

UU History & Timeline

The Early Church

325: Nicene Creed, adopted at the Council of Nicea under the emperor Constantine, establishes the dogma of the Trinity and suppresses the lower Christology espoused by Arius and his followers.

544: Another church council condemns as heresy the belief in universal salvation, a teaching traced back to second-century theologian Origen of Alexandria.

Reformation Europe

1531: Michael Servetus (1510-53) publishes *On the Errors of the Trinity*.

1539: Katherine Vogel of Krakow, Poland, burned at the stake for denying the Trinity. Birth of Faustus Socinus, leader of the Polish Unitarian (Socinian) movement (d. 1604).

1553: Servetus burned at the stake in Calvin's Geneva.

1566: Francis David preaches against the doctrine of the trinity in Transylvania.

1568: King John Sigismund of Transylvania, under the influence of David, converts to Unitarianism and issues the earliest edict of religious toleration.

1569: King Sigismund publicly declares himself a Unitarian.

1571: Unitarianism is declared one of the four official received faiths of Transylvania. King Sigismund dies two months later.

1579: Francis David, condemned as a heretic, dies in prison.

1648: Cambridge Platform, a formal statement of congregational polity is drawn up by a synod of ministers from Massachusetts and Connecticut.

1654: John Biddle, founder of English Unitarianism, banished to the Scilly Islands.

1658: The Polish Diet banishes Socinians from Poland.

Eighteenth-Century England and America

1703: Thomas Emelyn imprisoned at Dublin for anti-Trinitarian beliefs.

Birth of George de Benneville, early Universalist advocate.

1723: De Benneville preaches Unitarianism in Europe; birth of Theophilus Lindsey, later leader of London Unitarians.

1741: De Benneville emigrates to Pennsylvania; birth of John Murray, founder of organized American Universalism.

1770: Murray emigrates to America; preaches in Thomas Potter's chapel at Good Luck, N.J.

1779: First Universalist congregation in America gathered at Gloucester, Mass., with Murray as minister.

1785: Liturgy of King's Chapel, Boston, revised to omit references to the Trinity.

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1787: King's Chapel congregation ordains James Freeman as its minister, becoming "Anglican in worship, congregational in policy, and Unitarian in theology."

1794: Joseph Priestley, British Unitarian minister and scientist, emigrates to Pennsylvania.

1796: First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia organized with Priestley's encouragement.

Nineteenth-Century America

1802: The oldest Pilgrim church in America (founded at Plymouth in 1620) becomes Unitarian.

1803: Universalists at convention in Winchester, N.H., adopt a confession of faith.

1804: President Thomas Jefferson compiles his own version of the Gospels, inspired by Priestly.

1805: Universalist Hosea Ballou publishes *A Treatise on the Atonement*, rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity. Henry Ware, a Unitarian, elected Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard, establishing Unitarianism as the dominant theology at Harvard Divinity School.

1819: Reverend William Ellery Channing preaches "Unitarian Christianity" in Baltimore, helps gather first Unitarian Church in New York City.

1825: The American Unitarian Association founded.

1833: The General Convention of Universalists in the United States founded.

1838: Ralph Waldo Emerson, a Unitarian minister, delivers his "Divinity School Address" at Harvard, calling for major reforms in Unitarianism.

1841: Reverend Theodore Parker preaches "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity" in South Boston, emphasizing the importance of Jesus teachings rather than his life story or miracles.

1850: Death of Margaret Fuller, a Unitarian and author of *Women in the Nineteenth Century*.

1852: Universalist Church leaders found Tufts University in Medford, MA.

1856: Universalist Church leaders found St. Lawrence University in Canton, NY.

1863: Ordination of Olympia Brown as Universalist minister, first woman to be regularly ordained by any denomination.

1864: Death of Thomas Scarr King, Universalist minister and pastor of the First Unitarian Church of San Francisco, who "saved California for the Union."

1865: National Conference of Unitarian Churches, organized by Henry Whitney Bellows, gives Unitarians a more effective denominational structure.

1866: Organization of the Universalist General Convention (renamed in 1942 the Universalist Church in America).

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- 1867: Organization of the Free Religious Association.
- 1884: Death of Emerson; American Unitarian Association becomes a congregational and representative body, later absorbing the National Conference.
- 1890: Universalists establish churches in Japan.
- 1893: World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago, organized by Unitarian minister, Jenkin Lloyd Jones.
- 1899: A joint commission first discusses merger of Unitarian and Universalist movements.

Twentieth-Century America

- 1900: The International Congress of Free Christians and Other Religious Liberals (later renamed the International Association for Religious Freedom) formed with the aid of prominent Unitarians and Universalists.
- 1902: Beacon Press launched, broadening the American Unitarian Association's publishing program.
- 1908: Unitarian Fellowship for Social Justice organized by John Haynes Holmes (also a founder of the NAACP, the ACLU, and the Fellowship of Reconciliation).
- 1917: William Howard Taft, fourth Unitarian president of the United States, serves as moderator of the American Unitarian Association.
- 1921: Universalist women acquire Clara Barton homestead (later a camp for diabetic girls).
- 1925: Earl Morse Wilbur publishes his two-volume A History of Unitarianism, the first comprehensive history of Unitarianism in Poland, Transylvania, England, and America.
- 1931: Second Commission on Unitarian-Universalist merger.
- 1935: Universalists adopt the Washington Statement of Faith.
- 1936: American Unitarian Associations Commission on Appraisal issues its report, Unitarians Face a New Age, inspiring reforms and a new vibrancy among Unitarians.
- 1937: Frederick May Eliot, chair of the Commission on Appraisal, elected president of AUA (d. 1957).
- 1939: Unitarian Service Committee organized.
- 1944: Church of the Larger Fellowship organized to serve Unitarians living areas without Unitarian congregations.
- 1950: A. Powell Davies, minister of All Souls Church, Washington, D.C., inspires the founding of ten suburban congregations. Fellowship movement, which founded many new Unitarian churches across the country, organized under Monroe Husbands.

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1961: Universalist Church of America and American Unitarian Association merge to form the Unitarian Universalist Association, with Dana McLean Greeley as first president

1963: The hymnal, Hymns for the Celebration of Life published. 1965: UU minister James Reeb killed at Selma, Alabama while marching for civil rights

1969: Robert Nelson West elected second UUA president. UUA struggles with internal controversy over whether its civil right efforts should focus on black empowerment or integration.

1971: Beacon Press publishes The Pentagon Papers despite threats and intimidation by the FBI.

1970: UUA General Assembly passes resolution calling for an end to discrimination against homosexuals and bisexuals.

1973: General Assembly votes to create the UUA Office of Gay Affairs (later renamed the Office of Bisexual, Gay Lesbian and Transgender Concerns).

1977: Paul Carnes elected third UUA president; dies in office.

1978: Eugene Pickett elected fourth UUA president.

1984: General Assembly endorses the practice of UU clergy performing Services of Union for same-sex couples.

1985: William F. Schulz elected fifth UUA president; new statement of Principles and Purposes adopted. Shultz later became the executive director of Amnesty International (1994-2006).

1993: John Buehrens elected sixth UUA president. The hymnal, Singing the Living Tradition, published.

1995: International Council of Unitarians and Universalists founded to promote cooperation among Unitarian Universalists worldwide and help spread their message.

2001: William Sinkford elected seventh UUA president, the first African American to hold that office.

2009: Peter Morales elected eighth UUA president, the first Latino to hold that office. Standing on the Side of Love launched, a public advocacy campaign sponsored by the UUA.

Taken from <http://www.princeton.edu/~uucc/timeline.htm>

Timeline adapted from A Chosen Faith by John Buehrens and Forrest Church