

## Operations Policy

# Communications

The Senior Minister is responsible for ensuring that these policies are implemented, delegating responsibility to other staff members as appropriate. The Community Ministry Specialist is the primary delegate for all communications policy matters.

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## Representing or Speaking on Behalf of UUAA in Public

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The Senior Minister and the President of the UUAA Board of Trustees are the primary spokespeople for UUAA and have broad authority to speak as the “Senior Minister of UUAA” or the “President of the Board of Trustees of UUAA.” Any public communication on behalf of the entire congregation related to a specific issue (including formal position statements published in the media or logos/banners displayed during public events) — whether coming from the Senior Minister, Board President, or other member of the congregation or staff — must represent a vote of the congregation on that issue.

### A Note on Political Language

As observed by the Unitarian Universalist Association, “Religious individuals and groups have played a prophetic role in public life throughout history by calling attention to oppression, demanding change, and holding leaders and institutions accountable.” While UUAA has latitude in some areas of activity as a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, there are also some restrictions.

- UUAA **may not** endorse or oppose specific political candidates. Please note that this includes emails sent from an @uuaa.org email address or sent to an @uuaa.org group, as well as all other forms of communication (such as US mail and private email accounts) that are clearly identified as coming from a UUAA affiliated group.
- Within narrow limits on time, effort, and expense (see [www.uua.org/realrules](http://www.uua.org/realrules)), UUAA and its recognized groups **may** advocate for or against specific pieces of legislation or ballot initiatives.
- UUAA **may** announce the details of events that are nonpartisan in nature or that deal directly with relevant political or social advocacy issues.

These restrictions apply only to a congregation as a legal entity, or to a person or group speaking in the name of the congregation. A minister or congregation member may freely engage in these activities as an individual. However, if the person is identified by or likely to be

associated with the congregation, it may be helpful to clearly state that they are speaking as an individual.

For more details, see *The Real Rules* on the Unitarian Universalist Association website (<https://www.uua.org/justice-programs/realrules>).

## Speaking in Public as Recognized Congregational Groups

Recognized congregational groups may wish to sponsor activities or join in public statements on issues of importance to their group's work. In order to do so, they must ensure that the activity or communications are consistent with:

- UUAA core values
- State and federal laws for nonprofits (for example, no endorsements of political candidates)
- UUAA Bylaws and Governing Policies
- The opinion of the entire group that is associated with the statement

The communications or sponsorship must be clearly identified as coming from the specific group, such as the Social Justice Council of UUAA or the Chalice Singers Choir of UUAA. These statements may not be made on behalf of the entire congregation.

## Visually Representing UUAA in Public (Banners, T-Shirts, Etc)

Recognized congregational groups may wish to develop banners, t-shirts, or other visual representations related to the recognized group and specifically naming UUAA as the community or organization to which the recognized group belongs. This is permitted, and such visual representations must be officially approved by the leadership of a recognized congregational group.

Any recognized group may proactively seek the Executive Minister's guidance, in advance of creating or using a visual representation that names UUAA.

If there are concerns that the visual representation of a recognized group: 1) infringes in some way on the needs of another recognized group or the overall UUAA community; 2) might violate UUAA's core values, purpose, or mission/vision; or 3) in some other way creates harm within the UUAA community or to UUAA's reputation in the wider world, any individual or recognized group may bring such concerns to the attention of the Senior Minister or their designee. Depending on the needs of the situation, the Senior Minister or their designee may choose to solicit input from the Leadership Advisory Team (LAT), but retains final authority in adjudicating the matter.

If an already utilized visual representation, which specifically names UUAA, is deemed inappropriate for any reason, the Senior Minister or their designee may ask that the relevant recognized congregational group withdraw the use of that specific visual representation and/or re-design it.

## Press Releases

Press releases are an effective means of seeking publicity for UUAA and communicating the impact of our programs throughout the greater community. Appropriate subjects include:

- Guest speaker appearances
- Programs or activities that are open to the general public
- Social justice initiatives
- Positions that the congregation takes on issues of interest to the greater community
- Key staff changes

## Rules and Guidelines

Any lay leader or staff person can propose a press release and offer language for the release.

- Press releases should adhere to the restrictions on speaking on behalf of the congregation as noted above.
- Because a UUAA press release is a visible representation of who we are, the Senior Minister or their designee must approve all press releases.
- The Communications Ministry Specialist will maintain a list of media outlets and submit press releases to them.

## UUAA Communications

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Current UUAA publications include the Monthly Newsletter, Weekly News, Sunday email, Congregational Emails to members and friends, and the UUAA website ([www.uuaa.org](http://www.uuaa.org)). Social media include the First UU Ann Arbor Facebook page, the Our UUAA Community closed Facebook group, the Instagram account (@uu\_annarbor), the Twitter account (@uu\_annarbor) and the UUAA YouTube channel.

The content of all publications should be consistent with:

- UUAA core values
- State and federal laws for nonprofits (for example, no endorsements of political candidates)
- UUAA Bylaws and Governing Policies

All external publications using the UUAA name may be distributed only with the consent of the Senior Minister or their designee.

For guidelines on how to submit information for publication, see [How to Get Things Done at UUAA](#) or the [UUAA Content Guide](#) (available on the UUAA website).

## Monthly Newsletter

The purpose of the Monthly Newsletter, which is distributed electronically, is to inform members and friends of UUAA about programs and activities taking place in the coming month and to provide updates on ongoing programs. If needed, the Monthly Newsletter can be printed out and mailed to those who request it by contacting [communications@uuaa.org](mailto:communications@uuaa.org).

The Monthly Newsletter is compiled and edited by the Communications Ministry Specialist.

Space is allocated using the following priorities:

- Information about Sunday activities and worship services
- Articles and notices from the ministers and staff leaders
- Articles and notices from the Board of Trustees
- Information about Spiritual Growth & Development programs and classes
- Information about all-congregation functions (annual canvass, congregational meetings, etc.). In most cases, these types of articles will run in no more than two issues.
- Articles with events or activities submitted by lay leaders of recognized congregational groups
- Other articles submitted by lay leaders of recognized congregational groups
- MidAmerica Region and UUA news

Advertisements for businesses or professional services are not published.

The Communications Ministry Specialist and their designated editors have the right to edit material for length, spelling, and grammar; to make the voice and tone fit the entire publication; and to refuse material that is deemed inappropriate.

## Sunday Email

The purpose of the Sunday Email is to provide a link to the week's virtual service and to include information about the upcoming week's service and congregational activities. The Communications Ministry Specialist may briefly include other content in one of these areas at their discretion:

- Notices from the ministers and staff leaders
- Notices from the Board of Trustees
- Information about all-congregation functions (annual canvass, congregational meetings, etc.). In most cases, these types of articles will run no more than two weeks.

The Communications Ministry Specialist and their designated editors have the right to edit material for length, spelling, and grammar; to make the voice and tone fit the entire publication; and to refuse material that is deemed inappropriate.

## Weekly News

The purpose of the Weekly News, which is distributed electronically, is to inform members and friends of UUAA about programs and activities taking place in the coming weeks and to provide updates on ongoing programs. If needed, the Weekly News can be printed out and mailed to those who request it by contacting [communications@uuaa.org](mailto:communications@uuaa.org).

The Weekly News is compiled and edited by the Communications Ministry Specialist.

Space is allocated using the following priorities:

- Pastoral news
- Information about Sunday activities and worship services

- Notices about congregation-wide events and activities taking place in the next week
- Articles and notices from the Board of Trustees
- Information about Spiritual Growth & Development programs and classes
- Information about all-congregation functions (annual canvass, congregational meetings, etc.)
- Articles and notices about events or activities submitted by lay leaders of recognized congregational groups
- MidAmerica Region and UUA news

If space permits, notices of activities involving outside organizations of interest to congregants may be included. Advertisements for businesses or professional services are not published.

The Communications Ministry Specialist and their designated editors have the right to edit material for length, spelling, and grammar; to make the voice and tone fit the entire publication; and to refuse material that is deemed inappropriate.

## Inserts in the Sunday Order of Service

*On hold until in-person services resume.*

Inserts in the Sunday Order of Service promoting specific UUAA activities, events, fundraisers, etc., may be included upon approval of the Senior Minister or their designee. For any given Sunday, the number of inserts should be limited to no more than four items.

The content for an insert is the responsibility of the staff or lay leader of the recognized group making the request.

## Online Calendar

UUAA publishes a public calendar of events on our website. When a recognized congregational group has a confirmed room reservation (either physically or in a UUAA Zoom room) or an outside person/group signs a rental contract, the information is added to the calendar.

Off-site events sponsored in whole or in part by a recognized congregational group – whether held in person at another venue or offered online – may also be listed on the calendar. However, events sponsored entirely by non-UUAA groups are not eligible for the calendar.

## Congregational Emails

Email communications to the congregation's full email list may be used to announce major activities, programs, and news of the congregation. These emails must be approved by either the Senior Minister or their designee.

Congregational emails are reserved to communicate the most important UUAA events; to remain effective, they should not be used more than 20 times during a year. The content for an email is the responsibility of the staff or lay leader of the recognized group making the announcement and should be submitted to [communications@uuaa.org](mailto:communications@uuaa.org) at least 48 hours before the intended broadcast.

## Website

The purpose of UUAA digital media is to make information about the congregation's mission and ministries available to members, potential members, and the general public.

The website should represent the congregation and its core values and vision priorities as accurately and positively as possible. Content providers will use generally accepted guidelines for ease of navigation and recommended web development practices that improve access for users with disabilities.

The website is administered by UUAA's WebTech Team. WebTech Team volunteers serve on a rotating monthly schedule, and add or edit content as provided by staff and lay leaders.

WebTech Team members are authorized to refuse inappropriate material, including content inconsistent with UUAA's core values, Bylaws and Governing Policies, and state and federal laws governing nonprofits.

Information that needs to be kept up to date on the website includes:

- Upcoming Sunday activities and worship services
- Spiritual Growth & Development programs and classes
- All-congregation activities and functions (annual canvass, congregational meetings, etc.)
- Notices of congregational meetings and other official notices from the Board of Trustees
- Articles and notices about upcoming program activities and events
- Audio and/or text of previous sermons
- UUAA Bylaws and Governing/Operations Policies
- Budgets and financial reports

Staff and lay leaders of recognized congregational groups are responsible for submitting updated content for their pages on the website. They may submit content for inclusion on the website to [webtech@uuaa.org](mailto:webtech@uuaa.org).

### Website Fundraising

Specific recognized groups may solicit funds via the website only after receiving approval from the Senior Minister or their designee (see [UUAA's fundraising policy](#)).

### Website Copyright Considerations

Any intellectual property appearing on [uuaa.org](http://uuaa.org) or any original intellectual property written for a [uuaa.org](http://uuaa.org) web page must be released by the author. A statement to that effect must accompany the material. Such material includes sermons, music, articles, and pictures, whether or not they contain the copyright label. It is understood that UUAA ministers' sermons remain the property of the minister and the congregation retains no legal claim to them. Blanket permission can be granted for use of one type of material. If the author grants permission for including copyrighted material, a statement will appear on that web page and the permission supersedes the blanket copyright statement.

## YouTube Channel

The UUAA YouTube channel, titled “UUAA” (youtube.com/c/uuannarbor, in the Communications Google account) stores virtual services, music, stories, and additional videos. The channel is managed by UUAA staff and volunteers as designated by the Senior Minister and Worship Team.

## Social Media

The purpose of UUAA social media is to engage, inform, and minister to members, potential members, and the general public. The Communications Ministry Specialist is responsible for managing all UUAA social media.

All social media should represent the congregation and its core values as accurately and positively as possible. The Communications Ministry Specialist will use generally accepted guidelines for ease of navigation and recommended web development practices that improve access for users with disabilities.

### Facebook Page

The UUAA Facebook page, titled “First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor – UUAA” (<https://www.facebook.com/uuaa.org>) is the outward-facing Facebook profile for UUAA. It is managed by the Communications Ministry Specialist and their designees, including staff members and members of the WebTech team.

All administrators and moderators of the Facebook page are authorized to refuse inappropriate material, including content inconsistent with UUAA’s core values, Bylaws and Governing Policies, and state and federal laws governing nonprofits.

### Facebook Community Group

The UUAA Facebook group, titled “[Our UUAA Community](#)” is our closed Facebook group for members and friends of UUAA ages 14 and above. The group is moderated by staff members, including (but not limited to) the Communications Ministry Specialist, Coordinator of Congregational Life, Welcome Ministries Coordinator, and Executive Minister.

All members of the Facebook group are allowed to post within the group and are expected to adhere to the Community Guidelines posted in the group, as well as with UUAA’s core values, Bylaws and Governing Policies, and state and federal laws governing nonprofits.

All moderators of the Facebook group are authorized to remove inappropriate material.

### Additional Social Media

Social media platforms change quickly and UUAA may use new platforms before this policy can be updated. All UUAA social media use should follow this Communications Policy as closely as possible. The Senior Minister and Communications Ministry Specialist are responsible for ensuring this policy is noted and applied to such platforms.

All content published by any official UUAA social media must be in line with UUAA’s core values, Bylaws and Governing Policies, and state and federal laws governing nonprofits.

# Group Communications

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In order to facilitate communication, many groups use one or more of the following tools:

## Email Forwarder

A public email address that is forwarded to the leader(s) of the group and can be used in publications such as the bulletin or website (e.g. [UnityGroup@uuaa.org](mailto:UnityGroup@uuaa.org)). (Note that you cannot email “from” a forwarder.)

## Steering Committee Email

A [listserv] email address used by the leadership of the group (e.g. [UnityGroupSteering@uuaa.org](mailto:UnityGroupSteering@uuaa.org)). These are sometimes private email groups that do not accept email from email addresses outside of the group.

## Group News Email List

A [listserv] email address used to distribute communications to the larger membership of the group (e.g. [UnityGroupNews@uuaa.org](mailto:UnityGroupNews@uuaa.org) goes to anyone interested in getting email notifications of programming for the Unity Group).

## Realm

Our church management software that allows groups to easily communicate with each other via the Realm app and/or online. Group leaders can send messages out to the entire group on the newsfeed, private message individual members, set up events, and more. Realm can also be set up so that those who don't want to use Realm can still receive communications via email.

## Social Media Accounts and Groups

Groups are welcome and encouraged to create separate social media accounts or groups to share information and conversation with anyone interested in engaging in their accounts. As with all other communications, content must be in line with all UUA policies.

## Email Forwarders and Steering Committee Emails

The email forwarders and steering committee lists are intended to provide an easy and consistent way for the wider community to connect with groups. In order to maintain the efficacy of these tools, they may not be used for:

- Commercial solicitations
- Promoting political candidates
- Personal promotion
- Harassing group leaders
- Communicating about topics that are not related to the group

If group leaders determine that someone is using the email forwarders or steering committee emails in any of these ways, they will send one warning email to that person, including an explanation of how they are misusing the email in question. If the misuse continues, group leaders may choose to block the person from using the email, or they may refer the matter to the Healthy Congregations Response Team (please see the [Congregational Health and Safety Policy & Procedures](#) for more information).

## Intra-Group Communications

All UUAA intra-group communication channels - such as listservs, Realm groups, group social media pages, etc. - are provided to members in order to facilitate communication, connection, relationship, and activity planning. Access to such communication channels is a privilege, and provided on behalf of UUAA.

Intra-group communications, in the channels mentioned and others, are the responsibility of the leader or leaders of the recognized congregational group utilizing those chann. Group leaders are encouraged to become familiar with the Good Practices Guide for Group Communications (available on the UUAA website or by emailing [communications@uuaa.org](mailto:communications@uuaa.org)).

If any individual or group feels that a communication occurring via UUAA provided communication channels is disruptive, harmful, or not in line with UUAA's core values and/or mission/vision, they should first bring their concern to the attention of the recognized congregational group's leader(s) who directly oversee the channel that was utilized. If the matter is not successfully addressed at that level, they may then bring such concerns to the attention of the Senior Minister or their designee, for further consideration. In instances where communication patterns are repeatedly disruptive or harmful, the Senior Minister or their designee may refer the matter to the Healthy Congregation Response Team (please [see the Congregational Health and Safety Policy & Procedures](#) for more information). Resulting action, in response to repeated misuse of UUAA provided communication channels, may include removal of access to any or all of those channels.

## Privacy of Personal Information

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Respecting the privacy of UUAA congregants and visitors is of the utmost importance in all of our communications. The intent of this policy is to clarify the authorization to publish names, telephone numbers, email addresses, and/or pictures ("information") of the members and friends of UUAA and their families ("congregants") in any congregational communication media. UUAA recognizes that some congregants do not want their information available to the community-at-large or on the internet where congregational activities can be linked to their names.

All content editors will minimize the member information that is published via any congregational media. For communication purposes, it is convenient for staff and recognized lay leaders to allow their names and contact information to be used freely, with UUAA email addresses and Google voice numbers when possible. Photographs containing members participating in UUAA activities might occasionally identify adults in the photograph. It is our intent that names not be associated with any picture, unless verbal or written permission has been granted.

Submitting an announcement that includes a contact name, telephone number, and/or email address constitutes permission for UUAA to publish that information. The full name of a member is used in publications distributed within the congregation, unless a member specifically asks for their name to be withheld. The Web Team attempts to post email addresses using technology that keeps the addresses away from spambots, but use of UUAA addresses is a better solution.

The current policy for children and youth requires that no information about persons under the age of 18 be permitted in UUAA communications, unless written permission by a parent or guardian is granted and kept on file in the UUAA office. Children's names are published in the congregational directory, unless otherwise requested by a child's parent or legal guardian.

Anyone wanting personal information removed from [uuaa.org](http://uuaa.org) or UUAA social media should contact the office at (734) 665-6158 or email [webtech@uuaa.org](mailto:webtech@uuaa.org), specifying the personal information to be removed.

## Directory of Members and Friends

Realm is our congregational directory and is available via the Realm app and/or online. Members and friends who join Realm may input their own information and photograph, as well as control their own privacy settings. Anyone who has questions about Realm or who would like to request an invitation can email [realmhelp@uuaa.org](mailto:realmhelp@uuaa.org).

## Privacy of Visitors to Our Website

We directly collect personal information from visitors to our website only on a voluntary basis, typically as a form that requests the user to enter information. We do not collect information about specific IP addresses that access [uuaa.org](http://uuaa.org) or the UUAA Facebook page. Aggregate information about visitors is provided by Facebook and from website monitoring tools, and may be used to assist in improving the website (for example, to make frequently accessed information easier to locate on the site).

## Photography/Videography/Sound Recordings

Many members and friends of the congregation have generously offered their time and talent to UUAA by taking photographs or making audio or video recordings documenting special events and the life of the congregation. The intent of this policy is to clarify the terms and conditions for the reproduction of media depicting events, congregants, or facilities under the auspices of UUAA.

Photos of children/youth under the age of 18 cannot be taken without parental/guardian permission. Photos involving children/youth also cannot be posted on social media without parental/guardian permission. There are occasionally assigned volunteer photographers who take photos on behalf of the congregation, but these images are not posted in any venue unless a parent/guardian has signed the photo release clause on the Spiritual Growth and Development registration for the child(ren) pictured.

Any photos/recordings taken on the premises of UUAA, of official UUAA activities, or where UUAA property is the primary subject of the photograph may not be used for commercial purposes. Photographers and other media recorders who are not members of UUAA, such as professional media outlets, must obtain written permission from the Senior Minister or their designee prior to photographing or recording on the premises of UUAA. Weddings and rental events recording the specific event are excepted.

Photographs and recordings taken by members of the congregation that are used in UUAA publications should be credited to the photographer/recorder whenever possible.

**These policies are subject to change without notice. Changes in policy must be approved by the Senior Minister or their designee.**

| DATE              | DESCRIPTION OF REVISION  | REVISED BY     |
|-------------------|--|----------------|
| October 11, 2008  | Facebook, order of service inserts, and press release sections added   |                |
| June 2, 2012      | Office Manager changed to Office Administrator   |                |
| June 26, 2018     | New format and revisions across all text; addition of Governance Task Force recommended language around who speaks for UUAA  | Rev. L. Ulrich |
| August 21, 2018   | Clarified acceptable political language  | Rev. L. Ulrich |
| December 17, 2019 | Added the online calendar and restrictions on photographing children/youth   | Rev. L. Ulrich |
| May 1, 2021       | Revised to include virtual operations and added sections on social media and group communications; revised to ensure policy is in line with February 2021 updated Health & Safety Policy | K. Gottfried   |