

CHARLOTTE KOEFFLER 1918–2019

Susan Bergmann, Historian

Born when the United Unitarian and Universalist Society of Mukwonago, (UUUSM) was only 40 years old, Charlotte's life spanned a large part of our church history. She graced our pews from her birth until 2007 when we sold the church on Main Street. Throughout the years she worked tirelessly to support the church, contributing to our congregation in ways too numerous to mention. Our congregation is so thankful that she was not only generous with financial support, but that she did so much more than just show up on Sundays, and was a volunteer in the true sense of the word.

Char was the middle of the three Rintelman sisters, and the second child that we have baptism records for in our record book. As the daughter of former members Ernest and Jessie Rintelman she was involved at UUUSM from her early years, attending Sunday school with her sisters Fern and Loraine. I remember hearing the story about the frosted glass windows that were, according to the Rintelman sisters, installed in some of the sanctuary windows, so that the children would not be distracted by what was going on outside.



Charlotte (far right) in the choir Circa 1930's



A check for \$100 and gifts of food were presented to the Mukwonago Community Commission recently by the United Unitarian and Universalist Church of Mukwonago. The gifts helped fill 24 food baskets presented to needy families with 69 individuals living in the Mukwonago area. (left to right): Frank Hetherington, and Mrs. Linda Harris of Waukesha, Mrs. Marlene Fitzgerald of Mukwonago and Mrs. Charlotte Koeffler of Mukwonago. Fitzgerald is President of the Community Commission. The others are members of the U&U Church of Mukwonago. (Photo by Eric Sever)

Char Koeffler (far right) donating money & food to the Community Commission, Nov 1989

As an active member of UUUSM Char's name pops up time and time again in our church histories and files. The first time is in our record book which records her birth in September 24, 1918, and her baptism June 15, 1919 by UUUSM minister, the Rev. Thomas Murray.

Char was an active and influential member of our congregation. The 80-year History by J. Grutzmacher notes that, "The Junior league was started in the home of Mrs. Harold Koeffler in 1942 with Charlotte Koeffler and Ruth Kern as officers. They served the church long and faithfully, raising money every year for the Minister's salary besides improving the roof, whenever the need arose." This was in the days before members pledged, and without this amazing group of women raising money, the church would not have been able to pay their bills.

In 1984 Charlotte Koeffler attended the pivotal meeting that decide fate of our church after Rev. Ringe died. The church had been closed for a year, and the handful of members who had held the church together over the past decade were unwilling to take an active part in starting it up again. Charlotte was one of five dedicated parishioners who voted to keep the church going, and was there to support the church as the congregation grew and flourished.

In the years that followed, Char was involved in the life of the church in many different ways. In 1987 she and her husband Harold provided housing and hospitality for Rev. Holly Bell during the 6 weeks she served in Mukwonago, and provided her with the use of a typewriter. Holly enjoyed the time she spent with them.

When Harriet Steele was honored on her 85th birthday in 1987, the dinner was prepared entirely by Charlotte. The event was held at our historic church after the Sunday service, in the downstairs community room.

Char and her husband Harold also made substantial donations to the church. In 1996 they donated \$36,071 for new siding for the church, (worth \$59,037 in 2019) and in 1998 a matching grant of \$5,000 (\$7,664 in 2019 money) for the two new furnaces.

Soon after Harold's death in 2012, Char moved into Linden Grove, where she remained until her death.



Char Koeffler reads the church history at the 110th Anniversary Celebration of the UUUSM



2012 Susan Bergmann and Charlotte Passing the Chalice, before our move to Waukesha L to R Susan Bergmann & Char Koeffler

My friendship with Charlotte Koeffler dates back to the time when we were both members of the Mukwonago Area Women's Club. I still remember the first Sunday I visited the church in 1999. Her face lit up as she rushed over to greet me. She had such a wonderful smile, and having one familiar happy face greet me is something I always remember. She was there every week to welcome me, and is the reason I returned the next week. She held strong beliefs, and was intensely disappointed when her beloved church was sold. All the troubles and turmoil over selling the church never got in the way of our friendship. She lives on in my memory.