My Early History with UUFSCC
by Bob Bates

Linda and I moved to Davis in 1976. Linda got her PhD in English at UC Davis and then stayed on to teach and act as director of the campus writing center. I worked at the Yolo County Department of Public Health as the county health officer. We had attended the Davis UU church when our two children were young in order to give them a religious experience. Linda had grown up in a Southern Baptist church in East Texas, which she rejected because of racism and hypocrisy, and I had attended a Congregational church in Massachusetts. When our two children became teenagers, they drifted away from the church, and so did Linda and I. Then in 2000, when Linda and I had taken early retirement, we joined the church when we heard it had a new minister. Our son was married in the Davis UU Church.

We moved to Aptos in the summer of 2008 in order to escape the heat and pollen of the Sacramento Valley which had bothered Linda, and we were also closer to grandchildren We started attending the UU Fellowship of Santa Cruz County and got to know a lot of people right away as we attended the TGIF parties. I remember wonderful hospitality and stimulating discussions with Rich Racimora, Mike Jerry, Don Hoernschemyer, Art Anton, Mel Cole, Doug Bowman, Bob Kraft, and Robert Fish. I remember frequently being warmly greeted by Margaret each Sunday morning at the front patio greeting table. Margaret transitioned to Garreth and I missed her warm feminine greetings. We joined the Fellowship in 2009. I got involved in the governance of the Fellowship by being on the Finance Committee, and later on the Bylaws Committee and Facilities Committee. I was elected to the Board of Directors and advanced to the office of President at a challenging time when our settled minister, Rev. Pallas Stanford, was having problems which were causing turmoil among the members. Pallas subsequently resigned which I think was the correct thing for her to do professionally. The recruitment which followed brought us Rev. Russ Menk. I was very pleased with this as we had gotten to know and respect Russ previously when he had attended the Fellowship. Russ had a very good tenure with our Fellowship. His management and administrative skills were especially valuable for our Fellowship at that time. When the Covid epidemic hit in 2020, Russ had just begun his sabbatical leave. He returned from his sabbatical, which I believe is a very unusual thing to do, to lead our Fellowship through that difficult time, including instituting our online Zoom Sunday services.

Linda was diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease in 2015 and she did pretty well until about 2021 when it began to be difficult for her to attend the Fellowship in person. Over the next two years my time and energy were focused on Linda, and she died in May 2023. Since that time I have been gradually reengaging with the Fellowship, but with somewhat less energy than before which I attribute to my age and being out of town fairly often to visit my friend Angel Eberlein who lives in Woodland, over two hours away. When I have visited Woodland, I have attended the Davis UU Church a few times, but it no longer had much of an attraction as there were few people I had known from before and they had a new young minister.

Over the past couple of years I have been impressed with the energy and vitality of the Fellowship. This came as a pleasant surprise as I would have expected a letdown after Rev. Russ Menk's departure, an interim period without a minister, and now with a hybrid minister arrangement. The Fellowship has been a very important part of my life for the past seventeen years.