

Digital Communications Guidelines

Purpose

To establish healthy boundaries and accountability with regard to the official digital communication and communication channels for both internal and external communication at First Unitarian Society of Ithaca.

Our Covenant

First Unitarian Society of Ithaca adopts a covenant to sustain our commitment to each other, affirm our connections when we struggle, and form the foundation of our respectful relationships with each other and the world. As we communicate digitally, we strive to maintain these promises.

We covenant to:

Be together in community, guided by love and respect.

Be open, friendly, and welcoming to all.

Be engaged in congregational life.

Communicate compassionately, directly, and honestly.

Listen deeply and kindly to each other.

Believe in others' best intentions.

Support and inspire each other's quest for truth and meaning

Acknowledge, respect, and value our differences.

Work to serve our community's shared goals.

General Information about Digital Communications

We are now communicating digitally in a number of different ways including email, Facebook, listservs, and Twitter. Before engaging in any digital communication, please note:

1. Interactions in the virtual world are visible to all, are not confidential, and may be shared or re-posted to others.
2. In the virtual world, healthy boundary practices must be adhered to, as they are in the physical world.

3. Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse/neglect/exploitation of others apply in the virtual world, as they do in the physical world.
4. It is never advisable to post when under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Recommendations for the Use of Digital Communications

1. Digital communications can be an appropriate and effective means of communicating basic factual information, such as the time of an event, agenda for a meeting, or the text of a document.
2. They are generally not an appropriate communication method for matters that are pastorally or legally sensitive, emotionally charged, or require extensive conversation.
3. If a 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 social media.
5. Take time to consider the ramifications of a message before clicking on the “send” button.

Unacceptable Activities

All digital communications should be friendly, kind, and safe. Anyone failing to maintain that friendly spirit will be removed from further participation by the appointed monitor. Opinions are welcome, but nastiness is not. Some activities that are prohibited:

1. Trolling - posting controversial messages aimed specifically at generating controversy and dishonest discussion.
2. Mail bombing - inundating the list with many messages.
3. Signing up someone else to a listserv, without their knowledge or consent.
4. Flaming - sending angry email messages to others.
5. Inappropriate adult material or links (URL's) that lead to such material. Remember that our sites are open to all of our members, including young adults and minors.

6. Abuse of service (hacking) - 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 faith.

Harmful Digital Communications Act (HDCA) 2015

In addition to the information above, the HDCA has 10 communication principles which say a digital communication should not:

1. disclose sensitive personal facts about a person
2. be threatening, intimidating or menacing
3. be grossly offensive
4. be obscene or indecent
5. be used to harass a person
6. make a false allegation
7. break confidences
8. incite or encourage anyone to send a deliberately harmful message
9. incite or encourage a person to harm themselves or commit suicide
10. denigrate a person's color, race, ethnic or national origins, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or disability.

Any digital communication between church members or friends of FUSIT should follow these recommendations and be mindful of our covenant. Anyone who experiences a member acting disrespectfully, causing serious offenses that cannot be settled between them, is encouraged to report such activities to the Healthy Congregation Team, who will work toward resolving the issues.

Communication Policy Committee

8/30/22