

How One Congregation Made and Paid for a TV Commercial March 2008

Submitted to The Stillspeaking Ministry by Bob and Beth Hurst of The United Church of Huntsville (AL)
– <http://www.uchurch.org/>

Zig Roebuck, Discipleship Chairperson at The United Church of Huntsville (AL) had previously cultivated a relationship with WAFF, our local NBC affiliate. When “The Bouncer” ad first came out in late 2004 and we wanted to use it locally, WAFF, our local NBC affiliate, agreed to air it even though, at the corporate level, NBC had refused to air it. We continued to advertise on WAFF whenever we ran “The Bouncer” or the “Ejector” ads. In January 2008, at a workshop for potential advertisers, WAFF offered a \$24,000 package that promised free production for two 30-second commercials and the airing of 672 30-second commercials over a year’s time reaching 260,825 potential viewers - but we only had \$3,000. Zig continued to talk with the church’s account executive and negotiated a contract for production of one commercial (\$300) and 54 showings of the commercial reaching the same 260,825 potential viewers over a nine month period for \$2,700. (Six commercials to be shown between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. the first week of each month for nine months)

Linda Roebuck, 2008 chair of the UCH Discipleship Board wrote the commercial using statements jointly developed for print advertising several years ago, allowing the church to save money by not hiring a consultant. Contracting for a package deal is another way UCH saved money. Another money-saving move is that the church accepted some cheaper shows in the mix of shows on which the commercial will be aired (see note on script). We also accepted the 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. time slot which has fewer viewers but costs less. (Since the contract was signed, donors have come through to sponsor additional showings on the morning news, a high dollar spot.)

A plus is that UCH owns the commercial and can use it in any way, including on its website.

Note: The United Church of Huntsville commercial can easily be used as a template by any other UCC Church. Take a look at the script and write your own or use these statements. The population of Greater Huntsville, Alabama, is about 300,000. Costs may be significantly higher in larger metropolitan areas.

**At United Church,
No Matter Who You Are Or
Where You Are on Life’s Journey,
You Are Welcome Here**

- **Where Individual Conscience is respected**
- **Where knowledge of Science and Faith are not mutually exclusive**
- **Where you are encouraged to seek a non-literal understanding of Scripture**
- **Where you are encouraged to live your faith by helping others**

Several years ago,
The United Church of Huntsville (AL) placed a
short list of
jointly developed,
positively stated, declarative sentences in a
rectangular box on pamphlets and in
newspaper ads.

People responded! These statements resonate
with the kind of people who become UCC
members.

An updated version is on the left (one that has
benefited from “God is Still Speaking” and
“Not Mutually Exclusive”).

You can see that these statements are the
source of what we declare to be true
of our church in the TV ad.

Case Study Script
THE UNITED CHURCH OF HUNTSVILLE (AL)
Script for their
2008 TV Commercial

This is the information and invitation that went out to all UCH members

Setting: It is 9:45 am, Wednesday, 12 March 2008. We gather as many people from the congregation as possible in front of our beautiful stained glass window. We need to make the group as diverse as possible, with lots of children and youth. A letter requesting a morning absence from school for “church activities” will be available - WAFF does not record commercials on Saturday. Avoid clothing that is white, or striped, or overly seasonal (The commercial will air throughout the year).

Pastor Hurst: I’m Bob Hurst, Pastor of The United Church of Huntsville where “God is Still Speaking” and where:

Ron Spencer: Your personal faith is respected.

Stuart Clifton: Science and faith are not mutually exclusive.

Zig Roebuck: You are encouraged to seek your own understanding of the Bible.

Pippa Abston: You are encouraged to live your faith by helping others.

Linda Roebuck: No Matter Who You Are, Or Where You Are On Life’s Journey, You Are Welcome Here!

Mike Gallaher: You are welcome here!

Stacey Wilson: You are welcome here!

Cole Youngkin (age 5): You are welcome here!

Run trailer (Address, website, phone number for 5 seconds)

Themes:

1. Tell people what makes this church different from most others.
2. Emphasize the congregational nature of the church, rather than present as one of many “talking head” pastor TV ads.
3. Gain face recognition by having the speaking parts done by people who are known in the community, so that there are thoughts of: “I know her and I like her, I’ll try her church.”

Target: Families with a science/engineering background, people who resist doctrinal conformity, and people who are just looking for a church.

Schedule: The commercial will be shown six times during one week each month from March through December on WAFF, Channel 48 during airing of The Today Show II (9am-11am), Family Feud (11am-12pm), Noon News 12pm-1pm), Jeopardy (12:30pm-1pm), Days of Our Lives (1pm-2pm), and Martha Stewart (2pm-3pm).

Cost: The total cost, to include making the commercial, is \$3000.00, which is funded by the Discipleship Budget and proceeds from selling “Disciple Dogs.” We will be airing 54 commercials over nine months to 260,825 potential visitors. That’s \$50.00 per commercial and roughly 2/10000 of a cent per potential viewer