

NAIC Meeting, January 3, 2024 – First Church UCC

Attendees: John Rowntree (President), Lisa Vasquez, Division of Public Health and Community Services (DPHCS), speaker, Leah Elliott, DPHCS, speaker, Allyssa McCutcheon, DPHCS, Jocelyn Sharp-Henning (Secretary), Allison Palm, (Board member), Katy Cowen, Marina Vaz, Beverly Belus, Kathy Boss (Board member), Mike Apfelberg, Meg Hamm, Tom Woodward, Sarah Jane Knoy, Jon Spira-Savett (past President), Karl Hesser, Andy Armstrong, Bill Donahue.

Joining on Zoom: Karla Tolomeo, Meta Vornehm, Sharon Sargent, Tanya Stormo Rasmussen, Jim Jensen, Kim Hester, Nancy Meyer, Leah Rumsey.

TOPIC: Homelessness, Addiction and Mental Health. Small groups of 3: How have we been touched personally by homelessness, addiction and/or mental health issues?

PRESENTATION: Intersection of homelessness, addiction and mental health. Lisa Vasquez of DPHCS states the Mayor's task force meets 1/month, looks at data (overdoses, etc.), syringe service, what new services are available, referrals, collaborate with others in task force. Legislative task force will meet on 1/22.

Leah Elliott of DPHCS relates that opioid abatement money was used to hire workers to go to unhoused and encampments to do case management and develop relationships to help unhoused people get identity cards, services, help with barriers. Workers meet with people 1-2 times per week and connect them with resources. Lisa and Leah do short term counseling and are trying to build a recovery community.

There is a warming center on Ash Street with community workers helping with issues like ids, rent, housing. They collaborate with police concerning mental health calls, not criminal. A worker goes to the Day Café at St. Patrick's Community Church.

Greater Nashua Continuum of Care is collecting data on homelessness services from 9-12 and 12-3 on January 25th.

There is a Mobile Van syringe service Mondays and Wednesdays at the Nashua Library. Hygiene products, hats, socks, etc. are available. When unhoused are ready, workers connect them to available resources. Sleeping bags, toiletries, soup kitchen meals are available. Workers visit encampments once a day.

Narcan training is available at 268 Main Street, The Doorway of Greater Nashua, for free.

How Can We Help? Off Day Café availability, treat people with these issues like people, let them know of services and where to go. Teach people about this within congregations, have speakers come in to educate congregants.

There is a Conference on Homelessness, Mental Health and Addiction and where they intersect on May 21st.

QUESTIONS:

Where do people go with addiction that are homeless: the Welfare office, Department of Public Health community workers, Soup Kitchen and Shelter, etc.

Workers also go into schools to offer help.

Kathy Boss stated that 40% of homeless people are women with children.

There is a legislative bill coming up again in NH stating landlords can evict people for any reason at the end of their lease. Be proactive and defeat bill.

NEXT MEETING: February 7th at Rivier University. Braver Angels will be the speakers, discussing deescalating the political environment.

A spring panel discussion on Sacred Poetry is being planned, during National Poetry Month in April, looking at commonalities in different religious traditions. Also, in May, a 4-week book group discussion using My Neighbors Faith may occur.

Intercessions were then asked for and received. There was no old or new business.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Rabbi Jon stated the next meeting in a series of How To Be President will be on Monday, January 8th at Temple Beth Abraham with Rep. Dean Phillips from 5:30-6:30 pm.

Rabbi Jon also is offering one to one or one to two meetings to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Thanks to the volunteers who helped with the resident association election on Major Drive recently which is recognized by the Nashua Housing Authority for 200 units of housing.

Tom Woodward encouraged churches to donate food for the homeless.

First Baptist Church on Manchester Street invites you to an interfaith Martin Luther King celebration on January 13th at 6 pm which is open to the public and free.