

A Publication of the First Unitarian Universalist Church, Rochester, Minnesota



# UU REVUE

Spring 2015

## *Rain Garden*

A Problem Solved

*Karin's  
Creative  
Nature*

*Transitions*

*The Maypole*

*Rochester's First  
Universalist Minister*





*Photo by Ron Chrisope*

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## UU Revue

*The UU Revue* is produced quarterly by the First Unitarian Universalist Communications Committee.

Articles in *UU Revue* focus on the positive work done by First UU members and friends, demonstrating our congregation's commitment to the Seven Principles.

Much of the volunteering by our members is behind the scenes and, unless you are closely involved with these efforts, you may not be aware of the time and dedication, the challenges, or the joy experienced by those involved – not to mention the impact on those who benefit from their work.

By telling the stories of our wonderful members, we hope to inspire others to volunteer, become active, and find the reward of working with the church.

## Our Mission

To create a compassionate, welcoming community that nurtures spiritual growth and practices justice



# Rain Garden

By Kathy Brutinel and Paulette DeMers

## *A Problem Solved*

Would you call it coincidence? Happenstance? Serendipity? What is it called when a serious problem meets up with a motivated problem solver at just the right moment?

In our case, the serious problem was the erosion of our hillside and the watershed pollution that was created by run-off after every heavy rain. We had tried various solutions over the years, but none met the challenges posed by our large roof, our steep hillside, and our impervious parking lot.

The motivated problem solver was Kay Eberman, Master Gardener. The University of Minnesota Extension Master Gardener program requires Master Gardeners to volunteer 25 hours each year to maintain their certification and Kay was looking for a project. Motivated by her passion for gardening, her eye for beauty, and commitment to the church, she “envisioned a spot of great beauty right at our entrance. The location is ideal, with a south facing slope, mostly full



sun and also the first thing seen when coming toward the church. Every time I came to church I had pictures in my mind of what could be.”

The right moment arrived when Kay met up with Bill Thompson, Exterior and Grounds Subcommittee chair, who was looking for a solution to the run-off problem in the fall of 2013. Kay and Bill decided upon a rain garden, a special type of garden designed to collect storm water runoff. Rather than rushing off into a storm sewer or waterway, the rainwater collects in a garden where it is naturally filtered by plants and soil. Rain gardens can have a significant impact on water quality in communities. By taking responsibility for the rainwater that falls on our roof, we help protect our





*Work began with the temporary removal of plants on cool May days.*

environment from storm water pollution. Rain gardens also provide food and shelter for wildlife.

Normally, Master Gardeners volunteer for a variety of projects over the year, but Kay received permission from her Master Gardener group to devote all her time to creating a rain garden at our church and the project was off and running.

Because of the steepness of the slope, Kay and Bill asked the Property Committee for funds to pay for professional design assistance. They hired church member Curt Axen, who had considerable experience with sustainable landscapes and was willing to donate a portion of his costs to the church. The Clara Barton Guild donated \$500 to the project and the Board agreed to allocate up to \$6,500 from the Memorial and Gift Fund. In addition, Kay submitted a grant and received \$750 in matching funds from the city storm water management program.

Planning began in earnest in February, 2014. In April a perk test was completed to determine the draining capacity of the soil and utilities lines were marked. The physical labor began in May as volunteers arrived for the first of many Saturday mornings of hard but rewarding work. Because of the significant changes

*32 volunteers ... 535 hours ... 340 plants*







*A heavy rain puts our unfinished garden to the test.*

that needed to be made, a professional was hired to sculpt the ponds and place the very large rocks. Nonetheless, “The volunteers were the heroes of this project,” Kay said, “hauling rock, placing rock for steppers and retaining walls, bringing and planting plants, watering plants in the garden as well as the holding area, and moving dirt and mulch.” In all, 32 volunteers (most from the church and some from Kay’s gardening group) put in more than 500 hours planting or replanting more than 300 plants in the rain garden.

“We moved almost everything that was growing in the garden area to a holding area and then replanted them,” said Kay. “There were about 230 plants, including day lilies, hosta, tickseed, lupine, daisies, ornamental grasses, rudbeckia, cone flowers and lamb’s ear.” The donated and purchased plants included many native species such as nodding wild onion, native grasses and other flowering plants.

Since being installed, the ponds and plants have worked together to create a beautiful garden that catches and filters most of



*Plants put down deep roots to soak up water.*





the runoff from the building, stops erosion, creates ease of maintenance with accessible paths, and provides a user friendly space for children and adults to enjoy. It is the perfect addition to our outdoors, creating a beautiful sanctuary.

The rain garden construction brought people together to realize one of our visions: working in concert on issues of justice, inclusiveness, and environmental sustainability.

The church has other outdoor projects that are also inspired by our commitment to environmental sustainability.

Dawn Littleton is heading up a group to remove invasive grasses from our hillsides and turn the areas into Butterfly Gardens. The north hillside above the lower parking lot was the first step and it took most of the summer in 2014 to get rid of the invasive grass there. Dawn plans to start on the west hillside above the upper lot this spring and work on it throughout the summer. We also have lots of buckthorn around the church that we would like to banish. Phil Wheeler is helping to organize a team to continue to address that problem.

In addition to the opportunities described above, anyone wanting to get involved in beautifying the church's outdoors is encouraged to join our outdoor workdays that are held once a month throughout the growing season, starting in April and going through November. They are normally the third Saturday of the month, 9 a.m. to Noon. You will be welcomed by Bill Thompson and the Exterior and Grounds group. Sunshine ... fellowship ... hands in the dirt ... ahhhhh.

*Photos by Kay Eberman and Ron Chrisope*

*Kathy Brutinel is an English major whose only claim to literary fame so far is one opinion piece in the PostBulletin. She finds writing to be both arduous and exhilarating.*

*Paulette DeMers is an accountant by trade whose heart lies in exposing people's passions (including her own) with graphic design.*



*Our Rain Garden Party in September*



*Our youth painted houses to welcome both critters and fairies to the garden.*

# Transitions

*Are we ready for change?  
Transitioning to a new minister.*

By Kathy Brutinel

“It is difficult to overstate the opportunities provided to a congregation during an interim period. Rarely in the life of any human institution—congregation, business, nation, or house-hold—is there such a chance to begin anew. The interim period following the end of one relationship and preceding the beginning of another offers such an opportunity, providing the breathing space during which a congregation can review its goals, assess its programs, consider the quality of its life in common, and “tune up” for a new era. The one- to two-year period it usually takes for a congregation to grow into and own its identity, independent of both positive and negative feelings about the ministry that has come to an end, can be exciting, even transformative, when devoted to self-examination and institutional renewal. A palate cleanser, one might say.” From the



*Rev. Fred F. Campbell  
1985-1990*



*Rev. Dillman Baker Sorrells  
1992-2005*

UUA's *Transitional Ministry Handbook*



*Rev. Dr. Carol Hepokoski  
2006-2015*

Many different feelings are swirling in our church about the upcoming ministerial transition, especially the period of interim ministry. They range from “Ho hum, we’ve done this before—it’ll be fine” to “Help! How do we survive until we get a new minister?” to “Two years? Give me a break—I could hire an entire football team in that much time.” In this article I will address the rationale and challenges of a two-year interim period.

In the 1970’s the Alban Institute, an organization that devotes itself to church capacity building, found that following the departure of a long-term minister many churches experienced a de facto interim ministry, but in the form of a called minister with an unfortunately short term of service. Because the work of transition had not been undertaken, the new minister floundered in a place that had not prepared itself for change. From their work emerged the concept of an intentional interim ministry.

An intentional interim ministry brings a short-term interim minister and a transitional congregation together in a unique relationship.



The interim minister, being new, can see the organization from an outside perspective and identify issues and challenges that are so familiar to an insider as to be invisible. The interim minister, as a short-timer, can be open and candid in a way that may not be comfortable to a new settled minister who is trying to establish and nurture long-term relationships. For its part, the congregation has a period of time to explore its identity and redefine its goals and dreams outside the bounds established with its previous minister.

## The main tasks of the congregation during an interim ministry

### Getting over the departing minister

Whether the departing minister was a beloved long-time pastor or a difficult short-time one—or anywhere in between—members of the congregation need time to come to grips with the departure. People may feel abandoned or they may feel relief. Some may feel anger, some guilt, some joy. The resolution of these feelings may be more difficult if the congregation was divided about the effectiveness of the departing minister. In any event, the congregation needs time to process those feelings so that they do not distort the search for the next minister. Trying to find someone exactly like or exactly the opposite from the previous minister is not a good search strategy.

### Experiencing a different type of ministry

If the departing minister has been with the congregation for many years, many members of the congregation will be unfamiliar with any other style of UU ministry. By being exposed to the different strengths, weaknesses, style, and abilities of an interim minister, people are likely to become more flexible in their approach to the new settled minister. They will see that there is more than one way to be an effective minister.

If the relationship between the interim minister and the congregation is not proving to be successful, the congregation can decline to renew the minister's one-year contract and seek a different interim minister for the second year of the interim. Although unfor-

tunate, such an experience with the first interim minister gives the congregation the opportunity to practice communicating its needs openly and honestly without fear of damaging a long-term relationship.

### Making changes that need to be made

It's best not to leave the "heavy lifting" for the new settled minister. For example: For many years of our history, during a portion of the Sunday Service called Joys and Concerns, attendees could come forward to the microphone and speak about the joyful or difficult things happening in their lives. As our church grew rapidly during the ministry of Dillman Baker Sorrells, the number, unpredictability, and misuse of Joys and Concerns became very challenging for the person responsible for the service (the minister) to manage. For several years before her retirement Dillman advocated for change, but nothing was done because Joys and Concerns was a cherished tradition for some in our congregation. When Carol came she immediately recognized that this small-church tradition did not work well in our mid-size congregation and she pushed for change. Her stance put her at odds with many in our congregation and immediately harmed some relationships. It would have been far better if we had dealt with this church size transition issue during the interim period.

What are some issues we should look at now? Here are my favorites. (I'm sure others would have a different list.)

✧ *I frequently read a blog called *The Lively Tradition* that is written by Tom Schade, a retired UU minister. He speculates that UUs are so stressed out by caring for all the internal processes and needs of our congregations that we have little energy left to go out and make a difference in the world. Is the balance between our internal and external focus appropriate? Do we need to bring some attention to how we use our energy and make adjustments during the interim period?*

✧ *In January Ryan Shriver, our Director of Religious Education, posted on our RE Facebook page a link to a blog entitled, "Killing the Church with Sunday School," from *Ponder Anew: Discussions about Worship for Thinking People*. It explores the question of whether segregating our children in religious education programs is good for the long-*



term growth of their spiritual development, as well as the long-term health of a congregation. The article sparked a lively discussion on our RE Facebook page. I know there are wildly divergent opinions about having young children in the Sunday service. Should we bring this issue out into the open during the interim period?

✂ We consistently say that we want such things as more paid time for program staff, a more energy efficient building, and more support for our youth and adults to attend youth cons and conferences, yet raising money for these additions is like pulling teeth. Is the interim period a good time to openly explore the disconnect between what we want from our church and what we are willing to give?

✂ When I look at the 2014-15 leadership list, I see a lot of names of people my age. Retired Baby Boomers, that is. I don't want to speak for others, but I know that I'm getting tired. I feel like my name has been on that list forever and my enthusiasm is waning. Some days I am discouraged because the Millennials just aren't stepping up to volunteer. But wait! I read that Millennials volunteer at quite a high rate, but they have different needs and motivations than Baby Boomers. I suspect we need to address how we structure church work and our expectations. What do we ask people to do and why? Could we create more flexibility in roles and expectations? Could we be better at encouraging people to create what really excites them?

## Defining our congregation and our goals

I recently re-read interim minister Sue Turner's "Reflections on the Interim Year" from our congregation's 2005-06 annual report. She questions "whether the advice to have a two year interim was not given, or given and not taken" and suggests that, in either case, the one-year interim period we chose after Dillman's retirement did not give us enough time for the introspection and discernment that is normally undertaken prior to calling a new minister. She concludes that "The questions of who you are as a congregation and what you want to be have not been addressed in recent years. Making decisions together as a congregation to determine what you want the church to become is work that needs to happen in order to move forward in your new ministry."

It took us five years after Carol's arrival to create a mission and vision. In my opinion, however, the

goal of understanding ourselves remains elusive. Both the mission and vision are "all things for all people" kind of statements and each can easily be interpreted in a way that is consistent with one's own personal idea of our vision and direction. And maybe that's the way it has to be. Being the only UU church in Rochester, we welcome a broad spectrum of congregants, so perhaps we need to keep our statements vague; but if we cannot agree on our main goals and direction, how can we call a minister who is best suited to partner with us to reach them?

## Determining how our congregation sees our future minister in relation to the goals

Ministers are special people, but they are not wizards. They cannot do everything; they cannot be good at everything. Our task is to determine what we can do best for ourselves with lay leadership and what we need the knowledge, experience, and skills of a minister for.

The search process is a matching process. We define what we most want in a settled minister and ministers look for a congregation where his or her unique talents will be able to flourish. Agreeing upon the appropriate leadership roles and responsibilities of the minister, staff, and lay leaders is an important component in establishing a rewarding working relationship. Although no understanding will be complete until the new minister arrives, the interim period is a good time for the congregation to explore and clarify its expectations.

## Carrying on the work of our church

Of course, church life does not come to a halt during this period of interim ministry. Our church has always had strong lay leadership. Governance by our board of directors and activities led by our committees and staff will continue. Our interim minister, in addition to guiding us through the transitional tasks and helping us deal constructively with change, will provide pastoral care, and supervise the staff.

Rushing through the tasks described above is counter-productive, so we are planning on a two-year process with approximately the following timeline:



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# The Maypole

By Michelle Rowley



In typical First Unitarian Universalist fashion, the Maypole Sunday tradition began serendipitously, after a late night game of bridge when congregation members Mike Podulke and Jerry Katzmann were driving home. Haphazardly passing a very large pole lying on its side in a parking lot, Mike said to Jerry “Hey, I think I could use that. Let’s take it!”

The confiscation of this pole was not an easy feat. For those who have not participated in Maypole Sunday, describing it as tall and heavy would be an understatement. The maypole is between 30 to 40 feet long with a six inch diameter. Luckily because of the Podulke’s business, Rochester Stained Glass, Mike owned a very large cargo van fit for such spontaneous acquisitions. “It was not a perfect fit,” Jerry explained, “One end of the pole hung out of the van, like a medieval lance ready for jousting approaching traffic.”



*“Children running ...  
parents weaving ...  
elders watching ...  
spring sun shining ...  
community rising.”*

The maypole dance itself was a common practice throughout Europe celebrating May Day (May first) during the Medieval Ages. Every English village had a maypole, cut down from neighboring woods by the men who, in a procession of jollity, brought it into the village square. Villages would compete with one another to see which could produce the tallest maypole. Women and girls would festoon the log with garlands made of flowers and leaves that were attached to the pole prior to its erection. The young women and young men would then dance around the poles, in clockwise and counter-clockwise fashion with these garlands, as part of a festive rite of spring.



Although its original origins are obscure, some historians believe the maypole dance was an important Germanic Pagan fertility ritual signifying birth and renewal. Others believe the pole symbolizes the Germanic Pagan reverence for sacred trees. Many, including 1600s English philosopher Thomas Hobbes and psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, viewed the maypole as a phallic symbol. The sexual symbolism attributed to the maypole and the merriment on May Day led to England outlawing the custom for a short period in the late 1600s.

Maypole merriment began at First Unitarian Universalist Church in the early 1980s when Mike and Stephanie Podulke were Fellowship Committee Chairs. Neither Stephanie nor Jerry could remember the turn of events that led from the possession of the pole to its repurposing as our church’s maypole. However, it is important to note that the first Maypole Sunday event was planned as our church’s congregation was in a transitional phase.

The Rev. Warren Turner was serving as interim minister, between the settled ministries of the Rev.





Alexander “Scotty” Meek, Jr. and Rev. Fred F. Campbell. As we will be when the Rev, Dr. Carol Hepokoski retires in June, the congregation was going through a period of change. The Fellowship Committee planned Maypole Sunday as a way to bring congregation members together, both young and old. The maypole dance originally took place in what is now the parking lot, in a green space between our old, smaller parking lot and the fellowship hall of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Mike dug a large hole, fit with pipe, thus making a stand for the annual celebration.

“Mike spent a large amount of time readying the pole for our first May celebration; rigging it with hooks and pulleys,” said Stephanie. “At the base of the pole is a ring where the ribbons are attached. Every year Mike would go buy two different colors of flagging tape – this is the heavy-duty tape used by police and electricians – and it is what we still use as our maypole ribbon.”

Although this church tradition is often seen as a children’s event, it has always been multigenerational. And while discussing the maypole in her home, it was difficult for Stephanie to not comment on the physical significance of the maypole and the part the men in the congregation play. “Because of its size, men are the ones who carry this large pole from the church to its place in the earth. Originally we kept the pole at our house, but now it is in the furnace room at First UU.”

It is also impossible to discuss the maypole without paying homage to its creator, who passed away in 2011. Maypole Sunday has been an annual tradition since its inception three decades ago. “One year it was raining, so Mike went to a local carpet store and got a large cardboard tube which we used inside the church for the maypole dance. He was not going to let the weather spoil the event,” said Stephanie.

Throughout the years new flourishes were added to the maypole. At one point the youth group decided to add balloons and ribbons, which is done still today. “It’s a delight to see the





*Mike Podulke, the man  
behind the maypole*

children stream out of the church and watch the interactions between the children and adults as they dance around the maypole,” explained Stephanie.

Mike Podulke, in addition to being the founder of the maypole, also was integral in the organization of the many UU Boar’s Head Feasts and the annual fundraiser that is his namesake, the Mike Podulke Service Auction.

After Mike’s memorial service, family and friends proceeded out of the church to the maypole. Decorated fully with ribbons and balloons, it was hoisted up to the sky in his honor.

*A Maypole in February to honor Mike*



*Maypole photos provided by church members,  
Podulke memorial photo courtesy The Post-Bulletin*

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# Karin's Creative Nature

By Robin Taylor

When Karin Lindsay visited First Unitarian Universalist Church of Rochester for the first time, she found not only a spiritual home, but a welcoming community where her artistic talents were valued and appreciated.

Karin and her husband, Mac, a Mayo Clinic physician, had raised their four children in the Methodist church, but stopped attending after they were all confirmed. The church just wasn't a good fit theologically or socially. Karin had offered to volunteer her time and talent there as an artist, but was told she was "not needed."

"I felt excluded," she recalls. "It was hard to be part of the church community."



*Karin Lindsay is pictured with one of her signature bird paintings, all of which began as her annual Christmas cards for family and friends. Three more from the series are featured below.*



Their journey to Unitarian Universalism began when their daughter, Gail, called one day to tell them she had been accepted to Harvard Divinity School to become a UU minister. Karin and Mac promptly went to check out this denomination, which they knew nothing about. “We came to visit one Sunday . . . and stayed!” says Karin.

That was September of 1992—The Rev. Dillman Baker Sorrells’ second service. “We felt so welcomed, and Dillman was so reachable. I had always had ministers put up on a pedestal, but she was right there with us. And the congregation was so friendly.”

Karin says the UU Principles resonated with her directly. She quotes architect Frank Lloyd Wright, a lifelong Universalist, who famously said, “I believe in God, only I spell it N-A-T-U-R-E.”

That reverence for nature is immediately evident in Karin’s artwork. The walls of her apartment at Charter House are covered with her paintings of flowers, birds, and soothing landscapes. Each year, she creates a family Christmas card based on a painting or drawing of a new bird, many of which she observed at her own feeder in Rochester, or at the family cabin



*Karin’s collection of pencils and paintbrushes is within easy reach of her desk.*

in northern Minnesota. (When Karin ran out of wall space in her apartment, Charter House happily accepted 12 of her bird prints to permanently display in their conference room.)

Karin began her classical art studies at the Minnesota College of Art and Design, but left when she married Mac, her high school sweetheart, after he graduated from Dartmouth. She took a job as a fashion illustrator for Harold’s Women’s Store in Minneapolis, and put Mac through medical school. “Fashion illustration wasn’t my first love,” she admits, “and I couldn’t afford any of their clothes. But it was better than typing!”

Karin stopped working when her first child was born, and put her art on the back burner. However, her children’s activities eventually demanded her artistic support, and she found herself designing posters and playbills, or painting backdrops for their skating shows, ballet performances, and plays. She met her best friend, Jane Destro, a portrait artist, when the two volunteered to decorate for their children’s senior party at Mayo High School.

A couple of years before her last child graduated from high school, Karin and Jane rented studio space in downtown Rochester at the Art Quarter with another friend, and began to get serious about their art. They were among the group of artists who started SEMVA (the South East Minnesota Visual Artists cooperative gallery in the Peace Plaza), where they finally had a place to show and sell their work. At SEMVA, Karin’s bird prints quickly became her signature item.

*“Untitled,” an oil painting of a lily by Karin, 2013.*





*A bouquet of daffodils is rendered in pencil and pastels.*

*"Magpie" is Karin's most recent Christmas card, done in watercolor.*



When the Lindsays bought their house in Merrihills, Karin turned the basement, with its lovely northern exposure, into her home studio. She left SEMVA when Mac retired and they began to spend more time at their lake cabin, but she never stopped drawing, painting, and creating.

"When I am painting, I feel WONDERFUL," she explains. "It is like having a runner's high—especially when something turns out well." Even when she is just "fooling around" with ink and paper, Karin finds the process of creation therapeutic and engaging. "Time goes really fast," she says.

Karin has used her artistic talents in many ways at First UU. She drew the chalice design for the Rev. Dr. Carol Hepokoski's installation service, served as a member of the Design Committee for many years, collaborated with other artists to create the church's parade banner, and was part of the team that made the silk banners in the sanctuary. "I told Dillman that the only thing I missed about the Methodist church was the stained glass windows," says Karin. Getting that project started was a way of bringing "stained glass" to the concrete walls.

As Karin got involved in creative pursuits at the church, Mac served as a Worship Associate and then on the Committee for Ministry. The couple enjoyed hosting coffee hour and meeting new people. It didn't take them long to feel completely integrated into congregational life, and their ties to the denomination only deepened when their daughter, Gail, was ordained as a UU minister in Brookline, MA in October of 1995.



*Karin painted her son's dog, Toby, in pastels.*





*Karin painted this scene from a photo her son took of her grandchildren holding hands at the lake when the family gathered for Mac and Karin's 50th anniversary.*

This February will mark the first anniversary of Mac's death, following a difficult two-year illness. Karin has found it helpful and healing to throw herself into her artwork after losing her partner of 60 years ("if you count the four years we dated," she says with a smile). As she works through her grief, she has painted on T-shirts, scarves, pillows, and paper; and created stacks of cards, prints, and bookmarks.

"I can't say enough about the church Caring Committee," she insists. Throughout the two years of Mac's illness until his death last winter, Karin says they were "wonderful," helping her in all kinds of ways, and their attentions have not stopped.

Karin's granddaughter recently taught her an abstract watercolor process for making cards, and she found great joy playing with colors and pulling designs from the wet paint. Now she can't wait to offer a card-making workshop for the church later this spring. She hopes others will have as much fun making them as she does . . . and she wants to give back to the congregation that has supported her through so much.

*Robin Taylor is a freelance writer who started coming to First UU Rochester one whole week before the Lindsays did.*



# Rochester's First Universalist Minister

By Patricia Calvert

## Setting the scene

Alexander Ramsay, the first governor of Minnesota Territory, noted that a rapid influx of settlers into Wisconsin and Iowa had elevated those territories to statehood. Since statehood was based on population growth, Ramsay pleaded the case for his own territory in testimony before Congress:

*It is needed as an additional outlet to the overwhelming tide of migration which is both increasing and irresistible in its westward progress.*

What Ramsay wanted was land that could be made available for purchase by settlers. With the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux (“crossing of the Sioux”) on July 23, 1854, he achieved his aim. The Dakota Sioux transferred 24 million acres at 7 cents per acre to Minnesota Territory. Various last-minute exceptions inserted into the treaty before its signing meant little of the money was received by the tribe. The distrust sown as a result likely was a factor in the Great Sioux Uprising 8 years later that ended with the hanging of 38 members of the tribe on Dec. 26, 1862.

With the signing of the treaty, Alexander Ramsay moved closer to his goal. In 1854, George Head laid claim to land close to the banks of the Zumbro River in southeastern Minnesota, a well-known rest stop for wagon trains headed to St. Paul or Dubuque. He built a log cabin called Head’s Tavern, which became an unofficial town hall for the 50 residents in the new settlement. He named it Rochester, in honor of his birthplace, Rochester, New York.



By Henry Mitchell  
Restoration by  
Godot13  
[Public domain]

In 1858, Minnesota Territory became the nation’s 32nd state, and with statehood came an acceleration of its benefits: businesses, schools, and newspapers, as well as well as churches and their ministers. In 1860, when 39-year-old Isaac M. Westfall arrived to preach the first Universalist sermon in the area—only six years after George Head opened his tavern—the population of Rochester was a whopping 1,424.

## The next chapter

Isaac McCoy Westfall, born in Miami, Ohio in 1821, had been studying medicine when he became so compelled by the message of Universalism—salvation for all, not just the elect—that he switched his calling. Belief in universal salvation was declared a heresy in 544 A.D. by the Emperor Justinian, only to emerge again and again through the centuries, yet the Universalist Articles of Faith (adopted in 1803) were clearly in the mainstream of Christian tradition when they affirmed,



Bird's eye view of the city of Rochester, Olmsted County, Minnesota 1869  
(original Universalist Church highlighted in yellow)  
Library of Congress



Original Universalist Church 1866  
Images of America: Rochester,  
Minnesota, Arcadia Publishing 2003



*... the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments contain a revelation of the character of God ... whose nature is love; revealed in one Lord Jesus Christ ... who will finally restore the whole family of mankind to holiness and happiness.*

Westfall was ordained Aug. 3, 1845, age 24, in Franklin, Ohio, two years after his marriage to Amanda Davis; their family eventually included a daughter Alice and a son Murray. His first settled church was in Iowa City, Iowa, where he served until 1847, then became a guest minister in Lafayette, Indiana, remaining there until 1857. About that time, his earlier career interest resurfaced; he left active ministry and returned to school in Macomb, Illinois, to pursue a degree in homeopathic medicine.

Although he left the ministry to continue his medical education, Westfall didn't abandon his Universalist career. In 1860, after being encouraged by others who believed the new settlements in southeastern Minnesota were fertile ground for the Universalist message, he moved to the area.

Westfall began to hold meetings in Rochester every other Sunday in a building on Broadway known first as Compton's, later as Porter Hall, which also served as a public school. *The Rochester City Post* noted on Mar. 15, 1862, "Rev. I.M. Westfall will continue his Lectures on the Bible use of the word 'Hell,' in Compton's Hall at 2½ o'clock." What he

had to say on the subject hasn't been preserved—a pity!

On alternate Sundays he was a guest minister for congregations in Mantorville, Spring Valley, Cascade and several other towns throughout the region. Services were well attended but the growing impact of the Civil War soon meant "times were hard, money close, young men enlisting," and attendance declined. Westfall had to conclude his ministry after about three years without ever officially organizing the church.

## Another chapter

What became of Isaac Westfall after the end of his ministerial career in Rochester has been shrouded in mystery. He seemed to have vanished from the scene. Not quite. Research in old newspaper files and local histories reveal that he continued to be a well-known presence in Rochester and surrounding communities for almost a quarter century.

During his travels to serve other congregations, Westfall must have observed other occupations that a man with energy could pursue.

It wasn't long before he purchased farmland east of Rochester (assumed to be in the Dover-Eyota area), began to raise crops as well as livestock, and was elected president of the Patrons of Husbandry, a popular Grange movement. (*The Roch-*



*The Patrons of Husbandry, or the Grange, was founded in 1867 to advance methods of agriculture.*



ester City Post also noted Mrs. Westfall's election as the group's chaplain). Later, in Northfield, Westfall was elected overseer of the larger State Grange. He also was elected to represent Olmsted County in the Minnesota State Senate (1874-75) as a member of the Anti-Monopolist Party, an association of rural citizens that opposed the rising domination of the railroad and lumber industries. Tragedy struck as well: Alice Westfall Brown, 22, died in 1867 and was buried in Oakwood Cemetery, Rochester.

Such activities didn't impede the development of his medical career. He established a small practice in Plainview, and was elected president of the Southern Minnesota Homeopathic Society in 1871. When that practice closed, he opened an office in Rochester, which he later shuttered. Then, in the *Record & Union* on Nov. 24, 1876, Westfall announced the opening of a new practice in association with a Dr. Martin in Eyota, with offices above Jackson & Russell's store. On the line immediately below Westfall's announcement was a second notice: "Dr. W.W. Mayo, Physician & Surgeon. Office over Geisinger & Newton's Drug Store. Residence corner of Fourth & Franklin Sts., Rochester."

## The final chapter

Sometime during the early 1880s—lured perhaps by continuing migration even farther west—Westfall moved to Watertown in Dakota Territory (which didn't become two states until 1889). Although he'd long ago given up active ministry, apparently he'd never forsaken his Universalist convictions. From 1884 to 1889 he collaborated with Rev. Erasmus Manford as the editor of *Western Universalist and Christian Teacher*, published in Lafayette, Indiana, from whence he'd come nearly 24 years before.

He died in Watertown, age 68, and was later described by Joseph Leonard in *The History of Olmsted County* as "a fluent speaker, very social and popular." Isaac Westfall—for three years Rochester's first Universalist minister in an era of rapid westward expansion, Civil War upheaval, and Native American oppression—seems to have held firm to two Unitarian Universalist principles we recognize today: a free and responsible search for truth and meaning, and the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

A young man from Eccles, a small town near Manchester, England, two years older than Westfall, immigrated to America in 1845. He was interested in medicine as well, and settled in Lafayette around the same time as Westfall. He started a practice, but a doctor's income in that day was uncertain and he had to supplement it with work as a tailor, a trade he'd followed in England. It isn't known if he and Westfall crossed paths in Lafayette, or if they did after he arrived in Rochester in 1863 as the medical examiner of Civil War draftees. His name: William Worrall Mayo.

March 18, 1821, died at Watertown, Dakota, Dec. 29, 1889. Early in life he gave some attention to the study of medicine, but becoming deeply interested in Universalism, fit himself for the ministry and was ordained at Franklin, Iowa, Aug. 3, 1845. His first settlement was at Iowa City, where he also spent much time in general missionary work in that territory. He was next at Macomb, Ill., afterwards Lafayette, Ind., and then as missionary in Minnesota. Renewing his interest in the study of medicine, he settled again in Macomb, Ill., where he could enjoy the benefit of a medical school. Returning to Rochester, Minn., he practiced medicine a few years, and again resumed missionary labors. About ten years ago he made his home at Watertown, Dakota, where he was for a few years a city official. For a short time he was associated with Rev. Erasmus Manford in editing the "Western Universalist and Christian Teacher" published in Lafayette, Ind., 1844-9.

*Patricia Calvert is the author of many books for Young Adult readers, several of which are biographies and histories of ancient cultures (her favorite subjects to read about, too).*



# The Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism

We covenant to **affirm** and **promote** ...

The inherent **worth** and **dignity** of every person

**Justice, equity** and **compassion**  
in human relations

**Acceptance** of one another and encouragement  
to **spiritual growth** in our congregations

A free and responsible search for **truth** and **meaning**

The right of **conscience** and the use of the  
**democratic process** within our congregations  
and in society at large

The goal of **world community** with  
**peace**, liberty, and justice for all

**Respect** for the interdependent web of  
**all existence** of which we are a part



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