

Brief History of CommUnity on the Hill/Unity Center DC

Compiled and written
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“All things are possible if you believe. Think and dream and plan big, then Believe. Believe that you are worthy of your dream, believe that you are capable of your dream, believe that your dream is truly God’s dream for you...for through your believing it is made manifest.”

—Believe, February 14, Amalie’s Good Words

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Acronyms:

COth—CommUnity on the Hill

FCUCC—First Congregational United Church of Christ

LUT—Licensed Unity Teacher

NCS—National Cathedral School

UCDC—Unity Center DC

USC—Unity School of Christianity

Origins

By a July 27, 1994, certificate of incorporation, CommUnity on the Hill (COTH) was established as a nonprofit corporation in the District of Columbia “to conduct worship in accordance with the teachings of Charles and Myrtle Fillmore.” The initial “Board of Directors” consisted of Stephanie Dailey, Douglas Barker, Juline Anderson, Patricia (“Pat”) Weeks, Curtis Huff, and Carlie Dixon. The incorporators were listed as Amalie H. Frank, Henry H. Brylawski, and Douglas Barker. The new church became part of what is now Unity Worldwide Ministries, Eastern Region.

For most of its existence, the church has been (in the words of board member Jane West, in 2002) a “congregationally run worshiping organization with guest speakers and no minister.” The bylaws have been written and revised several times over its history. The board engaged Rev. Monica Driscoll to conduct a Unity-endorsed Honoring Our Past, Creating Our Future (HOPCOF) workshop, “Mission, Vision, Core Values,” on January 27-29, 2017. In 2018, COTH renamed itself Unity Center DC (UCDC), and, in 2020, UCDC rebranded itself as a “Spiritual Growth Community” and “a very special, talented, unique family of truth seekers.”

Ministers and Speakers

Rev. Amalie H. Frank, 1994-1997

Amalie (ah-MAH-lee-uh) Hafer Frank was the force behind the founding of COTH. And a force she was, despite her diminutive stature and kindly voice. Amalie was born in a Baltimore row house on December 16, 1910. She grew up with a love of performing music, which led to a degree in music education that she used as a public school teacher. In 1935 she married a U.S. Marine, Paul Frank, with whom she had four children.

In 1951 Amalie became acquainted with Unity teachings through *The Daily Word* pamphlet, a radio program called *The Unity Viewpoint*, and various lectures. Her joining Unity transformed her life from one of many challenges to one of belief that her life was a manifestation of her thoughts and that all things work together for good.

After her husband died and after studying at Unity Village, Amalie was ordained a Unity minister by James Dillet Freeman in 1976, at age 65. (Two years later she would fly an airplane solo after pilot training.) Amalie then taught Unity classes and acted as minister in several cities in Michigan as well as in Evanston, Illinois, and South Bend, Indiana.

In 1983 Amalie became the minister of Unity of Washington, D.C., which met at a church on A Street, N.E., on Capitol Hill. After about ten years a rift in the church resulted in the formation of a separate congregation, CommUnity on the Hill, under Amalie's ministry and based at Capitol Hill United Methodist Church on Seward Square, S.E. She was a vigorous leader as she spoke at services, encouraged a vibrant musical program, and provided encouragement and direction to COTH's congregation. Amalie also conducted many workshops and taught classes on Unity thought, including "Discover the Power Within You" and one based on her co-authored publication, *Consciousness Building Group Handbook*.

Amalie recorded a daily telephone dial-up of her thoughts on a particular "good word." In 1998, 365 of these were selected, edited, and published by Joan Rainwater and Judith Reynolds as *Amalie's Good Words: Signposts for the Journey*.

June 1, 1997, marked the last Sunday that Amalie led a service as COTH's minister. On September 14 she was honored at a "Gala Retirement Luncheon" to celebrate her dynamic ministerial career. The event was organized by Cindy Szady, emceed by Roy Berkowitz and young Adam Stimatz, and attended by 200 people.

Amalie remained in the Washington, D.C., area, occasionally speaking at COTH services and socializing with her many church friends. In 2002 she moved in with a daughter in Florida, where she died on December 31, 2003. A "Memories of Amalie" tribute was held on Mar 28, 2004, to share stories, photographs, and food.

Rev. Polly Dozier, 1998-1999

~~Polly Dozier was hired by COTH as its minister; she resigned in 1999. Polly began *A Course in Miracles* group.~~ After her first talk Polly Dozier was hired by COTH as its minister in December

1998 and assumed the office in February 1999. She resigned later that year. Polly began *A Course in Miracles* group.

Rev. LaFayette Seymour (b. 1938-d. 2018)

LaFayette Seymour was already the minister for the Unity Center of Truth in the Nation's Capitol when he began speaking at COTH services in 1999. Relations between LaFayette and COTH grew closer so that by the end of 2002 he was asked and agreed to address the congregation once a month. (LaFayette had met Pat and Phil Weeks in Afghanistan when all three were volunteers in the Peace Corps.) By the next year LaFayette and COTH signed a "Letter of Agreement," that, for a monthly retainer, he would provide ministerial services, such as counseling, teaching, and officiating at weddings and memorials, in addition to speaking at Sunday services each month. This arrangement continued successfully until about six years later when LaFayette announced that, due to deteriorating health, he planned on retiring but would still speak at COTH services as long as he could. Luckily, LaFayette was able to be part of COTH's ministry until he did retire in 2014.

LaFayette conducted several classes that COTH members attended at his church or at a public library. These included Metaphysics 1 and 2, and Metaphysical Interpretation of the Old Testament, the New Testament, and Revelation. LaFayette was beloved by many in the church; he was known for, among other things, his gentle manner and sartorial distinction.

Rev. Sandra Butler, 2016-2017

As COTH sought direction for its future as a Unity congregation, it signed a Transitional Ministry Specialist contract with Rev. Sandy, who gave valuable guidance for a year, beginning in January 2016. Sandy became a member of the board of trustees, where she advised on all aspects of church administration, frequently spoke at Sunday services, provided counseling to congregants, and conducted a workshop on Charles Filmore's *Prosperity*. She helped to ground the board in essentials of a successful Unity congregation that it could use in determining COTH's way forward, especially in its search for a full-time minister. Part of that effort was the drafting of a Strategic Action Plan by board president Kathie Libby.

New Minister Search

(In February 2017 COTH initiated a formal search for a minister with a Search Committee [Michael David, Kathleen Healey, Curt Huff, Marie Maus, Nancy Reid, Lucy Ruiz] and Sylvia Sturm as liaison to the Committee. The search went as far as offering the position to Rev. Bob Uhlar, who declined. The board then reopened the minister search and re-established a search committee.)

Rev. Paul Tenaglia, 2018-2019

In 2018 COTH board president Kathie Libby signed a contract, effective March 1, hiring Paul as its full-time minister. Under Paul, COTH changed its name to Unity Center DC (UCDC). As minister Paul made major changes to the layout of the sanctuary, the contents of the Sunday services, and the music program as well as in the bylaws and the way the church conducted business. The board dismissed him in late 2019 on the basis that “Paul was not a good fit for our community...we wish him well.”

GUEST SPEAKER SYSTEM

With the resignation of Rev. Dozier and the exceptions of Rev. Tenaglia and Rev. Butler, COTH has operated under a system in which speakers were invited to give the talks and meditations at Sunday services. After Paul’s departure Caywood Black arranged for weekly speakers. Categories of these speakers included members of the congregation, Unity and other New Thought ministers, Licensed Unity Teachers (LUTs), and others with appropriate spiritual messages. This system has continued up to the time of this writing.

So, at hundreds of services, many of the individuals named in this history have drafted and delivered inspirational talks to their fellow congregants, with many of them doing so frequently. The congregation has benefited from ministers who became regular speakers, such as Rev. LaFayette Seymour, Rev. Karen Gray, Rev. Grady Poulard, Rev. Charlette Manning, Rev. E.J. Niles, Rev. Lyn Billingsley, Rev. Andy Carlson, and Rev. Sandra Butler. Also, COTH’s own LUTs Clyde Rufus and Caywood Black frequently gave informed Unity talks.

Locations

COTH/UCDC has dealt with two major topics throughout most of its history: minister and location. Both the board of trustees and the congregation have wrestled with solutions to these issues that might satisfy both spiritual needs and practical considerations. As shown above, COTH/UCDC took different approaches from time to time to secure the services of a full-time, informal, or transitional minister, although it operated mainly with guest speakers and church members carrying on the work of the church. Occasional changes in circumstances also compelled the church to search for a new location for all its functions.

When COTH left Unity of Washington, D.C., at 700 A Street, N.E., Rev. Dick Stetler invited Rev. Amalie Frank to use Capitol Hill United Methodist at 421 Seward Square, S.E., where he was pastor, for services, office, and social events. Rev. Stetler left this Methodist congregation in 1995. After Amalie retired in 1997, it soon became necessary for COTH to leave the Capitol Hill church, which set off a search for a new facility.

By 1999 there is some indication that COTH met at the old Channel Inn on the Southwest waterfront. By March of that year, COTH contracted to use the assembly room in Hearst Hall at the National Cathedral School (NCS) on the grounds of the Washington National Cathedral. The first service held there was on March 7.

Also in 1999 board president Pat Weeks set up a challenge fund, called the 5000 Club, to encourage each member of the congregation to raise \$5,000 toward the purchase of a property for church use. The 5000 Club became a frequent recipient of Red Basket donations (*see* “Finances,” below) and special fundraising.

In her last newsletter column as board president, in December 2001, Pat announced that COTH and Rev. LaFayette Seymour’s Unity Center of Truth in the Nation’s Capitol were exploring the purchase of an old church building on First Street, S.W. The board went as far as inspecting the church and discussing sharing arrangements before abandoning the idea.

The situation at NCS worked successfully for about a dozen years, with the original arrangement being expanded, giving COTH the ability to rent the hall for special events and to use a classroom and other areas for meetings of such groups as “A Course in Miracles” and “Master Mind.” In 2011 NCS raised the rent significantly, so a search for a new site began.

The search for a new church home ended with COTH paying to use of the sanctuary and lobby of the First Congregational United Church of Christ (FCUCC), located at 10th and G Streets, N.W. The first service was held there on January 8, 2012. Sharing the worship space with FCUCC necessitated a change in the time of COTH services from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Despite the fine facilities of FCUCC, the dramatic changes of place and time caused some in COTH to stop attending.

By March 2015, COTH was again searching for a new church home, a search that concluded with a rental agreement with the Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church (now the United National Methodist Church) for the use of space at St. Luke’s Mission Center at 3655 Calvert Street, N.W. The first service at St. Luke’s was on August 2. The leased areas

included the old sanctuary as well as office space. This was the first time since COTH met on Capitol Hill that the church office was not housed in someone's home, as mentioned below.

With the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in early 2020, St. Luke's closed its facilities. Very quickly UCDC established Zoom for services on Sundays as well as for A Course in Miracles, prayer and book groups, board meetings, and holiday happy hours. In this way the church community maintained its spiritual and social activities.

Board of Trustees

Although the 1994 certificate of corporation used the term “Board of Directors,” COTH/UCDC has generally used the terms “Board of Trustees” and “trustee” to describe the church’s governing body. Members of the board have often been nominated by special committee and usually elected by the congregation (occasionally vacancies have been filled without elections). Trustees have served on a volunteer basis. Board members have selected officers from among themselves: president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer. Board member qualifications consisted of being an official church member, making financial contributions to the church, and having participated in church operations in some capacity.

Besides taking action and making decisions regarding ministers and locations, the board has managed fiscal matters, including maintaining records, drawing up annual budgets, raising and dispersing funds, and otherwise overseeing financial affairs, all with major contributions from the treasurers and office managers. It also has decided on any paid staff positions and responsibilities. In addition, the board has decided on issues concerning ministerial services, maintained relations with Unity Worldwide Ministries, overseen development of music and education programs, and otherwise administered church activities. From time to time board members wrote columns for the church newsletter and also acted as monthly coordinators for Sunday services, arranging for speakers and platform assistants. In some years board members went together on weekend retreats for planning and team-building.

For about 20 years, the board met on a bi-monthly basis, attended by any COTH/UCDC minister; it then switched to a monthly schedule. There have been as many as 12 board members (2006) and as few as four (2021). As far as can be determined, the following church members served as board presidents:

- Pat Weeks and Curt Huff (beginning years)
- Ed Heitov, 1997-1999
- Pat Weeks, 1999-2001
- Jane West, 2002
- Ed Heitov, 2003
- Jan Smoot, 2004-2005
- John Bell, 2005-2007
- Michael David, 2008
- Walter Albano, 2008-2009
- Rev. Andy Carlson, 2010-2011
- Michelle Hindmarch, 2012-2013
- Rev. Andy Carlson, 2014
- Caywood Black, 2015
- Tom Workman, 2015-2016
- Pat Weeks, 2016
- Chic Welsh-Charrier, 2016
- Kathie Libby, 2017-2018

- Nancy Reid, 2019-2021
- Joan Morgan, 2021-present

Ministerial Activities

Sunday services formed the center around which other church functions operated. The order of service changed from time to time, but for the most part consisted of a platform assistant, who led the congregation through a program of prayer, music, announcements, and a speaker's inspirational message and meditation. When necessary Chic Welsh-Charrier provided American Sign Language interpretation.

For many years the congregation recited two declarations, originally authored by Pat Weeks. One was "Affirmative Intentions for Our Ministry":

We affirm our unity with Holy Spirit and with all Humankind. We give thanks for Divine Order in our lives and acknowledge the presence of the Christ within. We ask that Divine peace, prosperity, and enlightenment manifest in our families, our congregation, our city, our nation, and our world—and that we live our daily lives as expressions of Divine Love.

We are grateful for our blessings and ask to be guided in the right direction so that we fulfill our Divine purpose on earth. Help us to serve with a grateful heart. Thank you God.

The other was "Offering Blessing":

We are grateful for the abundance in our lives. We give freely without fear, knowing that God is the Source of all our supply. We are secure in the knowledge that unlimited prosperity is available to us. We are grateful for all our needs being fully met and we give back, knowing that giving and receiving are one energy flow. We are truly thankful for all of God's rich blessings.

COTH did not "pass the basket" for personal donations. Instead, it had a specially made octagonal, white, wooden box with a heart-shaped opening in the lid to receive tithes and love offerings until the age of the internet (see "Finances," below). Only as UCDC, under Rev. Paul Tenaglia, were donations solicited directly from attendees by the ushers using velvet sacks.

Prayer is an integral part of Unity practice. Silent Unity is renowned for offering its prayer services; church members were regularly referred to this resource. For most of its existence, COTH/UCDC has had active prayer programs of its own, instituted by its members. By 2005 a "prayer team" provided one-on-one prayer support after Sunday services and prayed for a week over intentions written out and placed in a prayer request box. Original members of the prayer team were Jan Ferris, Michelle Hindmarch, Mary Koehler, Nancy Rowand, Jan Smoot, Sylvia Sturm, and Cheryl and Chic Welsh-Charrier.

Jan Smoot was the primary organizer of this service. Kathleen Healy and Andrea Solay completed chaplaincy training in 2012 and shortly afterwards created a prayer chaplaincy program through which they trained others with whom they replaced the prayer team.

Nearly every year COTH/UCDC has announced the 24-hour World Day of Prayer at Unity that is organized around an annual theme during the second week of September; church members have been encouraged to hold the theme in their prayers on that day and sometimes

have prayed together at the church facility. The ninth World Day of Prayer on September 11, 2002, observed the first anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. In August 2017 the board approved the observance of a World Day of Prayer on a yearly basis.

A Course in Miracles (ACIM) is now closely aligned with Unity and consists of a three-part volume that teaches its students the way to love, peace, and forgiveness. An ACIM group was established by Rev. Dozier in 1999; it first met on Saturdays on Capitol Hill and then on Monday evenings at Byron Murray's apartment across Wisconsin Avenue from the National Cathedral. In 2006 Jan Smoot organized an ACIM group that began to meet after Sunday services in a classroom at NCS. Numerous people from outside the church attended the publicized ACIM sessions, and over the years several of these attendees became members of COTH/UCDC. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the ACIM sessions were held via Zoom twice a week.

Pat Weeks organized a Master Mind group that began meeting after services when COTH was at NCS. Unity Master Mind groups implement the Master Mind Principle that the energy of two or more people together can draw upon the power and wisdom of the universal Source.

Over the course of its existence COTH set up versions of child care to address the needs of their parents during services and to encourage families to join the congregation. Care for children up to age six was provided in 2005 by students from NCS. Jan Smoot and Marie Maus directed the program in 2007. By 2008 Gerri Jones and Vicki Smith joined an NCS student, under the coordination of member and mother Carole Frampton, to add youth ministry to basic child care. When COTH met at FCUCC, Jesse Johnson provided child care.

In 2014 Licensed Unity Teacher (LUT) Andrea Solay began a "Daily Practice" of sending a Truth principle via email that was also available on COTH's website.

Through its pastoral care services the church at times has sent flowers and cards to members who had lost a loved one or who was laid up by illness or injury.

Groups of members occasionally went to weekend silent retreats at out-of-town venues.

Music

Music, in the form of hymns, choir, soloist, or ensemble, has always been an important spiritual and aesthetic component of COTH/UCDC services. COTH has had three paid directors of music: Michael Patterson, Barbara Wilkinson, and Harley Sponaugle. Most services have included two pieces of “special music,” ranging from classical to folk to jazz, provided by various singers and musicians, many of whom performed regularly for monetary compensation. The annual Christmas service has included group and solo renditions of traditional carols.

Michael went with Amalie Frank from Unity Washington, D.C., to COTH, where he played piano and organized the music portion of Sunday services. In so doing he conducted a sizable choir. Michael also oversaw musical productions performed by church members. ~~He served until 1999.~~ He served until 1999 to become music director at Unity Center of Light in Bowie, Maryland.

After Michael’s departure various persons played piano at services and accompanied the singing of hymns. These included Dave Kane, who, though not a church member, has frequently played for an appreciative congregation. At times one congregant led the rest through the singing of hymns.

Barbara, an accomplished pianist, also became a regular participant in Sunday services. By 2003 Barbara became the director of music for COTH, with volunteer Marie Maus, who, as music coordinator, secured performers for special music. Barbara left the Washington area in 2005 but returned in 2012 when she resumed her position without the assistance of Marie.

As pianist at services, Barbara would play a prelude, accompany the congregation in hymns she had selected, often accompany special music, and provide contemplative background during meditation. With her many connections in the Washington area musical community, Barbara arranged to bring a variety of special artists who played musical instruments, such as flute and clarinet, or sang opera, spirituals, and popular songs. Barbara also organized a COTH choir, for which she selected songs, held rehearsals, and played at services. Barbara resigned in August 2018 much to the regret of the congregation.

While Barbara was abroad, Harley took over as music director, in 2007, with Marie as coordinator. As such, she carried out the duties of pianist, choir director, and accompanist. Harley, with her operatically trained voice, also frequently performed arias and art songs. Besides Harley, several COTH members soloed at services, notably Chic Welsh-Charrier (tenor), Byron Murray (bass), and Rev. Karen Gray (jazz and pop).

Staff

Much of the success of COTH/UCDC has relied on its paid office managers, who have provided the administrative organization necessary for its smooth operation. The position's duties can run the gamut from paying bills to creating necessary documents to managing the church's web presence.

Gina Harris was office manager until 1999. When Polly Dozier became minister in 1998, Cheryl Welsh-Charrier took on the job, which she ran from her home until 2008. Cheryl was succeeded by Jan Smoot who also worked from home. Her basement office area was also used for board meetings, classes, and choir practice.

Perhaps the title of office manager doesn't adequately describe the services that Jan has provided COTH/UCDC over many years. During that time she has generated almost all publications as well as documentation for the board's use. In coordination with the board, she has handled virtually all administrative functions required for church operations. Before she was office manager Jan supervised the roll out of COTH's website, which appeared in 2003, as well as revisions in 2007, 2010, and 2017. Jan's contract expired in April 2017, but she returned in February 2018. In the interim, first Roxanna Millhouse and then Henry Maticorena worked as an administrative assistant.

During 2014 to 2016, Andrea Solay was paid to be a "monthly coordinator," who lined up the speakers and platform assistants for Sunday services, thus relieving board members of that responsibility. Caywood Black assumed responsibility, on a volunteer basis, to schedule Sunday speakers and platform assistants in 2020.

Volunteers

COTH/UCDC would not exist without the constant energy of the congregation and its managing and staffing of the several services that a healthy ministry cannot do without. Church members have provided these services for no other compensation than the satisfaction of helping out. Some major examples already mentioned are the board of trustees, the prayer team and chaplaincy, leaders of ACIM and Master Mind, and music coordinator.

Licensed Unity Teachers

To be recognized as a full-fledged Unity congregation, a church without a minister needs to have a Licensed Unity Teacher (LUT) among its members. Having been trained in Unity principles, LUTs give Sunday messages, lead classes and workshops, conduct new member orientation, and otherwise provide a base for Unity teachings. In 2012 COTH had three LUTs available to it: Clyde Rufus, Caywood Black, and Andrea Solay.

Clyde served as LUT from the early days of COTH with the title of “education director” until he and his wife, Mignonette, retired to Trinidad in 2013. In anticipation of Clyde’s retirement, Caywood took LUT certification training that included classes at Unity Village. In 2014 both Caywood and Andrea were LUTs at COTH/UCDC. Caywood has continued to serve in that capacity and has led several multi-week classes on Unity topics, such as Lessons in Truth, Keep a True Lent, Myrtle Fillmore's Divine Ideas, The 12 Powers, The Sermon on the Mount, and The Science of God Realization.

Platform Assistants

At Sunday services a congregant has filled the role of platform assistant, one who leads attendees through the weekly program (or “bulletin”). The platform assistant introduces the speaker and musician(s), reads the *Daily Word*, offers opening and closing prayers (some of which they compose themselves), makes announcements, and welcomes visitors.

Bookstore (book table)

To fuel congregants’ spiritual growth COTH/UCDC has always made available for purchase books and other literature written by Unity and other New Thought authors. Managers of the book store made orders, kept inventory, displayed copies, and collected money from sales. One of the first bookstore coordinators was Rozanne Barry, a librarian at the Library of Congress; she was later joined by Jan Smoot. When Rozanne became terminally ill in 2005, Minnie Campos helped Jan at the book table. In Late 2006 Chic-Welsh Charrier took Jan’s place. Roy Berkowitz and Sylvia Sturm became coordinators in 2008. By 2013 Amanda Hicks managed the bookstore, followed in 2016 by John Bell, assisted by Joan Morgan.

Hospitality

After Sunday services coffee and edibles have been offered during social mixing time; most of the donated food has been prepared or purchased by members. Managing the hospitality table involved making coffee, setting the table, and cleaning up afterwards. Many different people

have volunteered to provide food for the body as well as the soul at COTH/UCDC. For many years Curt Huff and his protégée, Jackie Nagawa, took care of refreshments. In 2005 Kathie Libby filled in for Jackie, whose occupation sometimes took her back to her native Africa. By 2012 at FCUCC, Andrea Solay, Pat and Phil Weeks, and Chic and Cheryl Welsh-Charrier managed the table with frequent assistance from Dominic Cardella. Most recently Helen Johansson has handled hospitality.

Ushers

COTH/UCDC volunteer ushers have greeted arrivals, handed out programs and other material, given newcomers welcome packets, and made a count of Sunday service attendance. Many members and attendees have served as ushers over the years under coordinators who scheduled and communicated with the other ushers. Among the coordinators were Clyde Rufus, Patty Guard, Helen Johansson, and Rosmarie Stucki. In some years ushers collected tithes and love offerings.

Reiki

For a short period around 2013-2014, at FCUCC, Sylvia Sturm and Chic Welsh-Charrier provided free reiki before Sunday services.

Special Mention

Pat Weeks: In terms of volunteering at COTH/UCDC, the contributions of Pat Weeks deserve special mention. From 1997 until her death in 2017, Pat's actions had a breadth and depth that largely defined the community. Pat served many years on the board of trustees, several as president, and at both board and membership meetings provided leadership and advice based on her faith in Unity principles. She often gave Sunday talks and wrote many columns and book reviews for the newsletter. She had a major part in setting up the Sunday liturgy and contributed to it the text of "Affirmative Intentions for Our Ministry" and "Offering Blessing." There was hardly a church activity in which Pat was not involved. She enjoyed organizing the Christmas and Easter services, urging attendees to bring poinsettias for the one and flowers in remembrance of the departed for the other. Pat also headed the Master Mind group and served on the hospitality table; her peach cobbler at the annual picnic was a favorite dessert. Pat was probably second only to Amalie Frank in her influence as an individual on the evolution and continuation of COTH.

Social Activities

Beginning with Amalie Frank's ministry COTH/UCDC has always been a very social entity. Church members often gathered at a fall retreat/social at Capon Springs Family and Farm at Capon Springs, West Virginia. Amalie often lunched with congregants after service, including a ladies' brunch group. COTH held events in the fellowship hall of Capitol Hill Methodist Church, such as a dinner plus silent auction. Also, under Amalie's auspices, Gary and Ana Rasmussen introduced a Toastmasters group.

The major annual community get-together has been a picnic and barbecue, generally held in the summer. These were potluck events with different side dishes and desserts provided by members to accompany the drinks, burgers and hot dogs (usually grilled on site by Clyde Rufus) paid for by the church. The picnic venues changed over time. They began on the grounds of NCS and moved to the garden at Byron Murray's when the Cathedral grounds became unavailable. When COTH left NCS, Carol Hopson volunteered outdoor space on the grounds of her condominium. Lately the picnics have been held in the courtyard at St. Luke's Mission Center.

On two occasions, in 2009 and 2014, Phil Weeks arranged for evening boat cruises on the Potomac River from the harbor in Southwest D.C. On July 29, 2004, COTH celebrated its 10th anniversary with a gathering at "R&B Night" at the National Zoo; the 20th anniversary was celebrated at a June 8, 2014, picnic. Custom tee shirts were designed and sold for each event.

For several years COTH's members would join Swiss-born Micheline Leon, Rosmarie Stucki, and Evelyne Bonhomme for a French-language lunch at a nearby restaurant (Cactus Cantina). Around 2011 to 2013 some Arlington, Virginia, members would meet at local restaurants for dinner. Also, members sometimes headed to a Thai restaurant to hear Karen Gray's jazz singing. During the COVID-19 pandemic Nancy Reid arranged virtual happy hours to mark holidays.

As a fund- and fun raiser, Carol Hopson, with help from John Bell, arranged for the publication, in 2007, of *Cooking with Wild Abandon*, a small press publication that contained favorite recipes contributed by COTH members. The church held a fundraising yard sale and festival, May 14, 2005, organized by Joan McKinney, in the parking lot of the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church. Marie Maus and Jane West (?) organized a high-end clothing sale at St. Luke's.

With music such an interest among the congregation, the church has hosted many concerts for the price of admission over the years, including the following:

- "A Gift of Love: Favorite Anthems Fully Orchestrated," by the COTH choir, 1997; issued on cassette and CD
- classical vocal & chamber music concert by the COTH Performance Group, May 17, 1997
- the COTH Performance Group also staged the musical *Closer Than Ever*, in fall 1996 under Scott Upright's direction
- a "Tango Cabaret" featuring member Carol Hopson at Hearst Hall, June 18, 2006

- “Classical to Jazz” with Dave Kane, piano; Harley Sponaugle, soprano; Karen Gray, vocals; et al., June 17, 2007 at Hearst Hall
- “Gala Concert,” Sept. 29, 2012, at FCUCC, organized by member Dominick Cardella
- “Levi Kreis Flying Solo Tour” concert, March 23, 2013
- Shari Wright concert (singer), June 23, 2013
- “Spirit in Music” concert recital, Sofia Gulyak, pianist, Oct. 6, 2013
- Senza Nome (female chorus) concert under the direction of Barbara Wilkinson, Dec 8, 2019

From time to time members have held informal book clubs, usually at their homes, where Unity and New Thought writings were discussed among those reading and attending. For example:

- Cheryl and Chic Welsh-Charrier hosted *Atom-Smashing Power of Mind*, by Charles Fillmore; *The Power of Now*, by Eckhart Tolle; *The Untethered Soul*, by Michael Singer; and works by Eric Butterworth and Catherine Ponder.
- at separate times both Michael Patterson and John Bell hosted *The Artist’s Way*, by Julia Cameron.
- Kathleen Healy hosted *Sermon on the Mount*, by Emmet Fox and *Thunder of Silence*, by Joel Goldsmith

Publications

COTH/UCDC has provided information in print and electronic formats to communicate with and inform its members. The “Pink Pages,” a directory of members, was first produced in 1997 by Jan Smoot, who periodically updated it. By 1999 there was a monthly newsletter, “CommUnity News”; by 2008 the newsletter was available online.

Since 2003 COTH/UCDC has had a web presence, largely due to Jan’s efforts as office manager. This resource gives a full introduction to the church and its activities, along with pertinent announcements and inspirational items. In 2019 Jan introduced a “Thursday eblast” which sends a newsletter to subscribers about upcoming services and other church-related information.

Finances, Tithing, Giving, and Bequests

Aside from bequests, occasional fundraising, and modest investment income, members and participants have always provided the financial wherewithal that has kept COTH/UCDC in existence—a sign of the importance the church holds in their lives. Originally, attendees placed their tithes and love offerings in a white box with a heart-shaped slot. As technology advanced, in addition to cash and checks, contributors could make their gifts online using PayPal, GiveLively, or Venmo.

Since 2004 expenses have exceeded revenues every year. However, even with such a small congregation and increasing costs, COTH/UCDC has always observed the Unity principle of tithing a percentage of its income to Unity Worldwide Ministries and to Unity's Eastern Region. In June 2018 the church discontinued tithing to the Eastern Region. Instead, beginning in July, it tithed 20% to Unity of Puerto Rico through December, in lieu of the tithe to Eastern Region. (Puerto Rico had been decimated by Hurricane Maria in September 2017.) Tithing to the Eastern Region resumed in October 2019.

Red Basket

When COTH began and through most years, service attendees also had the opportunity to donate to special causes through the use of the “Red Basket,” a woven red basket placed at the rear of the church. At a 2016 board meeting it was explained how the Red Basket began as a weekly collection mechanism for repair of the Unity of Washington, D.C.'s A Street building, then for special requests, and then as a once-a-month option. On multiple Sundays the Red Basket might be dedicated to ongoing efforts like the 5000 Club building fund, pastoral care, and the education costs of Jackie Nagawa as she pursued and completed a master's degree at Trinity College. By 2006 COTH had contributed about \$46,000 to Jackie.

The following are just some of the special recipients:

- victims of the southeast Asian tsunami, a hurricane in Guatemala, and Hurricane Wilma, 2005
- George Washington Carver Outdoor School and Indonesian earthquake victims, 2006
- earthquake victims in Peru and California wildfire relief, 2007
- Habitat for Humanity and the Kiva entrepreneurial program in Kenya (a project of Jackie's), 2009
- victims of natural disasters in Haiti and Pakistan, 2010
- Inova Juniper Program's Adopt-a-Family, 2014
- to assist member Alice Horner with Metro Access transportation, 2016

Sharing the Love fund: By 2009 COTH had been the recipient of three generous bequests (see below). At a board meeting that year Carol Frampton suggested and the board established a “Sharing the Love” fund (often referred to as “Share the Love”) as a means to share COTH's bounty with others. The fund had two components: the Spiritual Growth Fund to “subsidize

individual members' spiritual journey" and the Love in Action Fund to "support the work of local non-profit organizations in community-improving activities."

The following are gifts made through Sharing the Love:

- 2009: \$5,000 each to SMYAL (Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League), Interstages (an afterschool youth development program), and Lifting Voices (an organization to help young people discover and share their voices aloud and in writing)
- 2010: SMYAL (\$3,000); National Cathedral for repairs after a destructive winter storm (\$500); Andy Carlson for studies in InterSpiritual counseling (\$2,000)
- 2013: \$1,000 each to SMYAL; Lifting Voices; Pathways to Housing, INOVA Virginia
- 2014: \$1,000 as matching funds for a new heating system for Unity of the Shenandoah Valley
- 2015: \$1,000 each to Inova Juniper Program's Adopt-a-Family and St. Luke's Mission Center for use of its facilities
- 2016: \$50 a month for up to six months to assist member Alice Horner with her expenses for special transportation to Sunday services
- 2020: \$250 to Friendship Place at St. Luke's Mission Center; \$250 to the National Center for Children and Families' New Beginnings program; \$250 to the D.C. Food Bank

Under Rev. Paul Tenaglia the fund became the "Minister's Discretionary Fund."

Bequests

COTH was the beneficiary of three substantial, generous bequests:

- Unity School of Christianity (USC) received \$500,000 from the Meierhoff Charitable Remainder Unitrust to be used for Unity in Washington, D.C., as determined by USC; USC decided to give \$160,130 to COTH; received March 2006
- from the estate of COTH member Rozanne Barry, \$114,135 (including a \$9,150 timeshare); received March 12, 2009
- from the estate of member Lois Taylor, \$178,168; received August 18, 2009

Memorials

Helen Anthony (1908-2004), Nov 28 2004, Hearst Hall

<https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/timesdispatch/name/helen-anthony-obituary?pid=2761798>

Rozanne Barry (d. April 16), May 14, 2006, Hearst Hall

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/2006/04/22/obituaries/c8979556-8df6-461f-92a0-3f36911ef56b/>

John Gambrell, (d. June 28, 2006), October 8, Hearst Hall

<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/washingtonpost/obituary.aspx?n=john-e-gambrell&pid=18362229>

Lois Taylor (d. December 9, 2007), Jan. 20, 2008, Hearst Hall

<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/washingtonpost/obituary.aspx?n=lois-taylor&pid=99488632>

Miss Minnie Tucker (October 20, 1918 – December 27, 2014)

https://richmond.com/obituaries/tucker-minnie/article_0a289747-db0d-5cc4-b193-60f6fb91d651.html

Rev. Lyn Billingsley (d. January 10, 2008), April 5, Unity of Fairfax

<http://the.honoluluadvertiser.com/article/2008/Apr/28/ln/hawaii804280336.html>

Joan Rainwater (1943-2010), June 27, Hearst Hall

<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/name/joan-rainwater-obituary?pid=143581441>

Pat Weeks, (1937-2017), May 27, St. Luke's Mission Center

<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/washingtonpost/obituary.aspx?n=patricia-weeks&pid=185454700&fhid=4062>

Rev. LaFayette Seymour, (1938-2018), September 11, UCDC <https://www.mcguire-services.com/obituary/LaFayette-Seymour>

Sources

- CommUnity News (newsletter)
- weekly Sunday program (bulletin)
- minutes of board and membership meetings
- COTH/UCDC paper and electronic files
- input from COTH/UCDC members

“When you must turn the page to a new chapter of living, welcome it....If you begin the new chapter by writing upon it thoughts of optimism and that the proper outcome will unfold, a solution is inevitable. What you constantly picture in your mind will come to pass—sooner or later.”—from “Onward,” August 9, Amalie’s Good Words