

# Social Justice Committee Annual Report, 2013-14

## General Information

The Social Justice Committee's mission statement is as follows:

The Social Justice committee of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashua, grounded in our UU principles, is committed to making our church a force for positive social change in our community and in society at large.

We advocate for peace, justice, compassion and caring. We encourage all church members to be engaged, through their deeds and generosity, in issues of local, national and global concern, and to develop action plans in areas of particular interest to them.

We provide a forum for a wide range of ideas on issues of concern. We ask church members and friends to actively participate in educational programs on important social issues.

We work with UU churches, other religious congregations, civic, labor and social service organizations and all groups that are seeking to build a more peaceful, just and caring society.

The Social Justice Committee meets monthly, normally on the first Sunday of the month in the Fellowship Room. Of course, all are welcome to attend.

Participating members of the Social Justice Committee during the past year:

Ellen Barr  
Mary Ferguson  
Adrian George  
Tess George  
Bob Keating  
Hilary Keating  
Harvey Keye  
Nancy Klarman  
Sharon Machado  
Robin Nash  
Jerry Ross  
Mary Sias  
Marty Storer  
Nona Storer  
Elaine Thomas  
Sarah Widhu

Apologies to any members and friends inadvertently omitted!

## New Committee Governance

This year, the Committee has moved from single-chair leadership to shared leadership.

## Communications

Periodically, we publish announcements in the church newsletter and in the Order of Service.

We maintain an email list consisting of Committee members and many others who are interested in social justice issues.

The Social Justice Committee's web page is at <http://uunashua.org/socres> (menu item on the church's main page) and is maintained by Ellen Barr. (The entire church web site, including the Social Justice Committee's page, is being updated to use newer development technology.)

We also maintain a Yahoo! group that serves both as a mailing list and a repository for meeting minutes and much other information, such as announcements, flyers, and articles. The Yahoo! group complements the Committee's web page and email list. See Marty Storer to join the Yahoo! group (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/uunashua-social-justice>). Note: the content of this Yahoo! group still needs to be updated.

## Community Action Group

The Community Action Group is presently the only autonomous subgroup of the Social Justice Committee. The group supports the Nashua Soup Kitchen and Shelter (<http://www.nsk.org/home0.aspx>) with monthly meal preparation and serving. It also administers our Outreach Collections.

## Outreach Collections

The Outreach Collection program is one we can all feel very proud about—we give away our entire collection plate to groups outside our church. Applications are reviewed by the Community Action Group, and collections are scheduled accordingly. To apply, please visit our online form at <http://www.uunashua.org> and click on “Outreach Collections” in the **Members** section.

Greater congregational participation in selecting Outreach Collection groups, and in deciding on the selection process itself, is welcome and desired.

Here is a report showing the groups we have collected for during the past year, and the amounts raised:

<b>Month</b>	<b>Recipient</b>	<b>Amount</b>
June through September, 2013	Harbor Homes	\$6,511.73
October, 2013	Senior Center	\$2,493.00
November, 2013	CASA	\$3,051.48
December, 2013	UU Nashua Community Suppers	\$3,358.80
Christmas Eve, 2013	Nashua Soup Kitchen & Shelter	\$1,605.88
January and February 2014	Southern NH Service (Fuel Assistance)	\$5,465.58
March, 2014	Donna Purkhiser White Wing Scholarship	\$4,605.79
April, 2014	Girls Inc.	\$2,834.13
May, 2014	UU Chalice Lighters Program	\$2,174.46
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$32,100.85</b>

This total is close to last year's, which was a record. Thanks to all for your contributions in economic times that continue to be tough for many people.

### Nashua Soup Kitchen and Shelter

Another activity of the Community Action Group is to prepare and serve meals for the Nashua Soup Kitchen and Shelter. The following donations were made during the past church year:

6 large casseroles x 12 months = 72 casseroles

12 lbs. elbow macaroni x 12 months = 144 lbs.

5 lbs. mozzarella x 12 months = 60 lbs.

12 lbs. ground beef x 12 months = 144 lbs.

12 jars (2 lbs. 13 oz.) Ragu x 12 months = 144 jars (34 lbs.)

24 oz. Parmesan cheese x 12 months = 18 lbs.

The above comprising \$122 (approximate) per month, x 12 months = \$1,464

Thanks to Mary Ferguson, Mary Sias, and approximately 20 other volunteers who contributed time and resources.

## Ending Hunger and Homelessness (EHH) Project

Much of the following is quoted and otherwise adapted from the EHH Project web page:

<http://www.uunashua.org/EHH/>.

On January 31, 2012, the Board of Trustees of the UU Church of Nashua adopted an all-church social justice project under the banner of "Ending Hunger and Homelessness." Based on a Project Overview from the Social Justice Committee ([http://www.uunashua.org/socres/EHH\\_Project.pdf](http://www.uunashua.org/socres/EHH_Project.pdf)), and recognition of the many people in our church already working on related issues, the Board of Trustees deemed this project to be one of the top three priorities for our church during the next 18 months.

During that period, the project aims to be "All-Church," involving as many church members and friends as possible (including children), and having four specific areas of focus: Education, Advocacy, Service, and Financial Support. In addition, the Board has defined the following metrics for the duration of the project:

- To accomplish four major efforts (events, publications, or the like) which will serve to educate our church members and friends, as well as the wider community.
- To track (and double) the number of volunteers associated with our church working in the associated organizations and the hours spent volunteering.
- To donate at least \$10,000 to associated organizations.

### EHH Update for Church Year 2013-14

At our Annual Meeting in June 2013, the Board of Trustees announced that this project would be extended for two additional years under the banner of "All Church Social Justice Focus." The measures of success are defined as (1) 6 major educational efforts, (2) all member involvement in a service project, and (3) at least \$15,000 raised and donated to organizations focused on hunger and homelessness issues.

### Current EHH Activities

At this time numerous projects are going on:

- **Ending Homelessness Fund**-- The Ending Homelessness Fund of Harbor Homes was officially launched on January 29, 2014 with a kickoff event attended by over 150 people, including Governor Maggie Hassan who spoke at the event. To date, we have raised over \$110,000 of the \$200,000 we set for a goal this year, and that has enabled Harbor Homes to house 22 formerly chronic homeless people, with more to come. Committee members Jerry Ross, Elaine Thomas, Sarah Widhu, Ellen Barr, Hilary Keating, and Bob Keating were part of the creation of the EHF. Our church, through the outreach collections and individual donations by members, has contributed one-third of the total funds raised. We are well on our

way to housing all of the people identified as chronically homeless in our community and thus becoming the first community in the nation to do so. We should be proud that this community initiative began in our church!

- **Advocacy for the Residents of Bronstein Apartments**--Bronstein is a housing project in downtown Nashua with 49 affordable units. The Mayor had expressed interest in demolishing Bronstein without talking with the residents or detailing a relocation plan for the 160+ residents. Although the mayor's intentions have quieted down for the present, we are still keeping an eye on this situation.
- **Soup Kitchen Support**--on a monthly basis, many members of our church have participated in (1) the preparation of six large casseroles which we drop off at the Soup Kitchen for future use and (2) serving one dinner.
- **Anne Marie House Volunteering**--A number of members currently volunteer hours at this supportive facility for transitional housing. Of particular mention is Janie Andolsun, a church member who gave many hours of service. When Janie passed away in November of 2011, donations were solicited for a Memorial Library that has since been dedicated in her name.
- **Food, toiletry, and clothing collections**--A basket in the Parish House hallway indicates the focus of the current collection, and welcomes donations. (Individuals in the Social Justice Committee communicate with area organizations to identify needs.)
- **Third Sunday of the month dinners** offered at UU Nashua—The Soup Kitchen doesn't offer Sunday evening meals, and we have helped to fill that gap. The monthly dinners have been a huge success, thanks to many volunteers under the leadership and coordination of Jenn Morton and Michelle Morrison. A committee is now in charge of organizing these dinners.
- **To get information about volunteering** for a local organization, please see <http://www.uunashua.org/socres/LocalResources.pdf>. Also, we invite you to stop by the table in the front of the dining room. You will find materials on volunteer opportunities. If that's not possible, please call the church office at 882-1091—they'll help get you in touch with the right person.

The Social Justice Committee looks forward to working closely with other committees, with Janet Newman, our Interim Minister for 2014-15, and with Meredith Olson, our Interim Director of Lifespan Religious Education, on this church-wide project.

## Granite State Organizing Project and Other Activities

- The Granite State Organizing Project (GSOP) is a coalition of religious, community, and labor organizations that concentrates largely on community-level issues, but recently has focused on efforts in support of **labor unions** and **Social Security**. This year, both the Committee and the church maintained a high level of participation in GSOP.

Ellen Barr, Adrian and Tess George, and Elaine Thomas have been active in organizing to support unions and to stand against cuts in Social Security benefits

and new restrictions on eligibility for those benefits. See any of the above folks if you want to get involved.

Besides advocacy with and for tenants of Bronstein Apartments, and retirement security, GSOP's other efforts this past year include legislation relating to bedbugs (for more information, see [www.nhbedbugs.com](http://www.nhbedbugs.com), or contact Rick Castillo, Statewide Coordinator for the New Hampshire Bed Bug Action Committee, at 603-668-8250); far-reaching legal reform in the area of landlord-tenant relations; payday and car title lending; and immigrant justice. GSOP's efforts have been rewarded with some big successes.

- The Social Justice Committee is now working jointly with the Spiritual Development Committee to show films/videos monthly.
- In January, our church and the Social Justice Committee hosted an event produced by NH Rebellion (<http://www.nhrebellion.org/>) celebrating the life of Doris "Granny D" Haddock, who worked tirelessly for campaign finance reform from age 88 until her death at age 100. The event got massive media coverage. Some members have maintained contact with NH Rebellion, which plans to make systemic political corruption their key issue for the 2016 primaries. The video about Granny D, which was shown at January's event, is tentatively scheduled to be shown at the church in October of 2014.

## Conclusion

The Social Justice Committee wishes to thank our outgoing interim minister, the Reverend Olivia Holmes, for her support and help in encouraging the continuing integration of social justice with the life of the congregation. We thank her for her service over the past two years. We are eager to continue our work in cooperation with the Reverend Janet Newman.

Respectfully submitted,

**Marty Storer**  
**Outgoing Chair, Social Justice Committee**