UUFA COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Adopted: 2015.08.12

PREAMBLE

This document seeks to lay the foundation for effective communication between and among members, potential members (seekers), staff, the Board of Directors, the minister and the many committees and groups that fulfill the UUFA's mission, as well as the larger communities of which we are a part.

Within our congregation both the sender and the receiver of communications have a responsibility to make communication work. If our communications fail to have the desired effect, they are ineffective, whatever the cause.

People with something to say need to say it effectively, and members of the congregation need to pay attention and act with good intentions.

GENERAL POLICIES

FAITHFUL USE OF THE UUFA NAME AND LOGO

Any communication whose intended audience is primarily non-UUFA members must have prior approval by a member of paid staff designated by the Board of Directors for such purpose. This staff member will ensure the publication has been approved by the group requesting publication. This staff member will ensure that the communication does not violate any UUFA policy as documented in the Policies and Procedures Manual and that it adheres to content and design guidelines as described herein.

All communications should honor our covenant. If a member feels that communication received does not honor our covenant, the grievance should be taken to the Healthy Relations Team for further review and guidance.

Individuals may speak on their own behalf, but if they are speaking on behalf of the UUFA as a whole, this communication must first receive Board approval. Communications expectations of the minister shall be covered by his/her contract.

QUALITY & QUANTITY

In collaboration with UUFA staff, the Communications Committee shall establish and implement design and content guidelines for different types of publications.

EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW

The Committee shall annually review the effectiveness of each mechanism of communications (newsletter, weekly email, website, etc.) and make recommendations to improve them.

NOT JEOPARDIZE OUR RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION STATUS

No content shall be permitted in any UUFA communication that may jeopardize the UUFA's nonprofit status. As IRS rules can be complex and subtle, judgment as to what may jeopardize the UUFA's non-profit status shall be made by the minister or his/her designee, as part of the communications review process.

The UUA offers some advice as it pertains to political activities as the following webpage:

COORDINATION OF COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS

The Communications Committee, in coordination with UUFA staff, should make every effort to coordinate messages sent through all the communications channels used. The choices of channel should be made based on the audience, timing, purpose and content of the message.

NEWSLETTER

SCHEDULE

The UUFA shall publish a monthly newsletter. The schedule for publication, due dates, formats and any other details shall be determined by the editor in consultation with the Communications Committee.

DISTRIBUTION

The newsletter shall be produced in print and electronic format. In the interest of good stewardship of our resources, the electronic format is the default format sent to members. The print format newsletter will be delivered to any member who requests it. The editor shall determine the most appropriate method of delivery (in person, US Mail).

Printed copies of the newsletter will shall be placed in a location available to visitors (number of copies determined by editor based on demand).

RESPONSIBILITY

Editing, formatting and distribution of the newsletter shall be done by the administrative staff as assigned by the minister. The primary staff member designated shall be considered the editor for purposes of this document.

All articles are subject to editing for clarity, brevity or style by the editor. Authors may include their own contact information, but contact information of others will be omitted, unless express written consent is received. Although short headlines may be suggested by persons who submit articles, final decisions about headlines will be made by the editor.

The editor shall have authority, based on this policy, over what is published. Any disputes about editorial judgment may be taken to the minister.

The Communications Committee shall work with the editor to help generate appropriate and timely content for the newsletter.

CONTENT

Regular newsletter content shall include

- Message from the minister
- Message from the President of the Board of Directors (or designee)
- Board of Directors update from the last meeting
- Message from the Director of Religious Education (or equivalent position, or the Religious Education Committee)
- Sunday program information for the month covered by the current issue
- Fellowship calendar
- Reports/stories of recent and upcoming UUFA activities

Other content may include but is not limited to the following:

- Youth/RE news
- News of members, committees, affinity groups, or Friends of the UUFA
- Denominational/Partner Church information
- The use of appropriate photographs (with permission) is encouraged

The newsletter may not contain any advertising, political or commercial in nature, nor any material that might jeopardize the UUFA’s status as a non-profit religious organization.
DIRECTORY OF MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

The UUFA will maintain and make available an up-to-date UUFA Congregational Directory with a combination of names of household members, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, Fellowship information, and photos (see long issue note below).

The Directory will be maintained by office staff and will be available to members on the website and in hard copy form in the office, at the Welcome Table and in the Notebook of UUFA Policies and Procedures in the Berger Library.

The Directory will include:
- a face sheet with UUFA address, phone, email address, staff names and contact info
- a privacy statement on how the directory information is to be used
- the directory of Members and Friends with names of household members, address, phone numbers, email addresses
- photos of members

BOARD COMMUNICATIONS

The Board of Directors of the Fellowship is the policy body of the UUFA. The Bylaws state that the Board has the responsibility to keep the Congregation informed of its actions through the maintenance of an up-to-date Policies and Procedures Manual, which serves as an operations manual for the Fellowship.

In the interest of open communication and transparency, the following procedures are recommended for ensuring that the membership of the Fellowship is kept informed and abreast of the activities of the Board:

The agenda for the next board meeting shall be published within 24 hours of the ELT meeting that sets it. The agenda shall be published on a bulletin board, the website, and to the board news email list. Even if the agenda is preliminary it shall still be published.

The Board packet (agenda, minister’s report, budget reports, and other attachments) and minutes of Board meetings shall be posted on the web site, distributed to Board members and known meeting attendees, and available via printout in the UUFA office.

Minutes, decisions and actions made by the Board shall be disseminated within 7 calendar days by any of the following methods and others as appropriate:
- Posting on the web site
- Posting on the bulletin board designated for Board news
- Summary in the monthly newsletter
- Weekly email (via pdf attachment or hyperlink)
- Board news email list

Depending on the type of Board decision/action, Sunday Service Board presence in Fireside Room between services may be chosen for dissemination to the membership:

EMAIL

All email communications should honor our covenant.

EMAIL LISTS

The UUFA shall maintain a variety of email lists that allow members to subscribe to content that is of interest to them. Members who wish to be unsubscribed may do so at any time. The exact set of lists and their content will be determined by the Communications Committee in consultation with staff.
COMMITTEE, GROUP AND SPECIAL INTEREST LISTS

Lists shall be available for all committees and affinity groups. All groups shall use these lists for several reasons:
- Lists ensure that all members are included in all messages.
- Lists messages are archived

PROCESS FOR CREATING LISTS

Requests to create lists shall be made to the office staff. If the list is for an established group or committee, then no approval is required and staff will create the list promptly. Otherwise, the request will go to the Communications Committee who, at their next meeting, will discuss and decide if the group is appropriate.

New lists shall be announced in the weekly email and with a short notice in the next monthly newsletter.

PROCESS FOR ADDING/REMOVING MEMBERS

As a general rule, all group/committee/special interest lists shall be open for anyone to subscribe to or unsubscribe from using the automated subscription management system for the list software, or by making a request to the office. Some lists may have restricted membership for reasons of privacy or safety. The decision to restrict access to a list shall be made by the minister or minister’s designee. Membership requests may be moderated to avoid allowing spammers to join UUFA lists.

Group/committee/special interest lists will be subscribed to on an opt-in basis.

MASS EMAILS

Email messages to the entire congregation must be approved by the minister or president of the congregation except in cases of emergency. If neither the minister or president can be reached in a timely manner, permission may be granted by at least two concurring board members. This policy does not limit the use of existing email lists according to their specific purposes and policies.

EMAIL TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The UUFA Board of Directors is a volunteer group, the members of which give of their time to do the work of governing our community. In communicating with the board via email, members should send email to board@uufames.org so that all board members receive the message. The Board shall identify a method to make sure that at least one member board responds to any given email.

If a congregant would like time on the board’s monthly meeting agenda, please contact the UUFA office with your request.

UUFA WEBSITE

The main UUFA website (uufames.org) is the official website of the UUFA. The UUFA domain name (uufames.org) is the property of the UUFA.

RESPONSIBILITY

Administrative staff, as assigned by the minister, is responsible for administering the domain name, servers and other services and resources required to maintain the site.

The minister shall assign one member of staff to serve as the website editor. All content placed on the website shall be approved by the editor or designee.

All content is subject to editing for clarity, brevity or style by the editor. Placement on the site, titles of links or menu items, headings and any other editorial decisions shall be made by the editor. Any disputes about editorial judgment
may be taken to the Communications Committee for consideration and possible change in policy if deemed appropriate.

The Communications Committee shall work with the editor to help generate quality, interesting and timely content for the website.

At least one member of the Communications Committee shall have administrative permission on to website.

**CONTENT**

The design and content of the site should be welcoming, harmonious, accessible and engaging.

The **primary** audience for the UUFA website is prospective members who are investigating our fellowship as a possible spiritual home for themselves and/or their families. The **secondary** audience is our current members and friends. The home page shall be welcoming to visitors and strive to draw them into deeper investigation. It should succinctly convey our mission and values and present a picture of congregational life that is upbeat and friendly to all. Information that is of interest only or primarily to members and friends shall be placed in a secondary location so as not to detract from the site’s primary goal.

The communications committee, working with the editor, shall define the structure and design of the website.

The editor shall keep the site up to date by removing obsolete and expired content as soon as possible. This ensures that our site appears current and well maintained to visitors. Content need not be removed entirely, but expired content should not appear on menus. Expired content should be modified to indicate that it is historical.

The committee shall endeavor to identify technical and design support resources within and beyond the congregation who can assist the committee and editor in designing and maintaining the website.

**CONGREGATIONAL AND COTTAGE MEETINGS**

These meetings provide opportunities to gather, hear each other and be heard. They may be formal, where the business of the congregation as a whole is conducted. They may be informal, where congregants discuss a range of issues and enter into dialog with each other and with leaders of the congregation.

**FORMAL MEETINGS**

The Congregation exercises its authority at the annual meeting, as stated in the Bylaws, Article IV, Section 3. At other formal meetings only items listed on the announced agenda will be considered. There is no restriction on topics that may be included in the agenda. According to the Bylaws, Article IV, Section 6, the Board of Directors calls congregational meetings at its initiative. In addition, ten percent of the voting members of the Fellowship, by written petition to the Board, request a formal meeting.

**INFORMAL MEETINGS, COTTAGE MEETINGS, AND OTHER GATHERINGS**

The congregation benefits from opportunities to spend time together, to share ideas, to get to know each other better, and to have fun together. It is recommended that at least one informal gathering take place per calendar quarter that encourages all parts of our congregation to participate; for example, a discussion of a topic of wide interest, action on a social justice issue, or dance.

**COMMITTEE CLUSTER MEETINGS**

To encourage communication and cooperation, Committee Chairs will meet on a regular basis to discuss their activities and to provide opportunities for networking and partnering.
COMMITTEE MEETINGS

To facilitate transparency and good governance, all committees shall make an effort to:
- Schedule regular meetings and notify the Congregational Administrator of the time and location for inclusion on the Fellowship Calendar,
- Communicate among themselves and with other committees openly and transparently,
- Communicate their plans and actions with the UUFA office,
- Record their decisions in minutes and submit them to the UUFA office,
- Maintain open communication with their Board Liaison.

SOCIAL MEDIA

All online social media accounts used by UUFA committees and groups should be set up by the staff so that the UUFA owns the main access (username/password) and can control access as required. The committee shall approve the establishment of any social media account and at the time of inception shall write policy describing the purpose of the account, who will maintain it, how content will be generated, and how quality will be maintained.

Policy for social media accounts that existed prior to the adoption of this policy shall be created within 12 months of the adoption of this policy.

SURVEYS

Groups and committees may use whatever means they choose to conduct surveys. Those wishing to conduct a survey will likely find the office staff helpful in recommending and helping set up various technical options that might be available.

ALL CONGREGATION SURVEYS

All congregation surveys are those targeted at the entire congregation (either members or members and friends). All congregation survey shall be approved by the board of directors.

It is important that any effort to survey the entire congregation be conducted in a coordinated manner with all groups and committees interested in surveying the membership. Getting a high response rate depends on (among other things) not overwhelming members with frequent surveys.

Any data gathered by an all congregation survey must adhere to privacy rules, in order to ensure honest responses.

SIGNAGE/POSTERS/BANNERS/FLAGS/PLAQUES

Exterior or interior signs, banners, flags, marquees, or plaques are generally the responsibility of the Building Committee or the Grounds and Landscape Committee, but in considering the use of any such devices the Communications Committee shall be consulted to ensure that the device conforms to these policies and is consistent with any design schemes or plans that are currently in place.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY AND OTHER RECORDED MEDIA

Photos and video are popular ways of sharing the life of the UUFA congregation with others. Doing so, however, often raises issues of copyright permission and personal privacy. Below are some tips to help plan events that can be successfully photographed or recorded on video. None of these tips shall be accepted as legal advice, however.

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1 This section is adapted from: http://www.uua.org/communications/policies/290687.shtml
MAKE A GOOD FAITH EFFORT TO NOTIFY EVENT ATTENDEES IN ADVANCE

If children are going to be photographed or videotaped, written permission must be obtained from a parent or legal guardian of each child. When the photographs or videotapes are published, consider leaving out the names of the children.

If adults are going to be photographed or videotaped, advertise this fact on all promotion materials for the event. You may also want to make a brief announcement before the event or ceremony begins.

BLANKET PERMISSIONS ARE BEST

When asking permission, ask for blanket permission to publish and distribute photographs and video. Don’t ask for permission to publish the photographs or video in only one place (i.e. just in the congregational newsletter, just on the congregational website, etc.).

There are two reasons to ask for broad permission:

- Communication technologies are constantly evolving. Even if right now, our congregation only has a website, in a few months, we might have a blog too, and want to share photographs there.
- Once a photograph is published, especially online, you cannot completely control where it will be shared. People can very easily take a photograph that they see on a congregation’s website and post it to their Facebook profile, even if doing so violates copyright. You cannot ensure that a photograph posted on our congregation’s website will remain only there.

ACCOMMODATE PARTICIPANTS WHO DO NOT WISH TO APPEAR IN PHOTOS OR VIDEO

If it is feasible, you may also wish to demarcate a seating area that will not be visible on camera, for those who want to attend the event but do not want to be seen in the video.

WORSHIP

If you are recording a worship service or other presentation that may include copyrighted material, respect copyright laws. Read “Copyright Issues Related to Worship” for more information.

SOME EVENTS MAY BE CONSIDERED PRIVATE

For events at which people may normally have an expectation of privacy, or events with which people may run some risk by being publicly identified, take the extra step of obtaining written permission from each person in advance. Such events, depending on your community, may include support groups, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) dances, or other congregational events.

HONOR REMOVAL REQUESTS

If our congregation receives a request from someone featured in a photograph or video segment to have that photograph or video segment removed from a congregational website, Facebook Page, etc., do your best to honor that request.

HAVE FUN AND BE CREATIVE!

These media offer a wonderful way to share the story of our congregation with members, newcomers, and the general public.
INFORMATION PRIVACY

PERSONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

Personal contact information maintained by the Fellowship includes email addresses, postal mail addresses, and telephone numbers of members and friends.

Personal contact information may only be used in communication relevant to the activities or interests of the UUFA. Examples of allowable uses include: communications of UUFA calendar of events, notices of activities of the congregation or committees of the UUFA, and important events in the lives of members and friends. Examples of non-allowed uses include: the communication of personal solicitations or political endorsements.

USE OF PERSONAL CONTACT INFORMATION IN PUBLICATIONS

It is the responsibility of those submitting information for the newsletter, orders of service, weekly e-mail or other Fellowship publications to obtain permission for any personal contact information to be included.

The names and personal contact information of members, friends, and long-distance friends will be included in the annual member directory and handbook, in periodic photo directories, or in other directory listings unless the member or friend makes a request to the office administrator to withhold particular information from such publication.

INFORMATION ABOUT CHILDREN

Full names and/or contact information for children should not be posted on the website or included in documents posted on the website without the express written consent of a parent or guardian.

2 This section is a revision from Proposed communications and privacy policy, April 9, 2013.