



ACCESSIBILITY AND
INCLUSION MINISTRY
AIM PROGRAM

Committed to the full inclusion of people with disabilities

September 2017

NEWS FROM GENERAL ASSEMBLY

“STANDING ON THE SIDE OF LOVE” CAMPAIGN TO BECOME MORE INCLUSIVE

Perhaps the most exciting news in the ongoing work to address ableism within Unitarian Universalism was the passage of a [Responsive Resolution](#). Rev. Theresa Inez Soto, a powerful disability rights advocate and active member of EqUUal Access, put forth the resolution calling upon the leaders of UUA to replace the language of the “Standing on the Side of Love” with language that “better includes and reflects the needs and contributions of disabled people.” After some debate, the resolution passed overwhelmingly. It was a historic moment when ableism was at last recognized within Unitarian Universalism.



Pictured above: Revs. Suzanne Fast & Barbara Meyers, both founders of AIM and members of AIM’s Coordinating Committee, awaiting the outcome of the historic vote

AIM CERTIFICATIONS CELEBRATED

This year to date, two congregations have attained AIM Certification and were recognized during General Assembly. **First Parish in Bedford, MA** and **Unitarian Universalist Church of Las Cruces, NM** were honored during the EqUUal Access Celebration on June 23rd. An announcement was also made during General Session to share the news with our entire denomination.

GRATITUDE TO VOLUNTEERS

Each year EqUUal Access has a booth in the Exhibit Hall at General Assembly to share information about EqUUal Access and the AIM Program. We couldn’t staff the booth without the help of volunteers. This year, we would like to thank the following individuals from AIM-aspirant congregations who generously gave of their time during General Assembly:

- ❖ Marie Ryder, First Parish in Bedford, MA
- ❖ Michael Sallwasser, Unitarian Universalist Church of Long Beach, CA

WELCOME NEW AIM-ASPIRANT CONGREGATIONS

Since the launch of the live program last year at General Assembly, the AIM Program has continued to grow. Currently ten congregations are participating in the program.

The AIM Program has welcomed five new congregations in 2017 to date:

- [DuPage Unitarian Universalist Church](#) in Naperville, IL,
- [Unitarian Church of Montpelier, VT](#),
- [Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta](#), and
- [Unitarian Fellowship of LaCrosse, WI](#).

AIM VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

A virtual conference was held on April 12 entitled “Building Strong AIM Teams & Engaging Congregational Support.” Participants represented a wide range of experiences with the AIM Program and were enthusiastic about the ideas exchanged. Visit the [Conference Minutes](#) for more information on the topics discussed.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR

The AIM Program is pleased to announce that Rev. Helen McFadyen has joined our team as Program Administrator. Helen has been a dedicated member of EqUual Access and has decades of experience working, volunteering, and advocating for disability rights and greater accessibility.

Helen serves as Developmental Minister to the UU Fellowship of Kamloops in the province of British Columbia. She is currently doing research that examines the impact of mutual supportive relationships on residents of intentional communities as part of a Doctor of Ministry degree program.



Thanks to the wonders of the Internet and telephone communication technology, Rev. Helen will be able to work closely with AIM congregations. “This is a commitment without borders,” she reflected upon accepting the Administrator position. Please welcome Helen, who can be reached at any time at aim@uua.org.

Pictured above: new AIM Program Administrator Rev. Helen McFadyen with faithful companion and guide dog Camilla

CONGRATULATIONS ON COMPLETING PHASE II!

Completing the self-assessments and an AIM Plan in order to submit the Phase II Packet is no small task. We want to recognize the following congregations who have reached this milestone in 2017 to date:

Unitarian Fellowship of Hartford, CT
Unitarian Universalist Church of Long Beach, CA

PROGRAM CHANGES

As a new program, we are continually working to improve our materials and program design based on the feedback we receive from congregations. We appreciate your patience when a change is made and welcome your input.

AIM ADVISORY TEAMS

During our first year as a “live program,” each AIM Aspirant Congregation has been assigned to a Review Team once accepted into the program. But we’ve noticed that congregations are having less contact and struggling more than congregations that went through the pilot program.

In an effort to provide AIM Aspirant Congregations with the “missing ingredient” that pilot congregations told us helped them to be successful, we are changing the program model. AIM Review Teams will be getting a new name and a different role as AIM Advisory Teams. Advisory Teams’ goal will be to provide mentoring, guidance, and resources to support congregations throughout their participation in the AIM Program.

We ask your patience as members of Review Teams are trained for this new role. You can expect to begin hearing from your Advisory Team members more often in the coming weeks and months. Please help us to make this change in program design successful by doing your part to keep in contact with your AIM Advisory Team.

NEWS FROM AIM CONGREGATIONS

A congregation that has completed the requirements for AIM Certification earns the distinction of being an AIM Congregation. Here are a just a few highlights from the many great projects happening in AIM Congregations:

First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor, MI: installed outdoor benches in front of the building for those waiting to be picked up at the curb.

ORDINATION OF SUZANNE FAST



Our beloved Suzanne Fast (pictured above), one of the founders of AIM, a member of the AIM Coordinating Committee, and the president of EqUUal Access, was ordained on April 2, 2017 at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Fort Myers, FL.

Suzanne is a powerful and unflagging advocate for the inclusion of people of all abilities in congregational life. Her work has had and will continue to have a far-reaching impact on our denomination.

Congratulations, Rev. Suzanne, and much gratitude for your continued work for a more inclusive world.

NEWS FROM AIM-ASPIRANT CONGREGATIONS

Wonderful disability-related work is happening all the time at congregations participating in the AIM Program. We'd like to recognize just a few of the accomplishments from congregations who are in Phase III of the AIM Program, or were recently certified. During Phase III, congregations are actively working on completing their AIM Plan.

First Parish in Bedford, MA: social justice project working with veterans in new housing units of the local VA campus.

Unitarian Fellowship of Hartford, CT: installation of a hearing loop system in the Sanctuary.

UPDATED & NEW PROGRAM MATERIALS

UUA WEB PAGE UPDATES

We've been making changes to all of our webpages, which are generously hosted by UUA. Check them out at <http://www.uua.org/accessibility/aim>.

PHASE III PACKET UPDATED

Formerly called Packet C, the newly update Phase III Packet is now available on the UUA website: [Phase III Packet](#).

RECERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Certification last a period of three years, after which congregations re-apply. The requirements are now clearly explained and posted on our UUA web pages: [AIM Recertification Requirements](#).

COMING SOON

We are also working on improving the Phase II Packet Assessments, formerly called Packet B, so stay tuned.

The new assessments will be broken down into subject areas, i.e. "Worship," "Entrance & Egress," "Religious Education." We hope the assessments will become much less daunting when broken into components that can be completed by small groups of appropriate individuals.

The new Phase II Packet will provide clearer guidance on how to use the assessments as tools for engaging different groups in the congregation in the AIM Program. Each assessment component will include recommendations for individuals who should work together on that component of the assessment. When an AIM Team member, members of the board, and staff members have an opportunity to sit down together to work on the policy component of the assessment, for example, the AIM Team member can educate everyone on what AIM is and generate enthusiasm for the program, while all parties develop an understanding of what the inclusion and accessibility priorities are.

Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo, NY: invited nationally recognized queer and disability activist Eli Clare for their annual disability service; organized a book reading and signing of Eli's new book [Brilliant Imperfection](#).

Unitarian Universalist Church of Long Beach, CA: held a workshop on disability activism attended by 20 people and participated in usher/greeter training.

Unitarian Universalist Church of Rochester, MN: after much hard work and effort, this congregation's website has become an example of a Welcoming website on our UUA webpage,

<http://www.uua.org/accessibility/aim/application/your-website>.

FOND FAREWELL

In September, we will be losing Michelle Avery Ferguson, who has served as Program Administrator for more than two and a half years.

"As a parent and individual with disabilities, my tenure with the AIM Program has been of deep personal significance. Being able to observe how inclusion becomes part of the culture in congregations as they move through the AIM Program has been a powerful and inspiring experience. I look forward to seeing how AIM grows and develops during its next phase, with our new Program Administrator!"

We wish Michelle well as she returns to a career in clinical social work.



FACILITATOR & PARTICIPANT WORKSHOP FEEDBACK SURVEYS: HELP US IMPROVE AIM!

Each time your congregation holds a workshop as part of your AIM Plan, please have facilitators and participants complete feedback forms and return them to <mailto:aim@uua.org>. This information helps us to improve our workshops and provides your AIM Team with great feedback. The updated forms are at

<http://www.uua.org/accessibility/aim/workshops>

As a reminder, workshops that fulfill AIM Certification requirements can be found at:

<http://www.uua.org/accessibility/aim/workshops>.

If you have an idea for a new workshop, there are two options. If other congregations could repeat your workshop in order to promote inclusion or accessibility ministry, you may provide documentation of your workshop model and request a waiver for inclusion in the AIM curriculum. If the workshop is not repeatable and would not be appropriate for other congregations, you could instead consider it as a project rather than a workshop.

CONGRATULATIONS ON COMPLETING PHASE III!

Unitarian Universalist Church of Rochester, MN has completed its Phase III Packet and will be the next congregation in the AIM Program to receive AIM Certification. Send your congratulations to their team via AIM Team Leader Paula Horner, edlhorn@msn.com.

SHARE YOUR NEWS WITH US!

The work at your congregation is an inspiration to others, just as your AIM Team finds inspiration in the work other AIM Teams are doing. Send us your stories, audio recordings, photos, and videos so we can lift each other up. They need not be professional quality – using a smart phone or digital camera works just fine! Please email Rev. Helen at aim@uua.org with your trials and tribulations.