



Inspired Faith Effective Action

A Social Justice Workbook for
Unitarian Universalist Congregations

UUA Justice Ministries

Washington Office for Advocacy
Washington, DC
(202) 296-4672
uuawo@uua.org
www.uua.org/uuawo

Congregational Advocacy and Witness
Boston, MA
(617) 948-4607
social_justice@uua.org
www.uua.org/justice

Table of Contents

I. Religious Grounding	3
The Benefits	4
Tips on doing religiously grounded social justice work	4
II. Accountability	5
Being an Accountable Partner	6
Leadership Development	7
III. Congregation and Community:	8
Knowing Your Congregation	8
Knowing Your Community	9
One-on-Ones	10
Successful Social Action: A Congregational Ministry	11
IV. Strategic Planning and Implementation	12
Understanding Goals and Risks	12
Choosing an Issue:	13
Creating a Strategic Plan	14
Steps in Strategic Planning	15
Continuum of Public Witness Impact	16
V. Skills and Tactics	17
Service	17
Education	17
Organizing	18
Advocacy	19
Witness	22
Developing Your Message	23
V. UUA Resources	24
Evaluation	25

How to use this workbook:

- Read it over by yourself.
- Use it with relevant committees, action groups, etc. Set aside meeting time to go over specific sections, starting with religious grounding. Read it and share reactions, starting with personal/religious reactions and moving to congregational. Create discussion questions that are relevant for your congregation.
- Contact the Washington Office for Advocacy about having the workshop presented at your next district or multi-congregational gathering

I. Religious Grounding

We regard our living together not as an unfortunate mishap
Warranting endless competition among us
But as a deliberate act of God
To make us a community of brothers and sisters
Jointly involved in the quest for a composite answer
To the varied problems of life.

--Steven Biko, South African Anti-apartheid Activist.

From its very beginning, the precepts of our faith have had significant political implications: ““We need not think alike to love alike.” Frances David, court preacher to Unitarian king, John Sigismund, around 1568. Unitarians and their beliefs were a major influence in the influence on the founding of the US political system. Universalists and their beliefs were a major influence on US religion and culture.

Ours is a theology of engagement: we draw inspiration and truth from experiencing each other and the world around us. In doing so we necessarily witness both the beauty and brokenness of our world. And that’s why we’re here, because we have chosen to do social justice work in the context of our religious community. Being religiously grounded is key to effectiveness because it helps you frame issues from an authentic, religious perspective, and it helps you speak from a religious perspective when necessary.

- **Unitarian Universalist congregations are religious communities, not secular activist organizations.** Our primary purpose is not achieving political goals—although that may be a significant activity—but rather building relationships and meaning.
- **How the work is done is as important as the end goal of promoting justice.** If the justice work we do fails to build community—or worse yet destroys it—then we will not have served our congregations or Association well.
- **Utilize an appropriate, healthy process for decision making.** Any congregational activity or decision can be divisive if done badly. The solution is not to avoid that activity or decision, but to assess the process.
- **Engage in personal transformation.** Our ability to create social transformation is linked with our willingness to go through personal transformation in the process. How can we expect the world to change if we’re not willing to?
- **Reflect on your actions.** Educator and writer Paulo Friere, author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, argued that people learn best from conversations with each other (rather than teacher to student), and that only a small amount is learned from action, it is the reflection on action that informs values and thus makes the real difference.
- **Build Strong Relationships.** The more we are in relationship with each other, and approach social justice in ways that value this relationship, the better off we’ll be as a community. This type of sharing, namely personal, ethical, emotional, spiritual, and/or theological, is necessary both for effective justice work, and for personal and congregational development.

By facilitating personal development and building relationships, dialogue and reflection make social justice work more sustainable both individually and as a congregation.

The Benefits...

...of Religiously-Grounded, Congregation-Based Justice Work:

- Sustains us personally and congregationally by fostering personal religious growth and deepening collective religious understanding
- Provides a community space to authentically explore and address issues of systemic privilege and oppression
- Builds community and energy in the congregation—even across generations—by providing vision and inspiration
- Develops new leaders and skills
- Forms partnerships with other UU congregations, faith, and secular groups
- Builds bridges across barriers of race, class, sexual orientation and other differences
- Creates partnerships between groups with systemic privilege and historically marginalized groups
- Helps people in need
- Changes culture and policy
- Provides a great media angle
- Raises the profile/presence of the congregation in the community, potentially leading to growth

Tips on Doing Religiously-Grounded Social Justice Work

- Do some relationship building and personal, theological discussions before jumping in to the work. Discuss the differences between working in a Unitarian Universalist congregational setting and secular one. Talk personally about why you're passionate about the given issue, and why it's an important issue for Unitarian Universalism.
- Examine how systemic power, privilege and oppression impact the issue. Find out if there are groups who are the most affected by the issue that are active. If so, act as allies and take leadership from them.
- Be the change you wish to see. Model being centered, passionate, open-minded, and welcoming. Ask personal questions and share personal stories. Talk about your work in religious terms.
- Present your arguments using this model: I believe _____ (theological statement) therefore _____ (impact). Example: "I believe in the interconnectedness of all life, so if we hurt our planet we are hurting ourselves."
- Identify yourself as a person of faith/Unitarian Universalist: make references to your congregation, minister, congregants etc.
- Include rituals in your activities: start with a chalice lighting, reading, and/or meditation. End with a closing reading or brief sharing. Always plan time for reflection and discussion following significant activities or events.
- Participate in a small group ministry such as a covenant group to help stay centered/grounded (i.e., do an activity that just meets your needs).
- Hold "one-on-one" meetings with fellow members of your social action group to discuss personal and spiritual motivations for why you are involved. You might be surprised by what you share!

II. Accountability

Healing from Divisions and Acting with Accountability

“Being in diverse community is essential to making broad-based change in the United States. To enjoy the privilege and responsibility of being in diverse community, people are called to recognize that we share both a common humanity and particular social identities, which accord power in unbalanced ways. Bridging this power divide is at the heart of healing divisions...Although we may share similar visions, the realities of living in a structurally inequitable society shape the attitudes, behaviors, and interactions of us all. In order to confront the power, privilege, and oppression that grow from social identities, we who seek a better world are called to do our own personal change work.”

--From *Spirit in Action Facilitating Circles of Change Curriculum Guide*, 2005, Spirit in Action, Inc.

UU congregations and its members have committed to act in ways that are anti-oppressive and accountable to historically marginalized groups in their congregations and communities.

Accountability means being held responsible for ones behavior and commitments. Accountability is critically important to effective social justice work, and within this context has two specific applications.

Accountability to the Affected: listening to the individuals and groups most affected by a problem and working to implement solutions they identify. This is especially important when relatively privileged people are working with people and groups representing more marginalized communities. While there is certainly some diversity of identities within Unitarian Universalism, most Unitarian Universalists are white, and UUs are among the most educated and wealthy people of faith in the United States. When working with groups composed primarily of people of color and/or of lower incomes, we need to be particularly conscious that we’re listening to their stories and following their leadership and not imposing our solutions. This is especially true because healthy relationships are a key component of effective organizations, and you can’t have healthy relationships if you don’t show respect and support for your partners.

Accountability to be Effective: using our resources effectively. If our work makes us feel good but does not concretely advance our cause, we have not been accountable with our resources. Within Unitarian Universalism, we often avoid holding individuals accountable for their behavior and commitments—and especially negative behavior and failure to meet commitments—because we don’t want to “create” conflict. In reality there is already conflict present, and by avoiding it we compromise our effectiveness. The healthier the system, the more effective the action. Learning to deal with conflict in a healthy way is one of the most important things we can do as individuals and a religious community, and can have widespread personal and congregational benefits.

Being an Accountable Partner

To be an accountable partner with community groups (and within your own congregation):

- When considering a particular project, find out what is already happening in your community and talk to the individuals and group(s) most affected before taking action. Be conscious of the safety of those most at risk.
- Be willing to take a supporting role on issues that do not directly affect you. Take leadership from affected groups.
- Be conscious of how much “space” you’re taking up. Are you listening or dominating the conversation? Are you showing respect to the work they’ve been doing, or barraging them with your solutions? Are you believing their stories and perspectives, or asking critical questions to make them prove themselves?
- Partner with organizations recognized as legitimate representatives of the community you are working with, not self-appointed or vigilante groups.
- Foster awareness of your own and the congregation’s power, privilege, and history both as complicit with the status quo and as resisters and transformative agents.
- Structure your meetings and events in a manner that is inclusive and accessible to many different people, including those with special needs.
- For tips on *Becoming a Good Ally*, see <http://www.uua.org/programs/justice/ally101.html>

Leadership Development:

Keeping your work accountable and sustainable

Sustaining a social justice program in your congregation relies on your committee or group's ability to develop new leaders who will take on responsibility and can lead the congregation in new and positive directions. Think of leadership development as a way of approaching everything you do, as you engage in congregation-based social justice work.

Steps you can take to develop new leaders:

- Once you assume a leadership position, consider it your **first priority** to find our replacement and work with them throughout your term.
- Try not to do things for people that they can do themselves. This is especially important when working in **partnership**.
- **Alternate** who runs or facilitates meetings, who serves as spokesperson, and who plans or takes responsibility for various actions.
- Ask for feedback from new members of your committee or from other members of the congregation on decisions that are being made. **Be willing to be challenged and to change.**
- If you're doing something alone, stop and think about why that's the case and if you should be doing it at all. Sometimes it's better to let something fall than to carry it solely on your shoulders. This can be a good wake up call for others that they **cannot rely on one person to do all the work.**
- Provide **varying types of engagement** for members of your congregation. Different people will want to do different types of social justice work—direct service, education, witness, and advocacy—and new leaders will emerge naturally.

Do **one-on-one conversations** between members of your group. These conversations not only allow people to understand each other's motivations and interests, but also build an accountability structure in which people begin working on behalf of the group rather than themselves individually

III. Congregation and Community

Knowing Your Congregation

What is your congregation's history related to social justice work?

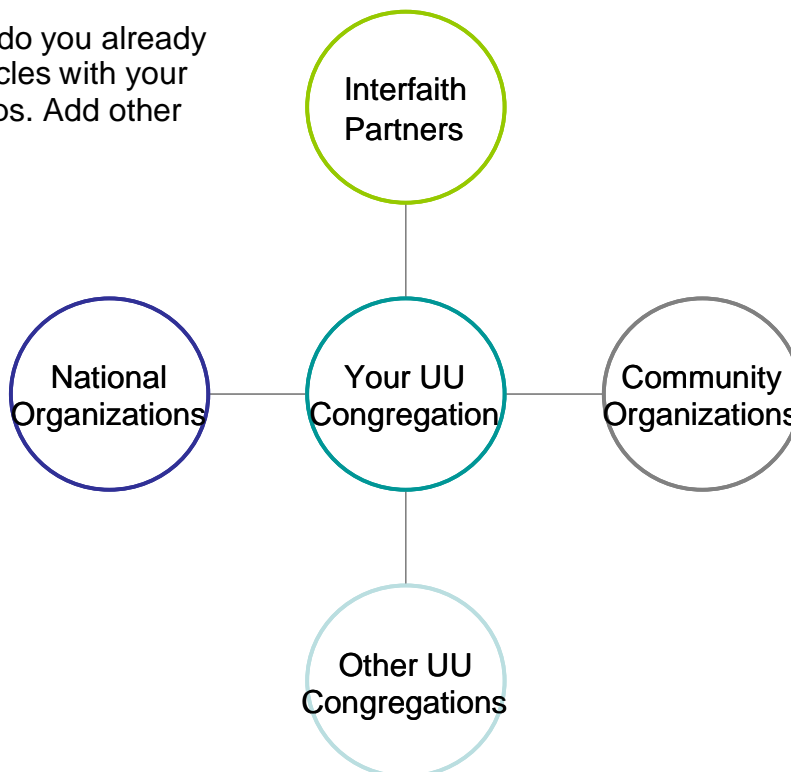


About your congregation

- What are the needs and interests of the members of your congregation?
- What are the assets within your congregation, in terms of people, experience, money, time, etc?
- What is going on right now, in terms of social justice work? Think of there being **five types of justice work**: service, education, witness, advocacy, and organizing. Fill in the current projects in your congregation that fit into each category. Do your programs reflect your priorities?

Service	Education	Organizing	Advocacy	Witness

- What partnerships do you already have? Fill in the circles with your existing relationships. Add other circles as needed.



Knowing Your Community

About your community:

- Who lives in your community? What do they care about? Use the one-on-one format described on the next page to find out!
- What social justice organizing is already going on?
- What relationships does your congregation already have with/in the community?
- What relationships do members of your congregation already have with community members or organizations independent of the congregation? Could a congregational connection be made?

Benefits of community partnerships and coalitions include:

- Fitting your work into an existing structure- not re-inventing the wheel! Filling a niche in the community organizing that may be empty
- Strength in numbers!
- More people = more hands. More people = more impact
- Opportunities for future collaboration on other issues
- Doing your work in an accountable way
- Bringing different constituencies together
- Work is more effective
- Increase community connections
- Groups can specialize and take responsibility for different facets of the work
- Wider message
- Increased opportunities for media
- Seeing issues from multiple points of view
- Spreading the impact of Unitarian Universalism!
- Others?

One-on-Ones

One-on-Ones

A one-on-one is a personal conversation with an individual community member to learn about his/her concerns, level of interest and commitment for an issue, and the resources the person has to offer. At the same time, the activist organizer can introduce the issues of the congregation or social justice committee, and increase the level of awareness of the issue.

One-on-ones should take place in a quiet setting and last 30 minutes to an hour, during which time the activist organizer and the congregation member should develop a level of trust with one another. The community member will do most of the talking in a one-on-one, while the "interviewer" asks questions to clarify points and learn more detail.

How would on-on-ones help our congregation?

Facilitating one on one conversations between members of your social action group and other members of the congregation lets you know which issues your congregation is most passionate about, what they have already been involved in and what actions they might be interested in organizing. This enables you to do your justice work in tune with the passion and desires of the members of your congregation. This means you will be MUCH more effective!

Who should we conduct one-on-ones with?

One-on-ones should start with a member of the congregation the social action group knows well. Some things you should do include:

- Contact that person and ask to sit down and visit with her or him.
- Brainstorm about who are the stakeholders in social justice in your congregation.
- Ask to meet with congregational board members.
- Every one-on-one should lead to future contacts. Ask for names of other members who may care about the issue.

What should we ask in a one-on-one?

Find out about the person you are interviewing. Ask open-ended questions. Some questions you should ask:

- How long have they been a member of the congregation?
- How long have they lived in the community?
- Have they been involved in social justice work through the congregation?
- Have they been or are they involved in other organizations that have/are doing social justice work.
- How would they like to see the congregation be involved in the community?
- What would they like to see happen in the neighborhood around the congregation?
- Has the issue in question affected them?
- What way would they consider being involved? Do they have special interests or skills they could contribute?
- Are there other people they would suggest that you talk to?

Thanks to the Marin Institute for information on one-on-ones. For more information on conducting one-on-ones in your congregation, contact Susan Leslie at sleslie@uua.org.

Successful Social Action: A Congregational Ministry

The following list of suggestions is included here as a guide (or a goal) for congregations seeking to improve their social action or social justice programs.

Deepen Congregational Identity: A successful social justice congregation has a sense of mission and purpose. Members are familiar with the history of the congregation's involvement in social justice in the community and its part in the larger UU movement.

Be Intentional: In order to be successful, a congregation must intentionally set a path for justice work. Priorities should be established as a congregation; clear goals/objectives set. Carefully analyze the problems you trying to solve and the passion of other members. Action is concrete, specific, manageable. Congregational structures are examined with social justice in mind. Changes are made to structures that do not support social justice efforts. Examples of congregational structures and policies to consider are: *Budget, By-laws, Representation (who speaks for the congregation and when?), committee and task force structure and leadership, etc.*

Pursue Ministerial Leadership: Ministerial support for justice work, including preaching, connection to the wider justice world, goal setting, and leadership development is key. A minister needs his or her congregation's support in achieving a healthy balance between pastoral and prophetic work.

Keep the Faith: As we walk together the path toward justice, there will be great successes, and there will be times of great despair. This is why we dare not walk alone. Engage our UU faith as a source of strength and reflection for the congregation's social justice work. Encourage your members to articulate how their theology informs their social justice efforts.

Make It Easy To Pursue Justice Work Through Your Congregation: In successful social justice congregations, at least 20% of the congregation is involved. Many members work or volunteer with justice-related organizations outside of church. Social justice ministry is seen as a part of the life of the congregation. Justice work is integrated into worship, RE, social programs, etc. This means that

new faces and new ideas are welcomed and incorporated into committees and taskforces. This requires an honest sense of when seasoned leaders should "step back" and a commitment to leadership development.

Use UUA Resources Mindfully: Our Association makes many resources and trainings available to its member congregations, and they should be reviewed and considered regularly. Anti-Racism training, Welcoming Congregation work or the Social Justice Empowerment Program might be just the thing to start your congregation on a path toward more active role in society. Contact UUA staff listed at the end of this workbook to discuss the best resources for your congregation.

Be Mindful of Balance: A variety of voices should be heard in planning meetings and in justice work. If social justice issues are raised by a single or a few voices only, this should be addressed. In addition, if the congregation engages in all (or most) of the various styles of social justice work (service, education, advocacy, witness, organizing), the overall justice programming will be stronger and more effective.

Be a Good Partner: The best community partner is a congregation that knows itself as well as its community. This also means know when to be involved and when to step back. Whether pursuing partnerships within the congregation or in the community, a special effort must be made to include traditionally marginalized groups and individuals.

Shy Not Away From Conflict Or Reflection : Facing controversy quickly and with creativity using foundations of shared theology can make all the difference and provide a strong foundation for justice work. Effective work is often based on consistent and continual evaluation of actions, programs, structures and leadership is done with objectivity and recorded for future use.

Thanks to Rev. Victoria Weinstein for her article "Nurturing a Ministry of Activism."

IV. Strategic Planning and Implementation

Understanding Goals and Risks

“...To pursue the impossible dream is a cop-out. If I pursue an impossible dream, I get to look noble without ever having to risk anything. Glorious failure is guaranteed.

*What [takes] courage is to pursue a **possible dream**. A possible dream is doable; it is a reachable star. A possible dream stretches us; it calls for a deep and enduring commitment. A possible dream exposes us to the real risk of failure — the failure to do what we might have done, could have done and should have done.”*

-Excerpt from sermon "To Dream the Possible Dream"

By the Rev. Peter Morales



It's important to choose a goal that is both **concrete** and **achievable**. Set your sights high, but not so high that you cannot possibly accomplish the goal you've set. This is a **risky** thing to do, but much more effective in the long run.

Small, easy goal

Concrete,
achievable goal

Huge, impossible goal

Low risk

Volunteering with
Habitat for Humanity

High risk

Influencing your City
Council to mandate
affordable housing in
your neighborhood

Low risk

Affordable
Housing
for All

Choosing an Issue:

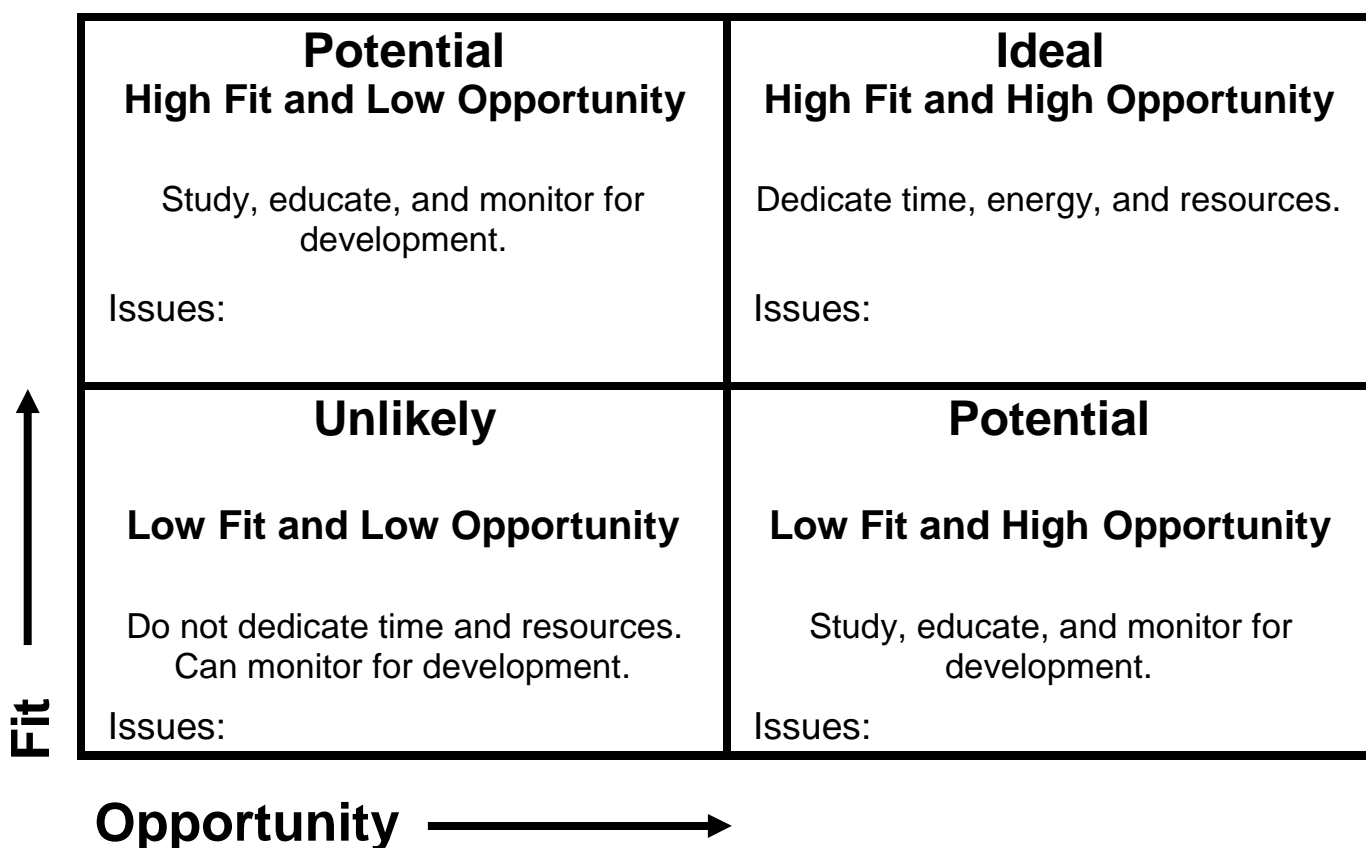
Determining Grounding, Fit, and Opportunity

When evaluating your issue-based priorities, consider the following for each issue:

- **Grounding:** Does the issue have authentic and deep Unitarian Universalist roots? Does it link to the current identity and theology of Unitarian Universalists?
- **Fit:** Is there a match between our congregation's resources, aspirations, and ability to make a real difference?
- **Opportunity:** Is there a likelihood that we can be a respected participant in the public dialogue on this issue? Are there allies we can work with?

For issues where you have grounding, use the chart below to plot the amount of fit and opportunity. The issues with high fit and high opportunity are ones you should consider making priorities. For help on grounding, you may want to consult the Social Justice Statements passed by the UUA General Assembly, which can be found at <http://www.uua.org/actions>.

The UUA Public Witness Team—a gathering of communication and social justice staff—used this process and identified Family Matters (Marriage Equality and Reproductive Health), Religion in Society, and Racial Justice as top priorities. Your results will probably be different, as your local circumstances are different than looking at the Association as a whole.

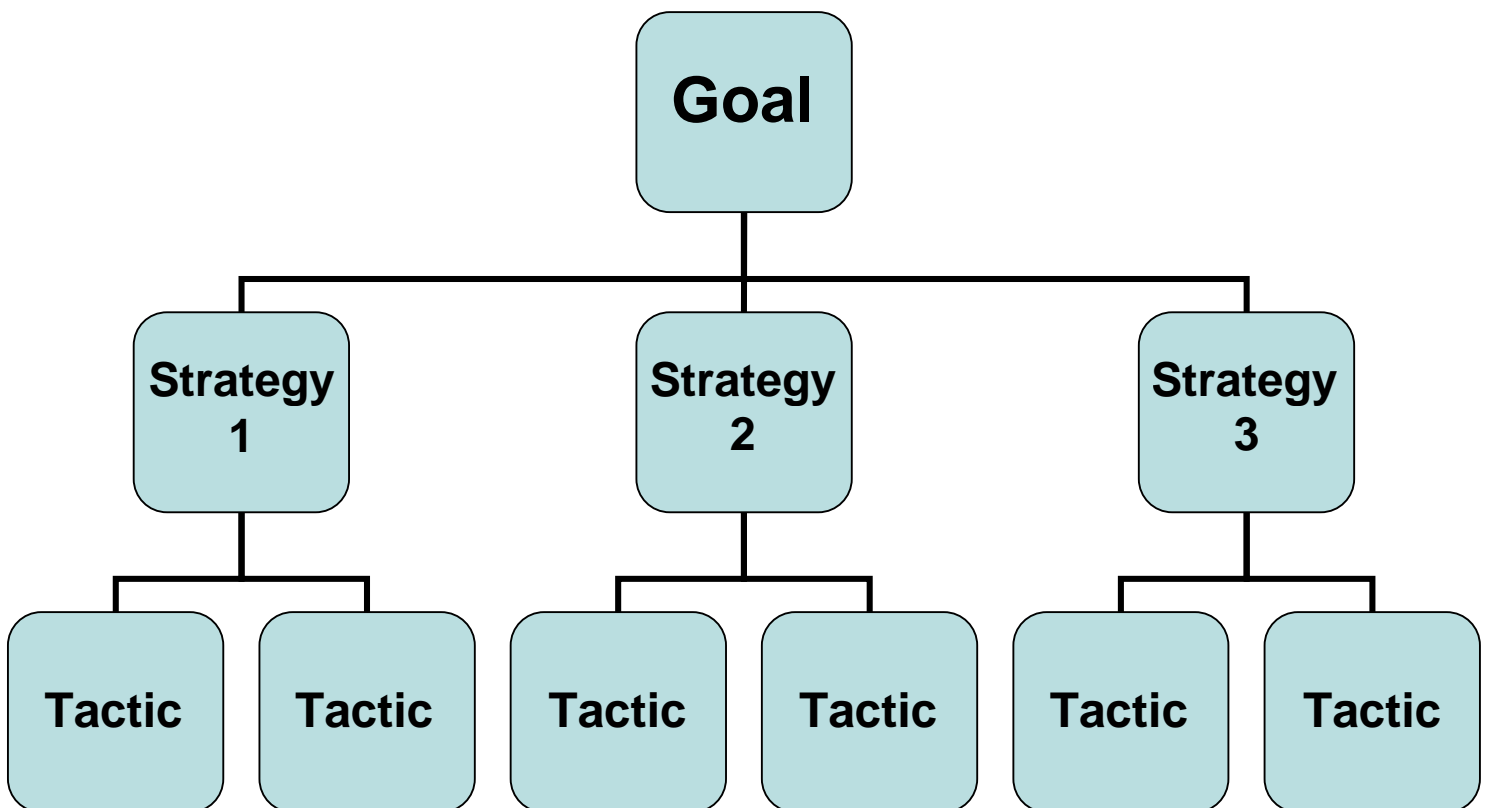


Creating a Strategic Plan

A goal is: the concrete, achievable outcome you wish to see

Strategies are: the concepts or plans that, when combined, will achieve your goal.

Tactics are: the specific actions that, when done, will complete your strategy



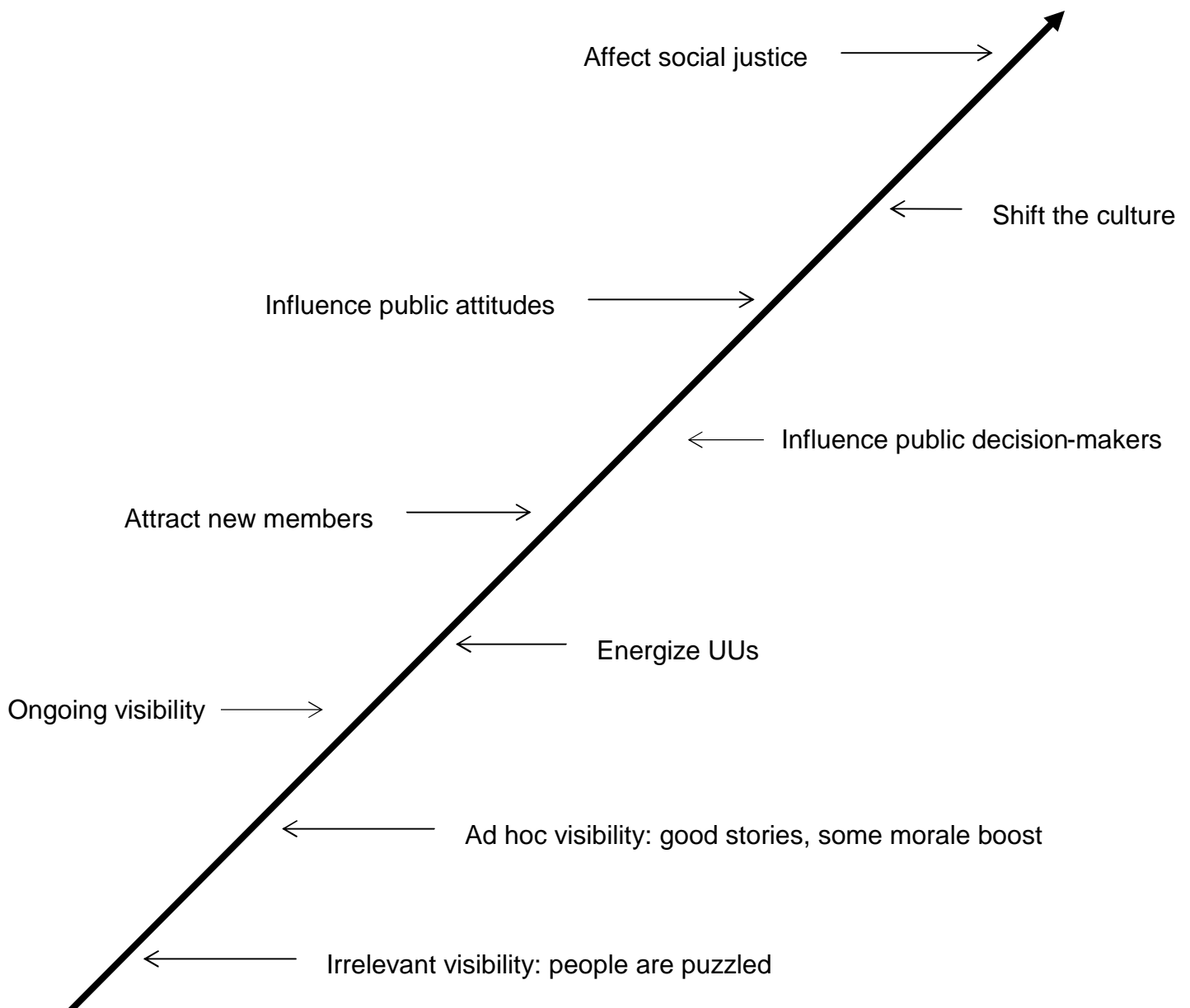
Steps in Strategic Planning

1. **Passion of Congregation:** Know the passion of your congregation. What do they care enough about to really work on?
2. **Issue Selection:** Choose an issue that has **grounding** with your congregation's history and theology, **fit** with its current passion and resources, and where you have the **opportunity** to make a real difference. Discerning grounding and fit require you to know your congregations. Discerning opportunity means understanding the larger community and the current status and context for the issue.
3. **Problem:** Clearly and concisely define the problem. You can start broad, but you should end up with a single, specific sentence. For example, you could move from "civil rights for BGLT people" to "our state does not the civil benefits of marriage to same-sex couples."
4. **Goal:** The solution to this problem is your goal. It should be clear and achievable. For example: "to secure the civil benefits of marriage for same-sex couples in our state." We strongly encourage you to be accountable when defining problems and goals by making sure that you're listening to the experience and desires of the people/groups most affected. Don't do your work in a vacuum.
5. **Strategies:** Identify the strategies which, when successfully implemented will achieve your goal. The first step in this process is identifying who has the power to change what needs to be changed. In this case, let's say it's the state legislature. That group (and virtually every group, including the general public) can be broken down into three parts: those who are supportive, those who are in opposition, and those who might be swayed. In general you want to work with the supportive folks and direct your education and advocacy work at those in the middle. What people and groups are allies with whom you can partner? What resources do they have to offer? Who is your opposition? What do you know about their work? What is the unique voice of your UU congregation? As you answer these questions, you'll start to see what strategies are necessary. In this case (like many), you're likely to have an education strategy, a media strategy, an advocacy strategy, and an organizing strategy. In general, your strategies will not change throughout the life of your plan.
6. **Tactics:** Tactics are the particular activities necessary to implement strategies. For example, a public forum is an education tactic, but a single forum alone does not complete your strategy nor achieve your goal. Your tactics should regularly be evaluated to ensure that they are effective. Be flexible--do not wed yourself to any one tactic. Remember that a tactic is NOT your goal, but merely a way of getting there.

Continuum of Public Witness Impact

This chart can help you to assess the **magnitude** of the impact of your justice work on the world around you. As you become more comfortable with public witness work, you can set your sights higher and higher on the continuum. Also, public witness can **build it's own momentum**: the more you get your voice out there, the more impact you can have each time.

Where have your past efforts fallen on this continuum?



Many thanks to Helio Fred Garcia, UUA Media Consultant, for developing this continuum and the following criteria and chart.

V. Skills and Tactics

Service

General tips: In addition to the direct benefits to others, service is an opportunity for individuals to build relationships and grow spiritually. As such, reflecting on the service is equally important as the service itself. How did it make you feel? What was the relationship like between you and those you were serving? What role did race, class, gender, and other factors play?

- Soup Kitchen
- Clothing Drive
- Thanksgiving Food Drive
- Adopt-a-Family Programs
- Care Packages for Military
- Women and Men
- Homeless Shelter
- Medical Clinic
- Blood Drive

Education

General Tips: Have an idea of what kind of programs your congregation or community partners are interested in and would attend. Educational programs and messages can be tailored to general or specific audiences. Know your audience! If inviting a congregation or community-wide audience, be sure to touch on aspects of each constituency's involvement in an issue. Include some form of follow up action or reflection on the forum or class. Have an advocacy campaign for attendees to sign up for or do a service project with your Adult or Youth RE class.

- Congregational Forum
- Community Forum
- Guest Speaker
- Adult RE classes
- Children/Youth RE classes
- Community classes
- Pulpit exchange with partner churches (UU and other denominations)
- Letters to the Editor (local)
- Op-Ed in local paper

Organizing

One Example of Partnership: Congregation Based Community Organizing (CBCO) is a movement that seeks to establish grassroots organizations for purposes of **increasing social integration and power** in civil society.

CBCO Organizations are:

*Interfaith

*Economically Diverse

* Multi-Ethnic

* Multi-Racial

Goals include **making civic, regional and state-wide changes for social improvement.**

Over 100 Unitarian Universalist congregations are members of CBCOs. The Office for Congregational Advocacy and Witness provides resources and support for congregations interested in or engaged in CBCO.

Contact Susan Leslie, Director of the Office for Congregational Advocacy and Witness, at sleslie@uaa.org or (617) 948-4607 for more information or to share your congregation's story of involvement in your local CBCO.

To learn more, visit: www.uua.org/programs/justice/cbco.html

Other examples of partnerships and coalitions:

- Groups within your congregation (including but not limited to the Youth Group, RE parents, Campus Ministry group, Women's group, etc.)
- Interfaith Organizations and other religious groups in your community
- Other Unitarian Universalist congregations in your area
- National Organizations
- Secular Community Organizations
- Local government or city council
- Schools or Universities

Advocacy

The roots of the word *advocacy* have to do with lending assistance, calling for a voice to speak out. Advocacy is a way of raising your voice, speaking on behalf of yourself and those people or causes you stand with. In this case, we use *advocacy* to mean lobbying and anything else that brings your voice to your elected officials, or to others who change and make policy. We UUs have the skills and resources to be excellent lobbyists; compelling spokespeople for our causes.

“It was an invigorating and empowering experience...I was surprised...at how much time some of the delegates were taking out of their intensely packed schedules to see us...My son's delegate...spent 15 minutes just to talk with him alone.” –Member of UU Congregation on first lobby visit

“Most moving was... getting to go lobby! I had an amazing experience with the staff persons at all the offices I went to. All the staff persons were extremely candid, sharing their own person experiences and opinions on sex education. I felt so at ease...Thanks again for this amazing experience!” --Young Adult Participant, UUA Sexuality Education Advocacy Training 2006

Advocacy can include personal lobby visits, phone calls, emails, letters, or petitions. Group lobby visits are one of the most highly effective forms of advocacy. After a visit, writing letters and making telephone calls are highly effective; postcards, petitions, and emails (provided they include your name and address) also have some impact, but considerably less.

What you need to know about the IRS restrictions on lobbying

Religious organizations and congregations **are** allowed to do advocacy, but must follow certain guidelines from the IRS. The three basic rules are:

1. **No Limits on Advocacy and Education** (activities that raise awareness on a given issue but don't encourage the public to support /oppose specific legislation).
2. **Narrow Limit on Lobbying** (advocating for or against specific pieces of legislation).
3. **Total Limit on Partisan Politics** (anything that advocates for or against candidates or parties).

According to the IRS, lobbying must be an "unsubstantial" portion of an organization's activities. The IRS has not defined what this means exactly, but it's generally agreed that up to 5% is fine. However, that's 5% of the total activities of the organization, including money for the building and staff salaries, all staff and volunteer hours, etc. As such, it is highly, highly unlikely that any congregation would come anywhere near the “substantial” threshold.

For more information, see *The Real Rules: Congregations and IRS Guidelines on Advocacy, Elections, and Lobbying* at www.uua.org/uuawo. Click “Activist Resources” and scroll to the bottom of the page under the heading “Resources for Congregations.” The full *Real Rules* is 16 pages; a 4-page executive summary is also available.

Lobbying

Many people on their first lobby visit are surprised at how simple and empowering they can be. Lobby visits are usually short, staff members you meet with are generally pleasant, and it's not essential for you to be an experienced politician. Particularly when lobbying on social justice issues, it is far more important to be a constituent and/or someone affected by the issue than it is to be an expert in Congressional procedure or in the nuances of a particular bill.

Identify an Issue. Since visits are short, you won't have time to discuss your views on every issue. Pick something specific, and stick to it.

Assemble a Group. Group visits are more influential than individual visits—especially if you have a broad, diverse delegation—and can help build relationships and skills among activists. Aim for 3-5 people (more can be hard to coordinate). Look for allies in:

- Your congregation
- Interfaith groups
- Issue coalitions
- Secular non-profits
- Interested business group

Schedule a Visit:

- **Identify a rough timeframe** for your visit and compile a list of all those who are potentially interested (you may not get your first choice for a time).
- **Check your Member's website** for information on setting up a meeting—many offices require a written request.
- **If you cannot find such info, call the office** and ask to speak to the person in charge of scheduling. Identify yourself as a constituent and member of [name your congregation/coalition], and request a meeting with the Representative/Senator, or staffer on [name your issue].
- **Plan for the process to take 1-3 weeks.** Setting up a visit often requires several follow-up calls.

Prepare for the Visit:

- **Learn something about the official's record** on the issue. Ideally you'll find something positive to thank them for that connects with the request you're about to make.
- **Once you know where the office stands, determine your "ask".** Your ask should be a specific action, such as voting for/against a certain bill.
 - A supportive member of Congress can be thanked for their leadership on the issue and asked to encourage other offices to support the issue.
 - An office on the fence can be asked to vote for/against a bill, and educated about the issue with compelling personal stories.
 - A member of Congress in opposition can be reminded that they have constituents who disagree and/or will be hurt by the policies.
- **Identify your best arguments** and assign each member of your delegation responsibility for covering one or more points. Read leading advocacy organizations' websites; try the UUA Washington Office's links page for starters. Familiarize yourself with the arguments of the "opposition" and be prepared to counter them.

- **Gather compelling personal stories.** These will stick in people's heads longer than facts—although you should also have some facts to help validate your stories.
- **Clarify religious grounding**—Reflect on why this issue is a matter of faith, and be prepared to communicate this succinctly.
- **Bring a packet of supporting materials** to leave with the office. Your information packet might include:
 - **Information about your organization and contact information**
 - Letters or handouts from yourself or from supportive organizations
 - Background information or polling
 - Personal stories
 - Local media coverage and newspaper editorials.

Conducting the Visit

- Dress neatly and conservatively. Have a brief review and pep rally outside the office beforehand (perhaps also with a meditation or prayer).
- Remember that you're trying to build a relationship, so your disposition/approach should be polite and reasonable. Relax. Stick to your message and avoid speaking out of anger or frustration.
- Expect some introductions and pleasantries: who you are, where you're from, etc. One person (generally the person who set up the visit) should take the lead by introducing the group and the reason for the visit. For example: "Good Morning Senator Smith. Thanks for meeting with us. We're here from the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Cityville, with 250 members, to talk about the Marriage Amendment, S.J. Res. 1, and we'd like to introduce ourselves and say a little about why we feel strongly about this issue.")
- Have each person make their arguments and conclude with your ask. Use your stories and validate them with facts. Thank the official for something if at all possible. Be prepared for the questions and give-and-take of the visit; but always keep returning to your central message.
- If you don't know an answer, say so. If the Member or staffer asks you for information that you do not have, say that you do not have it but will get it in a few days. Never lie or make things up!
- Press for a commitment. Will they support your position? If not, why not? When and how will they make a decision?
- End on a positive note. If you have found common ground, recognize where you disagree, but return to that "feel good" point.

After the Visit

- Debrief with your group. How did that go? Were participants happy with how they did? What arguments were most influential? What are the key factors in their decision-making, and what else can you do to influence them?
- Report how the visit went to others in the congregation or organization (such as the UUA Washington Office), especially if the visit is part of a larger effort.
- Follow up with the office by sending a thank you letter to the Member or staffer you met with, along with any additional information and materials you pledged to provide. Building a relationship with an office is the best way to make your voice heard. A meeting gets your foot in the door - it's in the follow-up that you're going to see results.
- Encourage others you know to do similar visits.

Witness

Using the Media

Types of Media

- **Paid:** Advertising.
- **Unearned:** Coverage you get without taking any steps to get it. For example, the paper covers your lobby day for marriage equality because they just happened to hear about it and decided it was newsworthy on their own.
- **Earned:** Coverage you get due to intentionally seeking coverage. For example, the paper covers your lobby day for marriage equality because you invited them.

Earning Media

Successfully earning media means that you (1) are doing something that is newsworthy, and (2) you've invited coverage effectively. To meet both of these criteria, you must understand how the media works and plan accordingly.

1. What is Newsworthy?

H. Fred Garcia, the UUA's expert media consultant, likes to sum up the components of a good news story as "the 5 C's." These are the elements that reporters are looking for. The 5 C's are:

Conflict • Contradiction • Controversy • Colorful Language • Cast of Characters

When seeking coverage, the question to ask is "What is our hook?" In seeking an answer, try to draw from the 5 Cs. Think of ways you can involve these elements. If what you're doing seems like the same people doing the same things you've always done, with nothing new or different, getting coverage will be difficult. The main exception is if you've established yourself as a credible voice in the community on a particular issue, and have good relationships with the media so they keep coming back to you whenever the issue comes up.

2. Working with the Media

Working with the media can feel intimidating, and it does require some particular skills and ways of thinking. The good news is that with adequate preparation, planning, and practice, most people and congregations can learn how to be effective. To learn more, see the newly-released *Sharing the Good News: A Public Relations Manual for Congregations*. This manual starts with tips for congregational organizing (the first chapter is "Forming and Effective Communications Committee," and then moves to the specifics of media relations including writing press releases, preparing for interviews, etc. It and other media resources are available through the UUA's Justice homepage, www.uua.org/justice, via "Resources for Your Congregation" > "Media."

See also the resources offered by Fenton Communication, a public interest firm, at http://www.fenton.com/pages/5_resources/1_bestpractices.htm. Their guide *Now Hear This* lays out the steps necessary for a successful media campaign, and the recently-released *This Just In: 10 Lessons From Two Decades of Public Communication* is very helpful.

Developing Your Message

Whatever the strategy, tactic, or activity, your campaign should be guided by a clear message. Ideally your message says (1) Who you are; (2) What you are doing; and (3) why should others join you.

1. **Identify and segment your audience** as much as possible. Your audience should never be “the public,” but specific groups and sub-groups that are likely to be mobilized or changed by your work.
2. **Clearly define the problem and the solution.** Identify the actions /changes that are needed.
3. **Frame your message.** When folks hear your message, what do you want them to think and feel? What are the key concepts that you want to communicate?

For more on framing, see *Don't Think of Elephant* by George Lakoff. Chelsea Green Publishing Company, 2004. <http://www.chelseagreen.com/2004/items/elephant>.

4. **Message development:** What are the concise words and phrases that will communicate your message effectively? What words will activate the frame (i.e., trigger the concepts) you seek? What popular slogans or concepts can you adapt/subvert for your cause? What is your opposition saying? Things to keep in mind:
 - Make sure your messages are concise, grounded in UU theology, and easy to understand.
 - Use big ideas and universal values like fairness, equality, justice, protection, reward-for-work, family, community, etc.
 - Tell the truth as we see it – tell it forcefully, straightforwardly, articulately, with moral conviction and without hesitation.
 - Have no more than three main message points. For example, on the issue of marriage Equality, you might have:
 - All families deserve the legal benefits of marriage.
 - Civil marriage is a civil right.
 - Unitarian Universalists stand on the side of love.

VI. UUA Resources

UUA Office of Congregational Advocacy & Witness

www.uua.org/justice

- FAQs
- Issue-based resources
- Helpful organizing resources – Congregational stories
- Coming soon: Public Relations resources from the Office of Information and Public Witness

Susan Leslie
Director
sleslie@uua.org
617-948-4607

Audra Friend
Administrative Assistant
afriend@uua.org
617-948-4656

UUA Washington Office for Advocacy

www.uua.org/uuawo

- Federal legislative advocacy – Issue-based resources
- IRS Guidelines
- Link to contact elected officials – General advocacy resources

Rob Keithan
Director
rkeithan@uua.org
202-296-4672 x15

Elizabeth Bukey
Legislative Assistant for Civil Rights and
Religious Liberty
ebukey@uua.org
202-296-4672 x22

Meredith Schonfeld-Hicks
Legislative Assistant for Women's Issues
UU Women's Federation Clara Barton
Internship
mschonfeldhicks@uua.org
202-296-4672 x13

Adam Gerhardstein
Legislative Assistant for International
Issues
agerhardstein@uua.org
202-296-4672 x21

Inspired Faith Effective Action **Workshop Evaluation**

Please rate the following on a scale of 1-5. **Did you leave the workshop with:**

	Not at all			Absolutely	
	1	2	3	4	5
1. A better sense of the UU theological grounding for justice work, and new or renewed interest in making religious practices part of it	1	2	3	4	5
2. A basic understanding of what accountability means and how to practice it	1	2	3	4	5
3. A desire to learn more about what's already happening in your community and work in partnership	1	2	3	4	5
4. A commitment to working more strategically, using some of the resources in this workbook	1	2	3	4	5

Please give us an overall rating for the workshop:

	Poor			Great	
	1	2	3	4	5
5. Overall rating for the workshop	1	2	3	4	5

6. What are the three most useful things you learned in this workshop?

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

7. How can we improve this workshop?

8. How can we improve this workbook?

Name (optional) _____ Congregation _____

SIGN ME UP for the UU Action Network!! Please give us your email address if you would like to receive an invitation to join our on-line UU Action Network:

Email Address: _____

Please use the reverse side for any additional comments. Thanks for your feedback!