

UUCSH Communications: How and When to Use Them, How Not to Abuse Them

Introduction

Purpose of guidelines. The Unitarian Universalist Church of the South Hills (UUCSH) offers many means to inform, request, and motivate. The UUCSH Communications Committee has created guidelines for UUCSH communications, to ensure that

- All members and friends have equal access to the means of communication
- Communication is efficient for senders and receivers
- The source of information is clear and that, when UUCSH speaks as a church, it speaks through the power of consensus

Update Your Contact Information

If your contact information changes, please notify the church administrator at **admin@sunnyhill.org** or 412-561-6277. The administrator updates addresses once monthly.

Advertising. UUCSH does not accept paid advertising, from inside or outside the congregation.

Overview of communications categories. This document will outline the characteristics of each communications category and tell how and when to submit copy. UUCSH communications categories follow.

- Monthly newsletter, *The Drummer* (available online and in print)
- Weekly emailed update, The Beat
- Announcements in the order of service (the printed program distributed at Sunday services)
- Church website, sunnyhill.org
- Urgent-notification system
- Oral announcements during Sunday services
- Materials in church literature racks
- Church bulletin boards
- Nonchurch brochures or flyers that someone wants to distribute at UUCSH

Submit Copy for Each Vehicle Separately

If you want the same announcement to appear in several different communications, make each request separately. This is necessary because different people maintain different communications vehicles.

Please address questions or comments to the church administrator in person, at 412-561-6277, or at **admin@sunnyhill.org**. If necessary, the administrator will forward your issue to the Communications Committee.

Include Contact Information

In any copy you submit, make sure that the

- Recipient knows who submitted the copy
- Reader knows who can answer questions about the content

Monthly Newsletter, *The Drummer*

Purpose and content. *The Drummer* publishes news and publicity about and for UUCSH and its members and friends, the Ohio–Meadville District (OMD), and the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). Program announcements receive priority. Other than in columns by staff, the newsletter is not a vehicle for opinion or discussion. *The Drummer* does not publish want ads of any kind (e.g., ads about employment, items desired, or items for sale by individuals). Use the community bulletin board in the church to post want ads.

Because the newsletter is accessible worldwide, personal contact information does not appear. Readers can use the printed church directory to find contact information.

The Drummer is UUCSH's official publication of record — the vehicle that publishes announcements required by UUCSH bylaws (e.g., notice of the annual meeting).

Recipients. Anyone with computer access can find *The Drummer*. Online links to the newsletter are

- Posted on the sunnyhill.org website. In the lefthand navigation bar, click Communications, then Newsletter. You will find current and archived issues.
- In each edition of The Beat, in the lefthand column, under Quick Links.

On request, a member or friend without computer access may receive the newsletter via U.S. mail. Printed copies of the current issue, in the brochure rack in the church entry, are primarily for visitors.

Format. Articles should be approximately 125 words or fewer — usually, one paragraph. If your article must be longer, discuss your story with the editor before submitting it. *The Drummer* publishes images.

Type “Drummer Submittal for [Month]” in the Subject line of emailed copy or at the top of the first page. Number each page.

Frequency. Monthly.

Submittal. Email copy to drummer@sunnyhill.org. Place typed or legible handwritten sheets in the *Drummer* file folder, in the “mailboxes” in the first-floor hallway of the church.

Deadline. The 14th of each month or as noted in the previous issue.

Weekly Emailed Update, The Beat

Purpose and content. The Beat engages readers by providing concise, time-sensitive information relevant to the one-week Wednesday–Tuesday period in which it is sent. A typical Beat contains links that refer readers to the UUCSH website and other relevant sites. The Beat may convey a brief reminder about an upcoming UUCSH event, but the congregation should already be aware, through other communications, of event background. All content must relate to UUCSH, OMD, or UUA. The Beat does not contain images or attachments or carry personal content or information about community events.

The Beat is not a publication of record; for example, a mention in The Beat does not constitute a bylaws-required board advisory.

Recipients. All members and friends who have given email addresses to UUCSH receive The Beat. Visitors may receive The Beat on request.

Format. Each item in the Beat should contain

- A headline, which summarizes content and engages the reader
- A body, or message, which is usually fewer than 100 words

Frequency. The church administrator emails The Beat weekly, on Wednesday or Thursday. The Board of Trustees or staff may request a second Beat within one week, if the need to communicate about time-sensitive matters is pressing.

Submittal. Submit copy to The Beat by using the online form at <http://www.sunnyhill.org/thebeat/index.html> The church administrator compiles The Beat by cutting and pasting; the administrator does not write or edit copy.

Deadline. Each Wednesday at 9 a.m.

Announcements in the Order of Service

Purpose and content. Before each Sunday service, ushers distribute programs to attendees. The program, or order of service, outlines the components of the service, includes a calendar of the coming week's activities, and provides brief news items about UUCSH, OMD, or UUA programming and events. Group or committee announcements (e.g., meeting dates) are appropriate only if the item communicates a last-minute change. News about people and community events of interest to most congregants appears as space permits. Items may appear in the order of service more than once; to sustain interest, each week's copy should be different. The order of service is not a publication of record.

Recipients. The order of service reaches Sunday-service attendees only. Note that announcements in the order of service will not reach adults who are contributing to religious education for children.

Format. The typical order-of-service announcement contains a short headline and a body of 90–100 words. Images do not usually accompany news items. Only staff and board members may request inserts to the order of service.

Include “Order of Service [desired publication date]” in the Subject line or at the top of the page.

Frequency. Each Sunday.

Submittal. Submit copy for the order of service to the church administrator at **admin@sunnyhill.org**. Place hard copy in the administrator’s mailbox in the first-floor hallway of the church.

Deadline. Each Wednesday at 9 a.m.

UUCSH Website

Purpose. The website is a means of posting time-sensitive information, such as event-related copy, and information that does not change but must be continuously accessible (e.g., directions to the church). It is an excellent vehicle for describing who we are as a congregation and what we do. Because anyone can access the website, it is not the venue in which to publish personal material, including personal contact information.

Recipients. Members, friends, and the public in the widest possible sense — especially those seeking a first-time or new church.

Format. Before writing, discuss desired content with the website coordinator. Arrange a conversation by emailing **website@sunnyhill.org**. The coordinator will help you fit your copy into the site structure and advise you regarding images. In the Subject line include the topic and the desired posting date.

Frequency. The website is available continuously.

Submittal. E-mail copy to **website@sunnyhill.org**. Include in your submittal the date on which copy should be removed from the site. Reminding the web coordinator of the removal date, when that date arrives, is a good idea.

Deadline. Submit copy to the website coordinator at least one week before copy should be posted.

Urgent-Notification System

Purpose. The system transmits urgent, confirmed information, such as news of a death within the congregation and relevant funeral arrangements or a facility emergency that necessitates program cancellation.

Recipients. Members and friends who have provided their email addresses to UUCSH and those who require or who have requested notification by telephone.

Format. As required — usually, very concise.

Frequency. When authorized, the church administrator communicates via the urgent-notification system. In some cases, the church administrator asks Caring Committee members to make telephone calls.

Submittal. Only the Board of Trustees, minister, or Caring Committee co-chair may authorize use of the urgent-notification system.

Deadline. As events require.

Oral Announcements During Sunday Services

UUCSH services usually include a period in which attendees may speak briefly, to highlight the work of the church. In most cases such announcements should refer listeners to details printed elsewhere. Most oral announcements should be no longer than 20 seconds.

In any case, begin your announcement by introducing yourself. Be clear about what you want people to know or do.

Materials in Church Literature Racks

In the literature rack in the church entry are materials about Unitarian Universalism and UUCSH, including printed copies of *The Drummer*. Also in the rack are items that visitors or ushers need at their fingertips: registration forms for the Religious Education program and the current Program Guide. The Membership Committee and staff are responsible for stocking the literature rack and have exclusive rights to allocating it.

In the literature rack in the dining room are slots for displaying take-home materials about UUCSH and UU news. Please give items for display to the church administrator, who should know the location of and be able to answer questions about all available items.

Items Posted on Church Bulletin Boards

Use church bulletin boards to communicate with all those who use the church building: members, friends, tenants, renters, and visitors. UUCSH maintains bulletin boards in two locations:

- **Dining room, UU bulletin boards**
 - The left side of the dining-room bulletin board is reserved for items about UUCSH, UUA, and OMD. Submit items to the church administrator for posting.

- The right side is reserved for items approved by the Social Action Committee. Submit items to the chair of the Social Action Committee for posting.
- **First-floor hallway, community bulletin board:** On the lefthand bulletin board, as you walk from the entry, members and friends may post information about community events, want ads, and other messages not pertaining to UUCSH, OMD, or UUA. Submit items to the church administrator for posting.
- **First-floor hallway, RE bulletin board:** On the righthand bulletin board, as you enter is material relating to UUCSH's Religious Education (RE) Program for children. The director of religious education maintains this board. Submit items to the RE director for posting.

Nonchurch Brochures and Flyers

If you wish to distribute a handout on church property and the handout is unrelated to UUCSH, OMD, or UUA, submit the item to a UUCSH staff member for prior approval. Ushers do not hand out flyers, and nonchurch flyers may not be inserted into orders of service.

Distribution of political material on church property may endanger UUCSH's nonprofit status and is not permitted.