

SOCIAL JUSTICE TEAM REPORT
JUNE 2023

The Social Justice Team report has always been a misnomer for many reasons. A central reason is that the report is about the work the team members do themselves, of course, but also what both the congregation as a whole and our individual members do. Moreover, social justice is central to our Principles and Sources. In fact, the only specific goal in our Principles is the goal of world community, with peace, liberty, and justice for all. We may never reach that point, but we can help to make things better for more people in our community and our larger world. And we try to do so by joining with others in this central task. We generally meet the 1st Sunday of the month after the service in the Youth Room at 11:30 a.m. Please join us!

This is a long introduction to the report, which will be more snapshots than graphs and tables. Hopefully it will give you a feel for the work of the Social Justice Team. Much of the work on social justice done by members of our church is not seen. For example, just as I was about to begin to write this, a neighbor and fellow UU stopped by to get signatures for a candidate trying to run for office, showing there are many ways to do social justice work.

Here are snapshots of the work the SJ Team does:

- 20 UUCN members attended the Freedom Dinner of the **NAACP** of Nashua. Harvey Keys, a long-time member, won a Lifetime Achievement Award. Congratulations, Harvey!
- Week after week, when our state legislature is in session, UUCN members, particularly through our **Granite State Organizing Project** (GSOP, of which we are a founding member), express their views in person and via the internet. We do so on issues of immigrant rights, LGBTQIA+ rights, a free and open education environment for our students, free and open elections, and more
- Immigrant support efforts, which include supporting an immigrant family in getting housing, jobs, tutoring, and raising money for reliable transportation for the mother.
- The **New Hampshire Community Bail Fund**, started by several members from UUCN and hosted by the UU Action Network, have bailed out 253 people during the last 12 months, including 2 moms in time for Mothers' Day, and a total of 363 since the fund began. Since the beginning, this group has worked to improve, change the conditions in the jails, and prevent incarceration in the first place. Thanks to Paul Introcaso, Jessica Price, Livia Gershon, and Sarah Widhu for all the time and effort they put into this work.
- UUCN members are a steady presence in a community effort to stop the construction of a proposed **asphalt plant** on Temple Street. GSOP is an important group leading the rallies, organizing petitions, and testifying. The next hearing will be after our annual meeting. Please see the church newsletter for more details. Related to this effort has

been a group of residents, many who are relatively new and for whom English is not their first language, who have been working hard to protect and improve the health of their community, such as making safer streets. They meet at the Arlington Community Center and are a vibrant group.

- We have continued our work with the statewide UU Action Network. Paul Introcaso, Kate Messner, and John Nevin all attended its annual meeting. John has stepped in to be a liaison from the Nashua area. Thanks to John,
- Through our advocacy, GSOP has added its support to the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (UDHR) and has featured it on its website, encouraging its use in “personal and community work”. Article 1 states, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood”. The UDHR was written in 1948 and bears striking resemblance to our 1st Principle supporting the individual worth and dignity of all human beings. This is not surprising, as the editor of this document was Canadian Unitarian John Humphrey. Paraphrasing Bruce Knotts, the longtime former head of the UU United Nations Office, UDHR values are UU values. It is good that we have another vehicle to promote the UDHR so linked to our UU social justice work.
- Thanks go up to Caro Barschow and her committee who head up our efforts to be recertified as a **Welcoming Congregation**. This seems all the more important in this time of pushback and increased hostility and violence around issues of gender identification.
- **Affordable Housing** unfortunately has only grown in the need for more. There are some bright spots. Nashua’s Inclusionary Zoning ordinance (all development of 10 or more units are required to add more affordable units, geared to 80% or below of the mean or, as the alternative, give to the Housing Trust) has begun its work. **Stepping Stones**, a group that we have given to and which will be our October outreach recipient, focuses on youth up to the age of 25 who are homeless without permanent stable housing. They are in the process of opening a program in part of the former Daniel Webster campus and will include transitional housing and independent living. It will, when fully operating, serve as many as 90 youth. This is very good news for a very much underserved population that is quite vulnerable, many of whom have aged out of the foster care system. So good things are happening. And our church and its members continue to be active, as in supporting the creation of the new Nashua Soup Kitchen and Shelter facility. GSOP is once again a key advocate as is our own Reverend Allison through her work on the Interfaith Housing Group.
- Through weekly donations to the Outreach recipient, we donated more than \$28K from July 2022 through April 2023 and around \$400K since its inception. Groups that received Outreach funds during this period included ORIS (refugee and immigration services), NH Community Bail Fund, CASA, Seacoast Outright, Bridges, Southern NH Fuel Assistance, Nashua Soup Kitchen and Shelter warming shelter, Donna Purkhiser and

Gregory McDevitt Scholarship Fund, and UU Action Network. Thanks to Kate Messner for her leadership on this.

- Finally, with our 200th Anniversary in 2026, we have begun thinking of our history as a church in regard to social justice and what we would like to see in our boldest dreams in the future for “world community”, but beginning with how we might utilize our resources, including the church itself, to further this vision. You will be hearing more about this in the fall. Please join us for these conversation. You are always welcome.

These were some snapshots of the work the Social Justice Team has been doing, but much else is done by so many of us in our church is done without fanfare. So, as a congregation, we are likely doing much more. Thanks for all those unreported efforts to make a better world. Maybe we can create a list in the future detailing all the work of the congregation. For those efforts by our fellow UUCN members, thank you, thank you.

Respectfully,

Bob Keating, Chair

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