

ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS POLICY - SOCIAL MEDIA, WEBSITE AND EMAIL

POLICY SUMMARY

The First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa (First U) recognizes the importance of the internet and social media in its communications with congregants and the outside community, including the value in communicating to potential attendees. The goal of this policy is to ensure we are using social media in a way that is consistent with our Unitarian Universalist principles and values and our congregational covenant, both within our congregation and to the wider community. This policy also identifies who can approve social media content as well as who can edit or remove content that is deemed inappropriate.

RATIONALE

We aspire, as a Unitarian Universalist (UU) congregation, to communicate what we believe through our online presence. We affirm and promote UU principles, including respect for the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and justice, equity and compassion in human relations. We welcome people from different faith backgrounds and value different beliefs and opinions that are consistent with our principles. Our online communications are expected to be consistent with our principles and values.

SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

This policy covers all on-line communications, including

- emails sent on behalf of FirstU or a committee, team or working group of FirstU
- our congregational website
- social media platforms (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, twitter) where we have an online presence
- messaging platforms (i.e. Facebook messenger, google messenger)
- other websites or social media platforms on which we are acting as First U
- related content, including videos, photos and podcasts.

DEFINITIONS

Designated individuals or moderator is any staff person or volunteer who has been designated by the Operations Manager as the moderator for a specific social media platform (e.g. Twitter) or for specific content on the website (e.g. Social Responsibility Coordinating Team or working group).

Content Provider is any staff person, volunteer or team designated by the Operations Manager to be responsible for the creation and where appropriate, posting, of specific content for the website or other social media.

POLICY DETAILS

1. General Expectations and Standards

i) All posts will reflect our Unitarian Universalist principles and the values and high standards of integrity of our Congregation.

- ii) FirstU's Privacy Policy will apply to all on-line postings. The confidential nature of commercial and personal information will be respected. Any questions about the confidentiality of information will be referred to the Operations Manager.
- iii) When posting, designated individuals will be mindful of laws governing copyright and fair use of copyrighted material. Quoted text will be attributed to its original source.
- iv) Designated individuals 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. CRA's policies on charitable organizations must also be respected, including ensuring no posting of material that may in any way be seen as partisan (i.e. supporting or opposing a specific political party or political candidate).
- v) All on-line communications, including emails, will respect our Congregational Covenant. Specific ways in which our covenant applies to on-line communications are outlined in Appendix A.
- vi) On-line communications will adhere to approved communication strategies and graphic standards as appropriate.
- vii) All social media and on-line communications must adhere to FirstU's Children and Youth policies, which strive to provide a safe environment for children and youth. (See
- viii) People who follow the social networks of designated individuals will not always see the distinction between an individual's personal life and their role at FirstU. Therefore, designated persons must carefully consider the content they post in any of their social media, and where confusion may exist, make it clear that they are expressing their personal opinions.
- ix) When a personal opinion is posted, this will be clearly noted. If designated as a representative of FirstU, or if FirstU 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 FirstU.

2. Website

FirstU's website is an important vehicle for sharing information among congregants and with the broader community.

Website Features

- i) In recognition of FirstU's commitment to inclusion, to the extent possible, the website will, be accessible to people with diverse abilities. The Web Team will, over time, strive to bring the website in full compliance with WCAG2.0 and the site will, as a minimum, have access comparable to that of other similar websites (e.g. CUC, other major Canadian UU congregations).
- ii) The website will use FirstU's branding features, including its logo, font and colour where appropriate.
- iii) Since many people find us through our website, every effort will be made to make the site as appealing and easy to navigate as possible. In keeping with best practices, the home page should include as a minimum, our name, our brand (logo), straightforward and intuitive navigation, a headline (our mission for example), a call to action (a prompt to delve deeper), social proof (success story), photos, text content

(example; what's happening this week) and a footer. To the best of the content provider's capability, the language of the website will also be kept to a grade 9 or below level (i.e. simple language, short, succinct sentences and ideas).

iv) The website content will include a Member's only section which allows for the retention and sharing of meeting minutes and other documents created and used by the Board, committees, teams and working groups. The Members Only area should have controlled access.

Website Roles and Responsibilities

i) The Web Working Group, under the direction of the Communications and Outreach Committee and with input from the Operations Manager, will be responsible for the technical development of the website and for ongoing technical maintenance and operation of the site.

ii) The Operations Manager has overall responsibility for ensuring that the content on FirstU's website is in keeping with the General Expectations and Standards outlined in this policy and for posting. Responsibility for content development and posting may be designated to Content Providers, including a Web Content Management Group which works closely with the Web Working Group under the direction of the Communications and Outreach Committee. The Content Providers will ensure that information is accurate and current.

iii) Designated staff members may create and post content for the portion of the website for which they are responsible (i.e. Music Director for music section of website; Director, Religious Exploration for religious exploration material), or they may designate another person to manage their website content.

iii) Regular reviews of the content and its structure will be undertaken by the Web Content Management Group reporting to the Communications and Outreach Committee. Suggestions for enhancement and changes will be made to the appropriate group.

3. Other Social Media Platforms

Other Social Media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) will be used in conjunction with the website for outreach to the broader community about FirstU's activities and values and where appropriate, will direct members of the public to the website for more information. Decisions on the use of social media platforms will be made by the Communications and Outreach Committee in consultation with the Operations Manager based on best practices and taking into consideration which platforms will have the largest reach.

Social media networks, blogs and other types of online content sometimes generate press and media attention or legal questions. Designated Individual/Moderators will refer these inquiries to the Operations Manager who will decide on the most appropriate course of action.

If a situation is encountered while using social media that threatens to become antagonistic, the Designated Individual/Moderator is expected to disengage from the dialogue in a polite manner and seek the advice of the Operations Manager.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Operations Manager may designate responsibility for moderating and posting to a social media platform to a Designated Individual/Moderator who will act in accordance with the General Expectations and Standards outlined in this policy and for posting.

4. Emails

Emails sent on behalf of FirstU or a committee, team or working group of FirstU will respect the expectations of our On-line Communications Covenant outlined in Appendix A.

5. Removal of Content from the Website and Social Media Platforms

Any content deemed to be not in adherence with the General Expectations and Standards outlined above may be deemed inappropriate to be posted on FirstU's website or social media platform. Any person (i.e. Congregant, leadership or staff) may request that inappropriate content be removed via oral or electronic means. The Operations Manager or the Designated Moderator for the particular social media platform has the authority to decide if content is inappropriate and remove it if needed. Where the appropriateness of the content is questionable or its removal is expected to lead to repercussions, the Minister will be consulted prior to removal of the content.

The Operations Manager or the Designated Moderator will also have the authority to deny a specific originator access to the social media platform or on-line forum provided warnings have first been issued. It is understood that in an extreme case, denial of access may take place without warning.

The Operations Manager will advise the Executive Committee of all denials or removed postings, in a manner and schedule determined by the Executive Committee.

A record of all warnings, posting deletions and denials will be retained.

An individual denied access may be reinstated when they have agreed to reasonable measures intended to assure they will abide by the standards, expectations and covenant. Reinstatement and applicable terms will be determined by the Executive Committee.

It is important to note that any and all public information about First U has a bearing on the way in which it is perceived. If unauthorized persons are acting on First U's behalf whether for nefarious reasons or not needs to be acted on and removal requested by the service provider as soon as possible.

AUTHORITIES

The Board, upon the recommendation of the Communications and Outreach Committee and with input from the Operations Manager, will approve the initial design of, and any major changes to, FirstU's website.

The Operations Manager has responsibility for overseeing the implementation of this policy and ensuring that FirstU's on-line communications are in line with this policy.

MONITORING AND REPORTING

The Operations Manager will monitor implementation of this policy and will bring any issues to the attention of the Minister and Executive Committee who will decide on the course of action.

8. WHO IS CONSULTED IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND AMENDMENT OF THIS POLICY

Operations Manager, Minister, Communications and Outreach Committee, Web Working Group, current social media moderators

WHO DRAFTED THIS POLICY

Governance Committee (Eva Berringer) with Operations Manager (Jen Brennan) and Board Liaison to the Communications and Outreach Committee and Web Working Group (Amy Bérubé)

WHO REVIEWS AND DRAFTS UPDATES AND AMENDMENTS TO THIS POLICY

Communications and Outreach Committee, Operations Manager

WHO APPROVES THIS POLICY?

Board of Directors

DATE OF INITIAL APPROVAL: June 19, 2019

REVISION HISTORY

Revision Date	Version	Comments

OUR COVENANT FOR ON-LINE COMMUNICATIONS

Our Congregational Covenant requires that we nurture our relationships with each other by, among other things, creating an inclusive, welcoming and safe space. Recognizing that on-line communications form a significant part of our community's interactions, we consent to and accept measures that ensure our on-line communications are clearly understood and accepted as intended.

- We recognize that our on-line communications can have a unique impact when compared to face-to-face or vocal communications. With the absence of vocal tone and body language, on screen messages can be harsher and not convey our true intent. We 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.
- We know that the wider community, including members, friends and visitors of First Unitarian may 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.
- We accept the following as measures of the appropriateness of on-line communication, both in the way they are sent and received:
 - o Is respect and reason present in our on-line communications?
 - o Is the appropriate tone and language used?
 - o Is the on-line communication unnecessarily aggressive and/or argumentative, rather than being explanatory, clear and respectful?
 - o Is the on-line communication, based on reasonable standards and analysis, aggressive, confrontational or disruptive to activities and/or relationships in the congregation?
- We respect someone who notes that we have not chosen an appropriate communication medium for particular topics. Should this be received, we, as originator of the communication, will contact that person directly to resolve the matter through off-line discussions.
- We call upon one another to present our best selves in 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 each other.
- We recognize that failure to comply with this covenant may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of an individual's relationship with FirstU. Principles of fairness and due process will apply.