to its extreme, the belief renders religious community superfluous. When changes occurred that were not perceived as being for the good of the whole community, or were not "owned" by the whole community, the old maxim, "it is easier to get forgiveness than permission" was disproved. When it appeared that one part of the community was making decisions without consulting the desires of the whole community, the commitment of member/participants to a covenanted community was disrupted. The dispersal of the Stefansson estate with what appeared to be a lack of regard for the community's needs is a case in point. But this set of polarities was not totally imbalanced. The excitement and stimulation caused by the influx of new people with diverse religious perspectives, bolstered and enhanced the significance of individual freedom of belief. The commencement of the plan for a new church edifice to be a home for religious liberals helped to create a sense of community. There was not, however, the balance that had been in existence previously.

In the second set of polarities an uneasy tnesion existed between change and innovation on the one hand and continuity and stability on the other.

The four years from 1964 to 1968 brought with them many changes for the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg. There had been a change in minister, a slight shift in theological focus; a change in Board and committee structure; physical adjustments to the building, a different exterior church sign; plans for a completely new church building, a different Sunday Services format and an alternative service offered on

Thursday nights, and growth in the numbers of people involved at all levels of church activities. Each of these changes was handled and, on the surface, assimilated. There is no doubt but that there was much excitement in the congregation at the injection of new ideas and new methods and, on the whole, willingness to try on the new formats and structures. Certainly for the new people coming in, these changes were "avant garde" and proved to them that they were "where it was happening" and the right place for them to be. The long-time members began to have some doubts--was it really the chaff that was being blown away? Some of them quietly stopped coming, others stayed and participated even though they didn't always agree or even understand. This was diversity in action and no one had said it would be all pleasant!

By the end of this period some doubt was appearing as to whether there was enough human and financial resources to complete all the tasks required of running a big church and raising a large sum of money for a new architecturally-prestigious building. As Jenkins says of the time and of the growth: "things didn't go up fast enough or far enough."[56] It was as though the people stoking the fire to produce the steam that would fill the balloon had run out of energy, or realized just how much stoking would be required. Or perhaps it was felt that too much would have to be left behind if the balloon was to take all of them with it. The familiar surroundings would be gone and with them a connectedness to the past. The numbers of new people constantly appearing meant personalities to adjust to and new ideas to understand. For the five calendar years between January 1964 and December 1968 the membership book shows that a total of 170 people joined the church. The official records sent in to the continental headquarters (UUA) in Boston, show that from 1964 to

1968 only 50 members were gained, membership rising from 300 to 350.[57] This meant that 120 members of the church, whether recently signed or not, left the church during those same five years. There were, of course, many reasons for the loss; death, job transfer, as well as dissatisfaction with the church. It did, however, point out a significant turn-over in membership and was a problem experienced by a majority of Unitarian churches on the continent.[58] It also created difficulty in maintaining a sense of continuity and stability. As one respondent put it, "there were lots of people but no at-homeness."[59]

In the polarities of lay leadership and religious leadership tension had also developed. It was caused in part, by the change in relationship between the minister and the Board and in part by a change in relationship between Board and congregation. In the past the Board had moved at a slower pace. Now pressure was being applied to step up the pace. They managed to keep up, and accomplished much, but in so doing, were not always able to maintain a channel of communication with the congregation. That the congregation recognized this inability was evidenced in the public meeting held in the church on March 3, 1968, "to discuss present and future performances of the church."[60] Twenty people attended the meeting. Those present said they wanted to receive printed information regarding what happened at Board meetings, announcements of meetings and social events made verbally after church services--for the "human touch"--, and more information regarding expenses of the church. There was also discussion about the building plans and imminent major fund-raising campaign.[61] There was obviously some uneasiness and some disappointment over the lack of communication. From the minister's point of view, by the fall of 1966 he was frustrated with "the indiffer-

ence and lack of support"[62] many of his proposals received. He had a vision of what the Winnipeg church could become and the prairie pace made it difficult to achieve. From the congregation's point of view, both leaderships were on the move, almost like a prairie fire. That put a mood of caution in the air. There was appreciation and support, on the whole, for both leaderships, but also a growing awareness of the difficulties lying ahead if the direction suggested was followed.

This era was indeed a time of change. At the end, however, there was some hesitation about the direction. At a special meeting called on May 8, 1968, to discuss the minister's resignation and to set in motion a committee to search for another minister, the question was raised for the first time: did the congregation definitely want to call another minister? The discussion to call was voted on and passed, but the question suggested some divergent views not easily reconcilable. This era was also a time of becoming more aware of some practical realities of communities, of financial requirements and physical space limitations. It was also a time of wanting to shape the future, of architectural dreams and intellectual mind-expansion. It was a church "always on the move"[63] and at a very fast pace.

Footnotes - Chapter III The Jenkins Era - A New Pace

1. Pulpit Committee meeting minutes, January 15, 1964. UCW Archives.
2. Telephone Interview with Ms Nancy Knight, Toronto, September, 1983.
3. Hewett, p. 266.
4. Ibid.
5. Tapes 1, 3, 17, 21, 23, 26, 31.
6. Tapes 1, 6, 15, 16, 17, 23.
7. Tapes 13, 17.
8. Tape 24.
9. Tape 15.
10. Tapes 1, 13, 17.
11. Tape 32.
12. Tape 26.
13. Tapes 13, 15, 31.
14. Unitarian Newsletters, 1966, 1967, UCW Archives.
15. Tapes 1, 2, 3, 16, 26, 32.
16. UCW Board meeting minutes, November 1964. UCW Archives.
17. UCW Annual Meeting minutes: Minister's Report, April 22, 1966. UCW Archives.
18. Hewett, pp. 282-83.
19. UCW Board meeting minutes, March 1965, June 1965, June 1966, August 1966. UCW Archives.
20. UCW Board meeting minutes, September 1966. UCW Archives.
21. Hewett comments that in Toronto, when Jenkins encountered opposition to a principle or a tactic he felt was right ". . . he could find little patience for those he saw as obstructionists standing in the way of progress." p. 224.
22. Clifford Patrick was a member of the Board during the 1950s.
23. Tape 2.
24. Tapes 3, 13, 14, 17, 24.

25. Tape 13.

26. Board meeting minutes, November 2, 1966. UCW Archives.

27. Board meeting minutes, March 6, 1968. UCW Archives.

28. UCW Annual Meeting Reports, 1964, 1965, 1966. UCW Archives.

29. Hewett, p. 281.

30. Board meeting minutes, May, 1965. UCW Archives.

31. Ibid., February and March 1966. UCW Archives.

32. Ibid., April 1966. UCW Archives.

33. Ibid., June 1966. UCW Archives.

34. The remainder of the Stefansson bequest ($3939.72) was used to cover the 1967 budget deficit. 1967 Budget papers, UCW Archives.

35. Tapes 9, 36.

36. See Appendix D, Tables I and II for membership figures.

37. See Appendix E, Tables I and II for financial information.

38. The UCW Budget papers list $18,920.14 on one sheet and $19,683.00 on another. I am at a loss to account for the difference between the papers, or between them and the amount reported to the UUA.

39. Tapes 13, 15, 23, 32.

40. Tapes 6, 14.

41. Tapes 1, 23, 36.

42. Tapes 2, 15.

43. Tapes 31, 32.

44. Tapes 9, 15, 21, 22, 26, 30.

45. Tape 9.

46. Tapes 9, 23, 26, 32.

47. Tape 2.

48. Tapes 22, 32.

49. Tape 30.

50. Tape 21.

51. Tapes 6, 13, 14, 15, 17, 24.

52. Tape 34.

53. Tape 36.

54. Tapes 22, 26.

55. Tapes 9, 23, 30, 31, 32.

56. Tape 34.

57. See Appendix E.

58. Tapp, p. 13.

59. Tape 31.

60. "Public Meeting," Miscellaneous Documents, UCW Archives.

61. Ibid.

62. Board meeting minutes, September 14, 1966. UCW Archives.

63. Tapes 2, 31.

## Chapter IV

### THE NAYLOR ERA - A NEW HORSE AND A CRUMBLING CART

Within a month of Jenkins' resignation a committee had been formed to find another minister for the church. The Search Committee (previously called the Pulpit Committee) did not use the friendly guidance of Petursson as the former committee had done, but had circulated a questionnaire among the congregation to obtain their views and opinions regarding a new minister.[1] There were three questions asked. The first dealt with the minister's orientation, that is, an indication of the minister's approach to leadership and the role the minister should take. The second question asked the congregation to specify what theological view they would prefer the minister to hold. The third question dealt with the amount of professional religious experience they wanted their minister to have had. Of the twelve choices offered on the question of the minister's orientation, the three most important ministerial qualities for Winnipeg Unitarians were: firstly, an Internationalist; having an understanding of national and world social problems, secondly, Creative; trying new ideas, being experimental, and thirdly, a Co-ordinator, having close communication with all groups in the church. The three qualities which were held to be least important were that the minister be: a Strong Leader; stating firmly the goals for which the church should work, a Preacher; seeing sermons as the primary mode of realizing church goals, and Traditional, tending to maintain the status quo. In answer to the question concerning a new

minister's theological views (six choices were offered), the congregation wanted someone who was first of all a humanist and secondly, one who could express and have sympathy for both theistic and agnostic religious viewpoints. Finally, the congregation was interested in someone who had had some experience, but was still growing. It is obvious from these results that the congregation was not looking for a Jenkins carbon-copy, but neither were they fully negating all of his qualities. Jenkins had given many sermons dealing with national and world social problems and had introduced a new format to the Sunday Services. He had also been a strong leader and a strong preacher. A return to Petursson's style was also not what was asked for. Petursson had had close communication with all groups in the church but he had also been more traditional.

What was wanted was someone who had a good balance of skills, someone who would keep them connected to and caring about the world around them, someone who would provide stimulation, provocation and encouragement to each part of the religious community.

The writer recalls a congregational meeting called by the Search Committee to report its success and the very words of the Search Committee spokesperson stating that with the qualifications being required, it was possible that Jesus himself would be the only suitable and acceptable candidate! In other words, the church had set a very high standard for the person they wanted to be their next religious leader, and the Search Committee did not want the congregation to have unrealistic expectations.

The minister that the Search Committee felt would best fulfil the requirements of the congregation was the Reverend Norman Naylor. The congregation voted to accept this choice and Naylor began his ministry

in January 1969. He already had had six years experience of ministry in the United States, three years as an assistant minister and a little more than three years as the minister of a Unitarian Universalist church in Brooklyn, New York. In the three years he had been at the Flatbush Unitarian Universalist Church in Brooklyn, membership had risen from 24 to 62, and the financial income increased from $3500.00 to $8500.00.[2] He had stated an interest in increasing the Winnipeg church's relevance to, and influence upon, the larger community.[3] Naylor knew that the church was in transition, and he also commented in response to the church information packet that had been sent to him prior to his being called that, "the definition and direction of the church does not seem clear to me in terms of a consensus . . . and that clarification of the congregational definition and direction are important in considering the architecture of new buildings."[4] The legacy he had been left would certainly prove to need both definition and direction.

In the intervening months, from July to December 1968, the lay leadership took over the ministerial functions of worship and program co-ordination. There were also on-going negotiations regarding the holding of the fund-raising campaign for the new building. One respondent commented that these months were most enjoyable, with many member/participants willingly donating skills, time and energy to the church community. There was the feeling that they "had something worth continuing."[5] Church life continued with a sense of waiting and expectancy in the air.

Initially, there was a strong acceptance of Naylor. He was young (in his mid-thirties whereas Jenkins had been in his mid-fifties) and eager to share his knowledge and skills with others. He was perceived

as an extremely likeable person with very modern ideas.[6] He was an accomplished musician and enjoyed socializing. Most people found it was easy to talk with him, that no topic was sacrosanct and that his perception of life was enlightening.[7] One respondent commented on his support and assistance during a difficult life crisis.[8] A few were concerned with his "pop" image, feeling that some of his modern ideas were accepted without analysis, leading to jumping on most bandwagons that presented themselves.[9] In the beginning, however, enthusiasm and excitement were evident in the numbers of people who came out to participate in his services.

The image of the church during this period changed several times. At the beginning it had some aspects of the Petursson period. It was a warm, supportive, satisfying place to be, the atmosphere was pleasing, the people like a family.[10] At the same time there was still strong affirmation for one's individuality. Gradually, as Naylor's personality and leadership style made themselves felt, there was a stronger impulse for people to try "to find themselves."[11] One respondent who had been a member/participant of the church since the middle 1950s felt that what was happening at the church was also happening in the wider community.[12] That is, the "human potential" movement was in full swing, the "ME generation" popular, the inward search for identity seen as necessary, not selfish. This was unquestionably the case, but not all churches, either mainline or Unitarian, had ministers who supported this perspective as positively and wholeheartedly as did Naylor. It would be false to suggest that this was all he supported, but the surface image of a "with-it" community obscured some of his other concerns. For some, the image was like a kaleidoscope, constantly changing, with some designs being more

pleasing than others. For one group the image "seemed to attract the hippies" and encourage a sensuous or "touchy-feely" atmosphere.[13] It still produced intellectual stimulation for many others. Topical issues were still being addressed but in a more innovative fashion. Naylor often played organ solos during the more traditional services, and there was an increase in the variety of musical pieces and instruments played. On the whole, worship services were more novel and unusual. As the era progressed however, the key seemed to be on change and on breaking away from the traditional ways. Those who liked the secure feeling of knowing what was going to happen when they came to church on Sunday, of being in a place of peaceful familiarity, became apprehensive. It was hard to know what to expect. Sometimes the chairs would be arranged in different patterns, and once there were no chairs at all, they were to be picked up at the side of the hall, so that one could sit where it "felt right." More radical statements were being made on social issues such as marriage, sexual preference and education. It was not as comfortable for many to say that one belonged to "a church with a difference," because for some this difference now alienated them from previous views commonly held by mainline churches.

The church was certainly more visible in the larger community but the publicity was not always welcome to the members. One respondent said what echoed many other comments: "It was a confusing [time] for me . . . I felt at home, but rumblings told me many others didn't."[14] Another respondent commented that both the church as a whole and the minister's leadership "forced us to recognize what we really are at heart, much more conservative than we wanted to recognize."[15] The image was in line with what the congregation had said they wanted their

religious leadership to project, but the actuality and consequences were not as easy to accept.

As mentioned earlier, Naylor was aware of the lack of clarity with regards to the church's religious definition and direction. Along with the lay leadership, he endeavoured to bring about that clarity. As Naylor had stated in his report to the 1970 Annual Meeting: "Speaking of direction, I firmly believe that we cannot go anywhere until we know where it is we want to go. Determining where we want to go, in terms of goals, has been of highest priority in my mind."[16]

A Goals Committee was established in 1969 which consisted of the minister and six members of the congregation. Using a process that permitted involvement of all member/participants, a list of goals was priorized. The goals most clearly stated the desire of the Winnipeg Unitarians for religious community. The first goal was; "to develop the 'loving community', through promotion of good family relations and through promotion of a caring bond with all members of our Unitarian family."[17] The second goal was the development of a "socially concerned community through heightened awareness to local and national problems . . ."[18]

Since the intention to develop and affirm the religious community was agreed upon, what went wrong? One answer is to be found in the amount and variety of changes that took place. These changes occurred organizationally, programmatically, financially and socially.

Just as had happened with the change in religious leadership before, in less than a year arrangements were underway for a re-organization of the committee and Board structure, "to improve the democratic process."[19] A Program Council was set up that allowed for more involve-

ment by the member/participants and took away some of the responsibility from the Board. On paper the changes were for the better, but it proved difficult to find people to take on the new positions. In part it was a communication problem. The re-organization was a new idea introduced by the minister and endorsed by a majority of Board members, who were then either not willing or not able to accomplish all the required changes.

There were misunderstandings regarding changes in the physical space. Rooms in the church that had previously been dedicated and furnished to commemorate the life of a former member or minister were used for different purposes without consultation of those originally involved in the dedication. One respondent recalled being present at a congregational meeting when discussion about renovating the sanctuary took place. She remembered the vote as being opposed to renovations. The sanctuary had been renovated before in 1951 and significantly changed. She was upset to learn that renovations had been done anyway. From her point of view, it seemed to negate the time, energy, money and consensus that had brought about the earlier renovations. The majority of the community liked the new look of the sanctuary, but obviously not enough time had been taken to bring everyone on board.[20]

When looking at church programs during this period another change is seen. There were more programs than ever before. "Something for Everybody" is what 1969's pledge campaign packet stated. The "Extended Family" program was one that answered a need of couples and individuals who did not have any, or many, blood relations in the city and therefore had little support in times of stress, and no interaction with different role models. People were grouped together to form extended families so

that different ages and life-styles could interact together. Altogether there were 5 extended families (of between 12-20 members each) started. There was an "About Your Sexuality" program started, first of all for parents and other interested adults, with the intention of the program being extended to the youth. The leaders had received training, and the program on the surface was accepted by most of the adults, but for a variety of reasons the youth did not take the program.[21] There were "Awareness" sessions, similar to encounter groups which were being offered in the larger community as well. These met with mixed responses, some finding them extremely helpful in coming to grips with personal issues and others experiencing the inter-personal confrontations as destructive to their personal growth.[22] A "Luncheon Group" was started by and for church members who for the most part were retired. This group also provided a focus for some of the older members who had lately become only peripherally involved. There was a short-lived women's group formed, intended to have a support and consciousness-raising function. All these programs were in addition to the on-going groups started in the Jenkins' era. In other words, variety brought much spice to the church programs. And while variety spiced up the life-menus of some, this rich, rather exotic diet gave indigestion to others.

A few respondents mentioned that a greater impact was made on the community through publicity given to sermons and interviews with the minister on social issues.[23] He was interviewed or spoke publicly on the church's Human Sexuality program, abortion, Vietnam war objectors, civil liberties, funeral planning and future shock, to name but a few. The Human Sexuality program was both controversial and intriguing to the larger community as it took an open, questioning, accepting stance

to many aspects of sexuality that were still considered to be unacceptable. The congregation's involvement with and understanding of the Unitarian Universalist continental movement was increased. The minister and lay leadership publicized issues that were of concern to the UUA and member/participants were encouraged to attend meetings and take part in the democratic process. A new prairie Canadian-American association, called "Prairie Galaxy" (that would decrease the sense of geographical isolation) was conceived by two Winnipeg Unitarians.

A Nursery School and then a Day Care Centre were started, mainly due to the efforts of one member, and they serviced the needs of children of working parents in the area who were not Unitarian. One of the respondents said that she liked the "doing" things that went on, both within the church community and extending into the larger community.[24] There was action happening as well as words.

The emphasis, however, was on "in church" programs. One respondent commented on criticisms regarding the church being not as actively involved in the larger community concerns: "We come to this church to build up our souls, build our supports, to try out new ideas within a framework that can be supportive and growing . . . we're all busy individually out in the community."[25] And this tended to be true. The minister and many member/participants were actively involved in a variety of social causes, but this did not often get translated into a total church effort. Rather, the encouragement to develop one's own religious values carried over into doing one's own social action.

There were also changes felt in the financial situation of the church. It was almost a year after Jenkins arrived before major financial difficulties were brought to the attention of the community. The

financial problem was already in place when Naylor arrived. On January 26, 1969, a Congregational Budget Meeting was held to approve the 1969 budget. At that time a motion was passed which said in its main clause:

> that, due to the financial crises in the church at this time, a committee should draw up an activities program for the year and that we conduct a financial canvass being guided by UUA recommendations.[26]

Six weeks later in March a second budget meeting was held, again "to consider the budget" which was pointed out as being a deficit budget.[37] The meeting was also to consider the date of the building drive. The deficit budget was passed and within a month the campaign planned for the new building was indefinitely postponed.[38] On October 26, 1969, the Budget Proposal Meeting for the 1970 budget moved a motion "that $35,180 be the goal of the Canvass Committee on November 2, 1969."[29] The pledges that came in totalled $21,710.45.[30] As a result, the minister's salary was not raised. This was to be the case for three years. The willingness to accept responsibility for fair payment of ministerial services, begun during Jenkins' era, was weakening. However, of the final three years of Naylor's ministry, two of them included salary increases.

Socially, the changes meant that member/participants were encouraged to be more open with their feelings as well as their ideas. There was stronger support for taking the Unitarian ideal of tolerance into the realm of action, of making what one did live up to what one said. A spirit of experimentation also prevailed. How was one to know what life-style was most appropriate if one had not experienced several? There was no pressure applied, but the norm was acceptance of differences in deeds as well as in words. This change also meant that people who were joining the religious community had behaviours and life-styles

that hithertofore had only been read about not encountered face-to-face. For example, some openly stated their homosexual preferences and others used language that was considered inappropriate.

The health of the church during this period was perceived in a variety of ways, there being no single prevailing view. One quarter of the respondents who had participated in church life during this period saw the church as healthy. One person enlarged her response by adding that health means a growing situation, and when something is growing there are usually growth pains. More than a quarter of the respondents saw the church as being healthy but with reservations. "The body is on vacation time . . . structure has been thrown away."[31] It was seen as being convalescent, recovering from surgery. Others in this group saw the body as healthy but having neurotic, or psychological problems.[32] Almost one third of the respondents felt the church was not healthy, either because it was becoming too radical or because it was a symptom of what was happening in the larger society, a "sign of the times."[33] In other words some uneasiness was evident. It reminded the writer of the feelings parents often have about their adolescents. They seem so healthy in spite of the junk food they eat and ridiculous hours they keep and the trouble they get into, but there must be something wrong!

The sense of mission went through several stages during this six year period. There was the initial excitement at new leadership taking hold and the suspense of waiting for a new church that would end some of the frustration at continually having to patch and fix a deteriorating building. At the beginning it looked as if a sense of purpose was building again after a brief hiatus. For those respondents who started in the church at the beginning of, or during this period, a sense of mission

or religious purpose was felt. "Most of the times there seemed to be a total caring of [sic] each other."[34] Another said, "there was a sense of commonality and energy when I started . . . a direction coming from the congregation."[35] So that, in spite of financial difficulties, lay and religious leadership and the congregation as a whole were perceived as working together toward a common end. Further into the period some felt the sense of mission was growing, others, that it had disappeared completely. A segment from the Board Chairperson's report to the 1970 Annual Meeting gives a notion of this:

> There have been substantial changes in leadership, membership and focus over the past several years culminating in Norman Naylor's arrival last year. The changes have been challenging and stimulating to some of us and merely upsetting to others. The cumulative effect seemed to be confusion as to what we are, and should be, as a Unitarian Church . . . we have begun to find ourselves again and to draw together as a congregation.[36]

And the next year the same chairperson saw a continued improvement, "a greater unity and closeness within the community."[37] But it was obvious that the church was going through an identity crisis, and one that was causing a sense of mission to become diffuse. All the energy was going in to the matter of "what we are, and should be, as a Unitarian church," rather than knowing what it was and working together for a common purpose. In other words, the church was having to take a large step backward to try and pin down the common basis, the religious perspective, that informed and inspirited the sense of mission. It was not only the changes brought about by Naylor's new emphases that caused this.

There was disappointment and perplexity over the failure to complete the major goal of Jenkins' era to construct a new and significant religious edifice for the Winnipeg Unitarian community. In this regard

the "onward and upward" motif had definitely failed. Having to backtrack on the building plans brought a concomitant feeling of having to backtrack on other aspects of church life. As Naylor put it: "the new building that is really needed before one of stone and mortar is built is the building of the Unitarian community. This is what we are about now."[38] Unfortunately the downward trend in financial support, whether caused by disillusionment over the failure of the building campaign or for other reasons, made it difficult for the religious and lay leadership to attempt very much.

The church was certainly not in total disarray. Many people still came out to programs and services. Many new people were fascinated at the variety of ways in which this church expressed a reverence for life and portrayed the wellsprings of the spirit found in both traditional and modern sources. Some of them became involved and gave time and energy to help such a community become more visible and vibrant. For them the sense of mission was strong.[39] There did not, however, seem to be enough of a critical mass that had this enthusiasm and energy; plainly not enough people who had a strong sense of the background of the Unitarian faith. One of the respondents said, "the thing that was missing was the spirit . . . there was a body with no soul."[40] This person was new to the Unitarian community with not much knowledge of the Unitarian heritage, but she intuited something akin to a "crying in the wilderness," a searching after religious purpose. A respondent who had been present during all the periods under study perceived a disintegration of the sense of purpose in 1969-1970. He felt there was an attempt to change the sense of purpose that was resisted.[41] The new leadership was encouraging a participative and affective mode that

would result in more than intellectual stimulation and tolerance. The minister would agree in essence with all these comments.

> The congregation did not seem to be interested in expressing itself to the [larger] community in some way that would define it as a Unitarian church that was truly different from all other churches in the city . . . I wanted them to unify around a conscious sense of what Unitarianism was to them, and they resisted that.[42]

Some would insist that they were resisting because they did not like the direction being taken. Others felt that there was no direction at all. One thing that is certain is that much was happening, much was changing and, somewhere along the way, the sense of mission was lost or deflected.

After the honeymoon phase, which lasted for about 18 months, other problems began to surface. At the end of 1970 a special Religious Education report indicated a large drop in church school enrolment and attendance, from 120 to 79, "problems for which solutions must be found."[43] Many reasons were given for this decrease: lack of parental interest and involvement, unattractive and physically limiting church school space, inappropriate curriculum, part of a pattern to be found in other [mainline] churches.[44] The solution to this problem resulted in a change in another aspect of church life. Since the middle of Jenkins' ministry the church had been holding two worship services on Sunday mornings to accommodate the numbers of adults and children. By the second year of Naylor's ministry there were not as many people turning out to services, nor were there as many volunteers willing to carry out all the accompanying tasks. Following discussion the congregation voted to return to a single Sunday service, thus allowing Religious Education resources and personnel to be consolidated.[45] This action

temporarily solved several problems but by 1972, into the fourth year of Naylor's ministry, the drop in church attendance began causing alarm.

The year 1972 seems to have been a turning point for this period. Much energy and participation by religious and lay leadership and by the congregation in general went into trying to pull things together. Concerned active member/participants initiated and held two open meetings to discuss the present situation. This group, called the Ruth-Harold Committee met on February 13, 1972 "to enquire into the state of Unitarianism in Winnipeg"[46] and several bones of contention were raised. As the result of this meeting, an all-day conference called Introspection III was convened in March of 1972.[47] A rather ominous sentence in the pre-conference material sent to church members read, "Please attend this conference, otherwise your absence will be considered a vote against the continuation of the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg."[48] Sixty people attended this conference. The pre-conference material had told prospective attendees that the workshops would "center upon the areas of dissatisfaction brought out by the Ruth-Harold Meetings."[49] The workshop topics were: 1) Why should this church continue? 2) The Roles of Minister, Board and Congregation, 3) Community, and 4) Spirituality.[50]

From the 1972 Annual Meeting Reports it seems that these meetings and conference did help to clear the air. They created a forum where the congregation, lay leadership, and the minister could air their grievances, agree on ways to solve them and reaffirm their desire to form a common bond of liberal religious endeavour. Many changes occurred at this point. There was a reorganization of the Board that redistributed responsibilities more evenly. The "Extended Families" program began in the spring of 1972 and was immediately successful. The Board endorsed

the "About Your Sexuality" program. In the fall of that year four members of the congregation were fully funded to attend a conference in Philadelphia dealing with Unitarian Universalist City Centre Churches and the specific problems they faced. The Nursery School/Day Care organization working out of the church basement became legally constituted. It was a busy active year and the majority of people were committed to trying to make the new more modern direction the church was taking, work. Things seemed to be settling down. The church services were still innovative, but not quite as unusual, there was vital social action in place through the Nursery School and involvement in a Federal Penitentiary program, and the minister finally had a legal contract.[51] There had been a good level of communication. Congregation, lay leadership and minister all seemed willing to correct their mistakes, bolster their weaknesses and make allowances for the faults of others. Unfortunately this did not extend into the area of pledges. Or rather, as the figures show, some of the peripheral participants dropped off and the more committed member/participants raised their pledging level. It was not, however, enough to provide the money necessary to do all the things that needed doing. On Nov. 12, 1972 a Special Congregational Meeting was called, as the '72 pledge campaign had produced "insufficient money to operate the Centre at this year's 'bare bones' level."[52] Expectations were lowered, some extra pledges came in and the budget limped through the next year. The programs still showed the same amount of variety and the lay leadership and minister were carefully optimistic.

In 1974 however, more rifts appeared in the church community. Dissatisfaction with Board participation led the Board chairperson to comment:

> If the congregation cannot evoke nine people who can give those qualities [time, initiative, energy and commitment] for one to three years, perhaps we need to ask ourselves if we really want to continue . . . why have so many people told their criticisms only to their friends. . .. while no one has gone to our new Congregation-Minister Relations Committee?[53]

In the same set of Annual Meeting Reports the minister comments:

> . . . This has been the best year of my ministry in Winnipeg. . . . nearly five and a half years ago when I arrived here . . . a sense of religious spirit and community seemed missing . . . my feeling is that at present we are closer to being a church community, a religious community, than at any time in the last five and a half years . . . characteristics are warmth, sharing, openness, honesty, caring, spontaneity, commitment to each other and to our free religion.[54]

There was obviously a different tone and perspective coming from the lay and ministerial leadership. The congregation was becoming split, some approving and affirming the open, spontaneous commitment to action as well as words, and others feeling that they had lost their stability and that it was time to retrench.

Three events stand out as signposts in this year. Firstly, a homosexual wedding was performed by the minister with the CBC in attendance; secondly, a program offered by the UUA called Sharing-in-Growth was entered into by the church; and thirdly, the Congregation-Minister Relations (CMR) Committee, formed to provide a process by which both minister and congregation could share grievances in a safe atmosphere, was asked to conduct a congregational survey.

The minister performed the wedding with the knowledge and approval of the Board.[55] The minister was at liberty, according to the liberal religious Unitarian tradition, to marry any couple he felt in conscience were sincere about their intentions to share their life together, without approval from Board or congregation. The resulting publicity, however, evoked a strong emotional response--some positive, more negative--

from the congregation. Were the Unitarian religious values being held up to be challenged, or was there some place at which the communication process was faulty or inappropriate? The Board approval had been given with the understanding that there would be no unnecessary publicity. There had already been some publicity, as, in an attempt to legalize the marriage, the banns had been announced in church in the legally required manner. The minister perceived the ceremony as "a political act with religious roots,"[56] and in his report to the 1974 Annual Meeting reminded the religious community that "the Church does not minister to the larger community by being invisible." There were some who had supported the wedding but felt betrayed by the public airing on the CBC of part of the ceremony; others were upset by everything; and still others felt that the total experience was one that correctly, courageously and honestly depicted the Unitarian stance of championing the right of each human being to the same measure of freedom and dignity. No one was untouched by the event.

In the spring of 1974 on the advice of the minister and with full support from the Board the church applied for and was accepted into a UUA "Sharing-in-Growth" program. This was a program designed to produce growth in churches that showed growth potential but had not been able to realize it. Statistically, Winnipeg should have been able to attract many more people who had a liberal religious perspective.[57] The Sharing-in-Growth pre-acceptance questionnaire answered by 237 of the Winnipeg church's members and friends revealed their concern with the church's situation. The current condition of the church was described as weak, or very weak, by 78% of the respondents.[58] One of the questions asked was: In your imagination, what are the three main things you would like to see your Society achieve in the next three to five years? The top

three things were: "more fellowship, warmth, communication and participation of members"; "ministerial or other professional leadership"; "growth and membership."[59] Clearly, the religious community wanted to be a religious community with a sense of belonging and purpose, but was still feeling frustration in achieving this goal. The Sharing-in-Growth program was not designed to solve problems as much as to help churches gain a sense of pride in their religious group and want to share it with others. In other words, the program assumed that each participating church was capable of working out its own internal problems. The program started in the fall of 1974, bringing in outside participants from growing Unitarian churches elsewhere in the continent to work with a team from the Winnipeg church. While the program with its meetings and workshops provided a chance for members to share their aspirations and needs, it had come too late to encourage growth effectively. The internal problems were not being resolved.

In the fall of 1974, the Board requested the Congregation-Minister Relations (CMR) Committee to do a study of the congregation's present feelings about the church and the ministerial leadership. The committee worked long hours and listened to countless confidential concerns. Many member/participants, whether peripherally or actively involved, and Board and committee members were contacted by the committee and encouraged to share their reasons for and feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the church. In a letter the CMR Committee sent to the Board the consensus was that, "we feel that problems concerning lay leadership, commitment, involvement and communication exist in this congregation to a marked degree independent of whether or not there is a minister."[60]

The Commitee, then, did not feel the blame could be laid at the door of the minister, although he of course was part of the equation trying to be solved.

In this era, the first set of polarities--between the importance of individual freedom of belief (and therefore, of the individual) and the need to be part of a religious community--continued to be unbalanced. It was felt by more than half the respondents that the needs of the individual had priority, that there was little "team spirit."[61] One person who started attending the church during this period commented that she felt the centrality of the individual, "which was good for me at the time, because I needed affirmation as I picked and chose what to believe . . . it helped me individually . . . at this time I was a 'taker'."[62] This underscored a difficulty for Unitarians in general and this church in particular. The Unitarian attitude of determining religious beliefs individually and respecting others who were doing the same thing, made it easier to ignore or suppress needs that required group support. The uniqueness and authority given to each individual outweighed any common apprehension of the religious community as a whole. This could be seen in both church programs and church Sunday services where the rights of the individual more often than not took precedence over promoting a commonly held religious purpose. The intention was to promote a sense of religious community, but the overemphasis on the individual was viewed as destructive to this end.

With the second set of polarities--the need to accept change and adapt innovatively to the existing conditions and yet keep a sense of religious continuity and stability--the imbalance was even greater. One of the respondents used the image of a teeter-totter and suggested that

the church was always teetering at the one end, change.[63] Another respondent commented that whenever there was change there would be "an enormous [negative] response" to the change.[64] Two examples given were the responses to the "About Your Sexuality" program and to the marrying of two homosexuals with its accompanying publicity. Several people felt that the change was just "change for the sake of change,"[65] that "anything goes . . . without any sense of purpose."[66] Many respondents would agree with one who felt that there was a need to follow the Canadian "historical/evolutional way" of adapting.[67] That is, a group needs to work out of stability toward change. One perceived continuity was a small core of people who were actively involved in different areas of church life. They were constantly mentioned as the kind of people who represented Unitarian values, people whose commitment was to the religious organization rather than to any particular leader or style. They also were seen as individuals who were able to bend with change, not break; who were willing to stay and work through differences and not leave when the going got tough.[68] There were never enough of these people to form a critical mass. By 1972, three years into the era, out of eight Board members elected, only <u>one</u> had any ongoing church experience prior to Naylor's arrival.[69] This lack of practical continuity made change easier, but led to a sense of disconnectedness, and for long-term member/participants another sign that very little from the past was valued. The continual need to adapt seemed to overwhelm or unbalance the teeter-totter. It was not perceived that continuity and stability had much importance in the scheme of things. And as one respondent comments: "If you don't have roots on which to build then change itself is very scary . . . shaky."[70]

Also in a shaky state was the third set of polarities, the lay leadership drawn from the religious community and the ministerial leadership. It was obvious that there was more dissonance than there was consonance. The relationship between Board and minister was uneven, sometimes unanimity being shown and sometimes distinctly differing views coming from lay and religious leadership. Some of the lay leadership supported the religious articulation and actions of the minister and others did not. Member/participants began to take sides, some feeling that the ministerial leadership was clarifying the specific Unitarian religious response to life situations and thus bringing about a unification of the community's sense of mission, and others feeling that what was being said and done by the minister contradicted the direction that the lay leadership was taking. Some felt that the risks being taken by the minister in championing individual rights were disrupting community life. Others felt that the lay leadership was not decisive enough in its support of Unitarian principles. The result was a weakening of commitment, a decrease in pledges and a lessening of trust in both leaderships.

With all three sets of polarities out of balance, a sense of common religious purpose became diffuse. The church could take some small consolation that mainline churches and synagogues across the country were also suffering. But, nevertheless, for Unitarians in Winnipeg it called into question the effectiveness of the religious organization. Could it provide a cooperative religious community where individuals could develop and affirm meaningful religious values?

In November 1974 the annual pledge campaign got underway and a note of desperation could be heard in a letter to member/participants. "Please help us now. If we can survive first, we can concentrate second

on growing in the directions you choose."[71] Although the CMR Committee had not seen the existing situation as being the fault of the minister, there were pressure groups within the church who felt that his leadership was not helping the situation. Naylor unexpectedly resigned on December 8, 1974, not to take another church but to pursue other professional interests within Winnipeg. His leaving eased the tension somewhat, but still left the realization in the community that all had not been solved by his leaving.

Footnotes - Chapter IV The Naylor Era - A New Horse and a Crumbling Cart

1. Miscellaneous Documents. "Summary of Replies to Pulpit Committee Questionnaire." UCW Archives.
2. Norman Naylor to Kris Breckman, September 30, 1968. Pulpit Committee File. UCW Archives.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., October 14, 1968.
5. Tape 2.
6. Tapes 1, 7, 16, 23, 26.
7. Tapes 2, 16, 25.
8. Tape 16.
9. Tapes 1, 3, 17, 20.
10. Tapes 12, 18.
11. Tape 3.
12. Tape 2.
13. Tapes 3, 13, 15.
14. Tape 31.
15. Tape 25.
16. Minister's Report to Annual Meeting, 1970. UCW Archives.
17. Miscellaneous Documents. "Goals Committee Report." UCW Archives.
18. Ibid.
19. Minister's Report to Annual Meeting, 1970. UCW Archives.
20. Tape 9. It is possible there was a subsequent meeting which voted to go ahead with the renovations. There is no record of either meeting, however, and Board minutes (April 1969) only mention that renovations are continuing. The Annual Meeting Property Report (1969) also mentions this fact.
21. Tapes 11, 19, 27.
22. Tape 37.
23. Tapes 3, 9, 10.
24. Tape 7.

25. Tape 27.

26. Annual Budget Meeting minutes, January 26, 1969. UCW Archives.

27. Congregational Budget Meeting, March 9, 1969. UCW Archives.

28. UCW Board Meeting minutes, April 9, 1969. UCW Archives.

29. Congregational Budget Meeting, October 26, 1969. UCW Archives.

30. Approved Budget Sheet for 1970. UCW Archives.

31. Tape 18.

32. Tapes 15, 31.

33. Tapes 2, 9, 11, 19.

34. Tape 12.

35. Tape 18.

36. Chairman's Report to the Annual Meeting, April 26, 1970. UCW Archives.

37. _Ibid_., April 25, 1971. UCW Archives.

38. Minister's Report to the Annual Meeting, April 26, 1970. UCW Archives.

39. Tapes 12, 16.

40. Tape 18.

41. Tape 11.

42. Tape 33.

43. Special Religious Education Report, presented at Annual Budget Meeting, November 15, 1970. UCW Archives.

44. _Ibid_.

45. Religious Education Report, Annual Meeting April 25, 1971. UCW Archives.

46. Committee Reports. UCW Archives.

47. The two meetings the Ruth-Harold Committee held were considered to be Introspection I and II.

48. Introspection III material, Miscellaneous Documents. UCW Archives.

49. _Ibid_.

50. Ibid.

51. Annual Meeting Reports, April 29, 1973. UCW Archives.

52. Board of Management to member/participants, November 8, 1972. Miscellaneous Documents. UCW Archives.

53. Report of Board Chairman, Annual Meeting Report, April 28, 1974. UCW Archives.

54. Report of the Minister, Annual Meeting Report, April 28, 1974. UCW Archives.

55. Board meeting minutes, January 1974. UCW Archives.

56. Report of the Minister, Annual Meeting Report, April 28, 1974. UCW Archives.

57. Using statistics based on the average Unitarian population to be found in total urban populations the UUA estimated that a Unitarian Universalist church should be able to attract roughly 1% of the population.

58. Sharing-in-Growth Tabulation, 1974, p. 9, Church Programs File. UCW Archives.

59. Ibid., p. 10.

60. CMR Committee to UCW Board of Management, December 12, 1974. Correspondence File. UCW Archives.

61. Tape 20.

62. Tape 18.

63. Tape 9.

64. Tape 27.

65. Tapes 9, 17.

66. Tape 24.

67. Tape 26.

68. Tapes 4, 7, 11, 12, 19, 20, 24, 27, 29.

69. Annual Meeting Report, April 28, 1974. UCW Archives.

70. Tape 18.

71. Pledge Campaign Committee to UCW member/participants. November 2, 1974. Fund Raising File. UCW Archives.

## Chapter V

## THE LAY-LED ERA - "I THINK I CAN"

Significant differences exist between the end of the Naylor era and that of the eras preceding it. First of all, the resignation of the minister and the termination of his services occurred in the middle of the church year rather than at the end of it. This meant that there was no period of grace for the lay leadership before they had to begin to cover all the congregational needs themselves. Secondly, while the resignation of the minister was at his instigation, there had been both overt and covert actions that indicated people were unhappy with his religious leadership.[1] Thirdly, the church had committed itself to a continental Sharing-in-Growth program in the fall of 1974 and was right in the middle of the program.[2] In one sense this provided a unique opportunity. There was already a process in place for looking at difficulties in church structure, organization and leadership. Immediate feedback from the outside observers of the Sharing-in-Growth program could be received to provide insight on the nexus of the many difficulties the church was experiencing.

The Sharing-in-Growth wrap-up comments by outside team members in May 1975 were indeed helpful and pointed. They said that the congregation had tremendous resources within their membership but tended to be too much concerned with treading on someone else's toes. In other words, they were too cautious and sensitive at times. They also

commented that a poor image was presented to newcomers because of the condition of the church buildings. Likewise a lack of church ownership was suggested by not using name tags on Sunday to identify who the members were. The team members urged the Board to take a "retreat" day so that matters of direction and policy could be given a thorough airing.[3]

Many of these comments suggest a church image that is fuzzy and vague rather than sharp and well-defined. The respondents on the whole would agree with the sense of fuzziness. More than anything else, the church was in a "survival first" phase that did not allow for much outreach whether with religious ideas or toward people on a religious search. This meant that there was much soul-searching going on, an attempt to bring more religious meaning back to the centre of the stage. For many of the respondents the church seemed divided and not definite, floundering, not pulling in one direction.[4] As one respondent commented, "the spirit wasn't all that excited even though the flesh was willing."[5] While many saw and experienced a directionless entropy, for other this period was most pleasurable. All aspects of church life were now the responsibility of the lay leadership and the congregation as a whole, and this meant that everyone's talents were needed. In fact, everyone's talents had been needed and requested in the previous era but the demand always exceeded the supply. Now people seemed prepared to come out and take on tasks. Respondents perceived an increase in the amount of member/participant involvement.[6] Certainly there were more tasks for which volunteer help was needed and an openness to accept any help that was offered. As well as the influx from previously non-participating people, there were still members around who were the "down to earth, interested in people, caring in a practical way"[7] kind. It was these people who con-

tinued to be committed to the church as a religious community, pointing the way to a religious purpose in life, not just commitment to a specific religious leader. There is not necessarily a contradiction in the different perceptions that saw the church as divided and not definite and yet having a higher participation level among the members. The image that comes to mind is that of a small ant hill that has been disturbed. At first observation it appears that all the ants are running around aimlessly and confusedly, yet upon closer observation some of the ants seem to have a pattern to what they are doing. Gradually more and more of the ants adopt this pattern. To the observer the purpose of the pattern may still not be clear and yet a rhythm is definitely being established.

Much of the activity going on dealt with re-organization and the clarifying of a sense of purpose. For example, the Inter-District Representative, The Reverend Emil Gudmundson, had come to the church in the fall of 1974 as a part of the Sharing-in-Growth program, to help the church set some congregational goals.[8] The members attending this meeting came up with twenty-six goals that were collectively agreed upon as being important. These goals were later regrouped into four major topics: Structure, Community, Program, and Religious Life and were the focus of a weekend conference held in March 1975 called Action 75.[9] From this conference emerged twenty-two goals with fifty-six means of implementation. The goals were not priorized. There is no mention of this conference in any of the church Board meeting minutes following the conference date. In the Annual Meeting Reports for 1975, the Program chairperson writes that "the results of the workshop [Action 75] are being closely studied, and will be implemented wherever possible, as

soon as possible."[10] Written material suggests that some of the goals were implemented,[11] but there does not appear to have been any over-all follow-up or any attempt to present an overview of what implementation of the goals would mean to the church.

In the same Program report the chairperson also states:

> When considering programming (in its entirety) a thorough discussion of the needs of the congregation took place. The diversity of those needs was fully recognized along with the fact that this is the only Unitarian church in Winnipeg. . . . yet those needs are the reason for the existence of this church--they must at all times be kept "up front."[12]

It is obvious from the number of goals with their many-faceted means of implementation that there was indeed a diversity of needs being expressed. The intentionality was high but the ability or energy required to organize the meeting of these needs was low. The completion of a task did not seem to have as high a priority as the explicating of the needs. Perhaps this is a church that is good at analysis but weak at synthesis. It certainly underlined the importance of the individual.

The reason for the existence of this church was indeed the needs of the individual members, but was that all? One member who wrote a letter to the national Unitarian newspaper, The Canadian Unitarian, certainly felt that it was. In response to a query in an earlier issue, "What is our church for?", she wrote:

> It is a family, a community in which to laugh, cry, grow, raise your children, clean the building, do good works. . . . .I don't fool myself or you, I do things for my own pleasure. . . . . .the sum of its [the family's] interests comprise its identity. I similarly regard each Unitarian church community: the identity is the result, not a preconceived purpose. . . . . .I believe the need to belong is primary and Unitarians would be more honest if they admitted it rather than trying to gloss it over with "purposes." If I want a purpose, I can join a club, garden, curling or whatever.

> What I want from my church is an all-encompassing, purposeless relationship.[13]

Was there, then, no sense of purpose beyond the individual needs of the members? For one respondent who started attending church during this time period there was a sense of purpose or sense of mission coming from the lay leadership that provided a religious framework for her life. She did find, however, that it "could have been clearer . . . that there was a need to state our beliefs positively not negatively."[14] Some respondents agreed and felt that there was a good sense of mission apparent.[15] Most of these respondents were those who preferred a fellowship style.[16] Others seemed to be rather puzzled and had felt little sense of mission. "I had the feeling for a while of wondering where we're going and what we really believe and what kind of consensus is there."[17] It seemed possible to work together organizationally in order to outline the needs of the individuals in the group. What was needed now was learning how to work together for the common good. Various changes occurred that provided the congregation with that opportunity.

One of the noticeable changes during this period was the increase in special Congregational Meetings.[18] Absence of professional leadership had brought about a change in the method of decision-making. Previously, most of the decisions were made at the Board level and then brought to an Annual Meeting for ratification or notification. Now each step in the decision-making process resulted in a congregational meeting being called. The lay leadership was being more careful about having the approval of the congregation, of being sure that the congregation was fully apprised of, and in agreement with, the progress of each situation. In the past some of the difficulty arose because of poor communication between different levels of leadership. A consensual model, in

which many avenues were explored, each person was listened to and a "sense of the meeting" agreed upon, was the process that was followed. A good example is found in the thoughtful and lengthy deliberations which took place regarding the hiring of another professional leader.

In previous eras the Search Committee (or Pulpit Committee) had been established even before the resigning minister had left, to ensure that there would be almost continuous religious leadership. This time it was different. Following the completion of the Sharing-in-Growth program in May 1975, five months after Naylor's resignation, an ad hoc committee was established to look into "what options are open to us regarding the religious leadership of our church."[19] These options included full-time ministry, part-time ministry or the establishment of the Winnipeg Unitarians as a fellowship with no professional religious leadership but with the possibility of a full-time or part-time lay co-ordinator. Other temporary options such as hiring a short-term Minister or consultant were also explored. A report on these options was made to the congregational meeting on Sept. 28, 1975. The information was received but not acted on. At the next congregational meeting on Oct. 19, 1975, ten months after Naylor had resigned, the congregation responded to the information and decided to look into the possibility of calling another minister.[20] This time, however, they wanted to make sure that there would be a solid financial commitment to equal the verbal agreement that ministerial leadership was both desirable and necessary for the healthy functioning of the church.

At a joint budget and special congregational meeting on Nov. 23, 1975 the budget adopted was sufficient to allow consideration of the possibility of professional leadership. Another motion was passed, however, that designated the portion of the budget set aside for a religious

leader as money for "professional leadership" rather than "minister."[21] This meant that the scope of the search would include other professionals as well as minister. Within the UUA leadership pool there were also Directors of Religious Education, people professionally trained to direct the children's church school program, who were moving toward ministerial status. These would also be considered. It was also intended to look within the fields of Sociology, Social Work, Counselling and Administration. This meant that in looking for a professional leader, the congregation was giving more thoughtful consideration to the specific requirements of the church community.

The slow progression continued. Four months later, on April 4, 1976, a Congregational meeting was called to review the budget, present a progress report on the Search Committee's activities and to consider retaining the services of a minister consultant. There were specific tasks this consultant would be asked to do.

> He would plan on assisting the congregation in preparing a job description for a professional leader, in planning development of the facilities, in being a resource person for Sunday Services, on preparing a long-range plan for development of the church, and in assisting the congregation in a follow-up of his work.[22]

The motion passed and it was agreed to hire the consultant, the Reverend Josiah Bartlett, for a three-month period beginning in the fall of 1976. The results and effects of his consultancy will be discussed in a later section of this chapter.

The Special Congregational meeting on Nov. 12, 1976, was held "to present a list of qualifications for the professional leadership."[23] The Search Committee had put together a list of personal and professional qualifications they felt would answer the present need in the church.

A much more pragmatic approach can be observed in this list. It focussed on "HOW TO [sic] achieve this [promoting of Unitarian ideals appropriate to Winnipeg] goal."[24] It listed duties to be required of the successful candidate and also presented a list of personal qualities desired. Of high priority in the duties category were "pulpit presentation (regular but limited); pastoral duties; working with children, youth and adults to promote religious social and educational programs. . . ."[25] There was a shift in emphasis from what had been wanted in the previous era. Before it had been more outward-looking, wanting to be connected to and aware of world issues (Internationalist), before there had been a mandate for the trying out of innovative ideas (Creative). The co-ordinating function was the only job quality that remained a high priority. There was very much the sense of "let us get our own house in order," and "charity begins at home." In other words, while the intention was to achieve promotion of Unitarian ideals, the job description did not allow for much inter-action with the wider society. That would have to come later.

One month later at a Special Congregational meeting there was a further report of the Professional Leadership Search Committee. At this point the Search Committee was authorized to proceed another step. They were to request names of available professional leaders from the UUA in Boston and compare their qualifications and qualities with the personal and professional qualities that had been agreed upon at the Nov. 12th meeting, 1976.[26] The final step came at the Special Congregational meeting on Feb. 20, 1977, when the motion read: "that we proceed with hiring a full-time minister. . . ."[27] It had taken almost two years to arrive at this decision, but the process followed meant that the spirit

of consensus had been maintained. Everyone in the church community could "live with" the decision and would support it. The care taken to involve everyone in the decision-making process was reminiscent of the steps taken to complete the merger of the Unitarians and Universalists in 1961.

One additional factor in the process for the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg was the presence, within the church community, of a vocal minority of people who wished to have the church become a 'fellowship' that would not require professional religious leadership. This was not a new issue. It had surfaced during Naylor's time.[28] The possibilities were researched and presented to the congregation at the Annual Meeting in 1973. While action was not taken at that time the preference for this kind of a Unitarian group remained a priority for a small number of the committed active church members. Their needs were important but did not necessarily lead in the same direction as those who wanted professional religious leadership, and a "church" atmosphere. One respondent commented that she saw the Unitarian system as being a fellowship system, that is, not requiring professional leadership so that she had a basic disagreement with how the church was organized.[29] This person had continued, however, to share her talents and energies with the church community and was an active participant. The two year process allowed time for this group to express their concerns and become convinced that professional religious leadership was in the best interests of the church.

While the decision to hire professional religious leadership once again was an important focus for the church in this three year era, it was not the only one. In June of 1975 a group of church members formed a committee to investigate alternative church sites. The church building had continued to need constant repair and it was felt that something

had to be done. Unexpectedly, in July, an offer to purchase the church buildings and land was made. The Board called a congregational meeting on Sept. 28, 1975 and the committee presented various alternatives. Some of the alternatives were: selling the building and land and buying an existing church; selling the building and land and building a new church on a different site; building a new church on the existing property; forming a corporation and building a complex that would include a church and senior citizen's housing (to which government grants could apply).[30] There was a large turnout to the meeting (85 persons) and care was taken that everyone made their opinions known. By the end of the meeting there was still much to be discussed and a decision was postponed to allow for the gathering of more information. A follow-up meeting three weeks later resulted in a decision not to move and not sell, to "carry on as [at] present."[31] Since this decision was being made at the same time as the process to decide on professional religious leadership, it is possible that the negative note regarding the church property moved the congregation more strongly in the direction of accepting professional religious leadership.

There were some who worked hard to increase a sense of community. The chairperson of the Membership Services Committee collated responses from the "Fall 1975 Family Registration Form". The objective of the form was to determine the interest members had in particular church programs and also to indicate where in the church structure they were prepared to volunteer their time and energy. The results showed that 44 families considered themselves inactive, and 66 families' involvement was unknown.[32] There was much more chaff than there was wheat, but the winnowing process helped to clarify the size of the church's people base. The committee

chairperson commented in her questionnaire result report: "This contact was a way of reaching out and asking, 'What is it that you want from and in your church? Do you know what is available, and that we need you?'"[33]

While the Membership Services Committee was encouraging more involvement from the congregation, the Board was enlisting the help of an outside expert. The ministerial consultant, the Reverend Josiah Bartlett, who came to the church in the fall of 1976, was hired to help the congregation clarify its needs and goals, to assist planning for development of the church's facilities and to demonstrate another ministerial model different from the three the church had already experienced. In a preliminary report to the church he commented:

> The congregation had this special problem: tension, some of long-standing centering on the two most recent ministers (1964-1974) and issues relating to building use, a discouraging inability to resolve basic policy questions and to follow through on decisions despite almost too much data (questionnaires, goals, meetings) etc. A representative exchange from one meeting:
>
> Q. Why should we hire somebody to say what we already know: Why don't we do it ourselves?
>
> A. Well, for some years now, we don't seem to!
>
> It seemed possible that much of the negative feelings and blockage might be reduced by the chance to talk things through with a sympathetic but uninvolved "outsider." Therefore, I concentrated on individual visits . . .
>
> Once we got beneath labels, to talk about functions and purposes, it was clear that the church is overwhelmingly agreed on what it wants and needs, both in terms of leadership and development of facilities.[34]

The overwhelming agreement Bartlett found was that the majority of church member/participants did indeed want to have a church not a fellowship and did want to find professional leadership that would assist in promoting the liberal religious faith.

During this period there was a need to reach out and remind people that the church was a religious community as well as a supporter of individually held religious beliefs. As Bartlett had suggested in his report, there did not seem to be a method in place to convert the results of this questionnaire into more involvement or commitment of the members. Once again there was difficulty with synthesis.

This was also a time when members of the church reached out beyond the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg to meet with other Unitarians. Trips were taken to churches and fellowships to the south of Winnipeg, in the United States, to share both worship and workshops. People from these churches and fellowships were in turn invited up to Winnipeg for more joint fellowship. This interaction gave strength and encouragement to the Winnipeg church which was able to give as well as to receive support. In the summer of 1976 a conference to initiate Prairie Galaxy was held. It arose out of the desire to share ideas and strengthen the Unitarian bond across the border. Unitarian Universalists from South and North Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa in the United States and from Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Northern Ontario in Canada were involved. It also helped to regain some pride in being part of a liberal religious tradition that wanted to have an impact on the larger society. As the church story was shared with others, links with the past were re-established and bonds for the future were forged.

At the local level, the Board decided to change the church sign outside the church that had said "Unitarian Centre" since the days of Jenkins. This change was influenced by a letter sent by the minister emeritus, the Reverend Philip Petursson, in which he stated that he felt the term "humanist church" on the notice board outside the church

was too restrictive. Since the church was not limited to humanists, it would be more appropriate if the sign read "church," "fellowship" or "society."[35] The discussion that followed the reading of this letter brought a reminder that the present sign "was never actually approved by the congregation."[36] The Board agreed to recommend to the Annual Meeting that both signboard and stationery letterhead revert to its legally constituted name, "First Unitarian Church of Winnipeg." The matter was brought up at the Annual Meeting in 1977. There was discussion of the change and although no motion was passed there were no dissenters to the change.[37]

A strong determination to survive the many disruptions that had happened to this religious group was evident. At times it seemed that it survived in spite of itself. It took a resolute person to join the church during this period. As one respondent observed, "Nobody asked me to join the church, I had to ask someone . . . when I asked the chair of the Board he was quite surprised."[38] It was not exactly that people were unwelcome, but that there was not a well travelled path to follow to become a member. Most of the energies of the group were directed toward saving the outward form of the religious organization. This provided identity and a sense of ownership for the existing members but made it difficult for newcomers to become integrated.

Most people, however, saw the church as healthy "getting younger instead of older . . . becoming more stable,"[39] "healthy and exciting."[40] Many, however, had qualifiers to their statements. "Maintaining his or her own but on a support system,"[41] "healthy but over-extended."[42] There was definitely the sense that toward the end of this period there was better health than at the beginning. Fairly consistently respondents

chose to reply using a medical health model. That is, the church as a "person" was seen as coming out of a period of convalescence, of rebuilding its strength, of caring for and sharing with others but having to be careful how its energy was used.

The increased involvement of both lay leadership and congregation has resulted in a sense of pride in their ability to survive and a desire to continue to have an influence on every aspect of church life. One respondent stated, "the church shrunk but it was a time when we coalesced, became a solid core . . . [we were] used to having a high degree of influence and input and even though we were tired, we weren't prepared to give up our influence."[43] This desire for more control resulted in the job description for the professional religious leader limiting and outlining specific responsibilities and qualifications. For example, the successful candidate was to preach at only half of the Sunday services. Members of the congregation, through the Sunday Services Committee, would be responsible for the other half of the services, arranging for members of the congregation to speak or obtaining outside speakers. This would allow equal time for the congregation to express an understanding of, and commitment to, a liberal religious faith. Also, the religious leader would be required to be highly involved with the various "in-church" groups to "promote religious, social and educational programs, including lay leadership training"[44] rather than being overly-involved in outside community and denominational matters.

The Search Committee decided on a ministerial candidate in August of 1977 and the congregation ratified the decision in September. The Reverend John S. Gilbert took up his responsibilities with the church in November 1977. He was hired at the end of a long process. The

congregation had had the time to work through some of its past difficulties, misunderstandings, and improve communication between all areas of the religious community. Decisions were made more slowly but were more inclusive. This religious leader was not being hired in reaction against any previous leader or group, but because he had those qualifications that it was hoped would enable the church to present a positive, life-affirming image and sense of mission to the members and to the larger community. According to the Board Meeting minutes he participated in all meetings but kept a low profile and did not attempt to affect the decision-making process of the Board. He responded to questions asked and gave input when requested.

The first few months did not see a change in organization or structure as had happened in the previous two eras. The pledge drive for 1978, conducted in November 1977, indicated the determination of the member/participants to move ahead.[45] A look at the balance of the three sets of polarities will give some indication as to the possibility for future growth and health. Had the church obtained a better balance during this era?

With the first set of polarities, individualism, the importance of each individual's religious beliefs and actions, continued to be seen as having more value than a sense of religious community. For one respondent who was new to the church "there was too much stress on individualism"[46] and for another there was not enough "team spirit."[47] There did appear to be a move in the direction of achieving a better balance. There was no suggestion that individualism would lessen, but that some of the support individuals had received was being repaid by a stronger commitment toward strengthening the whole community. "Only in this period was serious attention given to a wide variety of people's corporate worship

needs."[48] Individuals were more careful to recognize that others would, or might, have different reasons for participating in the church activities. Group programs and Sunday Services showed this awareness by the incorporating of different elements that would satisfy the needs of the entire community. It was hard going though, as the pull in the direction of individual freedom was strong. This in itself was not bad, but without a concern for the dynamic of the total group, the pull would cause even more imbalance. The emphasis on the one side of the polarity made achieving a lasting sense of religious community difficult.

Also, innovation and change were still perceived as being more important to the Winnipeg Unitarians than continuity and stability.[49] This was in spite of many shifts that occurred that were intended to provide a more stable base. But some of the shifts, such as changing the exterior signboard to read "church" instead of "center," suggested rather the desire to return to the past, to what had been. What was needed was a continuity with the past, a respect for its wisdom, and emulation of its strengths, a building on the historical insights and religious messages that still contained deep relevance. The problem lay in attempting to gauge correctly just where the balance should be. In truth, the expectation that an equal proportion of interest and energy would ever be expended on both sides of this set of polarities would be unrealistic; change would always carry more weight. But the change that happened needed to be of a kind that would cause the stability and continuity in the group to become more securely grounded, to be linked to the change in some way. There was a sense of uncertainty now. Large amounts of change had taken place in the previous two eras and the intention in this era was strong not to let change get out of hand. The refusal to sell the church and property was evidence of that. And yet change had to occur because it was a key com-

mitment of the Unitarians. Until there was a larger confidence in the ability of the group to handle, adapt to and absorb change, this would be difficult to accept. The balance of the first set of polarities would affect this balance. Change would be handled badly if individuals did not feel secure in their own religious search and also content with the aspirations of the church as a whole. An imbalance in the first set of polarities was counteracted somewhat by the strong determination to survive, to get back on the track, but it did affect this second set of polarities.

There was only a short period during this era when it was possible to observe the third set of polarities. Only for three months, when the ministerial consultant was present, were both sides of the polarities available. The Board and committees worked well with Bartlett, but it was a temporary situation with a set time limit. During this era, however, the lay leadership had ample opportunity to increase their management skills and improve communication with the congregation. It still remained to be seen if a better balance would be achieved with the new minister. The last few months of this era suggest that both lay and professional leadership would work hard to make it possible. The imbalance found in both the other sets of polarities contain elements that may work against this possibility. The lay leadership will have to champion the centrality of religious community in the face of strong pulls toward individual rights. The professional leadership will need to make sure that celebrating religious continuity does not stifle change. The inter-relating of the three sets of polarities will lead to a difficult balancing act.

As this church story draws to a close, there was an air of cautious hope. Maybe the new professional leadership would infuse the church community with a more dynamic sense of religious purpose; maybe its religious

message would make a larger impact on the wider community; maybe there would be a continuation of the involvement of member/participants; maybe the religious community would become a harmonious center, providing nurturance for individuals on a religious journey. Perhaps the individuals in return would increase support and give loyalty to the religious community; perhaps change would be welcomed from a stable base; perhaps the lay leadership would find itself dancing to the same beat as the professional leadership. For all this to happen it would not require a miracle, but it would mean acceptance of the polarities as both strengths and weaknesses. In some instances it would mean recognition of the significance of the polarities, or at least a reaffirmation of their power to effect the growth or decline of the church. It would mean continual struggle to provide a common bond of religious purpose that both transcended and enhanced the individual religious quest. The strength of commitment to the liberal religious vision would be put to the test.

Footnotes The Lay Led Era "I Think I Can"

1 Part of the Ruth-Harold Committee's agenda was to allow members to discuss their unhappiness with the present church situation, and much of the unhappiness, for some people, stemmed from the religious leadership. Also, there had been a request made to the Board in June 1973 for a vote of confidence regarding the professional leadership, but the Board decided not to have a vote taken. In the final year of Naylor's ministry there had been a group formed "sub rosa" whose intention it was to bring about the termination of his ministry.

2. Board Meeting Minutes, Sept. 1974. UCW Archives.

3. Unitarian Church of Winnipeg Board Meeting Minutes, June 1975. UCW Archives.

4. Tapes 3, 20, 28.

5. Tape 9.

6. Tapes 1, 2, 17, 25, 31.

7. Tape 17.

8. The continental UUA is divided into 23 regions or districts. Ministers with special skills were assigned to one or more districts to be available to assist congregations with organizational, programmatic or leadership difficulties.

9. Program Council Meeting notes, 1975.

10. Report of Program Chairman, Annual Meeting Minutes, April 20/75.

11. Program Council Meeting Minutes, May 8, 1975. Extension Committee Meeting, May 14, 1975. UCW Archives.

12. Report of Program Chairman, Annual Meeting Report, April 20, 1975. UCW Archives.

13. The Canadian Unitarian, Vol. 18: Nov-Dec 1975, p. 4.

14. Tape 28.

15. Tapes 4, 11, 25.

16. Tapes 4, 25.

17. Tape 24.

18. In the six years of the previous period (1969-74) there had been four special congregational meetings: March 9/69, Feb. 21/71, Nov. 12/72 and April 29/73. In the three years of this period (1975-77) there were nine special congregational meetings:

Sept. 28/75, Oct. 19/75, Nov. 23/75, Dec. 14/75, April 4/76, Nov. 12/76, Dec. 12/76, Feb. 20/77, Oct. 2/77. UCW Archives.

19 Stewart Frost, Board Chairman to UCW Members and Friends, Sept. 23, 1975. UCW Archives.

20. Special Congregational Meeting Minutes, Oct. 19, 1975. UCW Archives.

21. Special Congregational Meeting Minutes, Nov. 23/75. UCW Archives.

22. Special Congregational Meeting Minutes, April 4/76. UCW Archives.

23. Special Congregational Meeting Minutes, Nov. 12/76. UCW Archives.

24. "Profile of Professional Leadership Expectations: Unitarian Church of Winnipeg" in UCW church packet sent out to prospective leadership candidates, Jan. 20, 1977. UCW Archives.

25. Ibid.

26. Special Congregational Meeting, Dec. 12/76. UCW Archives.

27. Special Congregational Meeting, Feb. 20/77. UCW Archives.

28. Special Congregational Meeting, Nov. 12, 1972, and the Annual Meeting, April 29, 1973. UCW Archives.

29. Tape 25.

30. Special Congregational Meeting, Sept. 28, 1975. UCW Archives.

31. Minutes of Special Congregational Meeting, Oct. 19, 1975. UCW Archives.

32. "The Unitarian Church of Winnipeg Fall 1975 Family Registration Form: Questionnaire Results," p. 1. Miscellaneous Documents, UCW Archives.

33. Ibid., covering letter.

34. Josiah Bartlett, "Preliminary Report, Unitarian Church of Winnipeg," Nov. 14, 1975, p. 3. UCW Archives.

35. P. Petursson to UCW Board. Board Meeting Minutes, Dec. 8, 1976. UCW Archives.

36. Board Meeting Minutes, Dec. 8, 1976. UCW Archives.

37. The Annual Meeting Minutes report the chairperson as stating that "our new stationery will be headed "Unitarian Church of Winnipeg" and . . . the sign outside the building will be changed accordingly." Annual Meeting Minutes, April 24, 1977, under "New Business." UCW Archives.

38. Tape 28.

39. Tape 28.

40. Tape 1.

41. Tapes 2, 11.

42. Tape 31.

43. Tape 31.

44. "Profile of Professional Leadership Expectations."

45. Pledges for 1978 were $37,000 compared with $24,287.00 for 1977. 1978 Budget paper. UCW Archives.

46. Tape 28.

47. Tape 20.

48. Tape 31.

49. Tapes 2, 3, 11, 13, 14, 17, 20, 24, 25, 28, 31.

# Chapter VI

# CONCLUSION

The narrative story of the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg from 1964 to 1977 has presented one more piece in the jigsaw puzzle being constructed by historians, theologians, social scientists and church growth researchers. It has been an attempt to bring a larger understanding and clarity to the picture of religious history and church growth as it occurred in the 1960s and 1970s in Canada and the United States. To be sure, it is a small piece, but each piece is relevant to the whole. At the institutional level, this thesis has examined three sets of polarities ever-present in Unitarian Universalist religious dynamics, their positive and negative effects demonstrated in the story of the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg. These polarities have been the source of continual difficulty in a religious movement that attempts to unite diverse religious needs under a single religious banner. Furthermore, this thesis has provided a model for the study of individual churches, interrelating the personal insights of individuals involved in the story of church life through the vehicle of documentary interviews with an intensive study of relevant church documents.

Before focussing on specific conclusions to be drawn from this study, a recapitulation of the various aspects of church life which were examined will be made to summarize the "lived" story of this religious community.

In the perceptions of the respondents and from the perusal of

church documents, the image of the church in 1964 was both comfortable and stable. The church occupied an acceptable and useful niche in the larger society, initiating or supporting causes that would improve the quality of human life. The member/participants felt affirmed by their religious community. The arrival of Jenkins as religious leader, and an expanding membership, brought on a shift in the image. It was deemed to be more "intellectual" with much activity and change happening in many areas of church life. Outwardly the same causes received attention, but internally the changes in both content and form were greeted with both excitement and uneasiness. Further shifts occurred after the arrival of Naylor as religious leader. Now the image was split both outwardly and internally, sometimes evidencing a warm caring community supportive and tolerant of the individual's search for religious values, and at other times the "do your own thing at any cost" tone, resulting in visible tension. The larger society was not as accepting of the causes now being initiated by the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg. Affirmation for all was not always felt within the religious community. During the lay-led era the church presented a picture that was somewhat fuzzy and vague as it turned its energies and resources to the basic need of survival of the church as a viable organization.

The church programs also changed emphasis in the fourteen years under study. In 1964 the "in church" programs were mainly social, helping to create friendship bonds among the member/participants; the "outreach" programs were progressive and often supported by other religious organizations as well. By 1966 the "in church" programs had increased in number and variety--discussion groups being popular--and the outreach programs remained constant. 1970 saw "in church" programs as varied as

before, but now the emphasis was more on self-actualization and the need to "find one's self." The outreach programs increased as individual members initiated church projects affecting the wider community, gaining church approval and at least support in principle. In 1975, when the lay-led era began, "in church" programs were less in number with less variation. The main purpose was to draw people together in fellowship rather than provide intellectual stimulation or personal growth situations. The outreach programs became more separated from the church and more the "babies" of individual members.

One aspect of church life that remained constant (or relatively so) was the financial situation. Financial difficulties continued to plague the church regardless of the success or failure of other aspects. Perhaps it was a little worse at one time than another, but this seems to have been more a matter of the way it was perceived by the Board rather than a large difference in the amount of shortfall. Sometimes the Board responded to financial danger signs and sometimes it did not.[1] Even when the church was expanding rapidly, there was not an equivalent expansion in pledges. In the year of its largest membership, 1966, the budget shrank $4,000.00.[2] The larger numbers of people attending and participating in church life did not result in a rosier budget. In fact, when the membership shrank during the Naylor era and the lay-led era, the individual pledging levels rose considerably.[3]

The membership figures tell a provocative story. In 1964 the membership stood at 300, and in 1977 when this study ends, there were 203 members.[4] This meant a net loss of 97 persons. In the intervening fourteen years, however, a total of 269 persons joined the church. Obviously there was a massive turnover in membership and therefore con-

tinually changing inter-personal dynamics were in effect.

It should be no surprise that the health of the church as a "body" did not remain constant. It was perceived as being healthy--satisfied and secure would be appropriate adjectives to use--during the pre-study period. During the Jenkins era on the whole the body was healthy, but with a marked tendency toward intellectual egotism. The Naylor era saw the onset of an unhealthy turn, with attempt after attempt being made to bring health back. The health of the religious body in the lay-led era was tentative but present as it gradually grew out of a convalescent state.

The perception of a sense of mission or a sense of religious purpose felt in the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg also varied from one period to the next. There was strong agreement on its presence at the beginning of 1964. It remained strong through most of the Jenkins era until some respondents sensed a growing diffusion. It became difficult to separate it from the excitement over the building plans and the growth in membership. What was recalled was that somewhere along the way it started to weaken. In the Naylor era there were attempts to strengthen and highlight it and while for some it was present and powerful, for others it was non-existent. The same religious message did not speak to the community as a whole. In the lay led era the need for clarification of a sense of mission weakly sensed was acknowledged and there seemed to be a promise that it could be found and affirmed once again.

This brief summary gives the outline of a church that was always changing, sometimes quietly, sometimes turbulently, sometimes making its mark on the larger society, sometimes having no impact whatsoever, occasionally centered, usually searching for the center. It is now time

to fill in the outline, connect the spheres of relevance and draw conclusions from the effect the three polarities had on the growth and decline of this church.

The first sphere of relevance relating to this thesis was the North American Unitarian Universalist religion within which the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg makes its home. Several of the characteristics that make up the Unitarian Universalist institutional religious personality are well demonstrated in this study. The first is "the use of the democratic method in human relationships."[5] One of the things an understanding of the story of this church points out is just how difficult and open to error is the democratic method. When all avenues must be considered and all voices heard, when a majority vote may include the votes of those who have hitherto been uninvolved, the amount of patience and tolerance required can approach infinite proportions. There were times in the story when use of the democratic method slipped,[6] but it was obvious that the use of that method held the loyalty of the member/participants. When survival was the highest priority during the lay led era, it was the democratic method, and all the time required for it, that was the "glue" that gave the religious community hope.

A second characteristic that is exemplified is the steady influx of converts into this Unitarian religious community. Statistical analysis has not been obtained regarding the percentage of converts but the figures available suggest a percentage similar to the 89% quoted by Tapp.[7] The random sample comprising the respondents of the documentary interviews resulted in 8 out of 32 respondents being "born Unitarians," or at least second generation Unitarians,[8] and of these, 5 were Icelandic Unitarians.[9] Only 1 of the 8 respondents, however, had participated in

all of the periods under study.[10] The influx of new converts suggests both a cause and effect of the change-oriented nature of this group and may also be one reason for a lack of continuity and growth. This factor also affects one of the polarities and will be amplified further on in this chapter.

Another characteristic that is borne out in this study is the contributions made to the larger society by member/participants. At one point in the Naylor era there were 9 elected officials of the provincial and municipal governments who held membership in the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg.[11] There was no identifiable sign of growth or decline as a result of this involvement, and negligible involvement within the church community from any of the nine. It is possible to argue that had some of these persons been willing to devote some of their time, energy and commitment to the religious community, that more growth, more visibility and more influence of the church as a whole might have been achieved.

One final characteristic needs to be discussed. That is the religious value paradigm that distinguishes the continental Unitarian Universalist religion from other religions, "an orientation toward self-competence . . . personal realization, individual self-fulfillment and self-actualization."[12] This paradigm becomes meaningless if it is not affirmed and celebrated within religious community. While member/participants of the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg clearly fit within this religious value paradigm, it is not as clear in any of the periods under study that the paradigm was meaningfully affirmed in religious community. Or to put it another way, the paradigm only has value as it is sustained as part of a covenanted community. This point is emphasized in one of the study commission reports to the Unitarian Universalist Association in 1963.

> We are clear that we belong in community and that only in community can the individual attain his [her] fullest development. . . . there is need for a community where creative interchange consciously occurs under that which is conceived to be of ultimate value and in which common understanding and aspiration are celebrated in public worship. 13

By not grounding this paradigm in community, the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg lost much of the potency and effectiveness connected with it.

With regard to the second sphere of relevance, the religious cultural framework of North America, this prairie Unitarian Church in general fits into the religious developments of the 1960s and 1970s. That is, for it also the 1960s were a time of turbulent change and the 1970s a time of disillusionment. There is some variation in that the turbulence lasted until 1974 even while disillusionment was gaining ground.[14] It retained its loyalty longer than most to the modern thrust of secular society--more freedom in social behaviour, more responsibility in social concerns, more acceptance of individual differences.

Several of the Canadian differences were evident in this church's story. First of all, just as Canada was striving after a sense of its own national identity, so the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg in the 1960s and 1970s was searching for identity as a religious community. Secondly, in the matter of geographical isolation it is the opinion of the writer that the Winnipeg church was affected by this isolation and could not sustain an attitude of religious difference if it would mean further isolation. This was exemplified in the response to the homosexual wedding, which received little support from the wider community. Finally, the Canadian preference for preserving religious tradition rather than developing in new religious directions, had an influence on this church as there was certainly disagreement about the amount of development and which direction would be appropriate.

In other areas the Unitarian Universalist particularities over-rode the Canadian differences. Centralization was not an important factor for Canadian Unitarian Universalist churches, and during the period under study the Winnipeg church's relative uninvolvement with the national organization (CUC) would support this contention.[15] During all three eras the denominational involvement, when there was any, was more continental than national. Certainly Canadian Unitarians put more emphasis on freedom than authority, unlike many Canadians, and the Winnipeg church was no exception. Canadian historian Phillip Hewett speaks of the dangers for Unitarians in an unreasoned commitment to freedom.

> Without an effective recognition of the claims of each, freedom degenerates into irresponsible licence and order into authoritarianism. The danger for Unitarians lies exclusively in the first of these two directions. Neither in the past nor in the present has there been any likelihood of their endorsing authoritarianism in church or state. None the less, . . . , the freedom of the individual is equally endangered where there is no social order capable of maintaining it. 16

The story of the Winnipeg church suggests that they were aware of the dangers, although occasionally their reaction to excessive freedom was counter-productive. Rather than staying and working through a stance to freedom that would be acceptable to all, many chose to stay away, temporarily or permanently.

This study in its entirety stands related to the third sphere of relevance, because it presents a model by which growth and decline in individual churches can be evaluated. That is, it takes a holistic view, incorporating both the perceptions of member/participants involved in the story and the documentary evidence resulting from community actions. The studies into church growth and decline noted in the Introduction, while employing different methods, do call for some comment in relation

to this study. Two of the studies (those of the United Presbyterian Church and The United Church of Christ, see pp. 14-15 in Introductory chapter) found that clergy leadership was important for member satisfaction and congregational harmony. This conclusion is supported in that both clergy leaders, Jenkins and Naylor (and Petursson before them) had an influence on member satisfaction and congregational harmony. But clergy leadership was even more influential in creating excitement and stimulation that was intended to produce change, not satisfaction and harmony. The United Church of Christ study also stated that a larger membership is an important factor in achieving a healthy financial situation for a congregation. This was not the case in the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg. In 1970 the membership had declined by 66 (37) from four years previous, and yet the budget was $7,000.00 higher.[17] Obviously, financial support was not a hard and fast requirement of membership. It vascillated regardless of the needs or numbers of members. Voluntary associations continue to exist and function on the freely given time, energy and financial support of their memberships. As a voluntary association the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg was unable to draw consistently adequate financial support from its membership. This lack of consistency was part of a larger inconsistency brought on by the tension in the three polarities and a lack of a well-developed, agreed-upon sense of mission. An expansion of this theme will be found later in this concluding chapter.

The study conducted by Biersdorf on vital religious communities (see pp. 15-16 in Introductory chapter) bears an interesting relevance to this study. It was found that one of the paths followed by some of the religious communities accepted and celebrated modern scientific and technological advances and taught individuated valuing, and that some-

times this path resulted in members' self-interest being threatened by social activism.[18] Both the path followed and the result achieved fit the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg, particularly during the Naylor era. Perhaps the church should be complimented on the fact that it was not "happy and thriving while the culture [was] in agony."[19]

It was the central proposition of this thesis that the congregation's response to the three sets of polarities were the major influence on the growth and decline of this church. What are the conclusions that can be drawn from the study?

There is no doubt from the study that the first set of polarities--individual freedom of belief and the desire to be part of a religious community--were extremely influential. Both the responses given during the documentary interviews and the evidence of the church documents attest to this fact. When respondents discussed the purpose of the church for them, the answers almost always favoured either individual freedom of belief[20] or wanting to be part of a covenanted religious community.[21] Individual freedom of belief was the most common answer. This is not surprising in a religion that encourages the individual religious search so strongly.[22]

In the Jenkins era there were no responses that indicated concern with or need for a covenanted religious community. In part this was because the numbers of people and the amount of activity happening suggested that it was there and available to all who wanted to participate. But the strongly individualistic emphasis, the changing form as well as content, the enthusiasm for pushing ahead and reshaping both church property and church procedures also affected the element of covenanted community. It was more in a state of becoming rather than being. The unspoken agreement seemed to be that as soon as the new

building was built and the new procedures were in place the concerns of religious community would be addressed. In a sense it was like waiting for the other shoe to drop. Most of the effort and energy of this time period went into building, both intellectually for the mind and structurally to accommodate the increasing numbers of members and friends. But to accomplish this, the care, concern and affirmation of the religious community as a whole had to take a back seat.

Events in the Naylor era demonstrated a continued emphasis on the individual but at a more personal level. The affective side of one's individual religious beliefs became as important as the cognitive side. The need for religious community began to surface again, and one based on equal components of intellectual and emotional inspiration was promoted but not accepted. The preparation time for such a shift had been too short and when the shoe finally dropped it proved not to fit the foot. Or perhaps, with all the new people involved, it was not the same foot. That is to say, a covenanted community was desired, but not the one that took shape. It was as though suddenly there was a drawing back, a need to re-evaluate, to take stock of what the constituency's expectations and needs really were. New people coming to the church were initially impressed by the strong liberal religious statements and by the novel format in which they were presented. But the impressiveness turned to puzzlement as they observed the religious community expending most of their potency in dealing with basic "in-group" problems. The sense of being a covenanted community faded away in the face of so many internal difficulties. It was easy to choose not to become involved in a group where there was a preoccupation with dissension. For many it did not seem to be a community worth a commitment of one's time, energy or money.

Although the responses elicited from those member/participants present in the lay-led era indicated a favouring of the individual freedom side of the polarity, the actions of the community show that the need for a centered religious community was essential. The calling of a consultant was a move in this direction. It was a move which affirmed the role of the community and its resources. He helped the congregation to focus on the religious community as a vital component in the religious liberal's search for the deeper meanings in life.

For most of the years under study this set of polarities was imbalanced. The effect was to encourage and affirm the individual's right to hold his or her own religious values completely independently, without the need to honour the interdependence required of commitment to a group. It was as though the religious organization existed solely as a training ground for religious independence with little expectation that a person would desire an on-going relationship to the organization, or would wish to contribute to its continued well-being. This is somewhat of an overstatement, and yet it underlines the danger inherent in a religious group that forgets to ground itself in an affirmation of a covenanted religious community. The answer is not to be found in a trade-off situation, in less individual freedom making for more religious community. The answer is to be found in a balance of the two aspects that are clearly identified and celebrated. Then, the more individuals who are supported in their search for religious meaning, the stronger the religious community becomes; the deeper the bond that is found in religious community, the more nurturance will be received by the individuals on their religious search.

There was an interrelationship to be found between the first set of

polarities and the second--the inclination to change and innovation and yet the importance of maintaining the continuity and stability of the religious movement. As the emphasis on the individual's freedom of belief increased, so did the popularity of encouraging change and innovation. Each individual brought with him or her an openness to change. After all, it was the need for change, of finding a place that would accept the unique constellation of religious values embodied in each person that had been the attraction in the first place. On the whole, the loyalty was to the exciting possibilities contained within change, not to the enduring elements of the faith. With the affirmation of a covenanted community being under-valued, the religious and historical roots that were the foundation of the religion began to wither. In the Jenkins era so much changed so fast that there was seldom time to assess the long term effect[23] or to show appreciation of and connectedness to the Unitarian Universalist foundations. As other religious traditions have discovered, it is unwise to try and build a house on a sandy foundation. Change and innovation were firmly in place as the acceptable way of life when the Naylor era began, and they were taken to a natural conclusion. That is, in the perceptions of the member/participants, change became the _raison d'être_ and made a sense of continuity and stability _passé_. In the lay-led era change and innovation were still of primary importance, but now there was a cautiousness, an awareness of the need to link the changes to a stable base.

One of the elements that affected the imbalance of these polarities was the large number of converts. They often had little knowledge of the religious historical or social dynamics that were the background to the church story. They were there because of the openness and tolerance to religious ideas and because they found a compatibility with the manner

in which religious questions were approached.[24] They saw this church as a place that encouraged them to share their ideas and concerns and participate in bringing about change. Because of their numbers they were influential in the kind of change that happened. Congregational polity meant that each person had a right to share in the direction the church would take. But without much commitment to a sense of continuity in the Unitarian religion the reasons for change were not always supportive of that continuity. The answer is not to turn away those eager to follow the Unitarian Universalist religious path, but to recognize the necessity of providing ample opportunity for neophytes to learn the background of the religious faith they have chosen to join.

This is only part of the problem however. Because Unitarian Universalists in general, and Winnipeg Unitarians in particular, will continue to hold up change and innovation as a necessary part of their faith, extra care must be taken to be sure that continuity and stability are respected as a valuable and constant component in the life of the church. Without them the change loses its religious meaning and perspective.

The third set of polarities were also discovered to have a potent effect on church growth and decline. In a church that takes the model of wanting both lay and professional religious leadership,[25] and one that uses congregational polity as the governing mode, a good balance between these two kinds of leadership is crucial. This is the only area where the imbalance that developed may have been partially connected to an implicit weakness in the pre-study period. Certainly in that period the lay leadership and the minister worked well together. But the minister had so many years of experience in the religious community that the lay leadership was used to accepting his benign and caring advice.[26]

This did mean, however, that when a new professional leader came on the scene the lay leadership was prepared, sometimes uncritically, to accept his advice. This resulted in a degree of change for which the church was not prepared.[27] In hindsight it would have been more appropriate to have an interim professional leader who could have helped the congregation deal with the changes a different professional leader would bring. The lay leadership in the Jenkins era were competent men and women but they were having to cope with a new aggressive leadership style from a new minister, and they had not fully developed their own style. The lack of long-time church involvement of most of the lay leaders during the Naylor era led to a sense of disconnectedness. For the long-term members, this was another sign that nothing from the past was valued. The uneven relationship between lay and professional leadership during this period--sometimes unanimity being shown and sometimes distinctly conflicting viewpoints being stated--brought confusion and uncertainty to the congregation. Some felt the lay leadership was giving poor guidance and others felt it was the minister who was misguided. For most of the lay led era there was no balance to be sought, but having to manage on their own forced the lay leadership to develop their own leadership style. The ministerial consultant brought with him a different professional leadership style and gave the lay leadership an opportunity to work as a functioning independent leadership team in harness with a professional religious leader. There is evidence that matters were discussed from the perspective of both professional and lay leadership, mutual agreement arrived at and incorporated into the actions to be taken.[28] The early years of Gilbert's religious leadership suggest that he is willing to fit into this inter-dependent style.

It is important that the value of each side of this set of polarities be recognized. The lay leadership represents the heterogeneous religious values, needs and experiences of the individual whereas the professional religious leader must image the spirit of the religious community as a whole. The lay leadership provides the raw material of the impetus for change. The professional religious leader must provide the religious vision and pride of religious continuity that will both shape and refine the raw material. Both must work out of a common ground, accept the same religious vision. In all these statements there can be seen an interrelating among all three sets of imbalanced polarities that have strongly affected the growth and decline of the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg.

In the light of these imbalanced polarities it is no wonder that a centering of religious purpose, a sense of mission, was inconsistent. For this kind of a church, that is, a church that puts such a high value on open inquiry and the acceptance of new religious insights even if it means an adjustment of previously held beliefs and behaviours, having a strong sense of mission will be a difficult task. A sense of mission implies a singular purpose followed by everyone. One of the weaknesses of the Winnipeg Unitarian Church during the years under study was that its liberal religious faith had not been articulated in a manner that was cohesive for its member/participants. A common purpose had not been stated in a way that had been heard.

One of its strengths, the encouragement and nurture of individuals to seek out the religious meaning in life for himself or herself, has not always included a concomitant commitment on the part of its members for religious community. There almost seems to be support for members to

remain aloof, to listen attentively and objectively to each other but not to become involved in a common purpose. This would mean a responsibility and commitment to which they could be held accountable as a member of the covenanted community. In this western society money is a symbol of power, and how it is used is one of the indicators of what is of value. The lack of consistent financial support by member/participants would suggest that the church was not seen as a vehicle by which important values could be realized and communicated to others. If this is to change in the future, a focussed religious vision must light up a church community where the realization of central life values takes place. If this does not happen the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg will function more as a halfway house than a religious home where one's spirit is nourished, one's concerns are shared, one's intelligence is challenged and one's values are realized.

Footnotes    Conclusion

1. The financial instability of the Jenkins era was noted in Chapter III. The Long Range Planning Committee report to the Board stating, ". . . unless the finances of the church can be organized on a better basis and in particular unless the present deficit position can be rectified soon, there is little point in discussing new buildings. . . ." did not slow down plans to finance a new church building. Long Range Planning Committee Report, May 31, 1965. U.C.W. Archives.

2. See Appendix E, Tables I and II for yearly budget and pledge amounts.

3. The average pledge in 1969 was $146.00, in 1972, $175.00 and in 1976, $222.00. Josiah Bartlett, "Preliminary Report, Unitarian Church of Winnipeg" Nov. 14, 1975, p. 10. U.C.W. Archives.

4. See Appendix D, Table II for the graph of numbers of people joining the church in each year from 1960-1982.

5. "Unitarian Universalist Merger," p. 14.

6. An example would be the removal of the pews in the Jenkins era and the permitting of extensive publicity around the homosexual wedding in the Naylor era.

7. Tapp, p. 13. The sample comprising Tapp's study revealed that the Canadian convert percentage can go as high as 97%. The Winnipeg experience would be in line with this.

8. Tapes 6, 9, 13, 14, 17, 20, 22, 32.

9. Tapes 6, 9, 13, 14, 22.

10. Tape 17.

11. The Canadian Unitarian, Summer 1971, p. 1.

12. Miller, p. 189.

13. "Commission I: The Church and Its Leadership." The Free Church in a Changing World (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 1963), p. 6.

14. This was the time of much tension between lay and professional leadership.

15. The exceptions to this were the request for and acceptance of the Winnipeg Church hosting the C.U.C. Annual Meeting in 1970 and the voting once a year on matters of national social concern from the Canadian Unitarian perspective.

16. Hewett, p. 4.

17. See Appendix D, Table I for membership figures and Appendix E for budget amounts.

18. Biersdorf, p. 136.

19. Ibid., p. 137.

20. Tapes 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 24, 26, 29, 30.

21. Tapes 3, 9, 12, 20, 23, 25, 31, 32.

22. In the Commission On Appraisal Report to the 1979 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association a paper "Population Trends in the Unitarian Universalist Association since Merger (1961)" by Peter Raible and Milton Holmen, December 1978, p. 8. The comment is made, "Individual authority in religion is our hallmark. It stands in contrast with "true believer" faiths and their variant appeals."

23. Going in to a massive building project when the church was in a deficit position suggests an unrealistic attitude to change.

24. Generally speaking, this is true continentally as well as locally. Tapp comments, "it is very doubtful if many of these converts would have become Unitarian Universalists if the beliefs and practices . . . were being characteristically determined by those born into and remaining with the denomination." Tapp, p. 14.

25. As opposed to Unitarian Universalist fellowships that choose to have only lay leadership.

26. An example of this is the presence and influence of Petursson on the Search Commiteee that chose Jenkins as his successor.

27. As Lyle Schaller has pointed out, "Unless there is a change in the direction, value system and orientation of the organization frequently there are severe limitations on what can be accomplished by changes in people or by the addition of new personnel." Lyle E. Schaller, The Change Agent, (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1972), p. 175.

28. Board Meeting Minutes, October 1976, UCS Archives.

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# APPENDIX A

## Time Frame

Periods in the recent history of the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg

| Jan. 1/64 | Jan. 1/69 | Jan. 1/75 | Dec. 31/77 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. 2. | 3. 4. | 5. 6. | 7. |

- I: Jan. 1/64 – Dec. 31/68
- II: Jan. 1/69 – Dec. 31/74
- III: Jan. 1/75 – Dec. 31/77
- IV: Jan. 1/64 – Dec. 31/74
- V: Jan. 1/69 – Dec. 31/77
- VI: Jan. 1/64 – Dec. 31/77

1. Philip Petursson resigns ministry - June 30/64
2. William Jenkins begins ministry - September 1/64
3. William Jenkins resigns ministry - June 30/68
4. Norman Naylor begins ministry - January 1/69
5. Norman Naylor resigns minsitry - December 8/74
6. Lay leadership responsible for ministerial duties - April 1/75
7. John Gilbert begins ministry - October 31/77

The sample of people being interviewed will be divided into six groups taken from three time periods. Each time period represents a change in the leadership of the church. Where the leadership started during a calendar year the research will start at the beginning of that calendar year so that transitional nuances will be recorded. Where the leadership ended close to the end of a calendar year the time period will continue to the end of that calendar year.

Group I includes those who appear as participant/members only within the time period from Jan. 1, 1964 to Dec. 31, 1968. Group II includes those who appear as participant/members only within the time period from Jan. 1, 1969 to Dec. 31, 1974. Group III includes those who appear as participant/members only within the time period from Jan. 1, 1975 to Dec. 31, 1977. Group IV includes those who appear as participant/members within both the time periods Jan. 1. 1964 to Dec. 31, 1968 and Jan. 1, 1969 to Dec. 31, 1974, but not before. Group V includes those who appear as participant/members within both the time periods Jan. 1, 1969 to Dec. 31, 1974 and Jan. 1, 1975 to Dec. 31, 1977, but not before. Group VI includes those people who appear as participant/members in every one of the time periods above.

# APPENDIX B

## List of Respondents and Interview Dates

| TAPE # | RESPONDENT DESIGNATION Member/Participant | TIME PERIOD | INTERVIEW DATE |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | A | VI | Wed., June 16, 1982 |
| 2 | B | VI | Thurs., June 17, 1982 |
| 3 | C | VI | Thurs., June 17, 1982 |
| 4 | D | V | Thurs., June 17, 1982 |
| 5 | E | I | Tues., June 22, 1982 |
| 6 | F | I | Thurs., June 24, 1982 |
| 7 | G | V | Thurs., June 24, 1982 |
| 8 | H | I | Fri., June 24, 1982 |
| 9 | I | VI | Mon., June 28, 1982 |
| 10 | J | V | Tues., June 29, 1982 |
| 11 | K | VI | Tues., June 29, 1982 |
| 12 | L | II | Tues., June 29, 1982 |
| 13 | M | VI | Wed., June 30, 1982 |
| 14 | N | VI | Tues., July 6, 1982 |
| 15 | O | VI | Tues., July 6, 1982 |
| 16 | P | IV | Wed., July 7, 1982 |
| 17 | Q | VI | Fri., July 9, 1982 |
| 18 | R | II | Sun., July 11, 1982 |
| 19 | S | V | Tues., July 13, 1982 |
| 20 | T | V | Tues., July 13, 1982 |
| 21 | U | I | Wed., July 14, 1982 |
| 22 | V | VI | Wed., July 14, 1982 |
| 23 | W | IV | Thurs., July 15, 1982 |

| TAPE # | RESPONDENT DESIGNATION | TIME PERIOD | INTERVIEW DATE |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Member/Participant | | |
| 24 | X | VI | Thurs., July 15, 1982 |
| 25 | Y | VI | Thurs., July 15, 1982 |
| 26 | Z | IV | Tues., July 20, 1982 |
| 27 | a | V | Wed., July 21, 1982 |
| 28 | b | III | Wed., July 21, 1982 |
| 29 | c | VI | Thurs., July 22, 1982 |
| 30 | d | I | Wed., Aug. 4, 1982 |
| 31 | e | VI | Fri., Aug. 13, 1982 |
| 32 | f | IV | Tues., Aug. 17, 1982 |
| | MINISTER | | |
| 33 | g | II | June 1981 |
| 34 | h | I | Oct. 1981 |
| 35 | i | III | June 1982 |
| 36 | j | VI | June 1982 |

NOTE: The interviews elicited historical information, opinions and feelings about the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg during the period under study, 1964-1977. Information, opinions and feelings were also shared by some of the respondents about the state of the church prior to 1964. Comments from the tapes are used to explain and/or expand upon the elements and events that were a part of the church story.

# APPENDIX C

## Method

The largest source of research for this thesis comes from the memories of member/participants and ministers involved in the church during the period 1964-1977. A list of the names of all those member/participants who had been involved in the church during all or some portion of this time period was gathered. This list included people who were peripheral to the church but had shown interest and had participated in activities or made use of some of the church's services and had accepted inclusion in the church telephone directory. Several criteria were used in assigning names to this list. Firstly, because of the interview technique being used and the wish to interview in person, only those persons still residing in Manitoba[1] were included.[2] Secondly, only names that appeared for two consecutive years in the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg directory were considered. It was felt that it would require more than a year of involvement with or knowledge of the church, to respond to the interview with any depth. At the end of this process 306 names and addresses of member/participants had been obtained. A calculation was made to discover what percentage of the total sample each of the six time portions (I, II, III, IV, V, VI--explained in Appendix B) had. A random sampling was then done, using random numbers from The Rand Corporation book of random digits.[3] Since the final interview sample was to be 10% of the total available sample (30.6), 40 names were gathered, to allow for refusals and for better distribution, percentage-wise, among the six time periods.

The final number of persons being interviewed was 36--32 member/participants and 4 ministers. TABLE I gives the numbers and percentages of the total sample and the interviewees.

Anonymity had been assured each of the respondents and each interview took place at a spot chosen by each respondent. Each interview was taped and later analyzed for both factual information and effect.

Relevant church records were also scrutinized. They included: Annual Meeting Minutes, Board Meeting Minutes, Annual Budget Meeting Minutes, Financial Statements, Special Congregational Meetings Minutes, Ministerial Search Committee Minutes, Long Range Planning Minutes, Religious Education Minutes, Program Committee Minutes and congregational correspondence. Other material used from the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg Archives included historical data prepared for different anniversaries in the church's history by ministers or members of the congregation.

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[1] The Manitoba Henderson Directory (1982 edition) was used. Also, church staff and lay leadership were consulted if it was felt there might be a name that had missed inclusion in the Directory.

[2] The only exception was in the case of the ministers. On two occasions it was necessary to travel outside the province to obtain interviews with ministers no longer residing in Manitoba.

[3] The Rand Corporation, A Million Random Digits with 100,000 Normal Deviates (New York: The Free Press, 1955).

TABLE I

| TOTAL SAMPLE | TIME PERIODS I | II | III | IV | V | VI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 306 (member/participants) | 42 | 11 | 23 | 59 | 47 | 124 |
| % | 13 | 4 | 8 | 20 | 15 | 40 |
| TOTAL INTERVIEWED | | | | | | |
| 36 (32 + 4) (member/participants and ministers) | 6 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 15 |
| % | 16.6 | 8.3 | 5.5 | 12.5 | 16.6 | 41.6 |

A letter was sent to each of the 40 persons and was followed up, a week later, by a phone call which confirmed acceptance or rejection of participation in the study and set up an interview date. The letter in its entirety follows.

82 Douglas Park Road
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3J 1Z2

May 13, 1982

Dear

I am presently writing my thesis for my Master's degree in Religious Studies at the University of Winnipeg.

I have picked as my topic a study of some aspects of the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg from 1964-1977. The major portion of my research will come from interviews I will conduct with people who were participants in the church during part or all of this period. Through a random sampling procedure, your name has been selected as one of those I would like to interview. I hope you will give me permission to interview you. I would need about an hour of your time.

I will be phoning you about a week after you have received this letter to clarify any questions you might have regarding my thesis and the interview and to arrange a suitable time for us to meet.

Thanking you in advance, I am,

Yours sincerely,

Jane Bramadat

NOTE: This was the letter sent out to the original sample of 40 names, requesting their participation in a documentary interview.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS/CHECKLIST

1. Tell me how you came to attend the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg.

2. What is your image(s) of the church when you knew it, as you knew it?

3. What things stayed the same in the church and what things changed?

4. What church programs did you get involved in? What was your impression of their impact - on you and/or on the community as a whole?

5. Was there a "sense of mission" or "sense of religious purpose" felt? How did the church relate to the society around it?

6. In your own words, what would you say were the purposes or goals of the church while you were attending?

7. Thinking of the church as an individual, would you say it was healthy/unhealthy?

8. Did it ever seem to you that the church's commitment to individual freedom was in conflict with the need to be part of a religious community, or were these kept in balance?

9. Innovation and change has been important to Unitarian Universalists, but so has some measure of continuity and stability. Where, on a spectrum between innovation and continuity, would you see the Winnipeg church during the period you knew it?

NOTES:

A. When interviewing people in time period VI (those people who were present for the entire time under study), each question was asked of each time period. For example, "During the time period from 1964 to 1968, what were your images of the church? What were your images for the years from 1969 to 1974? What were the images of the lay-led period?"

B. Some of the respondents covered the questions raised in this checklist without the question(s) having to be asked. The questions were used when respondents had not covered the points under consideration.

# APPENDIX D

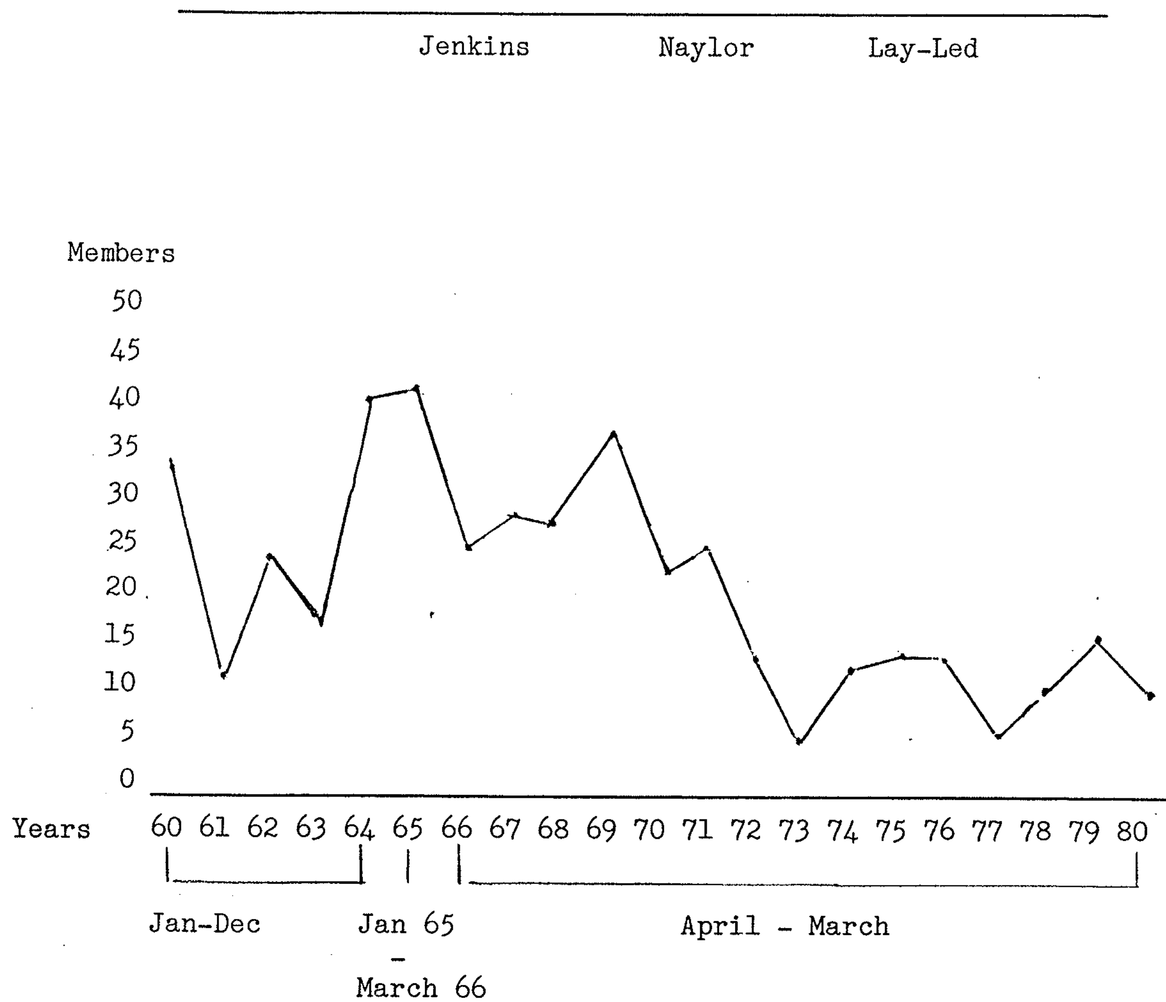
## TABLE I
Membership Growth/Decline

| Year | Total Reported to UUA | New Members (MB)[2] | New Members (AR)[3] | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1963 | 280 | 25 | 7 | Jan.-Dec. 62 |
| 1964 | 300 | 16 | 15 | Jan.-Dec. 63 |
| 1965 | 347 | 41 | 41 | Jan.-Dec. 64 |
| 1966 | 367 | 42 | 46 | Jan.65-Mar. 66[4] |
| 1967 | 342 (329)[1] | 25 | 25 | Apr. 66-Mar. 67 |
| 1968 | 350 | 28 | 29 | Apr. 67-Mar. 68 |
| 1969 | 350 | 28 | 29 | Apr. 68-Mar. 69 |
| 1970 | 301 (330) | 36 | 31 | Apr. 69-Mar. 70 |
| 1971 | 343 | 23 | 20 | Apr. 70-Mar. 71 |
| 1972 | 210 (250) | 25 | 7 | Apr. 71-Mar. 72 |
| 1973 | 220 | 13 | — | Apr. 72-Mar. 73 |
| 1974 | 216 | 5 | — | Apr. 73-Mar. 74 |
| 1975 | 223 | 12 | — | Apr. 74-Mar. 75 |
| 1976 | 185 | 13 | — | Apr. 75-Mar. 76 |
| 1977 | 203 | 13 | — | Apr. 76-Mar. 77 |
| 1978 | 215 | 6 | 5 | Apr. 77-Mar. 78 |

Notes:
1. ( ) = Figures inside brackets in "total" column represent amounts reported in Annual Report where different from figures sent into UUA.
2. M.B. = Unitarian Church of Winnipeg Membership Book.
3. A.R. = Annual Report of the Unitarian Church of Winnipeg.
4. Annual Meeting date changed from January to April. Membership figures for 1965 are for 15 months.

APPENDIX D

TABLE II
Yearly Membership Additions



# APPENDIX E

## TABLE I

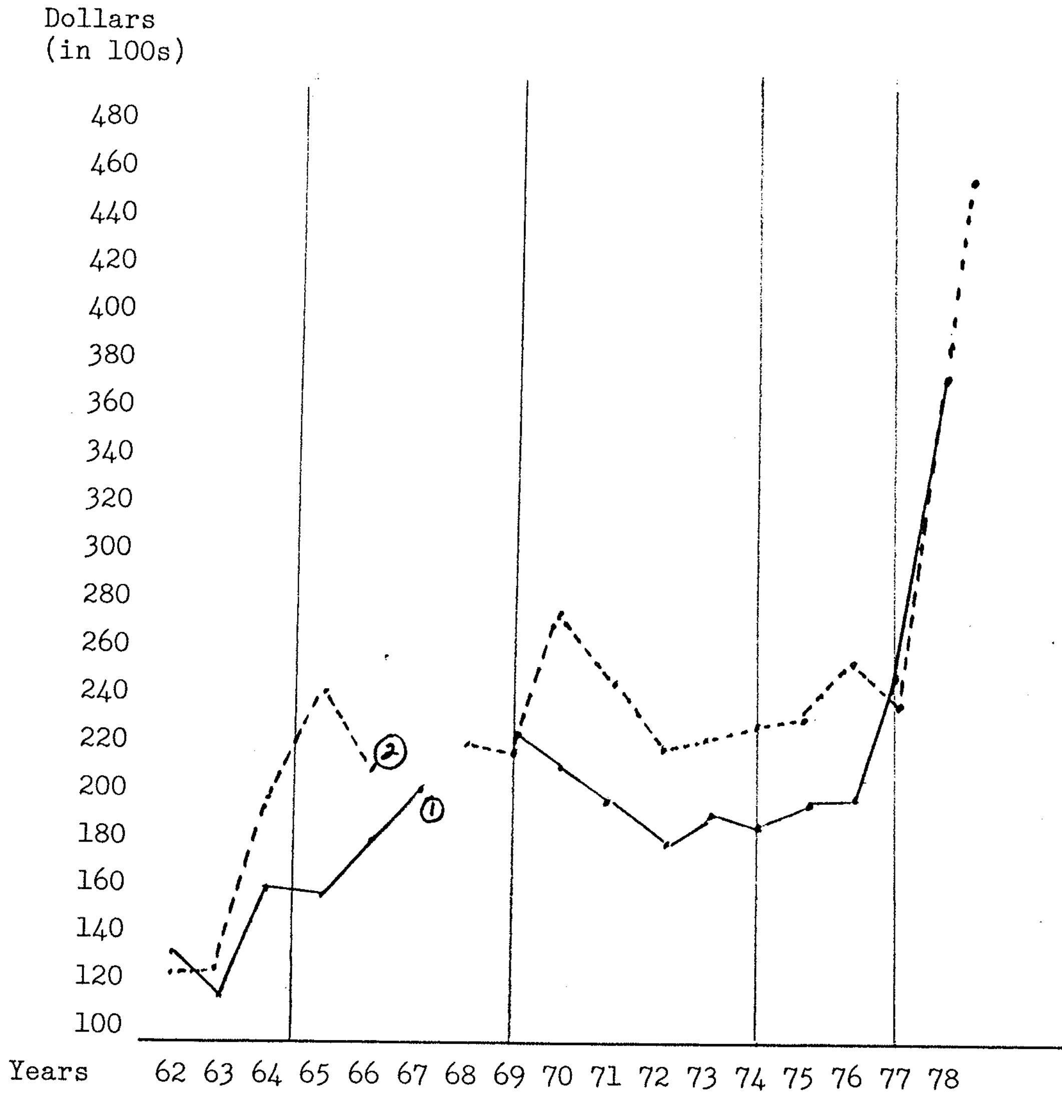
| Year | Pledges | Budget | Reported to UUA |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1964 | 15,841.49 | 19,529.81 (1490 D) | 19,500.00 |
| 1965 | 15,667.20 | 23,853.00 (4525.72 D) | 24,000.00 |
| 1966 | 17,809.57 | 34,055.50 (3939.72 S) | 20,383.00 |
| | | (Stefansson Estate 14,260.00) | |
| 1967 | 19,331.95 | 21,850.00 (524.04 S) | — |
| 1968 | — | 18,920.14 or 19,683.00 | 21,594.00 |
| 1969 | 23,369.48 | 26,111.25 | 21,590.00 |
| 1970 | 21,710.45 | 22,419.00 | 27,027.00 |
| 1971 | 18,737.29 | 21,844.00 | 24,550.00 |
| 1972 | 17,783.85 | 21,053.00 | 21,053.00 |
| 1973 | 18,328.30 | 19,310.00 (1697.00 D) | 21,243.00 |
| 1974 | 18,071.29 | 22,057.00 (1697.00 D) | 21,604.00 |
| 1975 | 19,950.50 | 21,500.00 (4112.81 S) | 22,325.00 |
| 1976 | 19,977.67 | 27,207.06 (900.00 D) | 25,000.00 |
| 1977 | 24,287.00 | 29,981.00 | 23,620.00 |
| 1978 | 37,000.00 (approx.) | 45,184.00 (3084.00 D) | 45,184.00 |

Notes: D = deficit

S = surplus

APPENDIX E

TABLE II
Pledges and Total Budget




Notes: 1. There was no available information on pledges* for 1968.

2. There was no available information on the UCW budget° for 1967.

* Pledges —

° Budget . . .