

**Identity-Based Ministries
Report to the UUA Board of Trustees
December 2008**

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Office of Accessibility Concerns

The Office of Accessibility Concerns wants to share three new resources:

1. **Assistive Listening Kit:** This battery-operated technology is available on loan for meetings, workshops and conferences from the Office of Accessibility Concerns by contacting Devorah Greenstein (dgreenstein@uua.org). The kit comes in a lunchbox-sized zip pack, is simple to set up, and uses the same FM technology as permanently installed assistive listening systems.
2. **equalaccess.org:** The Equal Access and the Office of Accessibility Concerns invites you to visit its informative website on accessibility and disability rights that launches on January 1, 2009. Equal Access is a UU affinity group formed from more than 100 UUs with disabilities, their friends, families, and allies.
3. **UU World MP3 Audio Files:** *UU World* magazine is now available as mp3 audio-files for all Unitarian Universalists to enjoy -- not only for people with print disabilities. This is a joint project of UU World and the Office of Accessibility Concerns. To learn more, visit <http://uuworld.org/issues/audiorecordingswinter2008.shtml>.

Office of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Concerns

Marriage

The loss of equal marriage in California has hit Unitarian Universalists very hard, particularly in California. Of all the religious groups working for the “No On 8,” Unitarian Universalists stood out as being the best organized, most dedicated, and most willing to not assume defeat of Proposition 8 as a given. The California UU Legislative Ministry was a model, though under-funded, that has been hailed by the Human Rights Campaign and others as having done amazing work.

The California Supreme Court has been petitioned to overturn Proposition 8. The petitioners believe that Proposition 8 changes the California constitution as opposed to amending it and conflicts with other pieces of the current state constitution. The case will be heard in March. Unitarian Universalist Eric Alan Isaacson wrote a lawsuit on behalf of the California Council of Churches, which was filed November 17, 2008, citing discrimination towards one group of people.

Subsequent protests from Join the Impact across the state have led to a group of conservative religious leaders to place an ad in the New York Times decrying demonstrations against Proposition 8 as mob violence. UUA President Bill Sinkford at the request of the Human Rights Campaign has issued a statement countering the homophobia of the ad and its desire to sway public opinion.

While the outcome before the California Supreme Court is unclear, equal marriage will return to California. Public opinion continues to move in favor of equal marriage as a result of the peaceful demonstrations and the marriage equality leaders are taking time to assess and learn from what happened.

At the same time, an equal marriage case has moved through the Iowa Supreme Court and was recently argued. One couple, two young men and both UUs, were legally married before an injunction stopped other same-sex marriages there. The couple was married by Rev. Mark String, of Des Moines.

Other states with movement toward equal marriage include New Jersey, Vermont, New York, and Maine. The Human Rights Campaign's Harry Knox believes UUs may well have a significant role to play in marriage equality work in Maryland as well.

Beyond Categorical Thinking (BCT)

Total BCT Workshops scheduled for 2008 – 2009: 38

Note: Increased work with ministerial settlement representatives and interim ministers has led to the increase in the BCT, which works to encourage full opportunities for all ministers in search, regardless of race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

Welcoming Congregation

Total Welcoming Congregations: 610

Total Congregations involved in Living the Welcoming Congregation: 140

Welcoming Synagogues

Rev. Kron has been asked to join the The Institute for Judaism and Sexual Orientation at Hebrew Union College-JIR and Jewish Mosaic in a strategic conference on how to help their synagogues be welcoming to bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender people and other issues of anti-oppression they face.

Anniversaries

This last October marked the 10 year anniversary of the death of Matthew Shepard. Here is a link to a personal reflection written by Rev. Keith Kron about the aftermath of Shepard's death:
<http://uасocialjustice.blogspot.com/2008/10/matthew-shepard-10-years-later.html> .

July 2009 will mark the 25th anniversary of the death of Charlie Howard, a UU who was the victim of hate crime for being gay in 1984 in Bangor, Maine. Charlie would have been 48.

General Assembly Salt Lake City

As a result of the loss on Proposition 8, some Unitarian Universalists are suggesting that General Assembly boycott Salt Lake City because of the high support of the Mormon church for Proposition 8. The statement below is being used by the General Assembly Office and OBGLTC is collecting communications on this issue. As of December 12, 42 requests/inquiries were made about the site of General Assembly. Most responses came after the election, but a spike is expected once General Assembly registration begins and once California's Supreme Court hears the lawsuits in March.

Hello,

Thanks for taking the time to write.

At this point the Unitarian Universalist Association is not considering a boycott of Salt Lake City. There are two UU congregations in Salt Lake City; one has a minister who is openly transgender and the other has housed gay/straight alliances from the high school. Both congregations in the city are counting on us to be there.

The UUA has thought long and hard about boycotts over the years. Invariably local UUs never want us to boycott their city.

Salt Lake City is one of the liberal cities in the west. Nearly 60% of its residents are non-Mormon. The city boasts three openly gay or lesbian state legislators and one of the largest gay pride marches in the West.

Given that there have been Mormons protesting their own leaders over support of California's Proposition 8, and given the number of b/g/l/t youth in the area, many of whom are Mormon, the Association can do better work by showing up and supporting change than it can by not showing up at all.

We are also planning General Assembly programming to support the local b/g/l/t community and to make us smarter about doing effective anti-oppression work. Going to Salt Lake City allows for UUism to make a difference and to draw attention to our values.

We will win eventually on equal marriage. There is much work to do in the days and years ahead. Thank you for being a part of a faith that has and will continue to make a difference in our drive for equality.

We have high hopes that the California Supreme Court will reverse the ballot initiative and reinstate marriage equality for all people. One UU attorney has filed a petition on behalf of the California Council of Churches to do just this:

<http://www.uua.org/news/newssubmissions/123881.shtml>

Please visit the Marriage Equality area of UUA.org for more information on this social justice work taking place within the Association:

<http://www.uua.org/socialjustice/issues/marriageequality/index.shtml>.

We hope to see you at General Assembly.

Office of Racial and Ethnic Concerns

Assessment of YaYA of Color / Mosaic Project

Laura Spencer attended the Youth Ministry Working Group meeting in October where the new members were integrated into the process.

Laura led an activity on creating a multicultural group culture at the 2008 LREDA Fall Conference where the focus was on “Building a Multigenerational: Faith Creating Wholeness in our Congregations.” She was also part of the planning team for the feature program.

The **Mosaic Project** report writing continues with a completion date target of the end of December 2008. The final draft will be sent to the Administration for review.

Diversity of Ministry Initiative (DOMT)

Rev. Alicia Forde continues to work closely with Rev. Sofia Betancourt and members of DOMT in shaping the DOMT Initiative. As of December 2008, two congregations are pursuing settled Associate Ministry in the Initiative, with a timeline of settlement in 2009 – 2010; and two congregations have applications pending. The December DOMT meeting will include a discussion of the necessity to co-create more solo ministry sites in fulfilling the goals of this Initiative.

In December 2009, Alicia attended the Excellence in Ministry Summit. This was an opportunity to be in conversation with a small cross-section of UU ministers and lay leaders regarding the future of ministry and theological education in the movement. She notes that in conversations such as this, it is crucially important to pay attention to how the language (excellence) reinforces current cultural norms to the disadvantage of marginalized communities. Alicia Forde notes the significance of broadening such conversations to demonstrate a true investment in co-creating the multiracial/multicultural Beloved Community of Love and Justice.

During this fall, Alicia and the Multi-Cultural design team for U.U. University’s Multicultural Track 2009 began conversations and planning for UU University. The team’s approach includes modeling and creating a design that invites participants to think both broadly and specifically about race/class/ability/age/sexual orientation/privilege and our role in dismantling systems of injustice.

Sofia Betancourt has been working closely with the search committees in the two DOMT congregations in search this fall, and providing support to the restructuring of the UU seminarians of color group. She has also visited and been in conversation with congregations considering participation in the DOMT Initiative. Five internship sites have been approved through the DOMT initiative, including: All Souls Unitarian, DC; West Shore UU Church; Throop Memorial Church / Neighborhood UU Church of Pasadena; UU Church of Rockville, MD; and First Unitarian Church of Oakland, CA.

Rev. Betancourt and Taquiena Boston, Director of Identity-Based Ministries, participated on a panel for the President’s Council in October, to share information about the DOMT initiative. Sofia Betancourt also had the opportunity in November to meet with the Florida District Board and Nominating Committee as they began the implementation of a new end statement, “Florida District congregations, working together to become more welcoming, transform themselves and their communities to achieve racial, economic, and environmental justice.”

Plans are currently underway for the annual retreat for ministers, seminarians, and religious educators who identify as people of color, Latina/o Hispanic, and/or multiracial and multiethnic. This year's retreat (Finding Our Way Home 2009) will be held at SimpsonWood in Atlanta, GA from March 5-8, 2009.

Office of the Identity-Based Ministries Director

Building the World We Dream About: The official field test for Building the World We Dream About, the welcoming congregation curriculum on race and ethnicity, ends December 31, 2008. Revisions are underway for the curriculum to allow for a 2009 distribution.

All Souls Church, Unitarian/Washington, DC – Taquiena Boston participated in a group sermon called “Crossing the Line” at All Souls Church in September as part of a worship devoted to embracing a “border identity” as part of multiracial/multicultural ministry.

General Assembly 2009: Taquiena Boston facilitated an invitation to Melissa Harris-Lacewell, Princeton University professor, public intellectual, and life-long Unitarian as the 2009 Ware Lecturer at the General Assembly.

Staff travel schedules noted below.

IdBM Staff Group Travel Schedules Winter 2009

Rev. Sofia Betancourt

January

15	Florida	Meeting with UUMA Exec and local clergy
29-31	Boston, MA	Cultural Misappropriation Task Force

February

5-8	Berkeley, CA	DRUUMM Steering Committee Meeting
26-Mar 1	Houston, TX	UU International Women's Convocation

March

4-8	Atlanta, GA	Finding Our Way Home DOMT Retreat
12	Boston, MA	DOMT Meeting
22	Kensington, CA	Preaching UUCB

Taquiena Boston

January

6-7	Boston, MA	Leadership Council
27-29	Baltimore, MD	Social Justice and Theology Convocation

February

3	Boston, MA	Leadership Council meeting
20-22	Boston, MA	Jubilee II Trainers meeting
27-Mar 1	Boston, MA	JUUST Change consultant training

March

4	Boston, MA	Leadership Council meeting
5-7	Boston, MA	JTWTC spring meeting

Rev. Alicia Forde

January

18	Berkeley, CA	UUCB Preaching,
21 - 24	New Mexico	MSR Training
23 - 24	Denver, CO	MDD Beloved Community weekend

February

27-28	Houston, TX	JUUST Change Consultancy
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March

1	Houston, TX	JUUST Change Consultancy
5 - 8	Atlanta, GA	Finding Our Way Home Retreat
12	Boston, MA	DOMT

Rev. Dr. Devorah GreensteinJanuary

24-25	Plantation, FL	River of Grass UU Congregation
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February

1	Pineda, FL	Friendship Fellowship
6-10	Flagstaff, AZ	UU Fellowship of Flagstaff
	Phoenix, AZ	NCC-Committee on Disability
21-22	Sarasota, FL	District UUMA meeting
26-Mar 1	Houston, TX	International Convocation of Unitarian Universalist Women

March

5 – 7	Boston, MA	JTWTC spring meeting
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Rev. Keith KronJanuary

2-3	Oak Ridge, TN	Welcoming Congregation workshops
	Westside, TN	
4	Oak Ridge, TN	Preaching
9-11	Dallas, TX	Beyond Categorical Thinking; Daniel Kanter installation
18	Bremerton, WA	Preaching
23-25	Bloomington, IN	Workshop, Preaching
30-Feb 1	Augusta, ME	Beyond Categorical Thinking

February

2-4	Boston, MA	1 st Year Ministers' Meeting, Teaching
5	Boston, MA	Public Witness Meeting
13-14	Rancho Palos Verdes, CA	Interweave Convocation
15	Canoga Park, CA	Preaching
18-20	Salem, OR	UUMA PNWD Ministers' Meeting
28-Mar 1	Clemson, SC	Workshop, Preaching

March

1-2	Los Angeles, CA	Consultation with Welcoming Jewish Synagogues Project
28-29	Tacoma, WA	Beyond Categorical Thinking
30-Apr 2	Federal Way, WA	UUMA PNWD Retreat

Laura Spencer

January

9-11 Boston, MA Youth Ministry Working Group

February

27-Mar 1 Boston, MA Youth Ministry Working Group

March

5-8 Atlanta, GA Diverse Religious Professionals Gathering