



April 2021

Communications 2020/2021 AGM Report

Committee/Group Name: Communications

Purpose of Committee:

To raise the profile of the Unitarian Church of Edmonton (UCE) through communications which reflect our values and promote our vision. To this end, the committee provides support, advice and oversight for UCE's internal and external communications. Its specific objectives include ensuring that congregants and general public are well-informed of UCE activities, programs, and services, and helping to effectively communicate the values, and ideals of Unitarian Universalism (UU) to the entire world.

Members:

Karen Bilida (chair), Alex Polkovsky (website)

There are more people that have done many things to assist the roles of this committee.

A huge thank you to all the people that have volunteered to keep the zoom services running on Sundays and during the week!

Pauline Atwood has hosted the successful Tuney Tuesdays all year!

Sunday Zoom Volunteers (Sept 1, 2020 – April 30, 2021):

Zoom Tech	Position Coverage	Zoom Tech	Position Coverage
Karen Bilida	42.6%	Sylvia Krogh	3.3%
Ruth Merriott	15.3%	Jan McMillan	1.6%
Andrew Mills	10.9%	Maria Jenkins	1.1%
Jeff Bisanz	7.7%	Gordon Ritchie	0.5%
Susan Ruttan	6.6%	Kat Hartshorne	0.5%
Gloria Krenbrenk	4.9%	Rhonda Jessen	0.5%
Lynne Turvey	3.8%	Yvonne Mireau	0.5%

ALL friends and members of UCE and all Unitarians &/or Universalists are important in educating and sharing with the entire world.

Please consider volunteering in the 2021/2022 church year – it is a great way to stay connected to our community.

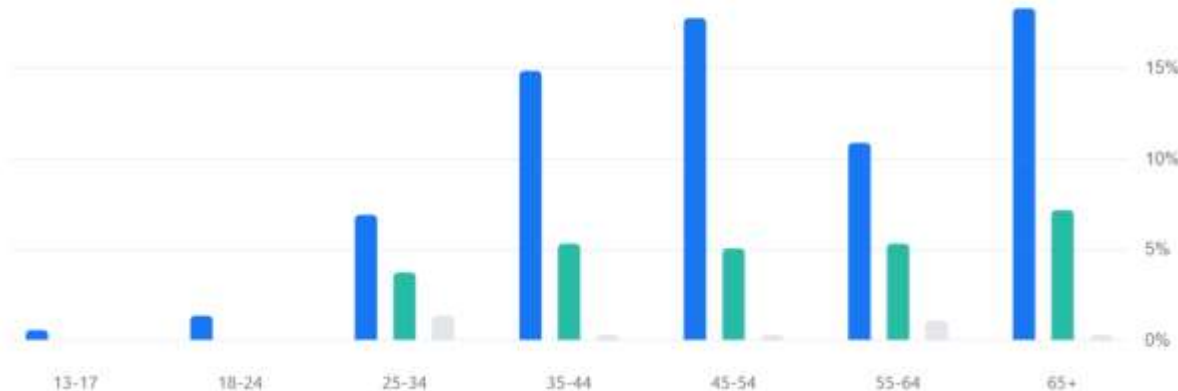
- ✚ Twitter Followers – 28 Day Summary ending April 5, 2021 Tweet impressions are up 27.6% to 4,951, Profile visits up 105.2% to 318. UCE has 516 followers (CUC 445 followers, Westwood 267 followers, First U of Toronto 229 followers).
- ✚ Instagram – 387 followers
- ✚ YouTube – 82 subscribers
- ✚ Increased Facebook viewership - Page (571 at April 5, 2021, 357 in 2019 to 491 followers as of April 6, 2020) and Group (392 members as at April 5, 2021 - 332 Members 2019 to 365 as of April 6, 2020)
 - Attracted new members and friends to UCE
 - Expanded our international presence

Edmonton Unitarians Facebook Group Demographics

Age and Gender

Mar 8, 2021 - Apr 4, 2021

70% Female 26% Male 3% Custom



Top Countries

Canada	351
United States	21
Netherlands	6
Italy	2
Kenya	2
Germany	1
India	1
Burundi	1
South Africa	1
Sweden	1

Top Cities

Edmonton, AB, Canada	253
Calgary, AB, Canada	12
Saint Albert, AB, Canada	7
Victoria, BC, Canada	6
Fort Saskatchewan, AB, Canada	5
Nederhorst den Berg, Netherlands	4
Sherwood Park, AB, Canada	3
Grande Prairie, AB, Canada	3
Vancouver, BC, Canada	3
Winnipeg, MB, Canada	2

Major Actions of 2020-21 / Outcomes Achieved (con't)

- ✚ Maintained the UCE Zoom Account and facilitated the online Sunday Services
- ✚ Booked UCE Zoom meetings, coffee hours, Sunday services, etc

- ✚ Created emails for distribution in regards to the very quickly changing circumstances around Covid-19 and the quickly changing technology that accompanied these events
- ✚ Continued to train numerous friends and members of UCE, and the larger UU community, on Zoom
- ✚ Hosted Zoom Coffee hours
- ✚ Hosted recorded, edited Sunday Services
- ✚ Trained people on how to host Zoom meetings
- ✚ Edited and posted recordings of Sunday Services to YouTube and Sound Cloud
- ✚ Updated policy(s) for UCE communication
- ✚ Created podcasts of the Sunday Services
- ✚ Research and creation of pictures/ memes/ videos/podcast of UCE interests and events for use in:
 - Facebook
 - YouTube
 - Twitter
 - UCE newsletter
 - Emails
 - Pinterest
 - Instagram
 - SoundCloud
- ✚ Published and promoted many events at UCE and associated with UCE
- ✚ Worked with and will continue to work with other not for profit organizations to cross promote
- ✚ Continued to work on the updating of the UCE website
- ✚ Merged Instagram/Twitter/Facebook/YouTube for more efficient posting
- ✚ UCE.ca settled into its new hosting service

Planned Actions for 2021/22

- ✚ Continue to be the most Accessible and Welcoming Congregation UCE can be with introducing Hybrid Services (combination of in person and online services)
 - From “UU Response to Covid Tech Group”:
 - “Rev Meghann Robern - For us it’s about accessibility and our commitment to it.”
 - “UUC Lakeland in Florida. Less than 100 members. We have flourished and grown during the pandemic. We’ll be continuing hybrid services. We think this is the future. We are investing in tech and social media.

Planned Actions for 2021/22 (Con’t)

Want to reach younger people and families? Also, great option for those that are unable to attend services for various reasons. Do hybrid and have options available.”

- “We have *members* who can’t attend. Some for distance, some for health. (It also pretty much terminates snow days...) and I think it may have made worship accessible for some who were formerly

abandoned because they were housebound by age and illness, or mental health. So it's really an accessibility issue, in my mind.

It has also turned out to be a low risk way for people to come visit... In the past, we blew all that off. Now all know we can make it available — accessible. And since some of the people who helped shoulder the load to support worship are among those who can't be in person, it would be incredibly awkward to “close the door” in their faces. So for us, it's clear that yes, we *would* be cutting out part of the membership of the congregation.”

“One silver lining of the pandemic lockdowns is the realization that church attendance is no longer limited to the dimensions of our sanctuary, the number of parking spaces, or our geographical location. Pledging members and friends can be anywhere, and your collection plate is now much bigger! RE programs can be international! Events such as meetings, concerts, weddings, and memorials, can have world wide attendance. Rental events can generate revenue for streaming service.”

- ⌘ Offer training for UCE members in technical tasks – seeking volunteers!
- ⌘ Investigate most appropriate equipment for hybrid services
- ⌘ Increase congregational support
 - Items to publish
 - Social Media participation – likes/ shares/ invites / views / comments (commenting on the social media posts is the most helpful way to participate)
- ⌘ Increase the public's knowledge of UU and UCE - More Congregational and Staff support is needed to widen the reach of the Social Media efforts
- ⌘ Further updating of Website
 - Needs staff / congregational /committee/ working groups support - specifically materials to publish
- ⌘ Increase the welcome and visual presence of the UCE building inside and out
- ⌘ Standardize email signatures
- ⌘ Standardize posters for UCE purposes

Planned Actions for 2021/22 (Con't)

- ⌘ Increase cooperation with other not for profits to cross promote
- ⌘ Increase involvement with UCE youth group
- ⌘ Information posters throughout all rooms of UCE on UU and UCE
- ⌘ Increase use of candles@uce.ca for members and friends to send personal cares and connections for Sundays and newsletter
- ⌘ Further increase social media presence

- A social media report has been received by an outside consultant. Further work based on the recommendations will be perused in the 2021/22 church year. (see report following)

Recommendations:

- ⌘ We need full participation by all staff, members, committees, and working groups of UCE to make communications effective. Send us what is newsworthy, topics to pursue, UCE/UU articles for newsletter, please keep us up to date with your actions, events, and thoughts.
- ⌘ If the congregation wants to grow, more Congregational and Staff support is needed to widen the reach of the Social Media efforts and share with the “outside” world” what a great community UCE is!

Even if you not have signed up for the various social media platforms you can still have a look as to what is happening.

Hope you love it, share with your friends and family, and please add comments to increase the mysterious Social Media algorithms that allow more people to learn about our fantastic community:

- ⌘ Facebook Group - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/41659071349/>
- ⌘ Facebook Page - <https://www.facebook.com/UnitarianChurch/>
- ⌘ SoundCloud Podcast - <https://soundcloud.com/user-189401827>
- ⌘ YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/user/EdmUnitarian>
- ⌘ Twitter - <https://twitter.com/UnitarianUCE>
- ⌘ Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/unitarianuce/>

Submitted by: Karen Bilida

A Social Media Strategy and Plan for the Unitarian Church of Edmonton (UCE)

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide the Unitarian Church of Edmonton (UCE) with a social media strategy and plan.

Based on my findings and report below, this will require a full church year to run before the UCE can really see the changes from this plan. Social media isn't something that will change overnight and will need time. Please keep this in mind as you read through and go forward with the strategy.

I originally believed that a social media coordinator could work and have posts scheduled for the month within a two-day time frame. After going through everything and talking to everyone I still think a majority of this can be done in this time frame. But a couple of extra hours half way through the month to make sure everything is running smoothly and to make any changes or updates to posts should be in place also.

A monthly email sent out by the coordinator to let everyone know what is working, what isn't, and to gather further information is worthwhile. With that said it will also depend on your social media coordinator and how they want to run things since everyone has different ways they do this.

Recommendation 1 –A Social Media Coordinator be contracted for 3 days per month (24 hours)

Recommendation 2 – The UCE Communications Committee or a designated Social Media Committee follow-up on the suggestions in this Report with an Action Plan for the Social Media Coordinator and the UCE staff such as defining target audience and goals

Recommendation 3 - The Church Administrator should check UCE social media posts daily and respond to any messages or comments on posts or assign the response to other staff or Board Member.

Recommendation 4 – UCE staff, the Interim Minister and Board President and Treasurer should provide content for social media on a regular basis with this Report as guidance on options and approaches

Roles and responsibilities for UCE Social Media Coordinator (Coordinator)

The UCE should have one main person designated Social Media Coordinator that works on your social media. They can take the information provided to them by UCE Staff and others designated to provide social media messaging for the month and turn it into posts using videos, high quality graphics, and words that will help get the messages across. This is a one-person role that is supported by the members of the board.

When it comes to posting the Coordinator will in consultation with the Board designate an app or site to use for scheduling posts. A lot of the apps and websites will also provide metrics which will be used for weekly/monthly reports to see what posts get more views and engagements. A couple well known sites are Hootsuite and Buffer, both these have a monthly cost. There is a site called Later.com which is free to use for one social media set (Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter.) and is good for 30 posts per month. Or you can pay \$12.50/month to be listed as a small business and have 60 posts. This will just depend on your social media requirements.

UCE Social Media Strategy

When it comes to creating a social media strategy it is important to remember what steps need to be taken to get a successful overall result. Above all this will work around goals that you and your Coordinator set. I suggest monthly goals to make sure that you are keeping on target.

Goals

From my interviews it sounds like the goals for social media are pretty similar.

1. Have more engagement from members.
2. Have a consistent plan on what is to be posted every week/month.
3. Attract new members

These are the top 3 goals that everyone seems to have for the outcome. To break it down even more when building a strategy, we have a couple of questions we need to answer to help UCE reach its overall goals.

1. Who is the audience and which channels are best?

Since our goals include getting more engagement from previous members and to attract new members, an answer to this question is critical. When it comes to the different social media channels that work best for places of worship it generally depends on the demographics of UCE current members and who the UCE wants to attract.

Facebook and Instagram are going to be the top two channels you are going to want to focus on . Facebook reaches out to every generation where Instagram is more targeted to people in their 20's to 30's. With that said these channels do not need to be posted on every day. It's actually said that it is best to post 3 times a week on both channels. They can be the same days or different days that will be up to you. Time wise for posting is more based off of when your audience is accessing social media. They use to have certain days and times to post, but since algorithms have changed people see what is more relevant to what they like then when things are posted. Most posts have a lifespan of 24 to 72 hours before no one sees it unless they look on the page. So regardless of when you post it; it will be seen eventually. My own rule of thumb for posting is between the hours of 9am to 1pm Monday to Friday. It's what has worked for me and my previous demographics in the past.

Twitter is also a good channel to have but the targeted demographic is predominately men and people over the age 50. Which for the current members is fine but unlikely to encourage new members.

2. What can be posted to help UCE achieve the goals?

Like any strategy with posts, you want to make sure you have consistent posts throughout the month and that they support and encourage your overall mission statement. We want to showcase to the

community the current members and how the community can become a member of the UCE. Ways this can be achieved are:

- Making posts about good things happening in the community.
- Good quality graphics and quotes to draw people in
- Announcements, upcoming events, and showing what's all going on in the current congregation. (These posts are mostly for Facebook only and should be made sparingly, because if you have too many internal things it sends off an unwelcoming vibe to people who are new to 'our' community.)
- Doing short videos once a week or once every two weeks. In these videos you want to make sure they have an uplifting message and encourage people to check out more of what we support. Videos in the marketing world have made a big impact because people are more likely to stop and watch a video than stop and read about something. If you check out Westwood's page they have lots of videos that are being posted almost daily and seem fun so they draw people in.

In addition

- To add to videos, I believe having a video of the pastor saying good morning that gets posted every now and then is a good way to get interactions. Also, I believe that having a video of their monthly input that they put in the newsletter with the poem and uplifting words for the month would be a good one to share with everyone.
- Posts about the monthly Charity/ organization with follow up! Talking with everyone I noticed that the number one complaint is that no one is following up with what has happened. My suggestion is that you have 3 posts a month about the Charity/organization.
 - Post 1- What the charity/ organization is, what they do, what we are doing with it, and a goal we have set that will help them out*
 - Post 2- Update on what we've achieved so far
 - Post 3- What the final tally is for what we've done, and a huge thank you to everyone who helped out.

With this I think it is important that you ask the charity/organization to mention that the UCE is helping out, and let it be known that if it is collecting donations that they can drop it off at the UCE. By doing this it helps us get our name out there, and could possibly draw more people in.

Another thing we should consider posting once a month is information about the building. Why would we do this you may ask? By showing that people can rent a room in the church it helps get the church name out there, and inspire curiosity of what a service might be like to people who are stopping in for other things.

Overall, with all these you want to keep people informed about what's happening in the community, in the building and things that are in the current news. One thing you NEVER post about is politics, this is something pretty much everyone understands but I just want to make sure that I say it anyways. So many people have different views on the politics that it just causes fights in comments and that leads to an unwelcoming and disorganization to anyone new reading the page.

From doing some research about church social media I have found that these things work best for each channel.

Facebook

- * Announcements with photos and videos (As I said before something to be done sparingly)
- * Engaging graphics (Quotes, Scriptures, Questions)

Instagram

- * Photos of members during events

(I know this one might be harder since getting a single person to play photographer is hard, BUT if we were to have a single email address that anyone could send photos to of members at events it would help out. We live in a time where everyone regardless of age is taking photos. Having a designated place for people to send photos will help out in the end. We just have to be careful about getting permission from people before posting the photos on social media.)

- * Stories
- * Hashtags (Something that is extremely important with every post. Number one mistake made with hashtags is that people don't tag what city they are in.)

Twitter

- * Quotes and thoughts
- * Trending News (By talking about what's trending, you piggyback on algorithms and get more views while everyone is reading who is saying what about what's going on)
- * Community Retweets

Support for the Community and Small Business

I know above I have talked a lot about the community and I just want to clear up some things about it. I don't just mean the church community itself I mean more local things that are happening in the area. With Covid a big thing has been people using small business to help them stay open. Knowing the area around where the church is there is plenty of small business that we could support by mentioning them in a post and by doing this we are also getting our name out there; also, we get the small business name out there too. When talking to Rev. Lee Ann, she mentioned that in her state they have a local news page online where churches would post about services and social justice things that the church was doing and after a few months they got some new members. I personally could not find any pages like this in Edmonton but it could be something that we look more into.

Building the Church Community

With all of this said, the church community is important to and I love how we are doing the game nights, coffee hour after services or on certain days, or just giving times where people can talk online. I know before Covid was a thing there were also Pub nights where you could go get a drink and chat with people. All of these things are things I think we should keep doing. I know right now it seems hard because engagement is low but maybe part of the issue is how we advertise it. I personally can't say a lot on this topic as I only know a little bit from talking to everyone but it is something that should be looked at.

The TV Monitor at the Church Entrance

Another thing that was brought up a couple times while talking to people was the TV at the front. People had different views on its purpose. But overall, it is kind of seen as a place just to play the same information that is posted online. Which isn't a bad thing, it just needs to be done slightly differently. Different graphics used, maybe more photos of the actual members, this is a great place to place more church community things such as welcoming new members, recent things that have happened in the church, or things about the monthly charity/organization.

Website

Couple other things that were brought up, was the website being more user friendly and welcoming to new people. From my understanding Karen Bilida and her Communication Committee team are working on this so I have no real input.

Newsletters and Emails

Newsletters and Emails were also a thing that came up in every conversation. The conclusion of most was trying to find a way to make things more modern and get a higher opening rate. The thing with this is it's not actually a social media related issue, it is considered more of an online marketing thing so I don't really have much to say in this report about it. With that said because it has been brought up a few times and I've been asked for my advice for it. Here are some tips I learned about and may help.

- * Make sure the graphics are good quality and linked if they are retaining a certain topic
- * Make things short and to the point, many people skim through newsletters and don't read every word. If it's too long people lose interest.
- * Make sure the email being sent is from a name that is known.
- * Use the same style of text through the email, if you use different styles its distracting to the eye
- * Make sure the text stands out from the photos. You can use photos but they do need to be able to stand out by themselves.
- * Use red text and pictures sparingly. Having too much red in an email flags the spam blocker.

Based on the 2 different ways the UCE sends them out now, it looks a lot better to have it in the email instead of sending a PDF file. It also is a lot more to the point and less steps people have to take to read the actual newsletter.