

Online and Social Media Communications

(Hereafter to be named “on-line communications”)

APPLICABLE TO STAFF AND LEADERSHIP

Covenant

1. Acceptance and practice of this Covenant is the foundation for our congregation’s on-line communications. It applies to all members and staff, including long-term contract employees. In addition, the terms and conditions set out in Section 3 will apply to the individuals identified in that section.
2. Unitarians gather in community with shared understandings, expectations, and codes of conduct to nurture the positive, with respectful and satisfying relationships that characterize a healthy congregational culture. On-line communications form a significant part of our community’s interactions. We therefore consent to and accept measures that ensure our on-line communications are clearly understood and accepted as intended.
3. We recognize that our on-line communications, due to media limitations, can have a unique impact when compared to more fulsome face-to-face or vocal communications. With the absence of vocal tone and body language, on screen messages can be harsher and less indicative of our true intent. We will therefore commit to adjust our on-line voice to assure our on-line communications are clearly stated, received and understood. We will also reserve communications about sensitive matters, debates and disagreements to better suited communication channels.
4. We know that the wider community, including members, friends, and visitors of First Unitarian share in our on-line community. As a result, we will, in on-line communication avoid intentional debates on matters which are sensitive to the congregation. Instead, we agree to direct questions or comments about such matters to the appropriate person or committee for resolution. This direct referral will reduce the risk of misunderstanding.
5. We will call on one another to present our best selves by the way we use on-line communications. To avoid being subsumed in a digital world, we will strive to build greater understanding and more meaningful connections with one another.

General Expectations and Standards

1. While on-line communications will comply with the Covenant, acceptance and practice of the following standards will be specific measures of the appropriateness of on-line communications, both sent and received:

- Is respect and reason present in our on-line communications?
- Is the appropriate tone and language used in on-line communications?
- Is the on-line communication unnecessarily aggressive and/or argumentative, rather than being explanatory, clear and communicative?
- Is the on-line communication, based on reasonable standards and analysis, aggressive, confrontational or disruptive to activities and/or relationships within the Congregation?

(Note: Other reasonable specific measures may be added if necessary.)

2. We will respect someone who notes that we have not chosen an appropriate communication medium for particular topics. Should this feedback be received, the originator of the communication will contact that person directly to resolve the matter through off-line discussions.
3. We recognize that if an authorized on-line moderator receives a complaint or observes postings which do not meet the shared norms set out in this policy, they have the authority to remove the postings.
4. The moderator will, in addition to (3) above, have the authority to deny a specific originator access to the email group or on-line forum provided appropriate warnings have first been issued. It is understood that in an extreme case denial of access may take place without warning.
5. The moderator will advise the Executive Committee of all denials or removed postings, in a manner and schedule determined by the Executive Committee.
6. A record of all warnings, posting deletions and denials will be retained.
7. An individual denied access may be reinstated when they have agreed to reasonable measure intended to assure they will abide by this Covenant in the future. Reinstatement and the terms applicable will be determined by the Executive Committee.

Expectations and Standards Applied to Employees and Lead Volunteers

Preamble

Social media tools are powerful channels of communication that often invite audience participation in a conversation. (Examples include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr, Instagram, Snapchat and blogs.)

This section sets out additional standards for social media and on-line communications for the staff and lead volunteers listed below, given the

potential adverse impact of on-line communications on individuals and the Congregation's reputation; its financial and legal position; and its ability to conduct its affairs.

These terms and conditions are a condition of employment for staff, as well as a condition for the continued engagement of volunteers for the positions they hold.

Application

Our Ministers (note policy on the voice of the Minister)	President of Board of Trustees (note policy on role as official Spokesperson)
Director of Lifespan Religious Education	All Other Board Members
Director of Music	Secretary of the Board
Administrator	All Convenors including Chief Convenor
Long-term contract staff	

Requirements and Conditions

- 1) All posts will reflect the values and high standards of integrity of our congregation.
- 2) First Unitarian's Privacy and Confidentiality Policy will apply. Confidential information includes details about current projects, software, finances and personal information (e.g. personal contact information, photographs, financial and medical information) regarding staff, board members, volunteers and other people involved with First Unitarian.
- 3) When posting, designated individuals will be mindful of laws governing copyright and fair use of copyrighted material. This includes First's publications and logos. Quoted text will be attributed to it's original source.
- 4) People who follow the social networks of those designated will not always see the distinction between a that individual's personal life and their role at First Unitarian. Therefore, designated persons must carefully consider the content they post in any of their social media channels.
- 5) When a personal opinion is posted this will be clearly noted. If designated, as a representative of First, or if First is mentioned on any personal blog or social network, the statement will start by noting that what follows is the individual's personal blog with the ideas, opinions, conclusions, and other content expressed therein not necessarily being a reflection of the policies or views of First Unitarian.
- 6) All social media use must adhere to First Unitarian's Safe Steps Policy, which strives to provide a safe environment for children, youth and

vulnerable adults. Those covered by this policy involved in on-line communication with persons under 18, shall:

- a. Send emails to youth only if parents are copied;
 - b. Whenever possible, send group texts rather than individual texts; copy another involved volunteer or staff member on all texts with youth;
 - c. Ensure texts are short and informative, relate only to upcoming or recent events, and require yes or no answers; do not send chatty texts;
 - d. Use a Facebook group, rather than friending individual youth;
 - e. Whenever possible, communicate directly with youth only with the consent of parents;
 - f. Never post photos of youth without explicit parental consent.
- 7) Those designated must not post material that is illegal, obscene, defamatory, profane, libellous, threatening, harassing, abusive, ridiculing or hateful to another person or group of persons or another organization. First Unitarian's Anti-Harassment Policy applies to all on-line and off-line communications.
- 8) The Terms of Use guidelines for every social platform will be respected.
- 9) First Unitarian staff time and technology are reserved for congregational activities. The stewardship of resources is extremely important. Personal social media activities should not interfere with work commitments.

Compliance

Non-compliance with this Policy could lead to disciplinary action, up to and including the termination of an individual's employment or volunteer relationship with First Unitarian. Principles of fairness and due process will apply.