



# Planning and Promoting Great Outreach Events

A Guide for Unitarian Universalist Congregations

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

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# About the Toolkit

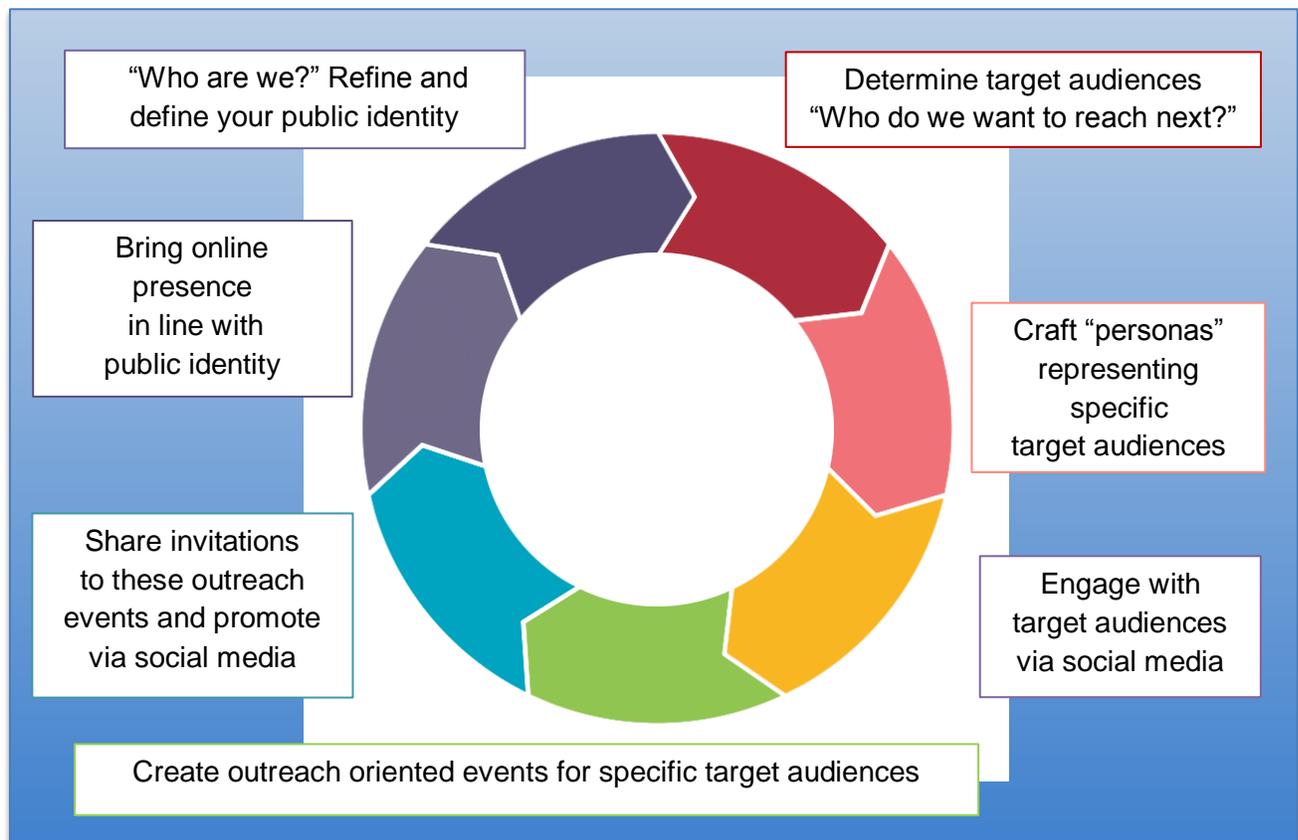
[Congregations Reaching Out](#) is designed to help your congregation and UU groups:

- 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, ***Planning and Promoting Great Outreach Events***, focuses on these aspects of the process.

- 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

This guide’s companion resources are:

### **[Finding Your Target Audience](#)**

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

### **[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

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](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](http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/love_reaches_out_study_guide.pdf)<sup>1</sup> 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](http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/uu_brand_identity_guidelines.pdf)<sup>2</sup> describe a flexible, shared approach to design, words, and images for communicating UU values.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/love\\_reaches\\_out\\_study\\_guide.pdf](http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/love_reaches_out_study_guide.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/uu\\_brand\\_identity\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/uu_brand_identity_guidelines.pdf)

# Introduction

If your congregation is doing amazing, life-changing ministry, how do people in your community get connected to it?<sup>3</sup> Today, fewer and fewer Americans are seeking out religious communities;<sup>4</sup> our congregations cannot wait for people to find them as they may have in years past.

While attending a faith community may no longer be an assumed cultural norm, people continue to have significant spiritual needs. Our local communities continue to need leadership and support from our congregations. The call for congregations to be active and engaged in the issues of our time and in the lives of the community has never been stronger.

If we are to realize our potential as Unitarian Universalist, learning how to reach new audiences, build relationships, and welcome people into our hearts and lives is a must.

Thanks to social media, inviting people in your area to connect with your congregation through outreach events is low cost and can have a very high impact.

This guide will walk you through the steps of designing outreach events for specific target audiences.

## Why Outreach Events?

Rather than just doing better advertising for existing congregational activities, creating great outreach events requires us to think in a whole new way. You begin by designing your event (or adapting an existing one) based on the needs and perspectives of the people you want to reach. Then, you can most effectively use the event to build relationships with that audience.

This approach uses “[design thinking](#)” to build empathy with people who would value your congregation’s ministry and then create entry points into your congregational life through outreach events.

We believe outreach is most successful when it is focused on specific target audiences, addressing specific needs and interests through intentionally designed outreach events.

For more information on how to use this approach in creating a welcoming experience for visitors, read our three-part blog series on User Experience: [Part 1](#)<sup>5</sup>, [Part 2](#)<sup>6</sup>, [Part 3](#)<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> If your congregation is NOT doing life-changing ministry, then why bother? Our faith movement is here to help people live better lives and make a better world.

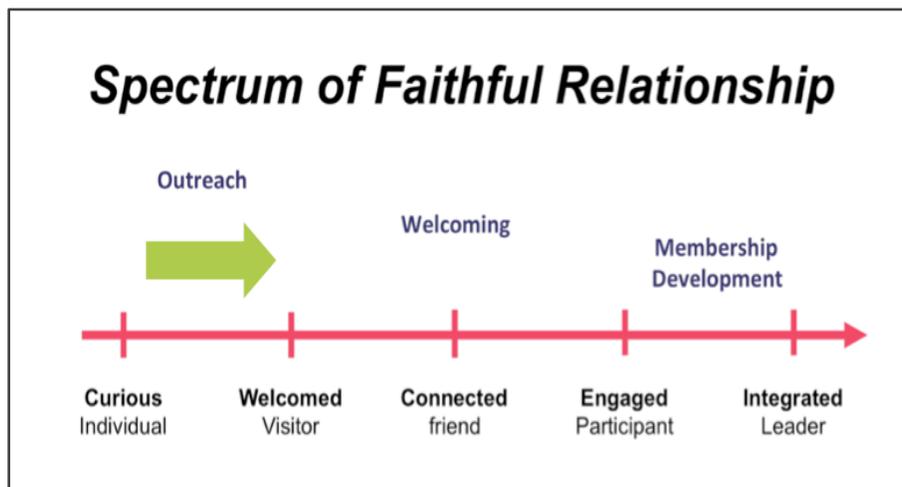
<sup>4</sup> <http://growinguu.blogs.uua.org/numerical-indicators/uncategorized/analysis-of-the-pew-forum-on-religion-and-public-life/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://growinguu.blogs.uua.org/organizational-maturity/improving-your-user-experience-ux-online-and-in-person-part-1/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://growinguu.blogs.uua.org/organizational-maturity/improving-your-user-experience-ux-online-and-in-person-part-2/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://growinguu.blogs.uua.org/numerical-indicators/uncategorized/improving-your-user-experience-ux-online-and-in-person-part-3/>

Using the language of the [spectrum of faithful relationship](#)<sup>8</sup>, outreach events are the invitation to go from “curious individual” to “welcomed visitor:”



We encourage you to create outreach events because Sunday morning services are not often the best events to advertise to people who have never visited your congregation before. Occasionally it may work to promote a holiday service, a “Bring a Friend” Sunday, or a special worship service like those done in partnership with community groups, but it is better to schedule outreach events at different times of the week.

For many people who are not already involved with a religious community, it can seem like a big step to join a Sunday worship service (even once!) and hard to know what to expect. Community events, programs and gatherings are more informal and an easier way for visitors to get to know people and your congregation. Then, if someone subsequently invites them to a Sunday service, they may come knowing a few familiar faces.

<sup>8</sup> <http://growinguu.blogs.uua.org/numerical-indicators/uncategorized/what-if-membership-was-a-spectrum/>

## Are you ready to reach out?

Before you start planning events and investing time or money to promote them, make sure you are ready to engage with new audiences.

If you were selling a house, would you get everything in top form before or after inviting people to an open house? Before, of course. Here you are inviting people not to buy a house, but to join your religious community. The stakes are high.

When you promote events and engage with people via social media, it is important that your website and primary social media channels are in great shape. As you promote events, the people you hope to engage with will explore your congregation online to determine if they want to attend.

Use the Toolkit's [Social Media Outreach Strategy](#) guide to assess your congregation's public identity and use top social media tools to effectively share online who you are.

## Designing Your Event

Design your event to appeal to the people you want to reach in your community. In order to design that event effectively, you should complete the [Finding Your Target Audience](#) resource and identify a target audience. You can either imagine a whole new event for your target audience or adapt an upcoming event already on your calendar.

Whether you are promoting a stand-alone event, a series, or a new group or program, your promotion should focus on one specific event with dates, times, locations and titles. This helps your potential target audiences engage, because they know exactly what they are being invited to do. General promotion, such as “all are welcome Sundays at 10 a.m.,” leaves people feeling unsure whether they should really show up since the event does not feel like it was designed for them. Focusing on a clear “ask” in your promotional materials will make them the most appealing to new audiences.

*Tip: Even though this guide is about promoting a single event, make sure there's at least one more event on the calendar when your event happens. This will allow you to close your event with an invitation to something your attendees will really enjoy, helping to build their engagement, trust and interest.*

If you need help imagining new ways to engage your target audience, try using the activities suggested in Session 3, Sweet Spots and Entry Points, of the [Love Reaches Out Study Guide](#)<sup>9</sup>, available at [uua.org/outreach](http://uua.org/outreach).

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/love\\_reaches\\_out\\_study\\_guide.pdf](http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/love_reaches_out_study_guide.pdf)

For any event, here are the essential steps:

1. Determine the **topic** and **format** of the event based on your target audience. What can you authentically offer that will grab your audience's attention and meet their needs? What can the event do for them that will make them go through the hassle of attending? Don't forget to confirm that the venue/location you want to use is available at the time of your event!
  - a. Plan your content to be relevant and meaningful.
    - i. *Example: A family-friendly cleanup of a local park, with BBQ afterwards, for Earth Day*
  - b. Set a simple and memorable **title** that clearly describes what the event is and avoids insider jargon.
    - i. *Bad title example: UUUCS Annual Environmental Stewardship Action Event*
    - ii. *Better title example: Earth Day Park Cleanup*
  - c. Craft **promotional language** that immediately communicates this meaning and relevance. Highlight what the event will feel like and what the experience will be like for participants.
    - i. *Example: Bring in the spring by joining the Earth Day cleanup of Somewhere Park. Help make our community greener and more sustainable. BBQ to follow, with vegan options. Open to nature fans of all ages, there will be lots of fun ways for kids to help! Sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Somewhere.*
  - d. Find or create **promotional images** that immediately communicate this meaning and relevance.
2. Identify partner organizations in the community who might support and promote your event. Consider connecting with PFLAG, GLSEN, or COLAGE for reaching LGBTQ families, or local activist groups like 350 and #BlackLivesMatter for reaching Young Activists.

The ideal partners will have established audiences similar to the audience you are trying to reach, and have the ability to promote the event via social media and/or print media.

*Example: To support and reach out to the local LGBTQ community, Channing Church in Newport, RI created the "**Born This Way Prom.**" First started by Channing Interweave, Pam Goff, and the Rev. Amy Freedman, working with a range of local partners, this*

*event has become a local tradition. It also receives regular local [media attention](#).<sup>10</sup>*

3. Schedule the events at a time and place that works for your target audience and doesn't conflict with major school or activist events in your area. This is complicated because of the general state of overwhelm and overscheduling that exists in our society.

Evening events for families should begin with dinner (especially on weeknights), include free childcare or a well run kids' component, and end by 8:00 so that children can get to bed on time.

## Promoting Your Event

Successful promotion involves the wise use of tools and people. Your tools—online and in-person outreach strategies—are outlined in this toolkit. Your people are your event planners/leaders, your promotion team, and everyone who's already connected to your congregation on social media. You'll deploy each of them at different times with different tools.

## Suggested Timeline

Depending on your event, expect a planning timeline of four to six weeks.

1. 4-6 weeks away: Design and plan your event, launch your event and promotions team, seek partners and co-sponsors, create communications materials
2. 3-4 weeks away: Start online and print promotion, send out invitations
3. 1-2 weeks away: Continue to promote your event using your networks, monitor online response, send reminders

## Online Tools

There are many possible tools, or "platforms," to use online, and new ones seem to emerge every day. The trick is to find the tools that are right for your group, event or congregation, and investing in them. It's always better to have a great presence on two or three platforms than spread yourself too thin across a dozen different platforms. You make the best use of each platform when you customize your information to maximize that platform's value. This section will describe some recommended platforms for promotion and how to make the most of them.

Choose your online platforms based on your target audience, where they are and what they use. The platforms described in this guide are most likely useful for any target audience. However, you may want to consider adding other platforms to your congregation's social media portfolio. See the [Social Media Strategy Guide](#) for more information.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://optionsri.org/born-this-way-prom-a-celebration-of-uniqueness/>

*Tip: If you want to understand who uses which social media platforms, check out this [infographic on social media demographics](#)<sup>11</sup> from Sprout Social (zoom in on the image to view).*

## Promotion-Specific Online Tools for Congregations

These are tools that your congregation may or may not already use, but they are really helpful for promoting events and opportunities to the wider public.

### Eventbrite

Eventbrite is a fast growing integrated system for marketing your events. It offers a one-stop-shop for invitations and RSVPs and generates promotions for Facebook, websites, e-news. We recommend using Eventbrite as your central hub and using its website and Facebook integration features. This allows anyone with an email address, no matter where they are online or how they RSVP, to use the same event platform.

1. Set up a nonprofit account on <http://www.eventbrite.com/>. Accounts have no fee if your events are free. If you are charging money, Eventbrite takes a small cut (less for nonprofits than for-profits). Eventbrite will serve as your hub for marketing your event in a variety of venues. Follow Eventbrite's instructions for account setup.
2. Create an event in Eventbrite. Use a photo and name that immediately communicates what it's all about and connects with potential participants on an emotional level. Write a description of the event, focusing on the impact on participants. (See the [UU Brand Identity Guidelines](#)<sup>12</sup> for suggestions on high-impact language and images).
3. Use Eventbrite's Facebook integration tool to add a Facebook event and to put the event on your congregation's Facebook page (and any co-sponsoring organizations' Facebook pages.)
4. Google "Eventbrite widget" and the type of platform your website uses (e.g. WordPress, Joomla, Squarespace) to see if there is a widget you can add to your website to advertise and enable RSVPs for the event directly on the website.
5. Use Eventbrite's email newsletter integration tools to insert an RSVP into your e-news and email promotions, if you use a compatible service for your e-newsletter (e.g. MailChimp, Emma)

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<sup>12</sup> [http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/uu\\_brand\\_identity\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/uu_brand_identity_guidelines.pdf)

## MeetUp

MeetUp is a longstanding tool for creating ongoing groups. If you're creating a discussion group, support group, book group, or a recurring event, MeetUp is a great way to connect with people in your area and keep them connected. The MeetUp platform automatically keeps promoting your events to its users.

1. MeetUp is a great tool for connecting with the audience you're looking for, especially if you want to have more than just one or two events for the same groups. Users tag themselves with a variety of identities and interests, and if your group also has those tags, MeetUp will suggest your group to the users.
2. A [MeetUp subscription](#)<sup>13</sup> costs \$10-15/month for an organization.
3. Review these [pros and cons of MeetUp](#)<sup>14</sup> to decide if it is right for your outreach.
4. MeetUp groups do not integrate well with Facebook or Eventbrite. However, you can post about and advertise a meetup group on your Facebook page (with links), Webpage (with a widget), or newsletter (with links).

## Standard Online Tools for Congregations

Facebook, websites and email—these three tools are used by most congregations and are the most popular ways to engage online. Since 87% of American adults are online and 74% use social media<sup>15</sup>, we encourage every congregation to invest in their online communication on these platforms!

### Facebook

As a platform that focuses on reinforcing existing relationships, Facebook provides a great way for your current network (friends and followers) to promote your event to their friends and groups. Within Facebook you can create an event, promote it, receive RSVPs, and more. We recommend using Eventbrite as your central hub and using its Facebook integration tool to create a Facebook event on your congregation's Facebook page.

1. Use [Eventbrite's Facebook Integration Tool](#)<sup>16</sup> to create a Facebook event on your congregation's page.
2. Make the event public.
3. Make sure the event shows your street address, allows attendees to write on the wall, and shows the guest list publicly.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.meetup.com/pricing/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://johnfwagner.net/228/overview-of-meetup/>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.pewinternet.org/three-technology-revolutions/>

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.eventbrite.com/support/articles/en\\_US/How\\_To/how-to-publish-your-eventbrite-event-to-facebook-and-sell-tickets](https://www.eventbrite.com/support/articles/en_US/How_To/how-to-publish-your-eventbrite-event-to-facebook-and-sell-tickets)

4. If the Eventbrite tool doesn't do this for you, add your Facebook Event to your organization's Facebook Page. To do this: log into your page as administrator. Follow these directions from WiredImpact.com:  
Adding Facebook Events is pretty simple (as long as you have administrative rights on your Facebook page).
  1. Locate the Admin Panel at the top of your Page. If you don't see it, click the button that says "Admin Panel" at the top right of the window.
  2. In the Admin Panel, click the "Manage" dropdown menu and select "Edit Page."
  3. Click "Apps" in the left sidebar navigation.
  4. Scroll down the page to "Events" and click the "Add App" button on the right.

*For more information on best practices for using Facebook for your congregation, check out the following:*

- *The Congregations Reach Out Toolkit's [Social Media Strategy Guide](#)*
- *[#UUsGetSocial workshop series at General Assembly 2014](#)<sup>17</sup>  
[This series includes the following workshops, including workshop recordings, notes, resource links, and handouts.](#)*

*How Congregations Can Deepen Engagement Online  
Updating Your Web Presence: Tools and Tips  
Reaching "Nones," Activists, and Spiritual Seekers  
Digging Into Facebook, Twitter and Video-Making*

## Your Website

Your website is your virtual front door, so make sure that it is welcoming to visitors who may be inspired to show up on your site by your excellent promotion work!

1. Put your event on your **calendar** and your upcoming events listing.
2. Feature it on your **homepage** using a widget from Eventbrite, Meetup, or Facebook (whichever service you are using for RSVPs).

*For more information on great congregational websites, see the following links:*

- *[Congregational Website Guidance on UUA.org](#)<sup>18</sup>*

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.uua.org/ga/past/2014/uusgetsocial>

- [UUA WordPress Theme for Congregations<sup>19</sup>](#) (advice on design and content)

## Email List or E-Newsletter

We highly recommend using an email marketing service to send emails to your lists of members and friends. These services (e.g. MailChimp, Emma, Constant Contact) allow you to send well-designed emails that look good on any screen, even mobile phones, and easily track your open and click-through rates. They also help you make sub-lists or “segments” to conveniently manage all your contact info. Most are low-cost or free. A growing favorite among UU congregations is MailChimp, which is free while you have fewer than 2,000 subscribers and send fewer than 12,000 emails per month.

1. Feature the event in your **newsletter** and encourage congregants to share it with their friends. Link to Eventbrite or Meetup for RSVPs.
2. Eventbrite has an **email marketing integration** tool that works with newsletters produced with MailChimp, Emma, and other common email marketing services.

## Print and In-Person Tools

These more “traditional” forms of promotion are still important! The following low-cost opportunities for promotion are available in most communities, and if you haven’t used them before it’s likely that someone in your congregation has.

## Press Releases and Calendar Listings

1. Write a **press release** and share with local media outlets (newspapers, magazines, online news).
2. Get the event put on the **calendar of local media** outlets (newspapers, magazines, online news).

For more information, review the [Congregational Public Relations<sup>20</sup>](#) section of UUA.org, including sample press releases and tips for working with the news media.

## Posters & Flyers

Posters: Does your building get a lot of non-member foot traffic? Are posters a big part of event promotion in your congregation or surrounding community? Then have **11x17 event posters**

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.uua.org/communications/websites>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.uua.org/communications/websites/wordpress-theme>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.uua.org/communications/pr>

printed and place them where your target audience is likely to see them. [Here are tips for event poster design](#)<sup>21</sup> from Canva, which has online tools for graphic art.

Flyers: Flyers are excellent for generating publicity at other events and locations where your target audience is likely to be. Can you distribute flyers at a local parents/families event, or at a march or rally? What about community spaces like a coffee shop, gym, library, yoga studio or day care center? If social justice groups or preschools or other relevant groups use your space, can you give leaders flyers to distribute to participants?

*Tip: Distributing flyers is a great way that people who want to help with your event, but do not have time to be a main organizer, can contribute. Give them the flyers and be clear about where and when they should go up, and your volunteers will be glad to help!*

## Send Invitations

Make sure your first invitations go out three to four weeks before the event. Follow up with reminders one week and again one to three days before the event.

### 1. Email

- a. Send email invitations with your email marketing software to the appropriate lists. Eventbrite has an integration tool for MailChimp, Emma, and other popular software used by our congregations.
- b. Send email invitations via Eventbrite to people who are not on your email lists but may want to know.

### 2. Facebook

- a. Send Facebook invitations to those who like your page on Facebook.

*Tip: Supplement your online invitations with snail mail. Mailing printed flyers and postcards is rarely worth the trouble and cost. However, you can be very effective at reaching your target audience with personal, hand-written postcards. Send these to visitors and less active members/friends who are part of your target audience. (An example: Dear Jeff, We have this great event for interfaith families coming up and I thought of you. When we talked in the fall, I remember you saying you were looking to raise your kids with Jewish and Christian heritage. Here's the event info: [include]. We hope you'll join us!).*

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<sup>21</sup> <https://designschool.canva.com/blog/25-ways-to-design-an-awesome-poster-and-create-a-buzz-for-your-next-event/>

## Use Your Networks

Communicating through your networks is the best promotion of all, because it comes from a trusted source.

1. Work with **co-sponsors** to help them publicize by whatever means they usually use: their Facebook pages, e-news, websites, print newsletters, posters, or mailers. Be mindful of other groups' deadlines for monthly announcements, mailings, etc.
2. Leverage your **friends and followers** (and their friends and followers) by encouraging and involving people who love your congregation to post, tweet, share, and more.
3. On **Sunday mornings**, publicize the event with verbal and written announcements in worship. Include encouragement to invite a friend.

*Tip from [JC Social Marketing](#)<sup>22</sup>: “Directly and in person ask every board member, staff member, volunteer and organization VIP to help spread the word and give them concrete, specific ways to do so. You may have asked everyone to ‘tell their networks,’ but what does that mean? The more specific you are with assigning tasks, the better for accountability and measurement. For example, give your volunteers and staff a menu of action items to choose from (can choose more than one): Commit to purchase 10 tickets, send a tweet a day, post on Facebook three times, send out an invite to their network, hand out flyers, call 10 guests.”*

## Leading Up to the Event

As your event approaches, make sure everything is ready, all supplies are on hand, and your promotion team checks in regularly (even if it's just sending emails to each other when a task is completed). Pay special attention to how potential attendees are interacting with your event online. Carefully prepare the experience attendees will have when they show up in person.

## Check Your Engagement

### On Eventbrite and MeetUp

Check your RSVPs on Eventbrite and see if anyone needs a response. Review your MeetUp event to see if anyone has posted a question you should answer.

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<sup>22</sup> [jcsocialmarketing.com/2012/04/4-ways-to-promote-your-event-that-you-havent-thought-of/](http://jcsocialmarketing.com/2012/04/4-ways-to-promote-your-event-that-you-havent-thought-of/)

## On Facebook

1. Use Facebook's [Event Insights](#)<sup>23</sup> tool to see how many people have viewed, engaged, and been reached by your event.
2. Check the event's wall and check Facebook messages to respond to questions and comments.
3. **Post on the event's wall** periodically about the event's content, kids' program, food, etc. to generate engagement and excitement by the people who have clicked "interested" or "maybe" but have not said yes. In addition to sharing tantalizing details, you can tell stories, ask questions, and create polls. Everyone who has RSVP'd as "yes" or "interested" will be notified when you post.

*Tip from [Bloomerang](#)<sup>24</sup> on how to add event promotion to other content: Mix in different types of compelling content that your audience will find entertaining or educational, then use calls-to-action at the end to convert them into event attendees. For example, you could: tell a donor or volunteer story (why they support you), tell a benefactor story (communicate need, celebrate a success story), interview a vendor or sponsor (they will re-share it!), or highlight one specific aspect of the event (the entertainment, the food, the activities, etc.). Then, at the end of each post, link to your event page (that's the call-to-action). The actual appeal ("buy a ticket now") is the whipped cream on top, not the ice cream.*

## Plan Your Event's Welcoming Experience

Using the empathy you built with the [Finding Your Target Audience](#) worksheet as your guide, think about what visitors will experience when they first show up at your event. Is there clear signage about where to go and how to check in? Do you have a welcoming area with information about the event, your congregation and Unitarian Universalism? Are your posters or flyers easy to see so visitors make the connection with your online presence?

Pay attention to the physical accessibility of your event. Will people with mobility challenges be able to get around? If it's at your congregation, will visitors easily find directions to the restrooms (hopefully including [gender neutral options](#)<sup>25</sup>)? If you expect families to attend, are there directions to changing or nursing areas or a place where kids who need a break from programs can play?

It needn't take long to post signs and make sure materials are clear. The intention and care you invest in creating a smooth and empathic experience will communicate as much about your congregation's welcoming spirit as any other aspect of your event.

<sup>23</sup> [https://thenextweb.com/facebook/2014/08/07/can-now-track-facebook-events-engagement-insights/- .tnw\\_DITGsa2G](https://thenextweb.com/facebook/2014/08/07/can-now-track-facebook-events-engagement-insights/- .tnw_DITGsa2G)

<sup>24</sup> <https://bloomerang.co/blog/6-social-media-tips-for-your-nonprofits-next-event/>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.uua.org/lgbtq/welcoming/ways/bathrooms>

## During the Event

1. Have people **sign in when they arrive**. Make sure someone is there to greet them. EventBrite allows you to check people in on the EventBrite [app](#)<sup>26</sup>, or use a [printout](#)<sup>27</sup> of attendees. Save emails so you can send updates about future events, but don't just spam them or add everyone to your church's newsletter list! Make sure you are only sending emails about things that this group would want to attend.
2. Encourage leaders and participants to “**check in**” on **social media** by opening up the event on their Facebook apps. They can then share photos, post insights, and more on the Event's wall.
3. Make sure to do an **official welcome** at some point. Depending on the structure of your event, this may be from a microphone in front of the group or just a huddle up midway through. Introduce the event leaders. Thank everyone for coming. You can also use this time to invite people to the next event.

Note: It is critically important to say aloud why your congregation is sponsoring this event. This is the glue that links the event to the wider ministry of your congregation and creates the invitation to connect more deeply with your congregational life. You don't have to say much, but make sure it gets said!

*E.g.: This park cleanup is sponsored by the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Somewhere because we care deeply about the environmental sustainability of our community and want to make sure everyone has access to green space. If you're having a good time at this clean-up, please join us for our June Family Picnic!*

4. You may want to **live tweet** the event. If so, choose a hashtag in advance that is not being used by others. Encourage cross-posting with hashtags that broader audiences use, like #interfaith, #lovemakesafamily, or #LGBTQ. You'll need to do some research in advance to decide which hashtags you'll encourage. (See the [Social Media Strategy Guide](#) for more information).
5. **Take photographs** to share in the moment and going forward (see below). Make sure they are high enough resolution for quality web posting (most late-model digital cameras or camera phones will capture hi res photos).

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.eventbrite.com/eventbriteapp/>

<sup>27</sup> [https://www.eventbrite.com/support/articles/en\\_US/How\\_To/how-to-print-a-check-in-list](https://www.eventbrite.com/support/articles/en_US/How_To/how-to-print-a-check-in-list)

# After the Event

Congratulations, you did it! Take time to debrief with your promotion and event team about what worked and what didn't. Make sure to thank your partner groups and others who helped make the event happen.

1. Follow up by emailing attendees to thank them for coming and remind them about the next upcoming event. You can do this through Eventbrite or email. The follow-up email is a good opportunity to promote your congregation's website, Facebook page or Twitter feed (e.g. Like us on Facebook at [facebook.com/yourcongregation](https://facebook.com/yourcongregation)).
2. Document the event on your website and social media. Post pictures, post slides, write it up. This will help continue to show that your congregation is a home for your target audience.

And finally...

3. Keep up the momentum by planning and promoting more events for this same audience. If everything didn't work out exactly as planned, or you didn't get as many attendees as you like, no worries! Try again with a different event. It takes time to build outreach connection. The more people in your community see your congregation getting out there and doing great things, the more they will want to become a part of your energy and enthusiasm.

*Tip from [Bloomerang](#)<sup>28</sup>: "Be sure to set aside your best content to use to promote the event next year, and don't forget to say 'thank you!' via social media to all the people who made the event possible (it will keep your vendors and sponsors coming back year after year)."*

## Share Your Learning

We hope you have great success with your outreach events. Please help Unitarian Universalist leaders across our Association learn from one another. We are always looking for great examples! As you hold your events, please share your learning by dropping a note to the UUA via [smillspaugh@uua.org](mailto:smillspaugh@uua.org) and [outreach@uua.org](mailto:outreach@uua.org).

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<sup>28</sup> <https://bloomerang.co/blog/6-social-media-tips-for-your-nonprofits-next-event/>