

NNED Congregational Board Survey
From your NNED Board of Directors; January, 2019
*(please provide your responses on the answer sheet included,
and return by email or US Mail; addresses are on answer sheet)*

Introduction *(please read to your Board)*

As you may know the dedicated staff of our 4 New England Districts united to become the UUA staff of our New England Region of UU congregations in 2015. Since then, the Clara Barton and Mass Bay Districts have dissolved, meaning they voted to give up being individual districts in favor of being part of the New England Region.

Last April, at our NNED Annual Meeting, our District Board recommended we also dissolve our district structure. Their primary reason was that the Board's mission, to serve the needs of NNED congregations, was already being better served by our regional staff than our volunteer Board, with only one part-time administrative assistant, was able to do. Concerns articulated by our NNED Board and our NNED congregations around the possibility of dissolution focused, primarily, on how the needs of our congregations would be met if the District were to dissolve, and what would become of our NNED invested funds, most particularly those having restrictions.

These issues were brought up at the 3 assemblies (one in each NNED state) and one zoom meeting our NNED Board held last spring, which were open to all NNED congregants. 63 dedicated UUs from all 3 states participated in those meetings, and the questions below reflect their questions and concerns.

Your District Board is hoping to learn, from this survey, which of the concerns raised last spring you think are most important to your particular congregation. Your answers will ensure your concerns will be addressed as the NNED Board and UUA staff discuss whether and how dissolution could best serve our NNED congregations.

A.1. Importance of Congregational Services Provided *(Please record your responses on the answer sheet provided)*

Each of the following services, currently provided by New England Region staff and volunteers, was mentioned as important by folk participating in last spring's meetings. They are grouped into four areas:

**Support for transitions in congregational religious professional staff,
Support in development of good congregational governance
Specialized congregational support
Communications Concerns Raised**

Please rank order each of the services in each of these groups, with #1 being the one you think is most important, and #3 or #4 being the one you think is least important. *(Please rank each service in each grouping and record your responses on the answer sheet provided.)*

Support for transitions in congregational religious professional staff

Coaching during staff transitions
Expert help in navigating the UUA ministerial search process
Religious educator credentialing

Support in Development of Good Governance

Counseling and guidance in times of crisis
Leadership development workshops or start-ups, geographically nearby
Leadership development webinars (on line)
Staff specialists in small and rural congregation

Specialized Congregational Support and Outreach

Capital campaign support
Counsel around joint ministries
Staff support for issue-based social action networks
Continuation of Chalice Lighter Program

Communications Concerns Raised

Having a staff contact person who knows our congregation
Connections with other congregations facing similar issues
Better communication about staff support available to congregation

A.2. Concerns of Your Board Not Raised Above *(Please record your answers on the answer sheet provided.)*

If your Board has important concerns that you have not seen in the responses from the spring meetings above, please describe that/those concern/s briefly in the answer sheet attached.

B. Financial Concerns around Dissolution *(Please record your answers on the answer sheet provided.)*

Many of the funds administered by the NNED and by the UUA on behalf of the NNED are unrestricted, meaning the income can be used in whatever way the Board and staff think best to strengthen our congregations in northern New England. However, some are restricted regarding how the income can be used. Law requires that not-for-profit organizational bylaws include a dissolution clause stipulating the “successor organization” to which the funds should go upon a vote to dissolve.

As our faith has evolved, these successor organizations have changed. Unitarian and Universalist organizations became Unitarian Universalist organizations with the 1961 merger. The Northeast District (Maine) and New Hampshire-Vermont District became the Northern New England District in 2008.

Our NNED bylaws state that “without successor organization(s), there will be a transfer of the investment of assets to our UUA with language guaranteeing that “such transferred assets be held and used exclusively for the congregations within the former District, wherever within that area, and however those assets and their income are determined to be most needed by our UUA.”

Our history of denominational and geographic consolidation suggests we might want to offer the UUA more generous guidelines than currently stated in our bylaws, and some folk in the spring discussions agree. Others believe the existing bylaw should be strictly respected. Please record on the answer sheet the possibility listed below that your board thinks is the right thing to do, should our congregations vote to dissolve the District:

- Restrict beneficiaries to NNED congregations in perpetuity,
- Restrict beneficiaries to NNED for a period of years (say 3 - 10; to be determined),
- Restrict beneficiaries to the New England Region for a period of years (3 - 10; tbd),
- Allow our UUA staff to benefit congregations as they deem best serves our faith, ensuring donor intentions are honored.

C. Your Congregation’s Use of Regional and District Resources *(Please provide answers on the answer sheet.)*

Finally, our New England Region staff and volunteers and our NNED volunteers offer many trainings, webinars, district or regional gatherings, and specialized services to individual congregations. Please list on the answer sheet, under question C all the events, trainings, or consultations your congregation, or members of your staff and congregation, have used (that you’re aware of) in the past 2 years.

Please return answer sheet a) by email to nnedadmin@comcast.net; or b) by US mail to NNED, POB 91, New Ipswich, NH. 03071.

Your NNED Board is deeply grateful for and appreciative of your taking the time to complete this survey. Thank you very much.