This collection consists of correspondence, notes, published works, and miscellaneous material of Lester Mondale, a retired Unitarian minister from near Fredericktown in Madison County, Missouri. He was president of the Fellowship of Religious Humanists, 1965-1972 and 1974-1976. Much of the collection is related to the Fellowship.

Lester Mondale was accorded some local recognition after his half-brother, Walter F. Mondale, served as Vice President of the United States, 1977-1981. However, he was already well known internationally as an author and lecturer, and as president of the Fellowship of Religious Humanists.

Mondale was born in Minnesota in 1904. Raised as a Methodist, he became interested in Unitarianism while a student at Hamline College. He entered the Unitarian ministry in 1926. After completing his education at Harvard Divinity School in 1929, Mondale held pulpit at various Unitarian churches, including a thirteen-year stint as a pastor in Kansas City, Missouri. He retired in 1962 to an eighty-acre farm near Fredericktown.

However, retirement did not bring inactivity. In addition to accepting several appointments as interim pastor to Unitarian congregations, Mondale became very active in humanist and ethical circles. His association with the humanist movement went back to 1933, when he became the youngest signer of the seminal document of American humanism, “The Humanist Manifesto.” He was also a member of the Unitarian Ministers Association and the American Ethical Union, and was a guest lecturer at theological schools and universities under the sponsorship of the American Humanist Association, 1966-1967. He was elected to the presidency of the Fellowship of Religious Humanists in 1967, serving until 1972. He was elected to a second term, 1974-1976.

Nearly all of the papers in this collection pertain to Mondale’s association with the Fellowship of Religious Humanists. The Fellowship, organized in 1963, was seen as a “rallying point” for non-theists and religious liberals who regarded religious experience as a fact of human existence, and who were dissatisfied with secular humanism and traditional religions. The Fellowship was also regarded as a bridge organization for religious humanists, and, as such, was affiliated with the American Ethical Union, the Unitarian-Universalist Association, the American Humanist Association, and the International Humanist and Ethical Union. In company with these groups, the Fellowship sponsored lectures, conferences, and meetings. The Fellowship also began publication in 1967 of a quarterly journal, Religious Humanism.

The collection is most complete for the period of Mondale’s first term as the president of the Fellowship, 1967-1972. Included are eight folders of correspondence, primarily with Edwin H. Wilson, the editor of Religious Humanism and administrative secretary of the Fellowship until 1970, and with Doris Slaughter, who became office manager after Wilson’s retirement. From “Humanist Center,” the headquarters of the Fellowship at Yellow Springs, Ohio, both Wilson and Slaughter corresponded frequently with Mondale in connection with the mechanics of running the society, setting up annual meetings and conferences, publishing the journal, and directing annual appeals for
Mondale also corresponded widely with the leaders of the societies with which the Fellowship was affiliated, and with the officers and benefactors of the Fellowship.

Mondale also received regular financial reports on the Fellowship from Yellow Springs, and the collection includes financial figures for the period of Mondale’s first term as president, 1967-1972. Also available are statistics on membership, promotions and appeals, subscriptions to the journal, and correspondence and notes connected with the annual meeting of the Fellowship, 1971.

The remainder of the collection contains several folders and three volumes of Mondale’s writings on religious humanism. There are also five folders of miscellaneous printed material from the affiliates of the society, including a file of bulletins issued by the International Humanist and Ethical Union of Utrecht, The Netherlands.

**Shelf List**

This collection consists of correspondence, notes, published works, and miscellaneous material of Lester Mondale, a retired Unitarian minister from near Fredericktown in Madison County, Missouri. He was president of the Fellowship of Religious Humanists, 1965-1972 and 1974-1976. Much of the collection is related to the Fellowship.

Folders 1-8: Correspondence, 1965-1972.

Folder 1: Correspondence, 1965-1967.
Folder 2: Correspondence, 1968.
Folder 3: Correspondence, January-June 1969.
Folder 4: Correspondence, July 1969-February 1970.
Folder 5: Correspondence, March-May 1970.
Folder 6: Correspondence, June-December 1970.
Folder 7: Correspondence, January-June 1971.
Folder 8: Correspondence, July 1971-September 1972.


Folders 19-23: Miscellaneous bulletins and printed material, ethical and humanist societies, 1968-1972


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