

ICONS

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Icons:

Organizations in the “icons” group share much in common with the “symbols” organizations. However, there are a few significant differences. While organizations in both the symbols and icons categories convey a connection to religion and faith principles, icons organizations are explicitly tied to a specific religion and convey core principles of that religion. While the principles conveyed through the use of an icon can be shared by multiple religions, an icon itself is associated with a specific religion. Furthermore, icons can function as an emblem that can be a tool to identify a religion—such as a cross for Christianity, the Star of David for Judaism, or the crescent and star for Islam.

Organizations in the “icons” category have wide-ranging purposes, from promoting culture and heritage to humanitarian work. These organizations typically have a more clear-cut connection to religion than those in the “symbols” category, even if there is no clear profession of faith. These foundations and grantees frequently include statements that express openness and desire to accept those from outside their faith community, but may also have clear examples of religio-specific events that take place within the organization, such as worship or prayer. Not all organizations within this group have clear ties to religious participation, and many do humanitarian work with no apparent examples of specific religious actions, but this group does display a much wider range of religious expression than the “symbols” group.

Case Study: Faith in Action

[Faith in Action](#) is an advocacy nonprofit aimed at creating social change. While the name of the organization makes their connection to faith clear, there is little else to clue-in visitors of the website to their religious affiliation. Their mission statement, which states, “we believe in a society free of economic oppression, racism, and discrimination in which every person lives in a safe and healthy environment, is respected and included, and has agency over the decisions that shape their lives,” clearly communicates that the main purpose of this organization is not to spread religious ideals, but rather to harness faith into collective action that will change society beyond religious affiliation.

While mention of faith is limited on the website, the first image that is prominently displayed on the homepage is of a woman protesting with a cross necklace, with multiple other crosses

displayed in separate pictures. These images show a connection between faith and action; an individual who is unashamed of her faith and how it propels her to fight for social change. Despite little other mention of faith on the homepage, this image clearly aligns the organization with Christian inspiration while simultaneously displaying the ways this organization believes this inspiration should compel followers to fight for change.

Although the first encounter with the website creates a sense that the organization is guided by a sense of social justice and responsibility, secondary pages on the website convey further connection to faith to support the icons used on the homepage. As an inspiration for their campaigns, Faith in Action explains that, “All people are made in the image of God and are therefore worthy of dignity, respect, and love.” This statement further illustrates what the image on the homepage represents, posturing themselves as an organization inspired by their Christian beliefs to create social change. The approach Faith in Action has taken creates an opening to work with individuals and organizations across the spectrum of faith by making social change and advocacy the forefront of their efforts, while allowing space to express their own inspiration for their actions.

Faith in Action’s expression of faith depicts the “icons” category well, as their main mode of communicating their religious affiliation comes through the display of the cross in the most visible images on the website. With no words that directly tie them to Christianity, this icon communicates their faith-inspiration on its own, while allowing their messages of social justice to take center stage. Faith in Action takes a similar approach to most other organizations in this category, in that the emphasis of the webpage is related to the work that is done rather than the systems of belief that the organization adheres to.