

Accessibility Touchstones: Eight Useful Resources for Your Congregation's Accessibility Journey

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Accessibility is a journey, and these eight brief resources, developed in collaboration with UUs with disabilities, include all sorts of information to help a congregation as it moves along the path to becoming an inclusive congregation. Please see <http://www.uua.org/accessibility/> or contact Devorah Greenstein at dgreenstein@uua.org for more information.

Accessibility information to include in your printed announcements

Unitarian Universalists are committed to be welcoming and inclusive. There should be accessibility information on registration forms and program materials about accessibility accommodations that we make. For example:

- Make sure your meeting place is wheelchair accessible (we are committed to hold all events in wheelchair-accessible facilities)
- If you are not wheelchair-accessible, mention it as well, but let people know that you offer other accommodations (such as large print materials)
- For any meetings, small or large, if you have ample notice, make a commitment to provide large-print materials (it's easy with a computer)
- If you have assistive listening devices for your services, can you use the same system for meetings? If so, mention it in your materials.

We are working hard to promote a culture of inclusion – and we should proclaim the work we are doing to welcome people with disabilities. Shown here is a simple accessibility statement that you might want to use as an example.

ACCESSIBILITY INFORMATION:

The Unitarian Universalist Society of XYZ is wheelchair accessible.

Let us know at least two weeks in advance if you will need:

- Printed materials in large print or in electronic formats
- A ride to and from the meeting
- Other accommodations that we can provide

For assistance and additional information on accessibility for this event, contact our church administrator by email or phone.

This is a basic, unadorned accessibility information statement. If you have graphic capabilities, paste in a universal disability symbol; many of them are available on-line. If we put a statement like this in writing on our program and registration materials it serves a variety of purposes:

- It tells people with disabilities that they are welcome
- It models good practice for other program presenters to follow
- It ensures that we will do what we say (e.g. if we say that a facility is wheelchair accessible then we have to make sure that seating is accessible as well – no steps, wide doorways, wide aisles, integrated seating places for wheelchairs, accessible restrooms, etc.)

If you are planning an off-site event, make sure (in person, not by phone) that the venue is really accessible before you commit to holding the event there. If at all possible, invite a person who is a wheelchair user to join you when you make a visit to the facility.

When You're Conversing with People who are Hard of Hearing

1. Always face the person when you are talking to them. Most people who are hard of hearing rely on speech-reading to some extent.
2. Don't hide your mouth. Keep your hands away from your face and don't bend your head down while you're talking.
3. You don't have to talk loudly, or exaggerate the way you speak, but do speak clearly, without mumbling your words.
4. Higher pitched women's voices are harder to understand; if you have a high voice, lower the pitch of your voice if you can.
5. Make sure the lighting is adequate. A bright light behind can cause a glare or your face (mouth) to be in a shadow.
6. Turn down music, turn off TVs and radios. Background noise is a big problem for people who are hard of hearing.
7. Choose a carpeted room and position yourself off to the side, or in a quiet nook. Hardwood floors, high ceilings, being situated in the center of a large room can all create acoustic problems.
8. Visual information helps. Use printed meeting minutes and agendas, flip charts, white boards, and Power Point presentations.
9. On Sundays offer printed texts of that day's sermon.
10. At meetings, try to control multiple people talking at once. It can be very confusing to follow the conversation if more than one person is talking at a time.

Try to schedule meetings and hold conversations in a quiet room, where the door can be closed and people can sit close together. Noise from phones, copy machines etc make it harder to concentrate.

Hints to Help Create Larger/Clearer Print Documents

Paper and ink - Use matte non-glossy paper, either white or pastel color. Some people prefer yellow paper. Use black or dark blue ink.

Font - Use 14 point Arial or *Comic Sans MS* (actually *Comic* is the easiest font to read!). Do not underline and avoid using CAPITAL LETTERS IN BLOCKS OF TEXT because they are harder to read. Do use them in headlines or in single words to emphasize them. *Avoid using italics because they are harder to read.* In general, **use bold letters to emphasize words.**

Numbers -Numbers, 3, 5, 6, 8 are hard to read. Where you can, spell out the number like "the meeting will begin at eight o'clock."

Spacing - Left justified text is clearer. Center text for titles and headings. Don't squeeze or stretch text. Don't right justify even if you are using two columns. Leave enough space between columns so that people don't read across the whole page.

Design - Keep it simple and uncluttered. Avoid wrapping text around a graphic when it produces an uneven left hand edge. Make the margins smaller to fit more text in. Avoid double sided printing if it leaves a gray shadow on the paper's other side.

Paragraphs - Instead of indenting, leave a line space between paragraphs.

Page numbers and symbols - Page numbers, headers and footers, should be the same font size as the rest of the text. If you are providing both large and smaller print versions, it may be helpful to indicate the print page (pp) as well. Keep brackets, parentheses, colons, dash, slashes, etc. to a minimum.

Hasty larger print documents - Changing font size on your computer is simple. Also, if you need to, large print copies can be made on your copy machine by enlarging 8-1/2 x 11 inch documents to 11 x 17 inch paper. But this is not ideal because the larger paper is difficult to handle and it focuses on a person's disability. It often does work though. Enlarge approximately 135-150 percent depending on your margins. Try a page to make sure you are not losing any text on the edges.

Ten Tips for Using a Sign Language Interpreter

11. Look at and speak directly to the person who is deaf. Face the person, don't look at the interpreter. Yes, sign language can be fascinating to watch, but you are having a conversation with the person who is deaf.
12. Be yourself, use your ordinary language and speaking style. Speak in the first person, just like you are having a normal voice-to-voice conversation with a person. Avoid such phrases as "Tell her," and "Explain to him."
13. You may be used to watching an interpreter during the service when the interpreter stands in front, facing the congregation. Interpreting conversations is different in that the interpreter will position him/herself next to you, so that the person who is deaf can glance at you both, picking up your non-verbal cues.
14. Speak in your normal tone, at your normal pace. The interpreter will tell you if you need to pause or slow down. If you use a word that the interpreter is unfamiliar with, he or she may ask you to spell it.
15. If you are using written notes, or preaching from a written text, it is helpful to offer a copy to the person who is deaf.
16. Give the interpreter a copy of readings, the sermon, and other written materials ahead of time. When distributing agendas, minutes, or other written materials, offer one to the interpreter as well.
17. If you lower the lights during part of the service, maintain enough light so that the interpreter can still be seen. Use a small directional "spot-light" if you can.
18. Be aware that the interpreter must interpret everything that is said. Don't ask the interpreter to refrain from interpreting some of what you say.
19. Try to avoid personal conversations with the interpreter during the professional situation. He or she is working as a means of language-transmission, not as a participant.

Relax. If you are unsure of the appropriate way to proceed in a particular situation, just ask. Conversing, through an interpreter, with a person who is deaf, can be very comfortable. It is such a natural process, you may find yourself forgetting that there is an interpreter.

TIPS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN YOU PLAN

ACCESSIBLE WORKSHOPS, GATHERINGS, CLASSES, MEETINGS etc.

We bid you welcome, who enter this hall as a homecoming,
Who have found here room for your spirit.
Who find in this people a family.
Whoever you are, whatever you are,
Wherever you are in your journey.
We bid you welcome.

– Richard S. Gilbert ([*Singing the Living Tradition: Reading 442*](#))

Because ours is a faith community that welcomes all people, we have an obligation to plan congregational meetings and activities, workshops, and religious education classes, so that all people can participate fully. Here are some things for you to think about as you plan gathering. The list is not in order of priority. It is alphabetical.

Accessibility inside and outside – Accessibility includes parking (consider offering volunteer “valet” parking service if there is insufficient accessible parking) as well as the path of travel into and through the facility. If overnight stays are included, accessible accommodations should be a consideration as well.

Adequate lighting level – Be intentional when you dim or extinguish the lights to create a particular mood. Darkness makes it harder for some people to see written materials, music lyrics and/or readings, and for people who are hard of hearing to have enough light to use lip reading to help them understand what people are saying.

Alternative formats of written materials – With electronic communication and photo-copiers it can be easy to provide alternative format materials. An inelegant method is to enlarge book pages and handouts on a copier to the biggest copy you can put on 11 x 17” paper – not the fanciest way, but it may work for someone – please ask the person beforehand. Audio-taping materials may also be a solution for some people.

Assistive listening systems and amplification – Use a microphone (if there is a floor microphone, make sure it is adjustable so people using wheelchairs can use it); sit in a “horseshoe” or circular seating configuration; use an assistive listening system (many churches have these systems in the sanctuary); make sure each person speaking faces the audience.

Be truly welcoming – Some congregations have made a covenant that all church-related events (e.g. restaurant dinners, picnics, etc.) must be held in accessible venues. Because accessibility can be a problem if an event is held in someone’s home, in the case of multiple small group meetings, at least one of the groups must be accessible.

Disability etiquette -- Unless you know someone with a disability, you may not think about the key points that make relationships with someone who has a disability easier and more relaxed. With the intent to create a welcoming and relaxed environment for everyone, you will find some basic rules of etiquette on our website: <http://uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/accessibility/index.shtml>

Emergency evacuation – Make sure there is a pre-determined evacuation plan for people who have movement or sensory limitations. Do not assume that every person who has a disability will need help in an evacuation – always ask before providing assistance.

Fragrance-free thoughtfulness – For people who have chemical sensitivities: beeswax candles with lead-free wicks can be purchased online; attendees can be asked to refrain from wearing personal scents; burning incense and/or sage should be avoided; open flame/fire (e.g. for use in burning small pieces of paper) should be avoided.

Meals and eating arrangements – Buffet-style serving is difficult for people who use wheelchairs, walkers, crutches. Offer to be a “valet” – to carry a plate or tray. If you have a potluck meal, keep allergies in mind. Ask people to make index cards listing all ingredients of the dish they have brought and place these cards in front of their casserole, bowl, etc.

Notices and publicity for the gathering – For legibility, use simple uncluttered page design. Use a font like Arial 14 (if possible) and light colored, non-glossy paper. Registration materials should include a contact person who will be responsible for accommodations; the most important thing is to work individually to determine what accommodation(s) will help

Scheduling, public transportation, carpooling – Arrange carpooling if possible. Some people do not drive and some people do not drive at night or in bad weather. If there is public transportation available, try to schedule workshops, classes, and other events to coincide with bus/train schedules.

Seating – Arrange seating so that there is adequate integrated spaces for people who use wheelchairs. Make sure that aisles are wide enough for people to navigate comfortably inside the room without having to move seats. Provide seats with extra leg-room for people who use crutches, braces, or other walking supports. Have some chairs with arms, and some chairs that will be comfortable for people who are large.

Sign language interpreters – In registration material, ask people to contact the accessibility contact person at least two weeks in advance. If a person does make the request, it will not be difficult to locate a skilled sign language interpreter through your local Center for Independent Living or your local school district.

Speaker platform, lectern, stage – Have a wheelchair accessible podium/lectern available (a less-than-optimal alternative is to use a music-stand as an accessible lectern) and a ramped stage. Portable ramps may be available from your local durable medical equipment suppliers.

There is a lot of additional accessibility information on our accessibilities website.
<http://uaa.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/accessibility/index.shtml>

We invite you to join Equal Access – visit our website www.equualaccess.org – we also invite you to join the UU Access-L listserv to meet others who are interested in accessibility:

<http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/access-L>

How Accessible is your Congregation for People with Multiple Chemical Sensitivities?

"Better Living Through Chemistry"? Remember those old DuPont ads that said "Better living through chemistry" and how we all thought that statement was true? Well, we have since learned that the misuse, overuse, and inappropriate use of chemicals has led, for some people, not to "better living" but to severe sensitivities – not only to what we think of as chemicals - people can also be sensitive to natural essential oils and fragrances.

Multiple chemical sensitivity IS REAL. MCS is defined as "an acquired disorder characterized by recurrent symptoms referable to multiple organ systems, occurring in response to demonstrable exposure to many chemically unrelated compounds at doses far below those established in the general population to cause harmful effects."¹

MCS is not simple to diagnose because reactions can be subtle and sometimes don't appear until after the exposure. That's why other people unfamiliar with MCS may mistakenly conclude that a person with MCS is not really physically sick, or should use "will power" to overcome symptoms. *These attitudes create barriers that cause distress for a person with MCS just as much as the chemical compounds create barriers and isolation.*

The person with MCS responds to chemicals at levels that don't bother most people. Most of us can wear clothing that has been made wrinkle-resistant; use scented shampoo; sleep on mattresses padded with foam; live with carpeting; and treat our lawns with herbicides. But, depending on a person's individual sensitivities, any of these things (or exposure to any one of hundreds of other substances) can produce life-threatening symptoms in a person with MCS.

Actually, about 15 percent of us have some degree of sensitivity to chemicals. People have a wide range of sensitivities and responses. For example, during Sunday worship a slightly sensitive person may get a headache from people wearing perfume in surrounding pews, but s/he feels better when the exposure stops. Or s/he may have a headache for hours after the exposure stops. Or s/he may actually become confused and unable to think clearly because of reactions to the perfume or other chemicals in the church - or fall sleep during the service - or suffer debilitating fatigue for days after the exposure.²

It seems complicated. But in fact, accommodations may require only minor adjustments.

Actually there is a lot we can do. As a United Methodists' publication tells us: "Making churches more accessible for people with environmental disabilities may seem to present a formidable challenge. Nevertheless, a large amount of improvement in air quality is achievable with very little effort."

The most important requirement is a spirit of wanting to help on the part of the congregation and church leaders. We may actually find that making these accommodations will increase the physical comfort level and alertness of many people who had not previously noticed their slight sensitivity. We must keep in mind though, that in addition to general considerations that will help us all, specific accommodations need to take into account the individual needs of a particular chemically sensitive individual who is having difficulty (and who should be asked about specific changes that will be most helpful.)

MCS questions for you to think about:

- Are building entrances kept free of people smoking?
- Are vehicles allowed to stand for periods of time with their motors running near the building?
- Are unscented beeswax candles used?
- Is property near buildings kept free of herbicides and pesticides or are notices posted before and after treatment?
- Is at least one restroom free of air fresheners/deodorizers and scented soaps?
- Is there a designated fragrance-free area in a well-ventilated area of the sanctuary? Is the area wheelchair accessible?
- Have silk flowers or organic flowers been considered as an alternative to flowers treated with pesticides?
- During coffee hour is there a fragrance-free table or area near a window that can be opened and as far away from the kitchen gas stove as possible?
- Are Care and Concern Committees advised of the special needs of people who have chemical sensitivities?
- Have maintenance staff and others been familiarized with less toxic cleaning products and are they used whenever possible?
- Is the building adequately ventilated and is it aired out periodically? Is the building free of mold and mildew?
- Are remodeling materials chosen with regard to low off-gassing qualities?
- Is advance notice given when chemicals (such as floor wax and pesticides) are to be used within the building?
- Have congregation members "signed on" to the idea of creating a supportive environment for people with MCS?

Air quality/pollution may affect many of us. Many of the items on this list are just common sense. Indoor sources : smoking; pesticides used and/or stored indoors; combustion exhaust from hot water heaters, furnaces and gas stoves; fumes from laser printers and copiers; volatile organic compounds in cleaning materials; scented soaps, air fresheners, and deodorizers; mold and mildew; scented candles; recent remodeling; new drapes, carpets, or upholstery; chemicals and/or microorganisms in heating and cooling systems; inadequate fresh air, improperly maintained filters or inadequate duct design in ventilation systems. Outdoor sources : herbicides and pesticides; emissions from cars idling nearby. People sources : perfumes and other scented products; freshly dry-cleaned clothing or clothing that was cleaned with scented detergent or fabric softeners.

Do we have to eliminate all of these potential chemical/pollution sources? We cannot create a safe environment without eliminating each problem at its source. We cannot have a fragrance-free seating area and think that we can call ourselves MCS-friendly if the sanctuary carpet has been cleaned with petrochemicals and we have scented soaps in the restrooms. While it may be extremely difficult to create an environment that will accommodate a severely chemically sensitive person, many people with mild or moderate sensitivities can be accommodated relatively easily.

Some suggested products - not meant to be complete

[Based on an original list](#) compiled by Sheila Bastien³ PhD and her patients these products can be found in many health food stores. Read labels carefully to be sure the unscented product has no herbal scent or essential oils.

Deodorants - possibly any unscented brand, including:

Arm & Hammer Baking Soda
Crystal (Le Crystal Rock, Natural Stick, Natural pump spray)
Mennen Unscented Speed Stick for Men
Mineral Rock
Tom's of Maine Unscented

Dishwasher Soap

Life Tree Dishwasher Liquid
Planet Dishwasher Liquid

Gel/Mousse - possibly any unscented brand, including

Aloe Vera Gel
Aubrey Hair Gel

Building Cleaners

Baking Soda
Bio-Kleen cleaning products
Orange Power/Citra-Solv
Vinegar

Laundry Detergents - possibly any unscented brand, including:

All Unscented
Arm & Hammer Unscented Washing Soda
Borax Unscented Washing Soda
Cheer Free
Tide Unscented

Lotions

Almay
Almond Oil (with no essential oils added)
Burt's Bees Lemon Balm Cuticle Cream
Granny's Old Fashioned
Lubriderm Fragrance Free
Moisture Guard
Nature's Plus Vitamin E Cream

Shampoo, Conditioner - check for Fragrance Free

Almay
Clinique Unscented
Dr. Bronner's Unscented Baby Castile Liquid Soap
Granny's Old Fashioned Unscented

Infinite Chamomile shampoo (conditioner is scented)
Magick Botanicals
Tom's of Maine Unscented

Shaving Creams

Aubrey
Shea Shaving Unscented
Simple
Tom's of Maine

Soaps

Almay
Clinique
Dr. Bronner's Baby Supermild Soap
Dr. Bronner's Unscented Baby Castile Liquid Soap
Granny's Old Fashioned Soap
Kiss my Face Olive Oil Soap

Sunscreens/Lotions

Aubrey Organics Ultra 15 Natural Herbal Sunblock (check the label because some Aubrey sunscreen has apple essential oil that may bother some people with MCS)
Hawaiian Tropic Sensitive (Fragrance and PABA free)

¹Cullin, M.R. ed. (1987) Workers with multiple chemical sensitivities, *Occupational Medicine*.

²Multiple Chemical Sensitivity Accessibility for United Methodist Churches from "Accessibility Audit for Churches, A United Methodist Resource Book,

³Dr. Bastien is a neuropsychologist who has MCS.

Disability Etiquette

This is the mission of our faith:

To teach the fragile art of hospitality;

To revere both the critical mind and the generous heart;

To prove that diversity need not mean divisiveness;

And to witness to all that we must hold the whole world in our hands.

– William F. Schulz, Reading 459 from [*Singing the Living Tradition*](#)

Etiquette may seem a rather formal term to portray the give and take of our interactions with other people. And yet, etiquette really feels like the right word to use to describe the thoughtful, considerate behavior that we expect to receive from others and give to them.

Until you know someone with a disability, you may never have had reason to think about the key points that make relationships with someone who has a disability easier and more relaxed. With the intent to create a welcoming and relaxed environment for everyone, here are some basic ground rules we should all keep in mind.

When you are with a person who is blind or has vision problems:

- Speak directly, not through an intermediary. Use a natural conversational volume and tone.
- When you are greeting a person who is blind or visually impaired, use their name and don't forget to identify yourself. For example, "Hi Sam, it's Joe."
- When the person enters a room, be sure to greet them, using your own name (as above).
- It is really okay to use say things like "See you soon." Feel comfortable using everyday words relating to vision like "look", "see", "watching TV".
- During a conversation, give verbal feedback to let them know you're listening. They may not be able to see the expression on your face.
- Do not take care of tasks for a person that they would normally do. First ask if they need help, then offer to assist, and be guided by the person's response to your offer.
- If you see someone about to encounter a dangerous situation, be calm and clear about your warning. For example, if they are about to bump into a pole, calmly and clearly call out, "Wait there for a moment; there is a pole in front of you."
- Never hold a person's arm while walking. Let the person hold your arm. This will let them walk slightly behind you, and the motion of your body will tell them what to expect. Offer verbal cues as to what is ahead when you approach steps, curbs, escalators, or doors.
- When you leave, say you are leaving. Never leave a person who is totally blind or severely visually impaired in an open area. Instead, lead them to the side of a room, to a chair, or some landmark.
- Never distract, pet, or offer food to a guide dog without permission from the owner. The dog is working and must not be petted without permission.

When you are with a person who is deaf or has hearing problems:

- Look directly at the person you are speaking to. If you are working with a sign language interpreter, talk directly to the person who is deaf, not to the interpreter. While working, the interpreter is not a participant in the conversation, but a transmitter for the person who is deaf.
- Don't cover your mouth, and don't create shadow on your face by standing with your back or side to a bright light or window.
- Speak at a slow to moderate rate and don't use exaggerated lip movement. Some people's voices are easier to understand. Women with soft voices can be more difficult to understand.
- If there is a misunderstanding about something you've said, repeat the same idea using different words.
- Keep paper and pen nearby. If communication is difficult, feel comfortable resorting to writing key words or brief phrases - and writing phone numbers or addresses is often a good idea.
- Don't shout - it won't help. Hearing aids make sounds louder, not clearer.
- To get a person's attention, gently tap the Deaf/hard of hearing person on the arm or elbow and make sure they are looking at you before you speak.
- Be aware that being able to hear conversation in a crowd and/or with background noise is most difficult.

When you are with a person who has a mobility impairment:

- Look at and talk directly to everyone with whom we converse.
- Be at eye level with everyone with whom we speak, if possible.
- Ask how we can best help when assisting a wheelchair user to go up or down a curb.
- Move crutches, walkers, canes, or wheelchairs only with the permission of the user. Return the devices as soon as possible.
- Ask if and how we can help in buffet lines.
- Respect everyone's individual space. Do not lean on someone's wheelchair.
- Allow children to ask questions and allow the person being questioned to answer.
- Ask "May I help?" when wanting to be helpful. And if given permission to do so, ask "How may I help?" Unsolicited assistance is rude and intrusive.
- People who use wheelchairs are "wheelchair users", not "confined to a wheelchair".
- Grasp the push handles tightly so that the chair does not go too fast when helping to guide a wheelchair user down an incline,
- When assisting a wheelchair user go up or down more than one step tilt the wheelchair back at all times while descending or ascending the stairs.
- Learn the location of wheelchair-accessible ramps, rest rooms, elevators, doors, water fountains, and telephones.
- Relax and smile! Very few people (even those with mobility impairments) bite! (That's a joke.) Everyone responds to a smile and a warm "hello".

When you are with a person who has an invisible disability:

- Don't refuse to believe what you cannot see by doubting a person's truthfulness.
- People do not like to always have to identify themselves as a person with a disability. When planning an event, add a note about accessibility needs with a direct number to a real person. That opens the door for the person to reach out and not feel like they are imposing.
- The best tactic is to simply talk to a person and ask what they can and cannot do.

- Always assume there is a person with a hidden disability in a group. So always say "Rise if you are willing and able," and always plan quick stretch breaks every 30-45 minutes.
- If a person says they cannot do something, don't try to coax or cajole or convince them to try anyway.
- Invite partial participation, and ask what you can do to make participation possible.
- A hearing impairment is a hidden disability; always assume there is a person in your group with hearing loss so face your audience.
- Don't judge another person's pain or limitations; accept as true what the person tells you.

When you are with a person who has a learning disability

- Understand that the term learning disability is broad and covers many types of learning styles and behavioral differences.
- Ask a person what accommodation will be most helpful. Then, with the person as partner, try different strategies.
- Recognize that a person with learning disabilities has limitations, as we all do, and be patient, flexible, and realistic, as we should all be with each other.
- Ask if they have understood specific information or if the information needs to be communicated in a different way. Ask what works best.
- Offer encouragement and support...and patience.

When you are with a person who has a psychiatric problem:

- Use an open, caring, accepting manner; find some common ground on which to interact
- Be genuine; like anyone else, a person with mental illness can pick up on a false or demeaning approach
- Try to understand what is being said from the person's perspective; be comfortable even if you feel this person's mind is working in a way that is different from yours.
- Stay calm, keep eye contact and retain a calm facial expression and body manner; what is most important is to communicate that you care.
- Use sentences and words that are short, simple and uncomplicated. If something you say is not understood, repeat the message, using other words.
- Be a good listener. Don't criticize, lecture, or argue. Try to be supportive. Treat the person with respect.
- If the person is angry, don't take it personally, and don't approach or touch the person without his or her request or permission.
- If the person is willing or indicates a need, offer to get the help of a friend, relative, clergy, or qualified professional.
- Focus on the person's strengths and what has been accomplished, and treat this in a positive way.
- Structure limits, behaviors and responses in an appropriate way. Ask for advice about how to handle limit-setting. In a non-judgmental and confidential way, ask your minister, Accessibility or Disability Committee, or Caring/Pastoral Care Committee.

When you are with a person who has multiple chemical sensitivities:

- Choose personal products that are fragrance-free. Be aware that there are hidden, long-lasting fragrances in detergents, fabric softeners, new clothing, deodorants, tissues, toilet

paper, potpourris, scented candles, hair sprays, magazines, hand lotions, disposable diapers, and dishwashing liquids.

- Use only unscented soap in restrooms, and carefully wrap and dispose of chemical air "fresheners"
- Designate fragrance-free seating sections for church and community events
- Designate smoking areas away from buildings so people don't have to pass through smoke when entering, or have smoke waft in through doorways or windows
- Adopt a policy of using fragrance-free cleaning products
- Provide adequate ventilation; clean furnace filters frequently
- Make sure toxic substances are labeled, tightly sealed, and stored in a separate safe area
- Post herbicide or insecticide application schedule in your newsletter. Post signs of treatment dates prominently. Use integrated pest management best practices
- Avoid wearing scented personal care products in public places. Improve indoor air quality simply by not wearing fragrance. Fragrance, like second-hand smoke, affects the health of those around you
- Unscented beeswax candles are often well-tolerated by people with sensitivities. Use them, as an alternative to scented or paraffin candles
- Learn what an individual is sensitive/allergic to and make accommodations respectfully

When you are with a person who has an intellectual disability:

- Use simple sentences - not baby talk - and please speak in a normal tone of voice - but don't use complex words where simple words will do. Talk to the person as a person; talk to adults as adults, not children. Do not be condescending.
- Find commonalities to talk about - TV shows, movies, church events, families
- Make instructions clear and concise. Don't combine many steps into one instruction.
- Talk with the person even though they may not be verbal enough to respond. If they cannot respond, at the very least, introduce yourself, tell them who you are and that you are pleased to meet them. Shake hands if that is appropriate.
- Give clear, non-judgmental feedback when behavior is not appropriate. If you are unsure about how to respond or handle a situation, ask your minister, Accessibility/Disability Committee, family member. Be non-judgmental and patient.
- Be generous, but appropriate, with compliments when behavior is appropriate - or when the person has accomplished a task, or taken initiative.

__There is a designated fragrance-free seating area in a well-ventilated part of the sanctuary or other worship space. There are also wheelchair accessible spaces in the fragrance-free area.

__There is a ramp or a wheelchair lift provided to make the chancel area accessible to people using wheelchairs. There is also a wheelchair accessible pulpit or pulpit substitute available (e.g. sturdy music stand).

__The choir area is accessible so that adults and children using mobility aids can participate in choir activities.

__Large print orders of service and large print hymnals are available.

__The sanctuary has good acoustics and an amplifying sound system for people who depend primarily on their hearing to enjoy the service.

__The worship leader invites people to rise “in body or in spirit.”

__Sign language interpreters are available on request. Staff knows how to contact local qualified sign language interpreters.

__Printed copies of the sermon are available for people who have hearing difficulty or who wish to read the sermons at home.

__The sanctuary has an assistive listening system (FM, audio-loop, or infra-red) and ushers are trained to give out headsets when asked.

__A microphone (accessible to people with mobility limitations) is always used for activities such as Joys and Concerns.

__There is at least one accessible restroom clearly marked with the international accessibility symbol. This restroom meets or exceeds all regulations for floor space and stall sizes. All faucet controls, door and stall handles are lever-type, and hot water and drain pipes are insulated. All dispensers and hand dryers are 40” or less above the floor.

We invite you to join Equal Access: www.equualaccess.org and the Access-L e-list: <http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/access-L>



ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLIST



Unitarian Universalists are on a journey toward a faith community that welcomes and affirms all people, a faith community that invites people with disabilities to participate fully in congregational life.

This brief audit introduces some of the basics. Please note that the kitchen, office, meeting rooms, social hall, and RE rooms are not included here. Those important areas are in a more complete audit at: <http://uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/accessibility/index.shtml>

Check the things you’ve done or the things you want to do next.

People and Policies

__A task group that includes several people with disabilities (and may also include community members that deal with accessibility) advises and guides the congregation’s accessibility efforts.

__Staff, volunteers, and congregation members have all been trained in disability etiquette so that they are comfortable in their relationships with visitors and members who have disabilities.

__Leadership roles are offered to people with disabilities, and needed accommodations are made to make this possible and comfortable.

__The congregation’s constitution, by-laws, and policies include welcoming, non-discriminatory language – see sample covenant at: www.uua.org/programs/idbm/accessibilities/conglife_hartford.html

__All registration forms for church-sponsored events are available in larger print and non-print formats, list a contact person, and have space for people to indicate their accessibility needs.

__There is a comfortable way for people with disabilities to offer suggestions for removing barriers without feeling like “complainers.”

__Church-sponsored community events are held in facilities that are accessible for people with mobility limitations.

__Carpools and volunteers are organized to provide transportation to church and community events for people who do not drive.

__Gatherings that take place in people's homes (e.g. covenant groups) have at least one home or venue that is wheelchair accessible.

__Meal/banquet/social event planners make sure that the location is a facility that is accessible for people who have mobility limitations.

__Disability-related resources are promoted: books for adults and children, videos, curricula, community speakers/teachers/events.

Brief Tour

__All sidewalks on and surrounding the campus have good curb cuts.

__Outside the building, signs with the international accessibility symbol are posted to clearly mark accessible parking spaces and clearly point to accessible entrances.

__Ramps meet all regulations and are as flat as possible (preferred slope is 1:20, steepest permissible slope is 1:12). Regulations are easily found on the internet.

__Indoor and outdoor spaces used for children and youth activities accommodate children, youth, and adults with disabilities.

__All doors are at least 32" wide (preferably 36") and thresholds no higher than 1/2" with beveled edges. All doors have 12-16" kick plates so people in wheelchairs can push them open.

__Entryway mats, runners, and rugs are less than 1/2 inch thick and have exposed edges fastened down so they cannot create tripping hazards.

__All doors are at least 32" wide (preferably 36"), thresholds no higher than 1/2" with beveled edges. All doors have 12-16" kick plates so

people in wheelchairs can push them open. Door handles are large, easy to grasp (e.g. lever handles). Doors are lightweight and easy to open (less than 6 pounds of pressure) or there are automatic door openers.

__All parts of the corridors and hallways are at least 60" wide.

__Staff and volunteers have training to assist people with disabilities in emergencies, and know where the accessible evacuation exits are.

__The building is adequately ventilated to eliminate buildup of harmful fumes. Staff and volunteers are familiar with less toxic cleaning products and the importance of using them.

__There is an accessible water fountain mounted with the spout no higher than 36" above the floor, or there is a paper cup dispenser mounted next to the water fountain.

__There is an accessible entrance to the sanctuary and other worship areas. All aisles in the sanctuary, including the side aisles, are at least 36" wide. All aisles and spaces where people move around during worship are at least 60" wide.

__There are an appropriate number of wheelchair accessible spaces dispersed throughout the sanctuary or worship area. People using wheelchairs do not have to block the aisles. Seating next to wheelchair space is marked with a sign: "Reserved-accessible companion seating".

__There is seating space with extra leg room for people using crutches, walkers, braces or casts.

__The sanctuary or other worship area is well lit so that people with visual limitations can read the order of service and hymnal. There is adequate lighting on the speaker's face for people who read lips.

__If there are steps to the chancel, there are handrails provided that can be used by people who can only use their right hand or their left hand.