

## Welcome to All – Accessible to All!

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First Congregational UCC in Madison, WI is excited to announce that it has officially been listed as an A2A Congregation! A2A, **Accessible To All**, is a distinction awarded by the UCC Disabilities Ministries (UCCDM) to Congregations who strive *to become Accessible to All in all aspects of their lives: buildings, worship, education, fellowship, and service in order to proclaim God's word to all people*. The A2A marker also recognizes Congregations *committed to be advocates with and for people with disabilities to overcome marginalization and injustice*. First Congregational Church, Madison, joins just one other A2A Congregation in the Wisconsin Conference, and 15 nationally.

Acknowledgment to the Accessibility Committee at First Cong for their persistence and dedication to move the Congregation to:

- **Empower** and **Advocate** for individuals of all abilities.
- **Explore** and **Promote** means to make First Congregational UCC's physical structure, and programming, more accessible to all.
- **Educate** the wider community for awareness and action.
- **Recognize** and **Support** the role of caregivers.

First Congregational UCC has diligently worked to create an inclusive community for individuals living with a wide range of disabilities: mobility, impaired vision, deafness and hearing loss, neurodevelopmental disabilities, learning disabilities, brain injury or stroke, Alzheimer's disease or other dementia, mental illness, etc. As the Accessibility Committee's Statement of Intent declares:

*We are an accessible community of faith, and accommodations are available upon request. Through participation in the life of this church, we hope that you will share your stories and listen to those of others, give and receive support, and feel a sense of comfort and belonging through the joys and struggles of life.*

The journey to A2A involved an intensive audit of the programming and physical structure at First Cong. Converting a solid 1930's vintage building into a barrier free structure was not an easy task, but with dedication and support, members have - through the decades - made the necessary adjustments to make nearly all spaces accessible to all. Some of those projects and renovations include:



Ramp Dedication

- Elevator addition in the 1960's
- Sanctuary and Garden Entrance renovations in the 80's & 90's
- Hearing Loop installations in Sanctuary & Chapel
- Selected pew removal for integrated accessibility in Worship
- Breese Terrace step renovation and ramp addition
- Recent renovations providing accessible Pastoral offices, small kitchen, restrooms, and multipurpose Chapel space

In addition to overcoming physical barriers, an A2A designation requires Congregational programming that *advocates with and for people with disabilities to overcome marginalization and injustice*, something woven into the very fabric of First Congregational Church and exhibited through:

- Ties to the formation of NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness;
- Continued work of the Accessibility Committee
- Accessible Worship - welcoming/understanding/patient congregation, large print bulletins, dedicated microphone use, usher training, respite room, worship friends
- Accessible parking/signage/Parking Lot Assistance Team
- Children & Youth programming/awareness and training for teachers
- Updated signage in building
- Dedicated education & advocacy programs- physical disabilities, autism spectrum and learning disorders, Alzheimer disease and other dementia, caregiver support, mental illness

The A2A designation is a major milestone for First Congregational United Church of Christ in Madison, recognition of the efforts of a *welcoming* body of Christ. This designation is also a touchstone of the ongoing dedication and support needed to sustain a faith community that strives to truly be **Accessible to All**.

*That they may all be one*  
John 17:21a