



First Unitarian Society of Ithaca

Connect. Inspire. Engage.

Website, Email, and Social Media Policy

The purposes of the website are as follows:

1. To establish and maintain a welcoming presence on the web for the First Unitarian Society of Ithaca (FUSIT).
2. To provide information about our church, its history, and beliefs to seekers, to friends and to members.
3. To create a connection that allows members away from Ithaca, or unable to physically attend church activities to maintain contact with our church community.
4. To contribute to the general presence of Unitarian Universalism on the web.
5. To facilitate and simplify the communication, engagement and consolidation of information about FUSIT and its members.
6. To provide a more secure and confidential methods for members to submit and share information with staff.

The website will contain:

1. Information about the congregation and its activities
2. Information of use to prospective visitors and members
3. Contact information for the staff

There will be both public access pages and privacy protected pages on the web site.

1. Only the Minister and FUSIT staff will normally be listed as contacts on public web pages.
2. Out of respect for the privacy of members and visitors, no personal contact information will be placed on the public web pages without prior permission.
3. Photos of adult members may be placed on the congregation's public website with their written consent. Recognizable photos of children in our congregation will not appear on the public site but may on the privacy protected site with written permission from the parent. This aspect of web policy will be explained to all members upon joining and will be published annually.
4. The following statement will be posted on the website:

This congregation respects the privacy of its members as well as that of visitors and friends. We understand that there are those who feel uncomfortable about having personal information, or information about their personal preferences disclosed, accidentally or otherwise. At no point does our web site capture or intend to disclose, accidentally or otherwise, personal data. Persons sending email to us will NOT be added to a mailing list, electronic or otherwise, without their request or permission.

The congregation does not take responsibility for, and does not necessarily agree with or support the opinions expressed and information provided at other websites which can be accessed by following links from our site.

Webmaster

The Congregational Administrator will act as webmaster. (Please see footnote 1 for webmaster's responsibilities.)

Developers

The Engagement and Outreach Coordinator will act as website content provider, editor, and web programmer. (Please see footnote 2 for the responsibilities of the developers.)

Reviewers

Other FUSIT staff members shall act as Website Reviewers. A person who is a Developer or the Webmaster may not be an independent reviewer of content that they have developed. (Please see footnote 3 for the responsibilities of Website Reviewers.)

FOOTNOTES

#1. The Webmaster shall:

1. Have overall authority and control of website administration.
2. Administer the website consistent with the congregation's mission and the Purposes and Principles of the UUA.
3. Act as a liaison to the organization currently hosting the website.
4. Act as a liaison to the Domain Name Service currently hosting our domain name.
5. Administer access to all parts of the website.
6. Coordinate development and delivery of content to be placed on the website.
7. Develop and maintain guidelines for the 'look and feel' of the website so that its appearance is consistent and access to information is logical.

8. Coordinate with Council members and various committees to allow opportunities for any committee to provide web content consistent with this policy.
 - 8a. Maintain a list of persons currently granted edit access to all or part of the website and make this list available for review by the Minister and Board of Trustees
 - 8b. Remove edit access from persons who are no longer actively serving the interests of the congregation. The Board of Trustees shall have final appeal authority concerning removal of edit access to the website.
9. Maintain a budget for web-related activities and report at least annually to the Treasurer regarding financial activities related to the website.
10. Remove web content that has been deemed inappropriate, subject to a review process.
11. Review this web policy annually prior to the annual congregational meeting, and provide a report to the Board of Trustees.
12. Ensure that the website policies outlined in this document are adhered to.
13. Have email that will usually be accessed daily and have convenient access to the Web.

#2. The Developer shall:

1. Understand and respect the limits of access to domains/web pages as designated.
2. Keep dynamic information current.
3. Deal with technical details of placing content on the web site.
4. Gather existing brochures, reports, pictures and histories for the site.
5. Act as liaison to Staff, Council and Committee members as appropriate.
6. Design the page layout for his or her areas of responsibility, consistent with look and feel of the overall web site as decided by the Webmaster. The Minister will arbitrate disputes should any occur in this area.
7. Develop web content consistent with the mission of this congregation and the Purposes and Principles of the UUA.
8. Create graphics as necessary (ensuring copyright laws are adhered to).
9. Work on continuously updating, expanding, and enhancing the web site.
10. Consult the Minister concerning content intended for the web site, which is of a questionable nature.
11. Maintain a list of members who desire that absolutely no public information about them be revealed on the website. Ensure that our website respects the rights and wishes of these and all members.

12. Be responsible for advertising website privacy policies to all members at least annually.
13. Create back-up copies of the website at least monthly.
14. Have email that will usually be accessed daily and have convenient access to the Web.

#3. The Web Site Reviewers shall:

1. Look at the site when changes are made and make suggestions, as appropriate, when a change might improve it.
2. Have email that will usually be accessed daily and have convenient access to the Web.

Mailing Lists

Announcement mailing lists: The congregation hosts one announcement mailing list to which anyone (members and friends of the congregation as well as others) may subscribe. Announcements may be posted to these lists only by the Congregational Administrator and should pertain to congregation business and events. Subscribers cannot post to the list, and it is not intended for online discussions.

Committee, Group or Board mailing lists: The congregation hosts various other church group mailing list to which members and friends of the congregation may be subscribed. Announcements may be posted to these lists only by the members of the list and should pertain to congregation business and events. Outside members and friends cannot post to the list, and it is not intended for online discussions.

Social Media Policy

Practicing Covenant

As Unitarian Universalists, we are bound by the promises we make to and with one another. In our engagement on social media we strive to maintain these promises. Here are some guidelines to help us do so.

Commonly Accepted Principles of Healthy Boundaries and Maintaining Covenant

1. Adults have more power than children and youth.
2. Clergy have more power than people with whom they have a pastoral relationship.
3. The mutuality of friendship cannot exist when there is a disparity of power.
4. Two unrelated adults must be able to maintain visual contact with each other any time they engage in ministry with children or youth.

5. Windows in doors allow transparency of interactions with children, youth and adults who may be vulnerable.

General Information about Digital Communications

1. All communication sent digitally (i.e. email, messages on social media sites, notes or posts, etc.) are not confidential and may be shared or reposted to others.
2. Interactions in the virtual world need to be transparent, just as a window in the door provides transparency in the physical world.
3. In the virtual world, healthy boundaries and Safeguarding God's People practices must be adhered to as they are in the physical world.
4. In the virtual world, "friend" can mean anyone with whom you are willing to communicate with through that medium. In the physical world, "friend" can mean much more in terms of intimacy, self-disclosure, mutuality and expectations for relationship.
5. Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse/neglect/exploitation of children, youth, elders and vulnerable adults apply in the virtual world as they do in the physical world.
6. Everything you post online is public and a part of your witness.
7. Clergy, especially, should not post if they are under the influence of alcohol.

Recommended Practices for Interactions with Children and Youth

Relationships on Social Media Sites

1. Adults who minister to children and youth are strongly encouraged to set stringent privacy settings on any social media profile, or to only post things they feel comfortable sharing with the youth to whom they minister. Individual personal profiles are to be used to interact with real friends, family and peers.
2. Adults should not submit friend requests to minors or youth. Youth may not be able to decline such requests due to the disparity of power between youth and adults. Youth may ask to be friends and adults should discern the level of contact they want to maintain with youth prior to responding to these requests.
3. If an adult chooses to accept friend requests from minors or youth who are associated with their faith community, other adult leaders must have full access to all aspects of that adult's profile and correspondence.
4. Adults who want to connect via a social media website with youth to whom they minister may want to set up a closed group account that youth may join. Youth requesting to friend an adult can then be invited to join this group rather than be accepted as a friend on an adult's personal profile account. The purpose of this is to create a line of privacy between youth and one's family, friends and colleagues.

Alternatively, the youth minister could also post only that which he or she feels comfortable sharing with the youth to whom he or she ministers.

5. Any material on any site (whether affiliated with the church or not) that raises suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited should be immediately reported to the clergy and/or the Child Protective Services (CPS). If the material is on a church affiliated site, that material should be documented for church records and then removed from the site after consultation with CPS and/or the police. The Tompkins County hotline is 1-800-342-3720 (toll-free, 24 hours/day).

Groups on Social Media Sites

1. Groups should have at least two unrelated adult administrators as well as at least two youth.

2. Closed groups, but not hidden groups, should be used for youth groups (OWL, administrators, COA, trips, etc.).

3. Invitations to youth to join the group should be made by youth administrators, unless a youth previously asked an adult administrator to invite another youth to join the group.

4. Behavioral covenants should be created to govern what content is appropriate and inappropriate for an online youth group.

5. Any material on any site (whether affiliated with the church or not) that raises suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited should be immediately reported to the clergy and/or CPS. If the material is on a church affiliated site, that material should be documented for church records and then removed from the site after consultation with CPS and/or police.

6. Inappropriate material that does not raise suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited should immediately be removed from the site.

7. Any content that details inappropriate behavior, which is outside of the bounds of the established behavioral covenant, during a church sponsored event or activity should be addressed by adult youth leaders and parents.

8. Social media groups for youth should be open to parents of current members.

9. Parents should be informed that the content of youth pages or groups that are not sponsored by the church are not within the purview of adult youth leaders.

10. Adult leaders of youth groups and former youth members who, due to departure, removal from position, or those who are no longer eligible because they aged-out of a program, should be removed from digital communication with youth groups via social media sites, list serves, etc. In some cases, the discretion of the youth minister must be trusted in this area.

Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Interactions with Adults Relationships on Social Media Sites

1. All individuals relating to one another on the church Facebook page should behave in the same way as they would during a fellowship moment at church. The atmosphere should be friendly, kind and safe. If anyone fails to maintain that friendly spirit, he/she will be asked to leave. Opinions are welcome, but nastiness is not.

Unacceptable activities

Proscribed activity on any Society list or social media site include, but are not limited to, the following.

1. Trolling - posting controversial messages aimed specifically at generating controversy and not honest discussion.
2. Mail bombing - inundating the list with many messages and no serious intent to correspond.
3. Signing up someone else to the list, without their knowledge or consent.
4. Flaming - sending angry email messages to others. Vigorous debate is encouraged, but if it threatens to become an argument, just agree to disagree and let it go. If necessary, wait 24 hours to reply to a message to ensure that you can respond appropriately. Remember to show respect for the worth and dignity of every person.
5. Inappropriate adult material or links (URL's) that lead to such material are prohibited. Our lists and social media sites are for all of our members. The participation of our young adults and minors is both encouraged and expected. The moderators and administrators will determine what constitutes "Adult Content."
6. Abuse of the Service. Abuse of service is any deliberate action by a list member that damages the computer system that manages the list or the computer systems of other list members.
7. Messages or posts which are not in alignment with the Principles of our Unitarian Universalist faith will not be tolerated.

Recommendations for Video Chats, Blogs or Video Blogs

1. Adults should refrain from initiating video chats with youth.
2. Participants in a video chat or blog should consider what will be shown in the video such as their surroundings, their clothing, state of dress, etc.
3. All transcripts of online text chats, video chats, blogs or video blogs should be saved when possible.
4. All clergy and adults engaged in ministry with youth should consider the content and nature of any post that will be read by or visible to youth. The voice of youth ministers and clergy is often considered the voice of the church.

Recommendations for Publishing/Posting Content Online

1. Congregations must inform participants when they are being recorded on video because church buildings are not considered public space.
2. Any faith community that distributes video of its worship services or activities on the web or via other broadcast media must post signs that indicate the service will be broadcast.
3. All communities of faith should take care to secure signed Media Release forms from adults and guardians of minor children who will, or may, participate in activities that may be photographed or videoed for distribution.
4. Photos that are published on church-sponsored sites should not include names or contact information for persons under 18.

Recommendations for Use of Email, Text Messaging & Twitter

1. Email can be an appropriate and effective means of communicating basic factual information such as the time of an event, agenda for a meeting, text of a document, etc.
2. Email may not be an appropriate communication method for matters that are pastorally or legally sensitive, emotionally charged or require extensive conversation.
3. If an email message is longer than a couple of paragraphs, then the matter might more properly be addressed via live conversation.
4. Humor and sarcasm can be easily misinterpreted in an email.

5. Take a moment to consider the ramifications of their message before clicking on the “send” or “reply all” button.

Cyber Security Policy