

Introduction

Every congregation needs a public relations or communications team. At a minimum, it is the job of the team to support the church's outreach activities, to plan public events, and to shape the congregation's messages. Many basic but vital tasks must be coordinated in order to develop effective internal communications. Once the committee has met the internal needs of the congregation, the next steps involve reaching out to develop a consistent and positive identity for the church within the local community.

At the advanced level, the communications team may develop publicity campaigns, pro-actively seek media coverage, coach congregational spokespeople, purchase advertising, and help the church community respond effectively in times of crisis. In this handbook, each of these functions will be treated as part of a series of concentric circles, with the inner rings representing the basic or core tasks from which the outer rings radiate. The widest rings represent the most advanced communications challenges, which are also opportunities to reach the largest audiences. But all of those achievements are anchored by the smallest, inner-most circles. The chapters in this manual develop progressively, with later sections building upon the groundwork laid in earlier ones.

I have been inspired by the enthusiasm of many skilled clergy and lay leaders who have been so effective in sharing the good news about our faith. In the following pages, you will find numerous examples of their work. This manual was designed to help more congregations learn from these successes and to support all of our churches in developing and maintaining effective public relations programs.

The resources in the following pages are made available here without charge for you to download, print, and share as needed. Chapters may be downloaded one at a time or the entire document may be printed and copied for all of your communications team

members, but please do not reprint, alter, excise, or sell any of this material without express written permission.

I genuinely hope that this manual proves helpful, and I welcome feedback on ways that it may be improved for future editions. I invite you to contact me with your comments or suggestions by writing me at jhayes@uua.org.

Finally, I wish to thank you for undertaking this very important work. When we share the good news of Unitarian Universalism, we draw upon the spirit that nurtures us within our congregations and allow it to overflow into the wider community. In doing so, we manifest the belief that our faith has something special to offer the world. It is this belief that gives power and meaning to all of our communications efforts.

In Faith,
Janet Hayes