

Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashua, NH

Music Program 2014-2015

Jared (Jed) Holland led two choirs this year.

The children's choir involves very young children up through about 8th grade. Singers this year ranged in age from 3 to 13, with most of them about 6 to 8 years old. There were between 5 to 14 children attending on any given Sunday, with a total of 25 children attending at some point throughout the year. The children's choir sang 5 songs this year, one with the adult choir, and with the help of Carol Tingleff, even danced along with one choir anthem! Music committee member Kathleen Griffis has assisted with directing and logistics for the children's choir this year.

The adult choir has continued to thrive, and involves a large number of church friends and members, currently totaling 47 choir members. Ten new members joined the choir this year. Out of those ten, three are new to our church this year. Many times Janet, our interim minister, would sing with us at rehearsals and Sunday mornings. The adult choir continues to schedule the choir to sing almost every Sunday. Before we made this change, our church attendance dropped noticeably on "Choir Days Off" because the choir is a large percentage of the congregation. This year, rather than taking one Sunday off each month, the only Sundays the choir did not sing were the Sundays for which the leader(s) of the service had special non-choir music planned, as well as the two snowstorm cancellations. The choir sang a total of 53 anthems, sang at 35 out of 39 services, and will be singing two anthems at the annual meeting. Some members of the congregation and choir also joined the early Christmas Eve service choir for 4 more anthems.

Our music committee has been assisting Jed with the music program. This committee (members Geri Davidson, Kathy Grossman, John Burkitt, Ruth Cannava, Kathleen Griffis) has been doing a great job. Kathy stepped down as chair in order to be on the ministerial search committee, so the committee has been spreading the work, with Geri running the meetings.

Our goal of more congregation participation

In keeping with our goal of participation by members of the congregation, we continued to solicit soloists, small groups, and large groups of vocalists and musicians.

To help with our goal of engaging children musically, we have included youth vocalists, drummers, brass players, and other instrumentalists.

We had great participation by over 50 guest musicians to provide special music other than the normal choirs, for a total of 17 services. John Burkitt has continued coordinating with the large number of special musicians.

A fun event was the 6th coming of "The Biggest Crazy UU Band That Ever Was (in Nashua at least)". This group brought together the talents of church members of all ages, and they all pulled together to play and sing "Down By The Riverside" and "This Little Light of Mine" for a service.

In order to allow choir members who have young children to sing with us, we have offered childcare in the past at 9 am on Sundays. This year, we passed that organizational responsibility on to Sherri. Four choir members have used the childcare this year.

Our goal of promoting a feeling of community among choir members

We encourage choir members to get to know each other better. We held a choir social event in the fall, sent out an email listing all the new members and encouraging established choir members to introduce themselves to somebody new, and had an online discussion about the year that each member joined the choir.

During Wednesday rehearsals, we regularly share joys and concerns. Sometimes everybody there goes around and says something about themselves to help us get to know each other better.

Church goal of better communication

We assist as needed with efforts to project the words on the wall during the services.

This year, American Sign Language Interpreter Beth Hudson provided ASL interpretation for selected services. The music committee assisted in this effort by providing Beth with lyrics for the anthems that would be sung during the services.

We continue to utilize electronic methods of communication. We have live-streaming of our Sunday service, and rebroadcasting later the same day at 3 pm and 7 pm. We are using Facebook, the UU network, the church website, the choir google group, and YouTube. We continue to post audio recordings of our services and some video content on the website.

Church goal of ending hunger and homelessness

We have been working toward the church goal of providing community dinners. Bass player John Burkitt, along with John's band-mate pianist Don Bernard, or with pianist Jed Holland, provided live music at 8 of the community dinners this year.

Church goal of year-round church services

When asked, Jed came to play piano at most of the summer services last summer. His contract does not include doing that, so we requested that he be paid \$250 for helping out. This amount should be increased to be able to attract and pay qualified musicians, whether it is Jed or another musician, and we have requested that be included in the budget.

Volunteer Frona Avery

We lost a choir friend and volunteer this autumn when Frona Avery died. Frona had helped us with rehearsing and directing the children's choir until her health began to fail. She had a cheerful attitude, had lots of skills for teaching children music, and she was always willing to jump in to assist. On her deathbed, her niece Gillian was with her and asked how she would like to spend her last hours. Frona requested music, and Gillian put the word out to the choir and church. People who were around during the Thanksgiving weekend quickly gathered at the hospital and sang to and with Frona that afternoon. It was a very moving sendoff for someone who loved music so much, as well as a touching experience for those who came to sing.

Printed Music/Folders

We continue to have good participation in our choirs! We are ordering music and folders for 50 adult choir members. We only bought one piano part for a children's choir song this year. This year, we also purchased several piano/vocal scores for small group and solo performances, which helped us have more guest musicians.

Guest Musicians

This year's guest musicians include many congregation members and friends.

Vocalists this year include Brenna McGoff, John Burkitt, Kathleen Griffis, Martha Holland, Pam Jordan, Dan Murphy, Darcy Hinkle, Sarah Shor, Jason Pancoast, Steve Hedges, Steve Ladew, Jeremy Parker, Simon Rios, Kim Steele, Karen Leonard, Ellen McCormick, Harry Purkhiser, and Clair Ryan.

Instrumentalists this year include clarinetists Burns Fisher and Tina Marshman; percussionists Ben Morton, Billy Parker, Jess Barkley, Brenna McGoff, John McCannon and Mandy Eberle; Bass players John Burkitt and John Brobst; trombonists Bryce Stack, Maggie Woolsey, Miranda McCannon, Jon Lasselle, and Kathy Grossman; Trumpet players Bruce Cleaveland, Bruce Dye, Jason Pancoast, and Carol Tingleff; French horn players Lori Lerude, Erica Agnew, and Sarah Thomas; pianists Nicole Straussberg and Jed Holland, baritone horn player Lindsey Hedrick; guitarists Dan Murphy, Jeremy Parker, Simon Rios, Bill Hinkle, Jason Pancoast, and Geoff Goodell; flute player Gillian Hinkle; Celtic harpist Clair Ryan; and many talented members who participated in the Biggest Crazy UU Band That Ever Was (in Nashua at least), the multi-generational Christmas Eve Choir, and the Brass Bands for Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Jed's professional development

Jed and Olivia Holmes attended a previous UU Musician's Network convention in Dallas, TX, and Jed and Kathy Grossman will be attending this summer's convention in Boston. The conventions offer workshops on all aspects of music, from composition to directing, song selection to accompaniment skills, and many more. They also offer many chances to see alternative worship possibilities and meet with fellow music director professionals.

Instrument Repairs/Maintenance

The organ had 2 tunings, and the sanctuary piano had 2 tunings and one string replacement.

Review of Music Budget 2014-2015

We continue to have a large expense of printed sheet music for the choir, due mostly to the large choir membership. We have paid for choir director substitutes for 2 rehearsals. We ordered no new pieces of children's choir music, and we repeated many of our favorite songs throughout the year, so we have kept our expenses down in these ways.

Goals for 2015-2016

To keep personally connected to the individuals in the music program so they feel this church is their family, especially during troubled times.

To integrate new choir members.

To find even more ways for church members and friends to contribute musically to the life of the church.

To find more ways to make services musically engaging for the children.

To encourage teenagers who are interested in running the sound system, performing solos or in small groups, or joining the choir.

To determine if we should raise funds to buy the teal Singing the Journey hymnals for the sanctuary.

To continue to keep our expenses down, but try to purchase one new anthem each month.

To use what we learned during our interim period to create a smooth start-of-the-church-year transition with the new minister.

To interact with the new minister and interim DLRE to continue to bring meaningful music to all ages.