



Finding Your Target Audience

A Guide for Unitarian Universalist Congregations

Part of the **UUA Pacific Western Region's [Congregations Reaching Out Toolkit](#)**, © 2018

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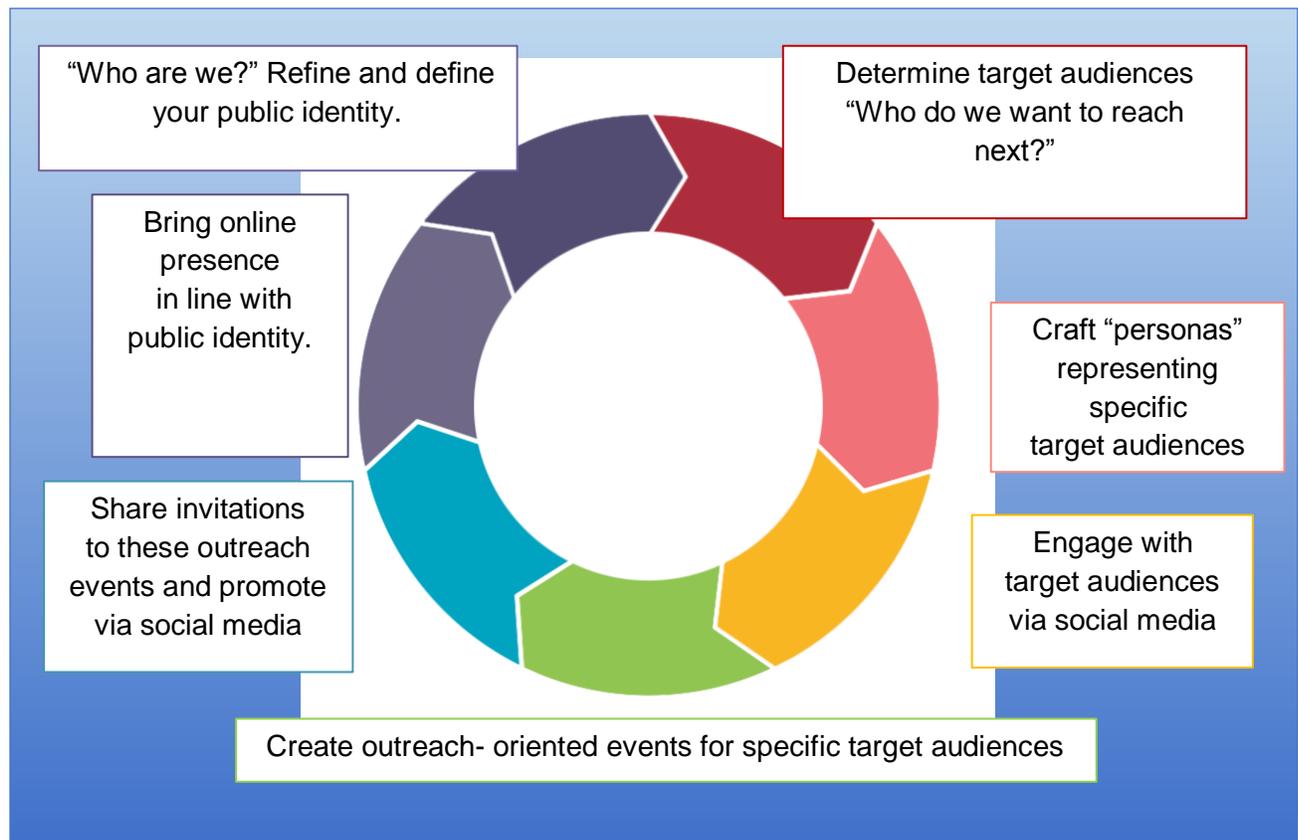
[Congregations Reaching Out](#) is designed to help your congregation and UU groups:

- Discern who you are and compellingly communicate a cohesive identity online and in person.
- Use social media to identify, reach, and engage with specific target audiences.
- Create and promote outreach events and opportunities based on the needs of these audiences.

This toolkit is comprised of three step-by-step guides:

1. ***Finding Your Target Audience***
2. ***[Social Media Strategy for Outreach](#)***
3. ***[Planning and Promoting Great Outreach Events](#)***

Together these present an outreach process of continually refining your public identity, sharing this through your online presence, identifying new audiences you want to reach, engaging with them via social media, and intentionally designing and promoting outreach-focused events. As the need for UU values has never been greater, we must turn up our efforts to turn our ministries outward to our communities, helping those values reach new groups of people inside and outside our congregations.



[Congregations Reaching Out](#) was developed by [Carey McDonald](#), Executive Vice President of the UUA, and [Rev. Sarah Gibb Millspaugh](#), Congregational Life Staff for the Pacific Western Region of the UUA, when they were both on the UUA's Outreach Team. [Peter Bowden of UU Planet Media](#) consulted on the project, offering wisdom and expertise from his years of social media work with congregations.

Several congregations field-tested an early version of this toolkit. We are grateful for their practical recommendations which have been incorporated into this edition.

How to Use This Guide

The “Congregations Reaching Out” Toolkit’s three guides may be used together (in any order) to support your outreach process with a cohesive strategy. They can also serve as spot reference guides to inform your social media, event planning, and related outreach efforts.

This guide, ***Finding Your Target Audience***, focuses on these aspects of the process.

- Determining target audiences
- Crafting “personas” representing specific target audiences
- Engaging with target audiences via social media

This guide’s companion resources are:

[Social Media Strategy for Outreach](#)

- Refining and defining your public identity
- Bringing your online presence in line with public identity
- Using top social media platforms for outreach

[Planning and Promoting Great Outreach Events](#)

- Creating outreach-oriented events designed for specific target audiences
- Sharing outreach event invitations and promoting via social media
- Following up, capturing, or strengthening new relationships the events generate

The complete toolkit can be found at <http://www.uua.org/pacific-western>. Additional congregational outreach resources may be found at <http://www.uua.org/outreach>.

Get monthly tips, strategies, and other resources from the UUA Outreach and Public Witness Team!

Subscribe to the UUA Outreach Revolution packet at http://bit.ly/uuaoutreach_signup.

Recommended Resources

If you are working with congregational outreach, growth, marketing or membership development, you'll also want to take advantage of the following related resources:

- [Love Reaches Out Study Guide](#)¹ offers three workshop sessions to engage your congregation in discovering who you are, what you do, and why it matters in your community.
- [UU Brand Identity Guidelines](#)² describe a flexible, shared approach to design, words and images for communicating UU values for use by congregations as well as the UUA.

¹ http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/love_reaches_out_study_guide.pdf

² http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/uu_brand_identity_guidelines.pdf

Introduction

Today there is a great hunger for what Unitarian Universalism and our congregations offer. This has only grown since the 2016 Presidential election. Interfaith families, young activists, and others are seeking community, support, and fellow spiritual revolutionaries! Congregational attendance and engagement are up. We need to turn our ministries outward toward engaging our communities if we want to fulfill Unitarian Universalism's calling in the world.

While our congregations may be well positioned to respond to the needs of the growing "spiritual but not religious" demographic and other audiences, often congregational outreach efforts are too general to make an impact. The popular expression, "If you try and please everyone, you'll end up pleasing no one," applies to UU outreach. If you try and reach out to all potential Unitarian Universalists at once, you'll end up reaching hardly anyone!

We have learned that effective outreach targets specific audiences, one at a time. By reaching out to specific audiences with invitations to unique, carefully designed outreach events, as described in this Outreach Toolkit's three guides, congregations and other UU groups can communicate and engage in a way that cuts through the noise of our media-saturated lives.

To be heard, our messages must resonate with the specific hopes, wants, and needs of specific audiences. And to do this well, we have to listen to them. It's not enough to just put our message out into the world. We must create a conversation, a two-way relationship we're building with different audiences, through social media.

How do you do that? First, you must know who you are! The [Social Media Strategy for Outreach](#) guide walks you through the process of strengthening your brand identity and bringing it online through your website and social media channels.

Next, you have to get specific about who you are trying to reach. Get to know them, and empathize with them. Who are they? What are their daily concerns? What gets their attention? Then, once you understand them better, assess what your congregation has to offer. What is here for that audience? What could be here for them? And how do we communicate the possibilities to them in an inviting way, so they begin to think our congregation can enhance their life?

This guide will lead you through a process to identify your target audiences, understand your appeal to these audiences, and help you see your congregation as they will. The guide includes sample profiles or "personas" based on target audiences that UU congregations have had success reaching. The target audience you choose has to do with who you are, who you aspire to be, what your surrounding community is like, and what your surrounding community needs. We hope this guide helps you focus your outreach efforts and reach ever expanding circles of potential Unitarian Universalists!

Learning to See Your Congregation

The key to successful outreach amid the changing religious landscape, particularly with the unaffiliated or Spiritual But Not Religious sets, will likely be to speak to why people would want to show up in the first place, not just what can keep them there year after year. Describe what we offer for learning, yearning, and working for our values.

We can't assume people are already looking for a church on Sunday mornings, because in fact we're competing for their time and attention against sleeping in, taking a walk, soccer practice, Facebook, and brunch. We have to focus on what we DO as UUs, not just who we are.

--Carey McDonald, then UUA Outreach Director, in the blog post [Join Our Cause, Not Our Club](#)³

Who are you? What do you do? Why does it matter? These three questions are core to your congregation's "brand identity." Every organization has a "brand" made up of their relationships, reputation, purpose and past. It's up to you as a congregational leader to take your "brand" seriously! You may have great answers to these questions, but there's a catch: It's not your answers that matter. It's *their* answers: your target audience's answers. The way *they* understand the congregation is what's going to get them to click "Like" on Facebook, what's going to get them out of bed and over to your event.

In 2013, the firm Proverb did some work to understand Unitarian Universalism's brand identity in general. [The UU Reputation](#), included in this document, organizes these perceptions into Assets, Challenges, Opportunities, and Pitfalls. Do they fit with how people not in your congregation see your congregation? What would you add? What would you take away?

Our "brand" is not who we say we are, it's who *other people* say we are. It's the summation of our reputation and people's feelings toward us. Who they can trust us to be and what they can trust us to do.

For example, over the years through our *Standing on the Side of Love* public witness events, media outlets have come to recognize our yellow shirts and often refer to us as "the love people." Some reporters would even ask to speak with "the leader of the love people"! In this case, the brand successfully connected with love, though not always Unitarian Universalism.

So if we aren't able to dictate what our brand is, how do we influence it? How do we shape and transform the way people feel about us, so that they want to be a part of Unitarian

³ <http://growinguu.blogs.uua.org/organizational-maturity/join-our-cause-not-our-club/>

Universalism and our faith community? How do we tell our story in a way that includes and invites them?

Building empathy

We get there by learning to understand *them*. Then we learn how to understand ourselves as others might do. And we work with those understandings, learning how to tune our communications to just the right frequency so that they will hear us and we will hear them, so that we will form a connection.

Tools for understanding your congregation through an audience's eyes:

- Explore the sample personas included in this document. They are a powerful tool for evaluating your congregation from the perspective of another person.
- Study Improving Your User Experience (UX) Online and In-Person, Part 1 on the physical building⁴, Part 2 on staffing and welcome⁵, and Part 3 on websites and personas.⁶ Each of these blog posts, by the Rev. Sarah Gibb Millspaugh of the UUA Congregational Life staff, explores a different aspect of the visitor's experience and guides you to see your congregation through the visitor's eyes.
- Watch a demonstration from the 2014 UUA General Assembly workshop, #UUsGetSocial: Make Your Website Awesome and Make It Yours. Learn how to use personas to evaluate your web presence (from 4:48 to 27:00)⁷.
- The Love Reaches Out study guide⁸, produced in 2015 by the UUA Outreach Office, is a curriculum for three 90-min. workshops that engage congregational leaders to develop better communications and connections. If you have not already done the workshops from *Love Reaches Out*, we highly recommend it. It will help you develop your understandings of your congregation from an outsider's perspective and generate ideas for communications and connections to build with target audiences.

Choosing and Refining Your Target Audience

This guide explores in depth three target audiences that may be particularly receptive to targeted UU outreach. These audiences, which sometimes overlap, are Interfaith Families, LGBTQ Families, and Young Activists. This guide's sample personas are designed to represent these three audiences. Additional research and resources to learn about each of these audiences appear at the end of the guide. Your target audience may be different, based on your own congregational identity, gifts, and location.

⁴ <http://growinguu.blogs.uua.org/organizational-maturity/improving-your-user-experience-ux-online-and-in-person-part-1/>

⁵ <http://growinguu.blogs.uua.org/organizational-maturity/improving-your-user-experience-ux-online-and-in-person-part-2/>

⁶ <http://growinguu.blogs.uua.org/numerical-indicators/uncategorized/improving-your-user-experience-ux-online-and-in-person-part-3/>

⁷ <http://www.uua.org/communications/websites/ga-2015>

⁸ https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/love_reaches_out_presentation.pdf

Interfaith Families

Unitarian Universalism's inclusion of many beliefs and backgrounds makes our congregations very appealing to interfaith families. Very few organizations or even websites celebrate interfaith families. These families have a strong need for affirmation, connection, and support. They can feel isolated, misunderstood, even stigmatized by their families and faith communities of origin.

The book, *Being Both*, by Susan Katz Miller, published by the UUA's Beacon Press, has shown us that interfaith families want to tell their stories. They want to connect with others with experiences like them. They want to be with people who accept their spiritually eclectic practices and affirm their whole family's "free and responsible search for truth and meaning."

By speaking to the common symbols and experiences that give life meaning, we are able to offer a shared religious experience for multi-faith families, one that honors their own celebrations and identities.

LGBTQ Families

LGBTQ families are a growing demographic in the United States. Today this demographic includes a spectrum of identities including "questioning," "intersexual," "pansexual," and more. Within the LGBTQ families audience, we include households with adults or children having a sexual orientation and/or gender identity other than heterosexual and/or other than cisgender (claiming the gender identity matching the sex they were assigned at birth).

While there is variation in how our congregations welcome, understand, and include members of LGBTQ families, our faith is overall far more explicit and intentional about gender and sexuality inclusivity than others. Our congregations often meet a need for queer-friendly spaces, particularly religious spaces, in many parts of this country.

We can do more to build relationship with LGBTQ families. Outreach can let this audience know what we offer, a story of wholeness and integrity that has literally saved the lives of countless queer youth and affirmed life for families and people whose identities cross the traditional boundaries of the gender and sexuality spectrum.

Young Activists

If we were to target for outreach the people who grew up in our Unitarian Universalist Association member congregations, we might end up with this exact demographic—young activists! So many UUs and those who share our values are deeply concerned about the state of the world, and dedicate their personal and professional energy to changing it.

Research on the Millennial Generation (born between 1982 and 2001) shows young adults' interest in social change. As Unitarian Universalists, we know that grounding in a values-driven community is key to the long-term sustainability of justice work. Among Millennials,

activists make sense to target. They are already engaged with the justice issues that UUs champion. Volunteers are a measurable proxy for activists.

The biggest challenge with this audience is avoiding the institutional frame that Millennials reject, and that so much of religious practice is infused with, while upholding the power and spiritual depth of our justice tradition.

Choosing a Target Audience for Outreach

For your congregation, you can target one of the three audiences suggested by the UUA, choose a similar audience, or pick a different audience entirely. The important thing is that your target audience is a good fit for your congregation and your ministry. Carey McDonald recommends a focus on where your congregation is its best self—your “authentic ministry”—overlaps with needs of the community.



It's more challenging to reach out to an audience not represented in your congregation than to an audience from a demographic is already present. For example, if you're reaching out to young adults, but you don't have much of a young adult presence in your congregation, successfully engaging new young adults will be harder. It's important to ask:

- What audience do you want to target?
- In what ways are you already successfully engaging this audience within your congregation?
- How would you describe those ways in terms that are emotional and spiritual as well as logistical? That is, deepen a statement like “We have an interfaith families group” into something like “We create a supportive and spiritually uplifting space,

through our interfaith families group, where the fullness of our identities and traditions are welcomed.”)

- What capacity do you have to expand or create new forms of engagement with this audience? (e.g., could you create an ongoing Interfaith Families Group, or a monthly Spirituality & Activism potluck?)
- Do you need to do some congregation-wide work to really be able to welcome this audience (e.g. might you need to do some intentional work on [multicultural ministry](#) or become an [LGBTQ Welcoming Congregation](#)?)

Take some time to consider how you already serve and engage with people in this demographic. Name them, write them down. This information will serve as a good basis for exploring your context, developing personas, and creating your “pitch.”

Perceiving Your Congregation’s Context

Of course, the way people experience and receive your congregation’s outreach depends a lot on context. Therefore, it’s important to understand who you are and what you do in the context of your local community. Use these questions to guide you to understand the broader context in which your outreach efforts are being received.

1. What trends are happening in the neighborhoods, towns, cities, and counties around you? What do you notice about who’s there who might be particularly receptive to your outreach?
 - You might, for example, notice that many of the young families are multicultural and multi-faith, or that young creative idealists are moving to your area in droves. Or perhaps you see a burgeoning of interest in community gardens and local food.
 - What do you see in the hard census data, as well as the soft anecdotal data you gather? (See [Getting Good Data](#) below for tips.)
2. Seeing your community with the eyes of someone who’s not yet involved with your congregation, what do you notice that relates to your target audience?
 - For example, you might notice that there are three other LGBTQ-affirming congregations in town, but that the overall climate in the schools is hostile to LGBTQ kids. Or you might notice that the local synagogue does not welcome interfaith families. Or that there’s nowhere else in town where spiritually progressive people can create values-based community.
3. What needs of the target population go largely unmet in the broader context?
 - For example, your local synagogue does outreach to interfaith families, but interfaith families who do not want to practice Judaism aren’t welcome. Or the young creative idealist crowd gets burned out quickly, and has an unmet need for restorative experiences that give them hope.
4. What organizations and groups are around you that meet similar needs?
 - For example, a nearby secular group sponsors social events for parents with young children that meets those parents’ need for social connection. Or a

very active community service program in the schools gives children and youth consistent opportunities to live their values.

5. What is distinctive about what you offer?
 - Perhaps it's your focus on spiritual growth, or multigenerational community, or the transcendent and inspiring experience of worship. Perhaps it's the welcoming of many beliefs and backgrounds, or the respectful, responsible sexuality education programs you've been leading for decades.
6. What else is important to note about your context and your congregation's specific role?

Getting Good Data

When you have a target audience (or two!) in mind, you can look at data to give you an idea about the size of your audience and a snapshot of the area where your congregation is. Reviewing data and survey results can be an excellent check on our assumptions about who lives in our neighborhoods. It's actually pretty easy to get basic demographic data about your community, though specialized or complex crosstabs and breakdowns usually require statistical software.

Here are two places to go to get good, quick, and free data for your area to help you understand who your congregation might connect with.

[American FactFinder](#) is the best source for US demographic info. A national Census is taken every ten years, but the Census Bureau does dozens of other surveys in between and makes data accessible to the public. You'll probably want to use [Community Facts](#)⁹ - just enter your city, town, or county in the search box to browse 2014 demographic data. Age, racial/ethnic identity, education, and workforce industry are often useful categories, but browse through the others as well (veterans status, nation of origin, language, housing, income, etc.). The [Census Mapper](#)¹⁰ is also a lot of fun.

To make sense of your data (e.g. what does it mean that 53% of the people in our town have a high school diploma?) it can be helpful to compare your area to 1) statewide averages (just repeat your search but use your state instead), or to 2) the same community in prior years (there will typically be links to 2014, 2010 and 2000 information). This will give you *benchmarks* and *trends*: it will allow you to see if your community is more or less educated than surrounding areas (benchmarks), or whether education levels tend to be increasing or decreasing (trends).

[Pew Forum Religious Landscape Study](#). The Pew Research Center is the gold standard for research about religious beliefs and practices in the US. You can explore their most recent survey results by religious group or by geography (regions, states, and some metro areas). Pew helpfully compares 2007 and 2014 survey results so you can quickly see trends. If you

⁹ https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml

¹⁰ <https://www.census.gov/geo/maps-data/maps/datamapper.html>

haven't explored this data before, we recommend that you read the overview from the report based on this dataset: [America's Changing Religious Landscape](#)¹¹. Is your part of the country more or less religious than other areas? What religious groups are growing? Which are the largest?

Visual Data

Check out these maps to help visualize some of the data trends in your area:

- [American migration interactive map](#)¹², based on 2010 Census data shows where people in your county tend to come from (within the US) and move to.
- [The Racial Dot Map](#)¹³ shows one dot for each person, color-coded by racial group, based on 2010 Census data. It makes housing segregation patterns seem to jump off the screen.

Depending on the audience you are reaching out to, there may be many other useful surveys and datasets that would be useful. See the audience profiles in the Resources and Handouts section for examples.

¹¹ <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>

¹² <https://www.forbes.com/special-report/2011/migration.html>

¹³ <https://demographics.virginia.edu/DotMap/index.html>

Personas: Turning Your Audience into People

So, you've done your research, looked at your congregation's strengths and your community's context, and you've chosen your target audience. How do you learn to relate to them? How do you learn to speak to their needs and identities?

One way is to translate your audience into a persona. A persona is a fictional character with traits of real-life people you would like to connect with. It puts a human face and story on a demographic group with characteristics, interests, hopes, and needs supported by data. This way you are not just reaching out to a mass of "young activists"—you're reaching out to "Tricia" and "Jason" in the fullness of their personalities.

Personas are an excellent tool for organizations to build relationships with people. With a well-crafted persona in hand, you can evaluate your website: Does it speak to their goals and challenges? Can they quickly find information about events and issues that concern them? You can evaluate your blog posts: What have we written that speaks to their values or fears? You can review your Facebook or Twitter presence: Does this show how our congregation would be a wonderful place for Tricia and Jason?



The personas you use should be grounded in the research and data you have reviewed, so they realistically reflect the reality of your target audience and life in your community. **This target audience must be a demographic you're already in relationship with** (see "It's About Relationship" below.)

We've created a [persona development worksheet](#) and have built [four sample personas](#) you can use as drafts or examples for your own. Once you've determined your target audience, it's wise to come up with three personas within that audience that reflect different aspects and attributes of that audience.

As tools, personas should be held lightly, not wielded heavily. The example persona David has Jewish roots, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't also reach out to people with roots from other major faiths of the world. The Tricia persona is an atheist, but don't assume she's going to be turned off by all references to spirituality on your Facebook page: she just needs to see some signals that UUs don't have to believe in God. Be who you are—just make sure you're speaking in ways your personas will hear and connect with.

It's About Relationship

Often, when our UU congregations' leadership sets out to attract new people, we start with what's awesome about our congregation and why people should come. **But this guide has a different approach: We start by looking at our congregation's own gifts, and what it has to offer to different kinds of people. We look at who we're moving into relationship with, more and more: LGBTQ families? Interfaith families? Young activists? Recently-transplanted retirees? Who else?**

Our target audience needs to be a demographic that we're already in some relationship with, either because that demographic is in our membership or because we're part of community groups and coalitions in relationship to those demographics. It's a rare person who will stay after visiting a congregation where there's no one else who they seem to have much in common with.

We deepen our ability to grow in relationship by using the perspective of the persona. **We center our outreach on the experience of someone who is not already involved.** There is power in this: understanding who we are from the perspective of someone new sets us up well to build genuine relationships by meeting new people's genuine needs.

What's Your Pitch to Each Persona?

Why would someone in your target audience choose to come to your program instead of following their normal routine? What's going to motivate them to pay for a babysitter, find a neighbor to take the dog out, reroute a commute home, miss time with loved ones, wake up earlier, or reschedule work? What makes the inconvenience worth it?

That's the pitch. We encourage you to create different pitches based on the different personas you are using. The persona development worksheet will ask you to do this.

Your pitch must be brief and clear, and must connect with their goals, challenges, values, fears, and identity. How would you say it in 30 words or less? In 15 words? How would you say it in the 185 characters of a tweet on Twitter? How would you say it with a picture, an image? Or a 15-second video on Instagram?

We do not have people's attention for long. We must choose our words and images to be impactful.

Successful outreach involves thinking like the people we are trying to reach: people who aren't necessarily looking to be part of a congregation, people who often don't discuss or may not even have the vocabulary for the deep longings they feel. Thinking like our target audience is a discipline. And we promise, just like building a connection with a new friend, it can be deeply rewarding.

Recommended Next Steps

Focus On Event-Driven Outreach

With your target audiences and personas identified, we recommend using an event-driven outreach strategy. The [Planning and Promoting Great Outreach Events](#) guide offers step-by-step instructions for designing and promoting events that will engage your target audiences.

Prepare Your Online Presence

As you promote events and engage with new audiences online, they will be reviewing your website and social media channels. Make sure these channels are in great shape before you start your event promotion. The [Social Media Strategy for Outreach](#) guide will help you strengthen your online presence and offers suggestions for how to use top social media platforms for outreach.

Resources and Handouts

Persona Development Worksheet

Adapted from <https://blog.bufferapp.com/marketing-personas-beginners-guide>
and <http://offers.hubspot.com/free-template-creating-buyer-personas>

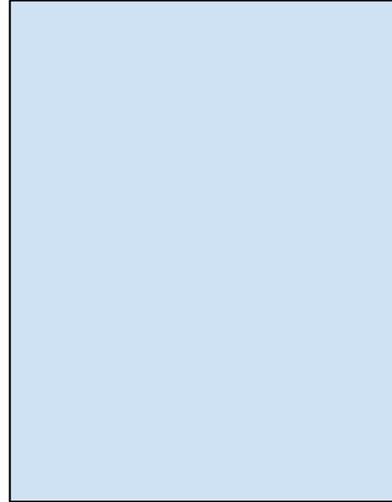
Name of the persona

Picture of the persona

Use a photo of a real person that you have permission to use, such as one licensed under Creative Commons. Find such images on [Flickr.com](https://www.flickr.com/).

Their story

Job? Career path? Family? Experience with religion? Age? Gender? Ethnicity? Sexual orientation? Religious/spiritual identities? Passions and hobbies? Cultural influences? Education? Income? Location?



Spirituality-related goals and challenges

These are life goals and challenges, core to who they are, that are related to spirituality in the broad sense.

- Primary goal
- Secondary goal
- Primary challenge
- Secondary challenge

How we can help

What do we do that addresses their goals and challenges?

Values & fears

What values they bring to their interactions with us? What fears?

Common objections

Why wouldn't they want to engage with Unitarian Universalism or our congregation?

What's our pitch to this persona?

How would we articulate, in just a few sentences, why they should get involved with our congregation?

Persona #1 Tricia

Tricia's Demographic

- Interfaith Family

Tricia's Story

Tricia is a hospital administrator for a large public hospital network. She excelled in sociology and math and graduated with honors from the University of Florida before pursuing her Masters in Public Health at NYU.

She's a 37-year-old heterosexual woman. Her mother immigrated from Jamaica and her father is from New York City. She has ethnic roots in Cuba, Jamaica, and Europe and identifies as multiracial.

Tricia grew up mainline Baptist, but started questioning it at a young age. She stopped attending church at age 10 when she announced she was an atheist. Her husband is white and has both Christian and Jewish roots. He believes in God but is not dogmatic.

She is a mom of two, ages 4 and 7. Her kids are bright and curious and are asking all kinds of questions about life, death, and God. In a dual-career family with young kids, she and her husband are making a good income of \$130,000 per year. What they never feel like they have enough of is time.

Tricia's modern-day heroes are Neil DeGrasse Tyson (astrophysicist, author, and TV host), Dr. Paul Farmer (founder of Partners in Health), and Alice Walker (author who Tricia once had as a course instructor).

Her musical tastes are eclectic and range from classical to pop, reggae to new wave.

Spirituality-related goals and challenges

- Primary goal: to be a loving and present parent and wife at home, as well as a capable leader at work.
- Secondary goal: to help her children make sense of the incredible beauty and incredible pain of our unfair world, and to encourage them to live lives of compassion and service.
- Primary challenge: a near-constant feeling of overwhelm. Never feeling adequate at parenting or work.
- Secondary challenge: difficulty creating time and space for meaningful conversations and traditions with the family.

How we can help

What do we do that addresses her goals and challenges? [This is a question for you to answer. You might say: "We create a space for renewal, a space that can hold both the incredible beauty and incredible sorrow of life. We nurture compassion and commitment to our fellow humans and web of life, across divisions. We engage the



whole family in meaningful traditions and conversations, drawing on the wisdom of many sources, including humanism and the world's religions. It feels like a time away from the constant demands, a time to be present to what matters more deeply.”]

Values & fears

Values: Tricia brings a commitment to compassion, community service, and social justice. She pushes herself hard, valuing excellence in all she does, and expecting the same from others. Though she didn't agree with the doctrine, she values many things about the church of her childhood, in particular its multigenerational community and its caring support when her grandparents died.

Fears: Tricia is afraid of where our country seems to be heading, with political polarization, mass incarceration, systemic brutality, and climate change. She worries about her and her family's vulnerability to these forces.

Common objections

Tricia is wary of church. She associates most churches with closed-mindedness and subservience to unjust authority. Even though she's heard great things about Unitarian Universalism, she suspects a church would not respect her husband and children's part-Jewish heritage, or her atheism.

Though Tricia has been involved in plenty of nearly all-white organizations, she knows she can relax and breathe easier the more she sees other people of color involved.

Her younger kid is kind of shy and clingy. She wonders how that child would do in a kids' program at a church where she would be separated from her and her husband.

What's our pitch to this persona?

How would we articulate, in just a few sentences, why they should get involved with our congregation? This is a question for you to answer based on your congregation's identity and offerings. About your congregation in general, you might say something like: “With eyes wide open to injustice and suffering, we teach compassion, interconnection, and love for all. Ours is an engaged spirituality of wisdom and hope.” You are strongly encouraged to answer this question in regard to the particular outreach events you offer, as well.

Image credit: Thomas Quine, [Leah From Above](#), Creative Commons License [CC-BY-2.0](#)

Persona #2 Jason

Jason's Demographic:

- Young Activists

Jason's Story

Since joining Occupy Wall Street during his sophomore year at the City University of New York in 2011, Jason has known that he wants to dedicate his life to organizing for a more just economy.

Jason is 25, single, and gay. His ethnic background is German and Italian, with his ancestors having come to the US through Ellis Island. He grew up middle-class in Ohio in a racially divided, economically stratified community. His parents believed in God and taught him to pray before bed, but the family didn't participate in services except to go to the Catholic church on Christmas and Easter. He's not sure if he was ever baptized.



His biggest influences are his parents, a history teacher and a social worker, who are both dedicated to social justice and helped found his high school's Gay Straight Alliance. Another big influence is his college economics professor who invited him to Occupy Wall Street. He did not finish college, as he devoted himself to the movement. His heroes include Noam Chomsky, Jill Stein, and Amy Goodman.

Spirituality-related goals and challenges

- Primary goal: He wants economic and social revolution, and he wants it now.
- Secondary goal: He needs inspiration and courage and hope.
- Primary challenge: He goes through periods of feeling very tired and hopeless. He lives an economically marginal life, crashing on people's couches and working when he needs to in order to sustain his volunteer activism. His daily life is hard, and he can be quick to anger as a result.
- Secondary challenge: He gets very discouraged when he sees his fellow activists fighting with one another, which happens all too frequently.

How we can help

What do we do that addresses their goals and challenges? This is a question for you to answer based on your particulars. You might say: "We have a growing group of young adults, many activists, many idealists. We know how easy it is to get discouraged. Here you can find your spiritual grounding, connect with your deep love and your great hope, and be surrounded by support as we seek to transform the world."

Values & fears

Values: Jason feels a strong commitment to the worth of every person, and this drives his activism. He feels a rush of love and power when he's engaged in collective action; he's been thinking about this as his spirituality.

Fears: He feels some shame about not completing college and not having the income that would support a stable living situation. He gets angry when he perceives someone saying or doing something that provokes that shame. He's lost a few boyfriends over it, and hates talking with his parents' friends who always seem to be looking down on him ("Oh, you had such potential...").

Common objections

He's actually pretty comfortable with UU beliefs and sources; he has a childhood friend who is a lifelong UU. But he thinks that UUs are too comfortable in their privilege to work for real liberation, and he imagines that would frustrate him. He's also afraid people in a congregation would patronize or pity him about not having money, a stable home, or a college degree.

What's our pitch to this persona?

How would we articulate, in just a few sentences, why they should get involved with our congregation? This is a question for you to answer based on your congregation's identity and offerings. About your congregation in general, you might say something like: "Working for justice in this messed-up world takes courage. Here, we help one another be brave. We learn to live with more trust, more hope, more spirit, more joy: changing ourselves, changing the system, changing the world." You are strongly encouraged to answer this question in regard to the particular outreach events you offer, as well.

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Persona #3 Charlene

Charlene's demographic

- LGBTQ Family

Charlene's story

Charlene's mother had a huge influence on her growing up. She was an outspoken, feminist, liberal thinker with working-class roots. Though her mother scoffed at the idea of taking her family to the formal Sunday Catholic services she was raised attending, she maintained a belief in "things unseen," as she said, and imparted spiritual acknowledgement on her children.

Charlene studied accounting at her state university. She spent many years floating in and out of congregations but could never recreate the connection she had felt when her mother led informal discussions about life, nature, and our place in the big, interconnected universe. She found much of what she was looking for through a daily yoga and meditation practice, but still craved spiritual exchange.



Charlene is 32 years old and a single mom of Rowan, age 8. She works full time. Rowan is biologically male and has been calling herself a girl since she could talk. Charlene used to correct her toddler, but by the time Rowan was three, Charlene understood that it was not a verbal mistake. For the last five years Charlene has been on a journey of acceptance and advocacy for her transgender daughter. It has been a hard road and she is often tired, scared, and in conflict with Rowan's dad.

Her heroes include the Dalai Lama and J.K. Rowling.

Spirituality-related goals and challenges

- Primary goal: Nurturing the spiritual strength it takes to be a single mom and an advocate, beyond the "peace and calm" she finds from yoga and meditation. She wants concepts, conversation, and companions for the journey.
- Secondary goal: Joining a community that accepts her transgender daughter for who she is.
- Primary challenge: Equipping her child for the world.
- Secondary challenge: Changing the world for her child.

How we can help

What do we do that addresses their goals and challenges? This is a question for you to answer based on your particulars. You might say: "Here we nurture spirits so that we might help heal the world. We are a community of people committed to inclusion, justice, and the free and responsible search for truth and meaning, and

that starts with children: celebrating every child for who they are, and teaching kindness, compassion, and spiritual connection.”

Values & fears

Charlene values highly the idea of each person’s inherent worth and dignity and feels she has awakened to this ever more by loving someone so deeply who is inherently different than society thinks her to be. She values community, conversation, and engaged spirituality.

Charlene is constantly fearful about the responses that her child will get from other children and adults. She fears that the congregation’s professed inclusion will still not result in her child feeling included.

Common objections

She has visited a UU congregation in another town, years before becoming a mom. The experience “didn’t really do it for her.” She didn’t dislike it, she just didn’t feel compelled to come back.

She also worries about whether there will be other transgender kids there. Knowing that the congregation has other transgender kids would put her mind at ease.

What’s our pitch to this persona?

How would we articulate, in just a few sentences, why she should get involved with our congregation?

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Persona #4 David

David's demographic

- Interfaith family

David's story

David is a computer programmer, husband, and dad. He grew up on Long Island, NY, the son of an Ashkenazi Jewish father and an Italian Catholic mother. Both of his parents' families, though nearby, were distant when he was a kid, as neither approved of his parents' marriage. When his parents divorced in the early 70s, he began attending occasional Shabbat services at a Reconstructionist synagogue with his father, and went to Mass with his maternal grandparents a few times a year.

David is a 51-year-old heterosexual white male. Theologically, he describes himself as a believer in something akin to “the force” in *Star Wars*—a way of the universe, a spiritual energy that can be tapped into and experienced.

Since age 38 he's been married to Shira, a fellow computer programmer who is Jewish on her mother's side and Lutheran on her father's.

Shira and David have three children, Sofia (12), Sasha (10), and Garrick (8). They had been participating in a wonderful synagogue for the first 10 years of parenthood, but after moving to the area two years ago they have not found a synagogue that fits them. Part of that reason is that the local synagogues are not particularly welcoming of interfaith families. Another is that their daughter Sofia does not want to have a bat mitzvah and has declared that she doesn't believe in God.

David identifies as a bit of a geek, loving Sci-Fi and Fantasy. *Star Wars* and *Lord of the Rings* inform his outlook just as much, or even more than, the stories of the Jewish and Christian traditions.

He and Shira earn just under \$150,000 a year at their computer programming jobs. They feel like they're scrambling to save up for their children's education and their retirement.

Spirituality-related goals and challenges

- Primary goal: He wants to raise responsible, healthy, happy kids and to be a role model for them.
- Secondary goal: He wants a spiritual and social place for his whole family to engage, and a meaningful coming-of-age program for Sofia since she decided she didn't want a bat mitzvah.



- Primary challenge: As a parent he's often feeling overextended and impatient. He wants religious participation to reduce, not increase these feelings.
- Secondary challenge: He worries about how incredibly commercialized and materialistic our society has become. He wants life beyond brands and devices.

How we can help

What do we do that addresses their goals and challenges? [This is a question for you to answer based on your particulars. You might say: "We have many interfaith families who weave together a variety of traditions and philosophies! Our Coming-of-Age programs for youth are powerful year-long experiences that help young people grow in spirituality, ethics, friendship, and faith."]

Values & fears

David strongly values the "right of conscience" that we affirm in our Principles: that people's conscience should be their ultimate guide in matters of identity and faith. He values wisdom from Christianity and Judaism but holds it lightly and playfully. He values the individuality of his children and will fight for their right to be who they are.

He fears the rising levels of polarization, hatred, and ignorance in the US and abroad, and doesn't know where it's headed. He fears a future with 400 ppm of carbon in the atmosphere and what it means for life on Earth.

Common objections

The UU congregation in town has a Protestant Christian look and feel to it. He wonders if he would feel comfortable there, even though he's 100% behind the UU Principles. As a half-Catholic, half-Jew, he's just not accustomed to the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) way of being and worshipping.

He gets frustrated by religious groups that don't understand technology or use it to their benefit. "Get with the 21st century," he often mutters when he sees bad church websites or social media being used like a bulletin board.

What's our pitch to this persona?

How would we articulate, in just a few sentences, why they should get involved with our congregation?

Image: Photo "[David](#)" by Fred Langridge on Flickr, [CC-BY-NC 2.0](#)

The UU Reputation

How are Unitarian Universalists actually perceived in the world? With a little help from Proverb Consulting in 2013, these assets, challenges, opportunities, and pitfalls were identified to help Unitarian Universalists to think about our faith's potential. How do these fit with specific assets, challenges, opportunities, and potential pitfalls of your congregation, in your own context?

Assets to build on:

- Strong reputation for being progressive and inclusive
- UU beliefs resonate with emerging cultural values
- UU organizations are willing to make change and take risks

Challenges to consider:

- Traditionalist trappings
- "Silly" or "wacky" reputation
- Aging/declining membership that lacks diversity
- Shrinking traditional funding base
- Lack of clarity to outsiders about beliefs
- Lack of consistency in being involved with congregations/communities
- Unclear "ask" and "promise" of what it means to be a UU

Opportunities we can take advantage of to spread our values:

- Rise of "spiritual but not religious" meshes with UU identity and beliefs
- Public desire for meaningful lives is high, even as more people are distrustful of or uninterested in traditional religion
- Untapped millennial audience is largest, most progressive and engaged, spiritually risk-taking generation ever
- New technologies allow us to reach more people than ever before

Potential Pitfalls that could actively work against our effort to reach new people:

- Openness to belief instead becomes "believe whatever you want"
- Trying to please all members all the time
- The nuanced, distinct UU point of view is lost in the 24/7 media culture
- Academic and cerebral tone
- Hesitance to push to action, more comfortable with just talking