**UU Church of Nashua**

**Social Justice Annual Report**

**2018-2019**

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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 with an ongoing focus on Racial Justice.

In addition to the numerous intra-church and community action activities outlined in this report, the team raised more than $4,000 to support the annual Nashua CROP Hunger Walk and hosted a forum to educate the congregation on New Hampshire’s ACLU efforts to repeal the death penalty.

***Social Justice Leadership Team***

Laurie Barry (chair), Hilary Keating (Secretary), Ellen Barr and Paul Introcaso (Racial Justice and Immigrant Solidarity), Kate Messner (Community Outreach), Karen Thomas (Community Dinner), Bob Keating (GSOP), Livia Gershon (UU Action NH)

# Racial Justice

The Racial Justice Working Group formed early Fall of this year. The group evolved out of the Black Lives Matter team to address racial justice issues for all people of color. It was decided that dividing up into smaller for more effective focus would be our best approach. We met May 9 to review this years’ progress, what things worked well, what could be improved and think about ideas and plans for next year. A follow up meeting is planned for August to discuss how to engage more people in the working group, Faith Formation Projects around race, other community service opportunities to support victims of Racial Injustice,

Here are key highlights from this year:

The Campbell Family Project Team (Harry Purkhiser, Tristan Husby, Roy Goodman and Kathi Fletcher completed seven presentations of our Sunday service to churches in New Hampshire and Vermont. One more is scheduled for July in Amherst, MA. The winter 2018 issue of UU World retold the story of Geoffrey and the Campbell family and highlighted the project. So the story of Geoffrey Campbell and the Campbell family lives beyond UUCN and the congregations the project Team visited.

The Geoffrey Campbell Dedication & Service happened September 22nd. The congregation raised over $4000 to pay for grave markers. Allison blessed the newly marked Campbell grave. About forty attendees laid flowers on the marker, a commitment to keep the family’s story alive. At the church, they, and others, heard from speakers, including Palm, study group members, and the local NAACP chapter. And 83 years after the Rev. Jeffrey Campbell’s ordination, UUA Executive Vice President Carey McDonald made a statement: “I want to offer, on behalf of the UUA, a humble apology to Jeffrey, Marguerite, Lillian, and Francis, and to their family . . .,” he said. “I can only imagine what would have been illuminated had the brilliant light of these ancestors been permitted to shine.” Last came a blessing for our chapel, now officially named the Campbell Chapel.

The UUCN History Project has had a busy start. Intermediate goals are to better understand our spiritual ancestors, their possible racist heritage, discover any new references to the Campbell family, and recommend ways to display our historical documents for our upcoming bicentennial.

Kathy Fletcher completed “Being White in a Racist World” training & she is now teaching the course at the UU in Plymouth NH

Conversations on Race met on the 3rd Tuesdays of each month. These are informal discussions open to the congregation about race and privilege, as we strive to make changes in our thinking, our interactions, and our world. We had 6 meetings. Thanks to Jodie Holway, Sadie Kahn-Greene, Gillian Hinkle, Garvin Warner and Allison Palm moderated for these.

NH Bail Fund— is also part of the UU Action committee and is also a partnership with UU Manchester and the NAACP. Despite the latest bail reform law that should prevent people from being held in jail due to their inability to pay bail, we have had 5-6 cases where we bailed out people who were incarcerated over minor infractions. We also worked with the UCC to bond out a Congolese man and a Honduran woman held in in the ICE detention center in Dover. For the 2018-2019 year the team will be adding Immigration Bonding to the focus. A promotion and fundraising campaign is in the planning stages.

Switch it up Sunday- Sing out Service. For this service, the children sang the adults out to our chosen “classes”. The classes explored issues of racial justice and our journey to building beloved community.

**NH Immigrant Solidarity and Sanctuary Movement**

This past year started off with a resounding vote by our congregation at our 2018 Annual Meeting. This was to approve UU Nashua becoming a Level 2, Sanctuary Support Church. Following that, our church strengthened its support for UU Manchester and their work to become a Sanctuary Church. Many folks from UU Nashua signed up to be volunteers. Over $1200 was raised toward a needed intercom system. And several members have been reaching out to help in more direct ways. UU Manchester has expressed a lot of appreciation for the support coming from our church.

Of particular interest was the pulpit exchange that took place on 10/21/2018. Allison Palm and Patrick McLaughlin went to each other’s churches that Sunday to gives services with a focus on “sanctuary,” both to high acclaim.

The work of the NH Immigrant Solidarity Movement continues to gather strength. Bi-monthly vigils at ICE headquarters continue and monthly network meetings at Blessed Sacrament Church bring in people from all over the state. Organizations working directly with immigrants, both in and out of the detention center provide updates. Important discussions of strategy and plans for direct action take place. For example, what to do about the border control checkpoints along i93, or how to hold Shaheen accountable for some of the votes she takes?

Although Dover had a family in sanctuary for a very brief period, no other situations have resulted in sanctuary stays. Now the three sanctuary churches are evaluating the opportunity to give their sanctuary support and spaces to a different group of immigrants. These are people awaiting asylum decisions, but languishing in detention because they have no sponsorship. As the summer progresses, we will see if this plan comes to fruition.

Currently there is an opportunity for the UU Sanctuary Team to sponsor “Bienfait”, a Congolese man who was bonded out via funds from UCC and the NH Bail fund. Bienfait needs both sponsorship and a place to live. The Sanctuary team is working with the UU Manchester Board to see if he can be offered sponsorship and quarters at UU Manchester. Because of the expected sponsorship demand, we anticipate more intersection between Racial Justice activities and Immigrant Solidarity.

# 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 Kate Messner

# Sunday Outreach Collections

Following is a summary of our collections (reportable to date) in church year 2018-2019:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| July-September 2018 | End 68 Hours of Hunger | $5,237.02 |
| October, 2018 | Gate City Bike Co-op | $3,178.71 |
| November, 2018 | UUCN Community Dinners | $3,973.36 |
| December, 2018 | Southern NH Fuel Assistance Fund | $4,861.43 |
| January, 2019 | Meals Matter | $3,207.55 |
| February, 2019 | Safe Stations (Harbor Homes) | $2,777.85 |
| March, 2019 | The Donna Purkhiser & Gregory McDevitt Scholarship Fund | $4,293.99 |
| April, 2019` | New Teacher's Training Retreat | $2,539.60 |
|  | **Subtotal FY 18 - 19** | **$30,069.51** |

# Community Dinner

This month, June 2019, is the 7 year anniversary of the 3rd Sunday evening Free Community Dinners at UU Nashua.

While working as volunteers at Community Dinner, UU Nashuan’s 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.

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

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. Karen Thomas is now chairing this team and works directly with the “Lead” volunteers ensuring each dinner is strategically planned in the most cost effective ways.

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). 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.

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 Thomas 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. 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

* The Micah award honors “community action heroes”, and this year’s Nashua chapter hero, is Jenn Morton.
* On the legislative front, GSOP is working to find ways for immigrants to obtain drivers licenses.  And, we are supporting various efforts to establish a minimum wage above the $7.25 federal minimum wage.
* A unanimous decision by the members to create a faith-based 501 (c)4 lobbying organization. It will give greater flexibility in our efforts to advocate for our social justice platform. Tristan Husby has agreed to serve on the organizing committee to establish it.

**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 Housing in NH**

* Focus on increasing affordable housing.
* Working with experts like Jim Vayo, a professional planner with extensive experience in housing development in the private and public sector.

**State Legislative Action: worked in the areas of**

* Health care
* Hunger
* Medicaid Expansion
* Immigration

# UU Action New Hampshire

-The group held its first Story Slam fundraiser on November 10, 2018, including a story by UUCN’s Vengerflutta Smith.

-UU Action NH continued its legislative advocacy work at the statehouse, including supporting the death penalty repeal.

-The NH Bail Fund began operating under the auspices of UU Action NH in spring of 2018. We ran a Faithify crowdfunding campaign, raising $6,720, and got additional funds from a generous donation from Starr King in Plymouth and some other individual donations. We have now bailed out five people from Valley Street Jail. Because of a (very good ACLU-backed) reform in NH law that has reduced the number of people held on bail, there has been less need for our work in that area than we anticipated. Because of that, we have used some of our funds to contribute to bonds for immigrants being held at the Strafford County facility in collaboration with the United Church of Christ. We are now embarking on efforts to raise more money for immigrant bonds, which are much higher than the criminal bails we’ve been paying. In recognition of the expanded mission, the fund is now known as the NH Bail and Bond Fund

-UU Action NH Spring Summit held on May 4, 2019 in Manchester. We heard updates about social justice organizing around the state, including Starr King’s story of hanging its Black Lives Matter Banner and a report from Gun Safety advocates in Laconia, who are looking for allies from other UU churches.

-UUCN’s own Tristan Husby was chosen as the group’s first executive director, a part-time position, and officially began work May 4.

-Looking into the new fiscal year, UU Action NH is looking to do more fundraising to continue growing its budget and capacity.

# Conclusion

It is with deep regret that we say good-bye to our long time Social Justice Team member, leader and activist Ellen Barr who has worked tirelessly over the years to overcome injustice on behalf of UUCN and the greater Nashua community. We will miss her.

I want to thank the team for their unwavering support and enthusiastic efforts during my tenure as Social Justice Chair. June will be my last month in this role.

Respectfully submitted,

**Laurie Barry**

**Chair, Social Justice Team**