

UU Church of Nashua Social Justice Annual Report 2017-2018

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Overview

This past year Social Justice Leaders worked with Reverend Allison to review progress against the team's stated Strategic Goals. Many of the goals were achieved and there was consensus to continue focus on Black Lives Matter and expand efforts for Immigrant support.

The team worked hard to thoroughly communicate the scope and responsibilities of signing onto the Immigrant Solidarity Network. One of the highlights was a visit to the First Parish Church of Bedford, MA to gather information about their Sanctuary Program. Finally, under the leadership of Ellen Barr, members of the Social Justice Teams solicited and obtained approval from the Board and Congregation to become a Sanctuary Support Congregation to the UU Church of Manchester.

Social Justice Leadership Team

Laurie Barry (chair), Bob Keating (GSOP), Ellen Barr (Outreach), Craig Thomas (BLM), Hilary Keating (Secretary), Livia Gershon (UU Action NH), Karen Leonard (Community Dinner)

Black Lives Matter

(See the project [Honoring the Campbells](#), and our [monthly discussions](#). Report coming soon.)

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, Kate Messner, and Ellen Barr.

Sunday Outreach Collections

Following is a summary of our collections in church year 2017-8:

Month	Recipient	Amount
June through August, 2016	My Brother's Keeper	\$4,769.13
September, 2017	Merrimack Hospice House	\$3,063.05
October, 2017	Operation Warm	\$3,785.05
November, 2017	Girl's Inc.	\$2,805.60

December, 2017	Aba Cross Cultural Collaborative	\$639.00
	Hurricane Maria Relief Fund	\$5,025.61
January, 2018	SNH Service – Fuel Assistance	\$2,962.00
February, 2018	Nashua Soup Kitchen – Employment Advocacy	\$2,665.89
March, 2018	The Donna Purkhiser and Gregory McDevitt Scholarship Fund	\$3,870.18
April, 2018	Black Lives of UU	\$3,550.00
May, 2018	Grow Nashua	*
June, 2018	YMCA	*
	2017-2018 Total	*

* *Not available at the time this document was finalized.*

UUCN Community Dinners and NSKS Monthly Meals

This month, June 2018, is the 6 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. Karen Leonard has functioned this year as the “go-to” person for questions about Community Dinners and has served as the Social Justice Team member as Head of the Community Dinner project. With the creation of “Lead” roles this year, we have seen more people volunteering and moving into lead positions, ensuring that our Community Dinners will be prepared & served with the same loving care that has accompanied them for the past 6 years. Karen will be working to develop her replacement in the coming months. Stay tuned!

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 again 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). We’ve also enjoyed music by Suellen Davidson and Lindsey Sylvester. 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!

Many thanks to our entire team of volunteers 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. Sometimes preparing rice or pasta at home and carting it to church on Sunday. We are incredibly grateful for the shoppers, especially Geri Davidson, who has been extremely committed to this project. And the cooks who have taken on additional work this year working with Geri on the grocery list each month.

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 are not going to list everyone who has volunteered this year, as surely we’d miss someone, but this doesn’t mean your work was not 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!

Respectfully submitted by Karen Leonard 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 2018, 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 managed by Marie Sias.

Granite State Organizing Project

NH Immigrant Solidarity Network

- Engaged faith leaders from more than 40 congregations in NH in standing up for immigrant families and against unjust deportations

- Monthly vigils, stood in witness and solidarity with immigrants at ICE headquarters at the Norris Cotton Federal Building in Manchester

Active Bystander Training

- Focused on bias-based aggression in social, work, and public settings, over 400 people in community, congregational, and educational setting and to groups of up to 60 people were trained

Quality Affordable and Accessible Childcare in NH

- Collected 26 stories on childcare issues and the way they affect the young families in our state, including affordability, accessibility for children with special needs, and inflexible hours

Young Organizers United (Y.O.U.)

- Established a student representative on the Manchester Schools Board of Education.
- In the process of establishing a YOU chapter in Nashua High School North and South.

Moral Economy Table

- Monthly meetings of the statewide partners to advocate for state policies that support families, including raising the minimum wage

State Legislative Action: worked in the areas of

- Health care
- Hunger
- Medicaid Expansion
- Immigration

UU Action New Hampshire

This year, [UU Action NH](#), the statewide social justice UU group formed in January 2017, has been working on several campaigns.

- **Immigrant rights:**
 - Group members have participated in monthly-plus vigils outside the ICE office in Manchester. The group is also supporting UU Manchester as it becomes a sanctuary church, offering to house an undocumented person or family fighting deportation.
- **Legislative work:**
 - UU Action NH held a Legislative Advocacy Day in February and cosponsored a presentation by Kathy Fletcher about the state legislative process. The group advocated for prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity, establishing family and medical leave, and supporting voting rights.
- **Bail fund:**
 - A working group within UU Action NH has begun an effort to create a community bail fund in New Hampshire to stop people from being imprisoned for lack of \$100-\$1,000.

UU Action NH has also joined the Coalition of Unitarian Universalist State Action Networks.

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'd also like to extend our thanks to Sadie Kahn-Greene who has help lead and encourage during Reverend Allison's Parental Leave. We are eager to continue our work in the coming year.

Respectfully submitted,
Laurie Barry
Chair, Social Justice Committee