



June 23, 2020

Dear Congregational Leaders,

Who knew three months ago how expert many of us would become with Zoom? Who could have imagined how beautiful worship could be even when we are experience it remotely? Since my own congregation records a beautiful service that I can view on Saturday, I have had a chance to attend services at quite a few congregations over the past three months. No matter “where” I attend church on a Sunday, I experience a deep connection with our UU faith and the love that calls us into service. I hope you have experienced moments of grace during this time of COVID-19.

NNED was unable to hold our annual meeting in April due to COVID 19 and we rescheduled the Annual Meeting and Assembly for September 25-26 believing at the time of our decisions that it would be safe to gather in September. Ah, how little we knew at that time.

Recognizing that holding an in-person meeting in September is impractical, if not impossible, while maintaining the physical distancing required to keep everyone healthy, the NNED Board has decided to move forward with a virtual annual meeting and assembly on September 26, 2020. Our time together will still include many of the elements you look forward to - music and worship along with our business meeting. If our experience with a virtual annual meeting aligns with the experience of other regional assemblies and our own General Assembly, we may find higher participation at this meeting since the costs of registration, housing and travel are eliminated. You will need to register to attend. An Eventbrite invitation will be sent out in July.

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Some may wonder if holding a meeting virtually constitutes a legally valid meeting and whether there is a provision for virtual meetings within our By-Laws? The Board asked our counsel for their opinion on this matter and received the following response, “Bylaws are silent about virtual meetings, but given the present environment, it is prudent and responsible for the meeting to be virtual.” The Board concurs.

We want to share two documents with you now: the “[Resolution of Dissolution](#)” and the “[Plan of Complete Liquidation and Dissolution](#)”. We have also created an [FAQ](#) to help you understand these documents. The board will offer optional Zoom calls for delegates in late August/early September to review the business meeting agenda and proposed motions prior to the annual meeting. Stay tuned for dates and times of these Zoom meetings.

In closing, I am sharing with you a thoughtful and pastoral message written by Board Member Rev. Margaret Beckman articulating the journey toward dissolution. It resonates so strongly with the entire Board that we wanted to share it with you.

With love for our faith and for each of you,  
Mary Heafy, President



## ***Holding On. Letting Go. Reaching Out.***

*by Reverend Margaret Beckman*

*In the discussions we've been having during the last few years about the best possible future for Unitarian Universalist congregations in Northern New England, we have shared our thoughts and emotions; we have been present to each other's hope and optimism as well as to our grief and misgiving; we have argued and persuaded, we have researched and reimagined; and finally, we have come together in this moment to bring these vital conversations to a close and to take action.*

*The recommendation of the NNED Board to dissolve the Northern New England District comes after all those conversations. We have listened. We have explored options. With the organization of the UUA Congregational Life staff deployed to all congregations, primarily but not exclusively, through regions, our financial support of our staff naturally follows that new structure. This structure is more efficient and more nimble than our previous structure of 19 separate districts. Our NNED finances will not be lost. They will be stewarded as a part of a larger and more comprehensive whole. Our resources, as they become part of the UUA resources, will benefit congregations in Northern New England all the time. And since we are an association of congregations across North America, we can be assured that when tragedy or extraordinary needs arise in one place, our resources can help restore, rebuild or replace what is lost by our sibling congregations. They will do the same for us should the need arise. When there is a fire in California – we reach out. When there is a flood in New Orleans – we reach out. When there is an ice storm in New England – we reach out. When tornados strike the Midwest, we reach out. When a congregation stretches to achieve a dream just outside their grasp, we reach out.*

*Dissolving the NNED is only one element of our larger challenge - to conceive and create the best possible future for UU congregations in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. That process will go on well after the delegates to the 2020 NNED Annual Meeting have voted on the Resolution of Dissolution, and it is that process that will demonstrate our commitment to ourselves, each other, and faith. We are an association of congregations. We are one association, one whole. We are not many associations tied together through Districts or Regions. Districts and Regions are conveniences; they are structures that help us manage our resources and share our faith. And yet, we become attached to these structures for the very reason that they have worked, imperfectly to be sure, but effectively in most instances. These structures were created in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to facilitate our association as it was then. As we move into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, new structures are needed that will support us in our world now.*

*There is comfort in holding on to what we know and what has worked in the past. Letting go of that comfort and familiarity is hard. At the same time, we know that as long as our hands are holding on to what we have now, we cannot accept what is coming forth. So, letting go is important, and because it is also hard, we will let go together. When we loosen our grip on our past success, we can open our hands and we can reach out for our future success. We can honestly and fully grieve what we leave behind, but we ought not to let our grief cloud our vision of what lies in front of us. Our pooled faith, strength, resources, and commitment are what keep our association of congregations both stronger together and independent in each congregation's operations. Reaching out is the way we bring our future closer and the way we grasp our own part in shaping and molding that future.*

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