

Groups at UUCB

This section is a potpourri of groups. There are individual descriptions of groups, a list of groups that existed at a specific time, and individuals remembering one or more groups.

Bona Fide Organizations and Their Chairpersons in 1986

Awards Committee—Ann McDonald	Book Table—Norman Hutchings & Susan Toth
Buildings & Grounds—Jon Ehlers	Canvass—Jess Blackstone
Caring Circle—Geneva Gates & Harriett Nelson	Celebrations Committee—Judith Trice
Endowment Committee—Leevern Johnson	Family Focus—Grego & Jody Kosinski
Finance Committee—Alex Holt	Flower Table Committee—Carrol Card White
Forum—Jane Luckham	Freestone Committee—Gertrude Hall
Futures Committee—Cal Baze	Isle of U—Mary Dewey & Jean Lipton
Landscapers—Russell Beeson & Gertrude Hall	Lawrence Lecture Committee—Larry Berger
Literature Group—Barbara Smith	Membership Committee—Orpha Gibson & Beryl Bates
Mental Health Group—Fern Labuhn	Ministerial Relations—Jeanne Loomer
Music Committee—Jane Vander Veer	Peace Committee—Evelyn Johnson
Personnel Committee—Jean Lipton	Radio Committee—Cal Herrman & Erda Labuhn
Religious Education Committee—Ira Nelken & Helynna Brooke	Sanctuary Committee—Sandy Hunter
Singles—Joan Swift	Social Action Network—Sheila Kennedy
Unitarian Connection 20s–40s—Meme Wittig	UU Center—Barbara Back
UU Concerns—Phyllis McKeeman	World Hunger Concerns—Jane Luckham

(This list was approved by the Board of Trustees; Have filed officers' names and addresses with the Board; main officers and most of the membership are affiliated with the church, and are under no other jurisdiction than this church.)

Abraxas

by Grace Ulp

Abraxas, called the “Congregation of Abraxas” by the UUA, was a group of ministers and lay people interested in the form, art, and experience of worship. In size, small (never more than 40 financial supporters); in clout, less than they hoped.

They gathered at a time when the UUA was growing its membership through Fellowships, mostly lay-led, with in some cases a lack of experience in providing worship services for their members. The famous “hymn sandwich” was a problem for seekers of worship: fill out an hour with a 50 minute lecture on anything between the atom bomb and the philosophy of God Is Dead, plus a hymn before and after.

The group started out publishing a “Worship Reader”: essays in worship theory from Von Ogden Vogt to the UUA Commission on Common Worship. They held discussions at the UUA General Assemblies, and provided retreats for those interested after the Assembly closed.

A group on the west coast (Abraxas West) published “Rite of Religion”: a booklet about the experience of worship, and “Book of Hours,” material for the worship services at retreats. They met frequently to hold worship services in the Starr King Worship yurt or in the UUCB Fireside Room. There also were weekend retreats—one at Zen Center’s Green Gulch Farm, and another in working meditation under the leadership of Blanche and Lou Hartman, Zen priests. Occasionally a worship service is still held, courtesy of one of our “Abraxans.”

Appreciation Circle

by Barbara Hamilton-Holway

The Appreciation Circle meets second Tuesdays from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon in the meeting room in the church office. On behalf of the congregation, the Appreciation Circle writes cards of appreciation to members of the community in gratitude for their contributions to the life of the congregation. We begin our meetings with a reading and each of us shares what we personally are grateful for within the life of the congregation. All are welcome to join this circle.

Caring Circle

All ages and kinds of people for all kinds of reasons need care. The Caring Circle coordinates visits, cards, casseroles, Supercards, and help for those in need. The Caring Circle meets once a month.

Centerpoint

by Karlyn Ward

Centerpoint was introduced in about 1976. It was a well-organized, self-guided, three-year course for anyone looking for meaning in life, and values that are not limited by current cultural dictates. Centerpoint is based on the work of Swiss psychiatrist C. G. Jung, who understood that the psyche has a reality, a language, and a nature of its own. It begins with study of the *persona*, our adaptation to the outer world, psychological types, and proceeds inward to investigating the shadow (that part of ourselves we'd rather not notice), the contrasexual elements *anima* and *animus*, and dreams—all in a context of better understanding ourselves in relationship to others and to the world. Centerpoint initially was affiliated with the Education Center of the Episcopal Church. These days Centerpoint has its own Foundation, and has grown by word of mouth to be a worldwide organization.

Initially, at UUCB, eleven people formed a group, or coterie, which met regularly for a year, reading the papers and other materials provided by the Centerpoint organization. About six continued to meet regularly for two more years, reading and discussing the material that Centerpoint continued to provide. One of the group went on to become a Jungian psychoanalyst.

Chalice Circles

by Grace Ulp

Small Group Ministry is a spiritual practice that creates a sacred space where we can tell the stories of our lives, be heard, and listen deeply to those of our companions. This is the heart of the Chalice Circle experience.

It has three parts. The first is preparation to discuss the topic. At the end of each meeting the facilitator passes out a slip of paper with the topic for the next meeting, expanded by a number of leading questions to help the participants focus their thoughts. The second part is the exercise of telling that story in a protected space to a group of people who are similarly vulnerable. It is a feeling of being both known and valued.

The third element of this experience is deep listening. This comes naturally to people who have practiced meditation, because they have trained themselves to empty their minds and listen to their breath, to be open to the sounds of the environment, to allow their own feelings and thoughts to dissolve and dissipate. This same attentiveness and egolessness is the hallmark of deeply listening to the experiences being narrated by fellow members of a Chalice Circle. It is a matter of standing out of the way so as to empathically participate in the speaker's experience. The result is a kaleidoscope of experiences around the topic of the meeting.

The Eclectic Songsters

by Mark Woodbury

The Eclectic Songsters started in the spring of 1987 and met in the church two evenings a month. We were an informal group who sang in unison with a piano accompaniment. Back in the 1950s there had been a similar group in the Berkeley church on Dana Street. Our new group compiled a wide variety of songs chosen by everybody, which extended from folk songs to Broadway

favorites, jazzy numbers from the 1930s and 1940s, to songs from both world wars, oldies from the 19th century, and more recent songs from the 1960s and 1970s.

We have the whimsical “On Ilkla Moor Baht’at” (without a hat) in Yorkshire dialect, and Orphan Annie’s cornball theme song from the radio series of the 1930s. We have beautiful love songs, the aria “Where E’er You Walk” from Handel’s opera “Semele,” “I Didn’t Know What Time It Was” by Rodgers and Hart, and the Beatles’ meditative “In My Life.” Our songs also include Bob Dylan’s militant hymn, “The Chimes of Freedom,” the ragtime “Good Morning Mr. Zip-Zip-Zip” from the First World War, Irving Berlin’s song and dance number “Puttin’ on the Ritz,” the wistful “Cindy, Oh Cindy” from the Tilden Park merry-go-round, and the Irish song “The Parting Glass,” one of the saddest songs I know.

We never really performed anywhere, but around 1990 we joined Reverend Boeke in singing Christmas carols at the homes of church members and the retirement places where some of them lived. Some of those we sang for were very receptive and sang along with us, and many knew the songs as well as we did. Often one of our listeners would want to sing “O Holy Night,” which was way out of our range, was in five flats and was really intended as a tenor solo. We would sing it anyway, and even got better at it as time went on. After Dick Boeke left, we continued caroling up until just a few years ago. We always looked forward to singing at David Strom’s small apartment, the tea and cookies he served, and the obvious pleasure he took in having us there.

And now, 24 years later, six of us are still singing twice a month and we still welcome new singers and new songs.

Evensong

by Grace Ulp

Evensong was a small-group ministry program, similar to chalice circles and covenant groups, in which members meet for eight weeks, share about a different topic each week, and practice deep listening. This program was developed by Rev. Barbara Hamilton-Holway, and is outlined in three books she wrote, including an Evensong for Families book.



The Green Committee

by James Schinnerer

The Green Committee has had several incarnations at UUCB. The most recent one is the one I was involved with, which was organized in December of 2006 and unofficially ended in the spring of 2010. During that time we met regularly on the first Sunday of the month with 6–8 people attending the meetings. During much of the time we worked toward being accepted into the Green Sanctuary Program (started by the UU Ministry for the Earth and now run by the UUA) and are now working toward certification by completing the various requirements. One of the first things we did was perform an audit of environmental practices at UUCB, which included things such as energy usage, water usage, and recycling. Working towards the Green Sanctuary Program goals was the number-one choice of the Dot Voting for the 2007–2008 year. Other activities have included having a table after Sunday services providing information on the group and environmental issues, the Edible Altar for Earth Day, installing a new energy-efficient refrigerator and freezer in the kitchen, looking into becoming a Contra Costa Certified Green Business and continuing to work with our facilities manager to make the building more sustainable and environmentally friendly through more efficient energy and water usage as well as greener cleaning products. The Green Committee also organized the Solar Panel Dedication in June 2008 marking the completion of the solar system installation at UUCB. A special committee unrelated to the Green Committee was responsible for all the various aspects that went into making the solar system happen at UUCB; Abbot Foote is the person to contact about the solar system and possibly earlier incarnations of the Green Committee.

Humanist Group

by Grace Ulp

The Humanist Group incorporates the Devout Atheists, the Humanist Connection, and Humanist Fellowship dialogues; and discusses under a series of rotating moderators explorations of subjects including, but not limited to, science and faith paths, or the transcendent in the absence

of the supernatural. The group meets every Sunday from 12:30 to 2:00 p.m. and for fellowship from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. each Sunday.

Membership Committee

by Grace Ulp

The Membership Committee, which greets everyone who walks in the door, gets nametags for most everybody, and has occasional get-togethers and programs had, at one time, a meeting right after church for newcomers and a minister. The process was for the newcomer to introduce him/her/self and tell what they were looking for in a church and why they came. Fourteen times out of fifteen they came because they wanted more spirituality. The minister would tell a little about UUism, and then they'd chat over their coffee cups.

Other forms of identification and welcome have been "Take a blue cup at coffee hour and someone will talk to you." This at least cuts into the embarrassment of asking an ancient member whether he/she is new here. Another is the Welcome Corner, a circle of chairs in the Atrium for informal gathering.

Memories of Groups at UUCB

by Martha Helming

I remember The Philosophers Club. I believe that it met on the second and fourth Tuesdays, following the Church night Supper. The Philosophers Club members included Joe Fabry, Hy Roudman, Walter Anderson, Lucille Green, and me. I remember one of the books we were reading: Jung's *The Undiscovered Self*. We took turns presenting a chapter and holding a discussion. I remember a sense of thoughtful people in discussion.

I remember the Great Book Group that Doug Pryne led (every first and third Tuesday before pot luck supper). Lorraine Cohen was in that group. The process under Doug's leadership was a creative one. Someone would put forth an idea. Someone else would build on it. A third person would take it further and then, all at once we saw a new vision—a new aspect of the subject. I remember Doug saying that he thought that *de Tocqueville's* idea of freedom was above systems. Later when we had a new leader and some new people, the spirit became argumentative, and I stopped going. One of the principles of Great Books was that we not argue about facts (we look them up). We discuss opinions.

Dick Boeke had a group before church, upstairs in the R.E Building. I remember us reading together *The Crack in the Cosmic Egg* and other thoughtful books. Dick was inviting us to expand our worldview. A word about Dick Boeke. He worked with the laity. We thought of the UUA as an association, not as a standard setter. Dick's practice was to gather together and start a group, and look for lay leadership to carry it on. That's how the UU Center for Spiritual Development was started. Dick had a big dream of an educational institute that would provide continuing education to ministers and laity. The first quarter listed an enormous number of classes. Most were cancelled for lack of students. The committee wanted to continue, but needed

a chairperson. That is when I was asked to lead it in a much more modest form. One good aspect of the UU Center was that it provided a chance for lay people to hold classes of spiritual interest on many themes.

Dick also started the Worship Committee. It was a successor to the Celebrations Committee (an all-lay group), which led services about four times a year, often commemorating religious aspects of the church year. For many years, Erda Labuhn was a member. One summer when we did not have a minister, the Worship Committee led services all summer. I thought that we did very good and thoughtful work, and I heard congregants remark on how good it had been. I remember a sermon that Barbara Cullinane gave near the fourth of July on “Interdependence Day.”

There was the Mental Health Committee. I understand that it was started by Dick Boeke and Don Price, head of the Mental Health Committee in Contra Costa County. I think that the original idea was that Don would be supportive of Dick when he “got over his head “ in a counseling situation. The Committee met the first Sunday of the month, and became a supportive and sharing group for Mental Health professionals.

Fern Labuhn created the position of Mental Health Intern when she was studying counseling at San Francisco State. For a while we put on creativity workshops including art, music, and theatre.

Bernie Loomer’s Personal Theology group started meeting around 1980. It was started after Jeanne Loomer approached Dick Boeke with a hope that Dick could think of something for Dr. Loomer to do. A brilliant theologian from the University of Chicago Theological School was sitting around watching the baseball reruns. Dick suggested that he start a group on Sunday morning. Some of the originals were John Tucker, Cal Baugh, Maggie Morley, Larry Berger, Lorraine Cohen. Bernie did a little bit of everything. He lectured on the parables, always bringing a new twist to them. He gave talks on Good and Evil, Relational Power and Authoritarian Power. He introduced the Personal Odyssey in which the members gave their spiritual journeys. He had a group of men and a group of women meet at his house weekly.

Mental Health and Counseling

by Fern Roberts-Labuhn

I had spent my younger years, ages 4–18, as a ballerina, but after my first marriage didn’t work out and I had a nervous breakdown, I pulled my self together through 10 years of therapy and choose my next career, a Marriage, Family and Child Counselor. I know about the pain and suffering and I know how to repair a life

At the stage where students are required to work in a counseling environment, I could not find a job. There were just too few, and many did not meet the school’s requirements. It meant I was going to have to drop out of school until I could find a position.

I was telling this to Dr. Richard Boeke on the Sunday before the school's Monday deadline. I was pretty upset. Being the caring man that he is and a good business manager as well, he said you have a job now! Bless the man!

I developed the Counselor in Training program. I had to have a therapist overseeing my work, and psychiatrist Dr. Price and Martha Helming, an LCSW, both stepped up to help out. I also had many MFCC's and LCSW's in the church who were wonderful help to me throughout the three years I counseled individuals, couples, families, children and groups. I also established a group for Children of Aging Parents.

In addition to developing the counseling internship, I volunteered to head the Mental Health Committee. We organized many workshops and had quite a nice group of people attending them. The workshops dealt with Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Eating Disorders, Resume Writing and Job Searching, Family and Child Education, Alternative Healing, and Dance Therapy to mention a few.

During this same time, I volunteered to be a teacher using the church program on sexual education. John Ehlers was my male counterpart. After the program ended, John and I decided to open workshops on Win/Win Communications. We started at the church and went from there marketing to local businesses.

I also did couples workshops at the Freestone Retreat. We made clay figures, masks, meals; and had individual, couple, and group sharing of our personal journeys.

Once again I found myself organizing events for the flailing Singles Group at the Church. We had several events and discussions and also I took on the Isle of U (or as the singles liked to think of it, the I Love You) dinner and performance evenings.

Isle of U's were all-church events and fundraisers, and I organized the food and preparations, did the decoration for the Social Hall and the tables with a lot of volunteers and cooks, including my family. I made many posters and menus, I planned out the performances and got wonderful help from choir members, actors, dancers, musicians; and I even did a lot of the dance choreography and danced in it myself. I enticed my husband Bill Roberts to be my partner, and we did an Apache dance where he got to throw me around a bit. I think he had a lot of fun! I managed to work on a new dinner show once a month for a year and, though it was a lot to take on, I had so much fun doing it and getting to know so many church members, it was hard to let it go.

From my humble beginnings at the church, I went into private practice as a counselor and ended up with an eighty-hour-a-week practice for nearly twenty years.

The Merry Moon Circle Memories

by Lois Atkinson

The Women and Religion Committee in the UUA and UUWF blossomed in 1977, one sprout of which inevitably grew into the seventh principal, "Respect for the interdependent web of all

existence of which we are a part.” Another sprout grew into “Spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature” being added to our religious sources. The UUWF elders also nourished interest in the long neglected goddesses of pagan and nature-based religions, both old and new. In the early 1990s, Elizabeth Fisher was creating an adult religious education course, “Rise Up and Call Her Name,” that had expanded on Shirley Ranck’s earlier “Cakes for the Queen of Heaven” curricula. I was church hunting at the time and had a history with delving into eco-feminism. UUCB’s Moon Circle was an offshoot of teachers Reverend Chris Bailey, Chris Martinez, and Allyson Rickard’s classes based on Fisher’s nature-based curricula.

This group held no dry, academic lectures or chase-your-tail discussion groups, but rather crafty ancient religions apprentice programs and sly start-your-own-coven workshops with an inclusive, eclectic UU edge. First, we made sacred artwork as responses to our readings, learning new and ancient chants and songs at the Fellowship’s banner-draped hall and by UUCB’s Fireside Room’s hearth. Remember Allyson’s kimonos illustrating Japan’s Goddess Amaterasu, Chris’s spring altar heaped with seeds and a huge mound of dirt, and Anne’s artistic Jack-o-lanterns? Jumping over a sparkler-filled cauldron or trying to read the future in Hecate’s Crystal Bowl? Helen Goodwin’s drumming and hat dancing, Phoebe’s soaring soprano, and Helene Knox’s lilting violin echoed under Freestone’s dome every Samhain? Jim and Carol’s ongoing sparkling Labyrinth, and Sanjay dressed as The Green Man at Yule? We held the first “Initiations” and “Cronings,” began the tradition of “Dias de los Muertos” services and May Pole Dancing, assisted at pagan and interdenominational funeral services. Eventually, these courses and groups became CUUPs (Council of Unitarian Universalist Pagans) chapters and also UU/Pagan congregations like The Gaia Community of Kansas.

I, a believer in an abstract, non-anthropomorphic, non-supernatural god/goddess concept along the lines of “chi” and Lucas’s “The Force,” could fit into the Moon Circle. Such tolerance and inclusively allowed healing some of those tender, bruised areas between the two UUA affiliates so that the combined BUUF/UUCB CUUPs Chapter, now called The Mist Tree Moon Circle, won a Pagan Pride Parade prize one year and continues, innovatively, still.

Personal Theology: Memories of Bernie Loomer and Personal Theology

by John Tucker, 5/21/11

Rev. Boeke invited Bernard Loomer to teach a seminar at the church on Sunday mornings. Bernie accepted and so Personal Theology was started in 1980. Bernie had a long career at the University of Chicago’s Divinity School as student, Professor and Dean. He was a Process Theologian. In 1965 he came to the Graduate Theological Union and retired in 1977. He died in 1985. Personal Theology met upstairs in the Conference Room. During Bernie’s tenure it was a welcoming space with old sofas and other comfortable chairs. We sat in a big circle; there were about twenty students. Topics included aspects of Process Theology and the Parables. Class started with Bernie speaking for a while on the topic of the day, and then there was time for questions and discussion. Bernie was a master teacher. He spoke clearly, often with humor and with great patience. He was also a powerful listener. He paid close attention to the question asked, and in his answer he indicated what other important issues your question suggested. When

he finished, you knew that you had asked an exceptionally penetrating question and felt very good. He empowered his students. Bernie was my teacher, my mentor and friend. As a biologist I was surprised and pleased to hear him talk about the Relational Web of Life in process theology. It sounded similar to how ecosystems work. He was also clear that all humans had a religious aspect. Coming from an un-churched family, I didn't think so at first. During his class I realized that I had been having religious experiences most of my life—sailing on San Francisco Bay.

During the year there were times for students to present their spiritual odyssey. After I had been attending for a year or two, I presented one. Coming from “I don't have one” it was a steep learning curve of insight and well worth the effort. Needless to say, personal theology and Bernie Loomer had a great impact on my worldview and my sense of self. He made a difference in the lives of all of his students. He was highly respected and loved. His health was not robust and his early death was a shock and left a hole in the lives of the personal theology class.

Personal Theology

by Grace Ulp

10:00 a.m. Sunday Seminars, for 30 years with the leadership of Martha Helming. Participants listen to and dialogue with theological and spiritual leaders, as well as present their own topics and spiritual journeys. Seminars fulfill the UU values of drawing inspiration from diverse traditions and deepening spiritual life. The program was founded by Bernie Loomer, former Dean of the Divinity School at the University of Chicago and leader in developing Process Theology. The group grew out of the Philosopher's Club.

Philosopher's Club

by Grace Ulp

This club started at the church when it was at Dana and Bancroft. Those attending it once a month presented papers on all sorts of subjects written by those members. One year a paper was presented— a rebuttal to religion, suggesting that the minister believed in God. Five years later the same man gave a paper defending the Apostles Creed and suggesting that the minister did not believe in God enough. It was all good, and opinions could change.

Psychology Forum

by Grace Ulp

The UUCB Psychology Forum (formerly the Mental Health Committee) met on October 7, 1994 at UUCB to begin a series of monthly “Conversations.” Topics for the 1995 season included “The Role of Elders in Our Church,” an intergenerational exchange of perspectives and wisdom.

This was a group of mental health professionals and laypersons whose goal was to provide a forum and support network for exploring the values and challenges of mental health in the context of a religious community. They also facilitated personal and spiritual development and

community building with the hope of enhancing and promoting the well being of the members and friends of this congregation. The Forum offered a multi-faceted program of lectures, forums, seminars, workshops, psychological consultation and referral services. Lucy Scott, Ph.D., was a member of the original UUCB Psychology Forum.

Safe Congregation Commission

by Kay Fairwell, December 2011

The mission of the Safe Congregation Commission is to promote right relationships among church members, offer compassionate listening and healing resources, work toward closure on controversial issues, and seek to enhance policies on personal or emotional safety at UUCB.”

Formed in 2011, the Commission continues the work of the Living Our Covenant team, reviewing and updating existing safety policies as well as finding ways to make these policies widely available to the congregation, finding a way to make it safe for people to seek help, and making sure the congregation knows that issues of safety need to be brought into the open.

The focus of the Commission continues to evolve. Currently this focus includes: finalizing a Safe Congregation Policy (includes reviewing and updating existing policies), establishing procedures for dealing with disruptive behavior, forming and arranging for training for a response team, making sure the congregation knows how to find current safety policies and where to go for help, addressing sexual harassment, and paying attention to elder care abuse or neglect.

Women’s Alliance

by Grace Ulp

The UU-wide organization we call the Women’s Alliance existed from the very first days of our church. Brooklyn’s Female Samaritan Society (1838) took care of the physical housekeeping of the church, ran the annual fundraising fair, visited the sick, and cooked for the congregation. St. Louis’s Alliance organized for friendship, service, and learning. Harvard’s Alliance organized for intergenerational friendship, to discuss issues important to women, and to support the special needs of the church. In the 1970s, as women’s lives became busier, the Alliances became strongly issue-oriented.

Our own Women’s Alliance was a great money-raising body in the church, and in the days before the church was built, the church often borrowed (at 1 %) from their bank account. They ran the fundraisers, cooked for the Men’s Club, offered advice and great assistance during pledge drives. One year Constance Daggett, a redoubtable member, convinced the Pledge Team that a successful canvass drive could only be made by canvassers visiting all the members. It worked and was successful. That plan was followed for many years, with varying outcomes. It has been said that to meet your pledge goals, do not do the same thing you did last year.

The changing demands on women’s lives changed their understanding of their role in the church, and fewer young women joined the Alliance. Back in the 1940s, the Women’s Alliance provided

feasts on many occasions, spearheaded most of the major fundraising activities and, in general, like Maizie Newman, the church secretary, ran the church out of their apron pockets. That was another time, long ago. Now their “churchmanship” is more focused on supporting particular activities that fit into working-eight-or-more-hours and/or family raising. The 2007–08 Annual Report reported that the Alliance is no longer well served by monthly meetings, so it has been supporting other church activities related to aging such as the Facing Aging and Death Group, a Valentine Tea, and Doctors of Durability.

Young Adults: A History of Young Adult (18–35) Community at UUCB 1991–2011

by Paul Hudson

The Numinous Circle was the young adult group of the UU Church of Berkeley and, for a time, the Berkeley Fellowship of UUs, from 1991 until 2009. For these years, the group met every Wednesday evening for a ritual of deep sharing and listening, and sometimes with programs led by group members on spiritual practice, relationships, music, art, and dance. The Numinous Circle was one of the longest-lived, continuously meeting UU young adult groups in the country. In 2005, a transition of leadership led to a transformation of identity for young adults in the congregation to the UU Young Adult Network (UUYAN) group of Berkeley. The Numinous Circle continued to meet until 2009, but no longer as the young adult group. The current UUYAN group meets in a chalice circle type format, and has other regular social events.

In early 1991 the Rev. Jopie Boeke initiated a young adult group to meet on Sundays at the Kensington Church. The Rev. Holly Horn, Associate Minister, had previously facilitated a group of young adults, and these people formed the core of the group. Five UUs in their late 20s came fairly regularly. Early meetings had little structure, but an opening check-in, practicing deep sharing and listening, was central to the group. One member who had moved to Berkeley recently from Washington D.C. knew of an East Coast band called the Numinous Fools. The Numinous Circle was born. The Circle decided to move its meeting place to Starr King School for the Ministry, a UU seminary. With a location much closer to downtown Berkeley and Oakland, other young adults in the East Bay could attend. In the fall of 1992 a seminarian from Starr King offered to participate and contribute leadership. With her leadership, the Numinous Circle started planning for a couple of months at a time, and the seminarian facilitated most of the meetings.

The group eventually adopted a model of shared leadership. It was clear that facilitating a meeting was easy, fun, and creative. Soon anyone that had a specific interest volunteered to facilitate a meeting. The Circle thrived. Several people invested time and emotional intimacy in the group. The Circle held a retreat to clarify the group’s *raison d’être*, its goals, and how to proceed without any formally designated chair.

Wednesday nights at 7:30 p.m., between 7 and 22 people, ranging from ages 19 to 35, gathered for a weekly ritual of check-in. During check-in, one by one around the circle, each person spoke. Most people shared joys and concerns; many told what happened to them that week; others spoke of insights gained, disappointments, and renewed hopes. People spoke of their jobs,

relationships, parents, anger, fears, and disappointments. Laughter liberally sprinkled check-in. Some people went on and on; others told stories that captivate the group.

Perhaps as late as 9:00 p.m., the circle would gather for its activity. One of the members would facilitate a discussion, a game, a talent night, a music sharing evening, or a presentation. For a final closing ritual, everyone would stand in a circle holding hands. A song, a few words, a couple of jokes, or simply a silence was shared.

Check-in was the defining ritual of the Numinous Circle. Check-in gave each person the opportunity to express themselves and listen to each other without interruption. Joys and sorrows were shared. The stories filled us with the range of emotions from dread to delight. The unencumbered sharing of check-in allowed people to truly be with the speaker. When trauma afflicted one of our lives, the Circle could listen without judgment, without criticism. The depth of sharing brought out our common humanity. We knew we all suffer in our unique circumstances.

In 1998, the Numinous Circle moved its meeting space from Starr King to the Berkeley Fellowship, and more young adults from the Fellowship joined, but many of the members were primarily associated with the Berkeley Church. As the Fellowship began to develop its own young adult group, the Circle again moved, this time back to the Berkeley Church, where it was founded.

In the late 1990s, the group advisers were Jim Burneo and Serena Shaw (now Serena Heaslip, she is the daughter of Frederick and Roberta). The group met in the Peace Library, and named themselves the Chrysalis Group. They petitioned the Board of Trustees to re-name the room the Chrysalis Room, as it is called today. One year I was one of the mentors for Coming of Age with a large group of peers. After that year, I became a youth adviser for the group for two years, along with Lisa Sargent (who is now one of our community ministers), and John Fahey and Megan Cefula, who at the time was a student at Starr King and is now UU minister at the Sierra Foothills congregation.

In the early 2000s, the original members of the group were beginning to reach their upper 30s and even 40s, and began having children. It was clear that it was time for new young adult leadership to take over and develop a model of young adult community and connection that was right for them. After a few fits and starts, a solid group of young adult leadership formed, and the current UU Young Adult Network at UUCB offers deep and connecting community to 18- to 35-year-old UUs in Berkeley.