

STEWARDSHIP TEAM, Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashua
ANNUAL REPORT, 2018-2019

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.

By the beginning of the church year, we already had a theme for our pledge drive chosen: "Growing Our Vision". Since the bulk of this planning was completed, meetings began in October, 2018.

Database: We spent much of our time re-organizing our methods to align with our new database. Brian Ibsen-Johnson (Stewardship Team) and Sherri Woosley (Church Administrator) spent many hours configuring letters and learning how to use the system the way we wanted. Year-End statements, tax letters, and fiscal year reminders can be sent by a simple form email through the Breeze database. More customized letters sent as paper mail were performed through a mail merge. The customized letter was our pledge letter. This year, it included a person's individual 8% and 10% increase as options into the next church year.

Pledge Drive Written Communication: Our pledge drive communications included a customized letter and an infographic that explained how our church budget is organized and spent. We used the Print Factory in Nashua again for these letters, with great service and quality.

At the start of the pledge drive, pledge emails were also sent from the Breeze database from one of the co-chairs of the stewardship team, Jess Woods. Jess temporarily changed her email address in Breeze to "stewardshipchair@uunashua.org" so that all returned emails would go to that account. Many congregants responded directly to the emails sent, which provided an efficient way for members to interact. Members were reminded that their pledge last year was automatically a "sustaining" pledge unless they "opted out". This is still new, so many reminders about this were sent in email and in each pledge letter.

An important aspect of our letters this year was including an 8% and 10% increase option for pledgers to check off and return. We wanted to make giving more easy as possible. The reality of time is that each year, we will need more money to do the same things in our congregation. Our base costs of running our church go up every year, so our income also needs to increase in order to sustain us.

Pledge Drive Messaging: The first Sunday Worship Service in February was themed around stewardship and giving. We also organized 11 small gatherings aimed to give a more hands-on approach to talking with our congregation about our money and gratitude. These gatherings were scheduled between December, January, and February. Members of the congregation

were asked if they could host a gathering and many graciously agreed! One gathering was canceled due to low attendance expected. A member of the Stewardship Team and Rev. Allison Palm were present at each of these gatherings. Personalized letters were distributed at these gatherings. Each gathering was about 2 hours long and though our plan was to have 15-20 minutes talking about stewardship, usually this conversation was the majority of the time.

Pledge drive Results: For the fourth year in a row, the Stewardship Campaign raised \$334,164 as of 5/24/2019. This includes the Matching Gift Campaign detailed below.

This year, we have 174 pledging units. Our pledges continue to have a large range (\$10 to \$20,060) and so finding an average (arithmetic mean) is not extremely informative but is found to be \$1,931.59. The median (arithmetic median) of the church's pledges is \$1,060. The geometric mean, which discounts all outlier pledges is found to be \$814.18. Since this is the first year we have tried using the geometric mean, provided for reference is last year's geometric mean at \$627.16.

Pledge Grant: Rev. Allison Palm continued to seek out members that might need to utilize a pledge grant in the next fiscal year.

Matching Gift Campaign: We had a generous Matching Gift donation of \$6,000 made to the congregation at the start of May. This was presented to the Board of Trustees and communicated with Jessica Woods on the Stewardship Team. Quickly, the "Matching Gift" Campaign was launched on Sunday May 5. The congregation overwhelmingly came through with over \$12,000 in the next two weeks toward the match! Our "pot" was overflowing. There were 6 pledge units that raised their pledge either again or for the first time during this match.

Trainings: Three members from the Team: Vengerflutta Smith, Marie Jones, and Sherri Woolsey, attended a workshop in April hosted by Stewardship for Us, a consulting team. It was held in Milton, MA. Additional training and education is desired by the team moving forward.

Auction: This year, our Auction was held on a Sunday after church, May 19. The auction was again services only and led by a fearless Kim Steele. Kim came into the planning later than usual due to a chair needing to step down for this spring. The auction this year had more attendees than years past and raised over \$5,000. This year, at the auction, shirts for the UU Church of Nashua were sold as well as 3 pieces of art by Cal Libbey. A post-auction debrief is still to be scheduled for more take-aways from the event. The Stewardship Team along with Rev. Allison has discussed exchanging the auction for another type or a series of other fundraisers to take its place in coming years. It should be noted that the auction took place on the final day of the match campaign.

Team Members, 2018-19:

Jess Woods, (Spring 2015-2019), Co-Chair, retiring

Vengerflutta Smith (2017-) Co-Chair

Marie Bozzi, (2017-2018)

Marie Jones (2018-)

Brian Ibsen-Johnson (2018-)

Sherri Woolsey, Church Administrator, Team Consultant (2017-)

Rev. Allison Palm