



FALL NEWS FROM EQUAL ACCESS

DISABILITY-RELATED AWARENESS DATES IN OCTOBER

October 8: World Dyslexia Awareness Day (via the European Dyslexia Association) read here: <https://eda-info.eu/what-is-dyslexia/index.html>

October 8: World Sight Day (focuses global attention on blindness and vision impairment) read here: <https://www.iapb.org/advocacy/world-sight-day/>

October 10: World Mental Health Day (World Federation of Mental Health)

October 10: The Big Event for Mental Health: (for the first time ever, the World Health Organization will host a global online advocacy event on mental health. World leaders, mental health experts and celebrity guests will join WHO Director-General, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, to tell the world what we can all do to improve our mental health and how we can help make sure that quality mental health care is available to everyone who needs it.

Read how to participate here:

<https://www.who.int/news-room/events/detail/2020/10/10/default-calendar/the-big-event-for-mental-health>

FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH

October 10 will mark World Mental Health Day, about which the World Health Organization (WHO) posted these words:

“This year’s World Mental Health Day, on 10 October, comes at a time when our daily lives have changed considerably as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The past months have brought many challenges: for health-care workers, providing care in difficult circumstances, going to work fearful of bringing

COVID-19 home with them; for students, adapting to taking classes from home, with little contact with teachers and friends, and anxious about their futures; for workers whose livelihoods are threatened; for the vast number of people caught in poverty or in fragile humanitarian settings with extremely limited protection from COVID-19; and for people with mental health conditions, many experiencing even greater social isolation than before. And this is to say nothing of managing the grief of losing a loved one, sometimes without being able to say goodbye.

The economic consequences of the pandemic are already being felt, as companies let staff go in an effort to save their businesses, or indeed shut down completely.

Given past experience of emergencies, it is expected that the need for mental health and psychosocial support will substantially increase in the coming months and years. Investment in mental health programmes at the national and international levels, which have already suffered from years of chronic underfunding, is now more important than it has ever been.

This is why the goal of this year's World Mental Health Day campaign is increased investment in mental health."

FUNDING FOR MENTAL HEALTH

A Justice/Advocacy Issue for Unitarian Universalists

A joint news release (27 Aug. 2020) issued **by the World Health Organization, United for Global Mental Health and the World Federation for Mental Health** suggests that World Mental Health Day "is an opportunity to kick-start a massive scale-up in investment in mental health".

Read more here:

<https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/27-08-2020-world-mental-health-day-an-opportunity-to-kick-start-a-massive-scale-up-in-investment-in-mental-health>

HELD - IN CONVERSATION WITH BARBARA MEYERS

by Rev. Helen McFadyen

My dear friend and colleague, Barbara Meyers, is the author of a new book titled, HELD: Showing Up for Each Other's Mental Health -- "a guide for every member of the congregation" (Skinner House, 2020). I recently had a conversation with Barbara via Zoom. She spoke to me from her home in Fremont CA. Here are a few excerpts from our Q & A, with links added in line for references mentioned in conversation.



ABOUT: *Rev. Barbara F. Meyers is a Unitarian Universalist community minister whose ministry focuses on mental health issues, affiliated with Mission Peak Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Fremont, California. She works as assistant director of Life Reaching Across to Life, a peer-support mental health center in Fremont. She is the author of The Caring Congregation Handbook and Training Manual—Resources for Welcoming and Supporting Those with Mental Disorders and their Families into Our Congregations and has produced a public access TV show, Mental Health Matters.*

HM: Given all the negative portrayals of "demonized" people with mental illness in religious texts, what do you think is a positive image of God in a conversation on mental health?

Barbara: Great question....There were whole eras when people with mental illness were believed to be sinful, possessed even...I think visualizing God as someone who will never giving up on you, who is always with you, who is crying with you when you are crying, suffering with you when you are suffering...that image of the presence, of being 'held'...and a congregation that will 'hold' you

in love when having a mental health difficulty.

HM: People living with mental illness often have co-existing barriers that impact their journey; social isolation, economic challenges, inadequate housing, medical health problems, and societal stigma around mental illness to name a few. What are your thoughts on this disparity?

Barbara: One of the saddest things I have experienced and continue to experience is the realization that the people who are most seriously ill are those who get the worst care...for economic reasons, lack of available of resources and adequate resources, and a mental health system that does not honor people in their most difficult times. The rich "worried well" are the most privileged [in receiving mental health services], and those with the least amount of resources, who don't respond the first or second time people try to treat them because something about their condition is hard to treat... their whole life can easily be taken away, their availability to be an independent person and to have a self-directed person life can be ruined.

HM: Do you see any changes occurring regarding the aspect of gender in mental health?

Barbara: With more women in political and corporate leadership, things are changing somewhat. I also think that misogyny in society, and the way people are put down, traumatized in domestic violence and so on, can contribute to mental health problems. Also, some things are inherited...when genetics are a factor. My mother had post partum depression when my youngest brother was born, though I was not aware of it then (at 6 years old). She finally got help when a particular medication was eventually developed that worked for her. Sometimes it takes years to find the right therapy or medication...It wasn't until I had a post partum depression that I learned of my mother's history of it. So, my daughter, thankfully, became proactive in this regard in preparing for her own experience of birth.

HM: Given the disproportionately low funding allocated to mental health services, in contrast to the overall health budget, what do you suggest congregations do around activism on mental health?

Barbara: the best large- scale model I know of is in the state of California. There

was a community activist, later elected to the state legislature... As a community activist he managed to get the city of Sacramento to create wrap around services for people who were severely mental ill so they would have the therapy, the medication, their social worker, all of those people surrounding the person in need. With that kind of service, there were far fewer re-hospitalizations. When elected to the legislature, he created a Citizen's Proposition that put a tax on anyone earning over 1 million dollars, and all that funding would go to mental health. He got it passed in 2005 or 2006; people voted for it. Categories were created like prevention and early intervention, research, and so on. Each county had to put together a commission to determine to determine which programs in their county would be funded. This is the largest scale action I've seen. Millions of dollars were collected on this, and went to a lot of worthy projects. I also put a list in the back of my book with some suggestions, some of which came from a very good book written by UU Larry Hayes.

(2008. Mental Illness and Your Town: 37 Ways for Communities to Help and Heal. This and other resources available from Loving Healing Press <https://www.lhpress.com/>)

...I also think incarceration is a big issue. People do not get better in a jail cell, or being pumped full of drugs all day.

HM: What's happening next for you? Any special projects on the horizon?

Barbara: I continue to be involved with EqUUal Access, the AIM program, of course, the Mental Health Network. I'm hoping there are a number of groups and actions that will come out of the MHN upcoming planning process. And I've started to work on a new book with a group of people involved with teaching emotional CPR. Basically, emotional CPR teaches how to give emotional support to people in crisis. It's been used in places around the world. (See <https://www.emotional-cpr.org/>)

HM: You are so active in many areas! What aspect of your work and ministry do you enjoy the most? Writing? Advocacy? One to one support, Teaching?

Barbara: The thing that is the foundation of what I do is person to person contact. Being with someone and experiencing the holy between us...that I consider to be pure ministry. It's the foundation of what I do. I like doing the other stuff too, but that's what really feeds me.

HM: **Any last words for our readers in the EqUUal Access community?**
(thoughtful pause, then speaking with quiet intention....)

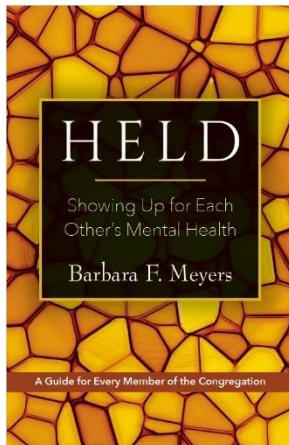
BM: *You're not alone. We're here for you.*

Before we concluded our conversation, Barbara added that her fondest wish these days *"is that a whole lot of congregations purchase and read this book and practice it! Do it as a book group discussion."*

Barbara also wants us to know that the UU Mental Health Network has collated a number of **resources for coping with mental health in COVID times**, noting that *"The pandemic can pose problems for everyone, and can be particularly hard for people who are living with mental health problems and their family members. Having to have distance from people you mainly socialize with is especially difficult because maintaining social contact is so important to one's mental health."*

Visit the UU Mental Health Network here for pandemic resources:

<https://uumentalhealth.org/resources/mental-health-resources-during-the-pandemic/>



In Held: Showing Up for Each Other's Mental Health, community minister and mental health advocate Barbara F. Meyers illustrates how members of liberal religious congregations can be supportive to those living with mental health problems, and their loved ones, in our congregations and society at large. Meyers addresses the fundamental elements of spiritual support—truth, hope, presence, acceptance, encouragement, authenticity, public witness, and pastoral care—with stories from real life situations and

suggestions for how parishioners can provide and advocate for support in their congregations. A study guide for congregations and a list of resources for more information round out this thoughtful and necessary resource.

Available in print from In Spirit UU

Bookshop: https://www.uuabookstore.org/cw_contributorinfo.aspx?ContribID=272614&Name=Barbara+F.+Meyers

A kindle e-book version is available from Amazon:

http://https://www.amazon.com/Held-Showing-Others-Mental-Health-ebook/dp/B08GP3VXGB/ref=sr_1_2?crid=3Q7K29TFFKE0A&dchild=1&keywords=held+barbara+meyers&qid=1598447245&s=books&sprefix=held+meyers%2Caps%2C169&sr=1-2%20%27

WHAT'S IN YOUR UU PANDEMIC "PIVOT" KIT?

a Check in with EqUUal Access

DON'T MISS THIS UPCOMING GATHERING!

Tues. 20 October -- 7:00 pm Eastern Time

(8:00 pm Atlantic; 6:00 pm Central; 5:00 pm Mountain; 4:00 pm Pacific)

Join with this Zoom link: <https://tinyurl.com/y26or7rb>

Mark your calendar for this relaxed hour of conversation via Zoom as we check in about how folx are pivoting in response to the pandemic. Join Shelly Rohe and Rev. Helen McFadyen for an opportunity to share experiences and ideas around these two questions:

- **What do disabled people want/need in these pandemic times that our UU church communities (can) offer?**
- **What have we discovered about doing "online" church and other virtual gatherings that make them engaging, accessible and inclusive?**

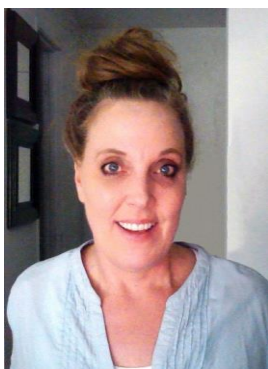
*Please note that the check in on Zoom will be recorded to preserve ideas and resources contributed during the session. Anyone choosing to participate is advised that their name, comments, and image (if camera on during the call) may be used in the creation of future EqUUal Access multimedia projects.

AIM PROGRAM WELCOMES NEW ADMINISTRATOR

The coordinating committee of Accessibility & Inclusion Ministry (AIM) Program is thrilled to announce that Shelly Rohe has been selected and contracted by the UUA and EqUUal Access as AIM's new Administrator. Competition for the position was very strong, and while almost every applicant and interviewee held unique and compelling skills and gifts, the panel's selection was decisive!

After three years in the Administrator position, Rev. Helen McFadyen will be leaving at the end of the year to dedicate more time to their academic research. But, you'll probably continue to encounter Helen volunteering with the EqUUal Access leadership circle, offering disability-themed workshops, ministering to the UU disability community in worship and pastoral care roles, or consulting on accessibility and disability inclusion matters in UU-land and beyond.

Through the month of December, both Rev. Helen and Shelly will collaborate in the role of Administrator to ensure smooth transition in all AIM activities and relationships.



Who is Shelly Rohe?

Glad you asked! Here are is a brief autobiographical reflection provided by Shelly.

I was born in a small midwestern town, Zumbrota, in Minnesota to hardworking parents. Four daughters, of which I am the second, completed our family. I went off to college in the cities and graduated cum laude with departmental honors in Psychology from Hamline University.

Already working to support people with disabilities, I grew and advanced in the field until one year I chose to work in the school system. To help financially, I took a job at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis and caught the acting bug. I wound up in Los Angeles and quickly learned that the collaborative nature of film making energized me but waiting around to be told what to do was not appealing. I eventually found casting and my love for helping people realize their dreams.

In 2006, I found out I had brain tumors. Three brain surgeries later found me back in Minnesota and living with multiple disabilities. I discovered the First Unitarian Universalist Church in Rochester, MN which became my spiritual home the past six years. I was able to help the Disability Task Group through the credentialing process to become a proud and active AIM Certified congregation. When our chairperson stepped down, I became a co-chair until being called back to California.

I currently live in Los Angeles, for now. I have travelled to Finland, Sweden, Canada, Mexico, Alaska, Hawaii, and all of the contiguous United States except Maine. One guess where I would like to travel next.

I look forward to working as the AIM Administrator and assisting congregations in becoming more accessible and inclusive.

OUT IN THE WORLD: DISABILITY & THE ARTS

SINS INVALID *~An Unashamed Claim to Beauty in the Face of Invisibility~*

Sins Invalid is a disability justice based performance project that incubates and celebrates artists with disabilities, centralizing artists of color and LGBTQ / gender-variant artists as communities who have been historically marginalized. Led by disabled people of color, Sins Invalid's performance work explores the

themes of sexuality, embodiment and the disabled body, developing provocative work where paradigms of “normal” and “sexy” are challenged, offering instead a vision of beauty and sexuality inclusive of all bodies and communities. (For more information, visit <https://www.sinsinvalid.org/>)

OCTOBER 23-25, 2020

We Love Like Barnacles: Crip Lives in Climate Chaos
SINS INVALID - webstream performance

Sins Invalid extend these words of invitation:

Join us amidst waves of gratitude and grief as we gather online October 23-25 to celebrate the wisdom and resilience of our communities. In these heartbreaking times when we are unable to gather in person, we offer a Sins Invalid performance that is more accessible than ever. This webstream-only performance offers the first opportunity to experience the show beyond the theater at the time of the event.

Holding space for love, mourning, and community healing in pandemic times, Sins Invalid brings forth a performance that centers our communities in the throes of climate chaos and our agonized planet. From the storms battering our shores to the raging fires threatening our homes, the social, political, and economic disparities faced by disabled queer and trans people of color put our communities at the frontlines of ecological disaster.

SPECIFICS

~ Streamed through the [ODC Theater](https://www.odctheater.com/) website ~ Ticketing info available soon!

Check Sins Invalid for updates: <https://www.sinsinvalid.org/upcoming-show>

Fri. October 23 & Sat. October 24: Virtual Doors 7pm PST (10 pm EST),

Performance at 7:30 pm PST (10:30 pm EST)

Sun. October 25: Performances at 3pm and 6pm PST (6:00 pm and 9:00 pm EST)

Lobby experience includes a pre-performance lounge and an online auction. All performance screenings followed by a live Q & A. All performances will be ASL interpreted and Audio Described.

ELECTION 2020



DISABILITY RIGHTS & ACCESSIBILITY

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protects the rights of voters with disabilities around all aspects of voting, including voter registration, site selection, and the casting of ballots, whether on Election Day or during an early voting process. Other federal laws exist which mandate accessible polling places in federal elections for elderly individuals and people with disabilities.

For guidance on how the Americans with Disabilities Act and other federal laws help ensure fairness in the voting process for people with disabilities, please check out the ADA website at this

link: https://www.ada.gov/ada_voting/ada_voting_ta.htm

Read more about provisions for voting accessibility in America

here: <https://www.eac.gov/election-officials/voting-accessibility>.

Disability Election Issues: CripTheVote is a nonpartisan online movement activating and engaging disabled people on policies and practices important to the disability community. Their movement is grounded in online conversations encouraging individual and collective action in the face of inequality, ableism, and oppression in all forms. <https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/tag/crip-the-vote/>

The Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund is a leading national civil rights law and policy center directed by individuals with disabilities and parents who have children with disabilities. <https://dredf.org/>.

EqUUal Access urges disabled and non-disabled UUs to learn more about the kinds of issues affecting people with disabilities:

<https://www.equualaccess.org/aim-program/aim/principles-purposes/aim-social-justice/issues-affecting-people-with-disabilities/>

CONNECTIONS FOR/BY/WITH THE UU DISABLED COMMUNITY:

EqUUal Access Weekly Connections include:

Theme Chat (Tuesday)
Oasis Worship (Thursday)
Craft & Chat (Friday)

These online spaces are for disabled community connection. We urge non-disabled friends, allies, and family members to tell disabled beloveds about these spaces.

If you would like to receive the Weekly Update and Notes e-message (single email) prepared by Rev. Suzanne Fast, follow this link and fill in the information <https://tinyletter.com/EquUUalAccessNotes> - your email will automatically be added to the subscriber list for the Notes.

Or check the EA website for updates on the theme of the week and zoom links to join Theme Chat, Oasis Worship, and Craft & Chat gatherings. <http://www.equualaccess.org/connect-online/> You can also find the Facebook Group by searching: 'Connection Space for and by Disabled UUs'.

Pastoral Conversation Appointments for UUs with disabilities are available with Rev. Helen McFadyen or Rev. Barbara Meyers. Please email hmcfadyen@uuma.org or bfbmeyers@gmail.com to arrange a private Zoom call. Please note that EqUUal Access is working to find improved ways of providing this resource and scheduling appointments.