



**A History of
Unity Center of Walnut Creek**

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Table of Contents

1948 to January, 1987 by Dr. Carol Ruth Knox

- Early Years (1948 – 1970)
- Reverend Knox Begins Ministry (September 1970)
- Early Growth (1970 – 1976)
- Outreach (1970 – 1976)
- Adult Education (1970 – 1976)
- Synergy – An Educational Experiment (1973 – 1978)
- Building Process (1970 – 1976)
- Generalities (1970 – 1976)
- Adolescence (1977 – 1982)
- Adult Education/Counseling (1977 – 1982)
- Resource (1977 – 1982)
- Fellowship and Community (1977 – 1982)
- Building (1977 – 1982)
- Reverend Knox (1977 – 1982)
- General (1977 – 1982)
- Ripening (1983 – 1987)
- Adult Education/Counseling (1983 – 1987)
- Resource (1983 – 1987)
- Fellowship and Community (1983 – 1987)
- Lay Ministry (1983 – 1987)
- Building (1983 – 1987)
- Reverend Knox, PhD (1983 – 1987)
- General (1983 – 1987)

Part 1: 1948 – January, 1987
by Dr. Carol Ruth Knox
(Written in 1987)

Early Years, 1948 – 1970

This Unity Center was started in the late 1940s by Reverend Marie Giles as an outreach of Lakeside Unity Temple, Oakland. A class was offered in Alamo on Wednesday evenings; at the time the entire area beyond the Berkeley hills was considered a summer community to Oakland and San Francisco. Emmet Fox, world renowned author of *The Power of Constructive Thinking*, gave a lecture sponsored by the fledgling study group. With conviction and faith, their aspirations to become a church were fulfilled as they began Sunday morning services in the PG&E building on the corner of Commercial Lane and Bonanza in Walnut Creek in 1951. Those services were held on alternate Sundays until they were able to move to the Eagle Building on Cole Street in the Spring of 1953. There the first Sunday school was begun by Bee Koontz and Mabel Manzer.

The church body kept groping for proper facilities which would become its physical home. They moved to Locust Street into a Methodist Church which is now the parking lot opposite Grograns, made an offer on a Baptist Church, and then in the early 1960s began to meet in the Sportsman's Club on North Main near Geary Road. Through the efforts of Connie Kraft, Realtor, the property at 1871 Geary Road was located and courageously purchased (the church having a small congregation and limited funds) for \$18,500.00 in the mid 1960s. The land was a one acre goat farm with a two bedroom cottage on it. Knocking out bedroom and kitchen walls allowed for the living area to seat sixty people for Sunday services. Finally Unity of Walnut Creek had found its physical home.

By now the ministry averaged thirty on Sunday mornings, there was a small youth education program, a piano, no heat or air conditioning (the comment was heard to be stated later on, "who needs it?"), a healing class once a week, and a vital and personal healing ministry under the leadership of Reverence Marie Giles.

However, now owning their own land and building, there was obvious pressure for expansion, exposure, and people power. In early 1970, Reverend Giles decided to step down, to make room for that growth. Her devotion had been to a small, intimate healing ministry -- she continued her practice, living in Martinez, until her death in December, 1973. Her vision began this work; her love and gifts of healing served many.

Reverend Knox Begins Ministry

During the interim period from March until September of 1970, the nucleus of members at Unity held the organization and activities of the church together, along with the resources of Reverends Phil and Dorothy Pierson, ministers from Sacramento, and Billie Blain, a licensed teacher who is now the Unity minister in Auburn. The Association of Unity Churches was advised of the opening and the intent to invite a minister. Reverends John Cuddeback (a classmate of Reverend Knox) and Emily Sanford, newly ordained, both showed interest but did not pursue. On a trip to Unity Village, Connie Kraft, Board President, interviewed the newly ordained Carol Knox who was eager to bring her expansive vision to this ready to burst yet tentative ministry. Although there were no funds to move Reverend Knox except by borrowing the \$1200.00 from the building fund, although the guaranteed \$500.00 per month salary was more than the Center's usual monthly income, both the Center's membership and Reverend Knox accepted the leap of faith and moved into possibility together.

Reverend Knox arrived in Walnut Creek, September 6, 1970, leaving her family and life on the East Coast and traveling across country alone. She was eager, and excited to implement the powerful Unity Principles she had learned at Unity Ministerial School and practiced all her life. A student of Unity since her birth, Reverend Knox had attended her first classes in Cambridge, Massachusetts, under the guidance of Reverend C. Edna E. Titus. A small study group in the vicinity of Harvard University, they read and pondered the writings of Charles and Myrtle Fillmore, Emily Cady, Emmet Fox, and the Bible; they practiced meditation and a life of prayer. Reverend Knox had pursued a career of concert pianist presenting three Boston concerts and concertizing throughout New England between 1955 and 1968. In 1960 she had graduated cum laude from Tufts University majoring in English and music, and had received a Masters Degree in musicology from Brown University in 1964. Her teaching career had included teaching high



Rev. Knox in 1970

school English in Norton, Massachusetts, and then had continued on to becoming Director of Music at Ledyard High School in Connecticut. There her programs in teaching adolescents to write and conduct their own music had gained national recognition – as director of a symphonic and marching band, chorus and a-capella choir as well as local musical comedies for the community, she had gained notoriety and attention of a legendary quality. But it was her students' attraction to her convictions and spiritual attitudes and the inspiration that provided them and their families that caused Reverend Knox to commit her career to teaching life rather than teaching music. Thus she had entered Unity Ministerial School in the fall of 1968 and was ordained August 17, 1970.

There was a flurry of activity as the Center prepared for the arrival of their new minister. Indeed it is a poetic, even romantic, moment. Unseen, unknown, they prepared in anticipation. The church walls were painted, the seating turned around to provide a new podium and more space, the bathroom which was just off the sanctuary had shelves placed in it for supplies and the like, the kitchen sink had a drapery placed across it so it would not be noticeable during Sunday services. The grounds were landscaped and the stage set.

Upon entering the building, Reverend Knox, filled with verve and vision, dressed in a mini skirt and boots (the style of the day), is quoted to have said, "It isn't as bad as I had thought it would be." She had been told she was going to an old house, in a declining ministry in a totally unknown town in California, called Walnut Creek. The all women Board of Directors, comprised of people still actively involved at Unity in Walnut Creek (Bee Koontz, Betty White, Connie Kraft, Emme Lorentzen, Evelyn Ludricks, and Grace Brogger) met with Reverend Knox that week to begin the growth process to which they were all devoted. Immediately issues of vision were raised in the simplest of ways but which set the tone for years to come: should they buy a used desk for the minister's office or a new one. Reverend Knox's comment was, "I think we are too good for a used desk." Without seeable income, the board took another leap of faith, more symbolic than large in nature; a new desk was bought. The same pattern was sewn in similar decisions that evening: to support the larger vision and let go of the impossibilities and to do so with wisdom and a practical awareness of reality.

Reverend Knox's first Sunday Service was given on September 11th before 66 people who had come to see the new minister. Her first words, which would set the tone of her willingness to be vulnerable, were, "I am so scared." Sharing that left her open to inspire those present with a lesson entitled Wheel Within A Wheel, which gave her vision of ministry – to share the ministry in ever increasing circles of support and lay expression, thereby promoting growth and expansion both within the individual and throughout the Center's expression of itself. Her training to recognize that everyone is a minister had seeped in deep. This would not be a ministry of followers spoken to as if sixth graders by an all knowing mother, but a ministry of leaders empowered to realize and activate their own inner knowing. That would create in the years to come a community of creative, vital leaders who would challenge their minister to break through together limitations of belief and organization and vision for the benefit and expansion of the entire Center.

Early Growth, 1970 – 1976

The vision was cast, the participants were committed, the intentions were clear. The early years of Reverend Knox's ministry were dynamic, fast, exciting, expansive, demanding, aggressive, action! Although the first few Sundays saw a decrease in attendance, the shuffling settled and by mid-October, Sunday services were increasing in attendance regularly until by late November a second service was necessary to allow for the eighty people attending to have seats. The first counselee was present the first Monday morning that Reverend Knox opened 'shop' and counseling grew. Within a week the first adult education class began, entitled Psychocybernetics. It was so successful two sessions had to be held, one on Tuesday evenings and the other on Thursday evenings.

The essentials for developing a Unity ministry were addressed and maintained: noonday meditation led by Reverend Knox was held daily, a prayer consciousness was built, a core of volunteers became responsive and responsible, regular Center hours were established between 9 – 5, prayer counseling was made available by phone as well as visitation, the mail was blessed daily with the expectation of income as well as all mail sent, visualization was used to project expansion and increased numbers in attendance during the day/at classes/and at Sunday mornings, goals were set and every projection of income and numbers (until the time when the center could hold no more) was fulfilled.

The miracles so essential to building a ministry on faith and action evidenced themselves. The income grew as Reverend Knox's commitment to personal tithing resulted in a doubling of her salary within six months and the Center's quadrupling its income over the same period. A mimeograph machine was made possible through an outright gift, a heater literally appeared overnight as did an air conditioner, a carpet was donated and a sound

system capable of reproducing tapes of Sunday services, healings of body and finance were kept recorded as evidence of the power of prayer and counseling care. Other gifts came along: filing cabinets, hymn books, coffee makers, to name a few. The bits of design (outreach, youth education, adult education, counseling) set into motion took seed and flourished in the next six years.

Outreach, 1970 – 1976

Unity was seen by Reverend Knox as not only a church but also as a spiritual focus for New Thought Consciousness and the New Age Movement in Contra Costa County. This ministry was not designed to imitate traditional ministries but to creatively lead the way for the New Age Movement and even establish itself as a leader for the Bay and Bay Area. As has been evidenced in the years since, that has happened. Unity of Walnut Creek has attracted the largest number of significant New Age speakers of any organization in the Bay Area, and is the largest suburban church in the Unity movement. It set the tone for lifting its head out of the smaller church vision, to hold itself above the rest – it is recognized throughout the Bay Area in the New Age Movement and throughout the country in the Unity Movement for its leadership and uniqueness of program and operation.

Outreach began in minimal, usual Unity ministry formats: dial-a-thought was installed and has continued uninterrupted since December, 1970; printed copies of Sunday lessons were initiated in January, 1971 and taped copies made available in February the same year and have continued uninterrupted. A consistent monthly newsletter was mailed in October, 1971, its name given as Centerpoint in March, 1973 and it has continued uninterrupted; the first Adult Class Schedule was designed for Fall, 1971 and has been mailed quarterly, uninterrupted ever since. The mailing list of 120 was contacted personally by phone by Reverend Knox, to invite participation and continued commitment to the new ministry – those who were interested were kept on the list and those who were no longer committed were asked if they minded being removed from the list.

A Sunday morning half hour broadcast was Unity's first representation on radio, KGBH in Walnut Creek, beginning April, 1971 (programming was discontinued after two years because of Reverend Knox's limited time). Cable TV, G.E., Walnut Creek, invited Reverend Knox to present a counseling program, starting in 1973. It was entitled Insights, a half hour live counseling program, which continued uninterrupted until 1979. The first Unity of Walnut Creek satellite was initiated in Rossmoor where Reverend Knox presented a class weekly, beginning in March, 1971. It continued under Unity sponsorship until 1975 at which time it was passed on to a Divine Science minister and continues to the present. In 1974, our assistant minister, Reverend Pierre Gallardo, began an outreach in Vallejo – upon his resignation a year later, the satellite was given to the leadership of a local member of Unity, Wanda Hadden, still remaining under the umbrella of Unity of Walnut Creek. The outreach continued until 1978 when the leader could no longer continue responsibility.

Reverend Knox first spoke before a community group, the Martinez Lions, in November, 1970. She has continued this outreach in numerous cities in the County and now is joined by Lay Ministers in this community service: Lions, Optimists, Soroptomist, Rotary, Kiwanis, Oakland Shriners, local school classes, Women's Groups, Government organizations, seminars in healing at John F. Kennedy University/Diablo College and Los Medanos, a graduate credit course Rosebridge University. To further the connection with serving the community, Reverend Knox has served on the boards of Contra Costa Mental Health Association, Rosebridge University, California Institute for Integral Studies in San Francisco, and Synergy School.

Besides going out into the community, the community was invited to enter. The first guest teacher taught a class in Yoga and Meditation in January, 1971; Reverend Giles was invited to return and teach a class on healing in the Fall of 1971. John F. Kennedy University held overflow classes in the balcony of our Center for one year, 1973-1974; Dr. Ernest Pecci's PSI program (the predecessor to Rosebridge University) started in the same spot on Saturdays in 1973. Leonard Orr, founder of Rebirthing (now a major organization in Marin), became a member of Unity of Walnut Creek in 1974 and began his first groups at our Center; and Douglas Hooper, who wrote for years in the Contra Costa Times began his search at our Center where he was a member and taught Sunday school. Early

guest speakers at lectures, on Sundays and in seminars included Sig Paulson of Unity literary note, Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri, founder of the California Institute of Asian Studies in San Francisco, Walter Starcke, Dr. Ernest Pecci, the Phillipin [sic] healer Doug Volst, actor Richard Alan Knox, and Joseph Chilton Pierce (Crack in the Cosmic Egg and Magical Child).

The Youth Education program expanded calling for two services and it was necessary to rent the Teen Center (now the Assistance League on the corner of Buena Vista and First Avenue) for two years until the new Sanctuary was built. The first summer program for young people was held in summer, 1971 (and has continued with rare absence through the present) in a program entitled Youth Enlightenment to Spirit (Y.E.S.), wherein the old and young integrated in sharing the pursuit of the spiritual life in projects such as wood carving, meditation, movement as Rossmoor Unity and Unity joined in serving. The celebration that occurred that summer in the little cottage was magnificent – a something which should be, must be perpetuated!

Always trying to accommodate more people, Sunday evening gatherings called “Rapping with the Rev” were held intermittently from 1971 – 1976. Uniteens was started in November, 1972 to join the active Youth of Unity. A Professional Directory was first prepared in 1976; Reverend Knox wrote an article for two years for the Martinez Gazette, from 1971 – 1973, which answered people’s questions to the issues of the day through a spiritual response. This was stopped because of lack of time.

In an attempt to integrate all facets of the Center, a large core of committees was formed as early as 1971 – committees in building, by laws, distribution of literature, lay services, luncheon and crafts, multi media, publications, visitation, young adults, and newspaper. These committees have continued over the years, only halted for a brief period during the early years of lay ministry. A group to support singles and couples was initiated in November, 1972 called Pairs and Spares, and the First Family Retreat was held in May, 1973 at Calistoga – both these activities have continued (the Family Retreat missed only in 1979 and 1986) as need arises. People in the arts have continually been encouraged, as first expressed in a monthly Poet’s Corner in Spring, 1972 and now expressed through the Arts Council (initiated 1985). To serve the older members of our community, Mildred Partansky and Reverend Knox initiated a Re-tired Ups program in the Spring of 1976 – although provided under different names and now called the Young at Heart, this program has also continued uninterrupted since 1976. Len Keith initiated a Singles Group on Sunday evenings in February, 1975 – without interruption, it continues, now under the guidance of Reverend Hank Visscher.

Adult Education, 1970 – 1976

From the beginning, Reverend Knox’s desire had been to create a powerful Adult Education program, one which would not only provide the Unity Principles but also provide related and peripheral studies which would gradually draw students into deeper teachings.

In the early stages of the program, a formal design did not exist nor a formal philosophy. (That was developed through the efforts of Reverend Knox, Susan Kopp and Ann Pieper in 1976.) At its inception and conception, it was seen by Reverend Knox as essential to invite those people devoted to spiritual ideas which aligned with Unity, to teach at Unity. In these years, the scope of classes did not extend far beyond the usual Unity teaching. Teachers came primarily from the Center lay people, Synergy School teachers, and an occasional ‘star’ from Berkeley or San Francisco. Twenty four hour marathons were offered by Reverend Knox during the mid years of the 70’s. As new ideas appeared on the horizon of the New Age Consciousness Movement, they were used as a teaching means and kept Unity Center current as a visionary organization and model for New Age thinking: Psychocybernetics, I’m Ok-You’re Ok, Dream Analysis, Numerology, Yoga, Body Expression, Success and Prosperity, Phenomenon of Man, Assertiveness Training, Think and Grow rich, For Women Only Groups, Creative Dynamics, Biofeedback Training were intermingled with basic Unity courses such as Lessons in Truth, Bible, the Fillmore books of Atom Smashing

Power of Mind, Twelve Powers of Man, Christian Healing, Jesus Christ Heals, Talks on Truth; as well as other basic texts from Unity such as Effectual Prayer, Discover the Power Within You, Teach Us to Pray.

Adult Education Programs have always provided training to allow for the people of Unity Center to participate in Continuing Education programs at Unity Village, Missouri. Classes at Unity Center and those at Unity Village are purposely interfaced and allow for its participants to become licensed teachers and counselors through the Unity Movement. To support this, Reverend Knox asked the Board, in 1974, to establish a scholarship program to send interested adults to Unity Village – the first such program in the Unity Movement, now strongly supported and recommended to other Unity Ministries by Unity School, this program has continued uninterrupted and sent over 40 individuals to Unity Village since 1974.

As the word spread of Unity's willingness to share its space with new and dynamic ideas; as it became known that teachers and entrepreneurs of the newest in human possibility could share their walls; as it was observed that there was a loving, inspired, eager, open group of students seeking the best and latest in New Thought and New Age Consciousness, the Adult Education grew from one class in 1970 to seventeen classes and five seminars involving sixteen teachers by the Fall quarter of 1976.

Counseling, 1970 – 1976

As mentioned earlier, the first counselee was present at Unity Center on Monday, September 12, 1970. There was obvious hunger for effective counseling that added depth and insight into spiritual methods such as prayer and affirmation. Interest in counseling is reflected in the year to year dynamic increase in the numbers of individuals who came to Unity for counseling. In June, 1972, 119 counseling sessions were provided for 43 different people by Reverend Knox; there were 14 home or hospital calls made as well by Reverend Knox; dial-a-thought had reached over 100 calls per day. A year later, the numbers were at 142 appointments and 52 individual counsees and 9 visitations. Reverend Knox's time was at maximum use – some new idea had to form if there was to be room for more.

Reverend Knox's training counseling techniques had come from three years of study at Unity School as a part of ministerial training. She incorporated techniques such as gestalt, biofeedback (the first equipment was purchased in June, 1973), role-playing, reality therapy, guided meditation, reflective listening, insight and revelation, play-making, encounter. Counseling included families, children, couples, healing, crisis, drug rehabilitation (Reverend Knox came to be a well known figure at J-Ward in Martinez), suicide prevention and intervention. Because of her success and notoriety, Reverend Knox was invited to present her counseling on local cable television, G.E. in Walnut Creek. A program entitled Insights was begun in March, 1973 and continued uninterrupted through 1979, at which time it was stopped due to lack of time. Through this program, numerous people came to Unity Center of Walnut Creek either for its services or for private counseling.

As the Counseling Program grew, as its clientele expanded, it was obvious that Reverend Knox could not continue caring for the fast expanding Center as well as devote personal time to the growing and extensive counseling and prayer needs. When Reverend Knox became ill briefly in the Spring of 1974, it was apparent that it was the result of excessive demand. The Board approached her to request that she diminish her time at the Center (to cut back from nearly 80 hours a week), and they would assist her by making arrangements to acquire more lay people to counsel. A training program was initiated in the fall of 1974 which included counseling philosophy, practicing counseling methodology and skills, critique by peers on television and prayer listening and counseling. The first group of lay counselors was graduated in the spring of 1975 and began their service at Unity Center immediately. Within that year they were involved in 68 counseling appointments a month, reducing the minister's load to 78/month (a sample month figure is provided here). By 1976, the additional counselors allowed for a total of 280 counseling appointments to be conducted at Unity Center and a continued lessening of the minister's load. This program continued to flourish through 1979 and gradually has been upgraded as will be

presented further on in this history. Reverend Knox trained the last group of counselors in the class of 1977 – no doubt, this program was the root, the predecessor for the inspiration of the Lay Ministry Program which was initiated in 1983. An assistant minister, hired for the year 1974/1975, was released because of poor performance.

Synergy – An Educational Experiment, 1973-1976

Early in Reverend Knox's career at Unity of Walnut Creek, she had been invited to share her spiritual ideas with students at the Orinda Free School. John Minkler, a member of Unity in Walnut Creek, taught at the school; he also taught at another school, devoted to assisting children in new ways of learning and New Age Consciousness ideas and ideals. This school, Holden School, had been founded by Carolyn Cogan, soon to become a member of Unity. Both John and Carolyn became deeply involved in Unity, its teachings and values, and Reverend Knox taught at both schools.

There was a feeling of excitement and enthusiasm by many who attended Unity at the time, that they would like a school where the Principles they heard at Unity, their children might absorb as a part of their daily school experience. In an exploratory meeting held in the balcony at Unity on November 26, 1972, fifty parents attended. The idea was sprung and the planning began. Both Carolyn and John were willing to leave their schools to initiate the idea at Unity Center of Walnut Creek. A complete plan was developed including staffing and materials costs and tuition charges. The program was accepted by the Unity Center Board unanimously on March 29, 1973 and the Board provided \$500.00 to back the project which was always self supporting. The name Synergy was taken from the writings of Buckminster Fuller, as an idea to develop all facets of a child's wholism.

Synergy School was dedicated September 16, 1975 in a special service held in the Sanctuary. It began with fifteen tuition students, grades 9 – 12, meeting in the Youth Education room downstairs behind the sanctuary.

By 1974, the new Youth Education building had been built and dedicated and now Synergy moved into its space to hold classes. Synergy prospered and grew in numbers and staff. David Brooks joined Carolyn and John, part time in 1974 and became full time in 1975. Unity Center now had young people on its grounds five days a week. That confined adult education classes to the main building. The grounds were filled with life and action as the numbers grew. There were problems, of course, complaints by our neighbors and yet the Unity Community was fully supportive as well as the Board. The Directors, Carolyn Cogan and John Minkler, maintained their vision and served the children deeply and profoundly. Some of the graduates of Synergy have gone on to major Universities, developed their own individuals life styles and expressions, one is a graduate of the United States Naval Academy. In April, 1976, the possibility of adding a Synergy Primary School was explored and approved by the Board. A house adjacent to our land was rented, a Primary School director, Olivia Carter, hired and the school increased to thirty students, grades K-12. The vision was complete. The life energy at Unity changed again – more activity, more children, more possibility.

Although it was not seen as such at the time, an attempt to expand our buildings on our present site in the Spring of 1978, led to our being forced by the city to remove Synergy from the grounds by the Fall of that year – reason, we did not have an adequate use permit. Synergy found wonderful property and buildings on Reliez Valley Road and moved there during the summer, 1978. They expanded again, developed their own Board (on which Reverend Knox served for one year to assist in the transition), became self sufficient, and their own entity.

However, the pressure of the financial responsibility and size of the project became burdensome, the problems too big to be managed. Both Carolyn Cogan and John Minkler left Synergy for other work, a year later, 1979. Olivia Carter took over direction for the entire school at that time, but was not able to perpetuate it. Synergy closed in 1981.

Synergy may have been an idea ahead of its time. It may be an idea which has survived in a school such as White Pony, now operated in the area by the Sufi's. However, White Pony School is now only teaching the early grades and there is still no such school for children reaching adolescence and beginning the important journey into adulthood. Such a school would always need a financial subsidy to free its teachers and administrators to give their real gifts – loving children and seeing them as whole and developing curriculums which will support that process. The tragedy, however, is that such an idea usually does not appeal to that element of society which can provide such income, such a subsidy. Should the idea find another way of expression in the years to come; should another come along with a vision which could be financially and organizationally supported, its presence would be encouraged at Unity Center of Walnut Creek.

Building Process, 1970 – 1976

It is obvious with the burst of response to Reverend Knox's ministry, that the small cottage could not contain the activity that was bounding about in its 1200 square feet. Quickly, the Board of Directors saw the need and began the visualizing as early as February, 1971. These were exciting, expansive, indeed explosive times. Joining wills and visions is no easy task; accepting a new leader and letting go of personal power is extremely hard on the ego and calls for mature egos; accepting the responsibility for building a church is far subtler than buying someone else's house or renting used quarters; gathering together the force of many horses and bringing them under one rein takes time, intelligence, deftness and multi-awareness – it also creates parting of the ways as people are not able to go along with the next dimension of expansion. But the Board had envisioned expansion, and understood its call and mission – they carried it forward into reality.

The design for the present Sanctuary was provided by an architect who attended Unity – his design, simple and cost effective, met the needs and was a gift of his time and design. Bids for the plan were sent out in February, 1972; ground breaking was held in the backyard of the cottage on March 12, 1972. The building cost \$53,000.00. The excitement could be seen in the air; we hardly walked on ground; there was a buzz in our beings. I personally could not believe it was happening so quickly. As church services and classes were held, the cement was poured for the foundation; Harold Collins, our contractor and a dear friend, died in June, and another miracle, someone appeared to carry on.



The sanctuary being built next to the cottage

The walls went up: "...there's the balcony and the minister's office...and the stairs to the Youth Education room downstairs...and there's the kitchen and a work room...it looks too small, we made a mistake...no, that's the way it always looks when the foundation is poured (too small)...wait, it's alright...look my office has a view of Mt. Diablo – another dream fulfilled!" And then they brought in the trusses for the roof – marvelous, and they just lifted them up and put them on top of those walls. And then the stucco and that wire mesh. And then...our people came in and did the finish work: we painted it, did the finished electrical and made the curtains and put on the molding. Saturday after Saturday we met and ate bologna sandwiches in the balcony and worked: landscaping carpet laying, fixtures, ad infinitum and a deadline to meet, September 17, 1972, dedication Sunday, two years exactly after Reverend Knox's arrival.

Money to begin an organ fund was donated and a new organ was delivered the day of the dedication; the formal podium chairs and numerous other gifts were given for the dedication. Leaping from a rent free status to a \$679.00 per month building loan was frightening, of course – and a special donor from Rossmoor wrote a check for \$15,000.00, presented in June 1972 and then sent \$2,000.00 quarterly for the next three years until her death. She loved Unity and especially our youth who were her inspiration to give.

Everything was primed and ready. Robert Sikking, Association of Unity Churches executive director, came from Lee's Summit, Missouri to provide the main inspiration, all the local Unity Ministers from Sacramento, Stockton, Marin County, San Jose, came to light one of the twelve candles representing the Twelve Powers Of Man, in a moving ceremony; Reverend Knox's parents came from Boston; Reverend Marie Giles was present; a catered silver tea was provided; 350 attended. The Church shown, lit by its own internal light.

It wasn't too long after, that it became evident the building was not adequate. Youth Education sounds came through the air vents, the bookstore area was too small (off the balcony), with Synergy School now meeting daily downstairs, we lacked classroom space; with the introduction of the counselor training program, more counseling rooms were needed. Thus, by May 1973, the Board of Directors ok'd the architectural plans for a Youth Education Building – the architect, Joe Bellows, still active at Unity and a 1985-1988 Board member. Ground breaking took place in March, 1974, two years after the first ground breaking. Eagerness appeared again, and at the same time, the Center was maturing, hardly having the time to pay attention. The building went up quickly, over the summer of 1974; it cost \$74,000.00. Dedication was held October 10, 1974. Approximately 150 people attended. The feeling was intensely internal, for the children!

In 1976, another step was taken to support the need for more space. The corner lot came up for sale and was purchased outright for cash in the amount of \$20,000.00. Our hope to convert it to parking, though thwarted by the City and neighbors in 1983, continues to be a hope and vision but has been delayed while other projects are pursued (re-design, alteration of buildings, purchase of Alamo property – all of which are explained in future sections of this history). That same year, the downstairs space in the main building was converted to counseling and biofeedback rooms – the cost, \$9,000.00, was raised immediately and paid in full.

Generalities, 1970 - 1976

The key to success in any work can be seen not only in its ideas and programs, but also its income and numbers.

Early in our growth, Propel Unity was initiated, to encourage our community in supporting its building program. At the first Propel Unity Sunday (held quarterly for five years and always a day of great eagerness and excitement), November, 1970, \$376.12 was given in the various banks shared with the Center. That placed our building fund at \$2,273.38.

By September, 1974, the mailing list had increased from 120 to 1,543.

A third service was added in November, 1974 with the addition of an assistant minister; with his leaving (June, 1975) Reverend Knox was only able to continue that third service through June, 1976.

By September, 1975, the mailing list was at 2,450 and by February, 1976, it had reached 3,430. By 1978, the mailing list peaked out at 4,500 – the reason, it is now reviewed yearly to keep it from extending and carrying disinterested parties.

Attendance began averaging around 250 on Sundays in the mid-1970's. By 1978 the Center was approaching maximum comfortable attendance, averaging between 350 and 400, altering off course during summer season. This maximum has continued and cannot be increased except by adding services in the present space (winter average in 1986 is 500 and summer average is 300).

The overall Center income was \$8,745.29 in the month of August, 1975; savings had \$2,550.51 and the building loans were \$74,326. In June, the following year monthly income had increased to \$10,000 plus. Staffing had also increased with the demand. Receptionists and volunteers in 1970 and early 1971, led to the hiring of a part time clerk/typist. By 1973 that position called for a full time secretary and an assistant as well as a paid Youth

Education Director. By 1975, a bookkeeper/adult education director was also employed, full time, along with a custodian part time.

We were moving into a new time, although we did not know: a time of quieting, internalization, deepening, which would allow for solidifying and confirming that which had been projected during the first six years.

Adolescence, 1977 – 1982



Rev. Knox at Sunday service in the early 1980s

Most Unity Centers are directed by a leader who provides the vision and direction for that Center. The tone, message, pace, clarity, effectiveness of that Center is carried by that leader. Unity Centers are not like traditional churches.

There is no mold, no hierarchy, no larger body who subsidizes or controls. Each minister is sent out, independently, bred and trained in the Unity teachings and then bound only by a code of ethics, affiliation with the Association of Unity Churches (although not all Unity churches are affiliated with the A.U.C.), and commitment to teaching Unity Principles. From this nucleus, the environment, character, expression, vision and its manifestation, are embodied in the minister. The board approves and supports that vision and assists in providing for a

stable financial foundation and an attractive Church home which belongs to the membership.

At this point in Reverend Knox's spiritual development, a major shift occurred. After years of externalization, she was abruptly taken into a period of recollection and contemplation, a period of deepening and being prepared for classical mystical immersion. Although this may not have meaning for the usual reader, this experience had profound impact on her dynamic leadership, her values and preferences, her interests, even her beliefs and vision. The movement towards expansion shifted towards deepening and expanding the message rather than programs and facilities. The rapid pace of adding numbers and programs quieted as attention was forced towards philosophy and intention. The tendency towards manifestation and affirmation, toward duality and karma was re-structured in the crucible of her own personal experience into an appreciation of trusting, becoming, allowing, receptivity – the masculine side was being upheaved by the feminine as integration within the minister and throughout the Center was created. Creation was being supplanted by process, metaphysics by mysticism, personality by individuality, duality by non-duality, conditional by unconditional, control by becoming, specificity by blending and integration.

Indicators of this internalization can be seen through symbolic occurrences. A midweek service was initiated by Reverend Knox and Carolyn Cogan in January, 1977 – it has continued without interruption (now led by Lay Ministers) to the present. Its intention: to offer a midweek time for quiet internalizing, without excessive words, wherein one can be contemplative. The third service on Sunday mornings was stopped in May, 1977; a Prayer Chain of lay people designed to pray with others was initiated the same year; a unique counseling tool was introduced by Judy Lee, called Processing, which led people deeply and profoundly into their symbolic and 'dark' side – it remained active through 1981 at which time it was integrated into all counseling procedures.

As well, through the efforts of a lay team who Reverend Knox had asked to care for the Unity Center during a two month sabbatical, considered this charge to be an opportunity to explore the entire operation of Unity Center and its potential for effectiveness in the community at large – total re-design and re-structuring of the internal 'sense' of Unity Center was recommended. The intention as well was to relieve the minister from as much "hands on" responsibility, to free that position for more of the contemplative life, to allow the minister to devote more time to speaking and spreading the "word," to spread out and share the base of power, and to provide the minister with more time for creative and personal self expansion. Although shocked at the immensity of the

changes, Reverend Knox was desirous of assisting in bringing the design into action -- she, the Board and the lay team worked together to iron out any areas which might conflict with Unity teachings and vision. By November the plan was implemented.

Now the ministry was seen as the internal vision for the Center, the trunk of the tree, out of which all other expressions came and which in turn fed the heart of the ministry. This moved the operation out of the typical hierarchal model and more into the prevalent New Age Consciousness model wherein the whole operates through sharing and affecting the vision and its implementation. As well, the Center was departmentalized with directors placed in positions of authority to direct their own departments:

Adult Education/Counseling – responsibility for selecting classes and teachers and causing those classes to take place in line with adult education policy; responsibility for selecting and observing counselors and providing intake for those seeking counseling

Resource – responsibility for inviting leading New Age speakers, visionaries and leaders to share their vision, guidance, prophecies and processes with our community and the entire Contra Costa Community

Bookstore – responsibility for providing Unity literature and related literature which supports the New Age Movement and attracts Contra County Community

Youth Education – responsibility for directing and coordinating all youth education activities including nursery through high school

Synergy School – its administration and curriculum (this department disappeared when Synergy left our grounds in 1978)

Support Staff – those staff necessary to support the work of these departments such as typing, bookkeeping, ministerial assistance

Such a plan took time to weave into the fabric of Unity Center. Of course there was discomfort, not only internally, but also from congregation and observers. Some saw it as a diminishing of the ministry, some saw it as necessary, some saw it for what it was in design and intention. Within a year, the jarring and pulling, the stretching and clarifying, were completed and this plan of operation has continued with expansion and refinement in the years following. Its creation has been a gift which has not only led to internal cohesiveness but has also created an expanded image of Unity Center and its minister in Contra Costa County and the country. Its seeds have had extensive impact and continue to flourish as they are nourished through in house care and continued professional consultation.

Adult Education/Counseling, 1977-1982

Both compartments continued relatively unchanged, their value being their consistency and capacity to maintain a quality program and quality personnel.

In 1977, an Adult Education Philosophy¹ was developed by Reverend Knox and Susan Kopp (Adult Education/Counseling Director) to define the limits of Unity Center's intention as an educational institution; its tendency towards the eclectic needed to be refined and confined. By 1977, an average of 15 classes was being offered each semester and four seminars with approximately 16 different teachers. By 1982, the average remained the same as classroom space and time slots allowed for no more expansion.

¹ A copy of this policy, if not attached as an appendix, is available through the Adult Education Department Director.

A sample of classes by 1982 read

Yoga, Stress Management, Prayer of the Heart Practice, Course in Miracles, Transformational Journey, Keep A True Lent, Relationships, Mysticism, Intuition, Self Healing, Astrology, Metaphysical Bible, Dreams, Spiritual Will, Tai Chi

Although the program had not been able to expand in number, other significant moves besides developing a Philosophy were made, to bring quality and depth during this time of internalization and recollection. In 1978, a core curriculum entitled Creative Metaphysics—Mysticism, was developed by Reverend Knox. It was the seed for the Training For the Life of the Spirit Curriculum which was to come along later. This program sought to provide information in three basic areas of Unity teaching: Principles, history and techniques. Students were encouraged to begin and complete the program in one year and invest three hours of class training a week. This program began with enthusiasm and then sputtered within a year and a half because of difficult in locating committed teachers besides the minister. It was picked up by a team of devoted creators: Jeannette Rothman, Sherry Wilson, Reverend Knox, Pat Renton, and Jan Hauser. After a year's study and development, a complete curriculum entitled Training For the Life of the Spirit was initiated the Fall of 1981. It incorporated four areas of study²: Principles (Spiritual Principles, Metaphysics, Mysticism, Metaphysical Bible, Interdisciplinary Studies, Chakras), Disciplines (Yoga/Tai Chi, Practicing The Presence, Meditation), Implementation (Healing, Prosperity, Relationships), and World Action (Lay Ministry, Volunteering, Ministerial Assistance). This program continues actively, continually upgraded and contemporized, and provides a Certificate of Recognition upon completion. It is important to note that credit was granted through St. Mary's College over a five year period beginning in 1977; and Nursing Credit through the state of California was granted the same year and continues to be available through Unity Center Adult Education programs.

Significant additions in the Counseling Department have also caused quality and depth to expand the possibilities in this area. As Reverend Knox's program of training counselors and giving them an environment in which they could share their talents, certain needs became evident: there was greater need for professionally qualified counselors and policies had to be developed and defined. By 1977, there were 8 full time counselors, 11 apprentice counselors, 3 processors, and 2 biofeedback trainers (biofeedback equipment – EEG, EMG, Thermometer – had been purchased in 1974/1975)...yet none of these were state licensed or professionally trained. The need for more professional counselors came as the result of a department's success – the Unity Counseling Program was being recognized and more and more clients were being recommended from outside sources. Through the vision of Susan Kopp and Sonny O'Toole, it was recommended that the Adult Education/Counseling Directorship be split into two departments, with the Counseling position being directed by a state licensed counselor who could oversee and supervise professional counselors.

This plan was accepted by the Board and minister and implemented in 1979. By 1982, there were 4 professionally licensed counselors on staff as well as 4 Unity counselors, and John F. Kennedy University had contacted our Center to invite us to supervise some of their intern counselors. This program of providing training for intern counselors through John F. Kennedy University continues uninterrupted. It has served Unity Center richly. Finally, a complete policies and procedures manual was developed by 1982 and is upgraded and contemporized as time and circumstance demand.

Resource, 1977 - 1982

The idea of developing a department which would attract leading New Age and related speakers, visionaries and programs was a gift of genius to Unity Center. It continued the process begun by Reverend Knox in 1970, to

² A copy of this program, if not attached as an appendix, is available through the Adult Education Department Director.

have Unity become a spiritual focus for New Thought Consciousness in the Bay Area. Through hiring a director of this department, more time could be devoted to attracting speakers, networking with other organizations to encourage outstanding leaders to come to this area and creating complete programs which would provide a “whole view” of contemporary spiritual ideas.

For instance, in 1979, three programs incorporated around a single spiritual thrust were presented. The first, entitled Communities week, was devoted to explaining the nature of spiritual communities. It featured leaders and groups from Ananda, Briarpatch Network, Synergy School, University of the Trees (Christopher Hills), Solar School of Light and Realization in Minnesota, and Nyingma Institute (Berkeley). The second, held in Spring, explored Health Awareness by inviting health professionals from the Bay Area and featured as well Richard Miles, Betty Beathards and the New Age music of Iasos. The Fall feature week explored Life, Death, After Life – Pascal Kaplan (founder of the Consciousness Studies Program at JFKU), Sig Paulson (noted Unity author and leader), Kathryn Breeze Whiting (founder of the Phoenix Institute in Arizona), and the noted Stanley Kelleman from Berkeley were the invited guests.

In the year 1980, January began with a study of different expressions of LOVE: Dorothy Fadiman (film producer), Betty Bethards, and Ernest Pecci (founder of PSI – Psycho Spiritual Institute and Rosebridge Institute, a graduate school in consciousness studies). Spring featured We Are Caretakers Of Our Planet – again, guests from our area (Mark Mulrone and Sue Phelan from Eco House; Richard Kastl, member of the Osage and Creek tribes; Willis Harman, author of *Incomplete Guide To The Future* and Stanford professor) and recording artist Steven Halpern and Norman Creamer presented as well. Fall featured Reincarnation with Pascal Kaplan and Pam Atkinson.

By 1981, the public response to these intensives was dwindling as people were evidencing a preference for a single evening event and a Saturday intensive. However, in the year 1981 and 1982 two other events which featured a single focus were offered. The first, in January 1981, devoted to Prosperity featured Doug Hooper (by now a weekly, syndicated and nationally recognized feature writer), Wally Minto (author of the Results Book), and Jane and Seth Manning of Growth Seminars. With growing pressure around the idea of peace and the planet a series was offered in Spring, 1982 which featured Theodore Roszak and other Bay Area commentators on this issue.

Before listing the other noted guests, who have appeared at Unity over the six yearperiod, 1977 – 1982, another observation is important. Just as Unity served to assist in the beginnings of JFKU, PSI, Rebirthing and Doug Hooper (as explained in the previous section of Outreach, 1970-1976), so it also served again. Betty Lou Lieber who founded Re-Union (a community which fostered the Miracles, Counseling, celebration, and rebirthing as well as a ministerial training program) which ran from ca. 1979-1986) was a member of Unity during this period, studied at Unity, and formulated many of her organizational and visionary ideas through her association with Reverend Knox. Patricia Sun, who has become noted nationally for her ‘sound,’ teachings and tours for peace to Russia, attended Unity of Walnut Creek in the mid-70’s, registered her son in Synergy School and was interviewed by Reverend Knox on Insights early in her career as well as in 1979. Finally, an important note – long before the Course in Miracles gained the notoriety it has received over the past eight years, its channel, Helen Schucman, visited with Reverend Knox in Reverend Knox’s office where Helen shared her experience, her hopes for the Course, and awe at “how she had been used.”

As the reader can see, Unity has been a ‘stomping grounds’ for exciting spiritual activity. Beginning with a visit from Emmett Fox in the early 1950’s, its vital attractiveness continues. Here is a list of other guests who appeared, according to the year in which they appeared:

1979: Dr. San Augustine, Dr. Hilary Ander (professor at California Institute of Asian Studies), Dr. Vera Freylin (noted psychiatrist and biofeedback trainer)

1980: Dr. Jerry Jampolski, Rolling Thunder, Joel Andrews (harpist), Dr. Jeffrey Mishlove (author and psychic), Judith Skutch and William Whitson (noted leaders in the Course in Miracles revolution), Raymond Vespe (Assistant Professor at JFKU and CIAS), Emmett Miller (stress professional)

1981: Frank Nieman (Dean, GTU), Sun Bear (Chippewa Medicine Man), Dr. Alan Cohen (Professor, JFKU), James Dillet Freeman (writer, author, whose poem "I Am" is on the moon)

1982: Marilyn Ferguson (author, *The Aquarian Conspiracy*), Dan Beaver (Marriage Fantasy), Ralph Metzner (author, *Maps of Consciousness*, and worked with Timothy Leary at Harvard, dean of CIAS), Swami Swananda, Father Thomas Keating, Richard Moss (author of *The I That Is We*), Joseph Chilton Pearce (author, *Crack In the Cosmic Egg, Magical Child*)

Fellowship and Community

Although Unity, by its very origin as evidenced in its Founder's Title, Unity School of Practical Christianity, is an educational religious and spiritual exploration which takes place within one's self, no church body only wants to learn – it also wants to play, sing, dance, discover others, socialize, rejoice, celebrate and share. It is a family, especially in today's society, which wants to meet, gather, eat, as well. Fellowship at Unity expresses in many forms. Many ways have been explored to attempt to knit the Unity Family together. As you will see in the account to follow, it has not been easy and there has been no single charm: the answer, keep listening to the people and attempt to provide those means which will allow them to meet others and share the journey of spiritual evolution. Fellowship begins at Unity on the patio, with coffee, between and after services. It fosters in classes and at lectures and seminars. It is specified at couples, Young at Heart, Youth of Unity, Uniteens, and singles events. It also demands special expressions and calls for celebration at special times of the year – as will be seen in the following.

Socializing

Reverend Knox created a program, Extended Families, in 1976. Using information from the Unitarian Church and integrating Unity Center's needs, it was initiated in a pilot program in the fall of 1975. At a meeting in February, 1976, 125 people attended and from that meeting seven families, each having twenty people, were formed.³ The idea was to gather once a month in private homes, eat together and then share together or play together as the group wished. The idea had power and merit; those who were involved loved the extended families, and in 1986, one of the original families had a ten year reunion gathering. There were also problems: there was not adequate staff to provide "feeders" when a family member left the area, many families did not know what to do at their meetings and needed programming to continue, new families wanted to form – in general, the Center was not prepared to service the idea, so it dwindled, sputtered, and disappeared within two years. Even though the Covenant Community idea appeared in October, 1978, under the Youth Education Department, once again, it was too big an adventure to be fulfilled. The desire for such an opportunity continues to be evident at Unity especially with its unique population (many single parents, upwardly mobile/sophisticated/mid-years adults, uprooted families distant from original families). The Circles formed in the Lay Ministry in the mid-80's may be the again appearing nucleus to fulfill this need.

Besides the formal family attempts, there was also ongoing events to bring the broader Unity family together: Music, Food/Fun/Frolic, Festivals, Retreats, Miscellaneous Others.

Music

³ A copy of this program, if not attached as an appendix, is available through the minister's assistant.

The first choral group was formed at Unity through the efforts of Eleanor Wagar, in November, 1973. Its life was short lived because there was no available music director. However, in 1979, it reappeared as Reverend Knox brought her musical experience back to the fore and directed a Christmas Cantata that year. The enthusiasm and response to the Cantata was so powerful, that a trend developed. Again at Easter/1980, Christmas/1981, and Easter/1982 (i.e. once a year between 1979 and 1982), Reverend Knox again directed and performed in public, with fine performers and musicians from the Center, these musical celebrations.

Besides these choral expressions, the amazing talents of our Sunday soloists have often been highlighted in concerts, as well as drawing upon the talents of other gifted musicians at Unity. In 1975, a concert pianist and soloist presented a dual concert; in 1976, David Brooks directed an all Center talent show entitled David's Dream. In February, 1980, David Brooks collaborated with Renee LeTourneau and Bruce Bly, in a concert; and that August Bruce and Renee joined Becky Reardon in another concert.

Food/Fun/Frolic

In the continuing saga of helping get people together at Unity, another format was developed. What Church group doesn't like to eat together? Often and regularly in our history, we have joined together to eat and share and entertain and be entertained. It began in the parking lot, with ice cream socials and folk dancing in the summers of 1971 and 1972; it has continued with occasional summer 'socials' and volleyball games and a trip to Stinson Beach in April, 1977, and at least once a year family hikes. In 1979 a special program was initiated to encourage families and groups gathering at Unity. Entitled Food/Fun/Frolic, it occurred every third month on a Friday evening, as a potluck followed by a concert. The program continued through July, 1982.

A Men's Prayer Breakfast was initiated in July, 1980 and continued meeting monthly until Fall '82. Its success had been dependent on our Adult Education Director, James McCaughan – on his leaving staff, leadership and inspiration through his male example was not available. Besides these times for eating and feasting, in the late 70's, membership teas were begun and have continued following each membership service.

Festivals

Christmas, Thanksgiving and Easter are special times for celebration at Unity. Activity and enthusiasm heighten, decorations are put out, social agencies for sharing our surplus are contacted, special events take place.

With the exception of 1982 and 1983, a Thanksgiving Eve or Day Service has been held since 1974. Begun by Reverend Knox, since the late '70s, it has been conducted by lay leaders and since 1983, by lay ministers. A Thanksgiving Dinner has been provided through the graciousness of Patt Knox, for those who have no intimate family connections, on Thanksgiving Day since 1979.

Christmas begins December first at Unity. Poinsettias and a Christmas tree "appear" in the sanctuary for the first service in December and remain through New Year's. A Children's Christmas presentation is included yearly whether that comes through their presenting a pageant or Mrs. Claus appearing from the North Pole. A Christmas Concert, whether through our soloists and musicians, a noted guest, or caroling and decorating the tree, or sharing with another tradition (Jewish, Eastern, etc.), has been part of our Christmas celebration since 1975. The first Candlelighting Service was held in Oak Park Chapel in 1970, because there was not enough room at our "inn." Always a beautiful service, it is held yearly and in 1983 called for two services to accommodate the crowd.

Reverend Knox has always provided a Christmas Communion Service, at Christmastime – first offered as a 'midnight mass' in 1970, she presented it as originally described in the Bible: bread and wine are served by sharing with each other and the feet washed if desired. In an atmosphere of music and candlelight, it is a holy, private, and silent event, which changes as the times change in its nature and content – although the theme of internal

prayer never changes. In 1983 this communion service was moved to Christmas day because of the increased number of candlelighting services – on Christmas Day it is even more ‘holy’ and precious. The first Christmas Faire, which included wandering mimes and Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus, children’s games as well as crafts, was held in 1979 – possibly due to overwhelm it was not held again until 1985, but it is gradually becoming a tradition. The first Christmas Banquet, given to honor all who have worked and supported our Center over the year, was initiated by Reverend Knox, in 1981. Held at the Sheraton-Concord, it is a high time of celebrating, dancing and truly enjoying one another in an elegant atmosphere.

New Year’s Eve does not go unheralded. On occasion in the early years it has been a time for Communion. In 1983, the Lay Ministry evidenced an interest in specializing the opportunity for release and new beginnings – a Watchnight Service was initiated and continues yearly, occasionally supported by festivity and dancing.

Easter is celebrated in varying and changing forms as the times draw forth. The Unity Flower Service has often been shared by Reverend Knox on Palm Sunday night; a communion service is usually led on Ash Wednesday, and often on Maunday Thursday (although the Jewish Sater meal is a growing tradition on that same night in connection with the Jewish Passover). Good Friday includes a service between noon and 3:00 and an evening service of music. Usually there is a sunrise service on Easter Sunday, often followed by a breakfast. In 1982, it was necessary to go to three Easter Services and then in 1985, Century Theatre in Pleasant Hill was rented to accommodate the overflow crowd – 1100 attended much to our surprise and delight.

Retreats

Our Center enjoys getting together and getting away together. Through Retreats, we can get away together, pray together, play together, be silent together. Indeed, it is nurturing. With the assistance of an eager group, the first Family Retreat had been organized on campgrounds in Calistoga in 1973. As mentioned before, with the exception of 1977, 1981 and 1986, this Retreat, named the A-May-Zing Retreat in 1976, has continued without fail.

And Retreats have also appeared at other times of the year with other purposes. A silent retreat has held in October, 1975, a Halloween Retreat in October 1977. A first Men’s Retreat took place in September ’79. The Center really stepped into Retreat fever in the early 80s. Women’s Retreats were offered twice a year, usually in Spring and Fall at San Damiano or Mt. Mary Immaculate were offered in addition to the Family Retreat. Unity Center attempts to operate by listening to the pulse and response of its people – in 1985, it was more and more difficult to ‘get’ people to attend Retreats and they became a financial burden and loss. Their importance in the ritual and spiritual life of those pursuing their internality continues to be explored for more dynamic and creative ways to be offered in the years ahead.

Miscellaneous Others

To bring this material on Fellowship and Community to a close, let us make note of other threads that have begun, ended, or continued and given their light into the lives of those we seek to serve at Unity. In 1978, out of her love for animals and through the inspiration of a Unity minister in San Francisco, Reverend Knox designed the first Bless the Beasts Sunday. Much to the board’s consternation, she invited people to bring their animals to the second service, which would be held out doors and there let all the animals be blessed. Music was set up, chairs, a ‘baptismal font’ and the animals came with their ‘masters’ in 1’s, 2’s, 3’s and more: cats, dogs, parakeets, pet rocks, hamsters, gerbils, rats, mice, cockatoos, snakes, etc. No fights, no messes – the Board was filled with glee. In 1980, the service was featured on the front page of the Contra Costa Times. With the exception of 1982 and 1983, the service continues yearly.

The Adventures Project, sometimes known as the Ropes Course, an experience for 20 adults and children, held in the Santa Cruz Mountains, to expose people to the art of vulnerability and communication and cooperation, was

provided by Unity under the leadership of Noel and Carlynn Williams from 1979-1983. The program has become widely known up and down the West Coast. The idea of a Professional Directory appeared again in 1980, and then again in 1983 as the Clarion Conspiracy (a network directory printed three times), and again as a Directory in 1985 and 1986.

The Young At Heart for older adults in our community was resurrected in 1980 and has continued uninterrupted. The Pairs and Spares which had begun in 1973, was given new enthusiasm in 1978 and called the Dynamic Duos – in 1981 its evolution caused it to be called the Couples and in 1986 (after a lapse of five months from meetings since 1978), it was expanded to include the singles and couples by which name it is known. Summer volleyball was initiated in 1982 and appears as requested – it is a favorite sport for ‘Unitics.’ Finally, a custom in Unity Ministries is a Re-Marriage Service. It invites couples to re-consider their marriage vows in a service of music and graciousness. The first one, presented by Reverend Knox in 1974, was so well received it has become a tradition, offered approximately every two to three years, in January, 1974, 1979, 1982, 1985.

Building, 1977-1982

Building the sanctuary and youth education buildings had been exciting, community creating, coagulating, bonding events for our center – so had the redesign of the Counseling Center and purchasing of the corner lot. The Center’s population increased and expanded, and now, as attention moved towards deepening and ‘qualitizing’, as attention turned towards defining and refining who we had become and who we intended to become, the building program followed. It too internalized.

A vision committee was formed in October, 1977. It met through 1978 and presented a report of its findings which indicated the need for expanding the Y.E. Building to allow for more classroom space. However, in drawing plans and designing the addition, our application for a use permit through the City of Walnut Creek was rejected in June, 1979, because of neighborhood resistance to the corner becoming a parking lot. The membership and Board voted, however, to stay at the present site and continue to pursue modification of its buildings. The same year, the large podium was removed from the platform area and the present smaller lectern replaced it; the sound system was moved to a master control unit in the assistant to the minister’s office.

During the years 1980-1982, the Board worked with the architect to explore options on the site: many approaches were taken to answer the problems of adjacent parking which had to be addressed before any addition could be made to the sanctuary. EBMUD was contacted and explorations were made into parking areas nearby, and we were blocked, as crossing the street from an adjacent parking lot was found to be unacceptable. We were informed as well that any entrance to the corner parking lot would cost at least \$150,000.00 to change lanes on Buena Vista and alter street lighting. Don Wolters, our architect, drew a complete re-design which re-oriented the Center seating, created an atrium where the present patio is, added a meditation gazebo, expanded sanctuary seating, and included symbolism from the 12 powers of man concept of Charles Fillmore – but , until more parking could be found, there was little chance for a use permit. Frustration was the name of this time. Steve Cowan, Mike Hesse, Larry Goodman, Mark Noe, Lou Schepel, John Minkler, Reverend Knox, Mike Smith, Ken DeBebre were the leaders as they and their committees walked miles, spent hours in meetings, met with lawyers and county boards and planning commission. No doors opened. All was at stop and wait – fitting with this intense time of internalization.

Recognizing by now, this process could continue a long time, it was apparent the present Center needed to be attended to. Jo Coudray organized a re-design committee and with the efforts of the Brisbons, and Jo Dunning, the carpeting was replaced (from brown to blue), the windows were simplified, the meditation room re-decorated and painted; and an entirely new podium background was designed and built by Jo Dunning using the theme of the flame in the heart as a focal point. The re-design was unveiled and dedicated November 8, 1981 at a special service of gratitude and appreciation.

Reverend Knox, 1977-1982

With the de-centralization of organization from being focused on the minister to being shared with many others, Reverend Knox was gradually being freed from the overwhelming responsibilities of running a ministry which now served approximately 350 people on a Sunday morning, a 4500 person mailing list, a staff of six and all related activities. As it became evident that Directors could carry their responsibilities, Reverend Knox was able to address three important areas: deeper exploration personally into the mystical life/existential despair and courage/and spiritual non duality, completion of her doctoral dissertation, and further extension of her increasingly unique message into the community and even the country. The Board and Staff continually reflected to Reverend Knox their desire for her to relinquish the "at home" responsibilities and step out into the larger world. Throughout her career at Unity of Walnut Creek, the far reaching vision of Board and Staff have encouraged Reverend Knox's uniqueness and nudged her to see herself as "larger" than a local church ministry. They have encouraged her speaking and writing, her travel and exposure beyond the Center's ministry.

In the early to mid-1970's Reverend Knox had served the Regional and National Association of Unity Churches both in heading the Youth of Unity for three years, serving on the National Education Committee, planning the Asilomar Retreat as Vice President of the Region, travelling to Lee's Summit, Missouri, twice a year and speaking at Regional Functions, directing two Unity International Conventions in Kansas City (1970 and 1973). In 1974 and 1978, as a gift from Lou Elliot, a member of Unity, compilations of her Dial-A-Thought Messages had been published in booklets entitled You've Got a Friend and Manna from Stones.

Now, both these areas, speaking and writing, were to gain momentum and expand as Reverend Knox's personal catharsis, transformation and mystical immersion became seeds for an expanded and deepened message - the breadth and depth were working synchronistically. For example, in February, 1978, she was invited to participate in a symposium at St. Mary's college, Moraga. The same year, she was invited to teach a course in Mysticism in the Unity International headquarters in Missouri. In April, 1979, her first article appeared in Unity Magazine; the same month she spoke before the Women's Auxiliary at the Alameda Naval Base and that same year spoke before Parents Without Partners and the Contra Costa county Mental Health Association. She was invited to speak at the International New Thought Conference in Reno, in 1980.

However, with as much activity and branching out, there was still tumultuous work occurring internally, quietly, beneath the ground, relatively unseen by those outside and around Reverend Knox. The mystical immersion was cutting its path, the hunger for recollection and quiet in which she could explore the spiritual heights and depths were demanding all of her attention, the mystical experiences were asking for a new life style. Realizing all these signals called for an abrupt shift in all major patterns, Reverend Knox formally retired from the ministry, as well as her position as minister and leader of Unity Center of Walnut Creek, in June, 1980. She sold her home and, with a friend, sought land for a retreat in the Southwestern United States. The Center began the process of replacing her. However, through the insight of the Board President, Don Olmstead, and the present Board, it was recognized that there might be a way to provide Reverend Knox with the fulfillment of her needs and serve the Center as well. She was asked (within six weeks of her retirement) to keep her position as minister and director of Unity Center of Walnut Creek, but with diminished demand, time, and energy. Reverend Knox, who also recognized her desires and needs might be served in a less dramatic way, accepted the proposal: she would be present at Unity only three days a week, only three weeks a month (unless it was a five Sunday month), and ten months a year, and a portion of her salary would be directed to administrative positions to maintain operations during her absence. This plan was implemented in October 1981. It has continued successfully with one exception - gradually Reverend Knox has returned to more fulltime leadership, returning to a five day week, while retaining the all but one Sunday a month commitment to Sunday ministry (freeing her to travel nationally on these extended weekends) and the two month creative time during the summer.

This new agreement opened up possibilities for both the Center and Reverend Knox. It not only allowed the Center to keep her, it also allowed the Center to expand in the breadth of its message and input. This pulpit would not be reserved for one only, nor one view; it would now be open for varied views, a diversified spiritual exchange; it would become an environment for Eastern and West, Jewish and Catholic, New Age and Unity fundamentalism. A look at the speakers in the Resource section for both the period from 1977-1982 and 1983 to the present [1987], indicates this. Immediately, this change in dynamic showed in the opportunities for Reverend Knox to share her message: Unity in Palo Alto and Modesto (1980), Santa Rosa Center for Positive Living (1981), Seattle (1982), California Institute for Integral Studies, and Santa Rosa Retreat on Gnosticism (both in 1982) [she may have meant 1983]. And, having her return was as good for the Center as it was for her, in mutual appreciation for what they had created together.

It is important to note that in March, 1981, Unity Center of Walnut Creek made a very conscious decision to become its own printing and in a 'sense' publishing house. The Board voted to purchase a \$6,000.00 printing press. Those Sunday lessons, first made available to the public in March, 1971? Well, now they could be combined into books under Reverend Knox's name (which has become by 1986 a \$10,000.00 a year income to Unity Center). The first books to be printed? Unity A Spiritual Path, A Journey Into Faith, Butterflies Are Free. And with this all came a brochure of Reverend Knox's tapes and writings, in the Winter of 1982, which made her message available nationally and in synchronicity with her travels.

General, 1977-1982

To bring this period to a close, let us take a look at some generalizations and figures. During the years 1977 – 1982, in retrospect, it can be seen, the Center had changed dramatically. 1970 – 1976 were years of expansion, years of youth and play, years of 'tripping the light fantastic,' years of family unity and intimacy – all possible as a Unity grows from 20 [to] 200. 1977 – 1982 were years of internalization, years of immigration into the young and bonded family, years of struggle and clarification, years of unification behind a message and stabilizing that message – providing a solid atmosphere and structure in which that message might flourish, years of deepening a message and that message's leader and that leader's team of supporters – providing them with the strength to be their own power in the midst of power, years of questioning that message and testing its validity to prepare for the next expansion, whatever that will be.

During these years, of course the prayer life continues daily at noon day meditation, the mail is blessed as sent and received, and the miraculous is less evident, maybe only less noticed. Many continue to be healed of heart/mind/body/financial life/relationships. The gift of a Gestetner [duplicating machine] in 1970 becomes enough money available to purchase outright a printing press in 1981 and a word processor in November, 1982. A Mortgage Burning Ceremony is held in January, 1979 as the mortgage is paid off on the Sanctuary – the entire original Board is present plus many who helped do the work. Instead of the personalities doing the labor and delighting in their accomplishments, the money is available to pay for the labor – a lot of the personality, the personalness leaves as the center matures and with it, those it serves and the needs it responds to. "something's lost and something's gained by living life, (any) way..." sings the song by Judy Collins. The early outreach of Reverend Knox in the mid-70's becomes a group effort as Unity sponsors a Berkeley Outreach led for Kat Leland between 1980 and 1981. Vallejo springs up again under Joan Snider – but there isn't the support system or leadership training to allow these to survive...that must be addressed and it will be in 1983. The question now will be: how can a Center, whose heart is expansion, expand in the confines of a limited building, while holding an explosive vision. The answer – a creative spirit.

Figures

January, 1977: 50 new visitors, 39 biofeedback, 2319 bulk mail, 225 counseling appointments, Income, \$16,203; Building Fund, \$3,775.81

April, 1978: 200 counseling appointments, biofeedback, 21, Income, \$15,798.26, Building Fund, \$6,130

May, 1979: 192 counseling appointments, 35 biofeedback appointments, Income, \$15,719, Building Fund, \$13, 120

May, 1980: Income \$15,564.97; Building Fund, \$3075.87

May, 1981: Income, \$17, 187.17; Building Fund, \$398.00

May, 1982: Income, \$18,238.38; Building Fund, \$1428.90

Ripening, 1983-1987

As grapes age, their wine becomes more desirable. As material goods survive, their value increases. As ideas gel in the minds of their recipients, their truth inspires. As organizations substantiate their existence, they are recognized as survivors. As people accept themselves and life, they are called wise and others want to know how they 'got that way.'

Such processes were happening at Unity Center. In the early years, Unity was unknown and unrecognized and unthreatened...something to be watched, maybe they will – maybe they won't. In the adolescent years, their potential was realizing, the arms of resistance (those factors which can cause doubt and diminish realization) became apparent, the stresses of growth were evident. Can the small, knowing everyone family make room for those who want "it" too; can the followers become leaders without destroying the leader; can the leader release power and share it while seeing the fruits of such action; can the natural human desire to topple success in order to make room for itself be served and transformed; can the petty human jealousies and gossips, contrived from self depreciation, be elevated into creativity so growth can continue? All these issues were being addressed beneath ground. Their answers are seen in the evident: the organization did survive creatively, the leader did survive and change and let go; those who did stay found a place for meaningful expression and sharing the creation; and continually more dynamic leadership channeled into the operations.

It is said that most churches are treated by their minister as if they were sixth graders. This includes the manner in which they are taught, the assumption about "what they can take," the relationship between them and the minister, and what they expect from the minister and the church family. At Unity Center of Walnut Creek:

- The minister does not know more than the community – she shares a mutual path of unfolding spiritual awareness
- The minister is an equal and a contemporary working out her process along with everyone else
- The minister is not a god or parent, but a human seeking the transcendent, molding the transformative out of the dust of everyone else
- The minister is 'doing the work' of the spirit in the 'real' world, making a living, walking through crises, pointing out the apparent, reveling in the awe of life, falling in the leap, playing in the obvious, hurting in the struggle, dancing in the darkness along with everyone else
- The minister is not the elevated host, not the anthropomorphic God – she is you and I and any attempts to elevate her will result in a broken graven image designed in the mind of the seer, not in the seen

This is a definition of the New Age leader/minister/human. Just as Unity, Religious Science, Divine Science and their related New Thought sibling philosophies took God out of the sky and invited everyone to discover It within, so they have designated their minister/leaders: "The Spirit is within you, I will help you find it there; I may be an example for now, but I will only teach you to turn within, not to me...not to me."

Many struggle with this image. They are still looking for the parent/pastor who will lick their wounds, nurture their need for sympathy and attention, take over their inadequacies and insecurities, continue to tie their spiritual shoes...perpetuate their helplessness and dependency. New Age ministers and leaders are trained in a different way...they are trained to believe in you, the Spirit and its dynamic power in you

...they believe you can do 'it' yourself

...they will not give you a fish but teach you how to fish

...they show the beauty behind the veil and encourage you to taste it but they know they cannot force you through guilt or manipulation or drinking it for you

...they believe the church belongs to the people and it is the people's to save through their commitment to Principle first and then to their action

...they are inclined to ask more, 'what are you doing internally' than 'what are you doing for others.'

"Something's lost and something's gained by living life (any) way..." yes. A Unity ministry consequently has a self-defeating nucleus – strengthen the people to believe in themselves and they will not need the church. Let the people continue once they know who they are because they make a commitment to continuing the church for those who it will serve in the days and years to come. As a result the Unity minister will not appear at every party, every function to keep the 'thing' going – the people's response keeps what is to continue going. And where does love and nurturing come from? Within is the answer. Caring is loving people into loving themselves, discovering themselves – believing in themselves without taking responsibility or making them dependent. Caring and loving is watching from afar as people find their own way, cut their own path, make their own mistakes, discover fitting guilt, ask their own forgiveness. The minister teaches and watches, prays and releases, loves and bites their nails in hoped-for-fulfillment for those she tenders.

From this comes a new kind of commitment, a new kind of leadership: a leadership which knows itself, which provides new and exciting ideas, which assists in carrying the burden, which has made a commitment as well to their indwelling Christ, who carries their spiritual self silently inside and emanates it into the world unrecognized in most instances, who walks with the minister in a co-creative act removed from the parent/child-authority/server relationships. This is the New Age man/woman standing arm and arm equally.

A final recognition. From out of all the colors given expression at Unity Center of Walnut Creek, beginning in 1977, directly as a result of Dr. Knox's personal experience, a deep magenta began protruding its way into the center, whose color would tinge all others – that color, commitment. In 1977, Reverend Knox had made a personal commitment to practicing being present with the awareness of God twenty-four hours a day; without proof or results, she knew it was essential to her growth and survival. The commitment and courage of that commitment had led to mystical experiences, integration and transformation. Naturally, this would begin to ooze its way into the whole life of Unity Center. With the vastness of the building plan, set forth in 1985, it became obvious to the Board and now Dr. Knox that no venture such as this could occur without commitment to Unity Center specifically. A non-profit organization must be able to rely on those who have made a decision to stop and stay at this spiritual well, rather than continuing to get up and perpetuate the youthful position of continually looking for something better. As a result, in Sunday lessons, in membership preparation, in adult education classes geared towards Unity Principles, that which had so deeply impacted Dr. Knox internally in 1977, as a spiritual action, now began to externalize itself into the community, as a call for commitment. As a result, those who were still looking for an easier life, those who had hoped Unity was a place to wander into and out of (as it still must be along with all other organizations) were more inclined to hear the word of commitment as an essential activity in the life of the Spirit. Those who came and stayed were now present from an entirely different view than in the

past and were bound to nurture the Center in more expansive expressions. Having drawn this picture, let us take a look at the movements made since 1983.

Adult Education/Counseling, 1983-1987

Solid as the rock of Gibraltar, these departments. Adult Education continues to attract outstanding teachers from the Bay Area. Applications to teach far surpass those available spots for teaching. Selections are made on the basis of a course's fitting with the purpose and intention of Unity Center, the focus of the term. The Fall term of 1986 had 21 classes as space was made available when the Counseling Center moved to its own quarters. In Winter, 1986, Don Garofalo, Adult Education Director, had initiated a lecture series which proved successful – in an attempt to create more community feeling at Unity, Winter-1987, led to using the lecture series and meditation service as a focus of people's sharing and enjoying fellowship in an atmosphere of music, playing games and eating food each Wednesday night. In the Fall, 1986, Training For The Life of the Spirit was featured as a one year program leading to a Certificate of Recognition in June – twenty eight made a commitment to participate which resulted in an intimate experience in study and fellowship, nice icing on the cake for learning.

Counseling continues to prosper not only in income but also in those who serve and those who are served. Gradually, the staff is almost entirely professionally licensed or apprentice counselors preparing to become so state certified. The Counseling Director, Miriam Sexton, supervises her staff, providing guidance and support, and keeping them contemporary with the newest techniques, policies, and Center goals and purpose. The synchronicity between Unity Center and the Counseling Center is well orchestrated. With the excitement of finally finding a separate facility that could house the counselors and apprentices and interns, in the Fall of 1986, the threads of connection had to be clearly stated. Arrangements were made to join both staffs once a month in prayer, to meet with the Unity administrator weekly at the Counseling Center, and to continue having the interns serve Unity by doing intakes and providing volunteer assistance. It is our combined hope that with more room and staff, as well as support groups, and a separate facility, the Counseling Program will double in services and income by 1988.

Resource, 1983-1987

Resource is another solid expression at Unity. Between 1983 and 1984, under the direction of Susan Galvan, who was also affiliated with JFKU, the entourage of New Age speakers and visionaries poured through Unity Center, sometimes in affiliation with JFKU programs. Also during those years, it was seen that that response to some of these programs was diminishing and maybe the public was doubting the tendency towards faddism and "quickie McDonald's" cures. In 1985, as Susan Galvan, now leader of the Lay Ministry, turned more of her attention to JFKU and left the employ of Unity, a conscious action was taken to diminish the time and energy devoted to seeking and procuring guests. However, the tide could not be held back – this expression at Unity had become too inbred. In 1986, Esther Reidenbach, hired as a private contractor, began the search and create mission, and Resource exploded again.

1983: Dr. Pelletier ("Mind as Healer-Mind as Slayer" – Gladman Clinic), Dr. Meir Schneider (wholistic health professional), Robert Bly (poet), Eknath Easwaran, Paul Solomon (New Age leader from North Carolina)

1984: Michael Murphy (co-founder of Esalen), Steven Halpern (musician), Doug Boyd (author and compatriot to Rolling Thunder), Arnold Patent (Prosperity/Abundance author and teacher), Kenneth Ring (author, "Life After Death – A Scientific Investigation"), Joan Halifax (Shamanism), Reshad Field (Sufi), Patricia Sun

1985: Dr. John Broomfield (President, California Institute Integral Studies), Peter Caddy (founder, Findhorn)

1986: Ramtha tapes, Lecture Series: Pascal Kaplan, Daniel Ellenberg, Neal Fiore, Moshe Kroy, Wally Minto (success dynamics), Kevin Reyerson (spiritual guide for Shirley McClaine), Hugh Prather (author), Dr. Emmet Miller (author, stress reduction), Robin Norwood (author, "Women Who Love Too Much"), Jack Schwarz (author, New Age leader), Dan Milman (author, "The Peaceful Warrior"), Doug Boyd

1987: Jack Schwarz, Terry Cole Whitaker (author, New Age leader), Dr. Carl Simington (cancer therapist), Patricia Sun, Liliias (noted teacher of Yoga)

Fellowship and Community, 1983-1987

Throughout this period Couples, Singles, Young at Heart, Youth Programs remain consistent and constant. However, that gnawing desire to fulfill more needs in a more effective way caused Dr. Knox to invite a group of Unity Center leaders to come together to once again address the issue of serving this burgeoning community. Approximately fifteen met in February and then went out to do research in the area, to explore how needs were being served in the community and what additional or equal services needed to be addressed by our Center, if any (year, 1983). The results were published in Centerpoint.⁴

Based on these results, the Contra Costa Job Forum was initiated, but the need for such a resource lasted only six months. Free Legal Service was offered for a year, and tax advice has been offered free since 1985. In music, a Choral Ensemble, under the direction of Kris Harper, presented a musical performance in Spring, 1983. A music committee was formed to bring regular musical performances to the Center – concerts were arranged which included Bruce Bly/Renee LeTourneau and Marshall Summers, an Indian Troupe, a series by Rudi Harst, a recorder quartet and cellist. In 1984 at Christmas and 1985 at Easter, Margaret Leach directed two different cantatas; in 1985 at Christmas and 1986 at Easter, Larry St. Regis brought his talents to the Center and led two different cantatas.

Three other major attempts were made to blend our Community together: the Family Service, Fellowship Breakfast, and bringing children to Church Service. The Family Service was designed to appeal to the Family unit – although led by Reverend Knox and Lay Ministers, it did not catch and ran from November, 1983 through April, 1984 (at which only four attended). The Fellowship breakfast gathered from November, 1983 through February, 1985 – however, attendance gradually dissipated at this function as well, and did not merit the extensive staff and volunteer time required to serve ten people. Having the children at the 9:30 service each Sunday was a wondrous idea – and gradually the parents and the children made it clear they did not want it: after a sixteen month run, the Youth Education Director recommended this practice, and it was. The idea of a Welcoming Table, initiated by the Lay Ministers in May, 1983 has served well and provided our visitors with warmth as well as information – gratefully it continues.

This area of Unity Center continues to be questioned by congregants, Lay Ministers, Minister, Board, Staff. The unbiased reader will see that no area of the Center has drawn greater attention, and yet it continues to struggle along, questioning why it does not attract a crowd for its various events, which are well thought out, well planned, well choreographed, well publicized (more so than most other events). Through Lay Ministry efforts in the Spring of 1986, Gary Schlagenhaut and Richard Miles made another attempt to explore this issue and the result may have become the development of Circles in the Lay Ministry...and yet, this only serves the Lay Ministers. A Family/Community Committee was named, upon recommendation of Dr. Knox, by the Board, in the Fall, 1986 – this too may be an avenue to finally find the key to Community at Unity.

What is sought? A means to gain the small family feeling in a large, fast moving society – whether that can be in the world in general or at Unity Center specifically. The peculiar noticeable thread: the majority are not

⁴ Copy attached.

interested in expanding the demands already made on their lives and are fulfilled in other ways – they come to Unity for a message and inspiration, wish to remain anonymous, are tired of church involvement and the politics which tend to come with it, and seek rest in their sanctuary rather than pressure to produce and keep one more thing going or attending one more activity. And for those who seek more of a community atmosphere, it continues to be discovered and shared through the many attempts which continue to manifest as new personalities appear and share their visions and hopes in this area of Unity Center.

Lay Ministry, 1983-1987

Recently, Dr. Knox was asked by a Board president, “Wherever did the idea for the Lay Ministry come from?” Her answer, “A lot of pressure and a moment in meditation.” In having the opportunity to serve a church for a long period of time, a minister can watch and feel the pulse of a ministry from a ‘distant view.’ After working within the community in Walnut Creek for twelve years, she observed:

- (1) Many people came to Unity in need, developed their self awareness and strength, and then left without having a place for deeper service within the community that had “raised” them
- (2) Already Dr. Knox was overextended and now she was being encouraged to expand her ministry nationally – there was need for more people to visit the ill and counsel the needy
- (3) As the Center expanded in intention and possibility for expression, there were more and more areas needing service, i.e. outreach study groups (nucleus for new Centers), midweek service, extra services during holiday seasons, and filling in the spaces to provide stop gaps for ongoing needs
- (4) Dr. Knox had continually expressed that everyone is a minister, and many people wanted an opportunity to be trained in the skills of ministering, i.e. pray with others, speak in public, function in crisis, lead and facilitate others

In the Fall of 1982, Reverend Knox prepared the program; its design, its organization, its content, its implementation. The Board formally approved it in November, 1982 with some trepidation as to how this ‘unwieldy’ group might be supported. The first “class” which called itself the Clarion Conspiracy, number[ed] 50, and completed its training in February, 1983; following a nine month apprenticeship during which the apprentice lay ministers took more intensive training, began ‘in service projects,’ took over the midweek service, began the Welcoming Table, started Convalescent Home Sunday services, and initiated the Unity on the Delta study group. 47 were confirmed on October 20, 1983. The power and potential unleashed! This group was inspiring, the assistance and love they gave the minister was invigorating, the gifts they shared with many others through their love and presence were deeply appreciated by the many whom they visited/counseled/prayed with.

Each year since (30 in 1984, 50 in 1985, 47 in 1986) a new class (or wave as they have called themselves) is trained by Dr. Knox for three reasons: people at Unity are always seeking the training, people do move on, and/or serving does take a toll. The Lay Ministry has enriched, enhanced, as well as given to Unity Center, its programs and dreams, its vision and its hopes. It has nourished a tour-de-force of leaders; it has provided a strong and loyal opposition which ultimately strengthens the ministry; it has developed its own personality and intention separate from and yet united with the ministry. The Lay Ministry has completed its youth and is presently living out gaining its own sense of self. In the process, it has doubted and questioned, yet continued to serve and survive so it might fulfill its original mission of service.

Its gifts to Unity are remarkable, although many Unity congregants are probably unaware: leading midweek services, opening Sunday morning services, assisting in fundraising, developing a Peace Committee, visiting in the homes and hospitals, investigating developing a Graduate Program in spiritual education, providing rides and special services, providing crisis care, visiting Convalescent Homes, directing Sunday morning services at Convalescent Homes, research and development, opening Unity on the Delta and providing a supply ministry for

Unity in Mt. Shasta, servicing on Center Committees and the Board, creating and ministering at Special Holiday Services, greeting and assisting on Sunday mornings, and managing their own organization.

The Lay Ministry has not only service Unity Center, it has also become more than an individual opportunity for the center. Without even realizing it, Dr. Knox had not only designed a program to suit this Center, but had also designed one which began to attract interest from other Unity Center nationwide. First, by word of mouth, interest was expressed. Then, Dr. Knox was invited to share the pilot program at the Minister's Conference at Lee's Summit, Missouri, in June, 1985. Following that introduction, more and more ministers wanted the program. As a result, during the summer, 1985, Dr. Knox wrote two manuals, one a Leadership Manual, the other a Student Manual. In December, 1985, she was invited to present this program to Religious Science ministers at an area Conference in San Jose – a number of those ministers or their representatives took the training with Dr. Knox in February, 1986 to bring it back into their churches. To date, ministries in the following cities have implemented the pilot program of Dr. Knox: Bellevue/Wa, Portland/Or, Reseda/CA, Colorado Springs/Co, Royal Oak, Mi, Santa Barbara/Ca, San Francisco/Ca, Stockton/Ca and Auburn/Ca. As well, ministries in the following areas have procured manuals and are using the ideas to some degree: Huntington Beach, San Luis Obispo, Santee, Ventura, San Diego, California; Muskeegan, Minnestoa; Livonia and Pontiac, Michigan; Huntington, Long Island, New York; LeMay, Missouri; Kenosha, Wisconsin; Peoria, Illinois; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Nashville, Tennessee; Brooklyn, New York; Delray Beach, Florida; Cincinnati, Ohio; Hamilton, Ontario, Canada; Mesa, Arizona; Charleston, South Carolina. It was in February 1987 that Dr. Knox was asked to present this pilot program to all the ministers in the Southern California Minister's Conference, as their required Post Graduate Course. Indeed, this idea, now become a pilot program, has flourished and served thousands nationally.

Unity on the Delta

One of the most successful results of the Lay Ministry program has been the success of an outreach of Walnut Creek Unity. Up to this point in time, as already noted, no outreach of our Center had survived, stood on its own two legs and walked. Leadership is so important, a kind of devotion, personal belief in oneself, and zest for the challenge of the ministry. That is what Mary Bruns has brought to Unity on the Delta. Vallejo had barely struggled under Reverend Pierre Gallardo in 1974-1975, and then it had bumped along and stopped – it had a brief revival in 1981; Berkeley had high hopes under the guidance of Kate Leland in 1980, but petered out in 1981 – it too had a brief revival, in 1985 which had not gained any 'legs.' There is no question that Vallejo, Berkeley, Dublin, are fertile ground for this Walnut Creek ministry to develop – TandT under the kind of devotion and commitment of someone like Mary Bruns, they absolutely can give birth and grow.

Mary began Antioch Unity (then called) in May, 1983. She found Citicorps Bank willing to provide free space for a mid-week meditation and class. The group "chugged" along, meeting regularly, supported through the umbrella of Unity Centers – its staff, Board and minister. Within a year and a half, the group began Sunday services, early enough so participants could attend both Walnut Creek and Antioch services. A few classes were added, lay ministers from Walnut Creek assisted with chairing and Youth Education. Then, gradually numbers grew into the twenties and it was realized they might move to larger quarters. In the Fall of 1985, they rented space in downtown Antioch, changed their hours to 10:30 Sunday mornings, and called the work, Unity on the Delta. With all growth comes its joys and sorrows, idealists and drones, attempts to expand and disappointment. Unity on the Delta is learning to become its own entity, making its break from the mother (Dr. Knox and Unity of Walnut Creek), deeply engaged in its youth. It has the commitment of its leader, of Dr. Knox, and Walnut Creek Unity.

Building, 1983-1987

If frustration and disappointment were the theme of 1977-1982, they have continued with increased intensity. Only those who have worked inside could know the attempts, the cast fishing lines well baited with no bite, the

council meetings, the phone calls, the contacts, the errors by the County and City, the incredibly slow moving gears of environmental impact reports and use permits which gradually spend the money and worse, spend human energy, making it difficult to keep on – and we have. Here are the particulars.

In 1983, the Board announced that a new architect had been procured, John Kernikl, a member of Unity Center. Don Wolters, our previous architect who had worked with us after his selection in 1978, found himself needing to give time to other projects, and Hernickl was chosen through due process, by the Board, to continue on. John worked with Wolters' designs, adding a third building to house additional classroom and counseling space, and the Board brought it to the city, who requested further alterations in the plan, including finding tandem parking and implying our land might be overbuilt. At this time, two homes bordering our property came up for sale. We explored purchasing them to provide more space on our present land and fulfill our vision. Within two months, \$22,000.00 was raised outright and \$6,000.00 in pledges for the purchase of these homes. The middle home was purchased and became a rental home at no loss to the Center monthly. The second house was taken off the market by the seller who then sued the Center, claiming we had backed out; after two years of legal allegations, the Center's negligibility was cleared and lawyer's fees were found to be payable through our insurance and were returned in full in December, 1986. The purchased house was sold, the Center breaking even financially, in July 1986, as the Center had become deeply involved in the Alamo property by this time.

Having done its footwork, research, and preparation, a complete re-design plan for our present property was brought before the city in Spring, 1985.⁵ It was totally rejected by the Planning Commission, and finally all hope to expand on our present site came to a halt. Seven years of envisioning, planning, had produced an answer: NO. Immediately the Board voted to locate another site and move from our present site upon completion of a new project (May, 1985). Property on Old Danville Highway, which had been observed for a year and a half by Dr. Knox and Mike Hesse, became available, and the Center's offer was accepted: six acres lining Walnut Creek itself, directly accessible to Highway 680, attractive and large enough. Immediately, John Hernickl, architect, and Santini and Thompson, engineers, were contacted to prepare a site plan fulfilling the Center's needs; a fund raising program was initiated by Dr. Knox and directed by long time member and lay minister Bonnie Daniel. The response was eager – by November, 1985, \$30,084.43 in outright gifts and \$123,700 in pledges had been guaranteed. The process for procuring environmental acceptance and a use permit was three months underway. By February, the total income towards the project was \$40,000.00 in outright gifts from 185 contributors and \$162,000.00 in commitments from 129 pledges. It was obvious that more commitment was needed to complete what was now being seen as a two million dollar project, and in March an outside firm was hired to assist while the environmental study continued. Within three months, an additional \$400,000.00 in outright gifts and pledges from 102 contributors was raised – in ten months \$600,000.00 in gifts from over 400 contributors had been raised, a sound beginning.

And the process continues. Frustrating. By January, 1987, the environmental report and use permit were still being bandied about by the County, even though the homework is well choreographed by Unity Center representatives. Meanwhile, the Counseling Department has moved to its own quarters on Oak Grove Road, a third service led by Lay Ministers Patty and Wally Summers, has been added providing room for Youth Education and Sunday attendance – ultimately our only need, space to serve, is being taken care of in strange and marvelous (?) ways. No doors are closed – all possibilities sit in waiting, researched and developed, until the right combination “clicks.” It is important for the casual reader to realize that the finest in Unity's talents have been used to address these issues – lawyers, real estate developers, builders, bankers, visionaries, drones, consultants, architects, the minister have spent hours, days, weeks working in the practical, nitty-gritty business of attempting to build. This is a highly complex issue in a highly complex time and social environment. We act and wait, trusting the Divine Intention moving in these events.

⁵ Copy attached.

Reverend Knox, PhD, 1983-1987

1983 is the year Reverend Knox became Dr. Knox, as a PhD in intercultural philosophy and religion with a major in East/West Psychology was confirmed on July 3, 1983 by the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco. Ten years earlier, Dr. Knox had begun, her dissertation, The Prayer of the Heart: A Method of Transformation, had been accepted, and consequently her life was to change – her desirability expanded and her notoriety. Within six months, her ministry reached out of Walnut Creek into Canada and across the United States. The Prayer of the Heart and the Mystical Consciousness was a fresh idea in the Unity movement, and wherever she went, the response said her particular ‘brand’ of spirituality had appeal and was wanted.

The first Prayer of the Heart Workshop was offered at Unity Center of Walnut Creek in March, 1983 – it was to become the model for those shared across the country in the years to come. It was this year that Dr. Knox began leading tours to major spiritual points of interest around the world, as well. The first, in April 1983, visited the Pyramids as well as Luxor and Karnak Temples in Egypt, Jerusalem and the Sea of Galilee in Israel, and The Oracle At Delphi in Greece. The main intention of each of these tours has been to give seekers a chance to see and experience their roots and awaken new channels for their own spirituality through the inspiration and breadth of vision and perspective which can only come from travel. Also in 1983, Dr. Knox made two major presentations – one before the Walnut Creek Community Center and the other before the Mind/Body/Spirit Exposition in San Francisco – also regular appearances on KPFA with Will Nofke’s Shared Visions began. Dr. Knox was also named to two Graduate School Boards: Rosebridge in Walnut Creek and CIIS in San Francisco. It was also this year that Dr. Knox initiated a major Peace effort. In a lesson entitled Mandate For Peace, Dr. Knox encouraged an attitude of internal peace as one went about pursuing their particular way for seeking peace to be expressed on the planet; it was recognized that one person might be resisting in front of Lawrence Livermore Labs while another might be designing a bomb within those very Labs, and yet both might be actively involved in what they considered to be a means for establishing peace on earth. She offered an also as a prayer, called the Prayer for Peace which she invited the Unity Community to engage in continuously and especially at 7 AM, 12 Noon, and 7 PM daily.

The Prayer of Peace is: HOLY SPIRIT, EVERYWHERE PRESENT, I BEHOLD LOVE IN ME AND SHARE IT WITH ALL LIFE AND ALL HUMANITY.

Dr. Knox then wrote to over 200 nations internationally and invited the leaders to share this possibility with their people, that we might unit in continuous prayer effort daily and periodically. Responses were received from approximately one eighth of those she contacted. In the meantime, the Prayer of Peace has been translated into four other languages, it is being distributed by the Peace Committee as a regular activity of their committee, it has been carried by Dr. Knox’s tours into India, China, Japan, and Russia; in 1987, it will be taken into Peru. The card has been requested by numerous other groups around the nation to be shared with their communities, and every Unity Center has been presented with the idea as well, through Dr. Knox’s invitation. This idea is a beginning, a small one; there is little doubt but that ideas such as the World Instant of cooperation held on December 31, 1986, at 12 Noon Greenwich meantime, rings from similar ideas such as these moving in the minds of humanity worldwide. Peace is an idea whose time seems more full than ever before: our issue, how we shall grope with allowing peace to manifest here on Earth.

1984 was the year that the Prayer of the Heart workshops “took off.” Beginning in Vancouver, British Columbia, in January, 1984, Dr. Knox returned for a repeat performance in May that year. Then Clearwater/Florida, Honolulu and Kona/Hawaii, Olympia/Washington, and Cap Code/Massachusetts invited this presentation at their churches where Dr. Knox would speak at the Sunday Service and then present the workshop Sunday afternoons and Monday evenings. In this same year The Incredible Journey, Love/Loved/Loving were printed and released by Unity’s Printing Press. As well, the first issues of Heartline, a quarterly bulletin designed to

keep those using the Prayer of the Heart connected with the process, its long term effects, questions and doubts, its tests and conflicts was released. Heartline is now printed twice a year and sent to over 1,000 people.

1985 Dr. Knox was named in Who's Who of American Women, presented Prayer of the Heart workshops in Minneapolis, Olympia, Sacramento, Houston, Seattle and was also invited to present the Lay Ministry Pilot Program at the annual Minister's Conference in Lee's Summit, Missouri. That same year a booklet entitled Metaphysical Bible and one entitled The Prayer of the Heart were published by Unity Center of Walnut Creek, and a tour to India/China/Nepal/Japan was guided, visiting such places as the Ganges River, Buddhist Temples and other spiritual power spots. 1986 saw the continuation of Prayer of the Heart Workshops in Sacramento, Mt. Shasta, Spokane and Albuquerque and at the Minister's Conference in San Diego, plus the addition of a workshop on Transformation in Seattle. But the demand increased now for her assistance in initiating the Lay Ministry Program as she was invited to Colorado Springs, Royal Oak Michigan, and Santa Barbara California. In Royal Oak she assisted in confirming their first class of Lay Ministers after their apprentice period, as well as the Prayer of the Heart Workshops. As well The Path of God was published by Unity Center and a trip to Russia was led taking people to the pilgrimage at Zagorsk and Eastern Orthodox Churches in Leningrad, Kiev and Moscow where the Prayer of the Heart has been revitalized as an activity of spiritual development in this century. Although in 1986, Dr. Knox was invited to make a major move by ministering in Seattle, Washington, she and the Board renewed their commitment to her ministering in Walnut Creek and her ministry beyond Walnut Creek, by developing a three year contract which included a major salary package and benefits which would provide for a pension (the first time in sixteen years such considerations had been cared for).

1987 looks to trips to Auburn/California for the Lay Ministry Program initiation, and then to Houston/Austin/San Antonio Texas, Stockton California, San Luis Obispo, Palo Alto, and San Francisco, California for the Prayer of the Heart Workshops. Besides the invitation to provide the postgraduate studies for the Southern California Minister's Conference in February, Dr. Knox will also teach a class in The Mystic Consciousness at JFKU.

General, 1983-1987

As the Center grows, the staffing needed to supply its many services necessarily increases. By the mid 80's, staff now included the following:

Administrator – to oversee and manage the entire operation and its staff

Assistant to the Minister – to operate all areas related directly to the ministry

Adult Education Director – to direct by procuring and causing to have form all classes and teachers

Resource Director – also known as Special Events, to seek speakers and events which will expose Unity Center to new ideas

Counseling Director – to oversee the incoming counselees and supervise counselors

Publications Director – to oversee all printing/publishing/mailing/graphics

Bookstore Manager – to operate the bookstore and manage the volunteers

Youth Education Director – to direct the family/youth program

Support Staff – bookkeeper, typists, computer programmer, addressograph operator, printer, custodian

...as well as the Sunday morning employees including: organists, soloists, lay minister leaders for the 8:30 service, bookstore operators, and parking attendant. Volunteers who function in major positions of responsibility include our Sunday morning video and audio production and reproduction staff, our Sunday morning assistants, our lay leaders who open each service, our Sunday service chairmen, greeters, rental library manager, collators and binders, mailing list manager, Sunday lesson mailer, new guest letter writer, bookstore receptionists.

Major occurrences have included the gift of a high speed tape duplicating machine, the purchase of a heavy duty copier (\$3,000.00), a computer (\$5,000.00) and a Printing Press (\$10,000.00). A piano was given for long term loan in April of 1985. In June, 1985, Unity returned to Cable Television, this time on Televents, Channel 19, out of Martinez. Every week since, the Sunday service is presented in an altered format to include the solo, the lesson, and a time for meditation; it runs for one hour. Both in 1985 and 1986, consultants have been hired to assist in bringing more effective systems and operations, to allow Unity Center to leave its "Momma/Poppa" atmosphere and step into more professional organization. The consultants have served and assisted in this process of expansion and growth.

The responsibility of management always is to keep an organization healthy and abreast of the times, its information, management ideas, its technology and implications for the future. Unity is doing that work as it attempts to bring the vast issues of spirituality, into the present systems that will allow it to share its powerful ideas in an atmosphere of loving support. At the same time the recognition that providing a place in which people may find and love each other becomes increasingly important in the speed and stress of today's present age. It is recognized that building a feeling of community and commitment calls for an atmosphere which nourishes coming together and bonding as well as teaching and learning. It is Unity's intent, as expressed by its Board of Directors and its minister, that we keep current in management and organization as well as keep the past through our symbolical and religious heritage. As well, we will allow for the new which appears in the minds of humanity to thread its way intelligently into the sinew of our message.

Figures

May, 1983:	Income, \$24, 217.15; Building Fund Income, \$868.00
May, 1984:	Income, \$29,536.40; Building Fund Income, \$251.25
May, 1985:	Income, \$37,778.61; Building Fund Income, \$1439.90
May, 1983:	Income, \$30,189.00; Building Fund Income, \$20,206.87