

Annual Report of the Stewardship Team 2017-2018

Provided by Elizabeth Lewis, May 2018
Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashua, NH

The broad purpose of the Stewardship Team is to serve as chief fundraising arm of the church. Under the UUCN Strategic Plan adopted in June 2016 the Stewardship Team was given charge of generating the funds to grow the church as outlined in the 5-year plan. Our ongoing goal is to instill in our members an understanding of themselves as stewards of this church community.

With reference to our Ends statements, we envision every church member as able to affirm:

Within: I have integrated my values and contributions of time, talent, and treasure to the Church. I am proud of my church and feel a sense of ownership and commitment to the mission of the church.

Among: Our congregation's sense of abundance allows us to accomplish our mission.

Beyond: Sufficient resources to support the chosen outreach plans.

Our intent at the start of the year was to explore and to introduce a method of year round stewardship, a model that breaks a congregation into small groups, each group assigned a month to make their annual pledge. Rather than a once a year Stewardship campaign, conversations on stewardship happen monthly with revolving groups of members. Gary Lerude joined the Team to lead this effort, and we recruited Sherri Woolsey as Stewardship Team consultant. In November, Gary left the Team, and we backed away from further exploration of this model, at least for now.

We did continue with our efforts (begun last year) to educate on Stewardship, with periodic "Stewardship Matters" emails and Facebook posts and four "Coffee with The Stewardship Team" sessions on Sundays: November 19, January 28, February 25, and April 15. The April coffee was to thank all for participation in this year's campaign, and to introduce interested members to the UUA's "Sustaining Our Vision" campaign. That campaign offers a way to grow UUCN's endowment and to generate free money for the church.

At both our November and January coffees we introduced our Stewardship Campaign theme, "Sustaining Our Vision: Within, Among, Beyond". We informed members of our new sustaining members model: next year we will automatically renew a members' pledge at existing level unless we hear otherwise. We put emphasis on moving members to automatic monthly contributions, from a bank account or by credit card. Continuing education will be required as an overall increase in UUCN costs will require folks to adjust their contributions in thoughtful manner.

For the third year in a row, the Stewardship Campaign raised over \$300,000: it raised \$325,500 as of 5/14/2018. We realized this year that the change to Bylaws enacted last year, requiring a pledge to maintain membership, adversely affected several among us. Our campaign letter and outreach to members reminded all of this change. Rev. Palm and the staff approved a pledge grant program and offered it to 7 of our pledging units.

We did get 18 new pledges, from new members and from members/friends pledging for first time in few years. Twenty-seven pledges are reduced from the previous years; six pledging units have not renewed; three members have left the church, and we had two deaths. Again, we need to be sensitive to these types of changes moving forward. We have had an increase in pledging units, 176 excluding pledge grant recipients, a positive sign. The range of our pledges is large, from over \$15,000 to \$10, making it difficult to speak of “average” UUCN pledge. For this next church year, the median pledge is \$1,200, and the two most frequent pledge amounts are \$1,200 (18) and \$600 (13).

Members of the Stewardship Team began planning for next year even as we were preparing this year’s materials. Our theme for the upcoming year is “Growing Our Vision”, and we anticipate making good use of the church’s new database for the FY 20 Stewardship Campaign.

Team Members, 2017-18:

Elizabeth Lewis, Chair (retiring)

Jess Woods, Co-Chair (member 2015-)

Marie Bozzi (member 2017-)

Kate O’Shea (member 2017-)

Vengerflutta Smith (member 2017-)

Sherri Woolsey, Church Administrator (Team Consultant 2017-)

Rev. Allison Palm