



## **Facilitating Excellence in Communications Guidelines March 2009**

**Communications** are any means of conveying information among people and groups in the congregation or about the church to the larger community.

**Internal communications** have a primary audience of members, friends, visitors and potential members. They shall be defined to include: the newsletter; web site; email communication to River of Grass Unitarian Universalist Congregation list; bulletin boards; posters and other communications within the congregation.

**External communications** are targeted to the larger community: news releases; interviews with news media on behalf of the congregation; advertising; written communication on River of Grass Unitarian Universalist Congregation letterhead; banners, posters or displays using River of Grass' name; and other communication publicly representing River of Grass Unitarian Universalist Congregation.

**Internal/external communications.** The River of Grass Unitarian Universalist Congregation web site, newsletter, Twitter, Facebook, and some other communications are both internal and external.

**Content.** All communications should reflect Unitarian Universalist values; provide information about River of Grass' purposes, programs, business, activity, and values; and/or encourage action in keeping with our covenant, mission and Unitarian Universalist principles.

## **Calendar Items**

Setting A Date: The calendar fills quickly and we have limited space. Dates for all events are approved through our Congregational Administrator, Minister, and related Staff. We recommend establishing a date at least three weeks prior to any event. For inclusion in our newsletter, you may have to set the date seven weeks prior to the event (depending on the timing. See “Newsletter Submissions” below.) (see appendix on establishing a date)

### Information for Setting A Date:

- Title of Event
- Group, Staff, or Team sponsoring the event
- Contact information
- Who is invited to the event
- Start time and end time
- Location of event
- Date and time, including whether a.m. or p.m.
- Any other necessary information to include.

Calendar: Updating our calendar is a multi-step process. Please email your calendar update to our Congregational Administrator at < office @ riverofgrass.org >, to our Minister at < minister @ riverofgrass.org >, and to related staff using their email addresses.

Canceling A Date: We ask you to please notify the office ASAP by email, and also by text message or voicemail about cancellations due to illness or other reasons. If you must cancel an event for illness on short notice during days when the office is not otherwise open, please follow the usual notification steps and also contact someone else on your committee or team to post that notification on the office door, in case someone attending your program for the first time is not otherwise notified.

## **Weekly Email Announcements**

Announcement Content: Keep your announcement as brief as possible. We will not run announcements that are over 50 words without special exemptions. Include the kind of information you would for setting a date, but written in an invitational style, to encourage people to attend or engage in your program.

Announcement Due Dates: Email announcements are due to our Congregational Administrator by email Wednesdays at 8 a.m., unless there is a Thursday holiday. On weeks with Thursday holidays, the due date is Tuesday at 8 a.m.

Weekly email announcements usually are sent on Thursday. On weeks with Thursday holidays, they are sent on Wednesday.

Unless you request that your email announcement is also printed in the order of worship announcements, it will not be included in both places.

Staff is empowered to decide which announcements are included.

No more than 2 emails are allowed per activity/event, without previous exception by the staff.

## **Printed Order of Worship Announcements**

*From our policies:*

7. A. 1. "It is preferred that announcements be included in the printed Order of Service."

Announcement Content: Keep your announcement as brief as possible. We will not run announcements that are over 30 words without special exemptions. Include the kind of information you would for setting a date, but written in an invitational style, to encourage people to attend or engage in your program.

Announcement Due Dates: Printed announcements are due to our Congregational Administrator by email Wednesdays at 8 a.m., unless there is a

Thursday holiday. On weeks with Thursday holidays, the due date is Tuesday at 8 a.m.

Unless you request that your printed announcement is also included in the weekly email announcements, it will not be included in both places.

The staff is empowered to decide which announcements are included.

Flyers and inserts are to be approved for distribution by the Minister. Email a pdf of your flyer or insert to the Minister by Tuesday of the Sunday before you wish to distribute it, or two weeks before a public event. If your flyer or insert is printed in color, then you will have to make them off-site, as our photocopier does not have color capacity. Please reference our policies re: flyers and other kinds of announcements.

Verbal announcements must be legibly written out and given to the Devotional Leader 15 minutes before the start of worship.

### **Newsletter Submissions**

Due: All submissions are due to the Newsletter Editor by email < NewsletterEditor @ riverofgrass.org > by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month.

Submissions may be edited by the Newsletter Editor and editing team. Submissions are not automatically included, but are prioritized by the editing team and Newsletter Editor.

### **Press Releases**

Press releases, like all other communications, go through our Community Awareness Committee. To work on a press release, contact:  
<Communityawareness @ riverofgrass.org >

### **Accessibility**

Visual: When printing signs, announcements, or other materials, it is important that to make accommodation for people with visual impairments. Our standard

is to begin with sizing at 18-point font in Arial, and for working across greater distances, 48- and 60- point font. High contrast is important in visual accessibility, so background graphics or papers in similar colors to the letters is discouraged. Please do not print communications using contrast colors of blue, green, and purple in the same piece. These are visually very similar for people with blue-green color differentiation impairment. At events, changes in elevation in rooms, even surfaces for walking, and lighting are all important considerations for visual accessibility. For coaching and further guidance on visual accessibility, please contact the Congregational Administrator or Minister.

Physical: When establishing events, it is helpful in promoting accessibility to note any physical limitations to the space for the event. If a space is fully equipped for people in motorized wheelchairs, let us know, so we can include the wheelchair accessibility graphic. If only a sport chair would work in a space, or a ramp would be required, or bathroom facilities limited with a space, please provide this information in your event planning notes, so we can make a note about contacting the office for accessibility information in the announcement and calendar, and provide accurate information. For coaching and further guidance on physical accessibility, please contact the Congregational Administrator or Minister.

Audio: We have a limited number of hearing assistive devices at our weekly worship service. Most of our other facilities and special worship locations are unable to provide this service. When planning events, please be aware that the more background noise there is at an event, the harder and more wearying it can be for people using hearing assistive devices. When communication is the primary focus of an event, we recommend that you meet in places where you can be more easily focused on the spoken word and not include background music. If sign language interpretation is desired, please contact the Congregational Administrator or Minister for assistance. For coaching and further guidance on audio accessibility, please contact the Congregational Administrator or Minister.

As a congregation, we continue to learn and grow how to be more hospitable and welcoming of all with our differing abilities.

### **Welcoming Language**

We endeavor to use welcoming language in our congregational communications. Some words that we've chosen to use as more welcoming to our diverse community:

Congregation	instead of	church
Worship, services	instead of	church
Guest	instead of	visitor
Partner, spouses	instead of	husband/wife
Parent(s)	instead of	mother/father

As our congregational culture changes, so, too, will our language. Please bring language concerns to the attention of Minister, Staff, and Ministry Council, as well as connecting directly with the person responsible for the communication.

We are a Welcoming Congregation, which means that we intentionally have as a vital part of our community, people who are transgender, bisexual, lesbian, and gay. River of Grass Unitarian Universalist Congregation also historically has welcomed interfaith families. Discrimination on the basis of race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, or ability is unacceptable at River of Grass and in our publications.

### **A Brief Note on Abbreviations**

We do not commonly use abbreviations in our communications at River of Grass Unitarian Universalist Congregation, especially in our verbal communications. In written communication, an abbreviation may be noted after first naming in the entire what is to be abbreviated: "Service and Social Justice Committee (SSJC) will meet..."

### **Cultural Misappropriation**

Cultural misappropriation is the term given to the set of injuries marked by:

\*using music, reading, symbols, ritual, or iconography of a group without a willingness to engage in their struggle and/or story and connecting their struggle and/or story with our own (Unitarian Universalism and community).

\* the use of cultural practices as bait rather than an as organic part of our cultural experience

\* an unwillingness to respect the community of origin or dishonoring the refusal of a community to share

\* disrespect or casual engagement with a practice, or

\* unwillingness to share the pain caused by intentional or unintentional misuse.

UUA Task Force on Cultural Misappropriation – September 2006

### **Style Guide**

Fonts: Please use Arial 12-point or Times New Roman 12-point in your communications.

Accessibility: Please include all communications and documents to the office in a format we can resize easily. As part of our commitment to accessibility for all, we need to be able to resize fonts to 18- and 24- point type. Photos and graphics should be high contrast in black and white printing processes.

Spacing: 1.5 line spacing, 1” top and bottom margins.

### **Photocopying**

Please limit your photocopying to what is necessary. If you know you will have an exceptionally large photocopying run, please connect in advance with our Congregational Administrator to talk about the least expensive way to handle your project, and to make sure there are enough supplies for your run.

### **Mailings**

There are several kinds of mailings that are routine and for which we have planned. Occasionally, there are other mailings approved by Staff or Board. For these, we need lead time to make sure we have enough materials to support the mailing.

**Purchases**

Please seek approval for your committee and team purchases before making them. Reimbursement forms are available in the office and under the “Documents Library” on our website.

**Office Communication**

When communicating with the office, please allow for varying schedules and programs. If you have sent an email and there is something time sensitive requiring a response, it is recommended to follow up with a phone call to the office.