

Our Heritage

Founded in 1898

Select Milestones

1898, March 22 – First Unitarian Society of Erie is incorporated at the West 11th Street home of Mrs. A. B. Elliott. Twenty-two individuals sign the “Bond of Union”. This is considered the founding date of the Congregation. Meetings are held first at the G.A.R. Hall and at the Anshe Hessed Synagogue.

1900 – A new Unitarian Church building is dedicated at 149 West 9th Street. William Channing Gannett, hymn writer, gives the opening prayer at the dedication.

The newly formed Women’s Alliance brings Julia Ward Howe to speak at the church.

1900 – Society hosts the first fundraising rummage sale ever held in the City of Erie.

1904 – A pipe organ is built and installed by Felgmacher of Erie.

1911 – President William H. Taft attends a church service here.

1929 – An entrance is added to the church and the sanctuary is rededicated.

1930 – The newsletter, “Erie Unitarian” is first published and edited by Kenneth Craig.

1938 – Church chancel is remodeled.

1940 – An extensive and popular Book Fair is held, including a book sale, exhibits lectures and live music.

1942 – Servicemen’s Recreational Center is opened in Channing Hall in the basement of the church. The Celestia Hershey Memorial Library, on the second floor of the church, is dedicated in remembrance of a once active member.

1943 – Mortgage burning ceremony is held. Janet Craig has the honors of igniting the document.

1948 – Congregation celebrated its 50th Anniversary.

1954 – A Chapter of the Senior Citizens of America is organized in Channing Hall.

1958 – A lot is purchased at 2910 Pine Avenue as a site for a new church.

1961 – This year sees the official merger of the Unitarian and Universalist denominations into the Unitarian Universalist movement.

1965 – No buyers are found for the existing property, so a decision is made to sell the Pine Avenue property without constructing at the site.

1966 – Church property on West 9th is sold to the Erie Redevelopment Authority. Nelson, Goldberg and Heidt Architects are retained to plan the new church, with John Evans as the principal architect.

1966 – Lot is purchased at 6150 New Perry Highway, the site of our current church.

1967 – Church is built by John Agnello and Sons.

1968 – New Church building is dedicated.

1970 – “The Fellowship Years” begin, a time of part-time and lay led ministry. They last until the next full-time minister is appointed in 1986.

1998 – In January, the Congregation adopts a Vision Statement, and in March, a Centennial Celebration honoring the congregations’s 100th Year is held.

1999 – After two years of planning, the New Century Capital Campaign, led by Al & Peggy Richardson, kicks off. Contributions to the campaign will fund approved architects’ plans for building expansion.

2000 – A groundbreaking ceremony for the expansion project is held on March 5th.

Victor King and Gary Peden of Crouner/King architects, along with Potomac Builders, expand the church with new classrooms, a conference room, library, and expanded kitchen and common area. The Sanctuary and exterior of building are also repainted and redecorated. Special touches include installation of the church bell in the entranceway, restoration of stained glass windows from the original church, and stenciling of our seven principles on the interior walls. A Dedication ceremony is held on November 12, 2000.

Prior to renovation, the congregation’s historic records are transferred to the Erie County Historical Society for safekeeping, preservation and access for research.

This timeline does not attempt to fully illustrate a culture established by more than a century of people who, by creating ceremony, providing service, demonstrating strength, and maintaining faith, embody the special community that worships here.

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