Sara’s comments on final draft:

Much better! I like it. I am suggesting some reorganization, below. There’s a section toward the bottom that talks about all the different actions she does to make a difference and quotes her friend to that effect; move this section up to the place I marked. Then go into the UU church activism and end with the Honduras trip.

I still say you could lead with the Honduras trip, if you had a nice scene/anecdote related to it.

Your expert source (the study) could be better. See my comments below asking for broader data and trends on the UU faith.

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**Assigned word count: 500-600 vs. ACW**: 748 Not bad; I think we can condense a little.

**Single word that sums up this story (use a noun):** Action

**Print Hed & Dek (give at least 3):**

Acting on beliefs -- Allie Gassmann finds meaning in putting her spiritual beliefs into action.

Sustaining an interdependent world -- Through her faith, Allie Gassmann works to live in a way that is best for the entire planet.

Journey to action -- For Allie Gassmann, a spiritual journey meant finding a faith that allowed her to make a difference.

**Web Hed & Dek (give 1)**: Getting active...spiritually -- Allie Gassmann uses her Unitarian Universalist faith to take action on important social issues.

**Story Links:** (at least 3 that could be embedded into story on website)

The Church’s web page with Honduras updates:

<http://www.uuchurch.net/honduras_news.htm>

The Church’s page with Reverend Molly’s bio:

<http://www.uuchurch.net/minister.htm>

A map of the area in Honduras where the church usually goes:

<https://maps.google.com/maps?hl=en&q=honduras&ie=UTF-8&ei=2hpJUaXcMYT1qAHuxIDoDg&ved=0CAgQ_AUoAg>

**Suggested Tweet**: It’s one thing to believe, but it’s another to act. Local Unitarian Universalist Allie Gassmann is the perfect example.

**Suggested Facebook post**: Allie Gassmann, a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbia, is all about making a difference. Whether it’s going to the farmer’s market or helping a rural Honduran village, she’s ready to act.

**Suggested Web Excerpt**: Allie Gassmann and the UU church don’t subscribe to a specific creed; they subscribe to social activism for a better world.

**Best version of lede**:

Allie Gassmann arrives at the Unitarian Universalist Church promptly at 9 a.m. on a bright, warm Sunday morning. She’s nearly two hours early to the actual service.

She works swiftly but quietly as she sets up a small table for the monthly fair trade coffee, tea and chocolate sales. The products are purchased directly from producers at a fair price which is higher price than normal.

She unpacks box after box as her daughter, Leila, plays the church piano in the next room. For a while, they’re the only two there.

**Body of the story**:

This level of dedication and service is typical for Gassmann--even though she doesn’t like to call attention to it. For her, spirituality is less about belief and more about taking action.

In her everyday life, she strives to live sustainably. Her mode of transportation is her bike. She buys organic food from the farmer’s market and local businesses. She and her husband, Walter, even installed solar panels on their roof.

“Without an environment that can sustain all of us, we will not be able to live the way we’re used to living,” says Gassmann.

One of her good friends, Kristine Smith, recognizes the rarity of knowing someone so dedicated, yet humble about practicing her beliefs.

“She’s the kind of person who does what she believes in. It’s not just talk to her. There are not a lot of people who do that,” says Smith.

Although not a very large denomination, Unitarian Universalists, known as UUs, are large proponents of reform and social activism. Throughout history, they’ve championed numerous liberal causes, such as freedom for slaves, civil rights, and better working conditions for women. Give a broader view of the group - how small and how much is it growing? Why is it growing now? Look at the USA Today article you linked below for the type of info I’m looking for.

A 2001 survey of UUs supports the idea that being active in the community is important to them. A majority of the sample (55 percent) agreed with the statement that “religious communities should stress social justice.”

This awareness and activism has become important to Gassmann. It took her years, however, to find this faith that has been such a strong influence on her life.

Much of Gassmann’s childhood was spent traveling overseas. She lived in Germany, Thailand, Korea and Greece before returning to the U.S. for college.

While abroad, she was exposed to and respectful of numerous faiths. She grew up Christian, but later went to a Quaker college in California where those beliefs started to resonate with her.

Over time, Gassmann didn’t feel as connected to the Quakers as she had initially. Some friends suggested she attend a service at a UU church nearby. How and when did she get to Columbia? What does she do for a living?

Gassmann has been a UU ever since. She loves the opportunities they provide for her to make a difference.

“The UU churches have really offered me lots of ways to get involved and do something beyond my own selfish needs,” says Gassmann, “In that way, it has definitely changed my life.”

Created in 1961, Unitarian Universalism doesn’t require its members to believe in a certain set of values or ideas.

Reverend Molly Housh Gordon, the minister at the UU Church in Columbia, says the denomination opted to a create a covenant, or agreement, rather than a specific, mandated belief set.

“It is basically a promise to walk together within our own different journeys religiously and spiritually,” says Gordon.

All UU churches have seven principles such as? Gordon calls their “guiding statement.” Members aren’t required to subscribe to all the principles, but are expected to commit to the spiritual journey.

“Our lack of creed doesn’t mean we don’t believe things. It does mean there’s not a test of belief to be among us,” says Gordon.

Gassmann also is involved in many activities within the church. She’s most engaged, however, in a project far away from Columbia.

In 2008, Gassmann, with the help of Smith, organized a trip to Las Mangas, a rural village in Honduras, to help build latrines.

Gassmann and the UU church have now gone on two trips to Las Mangas to build these latrines and volunteer in other ways. As Gassmann has gotten to know these people, she found out the village had a very unique problem.

The community is situated near a river, with the schools being on the opposite side. For three months every year, the river becomes too high to cross, making it impossible for the kids to attend classes.

To solve the problem, the people of Las Mangas want to install a canasta. A Spanish word meaning basket, a canasta is basically a hand-powered zipline that would allow four people to cross the river at a time.

Hearing this, Gassmann knew she wanted to help. She got a committee together and the church began raising funds. They recently reached the necessary $6,000 and are planning another trip to Honduras in 2014 to install the canasta.

“Doing something that can help those people who are less fortunate than we are is something that’s just very dear and close to my heart,” says Gassmann.

**Sidebar or Info Box if needed**: None

**Sources**: Make sure you include their Facebook pages, Twitter handles, websites etc. in addition to phone and email. Include when, where and how you interviewed the person. (By phone, email, in person; at the office, home, etc.)

Allie Gassmann

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UUA Official Website

<http://www.uua.org/beliefs/principles/>

UU Church of Columbia Website

<http://www.uuchurch.net/>

**Documents as Sources**: (links or copies of data, reports, records; must include statistical support for your story)

Survey from the Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1387908?seq=7>

An article on the connection between sustainability and sp

irituality

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1046/j.1523-1739.2002.01669.x/full>

**Media Support**: (news articles on your general topic)

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2012/10/01/unitarian-faith-growing-stronger-nationwide/1607243/>

<http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/2006-02-03/community/0602030264_1_unitarian-universalist-association-traditions-religious-congregations>

<http://wamu.org/news/11/08/05/religious_leaders_seek_to_boost_faith_in_sustainability.php>