

## **Stewardship Team Annual Report, 2025-2026**

Staff Liaisons: Rev. Allison Palm, Ericka LaValley

Members: Joe Delin, Libby Masek, Rick Spitz, Donna LaRue, Carolyn Eversole, Tom Sheehan, Patricia Reynolds

### Team Achievements:

The 2025 church year began with a return to worship on our own property, and nearing the end of the capital campaign construction project. After nearly eighteen months out of the building, we returned to worship in our parking lot for a few weeks, and then, after much anticipation, a return to our sanctuary. The congregation was finally able to see the improvements their Capital Campaign commitments had on our building.

The Stewardship Team organized a Homecoming themed auction and raffle which ran from November 2, 2025 to November 9, 2025. The online format using Auctria software, like previous years, was used for auction items, raffle items, and for sale items.

An in person auction was also held on November 8, 2025 in the dining room following an open house and rededication of our worship space. At the live auction we had bid-and-bump style bidding, two raffle baskets donated by local stores, a silent auction with gift baskets of various themes donated by church teams and committees, and 10 live auction items donated by church members and friends. Libby Masek served as our MC for the night. We provided soup for dinner as well as desserts. It was a successful event bringing in a total of \$11,593 from both online and in person sales.

For this year's Stewardship Campaign we decided to change our previous theme of "Lead with Love" to one that represented our move into our 200th anniversary as a faith in Nashua. This year, we used the theme "The Future Begins With Us" which launched February 8, 2026 and ran through March 8, 2026. With a goal of \$450,000. Informational packets were distributed to all members and friends after the services on February 8 and 15, and the remaining packets were sent in the mail. Each week during the campaign we had a testimonial from a member of the congregation sharing why they donate to this congregation and what it means to them. During this time, a member of the stewardship team also provided the congregation with an update on our campaign progress, and following the service members of the team were at an information table to collect pledges and talk to members and friends about the campaign.

Our focus this year was on our congregation and what it gives to us during these challenging times as a country and our programs as they give to ourselves and our larger community to shape a better future. We broke down where the money goes in relation to our values.

This year's campaign was very successful. During our campaign we held Giving Gatherings, dinners and lunches, where members and friends gathered for food and conversation. Some of these gatherings were small, but all were meaningful. Rev. Allison or a member of the stewardship team shared ways we can meet our goal as well as shared levels of giving; encouraging folks to work towards the next level of giving. They also lead conversations on planning for our 200th Anniversary celebration.

Following the completion of the campaign, members of the board of trustees and the stewardship team met on March 11th in the evening for our annual phone-a-thon to try and collect remaining pledges from folks we had not heard from yet. The final amount pledged was less than our goal, coming in at \$406,127. This was due to many factors, including members moving away and members passing away this past year.

In the wake of our shortfall, a generous donor offered to provide an additional \$10,000 if the congregation could provide an additional \$20,000 in pledges. After discussion, the Stewardship Team decided it would be beneficial to do a second ask of the congregation to increase pledges for FY27 and come closer to our goal so that a more balanced budget could be created. We knew the congregation could rise to the challenge. We made the congregation aware that without an increase, the congregation would not be able to keep up with inflation or provide staff with a basic cost of living increase.

We called this second ask "Keeping UU Nashua Whole" which included coupons on our large wooden chalice display that provided people the opportunity to select which small monthly increase they could make to their pledge, as well as invite folks who have not pledged to make a new pledge. These coupons began at \$5/month and went up to \$100/month. We also provided a fill in the blank option and provided an online form for folks to utilize if preferred.

This initiative ran for three weeks from April 12-April 30th, 2026. In the end, we received 42 increases and 11 new pledges. We raised an additional \$20,809 total which unlocked the anonymous donor's \$10,000, bringing our new pledge amount to a total of \$436,813. We can not thank this congregation enough for their commitment to the work of this church.

This year we had a reboot of the stewardship team as a whole. We are grateful for returning members Donna LaRue, Joe Delin and Patricia Reynolds. We are also grateful that Rick Spitz, who served on this team several years ago, agreed to come on board and help our new team get their bearings. Because this team is so new, and the returning members were new at the end of the previous years, staff liaisons Rev. Allison Palm and Ericka LaValley agreed to co-chair the team this year as we trained a new team.

We were excited to bring on new members this year: Libby Masek, Carolyn Eversole and Tom Sheehan. Donna LaRue and Rick Spitz are leaving the team at the end of this year. We want to offer our deepest gratitude to them for their commitment to this team and congregation, their wealth of knowledge, insight and encouragement.