

At a St. Louis Area Unitarian Universalist Council meeting on February 19, 1984 the first meeting was held to discuss the creation of a new Society in West County. Both major UU churches in the St. Louis area - First Unitarian Church in the city and Eliot Chapel in Kirkwood - were reaching capacity. Emerson Chapel held its first service September 9, 1984. The Chapel began with \$50,000 donated by First Unitarian Church and Eliot Chapel. On February 24, 1985, Charter Sunday, eighteen people signed the Membership Book.

Barbara A. Baker	Pat Baker	Dewalt Fowler	Janie Fowler
Cindy Holten	James C. Holten	Kristen Lassen Hunt	Bruce Hunt
Carol Hutchison	Barbara Jensen	William Jensen	Jayne Bury Leet
Dean Petersen	Roland Promisy	Jerald vanNatta	

The ministers of First Unitarian Church, Earl K. Holt and Eliot Chapel, John Robinson, preached alternating months the first year to ensure a speaker for each Sunday. Services were held at 9:30 a.m. so that each minister could return to his own church for their 11:00 a.m. service. Emerson Chapel held its first canvass in March of 1985.

September 7, 1986 Emerson called its first half-time minister, Martha S. Newman. She served Emerson for three years. In 1990, the first full-time minister, Leonetta Bugleisi was called.

In 1992, after four rented spaces, Emerson Chapel purchased this permanent sacred space on 3-1/2 acres in Ellisville, MO. At this place, Emerson has had two intern ministers, Alicia Grace and Susan Heller. The Rev. Danny R. Reed was our half-time minister, 2000-2001.

During the course of our first 15 years, Emerson grew from those 18 Founding Members to more than 60 members, greatly expanded our programs, hired a part time Religious Education Director and a part time Chapel Administrator. With the explosive growth in West County, we found ourselves on the verge of expanding our physical facilities to meet the needs of our growing membership. The process of expanding the Chapel facilities began when the *Long Range Planning Committee* identified both ministerial and facility expansion goals for the congregation. In 1998, the *Bricklayers Committee* began looking into the details of the building expansion and produced a Program Statement, a guiding architectural document that identified the essential elements for our new, expanded facilities. The Emerson congregation approved the Program Statement in February by a unanimous vote and authorized the hiring of an architect to turn our statement of ideas and goals into a real architectural design.

By 1999, we were looking at exciting building and renovation plans. Plans which supported the needs of a 300 member congregation with a full-time minister. We included adequate office and administrative space, RE classrooms, parking and sanctuary seating for 150 - all of which was to be handicap accessible - and to allow for further expansion in the years to come. In short, they were the plans to guide Emerson Chapel's growth toward a full-service church. All we needed to fulfill this dream, which was really just the culmination of the dream started 15 years before, was money - and so was born our Capital Campaign with its goal of \$350,000.

We arrived at our present design, by architect Robert Acree, in the fall of 2000. We then spent the next several months finding our contractor, Tom Copeland, acquiring a loan commitment from Bank of America and establishing a budget which the congregation approved on August 29, 2001. We were on our way.

Today, our dream has been realized. We broke ground on October 14, 2001 and held our first official service in the new Sanctuary for *Homecoming* on September 8, 2002. We not only built a new sacred space, but also we renovated our old one to give us new administrative offices, RE spaces, an enlarged kitchen, a new parking lot, handicap accessibility in both new and old buildings and beautiful gardens as well.

At the May 2005 congregational meeting, we called our new minister, the Reverend Krista Taves. We hired a new Director of Religious Education, Lauren Lyerla January 2006, who retired in May, 2010, and hired a new DRE that Spring, Jenn Taylor. And our new office manager, Randy Whitman, joined us the Spring of 2009.

So, from that tiny start in 1984, Emerson, in 2010 welcomed 12 new members for a total membership over 100, and growing! We look forward to new faces who will come through our doors and stay in this welcoming place. There is much to be done in the future but we are happy to have come this far. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "The reward of a thing well done is to have done it." And, so we have!