

Minister's Annual Report 2004-2005 Church Year

It's an old joke: As Adam and Eve were being expelled from the Garden of Eden, Adam said to Eve, "Well, it looks like we're living in a time of transition."

The same goes for our congregation as the 2004-05 church year comes to a close. After four years of John Sanders very capable leadership as Board/Church President, Gary Lerude assumed that role and position one year ago. Due in large measure to Gary's energy and initiative, we will be experimenting, in the upcoming church year with a new form of governance—which he addresses in his President's report. Members of our church staff, plus our soon to be elected Treasurer, will constitute an Executive Team that will handle much of the day to day, month to month, decisions and initiatives that need to be taken both to keep the church in good operation and our programming effective. This will allow the Board to move into a more policy making and long-range planning mode of operation.

My role is that of leader/coordinator of the Executive Team. After a one year trial process, I will make my recommendations to the Board as to how well this new governance process is working, what adjustments may need to be made, and how (or if) we should continue to utilize it in future years. This will be an important transition in how our lay and professional leadership operates.

It has been a time of transition with some of our leadership as well. After ten years of service, Jon Lasselle leaves his post as Church Treasurer—with our thanks for the countless hours he has so diligently devoted to that responsibility over those years. We also say farewell to Barbara Berrios as our Membership Coordinator, also for the past ten years. While she steps down from this particular role, we look forward to her continuing involvement in other areas of our congregational life.

We also thank Carol Lasselle and Charles Curtis for their work, and care, for our facility in their custodial roles. We have now taken on the services of a single, full-time cleaning person with Sandra Martinage.

The transition we have made, and will continue to make, in our outreach assistance efforts has been a successful one. Two years ago, our 2002-03 Annual Meeting was not a happy time. In order to have a budget we could reliably operate under for the 03-04 year we eliminated our outreach funding as a percentage of our pledge base. We then moved, with some urging from Michael Durall during his September '03 consultation with us, to using a Sunday collection to benefit certain designated causes, efforts, and organizations in our community and/or within our liberal religious movement. This year alone our outreach collections totaled more than \$32,000. This was clearly a move in the right direction when it comes to how we handle the financial support aspect of our larger and varied outreach efforts, and I believe we should continue in this mode.

My day to day responsibilities continue to be divided among worship leadership, adult education leadership, pastoral care and counseling, overseeing—with the indispensable help of a very competent staff—the overall operations of the church, involvement in a variety of community and denominational organizations and causes, and—as time permits—pursuing some of my writing projects. This past year I created a Worship Associates Group to explore with me the ever evolving nature of worship in a liberal religious community, and to assist me in certain aspects of our Sunday worship services.

In the area of adult religious education I led two Unitarian Universalism 101 series; and organized and led a five week series on world religions that was open to the community as well as members and friends of the congregation.

In our wider Nashua community I serve on the Boards of Directors of the Granite State Organizing Project and the Nashua Branch of the NAACP. Currently I am the Vice President of the Nashua Area Interfaith Council, and am slated to become the President of this organization in January of 2006.

I also served this past year as Chairperson of the Nominating Committee for the New Hampshire/Vermont District. This came at a time when a majority of the District Board members had terms that expired, resulting in new officers needing to be put in place.

I used the second phase of my sabbatical—which was the month of January, 2005—to finish a book I'd been working on, off and on, for the past 3-4 years called *The Beat Face of God—The Beat Generation Writers as Spirit Guides*. This is also the name of a course I'll be leading for the Graduate Theological Union's Summer Session program in Berkeley, California in July. If the publishing schedule holds up (a somewhat dubious proposition) I should have a book in hand by the end of the summer. I have a third, and final, phase of my sabbatical coming up in January of '06, which I primarily plan to use as a promotional time for this publication.

I know I could easily double the length of this report to this point, if I were to just individually thank all of the members and friends of this wonderful congregation who have given of their time and energies to make us the lively and vital liberal religious community that we indeed are. So many of you who Chair and/or serve on Committees, who organize our social activities and fundraisers, who represent our liberal religious values through social action and outreach, who help care for our facility, who volunteer when additional office help is needed, who make our every-member canvass successful, who teach our children, who advise our young people, and who simply—and profoundly—take care of one another; we would not be the congregation we are were you not doing these things. You make me both grateful and proud to be your minister. I thank you. And please know I want to support your efforts in whatever ways I can.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen D. Edington, Minister

