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First Unitarian Universalist Church of Niagara Falls

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# The Unitarian Universalist Church



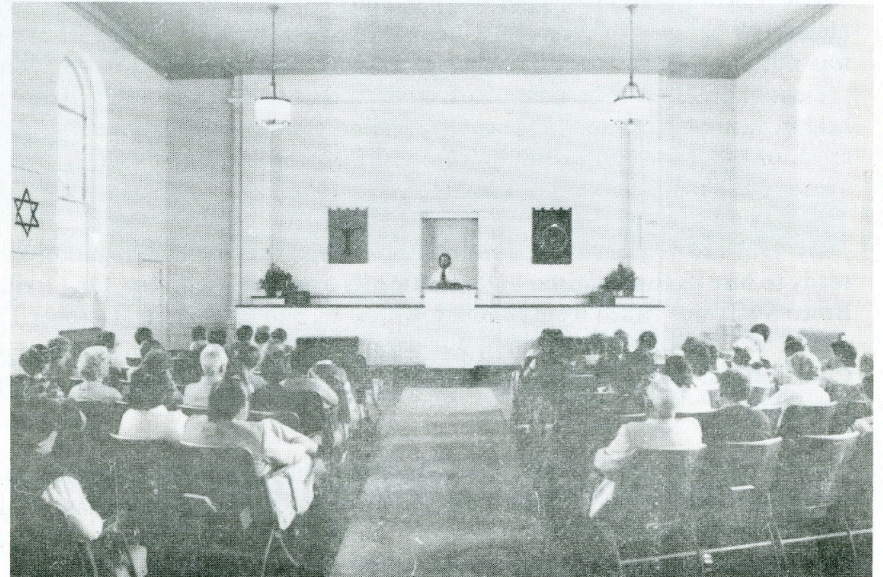
OF NIAGARA FALLS, NEW YORK  
639 Main Street 14301

## A UNIQUE CHURCH

This church is composed of people who vary in their religious thought and who expect and desire no conformity or uniformity of opinion. Centering around freedom of religious belief and a generous tolerance of other people's beliefs instead of around a particular creed or book or tradition or person, we welcome among us all manner of religious thinkers: theists, agnostics, humanists, atheists, and mystics. Everyone, regardless of past religious background or present religious outlook, is welcome among us. From our diversity is drawn our greatest sense of vitality.

Consistent with our uniquely liberal approach to religion is our openness to the wisdom of the other world religious traditions as well as to the wisdom of the world's secular disciplines. Thus, six banners representing the six major world religions, in addition to two banners representing Unitarian Universalism, grace the interior walls of our church, serving as visible reminders of our openness and diversity. The six faiths represented (and symbolized along the front border of this brochure) are: Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Taoism, plus the flaming chalice and the interlocking circles of Unitarian Universalism.

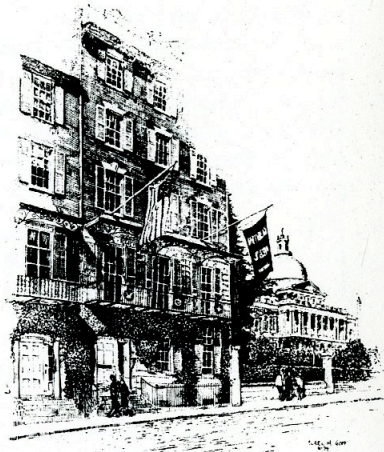
While ours is a small church, both locally and internationally, it is a unique church, which not infrequently attracts outstanding individuals. John Adams, Susan B. Anthony, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Dorothea Dix, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Louisa M. Alcott, Horace Mann and Thomas Jefferson all had at least two things in common: (1) they were all outstanding individuals, and (2) they were all either Unitarians or Universalists.



## A BROADER FELLOWSHIP

This church is a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association, whose main offices are located in Boston, Massachusetts. The UUA has a membership of more than 1,000 congregations serving nearly 200,000 adults and church school children.

The Unitarian Universalist Association represents the consolidation of two denominations which developed out of a Christian heritage into free thinking, not exclusively Christian churches. The consolidation in 1961 united the Universalists, who first organized in 1793, and the Unitarians, who organized themselves in 1825.



The Unitarian Universalist  
Association  
25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA

## OUR LOCAL BEGINNINGS

The Niagara Falls - Lewiston area had known several earlier attempts in the nineteenth century to establish Unitarian and Universalist churches, but it was not until 1913, under the leadership of Mr. J. Allen Johnson, that the present church began to take shape. For the first several years services were held in various halls and lodge rooms around the city of Niagara Falls, with much of the inspiration coming from visiting professors and students from Meadville Theological School in Meadville, Pennsylvania.

By 1920 the venture looked promising enough that the congregation was ready to hire its first minister and to officially organize itself. Rev. Dr. Orville Bruce Swift was called from Middletown, N. Y., and on Sunday, October 17, 1920 The First Unitarian Church was organized with 34 Charter Members, a Constitution, and a Board of 9 Trustees. Mr. J. Allen Johnson was elected President.

Early the next year, in 1921, it was decided to buy and build a church upon the present site on Main Street. When it came to the excavation, however, it was discovered that the site chosen rested upon solid rock. This rock, broken into suitable sizes, now serves as the rubble exterior of the church.

## OUR FELLOWSHIP TODAY

Our church's life revolves around weekly Sunday Services (11:00 A.M.) for adults and our Church School program (11:00 A.M.) for children. Afterwards, coffee and juice is served downstairs in Unity Hall where we join newcomers and friends in conversation and sometimes convene to share our diverse views on the topic of the morning's service.

Our Church School, consistent with our liberal approach to religion with adults, seeks to facilitate the development of each child's own life orientation. As frustrating as it may be at times, we do not believe that religion, or a life orientation, is something to be "given" or "taught" to a child. Rather, we believe it is something which grows and is distilled out of a wealth of real life experiences. We do try to expose our children to the thoughts and beliefs of various religion's, philosophies, and life styles, but we try not to impose upon our children any one value or belief system.



A variety of adult programs are offered each year in an effort to expand our horizons, deepen and sharpen our sensibilities, and generally improve our relationship to ourselves, one another, and to a variety of life concerns. Most recently programs have been offered in Death and Dying and Human Sexuality.

Similarly, at any one time we usually have a couple of ongoing groups. Presently a Women's Group and a Book Discussion Group are holding meetings.

A wide variety of social events are also sponsored by the church throughout the year to further enhance the vitality of our community life: potluck dinners, square dances, picnics, theatre parties, group breakfasts, and many more.

Opportunities exist for action on a variety of local and national social concerns through our Social Concerns Group as well as through our denomination's Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, whose offices are located in Boston.

The church depends for its existence solely upon the contributions of its members and friends. A financial campaign is conducted each year to solicit voluntary pledges of financial support for the following fiscal year.



#### OUR MINISTER

The church elects a minister, on the recommendation of a congregational Pulpit Committee, for an indefinite tenure.

The minister conducts Dedication Services for children, marriage ceremonies, funeral and memorial services. He or she counsels the troubled, visits the sick, represents the church to the community, and meets with committees. Without trying to complete the list, we should add that his or her work generally centers itself around preparation for Sunday Services.

Our present minister, since October of 1974, is the Rev. Dr. Andrew C. Kennedy. Drew holds a B.A. in Philosophy from the University of Michigan, a Masters (M.T.S.) degree and a Doctor of Ministry (D. Min.) degree from Meadville Theological School at the University of Chicago.

#### INTERESTED?

If this sounds like it might be the right kind of church for you, please feel free to come join us at 11:00 A.M. some Sunday morning (except July and August). We'd love to have you.

If you are not already on our newsletter mailing list and you would like to be, just fill out your name and address below. There is no charge or obligation. Also, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact the minister (call 285-8381 or 282-1421) or jot them down in the space provided below. Send the form below to:

The Unitarian Universalist Church  
639 Main Street  
Niagara Falls, N.Y. 14301

Please send me/us the church's newsletter until further notice.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

I would like more information regarding:

Unitarian Universalism

Your Church School

The history of your local church

I would like to meet the minister

Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_