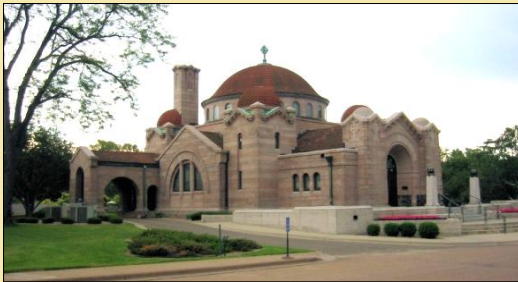


Stops on the 2016 Convocation Bus Tour

The bus tour will visit five sites, described below. The Lakewood Cemetery Chapel will be available to visitors if no service is in progress. Additional area UU congregations are also described here.

Lakewood Cemetery, Minneapolis

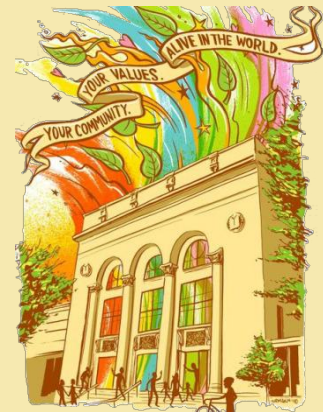


Founded in 1871 as a nonprofit institution by Colonel William S. King, founder of Northrup King, and other community members including fellow Universalists, Lakewood is the resting place of many notables. The Memorial Chapel's exterior is modeled on Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. The interior, crafted by Italian mosaic artists, is an outstanding example of the neo-Byzantine style. The chapel is available for touring unless a service is in progress.

First Universalist Church of Minneapolis

Organized in 1859, the Twin Cities' oldest and largest UU congregation stands a few blocks from Lakewood Cemetery. Prominent members over the years included Dorilus Morrison, sawmill and flour milling magnate, who was first president of the church's board of trustees, first mayor of Minneapolis, and first editor of the *Minneapolis Tribune*. He developed the dam, canal, and water power system at St. Anthony Falls on the Mississippi. Morrison co-founded what is now the Lakewood Cemetery Association. Church organist Emil Oberhoffer presided over the founding of the Minneapolis Symphony in 1903. Alfred Fiske Pillsbury promoted local parks, fine arts, symphony, transportation, and banking. Charles M. Loring initiated the summer playgrounds program that was eventually integrated into the public school system.

In 1897 the church founded Unity House, the first settlement house in Minneapolis, which integrated immigrants into American life. The building is gone, but the endowment continues to support the church's extensive social action activities. Clergy and laity of the congregation continue to be prominent in a variety of civic and national causes.



In the 1960s, rapid membership growth resulted in “spinoff” congregations: the Minnesota Valley UU Fellowship in Bloomington and the Lake Fellowship in Excelsior.

First Unitarian Society, Minneapolis



Late in 1881 Jenkin Lloyd Jones, Secretary of the Western Unitarian Conference, arranged for Minneapolis’ Liberal League to hear an address by Rev. Henry Martyn Simmons. League members then organized the First Unitarian Society with Simmons as minister. The congregation grew quickly and soon asserted a strong social presence. Members’ opposition to the Spanish-American War caused the governor to call Minnesota troops home early. A Mrs. Partridge initiated the “Post Office Mission,” which developed into the Church of the Larger Fellowship. A Mrs. Corser joined a group teaching free classes for working children and eventually started the city’s first kindergarten. Maud Conkey Stockwell and Clara Ueland were leading suffragists. The Women’s Alliance raised funds for education, peace efforts, war relief in Europe, and health care in Minnesota. In 1929 they opened the state’s first birth control clinic, which became Minnesota Planned Parenthood. Other members started a cooperative that developed into Group Health; yet others helped develop mental health facilities in the state.

In the 1920s and ‘30s, humanist sermons by the Rev. John Dietrich regularly drew over 1,000 listeners, requiring the congregation to rent theater space downtown. The Society continues to be a beacon of religious humanism today.

Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, Minneapolis



The oldest continuously used church in Minneapolis was erected in 1857 for the **First Universalist Society of St. Anthony**. The Greek Revival building was then the most expensive house of worship in the area. A famous minister was Herman Bisbee, whose “Radical Lectures” jolted local Universalist powers by favoring Darwin, higher criticism, and other new ideas. Disfellowshipped in 1872, Bisbee left the congregation and found a more peaceful career as a Unitarian in Massachusetts. His Minnesota congregation disbanded and the building was sold to a French Catholic group who altered the roofline and added a porch, and a steeple. A baptismal font was donated in 1970 by the First Universalist Society of Minneapolis.



Unity Church - Unitarian, Saint Paul

Unity was founded in 1872 and has had distinguished leaders. An early minister, William Channing Gannett (1877-1883), strongly supported abolition and woman suffrage and helped unite Eastern and Western Unitarians. Frederick May Eliot (1917-1937) strengthened the church organizationally and then left to become a long-serving and productive president of the American Unitarian Association. Eliot's influence is still felt in a love of drama and pageantry, largely conducted by younger members.



In the mid-1950s membership growth led to a building expansion as well as to the organizing of a branch church in Mahtomedi that is now a large independent congregation. Reconstruction after a fire in 1963 included a skylight over the sanctuary and other changes that brightened the interior. The building was expanded in 1970 and again in 2012.

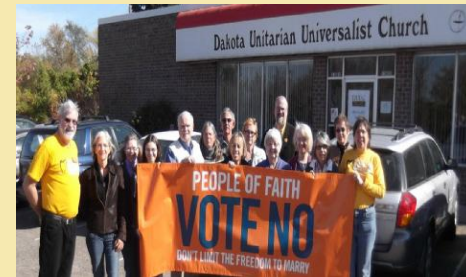
Unity has over 800 members and a large religious education program. In recent years, under co-ministers Rob and Janne Eller-Isaacs, Unity became a Welcoming Congregation. Members have also addressed racism, poverty, homelessness, and other community concerns. Sunday plate offerings are donated to community groups.

The glass walls of its new addition can be—and have been—seen as symbolizing openness to the wider community.

UU Sites off the Tour Route

Dakota Unitarian Universalist Church, Burnsville

Founded in 1987 to provide “a home for UUs south of the [Minnesota] River,” this lay-led group contributes to the health of the community through the Nature Conservancy, Habitat for Humanity, paint-a-thons, helping at a women’s shelter, the Humane Society, micro-lending, National Night Out, and other causes.



Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary, Minneapolis



The oldest public wildflower garden in the nation began with a 1907 petition to the Minneapolis Park Board by botany teachers led by Unitarian Eloise Butler to create a natural preserve for native flora as the city grew. The garden is open April 1 through October 15, 7:30 a.m. until one hour before sunset.

Groveland Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Saint Paul

The Fellowship was founded in 1996 by three women from Unity Church seeking a small community with varied programming and more interaction during services than a larger congregation could accommodate. Members feel they have attained that objective. They also take part in social action projects like tutoring, working with Habitat for Humanity, food drives, and support for a variety of organizations.



Lake Fellowship of Unitarian Universalists, Excelsior

In 1960 the large Minneapolis congregations were crowded and religious liberals in the western suburbs wanted a congregation closer to home. Two groups formed. One became the UU Church of Minnetonka. The future Lake Fellowship rented space until 1967 and bought a demonstration A-frame exhibited at the State Fair.

The group bought land, moved the building onto it, and maintained and enhanced the property. Lay-led and small but stable in size, the Fellowship offers solid religious education and many cultural events.



Michael Servetus Unitarian Society, Fridley



In 1966, members of a book club at First Unitarian Society in Minneapolis decided that the northeast suburbs needed a UU presence. They purchased a small church in the northern suburb of Fridley and moved in 1971. MSUS members have been active in denominational and civic affairs. They have contributed leadership to the board of Unity Hospital, the Girl Scouts, the Anoka County Library, the Springbrook Nature Center, and the recycling center in Fridley. In 2009 MSUS took a new direction began calling settled ministers.

Minnesota Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Bloomington



In 1965, First Universalist Church of Minneapolis dealt with membership growth by spinning off a fellowship. In 1966, twenty-seven adventurous souls adopted bylaws for the Minnesota Valley Fellowship. Reverends John Cummins of First Universalist and Emil Gudmundson of the District office provided organizational support.

At first using rented space, in 1975 the group acquired its present building. Members have been active in causes such as help for homeless children, the Veterans Administration, the Minnesota UU Social Justice Alliance, the UUSC, and marriage equality. The congregation is now served by a settled minister.

Pilgrim House Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Arden Hills

A philosophical split in a Lutheran church led to the founding of Pilgrim House in 1970 as an unaffiliated non-denominational liberal congregation. Since then, the fundamental values that define Pilgrim House have remained constant. The congregation is a home for those committed to free inquiry on all matters and provides stimulating discussion, creative expression, and mutual concern and respect for each other to the end of greater individual fulfillment. The congregation meets in a former one-room schoolhouse in Arden Hills.

In 1985 members affiliated with the UUA. In the mid-1990s they built an addition which preserved the historic character of the school building. The founding minister left in 1978, and Pilgrim House has been lay-led since.



Unitarian Universalist Church of Minnetonka, Wayzata

This congregation and the Lake Fellowship grew out of a series of meetings of suburban members of First Universalist in Minneapolis. First calling itself Amity Fellowship in 1960, the group soon numbered 30 families with 130 children and infants. In 1965 it purchased the present church in Wayzata. Guest speakers, lay leaders and interim ministers, including Grant Butler and Dana McLean Greeley, provided leadership until 1966, when Robert W. Brownlie became the first settled minister.

Social action has been extensive since the early years and included civil rights and human rights actions, scholarships for Native Americans, support for black-owned businesses, and initiating a mental health center. Members have worked with groups of other faiths to provide aid to the poor and to Tibetan refugees. Sunday plate offerings go to causes outside the church. The growing congregation is now in the process of changing locations.



Architect's sketch of the future home of the UU Church of Minnetonka

White Bear Unitarian Universalist Church, Mahtomedi

In 1956, rapid growth at Unity Church led to forming a branch church in the northeastern suburb of Mahtomedi. Unity provided generous assistance, and by 1959 the congregation had its first building. Membership fluctuated at first, then started growing in 1975. The congregation purchased a larger building in 1990. Membership is now the third largest in the metro, with a heavily enrolled RE program. The present facility has been expanded twice.



Many members contribute their talents in the performing and visual arts. The sanctuary in the 2006 addition is often used as a space for public performances. The foyer and corridors regularly display art works in a variety of media. With membership growth has come greater community involvement.

About a dozen working groups address racism, economic justice, homelessness, climate change, gun safety, and international concerns.