

here gives evidence of the messy movement of social revolutions. One is mindful of the Diffusion of Innovations model, in which the adoption of an idea or practice is dependent upon identifiable communication channels, the passage of time, and social systems, but is not inevitable.

Carey's other contribution, important though not entirely novel, is to remind historians of religion of the role that rhetoric plays in shaping the movement toward consensus, and how public discourse influences private conversation and unrecorded dialogue, which in turn create the popular groundswell that brings the vision of the rhetorician to fruition. Carey's book is an exciting contribution, not only for its content but for its form. This close reading of numerous lesser-known Quaker texts invites Unitarian Universalist historians to consider our own body of literature – public speeches, books, pamphlets, meeting minutes – in a similar fashion. As further histories of UU social justice processes are written, they will likewise reveal complex and nuanced narratives of innovation. They will deserve such a treatment as this.

CHAVA BAHLE

*Rabbi and Spiritual Director of the UU Congregation of Grand Traverse  
Northern Michigan*

**Toward the Beloved Community: The First Unitarian Church of Portland, Oregon, 1865-2015.** Cindy Cumfer. Portland, OR: First Unitarian Church, 2015. xiv + 275 pp. \$15.00 (paper).

All denominations produce congregational histories, and Unitarian Universalism is no exception. The genre is wide-ranging in scope and style. Some congregational histories are brief, self-published in limited quantity, and of interest primarily to insiders. Other congregational histories are larger in scope and attract readership beyond the congregation. One of the finest new UU congregational histories, which fits into the latter category, is Cindy Cumfer's *Toward the Beloved Community*. Unitarian Universalists, as well as Portland residents seeking to know more about the religious history of their city, will want to read this book, which is available at the church, at the website [www.firstunitarianportland.org](http://www.firstunitarianportland.org), and at the Oregon Historical Society Shop. This congregational history was written as part of the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the First

Unitarian Church of Portland, Oregon, one of Unitarian Universalism's most notable western congregations.

Several factors came together to produce this excellent anniversary tribute. First Church Portland has enjoyed vital ministries and equally vital congregational life since its founding in 1866; thus, there are many good stories to tell. The people of First Church have preserved their records, making it possible to document their stories. This is a reminder of the importance of maintaining good, workable congregational archives. In addition, Cumfer took advantage of community archives found at Portland's Reed College and Lewis and Clark University, as well as the UUA archives at Andover Harvard Library. Finally, Cumfer was able to consult the personal archives of former ministers of the congregation, and draw on previous histories of First Church written by researchers now gone. *A Time to Build: The First Unitarian Society of Portland, Oregon, 1866-1966*, includes a reprint of Earl Morse Wilbur's history of the church (1867-1892), and Evadne Hilands' coverage of the years that followed (1893-1966).

Neither vital congregational life nor a plethora of source material would automatically produce an engaging study of a congregation, without a skilled author at the helm. With a Ph.D. in history from UCLA, Oregon lawyer Cindy Cumfer brings systematic research skills to the genre of congregational history, weaving together many details around common themes of congregational life across the church's 150-year history.

One of Cumfer's goals in writing this history was to awaken greater awareness within the congregation of its identity as a Beloved Community. She hoped to articulate the "soul" of First Church by illuminating its core beliefs as lived out by its ministers and congregants in the wider world. As an example, the congregation is perhaps best known for the stand it took for LGBT rights in 1992 by tying a ribbon around the city block on which the building sits. Many other such markers of the congregation's contribution to religious life in Portland are found in these pages. Having served a one-year ministerial internship at First Church, I can attest that there is hardly a better place in this country to build a mutually supportive partnership between the liberal church and the surrounding community.

Another of Cumfer's goals was to write a congregational history that would not be solely self-congratulatory. Rather, she tells an authentic

story of both triumph and challenge. Financial shortfalls are a recurring theme, even in a church with a largely upper-middle-class membership. She also examines the limitation that white privilege can place on one's vision of the broader world. Some UUs may find comfort in realizing that this large, thriving congregation has confronted some of the same challenges seen in their own congregations.

Cumfer's study is organized in chapters defined by the tenure of the senior ministers. She recognizes seven distinct periods of ministry in the 150-year life of the church, noting the influence of the Eliot family for two-thirds of a century. The founding ministry of Thomas Lamb Eliot (1867-1893) marked the arrival on the West Coast of this influential family from St. Louis, where Thomas's father had founded that city's first Unitarian Church. Twenty-six years later, Thomas Lamb Eliot's daughter married assistant minister Earl Morse Wilbur, the first of three short-term ministers who served the church during its most varied period of ministry (1893-1906). Wilbur was followed in this period by William Lord and George Cressley.

The lengthy ministry of William Greenleaf Eliot (1907-1933), the son of Thomas Lamb Eliot, included the church's move to its current location on Salmon Street. This Eliot promoted a "manly" ministry, which was not particularly open to woman suffrage or progressive attitudes toward women. Then came the thirty-two-year ministry of Richard Steiner (1934-66), who led the congregation through the years of the Depression and post-World War II growth. His vigorous social gospel message made the church a vital part of the Portland religious community. The end of his ministry witnessed the devastating 1965 fire that destroyed the Salmon Street sanctuary. Steiner did not leave his position at the church until after the congregation voted to remain in its downtown location and replace the burned-out sanctuary.

During the ministry of Alan Deale (1970-1991), the congregation grew into one of the largest in the UUA. The current Music Director, Mark Slegers, joined the staff in 1977. Marilyn Sewell's advocacy-driven ministry (1992-2009) partnered well with the city's increasingly progressive outlook. As the growing membership encountered governance challenges, they moved to implement the Carver model of policy governance. Rev. Sewell exemplified the transformative power of worship to deepen spiritual experiences through her often edgy sermons.

The current minister, who happens to be the congregation's first minister of color, is William Sinkford (2010–present), who came to Portland after two terms as UUA President. The church continues to provide a thriving home for the spiritual growth of its members, and for outreach to the community.

Apart from this evolution in ministerial leadership, Cumfer tracks the role of the board and the broader topic of governance; the growing number of staff members; programs in congregational life, including music and religious education; notable lay leaders, many of whom are highlighted in stand-alone vignettes; and the importance of the Ladies Sewing Circle, which gave birth 150 years ago to the idea of founding a free church in Portland. The Circle continues today as the Women's Alliance. Cumfer also provides intriguing archival photographs that allow readers to connect visual images to the names and places discussed in the text. Regrettably, some of these images suffer from less-than-high quality reproduction.

*Toward the Beloved Community* not only tells the story of the First Unitarian Church of Portland, but situates it in the context of community and national events, showing that this has been, and continues to be, a congregation in touch with the spiritual and justice-making needs of the world around it. This history explains how the church not only survived but thrived for a century and a half. Its story can serve as both a resource and an inspiration for other congregations, helping to move Unitarian Universalism all the more "toward the Beloved Community."

BARBARA COEYMAN  
Accredited Interim Minister  
UU Church of Reston, VA

**Thomas Manns amerikanische Religion: Theologie, Politik und Literatur im kalifornischen Exil.** Heinrich Detering. Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag, 2012. 343 pp. €18.99.

Awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1929 for works such as *Death in Venice*, *The Magic Mountain*, and the multigenerational family novel *Buddenbrooks*, Thomas Mann went on to pen such classics as *Doctor*