

Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashua
Denominational Connections Committee
Annual Report

June 07, 2012 – June 06, 2013

Members: Mary Licking, Chair; Susan Chadwick, John Sanders, Henry Zalman

This year's report is longer than usual. The UUA / NNED involvement in the UU Nashua Ministerial Search process increased. Also, there is a new District Executive at the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Northern New England District (NNED), Joe Sullivan. Members have been attending events where he has been involved in order to take advantage of the skills and talents he brings to the position.

Publicity Efforts

A July 2012 UU Nashua newsletter article placed by the Committee discussed the General Assembly (Phoenix, Arizona) June 2012 and a March 2013 UU Nashua newsletter article placed by the Committee heralded the April 2013 NNED Spring Conference at Portsmouth, NH. The 2013 NNED Conference, the 2013 UUA GA, the NNED Chalice Lighter program, and the Denominational Connections (DC) Committee were all publicized at a table during coffee hour after the worship service on March 3rd, 2013.

Other Traditional Roles of the Committee

Committee member, John Sanders served as a delegate to the social justice UUA GA 2012 in Phoenix, Arizona. He was a member of the Bass Section of the UUA GA Sunday morning choir. While live delegates participated in Phoenix, Arizona, the off-site delegates, or virtual delegates to use another term, participated in real time for the same meeting using a broadband internet connection, voting software they downloaded, and landlines or cell phones. Representing UU Nashua as off-site (virtual) delegates were Mary Licking and Sylvia Lundberg. John Burkitt's photo of the UU Nashua banner that is posted on the UU Nashua website was used in the GA virtual banner parade.

Seven UU Nashua members represented the congregation as delegates at the NNED Annual Meeting on April 13th, 2013: Mary Licking, John Sanders, and Henry Zalman from the Committee, and also Ellen Barr, Ellen Fisher, Laurie Goodman, and Roy Goodman. Reverend Olivia Holmes, Interim Minister of UU Nashua, served as a ministerial delegate. The NNED Spring Conference was held April 12th-13th, and many of the delegates attended both days.

At the conference, Ellen Barr and Ellen Fisher represented UU Nashua on a panel called, "The Work of Beloved Community Beyond the Congregation". Over 50 UU s attended the workshop, according to an April 19th, 2013 note from the NNED that thanked UU Nashua for its involvement. The note also said the "two Ellens" moved and inspired their fellow Unitarian Universalists. Mary Licking served as a member of the choir. John Sanders hosted a booth publicizing the candidacy of Jim Keys for a six- year term as Moderator of the UUA (lay leader). UU Nashua member, Jerry Ross, hosted a booth on gun violence.

At the NNED Annual Meeting there were reports on steps being taken to increase efficiency. The NNED is the result of the Northeast District and the New Hampshire – Vermont District merging in July 2008. That merger continues to save money. Co-employment is a method being used to share costs and staff. Three of the NNED staff members are co-employed by the UUA, with both NNED and the UUA paying part of their salaries. To reduce travel, the NNED is open to conducting meetings electronically when appropriate.

Additionally, there is a regionalization movement within the UUA, with five regions being identified nationwide. Finances have been a driver in the decision to participate in regionalization for the districts that have chosen that route as a way of providing resources to congregations. Whether the NNED participates in regionalization is completely the decision of the NNED board, and the finances of the NNED are in sufficient shape so as to not have outside forces shaping the outcome on this issue, at least this year. The UUA itself is engaged in a real estate transaction that will sell its four buildings on Beacon Hill in Boston and purchase 24 Farnsworth, a six story building in the “Innovation District” (an area near the wharves where many warehouses used to be) in Boston.

For several years in a row, UU Nashua has been a UUA Fair Share congregation in terms of its support of the UUA Annual Program Fund. The wording has been changed, and the NNED Annual Report did not mention the term, “Fair Share”. Instead the correct reference is now, “requested Annual Program Fund (APF) contribution”. For the current year, the requested APF contribution is \$60 per certified member. The requested APF contribution program is one way that congregations can support the UUA. There is also a requested APF contribution for the NNED that UU Nashua pays that is \$18 per member. The UUA rate and the NNED rate added together put the total per member at \$78. The 2013 NNED Annual Report acknowledged UU Nashua’s contribution to the APF by putting it on the list of “Honor Congregations”, meaning it was one of the congregations that made its full requested contribution to the APF.

During 2012 -2013, John Sanders chaired the Nominating Committee of the Northern New England District (NNED), his last year on that committee because of term limit rules. Another “last year” mention that is noteworthy appeared as part of the Report of the NNED Compensation Consultant (one of the reports contained in the 2013 NNED Annual Report), authored by Robert Sampson, who is a UU Nashua member. He said this next year will be his last year in that position.

The church in Brunswick, Maine that was destroyed by fire was mentioned in last year’s version of this report in order to provide information on the progress of its rebuilding (UU Nashua had taken up a collection at its 2011 Annual Meeting for same). At the NNED 2013 Annual Meeting, three members from that congregation were given awards for their role in keeping the congregation going throughout the difficult times. See the mention of NNED Chalice Lighter grants below for more on the Brunswick, Maine rebuilding situation.

Under policy governance, it is the job of the Committee to recommend delegates to represent UU Nashua at the UUA GA and at the UUA NNED Annual Meeting. The Committee approved the delegates discussed above regarding those meetings. The Committee also approved John Sanders and Mary Licking as delegates to represent UU Nashua at the June 2013 UUA GA in Louisville, Kentucky. The delegate credential packets for the NNED Annual Meeting were sent to the church office this year, as requested last year after last year’s credential packet was sent to the previous year’s UU Nashua clerk. That the NNED kept their word on making this mailing change was much appreciated.

The NNED conducted the 2012 Staff & Board Listening Campaign which started with invitations for professional and lay leadership from all congregations within the NNED to attend one of six sessions. David Hudson, Lance Pratt, Ellen Fisher, Roy Goodman, and Monica Staples represented UU Nashua at the session held in Manchester on October 10th. The purpose of the campaign had to do with building relationships, and with gaining insights that could contribute to a vision and to strategies. The Board and District staff are in the process of deciding whether one of the results of the campaign is that the following statement applies to the NNED: Committed to future generations, grounded in our Unitarian Universalist principles, and embraced by wonder, the NNED is a dynamic, loving community of congregations who know each other in peace, seek understanding, serve one another and work towards a world transformed – and in which: - Congregations minister to people of all ages – Potential Unitarian Universalists find a home in our faith – Congregations live relationships of wider perspective and deeper trust within and among themselves.

Committee members Mary Licking and Henry Zalman attended the leadership development workshop facilitated by Joe Sullivan, District Executive of the NNED, held on April 20th and hosted by the congregation in Concord, NH. The workshop provided a nuanced look at what constitutes leadership and the effort it involves. Others attending from UU Nashua were Karen Murray, David Hudson, Kathleen Griffis, Harry Purkhiser, Lori Lerude, Ellen Fisher, Mickey Shepherd, Jerry Ross, and Interim Minister, Rev. Olivia Holmes. About 7 congregations of the UUA located in New Hampshire were represented. One of the ways District Executive, Joe Sullivan, evaluates trainings has to do with whether it helps congregations. In the case of the UU Nashua congregation, the workshop already has helped because content from one of the seminars put on by Doug Zielinski raised questions that Rev. Olivia highlighted in her May 5th UU Nashua sermon. The workshop was held at the request of the Nominating Committee of UU Nashua. The Nominating Committee also took the lead during the past year in educating UU Nashua members who serve in leadership positions on their roles. The DC Committee responded to the Nominating Committee's requests for information.

The second call of the NNED Chalice Lighter grant of 2012 – 2013 was the subject of UU Nashua outreach collections in April 2013. The two congregations that were designated as recipients of that call were the following: 1) First Universalist Church of Pittsfield, Maine, and 2) the UU Starr King Fellowship of Plymouth, New Hampshire. The tiny church in Pittsfield, Maine was described in the NNED Chalice Lighter announcement letter as having an unsafe horsehair ceiling that needed attention. The Plymouth, New Hampshire church wants to increase its music program in order to enhance membership and attendance. The DC Committee applied to the Social Justice Committee that administers the outreach collections for the Chalice Lighter program to be a collection recipient. Mary Licking made the presentation on April 7th, 2013 to provide the congregation with an understanding of the Chalice Lighter program. John Sanders, Roy Goodman, and Max Better mentioned the program and its purpose during introductions to the offertory at the April 14th and April 21st and 28th services, respectively. The Chalice Lighter Program's first call this past year was for the rebuilding after a fire that destroyed the Brunswick, Maine church.

John Sanders continues to serve as President of the Universalist Heritage Foundation and its Treasurer is Jon Lasselle, a member of UU Nashua.

One program that UU Nashua has participated in previously, but did not this past church year was Association Sunday because the program officially ended in 2011. The purpose of that fund raising program was to support the UUA and its programs. The UUA website says that the need is still there and states that congregations can support it. That could be a goal UU Nashua could take up in the future.

To gain an appreciation of other UU congregations outside the NNED, Mary Licking attended an offering of the Spiritual Development Committee that took a group from UU Nashua to visit the Arlington Street Church and King's Chapel in Boston on November 17th, 2012. Both churches have played a part in United States history as well as UU history. King's Chapel advocates Christianity and has drawn from at least four traditions for its conduct as a church: its governance was taken from the Congregational Church, its liturgy was taken from the Episcopalian Church, it uses the Common Book of Prayer from the Church of England, and it has chosen for its membership as a faith to belong to the UUA. One of its job titles is "Verger".

UUA / NNED Involvement in UU Nashua Ministerial Transition and Ministerial Search Process

The UUA and the NNED participated in multiple events that were part of the UU Nashua ministerial transition and search process. There are other teams and committees that were more involved and therefore, the privilege of reporting further on these events will be theirs.