

**Social Media Strategy**  
**The United Church of Canada’s Justice, Partnership, Global, and Advocacy Work**  
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**Organization and Brand Overview**

The United Church of Canada (referred to as “the United Church,” below) is a progressive protestant Christian denomination of close to 3,000 communities of faith across the country with a strong history of advocating for social justice and seeking to live into its commitments. The church prides itself as being a “big tent”—a highly welcoming community that captures a wide range of Christian beliefs and aims to strengthen common ground (where found).

The United Church’s brand can best be summed up in two statements:

1. “We are not alone,  
we live in God’s world.” (from [A New Creed](#) [1968])
2. “Diverse, yet one.”

**Visual Representations of the United Church’s Brand**

**Image 1. The United Church’s Crest**



Latin text translation: “That all may be one”

Mohawk text translation: “All my relations”

Colour scheme derived from the Indigenous Medicine Wheel (see below)

## Image 2. United Action for Justice logo



## Other Common Visual Representations of the United Church

- Rainbows
- Stained glass
- Indigenous Medicine Wheel and its colours (black, red, yellow, white)

## Business Objectives and the Role of Social Media in Supporting These Objectives

The United Church's General Council Office is not a "business" per se, but is the national body of a not-for-profit, faith-based organization. The General Council Office is responsible for top-level governance and the "business" of the national church's operations, and is also responsible for national and international programming. This include the work of justice, global, partnership, and federal advocacy.

This work of the United Church's General Council Office connects with the following church stakeholders:

- Regional bodies of the church (organized into geographic boundaries called "Conferences")
- Congregations and other communities of faith across Canada
- Individuals who connect with the United Church across Canada (usually called "members" or "adherents")
- Individuals who financially support the United Church's national and global programming with donations to its [Mission & Service Fund](#)
- Community and social justice ministries—ministries that support people seeking basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, advocacy services, and spiritual guidance
- United Church partners
- United church justice and advocacy networks

## Objectives of the United Church's Justice, Partnership, Global, and Advocacy Work

The church's justice, partnership, global, and advocacy work aims to fulfill the church's commitments to justice. These commitments are made with the adoption of church policy and expressed through the church's partners and programming.

The United Church continues to commit to act for peace, justice, care for creation, and God's mission of healing the whole world in cooperation with others who share our vision. For example, the United Church works with over 100 partners around the world. The church works to support partners on the

ground in the midst of oppression, poverty, and conflict for deep changes that will create just economic and social systems and a world transformed by love.

### **The Role of Social Media—Public Witness**

Social media falls under the category of what faith-based organizations often call “public witness.” Public witness is grounded in the concepts that Christian faith is a living faith, and a witness to the ministry of Jesus Christ is expressed in active, thoughtful involvement in society.

Social media is one part of the church’s public witness. It occupies the following roles:

**1. Faith formation**—Inspiring lives of faith grounded in the life, mission, and sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

**2. Raise awareness and generate inspiration**—Deepening understanding of justice by sharing prayers, news, and stories related to the United Church and its partners, particularly as they relate to the justice priorities of the church. Additionally, sharing stories of the work that United Church people and communities are currently doing to seek justice with the goal of inspiring others to do the same.

**3. Encourage action for justice**—Asking United Church stakeholders to live out the church’s commitments to justice. This can take on several forms:

- Contacting elected officials about particular justice issues in order to affect change in federal government policy
- Engaging in their own public witness (e.g., sharing the church’s justice information on personal social media accounts, talking to others about these issues, making particular lifestyle choices)
- Consider sponsoring a refugee
- Asking people to support the United Church and its partners by donating to the Mission & Service fund
- Many other, personal ways connected with an individual’s beliefs and life circumstances

Social media can help accomplish the above by:

- Enabling the United Church to engage in conversations directly with members and adherents with regards to its justice and partnership work
- Helping build the audience for the United Church’s newsletter *United Action for Justice*
- Educating United Church people, communities, and others about the church’s justice and advocacy work
- Converting social media followers to view content on [united-church.ca](http://united-church.ca)

### **Recommended Social Media Networks**

The information below is based, in part, on the article [Social Media Matters for Baby Boomers](#) from Forbes.com.

**1. Facebook**—Demographic analysis of the United Church shows that United Church members and adherents tend to be over the age of 50, and there are more women than men (about 55 per cent women, 44 per cent men, and 1 per cent trans/non-binary/other). Facebook continues to be the social media network of choice for this age range, particularly of baby boomers.

**2. Twitter**—Boomers are slowly converting to Twitter, and may even come more readily now that a user’s Twitter feed can be switched to chronological.

**3. Instagram**—The number of boomers on Instagram is small; however, they are more likely to use the app several times per day instead of just once. The United Church currently has a general Instagram account that does share photos related to justice, but United Action for Justice does not have its own.

**4. LinkedIn**—LinkedIn is baby boomers’ second-most-preferred social media platform (after Facebook). However, LinkedIn doesn’t really apply to the United Church’s justice work, but the United Church’s Ministry & Personnel Unit already does use it.

**5. YouTube**—YouTube is the preferred video-sharing platform for those aged 45 and above. The United Church has a YouTube channel that does share justice videos.

**A note on Pinterest**—Since 55 per cent of United Church people are women, on the surface it makes sense for the United Church to consider having a presence on female-dominated Pinterest. This might make sense for the national church, who might share pictures of merchandise from the bookstore, worship ideas, church décor ideas, or other similar content. However, the optics of using Pinterest to engage people in justice work would not be great. It could come off a bit shallow and out-of-touch, likely.

## Target Audience

### Demographics

The quantitative demographics below are based on information about members and adherents found in [The United Church Yearbook & Directory, vols. 1 and 2 \(2017\)](#).

The target audience for United Action for Justice social media is a person 50 and over (the average age of a United Church member or adherent is 59.4). They mostly live in Ontario (36% of all adherents), British Columbia (29%), or Saskatchewan (12%). They are more likely to identify as female (55%) and have an annual household income level of \$50,000–\$99,000 (45% of adherents). They tend to have a college diploma or university degree (64%). They are likely to be White (66%) and be married or live with their common-law spouse (52% of members/adherents). They are more likely than average to identify as an LGBT individual (18%; average is 10%).

### Psychographics

A member of this target audience almost always identifies as a person of the Christian faith—usually a “progressive Christian” or a similar descriptor. Some identify as “spiritual but not religious” (sometimes seen abbreviated as SBNR). Politically, they are likely to be left of centre. They have a high level of education (university degree or higher) and their interests include global and current affairs, climate change/the environment, politics, literature, arts and culture. They are highly likely to be politically active and engaged in volunteerism. Many regularly contact their elected officials about policy issues that matter to them. They are highly likely to attend regular worship services, usually at a United Church community of faith. They are sometimes a United Church ordered minister or lay leader. Often, they

have traveled or are planning to travel overseas for “exposure visits” to United Church partners and communities affected by systemic injustices.

They value their faith/beliefs, justice, and equality, and strive to make the world a better place. They are highly likely to make environmentally friendly or “green” lifestyle choices (e.g., vegetarianism, use of public transit, waste reduction, etc.). They likely live in an urban or suburban area (usually a city of 50,000 or more).

See Appendix 1 for an audience persona.

## Competitive Analysis

The United Church of Canada occupies a somewhat distinct place in the “marketplace” of Canadian churches, as it is the only Christian denomination that is uniquely Canadian. Many Christian denominations are worldwide communions, and it’s difficult to compare the United Church to other denominations that function on a worldwide scale.

For this competitive analysis, I have selected three organizations that, although they are part of worldwide Christian denominations, have a distinctly Canadian arm concerned with roughly the same work that United Action for Justice does. This work may have several names or descriptors, including: justice work, global work, advocacy work, development work, relief work, humanitarian aid, missionary work, and others.

### 1. [Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund Canada](#)

**Denomination:** Anglican Church of Canada

**Description:** “Anglican Church of Canada’s agency for sustainable development and relief.”

**Social media networks and their links:**

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[YouTube](#)

**Analysis:**

PWRDF uses social media primarily to encourage donations to their fund, not necessarily to encourage people to engage with deeper issues of justice or engage in action and advocacy around these issues. So it seems that the end goal of their social media accounts is slightly different than United Action for Justice.

On Facebook, their most widely engaged with posts are ones that include graphics made for social media. The graphics are simple, yet compelling. One example:

**Image 3. Screenshot from PWRDF Facebook**



PWRDF's Facebook admins are great at responding to comments quickly.

Their Twitter feed doesn't receive as high levels of engagement as their Facebook account. They are doing more retweeting than sharing of original content on Twitter.

Their YouTube videos have a good amount of views, but not too many likes or comments. I do, however, like the short, animated videos they are sharing with complicated concepts (see, for example, "[What is Food Security?](#)") explained with visually interesting animations and simple content. I am inspired by the possibilities of video resources like these to explain justice concepts.

## **2. Development and Peace – Caritas Canada**

**Denomination:** Roman Catholic

**Description:** "Development and Peace is the official international development organization of the Catholic Church in Canada."

**Social media networks and their links:**

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Flickr](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

[YouTube](#)

### **Analysis:**

It's hard to compare a Catholic organization to the United Church, since their capacity is quite a bit higher. About 43 per cent of the total population of Canada identify as Catholic, so their "market share" is huge. It's unsurprising that Development and Peace (D&P) has the capacity to be on several social media networks.

On Facebook, D&P make good use of custom social media graphics using consistent design and colour choices. Unfortunately, they do not engage very much with their Facebook audience in terms of replying

to comments or questions. Their Twitter feed is a bit more successful in that regard. I would consider Flickr a “passé” social network at this point, and I am wondering why they still promote it as one of their social media accounts. Their LinkedIn page is quite static—they basically only use it as an extension of their job board, only posting opportunities for employment.

D&P’s YouTube channel is, in my opinion, aspirational. Their videos are well done, attractive, and have a decent number of views (but not very many comments, unfortunately).

### **3. Canadian Baptist Ministries**

**Denomination:** Baptist

**Description:** A global mission organization that supports humanitarian projects in Canada and worldwide on behalf of Canadian Baptist churches.

**Social media networks and their links:**

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Vimeo](#)

[Instagram](#)

Canadian Baptist Ministries (CBM) does a great job on Facebook, especially with regards to writing content. They know that they are writing content for people of faith, and do a good job connecting aspects of faith to almost everything they post. Their posts are simple but uplifting. This is something United Action for Justice could do better.

CBM’s Twitter feed is less engaging. They clearly post the same content on their Twitter page that’s on their Facebook page, and the content that works well on Facebook does not always work well on Twitter.

Vimeo seems to serve the same purpose as YouTube does for the other organizations above. Downloading the videos is much easier on Vimeo—this may be because CBM would like to enable local Baptist churches may want to share these videos more easily during worship services or at other times. The videos do not seem to get much engagement, however. Perhaps this is because CBM is using Vimeo for one purpose: simply a convenient place for local Baptist worship planners to download the videos they want quickly.

CBM’s Instagram does fairly well. They focus on photos of their ministries and individuals supported by these ministries. This helps put a human face on their stories and it seems that their followers find this engaging. It would be hard for the United Church to replicate this, as we focus on supporting local partners working on the ground in global regions as opposed to sending outside “missionaries” from Canada overseas, so we simply do not have this kind of content. This is a key difference in how the two denominations live out their mission in the world.

## **Social Media Metrics on Existing Platforms**

[United Action for Justice Facebook](#)

**Overview from Oct 10 to Nov 6, 2018**

- 230 page views
- 46 page previews
- 17 page likes
- 12,851 people reached
- 2,427 post engagements
- 68 video views
- 16 page followers

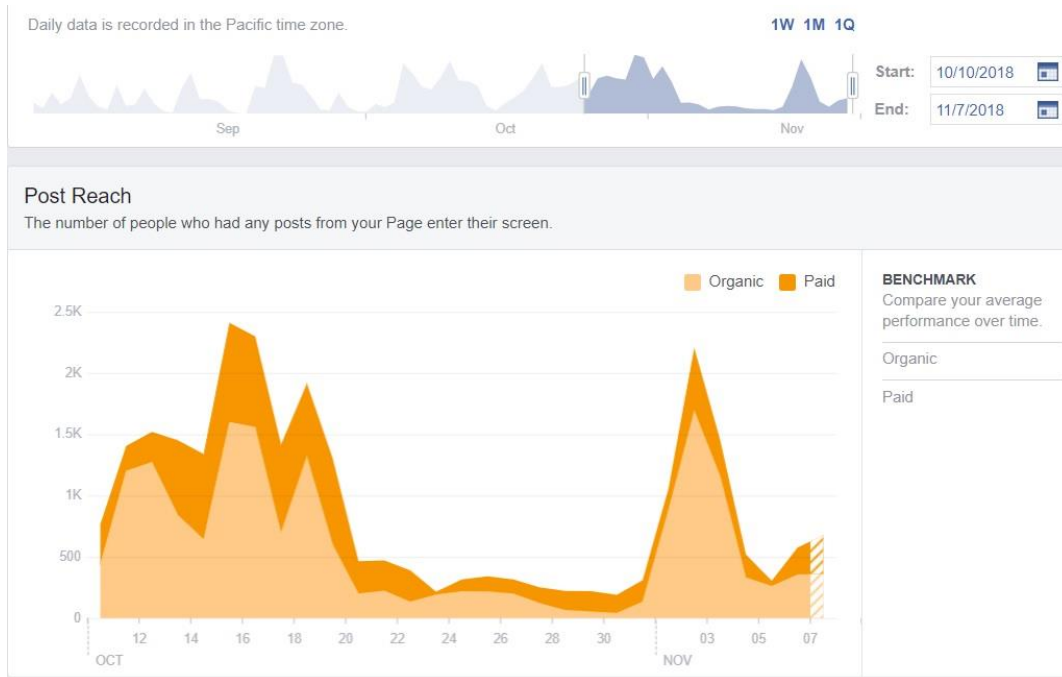
### Goals

- Increase post reach
- Increase post engagement (particularly Comments and Shares)
- Drive traffic links shared, particularly those that lead to united-church.ca
- Engage with page followers and increase their interest in and capacity for helping do the justice work of the church

### Metrics

#### Post Reach

**Image 4. Post Reach from UAJ Facebook Insights**



From this graph, it seems that the organic reach of this page is actually decent. Paid reach, however, helps bump it over the top. For key posts, it's important to continue paying to "boost" these.



## When Your Fans Are Online

Image 5. When Your Fans Are Online from UAJ Facebook Insights



Interestingly, UAJ fans are online pretty consistently throughout the week. Posting any time between 9 am and 9 pm will have it been seen by fans.

## Content Analysis

### Example #1

Image 6. UAJ Facebook Post Details

**United Action for Justice**  
 Published by Aimee At Ucc [?] · November 2 at 11:14 AM · 🌐

The United Church of Canada has supported a small delegation to attend Widening the Welcome--the United Church of Christ USA's conference on disability and accessibility, Nov 1-3, Niagara Falls, NY. Please pray for our delegates during their time at this conference--may it be an engaging and enriching experience! All members of the delegation are committed to doing follow-up work upon their return. #UCCan #InterculturalChurch



**Performance for Your Post**

**2,765** People Reached

**165** Reactions, Comments & Shares ⓘ

**137** Like  
 91 On Post | 46 On Shares

**7** Love  
 7 On Post | 0 On Shares

**5** Comments  
 1 On Post | 4 On Shares

**16** Shares  
 16 On Post | 0 On Shares

**275** Post Clicks

**68** Photo Views | **0** Link Clicks | **207** Other Clicks ⓘ

**NEGATIVE FEEDBACK**

**0** Hide Post | **0** Hide All Posts  
**0** Report as Spam | **0** Unlike Page

Insights activity is reported in the Pacific time zone. Ads activity is reported in the time zone of your ad account.

This is an example of a post that performed well on UAJ Facebook in the time period selected. This post was boosted, but the budget was quite small (\$10). Photo posts, in general, tend to perform the best on United Action for Justice. The content is engaging and tells a personal story, which is likely why it did so well. It also has a simple “ask” (for prayers) that anyone can do at any time.

## Example #2

Image 7. UAJ Facebook Post Details

**View Results**

OVERVIEW EDIT AD

DESKTOP NEWS FEED MOBILE NEWS FEED INSTAGRAM FEED

Are you satisfied with this ad?

No Yes

You targeted **people who like your Page and their friends, ages 18 - 65+** who live in **1 location**.

Show full summary

This ad ran for **7 days**.

Your total budget for this ad was **15.00 CAD**

1,342 33 \$15.00  
People Reached [?] Link Clicks [?] Total Spend [?]

Actions | Placements | People | Countries

Link Clicks	33
Comment	1
Shares	11

UNITED-ACTION-FOR-JUSTICE

Sponsored ·

We are "fearfully and wonderfully made" and God creates our very being (Psalm 139). The United Church is committed to affirming people of all abilities.

TAKE ACTION: Submit your feedback on the proposed #AccessibleCanada Act by October 25. Have your say! #UCCan #CdnPoli  
<https://www.united-church.ca/.../have-your-say-accessibility-...>

#CanadaAccessible

UNITED-CHURCH.CA

**Have Your Say on Accessibility in Canada**

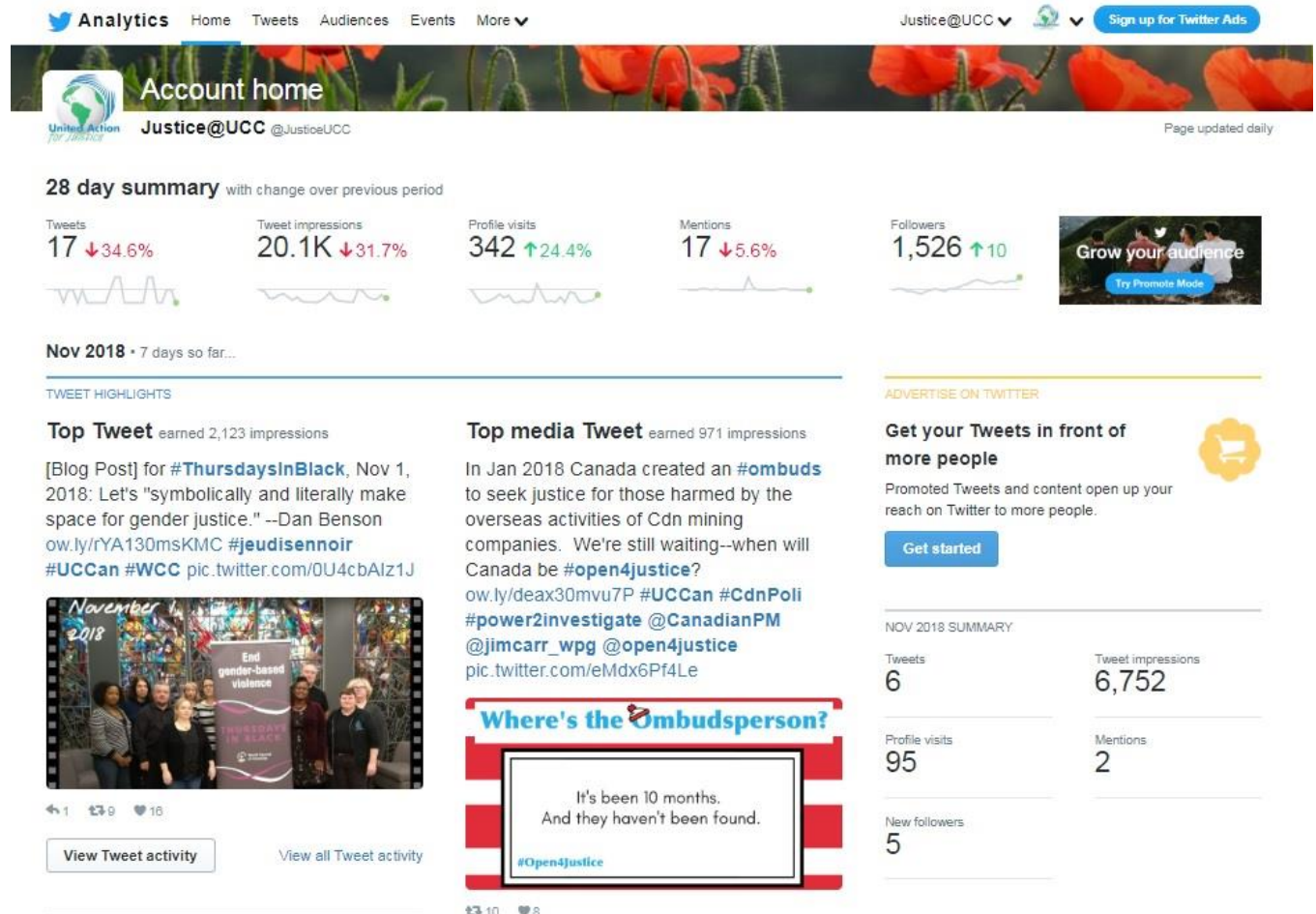
What do you think will make the Accessible Canada Act stronger?

By clicking Add Budget, you agree to Facebook's Terms & Conditions | Help Center

Boost Another Post Close

This post directed readers to a call to action webpage on the United Church website, so the goal was to get readers to go to this URL. It was boosted for \$15, and the cost per reach was \$0.01. However, only 33 people visited to the link, for a cost per click of \$0.45—this seems high. Perhaps the “ask” is just not that exciting—asking people to send the federal government a message about accessibility in Canada. Additionally, the photo is not that engaging (engaging photos on the topic of disabilities/accessibility are difficult to find). Either way, the cost per click shows that this post was not very effective and changes should be made in future.

Image 8. Overview from Oct 19 to Nov 8, 2018



**Goals**

- Increase post reach
- Increase post engagement (particularly Likes and Retweets)
- Drive traffic links shared, particularly those from united-church.ca
- Promote the work of ministries and partners with retweets, tagging, and other forms of promotion

Since most of the United Action for Justice audience is on Facebook, Twitter has a secondary role in terms of where United Action for Justice social media staff spend their time and energy. Seventeen tweets in 28 days, however, is an average of only 1.65 tweets per day—this is below what is required for this account to appear relevant and active. The admins should focus on tweeting and retweeting more often.

## Content Analysis: November 2018 (see Image 8, above)

#ThursdaysInBlack tweets always do well—these tweets are a part of a larger social media movement that many other people of faith participate in, so it’s no surprise that this is the top tweet of November so far. The “Top media Tweet” of November has done well because it makes good use of hashtags and tags, and also has an interesting graphic (it’s actually slightly humorous, even though the topic—Canadian mining companies behaving badly overseas—is not).

One bad habit is using the same text for tweets on @JusticeUCC as is used on UAJ Facebook. Admins should focus on creating different text that’s better suited to Twitter. The tweets perform better when the text used on Twitter is customized for Twitter.

## Image 9. Content Analysis: October 2018

Oct 2018 • 31 days

### TWEET HIGHLIGHTS

#### Top Tweet earned 6,282 impressions

The handprints of 150 children whose school is slated for destruction.

@CanadianPM & @cafreeland: Ask #Israel to call off the demolition of #KhanAlAhmar, #Palestine.

ow.ly/bgDr30m6xMQ #UCCan [Photo credit: Albin Hillert/World Council of Churches] pic.twitter.com/TQ9x4TxdIV



↳ 26    ❤️ 19

View Tweet activity

View all Tweet activity

#### Top mention earned 14 engagements



**SimonWiesenthalCntr**

@simonwiesenthal · Oct 8

@JusticeUCC And has @JusticeUCC developed any program to protect #Jews targeted by #Palestinian #terrorists or ever protested? #SWC

↳ 2    ↳ 2    ❤️ 8

View Tweet

#### Top media Tweet earned 2,645 impressions

Take Action: We need a plan to end poverty in Canada!

On Oct 17, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, ask Prime Minister Trudeau for a stronger, fully funded anti-poverty strategy for Canada.

ow.ly/G3QA30m3XUc #UCCan #ChewOnThis #EndPoverty @DignityForAllCA pic.twitter.com/v7oIAsH35P



↳ 8    ❤️ 11

The “Top Tweet” of October 2018 earned many more impressions than the average Justice@UCC tweet. The photo was supplied by a partner and the image, when accompanied by the story, is a powerful one that can provoke an emotional response from people. It makes good use of hashtags and tagging of elected officials. Images and stories that speak to the heart and spirit (rather than just the head) do well on social media. (Israeli authorities have since called off the demolition of this West Bank village, which is also good news.)

The “Top mention” of October 2018 is unfortunate, and probably refers to the church’s support of funding UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Justice@UCC did not engage with this purposefully. We are instructed to engage with those who constructively criticize our just peace in Palestine and Israel advocacy work, but the adversarial tone and the use of “#terrorists” means that we do not engage. The United Church sometimes gets “trolled” for its policies on Palestine, and there are not many ways to control these trolls.

## Content Categories for Each Social Network

### United Action for Justice Facebook

- **Prayers**—Calls for prayer around a particular issue or topic, usually containing an excerpt from a prayer currently found at [www.united-church.ca/prayers](http://www.united-church.ca/prayers)
- **Learning opportunities**—Opportunities for learning related to the justice, global, or partnership work of the Church, usually found at [www.united-church.ca/events](http://www.united-church.ca/events)
- **Minute for Mission (always shared on Sundays)**-- Weekly readings shared in United Church congregations on during Sunday worship that describe how gifts to the Mission & Service Fund are used to support United Church partners and ministries in Canada and around the world [www.ucrdstore.ca/m4m](http://www.ucrdstore.ca/m4m)
- **Take Action**—Time-sensitive opportunities to engage in action and advocacy around a particular justice issue found at [www.united-church.ca/social-action/act-now](http://www.united-church.ca/social-action/act-now)
- **Blogs**—Posts usually from the United Church blog <https://www.united-church.ca/blogs>
- **#ThursdaysInBlack (always on Thursdays)**—Weekly action to wear black as part of a campaign to end sex- and gender-based violence; more information at <https://www.united-church.ca/social-action/act-now/end-gender-based-violence>
- **Peace in Palestine and Israel**—Content related to the United Church’s ongoing advocacy focus around peace with justice in Palestine and Israel
- **Special Worship Days**—Information and resources related to special worship observances for the Church
- **Miscellaneous**—Anything that does not fit into the above-listed content buckets

### Justice@UCC Twitter

The same content categories as Facebook (above), but I would also add retweets (especially from the Twitter accounts of United Church partners and ministries) as an additional category. This is a good way to promote the work of United Church partners further.

## Three Influencers United Action for Justice Should Connect with and Why

[Sabrina Nemis](#) is the most followed person who also follows [Justice@UCC Twitter](#). She is a freelance journalist whose work has been published in Canadian Geographic, Maclean's, and the Ottawa Citizen. Her social media has the potential to reach a high number of Twitter users, she writes well, and she has the potential to connect the United Church's justice work with the mainstream media.

**Rev. Aaron Billard** runs the popular Twitter account [@Unvirtuous Abbey](#), supposedly the account of a (fictional) group of monks who tweet humorously about first-world problems. Aaron is also a United Church minister from Moncton, NB. His Twitter account is humorous, but [his blog](#) often takes on more serious issues. We could invite him to write a blog about a justice issue (or related topic), which would receive exposure among his 40,000+ Twitter followers.

[Michael Ensley](#) is a retired university professor who is extremely active on Facebook. He is one of the admins of [The United Church of Canada Facebook Group](#) (administered and populated by individuals who self-identify as United Church people, not by the General Council Office). He posts very frequently and engages in lengthy discussions on Facebook several times per day. He has the ear of United Church people who are active on Facebook, from members and adherents to ministers and leaders. If he shares about the church and its justice work on Facebook, it will definitely attract attention from the church's Facebook communities.

## Strategies for Growth

1. When posting content, focus on communications that engage heart, emotions, and spirit, rather than just mind. Make it fun when possible and appropriate—people often come to social media for a break and/or to have fun.
2. Focus on photo and video content rather than too much text. Look for ways to experiment with “Facebook Live,” since Facebook's algorithms push Facebook Live posts into people's news feeds. Also try better connecting with the United Church's Instagram page, so that more justice photos can be engaged with there.
3. Spending more time and energy on Twitter will help grow the UAJ Twitter network. UAJ has established a strong presence on Facebook, but it needs to focus more work on Twitter. This includes customizing content for Twitter (rather than simply reusing Facebook text), tagging partners and people, and using hashtags. Make more of a focused effort to share the content of United Church partners, ministries, and related Twitter accounts.

## Appendix 1. Audience Persona

### Meet Dawn



[Credit: Pexels.com/Huy Phan]

**Location:** Toronto, urban

**Age:** 53

**Marital Status:** Married to Nancy, no children

**Career:** University professor

**Income:** \$75,000

**Religion:** Progressive Christian (attends worship regularly at Bloor Street United Church)

**Other convictions and lifestyle choices:** Vegetarianism, feminism, environmentally conscious (e.g., doesn't own a car), volunteers at an animal rescue

**Primary need/concern:** Dawn participated in a "Come and See" trip to the Holy Land with the United Church's [People in Partnership](#) program in June 2017. She wants to do what she can to end the occupation of Palestine and work for just peace in the region. In 2017, she saw the effects of the occupation on children firsthand. One of her deepest desires is to see the end of suffering of the Palestinian children living under occupation.

**Desires:** Peace, justice, to live our her faith

**Interaction with United Action for Justice:** Dawn is seeking out more information about peace in Palestine and Israel: news from the partners she visited in 2017, ideas for action, ways to support



partners in the region, and resources and learning opportunities to deepen her engagement around this issue.