

SOCIAL JUSTICE TEAM REPORT FOR 20-21

The Social Justice Team consists of Livia Gershon (UU Action NH), Tom Harris, Paul Introcaso (Racial Justice and Immigrant Solidarity), Bob Keating (GOSP), Hilary Keating (Secretary), Kate Messner (Community Outreach), Jessica Price, and Karen Thomas (Community Dinners/NSKS Casseroles, L'il Farm Stand, Inquirers Series). There was no assigned chair for the SJ Team, and team members took turns chairing meetings. Ministerial Intern Ben Atherton-Zeman, along with Peggy and Charlotte Cardone, organized the UUCN's participation in the 2020 virtual CROP walk.

As with everyone else, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted and interfered with some of the activities of the Social Justice Team, described below. However, we continued to meet via Zoom from 6:30 to 7:30 pm on the first Monday of the month and had a successful year working in the areas of racial justice, immigration, climate change, food insecurity, affordable housing, and outreach to the community. There is much overlap among the groups described below and many other UUCN members were involved in making these activities successful. We thank them all for all the help received in trying to make a better world, especially in such a difficult time, and always welcome new members to the Team!

L'il Farm Stand/Community Dinner/Inquirers Series

Karen Thomas and Peggy Cardone were co-chairs of the L'il Farm Stand, which was designed and built by Steve Hedges. During the summer of 2020, the L'il Farm Stand operated successfully for 12 weeks, donating a total of 1,340 pounds of food. Gleaners provided 920 pounds, Volunteers provided 285 pounds, and Grow Nashua provided 135 pounds. For the summer of 2021, UUCN will work in collaboration with Grow Nashua, and the farm stand will open on June 27th. It will accept donations of fruits and veggies and will buy some from a farm in Dublin. The food will be distributed Fridays at the Arlington Street Center, Saturdays at PAL, and Sunday afternoons at UUCN.

The Community Dinners did not operate this church year because of the pandemic, although casseroles were prepared by church members each month and donated to the Nashua Soup Kitchen and Shelter. Community Dinners will resume for June, July, and August in a Grab and Go format, coordinated by Karen Thomas and supported by too many church members to mention without missing someone.

The Inquirers Series introduced new members to the church and its programs, each series running five sessions. Karen Thomas, Ben Atherton-Zeman, Sadie Kahn Greene, and Rev. Allison Palm facilitated this program on a rotating basis.

Immigrant Solidarity/Sanctuary/Host Homes

Paul Introcaso was the representative for these issues. The Nashua Host Home Network and Sanctuary work, which support immigrants seeking asylum to stay in this country legally, also included the participation of Tristan Husby and Jessica Price. Several people were hosted in Nashua and at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Manchester this year. Money was raised through fundraisers for legal expenses of these individuals, including a Faithify crowdfunding campaign run by UUCM.

The Immigrant Solidarity Network is organized through Granite State Organizing Project (GSOP) and allied groups to respond to the fear and anxiety in our communities as a result of an increase in immigration enforcement and random acts of violence against immigrants across the country. Church members, including Rev. Allison, Tristan Husby, Jessica Price, Tess George, and Paul participated in vigils

outside ICE in Manchester and in Rolling Rallies to Free Immigrant Detainees at the Strafford County Courthouse in Dover, NH on many Sundays.

Racial Justice

The Racial Justice group, led by Rev. Allison and Jodie Holway, organized Thirty Days of Love, the UUA Side With Love campaign's annual celebration, which ran approximately from Martin Luther King Day to Valentine's Day and focused on 4 different themes, a different one each week, and included activities in the categories of Read, Watch, Participate, Listen, and Worship. The group's first priority was to support Black Lives Matter and, to this end during the pandemic, it sponsored on-line videos followed by group discussions via Zoom on related topics.

UU Action NH

Livia Gershon was the UUANH representative of the SJ Team. Tristan Husby, Jessica Price, Fahmina Zahman, Kate Messner, and Paul Introcaso are also members of the SJ Team who were active in UUANH, a statewide group committed to and firmly grounded in the UU principles of world peace, justice, and sustainability, and UUCN has been an integral part of efforts by its State Action Network. Highlights of activities this year include continued work on immigrant justice in partnership with Granite State Organizing Project, the NH Immigrant Solidarity Network, and other organizations. We participated in the Rolling Rallies at Strafford County Courthouse in Dover, NH in support of detainees and worked with the national UU the Vote campaign and local allies to boost turnout in November and help ensure that everyone can vote safely despite the pandemic.

Since the start of July 2020, as of mid-May the Bail and Bond Fund has paid \$6,825 in bail and \$1,000 in bail commissioners' fees to bail out 25 people from Valley Street Jail in Manchester. While there has been a big increase in requests to the Bail and Bond Fund, it hasn't paid any immigrant bonds this year because there haven't been eligible people due to COVID-19 and legal changes.

UU Action Network has also been involved in climate issues, in collaboration with Renew NH and UU College of Social Justice. UUANH participated or sponsored presentations as well, such as "Speaking Justice in the Language of Our Faith: NH and Beyond" and a conversation regarding the spirituality and significance of land acknowledgement with two speakers from the Cowasuch Band of the Pennacook and Abnaki people. Upcoming in May is "Faith, Climate, and Civil Disobedience", a conversation with leaders from the 2019 civil disobedience action at the Bow NH power plant as well as the UUANH Spring Summit/Annual meeting with Rev. Ranwa Hammamy, Executive Director of UU Justice Ministries of CA speaking on "Crossing Borders in a Warming World".

These activities were funded in part by the annual Trivia Night in September, the Sermon Slam in November, and a fundraiser entitled Getting Free, Staying Free, which raised \$1999.50! The support of this congregation was immeasurable.

Granite State Organizing Project (GSOP)

Bob Keating was the GSOP representative of the SJ Team. Statewide, GSOP continues its focus, in the broadest sense, on creating a moral economy, working on such issues as increasing the minimum wage and workers' rights, increasing affordable housing, immigrant rights, gun safety, and, this year in particular, voter education, getting out the vote, and helping our community members, particularly the

most vulnerable, deal with the impact of the pandemic. Addressing the needs for much more safe, decent, and affordable housing throughout our state has been a central focus throughout GSOP’s history, and it very much remains so. The goal, established with the Interfaith Housing Justice Group last year, has been to create significantly more affordable housing in Nashua, with a goal to create 2,000 units over the next 10 years. This year GSOP focused on our continued work with the residents of Bronstein Apartments, Mayor Donchess, the Nashua Board of Aldermen, and the Nashua Housing and Redevelopment Authority. The BOA approved the demolition of the 46 Bronstein apartments, to be replaced by 216 apartments, most affordable, 10% at market rate. At the same time, the BOA gave preliminary approval for the High Street city parking lot to be sold to a private developer, spending \$2.5M to alleviate parking created by the selling of the lot; this project is referred to as School Street Flats and will consist of 150 apartments to be rented at market value. GSOP worked with Bronstein residents to attempt to ensure that they had fair treatment during this process. Petitions were distributed and signed and letters were sent to the BOA and NHRA asking that Bronstein residents be allowed to move to School Street Flats and that students be allowed to remain in their current schools for the rest of the school year if the move from Bronstein happens during the school year.

In November, GSOP sent letters to the Mayor, the BOA, and NHRA suggesting a Housing Trust Fund be established and asking them to make a meaningful contribution to Bronstein residents to compensate them for their loss of homes and the disruption in their lives created by the demolition of their homes. In May, the Housing Trust Fund was approved, with an initial seed of \$30,000 and a \$10,000 addition to it each year as well as an agreement to look for more robust sources of funding for the Housing Trust Fund.

Outreach Collections

Victoria Agnew, Allison Anand, Bob Keating, and Kate Messner coordinated the Outreach Collection, accepting applications and vetting agencies to be recipients of the collections. Despite, or maybe because of, the pandemic, donors were very generous.

Date	Recipient	Amount
May 2020	Grow Nashua *	\$ 2,873.50
June/July 2020	68 Hours of Hunger *	\$ 5,111.11
Aug, Sept 2020	Minister’s Discretionary Fund	\$ 8,839.83
October 2020	GSOP	\$ 2,169.90
November 2020	Bridges	\$ 3,951.18
December 2020	SNH Services – Fuel Assistance	\$ 5,402.11
January 2021	SNH Services – Fuel Assistance	\$ 3,437.72
February 2021	GSOP Rental Fund	\$ 2,951.67
March 2021	Donna Purkhiser/Gregory McDevitt Scholarship Fund	\$ 3,595.50
April 2021	Opportunity Network	\$ 2,670.83
	TOTAL	\$41,003.35

*May and June/July 2020 were included because these months had not yet been totaled at the time of last year’s annual report and so were not included.

Respectfully submitted,
Hilary Keating, Secretary

