

First Unitarian Church of Des Moines

User Guide to Communication Tools

June 2021

Purpose

This guide is for the use of members and staff of the First Unitarian Church of Des Moines. It is intended to outline the communication tools available to the church community. You will find an explanation of the primary purpose for each tool and how to make the best use of these tools. The Communications Team welcomes your input. From time to time, we will update this guide.

Website (www.ucdsm.org)

The website is intended to create a friendly, welcoming introduction to the church for those who do not know us, as well as a place for church members and friends to easily find information.

What you will find on the website:

- Upcoming and past services prominently displayed
- Programs, classes and groups with descriptions and contact information
- Social Justice initiatives and how to get involved
- Organized information about governance
- Church calendar with event descriptions, contact information and Zoom links
- Announcements of church-wide interest

What you will not find on the website:

- Member personal information
- Minutes from non-Board/non-elected meetings
- Information about near-term or one-time events or activities (See information about the *Intercom* for these types of announcements)

Who manages the website?

The Communications Coordinator has primary responsibility for the website and works closely with the Communications Team which can provide limited backup.

How do I update my group's information on the website?

If the existing contact on the website for your group is inaccurate, please notify the Communications Coordinator.

If you need to change the content for your group, please have your group leader provide the new content to the Communications Coordinator. In some cases, the Communications Coordinator will work with staff and the Communications Team to evaluate, edit and make the changes.

How do I place an announcement on the website?

Items sent to the Communications Coordinator for placement in the Intercom may sometimes be added to the 'Announcements' section on the home page of the website, depending on the nature of the item.

How do I create a sign-up form for an event?

You have several options for creating forms, depending on your event's needs. You are responsible for creating and sending either the PDF document or the link for the sign-up form to the Communications Coordinator (communications@ucdsm.org).

- **Simple PDF form**
Users download the PDF you've created, fill in the form, and send it to your team's designated person. Best used for small gatherings needing limited responses.
- **Sign Up Genius** <https://www.signupgenius.com/>
An online tool that allows attendees to sign up to provide food, tools, etc. for an event. Also allows attendees to choose times, days, etc.
- **Doodle Poll** <https://doodle.com/en/>
An online tool that allows a meeting organizer to quickly determine the best time to meet with a group.

Intercom Weekly

The *Intercom* is a weekly e-newsletter delivered to members and friends every Friday morning. The format and frequency are designed to keep readers up to date on services, events, member updates, and activities. The current issue of the *Intercom* is accessible via a link on the website: <https://www.ucdsm.org/newsletter-sign-up>

Who manages the *Intercom*?

The Communications Coordinator manages the *Intercom*.

How do I submit items for the *Intercom*?

Information items for the Friday *Intercom* are **due by Wednesday noon** to our Communications Coordinator, communications@ucdsm.org. Please follow these guidelines:

- **In the body of an email (NOT as an attachment)**, please include a title, relevant dates and times, contact information, and a *brief* description of your event or announcement.
- Please **proofread your article** before submitting (or ask a trusted friend to proofread if you need help!) We try to check every article, but we still miss things.
- An image can help make your article stand out! Please feel free to **attach an image** to your email. (JPG or PNG files are preferred.) *Note: images that violate copyright laws will be rejected.*
- We run announcements for no more than **three consecutive weeks**, so please plan accordingly.
- Per church policy, **we do not share private email addresses** or phone numbers in our communications. If your committee or affinity group doesn't already have an @ucdsm.org email, we can easily set one up that forwards to a personal email or creates a mailbox that designated people can log in to.

If you need help writing or editing, please contact the Communications Team at commteam@ucdsm.org. You'll need to submit your piece by **noon on Monday** to give the team time to review.

You'll get the best response to your *Intercom* submission if you include the following details:

- **What** is happening or what benefit is being offered? Lean toward directness
- **Who** is invited or needs to know? e.g. all members, Faith Formation families, etc.
- **When and where** is your event happening or when does someone need to take action?
- **How** do readers get involved, signed up or learn more? Include links to make it easy for readers to find more info. or documents

Next is a past *Intercom* submission as an example:

REACH Grant Applications Now Being Accepted

Due: May 15

In this time of uncertainty, let your ideas flow for radical engagement and creative happenings at church!

Applications for REACH Grants for the next fiscal church year (July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022) are being accepted through May 15, 2021. REACH grants can be awarded to church members and groups for ideas related to community outreach, educational opportunities for members, or equipment purchases. This is your chance to plan a program or event beyond our usual budget limitations. We have \$14,800 available for grants this year, with each individual grant capped at \$2,500.

[The grant application form is available on our website's REACH Grant page](#)

If you have questions or would like to discuss your project prior to completing the application, please e-mail the Endowment Committee at Endowment@UCDSM.org.

- **What?** *It's in the title*
- **Who?** *"church members and groups"*
- **When?** *Subhead – Due May 15*
- **How?** *There two ways to get more info – the website or email*

Facebook

First Unitarian has two Facebook contact points:

1. Our **public page** (<https://www.facebook.com/FUCDM>) can be accessed by anyone and serves as a promotional tool to provide basic information about the church.
2. Our **private group** (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/UCDSM/>) is just for members. This group allows members to converse with other members about events, post and see important updates about members and hold discussions. Consider the private Facebook group as a casual format for knowing what is going on and hearing from other members.

Who manages the Facebook page and group?

- The Communications Coordinator updates the public Facebook page.
- We have two church members who serve as administrators of our private group. Access to the private Facebook group can be requested from the Membership Coordinator.

What can be posted to the private Facebook group?

Any member of the private Facebook group can post and must follow these guidelines:

- Postings should be relevant to the general church community
- Postings should not promote a business
- Postings should adhere to and support our Seven UU Principles
- Conversations that become heated may be removed or the administrator may intervene privately
- This is not the place for intense, nuanced discussions on any topic

UCDSM App

The First Unitarian Church app can be downloaded to your smart phone by texting “UCDSM APP” to 77977. The app is the best way to get timely texts (“push notifications”) about church activities and late-breaking updates (e.g. weather closures).

Who manages the church app?

The Communications Coordinator schedules push notifications through the app. In keeping with best practices, we limit the number of notifications to a handful of circumstances, such as:

- Emergency information, such as weather or other reasons to close our building on short notice
- Church neighborhood activity that could impact access to the building
- Reminders about upcoming all-church events that require pre-registration or some other action in advance

How do I request a push notification?

When you submit information for the *Intercom*, you may request a push notification. Keep in mind that not all activities are appropriate for the app. Please note: Push notifications are limited to a title of 45 characters, and a message 90 characters. A web link can be included in the message and counts toward the total characters.

Email

Emails to all or a portion of our members and friends are generally reserved for special announcements.

Who manages general email?

The Communication Coordinator deploys general emails after consultation with staff.

Suggested email etiquette:

- Keep your email message short and to the point
- State the purpose or topic of the email in the subject line so recipients have an idea about what's in the email without having to open it
- Do not forward emails containing personal information of others, e.g. email or physical addresses, phone numbers, etc.
- Use BCC when sending out mass emails to avoid disclosing the email addresses of others without their consent, or unnecessarily subjecting everyone to "Reply All" responses not actually meant for everyone. Also, in the content of the email, let everyone know the message has gone to a group of recipients by including something like, "I thought you all would appreciate seeing this..."
- Do not use "Reply All" if you only need to respond to the sender of a message
- Re-read your message before sending it – if you're wondering whether to hit "send" or not, don't!