

Good afternoon,

My name is Lindsey Hedrick and I am honored to be the President of the Congregation.

I want to begin by first thanking all the members of the Board of Trustees:

Burns Fisher, Vice President
Emma Rearick, Treasurer
Karen Murray, Clerk
Victoria Agnew
Cecile Bonvouloir
Paul Cardone,
Anne Smith
Robin Trudel

With over half of the Board members being either new to the Board or their respective office, myself included, a lot about this year felt new. While reflecting over the past year I kept coming back to the idea of a new normal. All of us lost our sense of normalcy during the Covid-19 pandemic. And as we gradually adjusted to the world around us, over the past few years many of us began returning to our pre-Covid activities in search of what felt normal. And I don't think I'm alone when I admit that nothing really felt normal, once Covid-19 came into the world. There was that frustrating and confusing time of just wanting to return back to normal. And we were grieving the loss of how things used to be, but there was no reset button. And then this year kind of felt normal. That's not to say that it felt like it did pre-Covid, because it didn't. And it couldn't. We have changed. The world has changed. And yet something about this year here at UU Nashua felt consistent. And it felt stable. And normal. A new normal.

And as I started to say, I could feel this new normal taking place in the Board too. With new faces and people in new positions, it was an opportunity to take a fresh look at a few different areas. The first few meetings of this year involved several conversations that would include questions like "And who is responsible for that?" Comments like "Oh, I didn't know that." And an occasional "How come we....[fill in the blank]?" We were all finding our way in this new normal, and finding a new way to fit together.

In an effort to be more efficient, we broke ourselves up into two different sub-committees. The Board has taken this sub committee approach for the last 6 or so years. By forming sub-committees, it allows us have smaller groups deep dive into certain areas and then bring information and suggestions back to the Board as a whole to discuss.

Some of you will remember we held a Next Steps Weekend in late 2019. During that weekend Mark Ewert, a paid financial consultant, came to visit us and assess the financial feasibility of UU Nashua holding a successful capital campaign. In his report to the Board, he listed the cemetery as a gray area, citing that the church members overall seemed unclear of the cemetery's governance and management. He noted that they have an independent board, and yet simultaneously are not really separate from the church. And candidly, this was not a surprise at the time. I can remember it being listed well before 2019 on the Board's list of items to discuss at some point in the future. To further explore this, the Board formed a sub committee whose goals were to clarify our relationship and come away with a better understanding of how we fit together in order to clarify roles and responsibilities. I appreciate the Cemetery Board of Trustees' willingness to enter into these conversations with us as we explore what is and isn't working and what might be improved upon. Spoiler alert. There wasn't a simple answer here, or a neat resolution tied up with a bow, and there is certainly more work to be done. But I look forward

to continued conversations with the Cemetery Board of Trustees as we build a deeper connection together in support of the Congregation.

Our second subcommittee started the first half of the year by creating a job description for Rev Palm. The board noticed as we reviewed our governing policies the past few years, that a few of those policies would fit more appropriately within in a job description. And inconveniently enough, Rev Palm did not already have a job description. However, creating one to capture her many responsibilities as Executive Director of UU Nashua has enabled us to have a more personalized ministerial review process in this upcoming church year.

After completing the job description, this sub committee pivoted itself to more financial matters and was asked to look comprehensively at how we review our finances at a board level. This stemmed the creation of our new financial review policy which has been added to our governing policies. The purpose of it is to instruct the treasurer along with a small financial committee to review our church's finances regularly independent of the minister to ensure both full transparency as well as accountability.

These new financial policies are setting us up this year to ultimately review the purpose of the Financial Records Review Committee, and determine if things can be done differently to better suit the needs of the Board and the Congregation. If you've followed me so far in this report, and are intimately familiar with our organization's structure, you may sense a potential next step. Any changes suggested to the Financial Records Review Committee, in either name or intent would require – say it with me – bylaws changes. I know. Get excited.

Now let me clarify before some of you start planning your out of town vacations for June 2025. I don't speak of bylaw changes with any sort of clairvoyant nature. There is still plenty of work to be done here both internally amongst the board members and externally communicating and workshopping with the congregation. Rather I mention the possibility of bylaw changes in the future to demonstrate the sort of forward thinking and additional long term planning work that the Board is committed to in order to preserve our functional foundation.

And lastly I'd like to add a bit of a personal reflection. When I agreed to become Vice President of the Board over 4 years ago, I couldn't actually envision myself being President. I said yes to being Vice President (pre-Covid, mind you) in what was at the time a very short sighted decision. Vice President? Okay, yeah. I can do that. And then when the time came to make the transition to President a little over a year ago, I was thinking. Lindsey, what did you get yourself into this time? You've really gone and done it now.... I was entirely unconvinced that I had what it would take. Looking at the people that came before me, I was thinking: there's no way that I could do what they did. There was no way that I could be president and make it appear as effortless as they did. And so I didn't really try to make it look effortless. I showed up as my whole self.

And what did that look like? A few weeks before becoming president you watched while I tried to give the offering during a Sunday service and Jordan knocked the microphone clear off of the pulpit. Twice. I showed up to more than a couple meetings 15 minutes late. And I can't even begin to count the many, many conversations where I interrupted a congregant mid-sentence by running away to chase after a child. And throughout all of this you gave me grace. You offered help, and support, and often childcare and allowed me to be the complete and imperfect President of this congregation.

Several times over the last 9 months people came up to me making comments about how I'm "in charge" now or I'm "running the show." And I'll confess I don't really feel in charge at all. I am part of an incredibly dedicated Board of Trustees, and I am so thankful for their hard work this past year. I'm grateful for Rev. Allison and her grounded leadership, and I feel so lucky to have this caring and compassionate community. You never made me feel anything other than capable and supported. Thank you for that.

In visualizing myself standing up here giving this report, my mind kept jumping ahead to what the next year has in store for us. In a few weeks we will be spending some 6 or more months out of our building. Out of this room. And while that adventure will undoubtedly have its stressors as all changes do, I'm excited to see what we learn from it. How will we grow from worshipping together in new spaces? What will we look like when we return to our sanctuary? And what will this sanctuary look like? Thinking ahead to next year's annual meeting, I can honestly say it may be the first time I'm looking forward to speaking in public. And next year I encourage you to remind me I said that.

Thank you again to all of you for what you have contributed to this church over the past year. I look forward to continuing in this new normal with you.

Respectfully submitted,
Lindsey Hedrick
President