

Minister's Report 2025-2026
UU Church of Nashua, NH - Rev. Allison Palm

As I tried to think about a theme for this, our 11th year of shared ministry together, a variety of words came to mind. We could say that this was a year of re-entry, as we moved slowly back into our buildings. We could also say that this was the year of dust, mostly construction dust from the intensive construction that began our year and the lingering projects that continued even up to this last month. I also considered chaos, a nod to both the chaos of doing church in a half unpacked, half finished, still not quite settled into space, as well as a nod to the chaos of our country in this moment.

But none of those seemed quite right for the feeling of this year. While the world both within and outside our walls may have been chaotic, what we found most here was connection and care. We came together in new ways, reminding each other over and over again about the power of community, and the importance of the community that we build here together.

We built community as we weathered the uncertainty and instability of finishing up a major renovation to our space. I knew from the first Sunday of the church year, that soggy Water Communion in our parking lot, that this year was going to be special. We built community as we vacuumed pew cushions, and mopped floors, and tried to remember how it is that we used to use our kitchen. We built community as we welcomed in the larger community to dedicate our new space back in November – what a homecoming celebration that was! We built community as we showed up again and again to protest together, to fight for justice, to defend the most vulnerable among us, and to remind ourselves that kindness does still exist even now. We built community as we worshiped together, and sang together, as we mourned together for dear ones lost among us, and for the loss of the world as we knew it. We built community as we had hard conversations, staying at the table and listening deeply to one another. We built community as we gathered around dinners and chalices and campfires.

This was not an easy year by any stretch of the imagination, but it was a year filled with resilience and love, and I am so grateful for all the ways we built community together. In the next few pages, I will share some of the highlights of how we have built community, and more specifically, how we have been working towards each of our Ends Statements this year. This report won't capture everything, but I hope it offers a snapshot of our year.

Highlights by Ends Statement

For each of our Ends, I wanted to share just a couple of the things we've been up to this year. There is a lot that is not included here, but much of that can be found in other reports. The Ends statements are in italics.

We create brave space for all ages where we:

Know our authentic Unitarian Universalist faith identity, teach it to our children, share it with others, and live it in the world.

- We held **two day-long kids camps** this year – one for Election Day and one during the Building Beloved Community Beyond the Binary Conference for elementary and middle schoolers. We

talked about democracy, identity and UU values, and enjoyed getting to spend a more extended time with our kiddos.

- Seven 8th and 9th graders participated in our year-long **Coming of Age** program, culminating in a beautiful service where they shared their credos.
- We held **OWL classes** for two age groups – Kindergarten/1st grade and 5th/6th grade.

Develop meaningful spiritual practices that connect us to wonder.

- We have continued to hold **high quality multiplatform services every Sunday**, even when they had to be held outdoors in our parking lot. As we have moved back into our sanctuary, we have navigated adapting to the new space, and continue to figure out the best ways to make it work for our services.
- We had lots of music! In addition to our regular choir, soloists, small groups, and participation in the Interfaith Choir, we hosted a workshop led by Matt Meyer called **Singing for Resistance and Resilience**, a **Sacred Music Concert** organized by the Interfaith Council, and **Joyful Resistance: a Night of Protest Songs**, a beautiful evening of singing and fundraising for the NH Immigrant Mutual Aid Fund.
- We launched a new weekly **Meditation and Mindful Living Group**, which meets here in the sanctuary and has great participation from both within and beyond our congregation.

Ask for and receive care, support, and connection in times of struggle, joy, and transition.

- Our Pastoral Care Associates began holding **monthly drop-in office hours** after the service.
- I started a new monthly drop in **Coffee and Connection** group that made space for people to bring their concerns and fears about the state of our larger world.
- We once again offered **many opportunities for connection** throughout the year, including Circle Dinners/Kids Movie Night, Game Night, a summer Camping Trip with over 70 participants, summer playground meet ups, and a Carol Sing.

Grow leaders who serve the needs of our congregation and our community with faith, resilience, and courage.

- We welcomed **new leaders** into our Stewardship Team, Faith Formation, Smooth Sunday Teams and more, offering opportunities to try out new roles and learn new skills.
- We held **two Leadership Summits** this year – one was a CPR/AED Training, and the other was to brainstorm our Monthly Themes. Both had more than 20 people in attendance.

Steward our congregational community with our time, talent, and money.

- We had our **most successful auction** in many years, raising \$11,500 and celebrating being back in the building with the theme of Homecoming.
- Our Stewardship Team led a compelling **“The Future Begins With Us”** Campaign, and an extra **“Keep UU Nashua Whole”** Campaign, which raised over 5% more than last year despite multiple large donors passing away and moving in the last year.
- Moving back into our building required **so many volunteers** to set up new systems and spaces, to help make decisions on many details, and to do so much cleaning.

Participate actively in our larger Unitarian Universalist community.

- Seventeen people attended **UUA General Assembly** in Baltimore last June, and we have a full slate of delegates registered for the virtual General Assembly this year.
- We partnered with UU Concord and UU Manchester to host the **Building Beloved Community Beyond the Binary Conference** in April. There were people there from at least five UU congregations.

Understand systems of oppression and privilege and work to dismantle them within ourselves, our congregation, our community, and the larger world.

- The Racial Justice Working Group held their second annual **Campbell Day of Action** on March 16, honoring Rev. Jeffrey Campbell, Marguerite Campbell Davis and Lillian Campbell with a day of remembrance and action. We packed Welcome Baby bags for the United Way Community Baby Shower, wrote a whole pile of letters to our legislators, and made some fabulous protest signs.
- The Welcoming Congregation Working Group led a service in February about “**Thinking Beyond the Binary,**” inviting the congregation into thinking more deeply about gender and welcoming.

Work in deep partnership to advance justice and heal our community and our world.

- We have continued and deepened our partnership with the **Granite State Organizing Project**. We have 10 people from our congregation who regularly attend chapter meetings and are active in the current campaign around homelessness. We also regularly have 4-6 people from UU Nashua at the monthly Immigrant Solidarity Visibility. In the fall, we had about 15 people attend a listening session to help choose the new campaign for the Nashua chapter.
- We **raised over \$40,000** for multiple nonprofits both local and beyond through our Outreach Offerings.

What's Next

We are in the midst of some staff transitions, including saying goodbye this spring to our Faith Formation Assistants Emma Goyette (in March) and Sam Murray (at the end of June) – we will miss them as they go off on their next adventure as college graduates! We have already welcomed Manuela Calderon as a new Faith Formation Assistant and will be welcoming a second FFA soon. We are also were so glad to welcome Curtis Opperman earlier this month as Custodian, a position that we are sharing with Temple Beth Abraham. This is a position that has been open most of the year, so we are especially glad to have Curtis on board.

Next year, we will be celebrating our 200th anniversary! We'll be kicking off the celebration with an anniversary worship service on September 27th, exactly two hundred years and one day after the founding documents of the First Unitarian Congregational Society of Dunstable were signed. We plan to celebrate the anniversary all year long. We have a Bicentennial Planning Team that is working on worship services, history write-ups and displays, a historical walking tour, a contra dance, new church t-shirts and more! If you are interested in being a part of the planning, let me know.

Next year will also be a time of stabilization. It will be the first full church year back in our building, and we will be able to really settle in and get back to some routines that had to change with the extra demands of construction, being out of the building and moving back in.

I also plan to take a brief sabbatical next spring, just six weeks from mid-April through the end of May. I look forward to taking this time to catch my breath and rejuvenate after a very full few years. The Board has approved this time away and our staff are on board to keep things going in my absence.

Gratitude

Building community takes a whole of help, and so I want to conclude my report with gratitude. To simply say “thank you” feels like not enough this year. I feel overwhelmed with gratitude for all the ways we have built community together this year, and the ways you all have supported this community. I remember in the fall as we gathered for one of our various church cleanup days, I had a moment where I just looked around at this group of people who had shown up on a hot Saturday to mop and vacuum and scrub simply because they love this community that much. It astonishes me every day the ways that you all give of yourselves to each other and to this larger mission of ours: to being a welcoming community of faith, inspiring lives of wonder, generosity encourage, and serving our world through love in action.

So thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything.

I do want to shout out a few folks in particular, starting with our fabulous staff team: Lori Bonnette, Emma Goyette, Jed Holland, Sadie Kahn-Greene, Ericka LaValley, Sam Murray, and Michael Packard. They are all rockstars, and have put up with so much chaos and dust and last minute changes this year.

And I would be remiss if I did not call out our temporary Custodian, Carl Phillips, who initially signed up for just a couple of months in the fall. When our first hire did not work out, he came back for a couple more months, and has been filling in this week as well as our new Custodian had a prior commitment this particular week. The reason this place has not been a wreck all year without a regular custodian is because of Carl, I am so grateful for his willingness to serve and then serve again and again.

Thank you to our Board of Trustees: this was not always an easy year, but you stuck with each other, and listened with patience each month as I told you that, “No, construction is not done quite yet.” I appreciate your thoughtful leadership and your willingness to laugh together.

And thank you especially to our outgoing President, Lindsey Hedrick. You have been such a steady leader in this time of so much change. You have guided the Board with care and helped us to take risks together. You were exactly the right leader for this time, and I am so glad you said yes to serving as President.

What a year we have had together. Thank you all. I look forward to spending this next 200th Anniversary year in continued shared ministry with all of you.

In faith,
Rev. Allison Palm