

President's Report

Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashua

June 6, 2021

I think that if you had told me when I joined this congregation 7 years ago that I would eventually be the President of your Board of Trustees, I would have offered you a place to sit down because clearly, you were delirious. If you had told me 7 years ago that I would eventually be the President of your Board of Trustees during a Global Pandemic making our church services entirely virtual, I probably would have backed away slowly, afraid of what may come out of your mouth next. Clearly, you were great at concocting fictional things in your head and who knows what may have come out of your mouth next! But alas. Here we are. We have completed our first entire virtual church year. And we have done it well – might I add. I just want you to pause for a moment and scroll through your zoom pages. Look who is still here. Look at this community that continues to thrive even when all of the obstacles around us suggest we should be doing otherwise. I have never been prouder to be a part of a community as I am of this one. We have accomplished more than most and we have done so knowing that things may have to change at any moment. We have done so and forgiven mistakes and mishaps that have occurred throughout. We have done so through our own Love in virtual action. I just need to say thank you up front for that.

I also want to thank our incredible staff. Allison, Sadie, Sherri, Ericka, Ben and Jed. I hope you understand what a difference you make in the life of so many. We are still here because of you. You have given us all hope when hope seemed to be a thing of the past. You find ways to connect with us and make sure that we remain an interconnected web and loving community. From beautiful stop motion stories to music videos more complicated than MTV, to babies and children being dedicated online, and of course to our infamous Elmo and Kermit, you all are invaluable to our congregation and to our lives. Thank you for much for continuing to create a space for us that we can call home, even virtually.

There are also an enormous number of Volunteers who make this church what it is today. Everyone has had a hand in something or other to make this church work but I do want to make sure that I give a huge shout out to Frank and Kathy Grossman. We have all done our part to make sure that church is functioning but these two have gone above and beyond to keep church alive and well. Frank has participated with the staff to make sure that Sunday morning worship runs. Kathy has led our music team to make sure that we consistently have beautiful music for each Sunday. You welcome us into your home every Sunday with a magical wonderbot that brings Wonder to children and adults alike. Thank you so much for your time and dedication to this church. I feel like I can speak for all of us when I say we love and appreciate you. And to all of our volunteers who have made this church year as incredible as it has been, I thank you as well from the bottom of my heart.

I also want to point out how hard your Board of Trustees has worked over this last year. As a lot of you may know, we have been up to quite a bit this year. I'll give you an overview of all the things we have accomplished or plan to accomplish over the next 2 years.

Baseline Survey Data and Subcommittees

We took the information we gathered from the Baseline Ends survey (which if you have not filled out by now, please do because we use this to guide our work!) to create goals for the Board to accomplish over the next few years. Based on the information from this survey and from suggestions made by Mark Ewart from last year's observations, we decided to split the Board into two subcommittees to achieve these goals. Our first goal is around Monitoring. We realized that the Board has done a great job of monitoring things happening around us but needed to do work on monitoring ourselves. We tasked this SC with looking at our own policies. We had intended to look at these during the first half of the year and move onto Allison's executive limitations, but this proved to be a bigger task than expected. The work we were able to do was good but lengthy conversations pushed our timetable back. We were able to successfully go through and comply with all our policies and plan to continue this practice in the future. Our intention will be to start reviewing Allison's executive limitations in the Fall. The tendency of the Board over the past many years has been to add limitations when necessary and have not removed any. We want to do work around streamlining them to make sure that this is manageable for Allison and for future ministers to come.

We have also created an Endowment Subcommittee. This committee has set forth a 2-year plan to develop a policy and purpose for our Endowment. This can sometimes feel like the elephant in the room. Mark Ewart gave us some feedback on how we need to start navigating this and I am happy to report that this SC has hit the ground running. They have been doing research with other churches, starting more intentional conversations with the Invested Funds Committee, and even started looking into resources that the UUA has to offer, such as the Common Endowment Fund. This is certainly a Herculean task, but this team has taken it on and has been making great progress. We plan to bring you more information as we learn more about this process. Please know we are working on this goal with our Ends and Mission in mind.

While these Subcommittees and goals are what takes up large pieces of our meeting, we have also done some work in becoming better story tellers. We were given feedback that we were great at telling stories about our physical building, and we could talk about some UU history, but we were not great at telling the stories of this church's ancestors. This has been one of my favorite practices. We take 30 minutes at the beginning of each board meeting to talk about the people who came before us and the people who are here now. We are intentional in our conversations around who has impacted our lives. When we first started this practice, I did not know where it would take us, but I firmly believe it has created a strong foundation for our work. We are able to talk, reminisce and learn about who has made our church what it is today. I cannot begin to describe to you how much I have learned about our past and current communities. I look forward to our future coffee hours where we can continue these conversations.

At the beginning and throughout this whole year, we have been able to work through creations of policies around COVID. The flexibility and willingness of our congregants and staff have been the

biggest asset. Things have been changing at the drop of a hat and your Board and Staff have been working tirelessly to keep up with safety guidelines. This has involved conversations with the preschool and making difficult decisions for the betterment of our community.

Overall, I think this year has been incredibly successful. I mentioned our practice of storytelling. Specifically, storytelling around the people of this church. I cannot wait for Simon to grow up and tell him what he does not even realize he has lived through. I cannot wait to tell him about this community that held him in love over a VIRTUAL child dedication And how he slid down a slide when his name was being read out... But mostly, I cannot wait to share with him the stories of you all. During this time that could have separated us and broken us apart. We have remained together, a community of people, who knows that every person is worthy of love and attention. This will be quite the story to tell.

Now, let' hear from Allison on her Minister's report.