

## Unity Church in Albany:

### *Founded on Prayer Consciousness; Sustained by Prosperity Consciousness*

One of the first things taught to candidates for Church membership is the tale of how the Unity movement was founded by Myrtle and Charles Fillmore. Similarly, Unity Church in Albany also was founded by two individuals. Like the Fillmores one founder demonstrated a commitment to prayer while the other founder was adept at organization and dedicated to development of a Unity Church here in the Capital District. Unlike the Fillmores however both founders of Unity Church in Albany are women! Having learned of Unity principles from her mother, Lynn Davis used Daily Word and other Unity publications in a prayer group she conducted for teenage girls. Ms. Davis shared this prayer consciousness with her friend Margaret “Peg” White who became eager to promote a formal Unity Prayer Group to other like-minded adults. As in the greater Unity movement, prayer is the cornerstone upon which Unity Church in Albany was founded.

Regular meetings of the fledgling Unity Study Group began in 1981. These meetings moved from various rental spaces to Peg White's home at Western Avenue and South Manning Boulevard in the Fall of 1983. Under the guidance of Peg White the Study Group grew in numbers and manifest sufficient abundance to hire Paul Borden, a Licensed Unity Teacher from Rochester, to conduct services and classes. Ever-expanding prosperity consciousness enabled the hiring of Rev. Rebecca Clark to be our first full time minister in May of 1984. Thanks to the work of attorneys Sam Madison and Josephine Cleary, Unity Church in Albany was incorporated on December 4, 1984 under the Religious Corporation Law of the State of New York. Subsequently 39 Charter Members were admitted to the newly incorporated Unity Church in Albany, *founded in prayer consciousness*, Unity Church in Albany manifested continued growth by demonstrating

*its prosperity consciousness.*

In the Spring of 1985, the church manifest sufficient abundance to rent space in the Women's Club of Albany for Sunday services and mid-week meditation and classes. Roberta Yackel became our minister in 1987 and she was succeeded in that role by Rev. Arthur Wells in 1991. During the ten years of residence at the Women's Club, every Sunday and every Thursday night it was necessary to set up chairs, tables and lectern and put everything away afterward. Also, the Bookstore had to be unboxed for display and then stored away after Sunday every service. One Sunday in early 1995 while we were stacking chairs after service someone asked Rev. Wells when we would have a church home of our own. Without hesitation Arthur Wells responded, "When 51% of you truly WANT a church home, it will be manifest." Prayer consciousness was the centerpiece of his ministry.

The desire of the congregation for our own church home was not a new phenomenon. In order to facilitate manifesting our church home, a committee was formed in the late 1980's or early 1990's and dedicated to that purpose. In keeping with the Law of Mind Action, the committee was called the Home of Our Own Committee. Thus every time we spoke of the committee's progress, we affirmed the phrase "Home of Our Own." While our congregation was neither large or wealthy, we tithed a percentage of our income to the Home of Our Own Fund every month. So certain were we of our ultimate success that we also tithed a small amount of income to a separate fund dedicated to the repair and furnishing of that home once it became a reality. Four different members would chair the Home of Our Own Committee over the years and they would explore more than 30 possible sites. By the middle of 1995 we focused on the property at 21 King Avenue in Albany. More than a dozen candidates attended the new member class in 1995 so they could qualify to vote "YES" when the building purchase came to a vote.

It was now time to move our prosperity consciousness into high gear. The bank required a down payment of \$50,000 before a mortgage would be approved. The trustee

serving as Treasurer at that time was Morgan Barclay. (Both Morgan and his wife Cynthia would go on to become ordained ministers.) Morgan assumed leadership of the fund-raising task and consulted with Rev. Shay St. John who was Director of Development at Unity Village in Missouri. Rev. St. John warned that her expertise was in church growth and had no knowledge of fund-raising protocols. She reminded Morgan of the difficulty involved in raising funds during the year-end holidays and asked if Unity In Albany had prosperity consciousness adequate to the task. Morgan answered with a resounding “yes” and the rest is history. Folks volunteered to perform several of Morgan's duties so he could focus on the fund-raising goal. Money was donated by members, former congregants, friends and other less likely sources. Members pledged to continue making Capital Fund donations over the next five years in addition to their regular tithes. Board President Bill Bird signed the mortgage on Valentine’s Day 1996. More than 70 congregants worked to repair this building for the next month. By mid-March Ginger Olthoff was our President and she was present when repair work concluded at 1:00 AM on Sunday March 17<sup>th</sup>. As we were filing out the door, Ginger entreated us to go back inside. She reminded us that we should sit in the silence and affirm gratitude. Later on that day, St. Patrick's Day, we would celebrate our first Sunday Service at this location.

While we were glad to leave the Women's Club behind, we regretted the Club's Steinway Piano was no longer available to us. We had come so far in such a short time and now the un-funded purchase of our own piano left us another \$9,000 in debt. Morgan Barclay was no longer Treasurer; but he did not want to enter 1997 without retiring this piano debt. Once again Morgan. Again, year end holidays. Again, we manifest abundance. The piano is ours. We are prosperous.

One of the first guest speakers at the new church home was Rev. Lafayette Seymour of Washington DC. His message on the topic of Prosperity Consciousness ended with the words:

***“Thought of lack has no power over me. God is the source of my good.”***

This denial/affirmation was adopted by the next Treasurer each month when he gave the congregants their “prosperity report card”. Any time that report card demonstrated the “appearance of lack”, the congregation would recite the denial/affirmation and manifest sufficient abundance that our bills were always paid on time.

Rev. Jim Fuller arrived in 2003 and by 2004 we once again faced building repair and renewal expenses. Rev. Jim, who had mentored Morgan Barclay at Unity Ministry School, affirmed we could raise \$10,000 to fund the project. This program, called *Caring Hands*, found it easier to raise the money than it was to hire contractors to do the work. By 2005 our mortgage was paid in full. We are prosperous.

Upon her arrival at Unity Church in Albany, Rev. Crystal Muldrow, a former Silent Unity Prayer Associate, immediately set out to revitalize our prayer ministry. Prayer remains the cornerstone of this congregation. As we enter the congregation's 36<sup>th</sup> year, our prosperity consciousness will sustain this ministry for years to come.

Respectfully submitted,

Dennis Ryan

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