

Cedars Communications Committee

Guidelines and Policies

Good communications are essential in any organization, particularly a large and evolving one like Cedars Unitarian Universalist Church. Members, friends, visitors, and sometimes members of the wider community need to get reliable and timely information. In addition, potential visitors need to be able to easily access information. The fact that we do not have our own building underscores the need for effective announcements strategies and for making other information as accessible as possible.

With those goals in mind, the following communication policies and guidelines were designed by the Communications Committee to help the Board, other lay leaders, and staff use our various communication mechanisms most efficiently and effectively.

What We Communicate: Thinking About Your Audience and Your Message

Some communications are personal and should be done face-to-face between individuals. That said, most of our church-related communications fall into three basic categories: institutional, programming, and group-focused.

Institutional communications involve information or announcements with major church-wide significance. Such announcements may include our annual pledge drive, our auction, or other fundraising events; congregational meetings; or the process for calling a professional minister.

Programming communications involve information or announcements about programming intended for the entire congregation and sometimes the wider community as well. Examples include upcoming study circles, requests for RE teachers or other volunteers, special choir concerts, or special social action projects.

Group-focused communications involve information or announcements that are relevant only to a defined sub-group of the congregation. Examples include announcements that a specific choir rehearsal has been cancelled or the time of a committee meeting has been changed as well as reminders to specific groups.

Defining the audience for a particular communication and the category it falls into will help determine which communication mechanisms are most efficient and effective for reaching the appropriate audience(s) in a timely manner.

How We Communicate: The Big Five

Our five primary mechanisms for communicating church-related information with each other and with the wider community are our monthly newsletter, our website, broadcast e-mails, and the announcements included in the Order of Service each Sunday.

The Beacon

Our monthly newsletter, *The Beacon*, is the primary vehicle for news, announcements, and publicity for upcoming events and initiatives in our church, the Pacific Northwest District, and the Unitarian Universalist Association. It is published on or about the first day of each month and is available to all members, pledging friends, subscribers, and visitors who have signed our Guest Book and provided contact information.

The newsletter typically includes a monthly calendar as well as information about upcoming services and other church and denominational programs and activities. It often includes regular columns by the minister, the Director of Religious Education, the President of the Board of Trustees, and the Chairs of certain program committees. Other articles or announcements submitted in advance of the monthly deadline and of interest to the entire congregation or particular groups within the congregation may be included as well, as long as they serve to provide information, announcements, or publicity regarding events within the church, District or Denomination. Articles will not be censored, unless they are defamatory or obviously incorrect. In such cases, the person submitting the article will be asked to revise it.

The submission deadline for the newsletter is the 15th of each month prior to publication. Material submitted after that deadline may be included if space is available and at the discretion of the editor.

All submissions to the newsletter should be short and concise. Columns should be limited to 500 words; articles should be no more than 250 words, and announcements no more than 100 words. They should also include the name and phone number and/or e-mail address of at least one contact person. *Be aware that The Beacon is published on the internet. If you do not want your phone number to appear in The Beacon, please inform the editor.*

Most announcements should be placed in *The Beacon* no more than twice, although announcements about ongoing events such as Circle Suppers or Super Suppers will be published monthly, and information about such events as the annual Stewardship Campaign or the Auction may appear for several months.

Submissions for *The Beacon* should be sent via e-mail to the editor. Typed submissions or ones in legible handwriting will also be accepted. All submissions are subject to editing for space as well as grammar, style, and clarity of content (see *Content Guidelines* and *Style and Grammar Guidelines* below). Photos and graphics will be considered on a space-available basis and should be submitted separately from text as a .jpeg, .gif, .tif or other standard graphics format. A PDF should not be used to submit photos or graphics, as this format does not allow for reproduction.

Inserts and flyers on subjects of interest to the congregation may be included in *The Beacon* only if advance arrangements are made with the editor. They must be 8.5" x 11" and available to the newsletter editor for inserting prior to the submission deadline.

The Beacon is sent to every member, pledging friend, subscriber, and recent visitor via e-mail. Members and pledging friends may receive a hard copy in the mail if they request it. Hard copy subscriptions to others are available for \$20 a year.

Advertising in *The Beacon* is available to members only. Business card-sized ads (2" x 3.5") may be purchased for six months (\$60) or one year (\$100). Classified ads may be submitted on a one-time basis by members or pledging friends and will be published for free if space is available.

Website: www.cedarsuuchurch.org

The church's website, www.cedarsuuchurch.org, is our primary vehicle for updates about church-related events and other activities between newsletters. A repository of information about the church, it also includes the official church calendar, past sermons, information about our program committees and their activities, links to denominational resources, and a password-protected membership directory.

Our website also serves as the primary portal to our church for seekers and visitors. In addition to driving directions and information about our services, www.cedarsuuchurch.org includes information about our history, Unitarian Universalism, and our basic principles.

Anything appropriate for publication in *The Beacon* is appropriate for the church website and will normally be posted there. All submissions are subject to editing for space as well as grammar, style, and clarity of content (see *Content Guidelines* and *Style and Grammar Guidelines* below).

Advertising on the website is available on a limited basis only to church members who also have an ad in *The Beacon*. In conjunction with that ad, members may post an ad in the business directory with a link to their business website for an additional fee of \$50.00 per year.

Weekly E-mail Bulletins

A weekly e-mail bulletin is compiled in the church office each week, specifically for announcements and information about upcoming events sponsored or co-sponsored by Cedars. Submissions for the weekly e-mail may be submitted by committee chairs, Board members and staff. Submissions must be submitted via e-mail to the Office Administrator (cuuoffice@cedarsuuchurch.org) no later than 10:00 am on Tuesday. The Office Administrator will send the weekly e-mail bulletin to all members and friends that day. Those submitting announcements *must* include a daytime phone number where they can be reached for questions.

There are two types of announcements included in the weekly e-mail bulletin:

- This Week at Cedars
- Upcoming Events

This Week at Cedars announcements must include the following information:

- Name of event
- CUUC Sponsor
- Day and Date (e.g., “Wednesday, Feb. 7”)
- Time
- Location, including **full address**
- Phone number and/or e-mail address of contact person
- Brief description, 50 to 75 words

A link to more detail on the website may be included.

Upcoming Events are save-the-date announcements, and as such, must be brief: one or two sentences, listing the event, sponsor, date, time, and location. A link to more detail on the website may be included. Announcements of upcoming events should not run for more than a few weeks prior to becoming a *This Week* announcement. Exceptions will be made for congregation-wide events such as the Stewardship Campaign and the Auction.

All submissions are subject to editing for space as well as grammar, style, and clarity of content (see *Content Guidelines* and *Style and Grammar Guidelines* below).

Sunday Announcements

An insert for the *Order of Service* is compiled in the church office each week, specifically for announcements and information about upcoming events sponsored or co-sponsored by Cedars. Because the *Order of Service* is distributed to each adult attending our Sunday service(s), this is a particularly effective means of communicating timely information to a wide audience.

Announcements and other information for these weekly announcements should be submitted via e-mail to the Office Administrator no later than the Thursday prior to the Sunday they are to appear. Those submitting announcements **must** include a daytime phone number where they can be reached for questions. They should be brief and as specific as possible, although they should include the information listed in *Content Guidelines* below. Institutional announcements that are to run for more than one Sunday should be revised each week to make them more interesting and timely. Normally, events are not announced more than two or three weeks in advance. Exceptions are made for very brief *save the date* types of announcements of future major events such as the Action or Stewardship Dinner.

The Office Administrator may edit submissions because of space constraints. On occasion, announcements about events several weeks in the future may be cut if there are too many other time-sensitive announcements.

On rare occasions, time-sensitive announcements of great institutional importance can be made by the Board of Trustee member giving the welcome at the beginning of each service. Such

announcements should be brief, taking no more than 10 seconds to read. They should also be submitted to the trustee responsible for the welcome part of the service well in advance. The Office Administrator keeps an updated calendar of the Trustees giving the Word of Welcome on any given week. Unplanned oral announcements by individual members of the congregation are no longer part of our Sunday worship services.

Broadcast E-mails

A master list of member/friend/visitor e-mail addresses for making broadcast e-mails on a very limited basis is currently maintained by the Online Directory webmaster and the newsletter editor. In deciding when to use it, consideration is given to *urgency* (is this something all members need to know ASAP?) and *institutional significance*. If you have questions as to the appropriateness of a broadcast e-mail, please contact the Communications Chair.

The list is not to be used for routine event announcements or publicity that could easily be placed in *The Beacon*, on our website, or in our Sunday Order of Service announcements, nor should it be used for announcements that are not directly related to the Church, the PNW District, or the UUA. The list will not be used for commercial purposes. Jokes, business propositions, petitions, political information, and other such material will not be forwarded.

A broadcast e-mail should include the information listed in *Content Guidelines* below. All submissions are subject to editing for space as well as grammar, style, and clarity of content (see *Content Guidelines* and *Style and Grammar Guidelines* below).

If you want to alert members of a particular committee, please e-mail those members directly. A comprehensive list of each committee's membership is in the password-protected membership directory on our website. Be aware that while the information or news may be important to you, it is not to everyone and others may view broadcast messages as spam.

More Ways to Communicate

Posters/Bulletin Boards. Church groups may establish and maintain portable bulletin boards. Groups may not place publicity posters on the walls of The Playhouse.

Flyers. The distribution of handouts or flyers on Sunday mornings is the responsibility of the committee or task force that wants them distributed. Flyers should be inserted in the *Order of Service* only after making special arrangements with the Office Administrator in advance. Such flyers should be limited to church business and special events. They should be the same dimensions as the Order of Service (currently half of a legal-sized paper). They can also be distributed by individual committee or task force members before or after our services. It is *not* the job of the greeters to hand out or to collate flyers.

Printed material related to a political *issue*, such as flyers and petitions, may be distributed on church premises. Obvious campaigning, including the distribution of printed material, on behalf of an individual running for political office is prohibited. Such activity on church premises

threatens our tax-exempt status as a religious organization. Fundraising activities on behalf of community organizations that are not sponsored by or affiliated with the church (such as Girl Scout cookies, school raffle tickets, etc.) are not prohibited on church premises, but should be conducted discreetly. Broad dissemination while on church premises of printed material related to an event, service or product touted for personal gain is *not* appropriate and is prohibited.

Media publicity. The Communications Committee is responsible for sending out press releases and coordinating media coverage. It is of utmost importance that Cedars UU Church be able to control the use of its name, and neither individuals nor committees should send press releases independent of the Communications Committee. Gene Bullock is the current designated media contact, and all external publicity must be routed through him.

Brochures. Some committees and task forces within the church create their own brochures for newcomers and visitors. This should be done in coordination with the Communications Committee so that our general style, the use of our logo, and the way information is presented is consistent.

Brochures and similar materials of interest to visitors may be placed on the Welcome Table only with the consent of the Membership Chair. This is not an appropriate place for event publicity.

Display Advertisements. Advertising in local media and phone directories must be done through the Communications Committee, allowing us to control the advertising budget, as well as the use of our name and image.

Content Guidelines

The following guidelines should be followed when composing a *Beacon* article, website submission, broadcast e-mail, *Order of Service* announcement, or other communication of broad interest:

- What is the program being presented?
- Where is it? Full addresses **must** be given. The Church Office, Madison Rehab, the Senior Center, or Eagle Harbor Church is not satisfactory. Visitors and new people may have no idea where these places are.
- When is it? Cite the date and time (length of the event).
- Who is sponsoring the event? Make sure there is contact information for more questions.
- Why should anyone come?

Try to look at your event through the eyes of first-time visitors who are not familiar with the area. Give them enough information to not only decide whether or not to attend, but also to find the venue if they want to come.

In addition, Cedars has a policy of providing child care for all events. Please list a contact for those needing child care, and a deadline for which child care RSVPs must be received.

Style and Grammar Guidelines

In order to maintain consistency, please observe the following stylistic and grammatical guidelines when creating flyers, brochures and the like or submitting material for publication:

- Abbreviations should not be used except for well-known acronyms, such as PNWD or UUA. Even then the name should be spelled out with the acronym in parentheses the first time it appears (e.g., Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA)).
- Dates (month or day) should not be abbreviated.
- Time should be in the following format: 10:00 am.
- All phone numbers must include an area code. Since our membership includes at least two area codes, it is imperative that a full phone number, with area code, is given. The preferred format for phone numbers is: 206-780-0373.
- Be aware of redundancies. Please do not repeat the headline of your article in the first sentence or paragraph.
- Be aware of subject-verb agreement.
- Make sure that the main point of your article is in the first paragraph. Don't make readers work to figure out what you are trying to say.
- Length guidelines for *The Beacon* are: columns, 500 words; articles, 250 words; announcements, 100 words. Submissions that are too long may be edited or returned to the sender to be re-written.
- Underlining is discouraged and will be changed by the editor to either bold or italic text, depending on context. This is to prevent confusion with hyperlinks, since most articles will also appear on the church website.
- When in doubt, please consult *Strunk & White: Elements of Style, 4th Edition*.
- Remember: *Brevity is the soul of wit*. Length is not.

Dispute Resolution

Disagreement over application of these guidelines should be brought to the Communications Committee. Failing resolution of the conflict at that level, the matter should be brought to the Board.