

**President's Report**  
**Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashua Annual Meeting**  
**June 11, 2009**

As the 2008/2009 church year comes to a close, I am thinking about the many ways that our activities have reflected the deep commitment we have as a congregation to the principles of Unitarian Universalism, and the steps we have taken together that show we recognize our responsibility to current and future church members, as well as to the community outside our doors. I would like to share here some of what I consider to be the highlights:

**Strategic Vision for 2018**

In the 2007/2008 church year, the Executive Board identified the need to establish a long range strategic plan based on our values, vision, and mission to help guide our decisions in the coming years. With the financial assistance of the UUA, made possible through our standing as a "Fair Share Congregation," we were able to secure the services of strategic planning consultant, Larry Lemmel, who has extensive experience in working with schools, towns, and congregations in developing comprehensive plans to achieve long term goals.

A *sincere* thank you goes out to the 34 church members who gathered together for two full Saturdays during the best weather of the autumn season in order to develop our Strategic Vision for 2018. Included in the planning process were members of the Executive Board, our minister, committee chairpersons and committee members representing a diverse cross section of our membership.

This plan is guiding us in becoming the "church of our highest aspirations" within the next ten years. The work we have done so far is just the beginning, and it will require the active, ongoing participation of the Executive Board, the Executive Team including committees, and all church members interested and invested in our future in order to successfully achieve our objectives. You can read an overview of the Strategic Vision for 2018 in this binder.

**Church Council**

Following the creation of the Strategic Vision for 2018 in the fall, we convened in January a "Church Council" Meeting, similar to the Inter-Committee Council Meetings our church held in past years. The purpose of this meeting was to introduce the new Strategic Vision for 2018 to the committees, and to begin to integrate the SV2018 into the work of the Executive Board and Executive Team including Committees.

This meeting was well attended, and provided an opportunity for the various committees to share the mission and focus of their activities as well as their success stories. Following the presentation of the SV2018, committees broke into small groups and then shared with the larger group ways in which their committee could integrate the objectives of the strategic plan into their work. This exercise will result in specific projects that the various committees will develop and carry out to help us achieve our strategic goals. Committees will be asked to provide details of these projects when the new church year begins in the fall.

### **Revising our Annual Meeting**

Following our Annual Business Meeting last year, Ellen Barr approached me to discuss the idea of revising our Annual meeting to better reflect our Mission and Vision. In later conversations we discussed our desire to also incorporate aspects of our new Strategic Vision for 2018.

At the Church Council meeting, we formed a small committee to develop our ideas, and led by Ken Cowan, we developed the agenda for this year's Annual Meeting. Our goal was to incorporate the important business we need to conduct with more spiritual and contemplative pieces that reflect the things we value as a congregation. We encourage your feedback and participation in developing this idea further in the coming years.

### **Interfaith Oil Crisis Response**

In my professional role in Congressman Hodes' office, I became acutely aware this past fall of the devastating effect the sky rocketing oil prices were going to have on low and moderate income area residents. It was clear that even if the federal government doubled or even tripled the LIHEAP funding to assist extremely low income families to purchase fuel oil, it was not going to come close to meeting the need and many families would go without heat during the winter.

I am proud to say that members of this congregation responded to this impending crisis, contributing a generous \$5,772 through our Sunday Outreach Collections for Southern New Hampshire Services Fuel Assistance Discretionary Fund. This fund does not have the strict, narrow rules imposed by the federal government for the LIHEAP funds, and can be used on a case by case basis at the discretion of the Energy Director for Southern NH Services to provide additional assistance to families in need of more fuel, to help with weatherization materials, or to repair or replace a broken heating system. In addition, our congregation called on other faith communities in the Greater Nashua area to join us in contributing to this worthy cause, and as a result, several thousand additional dollars were raised to help our neighbors through this very challenging situation. This effort alone reflects many of our guiding principles, including "justice, equity and compassion in human relations," "the inherent worth and dignity of every person," and "respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."

### **Executive Board**

This church year the Executive Board took an active role in developing the plans for the strategic planning process, the pledge drive, and the Church Council. In addition, members of the Social Justice Committee took the lead role in looking into the feasibility of our church investing in the NH Community Loan Fund as a fiscally sound investment for our congregation, and arranged for representatives from the organization to give a presentation on this for the Executive Board and members of the Investment Review Committee. Since Ellen Barr will be speaking about this, all I want to say now is thank you to the Social Justice Committee, the Investment Review Committee, and members of the Executive Board for your thoughtful consideration of the merits of this investment opportunity that so well reflects our deep commitment to social justice, our Seven UU Principles, and our fiscal responsibility to future generations that will come after us in this faith community.

In addition, the Personnel Committee completed their work on a comprehensive Personnel Manual for our church staff that will provide meaningful guidance for decades to come. A sincere thank you to all of you who dedicated so many hours to producing this important and useful document.

I would like to thank two members of the Executive Board who are stepping down now after several years of dedicated service. The wisdom and experience of both Stephen Nodvin and Jim McCormick will be missed.

The Nominating Committee is nominating two young, energetic members of our congregation who have already made large contributions through their participation in the life of our church. Having worked with both of them on a committee and learning first hand how much they have to offer, I am excited to have their active participation and enthusiasm on the Executive Board.

### **Looking ahead**

This year, several of our dedicated, long term committee members are stepping down from their leadership roles, leaving big shoes to fill. Tina Marshman has steered the Nominating Committee with a deep understanding of our both our history as well as a keen sense of where we need to go as a community of faith. Steve Ladew is finishing his term on the Financial Records Review Committee, where his depth of knowledge in financial practices has been most valuable. Ellen Barr's own deep commitment to social justice issues along with her thoughtful approach to finding new and better ways to carry out social justice work has provided our congregation with a new energy that has forged new paths for accomplishing this important work that is so fundamentally tied to our Mission and Vision.

These individuals have been exceptional stewards of our congregation, and will continue to make significant contributions. However, I would like to take this opportunity to put out a call for the next generation of leaders to step up and take on the challenge of stewardship. There are many among us who have contributed in many large and small ways as members of committees, and for some, the time has come to raise up your hand and say, "yes, I will take on the responsibility of organizing the work of this committee." All it takes is a willingness to devote some of your time and energy to combine your efforts with those of many others who are committed to doing the important work that will move the Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashua into the future.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and celebrate the extraordinary commitment of our members reflected in the success of our pledge drive. In this very challenging and uncertain economic climate, our members rose to the challenge of pledging from a place of hope and optimism, rather than fear. Through your dedication to our vision and mission, you have made it possible to offer our staff a small cost of living raise, add much needed funding to projects devoted to the upkeep of our historic facility, and even put some money aside for unexpected needs that will undoubtedly arise. In addition, we happen to be the generation whose responsibility it is to make major repairs to our roof, which will, once finished, keep future generations of members and visitors to our facility dry and warm for more than 150 years. Your generous pledges will assist us in accomplishing this needed repair.

Thank you to all who contribute your time, talent, and financial pledges to this, our spiritual home. And thank you for participating in the annual business meeting, our expression of the importance of the "democratic process within our congregation and in society at large."

Laurie Goodman, President