



CRITICAL UPDATE REGARDING THE FUTURE OF THE NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND DISTRICT PLEASE READ AND SHARE WITH CONGREGANTS

March 12, 2018

Dear Congregational Leaders and Ministers,

I am writing to communicate the NNED Board's recommendation that our district moves toward dissolution.

Nearly three years ago, the Northern New England District entered into an agreement with our UUA to become part of the New England Region. Doing so meant our district staff became full employees of the UUA rather than co-employed by the UUA and the district, and NNED gained access to the combined gifts, talents, and resources of the staff of the four, formerly distinct, districts as one unified region. Two of the four districts in New England, including NNED, chose to continue to exist as distinct entities and two districts dissolved. Since NNED was organized under a system of policy governance and we no longer had staff reporting to the board, the board did not have a governance role to perform.

Your NNED board has spent significant time and energy since becoming part of the New England Region discerning how we can best serve our faith. We created the following mission statement:

The Mission of the Northern New England District Board is to help our Unitarian Universalist communities innovate and thrive by strengthening relationships within our New England Region and the larger Unitarian Universalist world.

The board believes strongly in the mission and yet struggles with the reality that an all-volunteer board with one 30-hour a month administrative assistant is challenged to live into the mission. After 2 ½ years of discernment, the board is recommending that we move toward dissolution of the Northern New England District. This letter will provide you with:

- I. The process the board went through to reach this recommendation;
- II. Opportunities for interested Northern New England UUs to meet with board members in-person and via Zoom to learn more and to provide feedback on the recommendation for dissolution; and,
- III. Next steps

Northern New England District – UUA
PO Box 333
New Ipswich NH 03071-0333

Telephone: 603-732-7795
Fax: 603-878-1869
Email: [NNEDAdmin@comcast.net](mailto>NNEDAdmin@comcast.net)

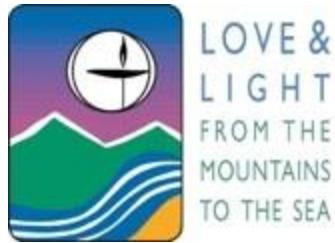
I. Process

- In January of 2018, the board summarized 2 ½ years of discussion about the challenge of a volunteer board, without any program staff, to advance our stated mission AND the difficulty of the Nominating Committee to recruit new board members to do work that is unclear and with a wide perception that the district does not exist since regionalization.
- We summarized our past years of discussion through a thoughtful analysis that identified our strengths, challenges, opportunities, and vulnerabilities.
- After looking at the data, we posed three questions:
 - Is the NNED relevant?
 - Not as a governance body just as maintainer of the district endowment
 - Not since the consolidation of NH/VT with Maine have strong connections been felt - no longer have staff, youth conferences, adult conferences, committees, collegiality
 - Our continued existence as a district confuses the sense of being part of a larger UU whole
 - We are not fulfilling any purpose that can't be done better by some other body
 - How are we relevant?
 - Program offerings
 - Using listening campaign to advocate for NER to offer Stewardship workshop
 - As a granting organization: BLUU, reinvigoration of Chalice Lighters, getting word out about available endowment funds
 - Is NNED existing the only way that these things will happen? Does a distinct NNE entity need to do these things? The answer was a resounding NO.

II. Opportunities to connect with the NNED Board regarding the recommendation to dissolve.

We want to meet with interested UUs and are offering face-to-face meetings in each state plus day and evening opportunities to participate in Zoom video conference meetings. Please RSVP to [NNEDAdmin@comcast.net](mailto>NNEDAdmin@comcast.net) for any meeting you will attend so that we are making the best use of board members' time. If no one RSVPs within 48 hours of a meeting, it will be cancelled.

- Friday, April 13 – an optional discussion during the Friday evening activities at District Assembly with Board Members Mary and Kendra
- Saturday, April 28, Maine Face-to-Face - 10AM to Noon at Auburn Maine with Board Members Mary, Austin, Carol, and Anne
- Saturday, May 5, Vermont Face-to-Face - 10AM to Noon at Montpelier VT with Board Members Mary, Olav and Paul
- Wednesday, May 9, Zoom Video Call, - 10AM to Noon with Board Members Mary, Paul, Austin, Carol, and Anne
- Thursday, May 17, Zoom Video Call, - 7-9PM with Board Members Mary, Paul, Kendra, and Anne
- Saturday, May 19, New Hampshire Face-to-Face - 10AM to Noon Manchester NH-with Board Members Mary, Paul, Olav and Kendra



III. Next Steps – this list will grow/change over time

- Conduct meetings with stakeholders
- Review stakeholder input at June Board Meeting
- Communicate with congregations by email, social media, and Zoom quarterly or more often as needed
- Identify legal counsel to guide process
- Clarify with NH Secretary of State who votes on dissolution then determine/communicate voting process
- Work with UUA to determine transition of Endowment to UUA Common Endowment Fund as required by NNED by-laws while maintaining restriction of fund donors

Please be assured that there will be no vote on this at our 2018 Annual Meeting. The months ahead are the time for listening and communicating. We will keep you informed of the next steps in our process with at least quarterly communications on this recommendation. Please reach out directly with any questions and/or concerns, and strongly consider joining us for one of the upcoming meetings. (maryheafy@gmail.com)

On behalf of the NNED Board Members, I am yours in faith and service,

Mary Heafy, President
Rev. Olav Nieuwejaar, Vice President
Rev. Allison Palm, Secretary
Austin Farrar, Financial Officer
Rev. Kendra Ford, Board Member
Anne Kinney, Board Member
Carol Larson, Board Member
Paul Tierney, Board Member

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