

Annual Report of the Social Justice Team – June 2, 2024

The UU Church of Nashua has a long history of Social Justice activism, with the involvement of many members in the various programs and issues that arise in our city, state, nation, and world. The Social Justice Team itself has been active in UUCN since 1987. We initiate projects that address key issues in our community, advocate for issues that speak passionately to our values, and align with community organizations that can help strengthen the work that we do. Our Social Justice Team, active in our congregation since 1987, helps to publicize materials, organize events, and provide opportunities for members and friends to participate. Overall, we are grounded in our Unitarian Universalist values beginning with the inherent worth and dignity of all human beings.

The SJ team has been working in several areas and with other partners this year: racial justice, immigration, climate justice, the NH Bail Fund, Granite State Organizing Project, and Outreach.

Racial Justice: This group is a working group meeting quarterly. Its goal is to identify and work on anti-racist language. This year congregation members were offered a book to read and discuss on racial justice and UUCN was a sponsor of the NAACP's Annual Fundraising Dinner, which was very well attended.

Immigrant Solidarity and Host Homes: Some members of the SJ team attended a monthly vigil on the first Tuesday each month in Manchester at the Norris Cotton Federal Building, when immigrants had to check into ICE, sometimes not knowing whether they would be incarcerated or be able to return to their families that day. Following each vigil, the monthly meeting of Immigrant Solidarity was held at a nearby church.

Some members of the SJ team were also very involved with a Host Homes. The group connected with an immigrant family from the Congo, helping the family to get established, which included tutoring one of the children and a myriad of small but important tasks. The family was able to move from a small, old apartment to a much larger and brand-new apartment within the city.

Climate Justice: The SJ team is connected to the UU Action Network. One member, Kate, is particularly involved and provides our group with current information in regard to climate change. At this time, listening campaigns are being organized around the state to get the input of others in New Hampshire.

A local challenge the SJ team took on, in collaboration with the Granite State Organizing Project (GSOP), was to shut down the attempt to build an asphalt plant on Temple Street, close to downtown and in a neighborhood with the highest minority population. The establishment of

the plant was denied by the Nashua Planning Board in a unanimous vote, although it is under appeal by the company that wanted to build.

New Hampshire Community Bail Fund: The bail fund, led by Paul Introcaso has had an extremely busy year. With the request for funds tripling. As a result, the bail fund had to decrease the maximum amount of bail they would pay from \$500 to \$250. This group has been able to expand however, including all of Hillsborough County, Carroll County, Keene, Laconia, and Portsmouth. This spring, the bail fund ran out of money, but, putting the word out, received generous funds to continue their important work.

Community Outreach: During the calendar year, this group takes applications from local agencies for being the recipient of UUCN's Sunday collection for an assigned period, usually a month. The Community Outreach team organizes the yearly calendar, receives and reviews requests, selects the monthly recipient and arranges for speakers at Sunday Services. To date they have raised and given away over \$400,000 for dozens of different community organizations that do important work in our community.

Welcoming Congregation: UUCN is very involved with the LGBTQIA+ community and takes PRIDE in supporting them. Last fall, UUN intern Erin Scott successfully led the work for our church to be recertified as a Welcoming Congregation. In April, Kimayo brought the program, "My Queer Faith", which was very well received. The big event of the year is sponsoring and taking part in PRIDE WEEK, with the culminating event being Nashua's Annual PRIDE Parade, where many in the congregation walk in a group up Main Street, carrying banners to show our support.

Granite State Organizing Project: GSOP is a major ally for our work as it has been since its founding over 20 years ago and is New Hampshire's largest faith-based, grass-roots, community organization. UUCN has been a member for most of those years. In conjunction with other faith communities, labor unions, community groups, and individuals, GSOP seeks to strengthen communities, empowering them to find their voice and effect change. Aside from UUCN's work on the asphalt plant mentioned above, a significant amount of focus of our work with GSOP has been on housing. Areas of focus have been on the proposed Elm Street redevelopment, the Tannery's remediation and development, and continued efforts around the Nashua Housing and Redevelopment Authority, including the creation of the "Voices of Major Drive", a resident council to represent residents of Major Drive. This already resulted in the reduction of density of the proposed new development and creation of more green space and a link to the abutting Joyce Park. Our alliance with GSOP has been able to amplify the voices of many people and groups who are underrepresented in decisions about things in their lives most affecting them.

Other Activities: UUCN served as a warming station from February to May to provide a warm and safe place for anyone who did not have a place to spend the night during the winter. It was open from p.m. to am, and coffee and snacks were provided. Members of the SJ Team and the congregation were generous in providing snacks.

The Social Justice Team meets on the second Sunday of the month after the service, from 11:30 to 12:45. Active members include Cheryl Carroll, Joe Delin, Paul Introcaso, Bob Keating (Chair), Hilary Keating (Recorder), Secretary, Christal Lloyd, Kenna McLeod, Kate Messner, and Jessica Price. We don't usually meet as a group in July and August, but we would love to have you join us in September. And if you have a social justice issue that you'd like to work on and find possible support for, come join us at our next meeting!

Respectfully submitted,
Hilary Keating