


● **Communication Policy (2021.05.26)**

	<b>Policy of First Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbus, Ohio</b>	
	Location: Ministry and Teams/ Communication	Effective Date: 3/27/2019
	Original Source: Chuck Wolfe, Board Liaison, Brian Hagemann, Dir. of Administration and the 2012-2013 Communication Task Force	Date of Origin: 2/27/13, Approved by Board of Trustees
	Last Reviewed by: Coordinating Team	Date of Review: 5/26/2021
	Last Approved by: Coordinating Team	Date of Approval: 5/26/2021

**A. Part I: Purpose and Background**

**1. Rationale**

The responsibility for the policies and procedures of all church communications rests with the Board of Trustees and its designees. The media this policy includes, but is not limited to; newsletters, fliers, event promotions, website, social media and Sunday inserts. This policy also includes all press releases and media interview requests.

**2. Policy**

The content of all First Unitarian Universalist (First UU) communications should be consistent with the Mission, Vision and objectives of First UU. All communication types using the name or likeness of the First UU may be used only with the consent of the Board of Trustees or its designees.

This policy seeks to provide guidelines for ensuring appropriate, accurate, timely, and thorough communication within our church community, as well as to the community at large.

**3. Accountability and Responsibilities**

The Board of Trustees is accountable to the congregation; the ministerial staff and administrative staffs are accountable to the Board of Trustees. The Director of Administration under the supervision of the Senior Minister manages all official church communication.

The primary spokesperson for the church will be either the Senior Minister, the Board Chair, or the designee of either. All statements made in the name of the church or on the church's behalf, endorsements of or positions on public issues, sponsorships of organizations, sponsorships of events, or participation in coalitions of any type are to occur only with the approval of both the Board of Trustees and the Coordinating Team.

**B. Part II: Traditional or Print Communications**

### **1. Personal Permission Policy for Privacy of Adult Members**

The First UU Church is authorized to publish member names, contact information, and pictures of members and friends of the church and their families in congregation media, taking into account that some members may not want their information available to the community-at-large.

Members will have the option of having their names and contact information omitted from the church directory.

For communication purposes, it is convenient for staff and recognized lay leadership to allow their names used freely in communications. Sometimes there will be pictures containing adults participating in church activities. It is the intent that names will not be associated with any picture, unless the subjects have granted verbal or written permission to the Director of Administration.

Submission of an announcement or event by a church member, including name and member information will constitute permission for publication of that information. Full names of individuals will be used in publications and other media unless a member specifically asks for their name to be withheld.

### **2. Personal Permission for Privacy of Children and Youth**

The policy for persons under the age of 18 is that no identifiable information (names, pictures, contact information) will be published on any pages of the website unless written permission by a parent or guardian is granted. This permission is for only one event or one purpose. Children's names will be published in the congregational directory, unless their parent or legal guardian requests to have it withheld.

### **3. Removal of personal information from Church Media**

Anyone who wants some, or all, personal information removed from a website, social media or other publications should immediately contact the church office by email or by phone. Church staff will remove the information as soon as possible.

### **4. Publicity Policy**

This policy is intended to support the various ways of publicizing information or events to the congregation and to the outside community. The Publicity Policy applies to all church-sponsored events. First UU does not accept any liability for publicity for events sponsored by renters or non-church sponsored events.

### **5. Internal Publicity**

Internal publicity targets only the members and attendees of First UU. If a wider audience is desired, internal publicity methods can be used in conjunction with external publicity methods.

For all methods, inclusion, sizes, design, are subject to the approval of the Director of Administration. Methods for for internal publicity include but may not be limited to:

- Newsletter articles
- Order of service announcements
- Weekly church email, team emails
- Bulletin boards / display boards
- Information tables
- Website and social media

#### **6. External Publicity by Affiliated Groups**

Approval from the Director of Administration is requested before publicizing events or information to the greater community. This includes, but is not limited to, use of the following:

- Newspaper ads paid or free
- Paid and free radio community spots
- Handouts and flyers
- non-First UU social media

#### **7. Official Statements: Press and Media**

In situations where church officials must make a statement to the press, the public, or to authorities, the Senior Minister and/or Board President are empowered to speak for First UU. If contacted by any outside entity regarding a statement, others shall refer them to the Senior Minister or Board President. If these persons are not available, no comment shall be made; it shall be stated that the Senior Minister or Board President will make contact as soon as possible.

#### **8. Press Releases for Affiliate Groups**

Press releases may be created and sent to media outlets to announce major activities, programs and news of the congregation. Recognized congregational groups may choose to create and send press releases to media outlets. It will be the responsibility of the Director of Administration to approve the content and format of press releases to be distributed to media. Press releases abide by all other policies set forth in this document, and it is expected that these groups will follow these policies.

#### **9. Copyright Considerations**

Any intellectual property used for any communications or publications must obtain a release for the original intellectual property from the creator. A statement to that effect must accompany the material. Such material includes sermons, music, articles or pictures, whether they contain the copyright label or not. It is understood that a minister's sermons, printed or appearing on the website, remain the property of the minister and the congregation has no legal claim to them. Blanket permission can be granted for use of one type of material. If the author grants permission

for copying of information, that statement will appear with the material and the permission supersedes the blanket copyright statement. It is suggested that teams seek out royalty-free and/or copyright free materials when possible

### **10. Photography (recordings)**

For purposes of these policies, “photography” includes both digital and film, still and video, and sound recordings. All comments regarding “photo,” “negative,” etc. is to be construed to include related publishing e.g. website, Instagram/YouTube/social media.

Many church members and friends have made significant contributions to the congregation by taking photographs documenting special events and people. The following policies are only intended to clarify the terms and conditions for photographic reproduction of events, members, or facilities under the auspices of the congregation.

Photographers who are members/friends of the congregation are welcome to take pictures at events with the limitation that the photos taken will not be used for commercial purposes. If the pictures are to be used for commercial purposes, advance written permission using a standard model release form must be obtained from those in the picture with a standard model release form, and from either the Senior Minister or Director of Administration. Pictures taken by outside photographers, such as newspaper, also require permission from the Senior Minister or Director of Administration in addition to those in the pictures.

Those photographers, who choose to retain the originals, may make prints available at cost upon request by congregation members. The photographer will retain the rights to these pictures and will be responsible for informing recipients of the need to obtain the photographer's permission before duplicating them; the photographer's name and telephone number will be on the prints. Unless there are specific reasons to withhold permission for duplication, as would be the case if the photograph were to be sold or used for a commercial purpose, permission would normally be granted.

If photographs taken by member/friend photographers are used in congregation publications, the photographers will be credited in the publication, if they choose to be, regardless of whether the photographs have been paid for by the congregation or donated for use by the congregation.

### **11. Restrictions**

The following restrictions apply to all First UU communications:

- I. Endorsements: It is unacceptable to use the name or logo of the Unitarian Universalist Association in any way that implies, without advance permission from the Director of Administration, that First UU Church endorses, supports, or is affiliated with any product, service, or organization. Links from a First UU website or social media not affiliated with the church must not express or imply endorsement of the latter site's

- products, services, or other content, with the exception of links to officially endorsed websites.
- II. Advertising: Only church and church-sponsored activities may be advertised in church communications. Church-sponsored events may be advertised if such acknowledgement does not advertise a product or for profit service.
  - III. Unlawful activities
  - IV. Commercial purposes not under the auspices of the church
  - V. Personal financial gain
  - VI. Personal use inconsistent with that authorized by this Policy
  - VII. Uses that violate other First UU policies.

## **12. Newsletter Policy**

The Director of Administration will appoint and supervise a volunteer or staff member in the production of the newsletter. The primary function of the newsletter is to inform the congregation of church programs and activities.

This newsletter editor has the responsibility to edit material that is too long or that contains incorrect grammar or spelling. The newsletter editor will consult with the Director of Administration or Senior Minister for significant editorial changes or if rejecting an article.

Any questions or problems concerning the newsletter should be addressed to the Director of Administration.

## **13. Brochures**

All brochures or fliers produced for the church must be presented to the Director of Administration for final approval before distribution. The intent is for minimal oversight to try to maintain a level of professionalism and consistency across publications.

## **14. Directory of Members and Friends**

Periodic publications of a directory of member and friend information are available to congregants at no cost. The directory includes name, contact information, and if applicable, children's names. Please see the previous section on privacy considerations for information regarding the publication of this information.

Photos taken for the purpose of inclusion in a photo directory of the congregation are taken with consent and release of each individual or family. Please see the section regarding photographs for more information.

The Directory will contain a notice as follows:

“This Directory is made available to Members and Friends of First Unitarian Universalist Church for their personal use. Reproduction, dissemination, or publication is not permitted. The information contained herein is not to be used for commercial or solicitation purposes.”

## **15. Proposals from church members**

To obtain approval of a church endorsement of or position on a public issue, sponsorship of a non-church organization, or participation in a coalition of any type, a church member in good standing will submit to the Senior Minister or Board Chair a written proposal and rationale consistent with UU Principles and the mission and vision of First UU Church. Such proposals must be signed by at least five other members in good standing.

## **C. Part III: Electronic and Social Media Policy**

### **1. Social Media Policy**

These are to be used as guidelines for the content on social media sites. Social media sites include, but are not limited to; Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and blogs. We understand the media landscape is constantly evolving and changing and this policy is intended to cover these types of media. The church owns all social media sites affiliated with First Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbus, Ohio. No individual may begin, or maintain, a social media site using the First UU name without approval of the Director of Administration. A staff member must have administrative access to any social media sites affiliated with the church.

The majority of First UU social media content will promote activities occurring for or of interest to our members and visitors. This will include, but is not limited to events in the central Ohio area sponsored by Unitarian Universalist churches, UUA affiliated organizations, and other partners. Due to the nature of social media sites in general, other types of content may include personal comments, photos, etc. from the page administrator, and people who have “liked” the page, and these customarily will relate to First UU, Unitarian Universalism, members of our congregation, etc.

Any logos, colors and typefaces should be consistent with First UU graphic guidelines and resemble the other media “branding” styles of First UU. Contact information should be prominently displayed, and links to the church’s website should be easily accessible.

Photos should be of a presentable quality, but this is not as critical as the requirements for photos on the website. If photos of children are posted, they must comply with the photo guidelines contained in the Photography Policy. Last names, or contact information, of minors should never be posted.

No videos of activities overseen by First UU should be posted on YouTube or similar sites without permission from the Director of Administration. Any video posted to a First UU affiliated account must obtain proper permission for any copyrighted music (including background music) or performance contained within it. Posted videos must also follow the Photography Policy.

The Director of Administration will designate Facebook, Twitter, or other social media administrators. New content should be added by the social media administrator on a regular

basis. A social media administrator will have responsibility for monitoring content, and will have full authority to create, delete and maintain the content, provided that the content:

- I. Is maintained within the bounds of these policies
- II. Is consistent with the Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism
- III. Avoids slander, libel, violations of copyright, profanity, off-color humor, and advocacy of political candidates
- IV. Does not reveal private personal information
- V. Does not advertise commercial businesses
- VI. Presents information that is accurate and relevant

## **2. Website**

The primary function of the church website is to communicate outward and promote the church and its philosophy and events to prospective and current members, news media, other religious organizations, and friends. This is distinctly different from the goals of other media. The website should be easy to navigate and follow web accessibility standards so it is available for the entire church community. The First Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbus, owns the website and content.

To ensure a unified image and high quality content, all website information will be directed through the Director of Administration or their designated person. Periodically, the Director of Administration and interested parties will review the site for accuracy, currency, continuity, and compliance with these policies and procedures. These policies and procedures apply to all website pages of the church, including any special websites that have been approved to operate using the First UU name or hosted within the website domain.

## **3. Privacy of Visitors to our Websites**

Personal information is collected from our visitors only on a voluntary basis, and may include name and contact information. This information is only used to process a request that has been placed by the visitor. Typically, this is in the form of a request for information.

## **4. Email Policy**

Email lists support the needs of the congregation in communicating on a timely basis about issues of importance. Email can be used for general announcements, urgent announcements, and as a tool by committees for communicating with each other and reviewing documents and other material. As a best practice, it should not be considered a substitute for face-to-face interaction or meetings, as it is not the proper forum for dealing with deeper issues or important discussions.

Email communications utilizing the members database may be used to announce major activities or news of the congregation. Congregation-wide emails are only to be sent by the

Senior Minister, or Director of Administration, or others as authorized. Congregation-wide emails will be reserved for communication regarding the most important First UU events or news. Many other opt-in email lists are maintained for purposes such as “church events updates,” specific team or committee communications, or special interest lists.

#### **D. Revision History**

##### 1. 2019.02.13

Coordinating Team members Amanda Hays (Ministerial Intern) and David Carr (congregation member) reviewed this policy, reformatted it to the standard policy format, and determined that several existing policies were already essentially included in this policy - these policies were eliminated. The eliminated policies were:

- I. Individual Privacy Rights Policy, previously found in II. Congregational Responsibilities, and approved:1/2/02.
- II. Mailing List Policy, previously found in II. Congregational Responsibilities, date of origin: 12.2.91

Amanda and David, with consultation from the rest of CT, also changed lists of multiple forms of contact information to just say “contact information.”, added two sentences from the old Mailing Lists Policy to this policy:

The Directory will contain a notice as follows:

“This Directory is made available to Members and Friends of First Unitarian Universalist Church for their personal use. Reproduction, dissemination, or publication is not permitted. The information contained herein is not to be used for commercial or solicitation purposes.”

##### 2. 03.27.19 Brian Hagemann Edits

Director of Administration, Brian Hagemann edited the document to refresh the language to reflect modern standards, edit titles for consistency and collapse a lot of the specifics, especially around social media to read as more generally applying to all such media. Part III: Electronic and Social Media Policy was heavily edited.

##### 3. 05.26.21

Tony Skrabak (congregational member of Coordinating Team) added wording approved at a previous congregational meeting. Part I, paragraph 3 designating Senior Minister, Board Chair, or their designee as the primary spokesperson. It also describes the types of statements, endorsements, sponsorships or participation in a coalition that must be approved by the Board and CT. This can be contrasted to wording in the Constitution that requires that when there is impact to financial resources, physical plant resources, or where there are any legal implications, they must be approved by a vote of the membership.



Also added Part II, paragraph 15 that describes how a member can propose an endorsement, sponsorship, or participation in a coalition.