

March 17, 2008

Gini Courter, Moderator  
UUA Board of Trustees

RE: Equal Access

Dear Gini,

I am pleased to let you know that we have made substantial progress in forming Equal Access, our new affinity group for Unitarian Universalists with physical, sensory, mental health, and intellectual disabilities; families with children who have disabilities; friends and allies. Our mission is to create a collective community of identity caucuses to promote equality and access for Unitarian Universalists with disabilities.

The core working group which has created Equal Access recently adopted by-laws for this new organization and will soon appoint interim officers and directors to serve until June 2009 when our first elections will be held.

We believe we have accomplished a great deal during the past six months, but we are only too well aware that much work remains. During the next several months, we will concentrate on recruiting members and building a solid membership base. We will also work on developing a web site as well as incorporating Equal Access in Massachusetts. Our work is cut out for us, but we have a group of dedicated people with a dynamic spirit for making our organization successful.

An important event at General Assemblies has been the time in plenary when the Accessibilities Committee turned attention to accessibility issues at GA. These moments of awareness will be missed. I wish to take this opportunity to request time during the 2008 plenary session to speak to accessibility issues and to introduce our organization.

Please find attached a copy of our by-laws and our recruitment poster.

Thank you.

Arthur Tackman

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# JOIN EQUUAL ACCESS

Equality and access for UUs with disabilities



- We will work toward comprehensive accessibility in our faith
- We will identify, counter and dismantle ableism
- We will advocate for people with disabilities

## **All are welcome to be part of this new transformative organization**

- people with physical, sensory, mental health, and intellectual disabilities
- families with children who have disabilities
- friends and allies

**For more information contact:**

**Email:** [access@uua.org](mailto:access@uua.org)

**Mail:** UUA-IDBM, Equal Access, 25 Beacon St., Boston MA 02108

*Please read the Mission, Vision, and Values statements from our by-laws on the other side of this poster.*

# Introducing Equal Access

a newly forming UU affinity organization

## **MISSION:**

Equal Access promotes equality and access for Unitarian Universalists with disabilities.

We unite to:

- Promote comprehensive accessibility throughout our faith community, including congregations, districts, and the UUA.
- Advocate on our behalf within our faith community for full inclusion by identifying, countering, and dismantling ableism.
- Advocate for people with disabilities throughout our larger world community.

## **VISION:**

We live in an ableist society that devalues people based on various physical, sensory, mental health, and intellectual disabilities, and gives privilege to those who are not disabled. Equal Access is an anti-ableist collective of people with various disabilities and their allies.

While each disability is affected by ableism differently and people with disabilities maintain their own unique identities, challenges and solutions, ableism has the potential to unite oppressed people in a collective of resistance.

This in no way diminishes the challenges and solutions of each specific disability identity; rather it is an affirmation of the multiple layers of identity of every individual.

We shall work to accomplish our mission through the following actions:

- By creating an atmosphere of openness and acceptance of those with physical, sensory, mental health, and intellectual disabilities.
- By addressing and eliminating physical, attitudinal, and communication obstacles to full participation in all Unitarian Universalist activities in congregations, in districts, and in the denomination as a whole.
- By educating all Unitarian Universalists about the social justice implications and impact of disabilities on our denomination and in our culture.
- By affirming the spiritual needs of congregation members and friends with disabilities.
- By developing and adopting accessibility policies and practices that endorse and ensure the full inclusion of members, friends, and guests with disabilities in a non-discriminatory manner, and by seeking to have them adopted by the UUA. These policies and practices will carry out this vision throughout our faith community.
- By working with the UUA, the Journey Towards Wholeness Transformation Committee, and districts on disability-related social justice policy issues of non-discrimination and access, and on education of congregations and clergy.
- By encouraging all people with disabilities and their allies within the denomination to join in this effort.

## **VALUES:**

We covenant together to:

- Work with all people who share our goals in building coalitions to achieve them.
- Take responsibility to create a community of encouragement, compassion, and hospitality.
- Be sensitive to possible conflicts, and be willing to work toward solutions using available resources, accepting that some differences may not be resolvable.
- Make decisions democratically.

*Please share copies of our Membership poster (on the other side of this page) with other interested UUs.*