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# First Unitarian Church of Omaha Communications Practices

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## **PURPOSE**

To provide a clearly defined means of communicating information on the business and events of the church to its members while respecting member's privacy. All communications should reflect Unitarian Universalist values; provide information about First Unitarian Church of Omaha's ministry, business and activities; and/or encourage action in keeping with our covenant, vision of ministry, bylaws and UU principles.

## **SCOPE**

The communications team and its practices navigate how to disseminate information within the established channels for internal and/or external publications. *Information that must be communicated which falls outside of these practices should be addressed to the ministry team leader and/or the right relations committee. This will be determined by the communications team.*

## **DEFINITIONS**

Publications are defined as any means of conveying information among people and groups in the congregation or about the church to the larger community.

1. Internal communications have a primary audience of members, friends, visitors and potential members. They include: The Flame, First Unitarian Weekly News (enews), web site, email, bulletin boards, posters and other communications within the church. (i.e. order of service, pulpit announcements...)
2. External communications are targeted to the larger community and shall be defined as: news releases, interviews with news media on behalf of the church, advertising, written communication on First Unitarian Church of Omaha letterhead, banners, posters or displays using First Unitarian Church of Omaha's name, other communication publicly representing First Unitarian Church of Omaha.
3. Internal/external communications such as the First Unitarian Church of Omaha's: web site, social media, and some other communications may be defined as both internal and external.

*Church communications and media may not be used for political endorsements of individual candidates. However, the church and its minister can advocate for public policy issues as long as it does not appear to endorse a certain candidate.*

4. Spokespersons. Authorized spokespersons are the minister, the president of the Board of Trustees, and other persons designated by the Board of Trustees for a one-year period of time. Only authorized spokespersons are allowed to speak for the church as a whole. Please see bylaws for speaking on behalf of the church on social issues.

## **PROCEDURES**

Policies for all publications are developed by the First Unitarian Church of Omaha's Communications Team, approved by the Ministry Team Leader and then posted on the church's website. The policies are available by request at the church office for those wishing to have a paper copy.

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The Communications Team oversees the development and maintenance of systems to support effective Internal & External Public Communications. Specific responsibilities include:

- Recommend one or more volunteers to assist with editing, web administration, or upgrading current systems.
- Review current publications and research possible changes.
- Approve and create church wide communication methods.
- Recommend emerging technologies and upgrades.
- Help with public relation and marketing projects as needed.

## **PRACTICES**

### Order of Service Inserts

Inserts should arrive in the office, formatted and ready to copy no later than 9am on Thursday. For detailed instructions about formatting, contact the office. Inserts will only be used if they are for: church fundraising (ex. Heart & Hand Auction), team fundraiser (ex: Women's Alliance Bake Sale), sign-ups for a church related event (UU & You), nominating committee related (UU of the Year Award) and information from the board (annual meeting announcement). We encourage teams and others to please use the bulletin boards as opposed to inserts. We have found that inserts are not as effective as they once were.

### Pulpit & Oral Announcements

These announcements must be coordinated with the worship leader on the Sunday of the announcement.

### The Flame (the official newsletter of the church)

1. Deadline: Articles or other submissions must be received by the church office by the published deadline.
  2. Method: Articles should be sent by email to [admin@firstuomaha.org](mailto:admin@firstuomaha.org) . Written articles may also be submitted to the church office or left in the Flame mailbox.
  3. Length: Maximum length for most articles is 200 words or 1200 characters. Longer articles may be cut by the editor.
  4. Submissions: The author's name must be included with all submissions. No anonymous submissions will be accepted. Articles submitted should follow these guidelines and be respectful of the author's ministry in the church.
  5. Changes: All articles are subject to editing for clarity, brevity or style by the editor. Questions regarding appropriateness or content should be resolved through consultation with the communications team, then the rights relations committee or ministry team leader.
  6. Priorities: The office administrator gives items priority in the following order:
    1. News of Sunday Services, Forums.
    2. News of other services.
    3. Column by the minister and/or Board president.
    4. Board meeting highlights, including a financial summary.
    5. Religious Education news.
    6. Social Justice news.
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7. Church calendar.
8. Upcoming approved church events.
9. Church Board and team information.
10. Upcoming events of affiliated or relational groups.
11. Denominational and district information relevant to members and friends.
12. Current issues of concern to organizations of which First Unitarian Church of Omaha is a member.

## eNews

The First Unitarian Church of Omaha's eNews is sent weekly as an email to all friends and members who have email addresses on file with the church. The content focuses on immediate events or concerns. Priorities are the same as for The Flame. People who specifically opt-in shall be included on this list, and every email will have an easy way for people to opt-out and will comply with the CAN SPAM act.

Special emails shall come only from the Minister, President of the Board of Trustees, or the Holland Lecture Series.

## Website

First Unitarian Church of Omaha maintains a web site that is informative and useful to its members, friends, potential members and the public.

Information on the First Unitarian Church of Omaha's web site should be timely, accurate, useful and appropriate.

The webmaster and office administrator review all content. The office administrator is responsible for maintaining the website. The webmaster and other communications team volunteers assist with this maintenance. Ministry team leaders can also contribute to the website within these allowed policies and respective to the project or team they are working on.

Priorities for content include the following:

1. News of Sunday Services, Forums
2. News of other upcoming events and activities
3. Information about church programs, e.g., Religious Education programs and Music
4. Social Justice opportunities and activities
5. Church calendar
6. Information about the church and directions for finding it
7. Information about the board of trustees, church ministry and teams
8. Sermons
9. History and archival records
10. Contact information and links

Guidelines include:

- No names of minors should be published.
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- No phone numbers, addresses or email addresses should be published without consent.
- Personal news of interest only to the congregation should not be placed on the web. Examples could include items such as "Caring Notes" and New Member profiles.
- The sermons will be posted to the site as soon as practical.
- A copy of the entire site is backed up weekly to the computer in the church office, and also copied dynamically to the [uutester@gmail.com](mailto:uutester@gmail.com) address.

## Bulletin Boards

Bulletin boards are the responsibility of the team whose information is displayed. These include: Archives, Social Justice, Religious Education, Membership, Board of Trustees, and Fundraising.

## Social Networking and Online Media

Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Twitter and other online media that use First Unitarian Church of Omaha's name must support the church and its mission. Use of any church created and maintained social networking sites should adhere to the following:

The office administrator or a designated member of the Communications Team are responsible for monitoring social/online media. Content, postings or other information on such sites not in keeping with the mission of the church, church bylaws or policies, the Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism, or church policy will be edited or removed.

Content should generally be factual and remain supportive of church programs as well as of individual members.

The following guidelines are intended to protect the privacy of those served by the congregation:

- No photos of any minors should be used without approval by the parent or guardian.
- No names of minors should be published.
- No phone numbers, addresses or email addresses should be published without consent.
- Personal matters concerning individuals and families should only be entered by (or with the approval of) that individual.

## Other

1. Using the name of the church in unofficial communications which imply official connection with the church is explicitly forbidden.
  2. Protection of the membership list and church directory:
    - The church directory is an official document of the church and contains the names and contact information of all members. Non-members are included at the discretion of the ministry team leader, membership, office and communications teams.
    - Only those persons listed in the directory will receive a copy of the directory.
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- The information contained in the directory is for use by members and friends, and is not to be used for private gain or commercial purposes. A disclaimer to this effect shall appear on the directory. Generally, the directory should not be used for private groups that are not part of the ministry of First Unitarian Church of Omaha.

### **Communications Privacy Practices for The First Unitarian Church of Omaha**

These practices govern the use of personal information of members, friends and visitors by First Unitarian Church of Omaha in regular operations, on our website at <http://www.firstuomaha.org> and for purposes of publicity both online and in print.

#### **General**

##### Use of Images

We believe that using images of church activities and events is valuable to create accurate, attractive and relevant on-line representation of the The First Unitarian Church of Omaha.

Photographs and videos of church activities may be posted on our website, used in social media, and printed in our newsletter or other promotional materials.

Adults not wishing to be photographed should notify The First Unitarian Church of Omaha's office administrator in writing.

Personal identification information such as names will not be associated with any photograph unless identification is warranted and permission of the individual of the person photographed has been obtained.

Email addresses are not to be posted without specific permission.

In the case of minors (children under 19 years) no photographs or videos will be posted or printed without the written permission of the parent(s), including both custodial parents in the event of a divorce or separation. Consent forms will be collected annually through the Religious Education program (See Image Release Consent Form); parent/guardian consent will be on file for all minors shown in pictures. No names or other identifying information will be posted in association with photos of minors.

However, the following information can be posted without prior written permission of the person depicted:

- Photographs and full names of staff members for biographies
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- Photographs and full names of staff members leading or attending a First Unitarian Church of Omaha event; and
- Photographs and full names of Board of Trustees members of the church currently serving.

## Website Practices

### Contact Information:

Personal information about members of The First Unitarian Church of Omaha shall not be disclosed on public portions of this site except as determined necessary by the Board of Trustees or the staff of The First Unitarian Church of Omaha, and then only by permission. Specifically:

- No names are used, other than staff, without permission

The following information can be posted without prior written permission of the person depicted or described:

- Names, office phone numbers, and extensions of staff persons;
- Narrative descriptions of events which contain the names of staff person;
- Staff-provided biographical information for publicity purposes
- First and/or last names of adult members when those members are designated as a contact person for a The First Unitarian Church of Omaha event or activity
- Descriptive announcements of The First Unitarian Church of Omaha-sponsored events that contain the names of persons in a leadership role, for example, a visiting speaker, musician, author, or local dignitary.

### Website Use by Children:

Children under age 13 should obtain their parents'/guardians' permission to access the The First Unitarian Church of Omaha website and to send any personal information (such as name, address, email address, etc.) via our website or anywhere else on the internet. The First Unitarian Church of Omaha encourages parents to get involved with their children's online usage and to be aware of the internet activities in which they are participating. See COPPA (Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, <http://www.coppa.org/coppa.htm>).

### Tracking Website Use:

We use google analytics, which automatically gathers information from your browser and may set a cookie to determine trends. A full explanation of how google analytics uses cookies can be found here: <http://code.google.com/apis/analytics/docs/concepts/gaConceptsCookies.html>

It does not harvest email addresses or other personal information . This information is not shared with any other organizations. We do not employ spyware or adware of any kind.

### Links to Third Party Sites

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This website contains links to other websites that are not owned or controlled by The First Unitarian Church of Omaha. The First Unitarian Church of Omaha is not responsible for the privacy practices or content of other websites. The inclusion of hyperlinks to other websites does not imply an endorsement of the material on these websites or any association with their operators.

### Information Accuracy

First Unitarian Church of Omaha will make every effort to ensure that the information presented on our website is accurate. If inaccuracies occur, we will correct them in a timely manner. To report any web site inaccuracies, contact the office administrator: [admin@firstuuomaha.org](mailto:admin@firstuuomaha.org)

### Ownership

This Website is owned and operated by The First Unitarian Church of Omaha. This Privacy Policy is a living document and may be changed or updated from time to time. If we make material changes to these practices, we will notify you by email or by means of a notice on our home page. If you have questions about these privacy practices, you can contact us at:

First Unitarian Church of Omaha | 3114 Harney Street | Omaha NE 68131  
Phone 402-345-3039 | Fax 402-346-2662 | [admin@firstuuomaha.org](mailto:admin@firstuuomaha.org)

*As suggested by the First Unitarian Church of Omaha's Communications Team:  
Shawna Foster, Barb Herring & Diane Withem*

*These practices suggestions come after researching the UUA website and finding example model policies from All Souls in Kansas City, First Unitarian Society in Minneapolis, and The Unitarian Church in Summit. They were developed in the team and then received feedback from staff and lay leadership of the church. They are subject to change and the communication team welcomes feedback from members & visitors.*