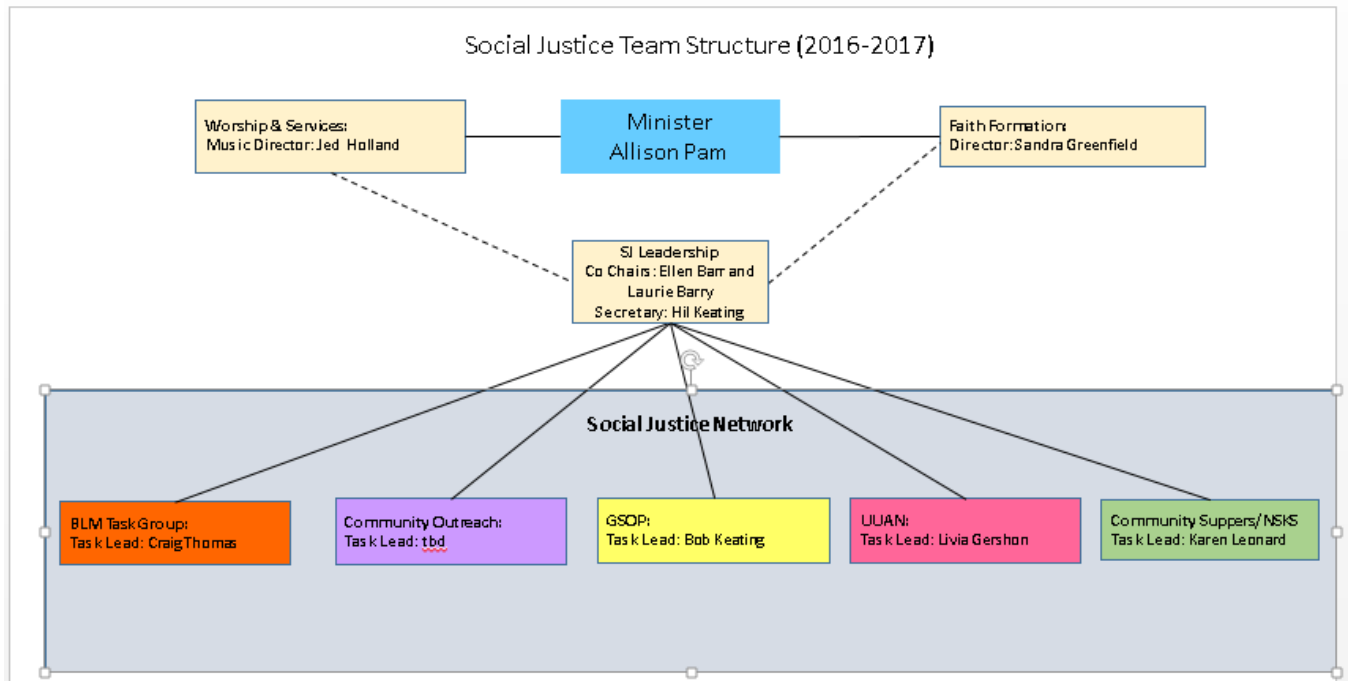


Social Justice Network Annual Report, 2016-17

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Overview

This past year Social Justice Leaders worked with Reverend Allison to start planning a restructuring of the Social Justice Network. After a number of meetings, the following picture emerged:



In looking at the teams for 2016-17, we also defined role responsibilities, critical functions such as communication, and the importance of monthly meetings with all task group leads.

Another focus of the Leadership Team was to consider UUCN's "Strategic Goals," and in particular the goals that were called out for the current year(s). These included (1) choosing a main issue to focus on as a congregation and (2) engaging more people in support for the Community Dinners. Our *choice* was "Black Lives Matter," and details about this work and that of the Community Suppers project are given in their respective sections.

SJ Leadership

Ellen Barr (co-chair), Laurie Barry (co-chair), Bob Keating, Elaine Thomas, Adrian George, Craig Thomas, Hilary Keating, Livia Gershon, Karen Leonard

SJN Members

Moe Daniels, Nona Storer, Marty Storer, Harvey Keye, Paula Super, Seth Bonvouloir, Rafael Calderon

Black Lives Matter

A quick summary for the Black Lives Matters team is that it has been in a state of education and transition. The BLM Banner is a good "representation" of this in many ways. Our BLM banner, raised in early 2017, represents our continued commitment to racial injustice both internally and externally. As

part of displaying the banner, the BLM team provided several educational opportunities such as introduction to BLM discussions and in house showings of the film *13th*.

We as a congregation continue to educate ourselves not only internally, but also by attending workshops, lectures and other events sponsored by organizations, such as GRACE, Minns, GSOP, United for a Fair Economy, and American Friends Service Committee.

In February, the Black Lives Matter team helped initiate a series of classes, led by Ken Wagner, member of the [GRACE](#) (Growing Racial & Cultural Equity) Team, and entitled “Being White in a Racist World.” There were 25+ people who participated in the 8 weeks of class. The feedback on the curriculum has been extremely positive, and the Black Lives Matter team is continuing the dialogue with bi-weekly discussions.

In addition to educating ourselves, many of the congregation have gotten involved with other organizations. The following organizations we have reached out to find common ground: BLM Boston, BLM Manchester, My Brother’s Keeper, UU Action Network, GSOP, GRACE, Voices of Faith, and Citizens for Criminal Justice Reform. Because of these continued efforts, two major things that have happened. First is that a representative from BLM of Boston came and gave a talk on BLM issues in the UU Church. This was well attended by folks in the church and the surrounding community. The other major action was a very successful initiative to help My Brother’s Keeper of Nashua with cleaning up the new Community Center.

The BLM team is responsible for a lot more things but these are the highlights. The BLM team looks forward to continued work over the next year and hope that our impacts are felt by those that are under-privileged.

Note: In 2016, the UUA General Assembly voted to continue support for the Black Lives Matter Movement. You can find details of this “Reaffirmation of Commitment to Racial Justice” at <https://www.uua.org/action/statements/reaffirmation-commitment-racial-justice>.

BLM Team Members

Adrian George, Allison Palm, Barbara Spitz, Bob Keating, Brenna Woods, Craig Thomas, Donna Dye, Elaine Thomas, Elizabeth Lewis, Ellen Barr, Gillian Hinkle, Harry Purkhiser, Jeffrey Beland, Jodie Holway, Kathleen Griffis, Kathy Fletcher, Kim Steele, Laurie Barry, Livia Gershon, Lori Lerude, Mandy Eberle, Margaret Wheeler, Marty Storer, Monica Staples, Tristan Husby

Community Outreach Team

The Community Outreach Team is a subcommittee of the Social Justice Committee. This team manages the Sunday Outreach Collections program, which includes:

- Managing the yearly calendar
- Reviewing requests, and communicating with requesting persons/organizations.
- Arranging for speakers from recipient organizations

- Communicating collection totals
- Working with requestors on related events/activities
- Helping with outreach counting

Team Membership

Bob Keating, Allison Annand, Victoria Agnew, and Ellen Barr.

Sunday Outreach Collections

Following is a summary of our collections in church year 2016-7:

Month	Recipient	Amount
June through September, 2016	End 68 Hours of Hunger	\$6,908.50
October, 2016	Senior Center Wellness Initiative	\$3,436.01
November, 2016	Southern NH Fuel Assistance	\$3,336.18
December, 2016	Harbor Homes - Ending Homelessness Fund	\$4,922.82
January, 2017	UUCN Senior High Group	\$4,357.00
February, 2017	Develop Africa	\$3,251.64
March, 2017	Children's Winter Garden White Wing Scholarship Fund	\$4,258.94
April, 2017	Circles	\$3,676.55
May, 2017	Friends Forever	*
June, 2017	My Brother's Keeper	*
	2016-2017 Total	*

* Not available at the time this document was finalized.

UUCN Community Suppers

This month, June 2017, is the 5 year anniversary of the 3rd Sunday evening Free Community Dinners at UU Nashua. In evaluating the Community Dinner with the Ends Statements of the Strategic Plan, we submit the following observations:

Within- While working as volunteers at Community Dinner, UU Nashuans are joining in fellowship with other members and friends. Our volunteer crews often get to know each other better because of the work they do in the kitchen & the time they spend together. We feel Community Dinner is a form of worship. Is there any better way to live our first principle than to care for all who show up both in the kitchen and the dining room? No questions asked. No judgements placed. Preparing & serving Community Dinner is a worship that nurtures, challenges, and inspires.

Among- By lighting a chalice to center the volunteers and bring everyone together, Community Dinners help create a beloved community among UU Nashuans. The volunteers who work on Community Dinner give generously of their time while promoting our church's mission.

Beyond- Community Dinner welcomes everyone. Some guests may be seeking personal transformation and a spiritual home, although many are not. A goal of Community Dinner is to provide a safe space for those who may usually struggle to be accepted in the community of Nashua. We see the inherent worth and dignity of each person and treat each person as we ourselves would like to be treated. The past year has been a year of transition. Last fall, Jenn Morton decided to step away from the role as a leader of the Community Dinner project, and last month Michelle Morrison stepped away as well. Thankfully, Karen Leonard has committed to stay on as a "go-to" person should questions about Community Dinners arise. She has taken on the role of Social Justice Team member as Head of the Community Dinner project. Karen has worked with Jenn & Michelle since the beginning of this project 5 years ago, and with the help of "Lead" roles, newly created for ongoing volunteers, Community Dinners will be prepared & served with the same loving care that has accompanied them for the past 5 years.

In December, a new model for serving Community Dinner was implemented. In an effort to further promote the dignity and respect of all Dinner patrons, we went from a traditional buffet-line/Soup Kitchen model to restaurant style serving. The patrons are welcomed to sit at a table whenever they arrive, and some bread or popcorn awaits them as a snack. A coffee cart makes the rounds in the dining room, and mugs are refilled often. At 5pm dinner service starts, waitstaff talk to the patrons about the menu and take orders. Kitchen servers prepare the plates behind the scenes, and the guests are served. Waitstaff also bus the tables, which helps with a steady flow of dishes coming back to the dishwashers. All of the feedback we received from guests about this change has been positive.

Attendance at Community Dinners varies from month-to-month, but is always over 50 people, and can sometimes be close to 75 people. Each month we receive grateful comments about the serving style, the food quality, the kindness of the volunteers, the take-away table goodies, the clean & relaxed environment, and the music.

The December AREA event included packing “care packages” of toiletries, nonperishable snacks, and winter warmth items. These backpacks of goodies were available for take-away by Community Dinner guests at both the December & January meals. After the January dinner, the leftover backpacks were donated to the Nashua Soup Kitchen.

Since the summer 2015, John Burkitt’s “Let’s Put People on Bikes” has generously donated time, supplies, and talent to perform bike maintenance at several of the spring/summer/fall monthly dinners (weather permitting). This endeavor has been well received by both dinner patrons and cyclists who happen to hear about it or see it while passing by. Many thanks to John & his crew of dedicated bike mechanics who make this possible.

Most months, soothing background music is provided by John Burkitt (bass) with Dr. Don Bernard (piano) or by Jed Holland (piano). The music is a unique gift that Community Dinner patrons do not experience anywhere else they eat. There are many positive comments each month about the wonderful ambiance that live music provides. THANK YOU to the musicians!

Thanks to the generosity of some of our Community Dinner shoppers, we have succeeded in staying within our budget allotted for 2016-2017. Often, shoppers choose to donate part or all of the items necessary to provide dinner for the guests. Many thanks to those who do the heavy lifting— quite literally— hauling a cart of food around at the store, transporting it to the church, and unloading it into the kitchen. We are incredibly grateful for the shoppers, especially Geri Davidson, who has been extremely committed to this project.

Community Dinner lost one of its most dedicated volunteers this year. Linda White loved to be the “Gatekeeper” for us each month. She often brought items to donate to the take-away tables, since as Gatekeeper she knew what people were most in need of, and she wanted to help them get those things. She was generous with her time and often multi-tasked while volunteering at the dinner. She would greet guests and maintain the take away tables for Community Dinner, while also knitting a hat or scarf that she would then donate. We are grateful for Linda’s dedication to the Community Dinner project. She is missed.

UU Nashua volunteers give Community Dinner life. It would be impossible to serve Dinner guests without the hours of help provided each month by cooks, bakers, set up & servers, gatekeepers & cleanup crew. We attempted to keep a list of all who volunteered at Community Dinners during the past year. We are hoping that we have not missed anyone, but please understand that we may have inadvertently left a volunteer participant off this list. This doesn’t mean your work was less valued. We are in awe of and appreciate every person who makes the time to help at Community Dinner. These Dinners would not be possible without you! THANK YOU!

Erica, Samuel & Victoria Agnew, Allison Annand, Lea Anne Atwell, Bob & Laurie Barry, Nancy Bell, Laura & Ruth Cannava, Laura Crossman, Moe Daniels, Geri Davidson, Stu & Suellen Davidson, Diane Eagle, Burns & Ellen Fisher, Kathy Fletcher, Diane Fontas, Jamie Gagne, Bob & Ellen Gaimari, Kathy & Frank Grossman, Sara Gual, Eileen Herring, Darcy, Gillian, Jackson, & Jamie Hinkle, Dan Holland, Megan & Tiffany Holmes, Hal, Jodie, Xander & Zoe Holway, Tristan Husby, Joanne Iovino, Pat Ladew, Karen & Russ Leonard, Gary Lerude, Elizabeth Lewis, Deede & Paul Loffler, Tina Marshman, Jim McCormick, Michelle Morrison, Jenn Morton, Kate O'Shea, Allison Palm, Barbara & Steve Pugh, Mary Beth Restivo, Nolan Ring, Patricia Rollman, Stan St. Onge, Charles Savoie, Nicole Straussberg, Lois Taylor, Mia Taylor, Asher, Craig, & Karen Thomas, Sally Thomas, Carrie Thompson, Linda White, Jess Woods

Respectfully submitted by Jenn Morton on behalf of the UUCN's Community Dinners

Nashua Soup Kitchen Meal Preparation

Our church is committed to preparing and delivering six casseroles per month to the Nashua Soup Kitchen. During fiscal year 2017, 11 individuals and one covenant group prepared and delivered 72 casseroles. Some individuals volunteered for one casserole, others for two or three or four or six. Some individuals volunteered for one month, others for two or three months.

The commitment to deliver 6 casseroles every month to the Soup Kitchen has decades of history in our church. The program is chaired by Marie Sias.

Ending Homelessness Fund

[The Ending Homelessness Fund of Harbor Homes](#) had another very successful year. We met our fundraising goal of \$200,000. On March 24th, Mayor Donchess announced that Greater Nashua had been certified by three federal agencies to have effectively ended homelessness among veterans. And the most recent Point in Time Count, held at the end of January but just announced, identified only three chronically homeless individuals in Greater Nashua, one of whom had already been housed by Harbor Homes. In addition to raising funds to maintain individuals in housing, an important part of the EHF's mission has been education, and during this church year it has put on two important education forums, one in October on substance misuse, addressing the opioid crisis, and the other in April describing how Nashua's Safe Station initiative works from the time an individual walks into a fire station seeking help for substance misuse to the different paths recovery may take. Special thanks to Elaine Thomas for all her work on these forums. While the EHF will continue to work on housing the chronic homeless, we are expanding our mission to include what HUD is now focusing on, youth homelessness, and will continue to be deeply involved in the work of Harbor Homes.

Members are: Bob and Hilary Keating (co-chairs), Elaine Thomas, and Sarah Widhu.

Granite State Organizing Project

[The Granite State Organizing Project \(GSOP\)](#) is a coalition of religious, community, and labor organizations that concentrates on community-level issues, mostly on the local and state level. In 2002, UU Nashua became a founding member, and has been an ongoing supporter in the 15 years since.

Since our last UUCN annual meeting, GSOP has had a very active year. Activities and initiatives have included:

- Hosted a well-attended Candidate Forum to help highlight state representative and senator positions for members of our community.
- Gave continued advocacy on the state legislative bills, including helping defeat SB-7 that would have cut the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as the food stamp program).
- Initiated a program to combat hate speech and violence called Active Bystander Training and is currently conducting training (and train the trainer) sessions around the state.
- Reached out to member organizations with “Sanctuary Toolkits” and conducted training sessions on Sanctuary. Is now working on coalition building on Sanctuary efforts in our community.

Finally, GSOP continued its efforts to create a moral economy, one manifestation of that being our work on the campaign Fight for 15 (a \$15 minimum wage for New Hampshire).

UU Action New Hampshire

[UU Action NH](#) formed in January as a way to help UU congregations across the state get more involved in social justice organizing. It provides education and training, and helps UUs communicate with our state legislators. The SJ Team voted in April to join the group, paying \$2 per member, or \$566 for the year. More than enough money--\$1,441—was raised through a “Fund the Need” item at the church auction in May. UUCN has also been allowing UU Action NH to temporarily use our EIN until it can become its own 501-C3 organization.

Conclusion

The Social Justice Committee wishes to thank our minister, the Reverend Allison Palm, for her support and help in encouraging the continuing integration of social justice with the life of the congregation. We are eager to continue our work with her in the coming year.

Respectfully submitted,
Ellen Barr, Laurie Barry
Co- Chairs, Social Justice Committee