



Communications Guidelines for First United Methodist Church, Lancaster, PA

Date Updated: May 30, 2017

Introduction: The following guidelines are intended to enhance all communications regarding news, events, and information about First United Methodist Church, Lancaster. This is a working document and it will be updated and changed as needed. Staff and ministry leaders need to be familiar with these as it will enhance their ability to communicate the ministries of First United Methodist Church both internally and externally.

All communications must be approved by the Director of Communications (currently Pastor Kerry Leeper) at First Church. The Director of Communications can answer all your questions regarding communications at the church, including the weekly church bulletin, the monthly church newsletter, weekly email blasts, the church website, Facebook, voice mail at the church, Sunday morning announcements (requests must be made to the senior pastor for these announcements), advertising, and all other communications for First Church. All suggestions for communications are welcomed by the Director of Communications.

Submissions and Editing: Expect that your submissions will be edited for content and layout. The editor(s) will do their best not to omit important details. To reduce omissions, it will help you to edit your own work and ask someone else to review your work for feedback before submitting it to the communications director. It is important to consider adding digital media, especially images and photographs, to your submissions. All photographs of individuals must have a Media Release Form accompany the submission (unless we have one on file).
Note: All written submissions for any publication must be in Microsoft Word format.

Deadlines: Deadlines are listed below for each communication piece. For example, you will find deadlines for the bulletin in the section describing the bulletin. Deadlines are firm. Do not wait to submit your request until the deadline date. Not all submissions (even those that meet deadlines) are guaranteed to make a publication. It is best to send your event information as soon as you are able.

Sometimes publication dates change. If that happens, every effort will be made to notify all staff and ministry leaders.

How to reach the Director of Communications:

Email: communications@engagegodfirst.org

Phone: 717.394.7231 x.306

The Weekly Church Bulletin:

- Purpose: The primary function of the weekly bulletin is to guide worship. Its secondary function is to communicate church events. Other mediums exist through which to communicate. You are encouraged to use as many of them as are appropriate.
- Deadline for submissions: Wednesday at noon for the Sunday upcoming. Exceptions: Weeks with holidays, or weeks when the secretary is absent. Submissions typically will be required those weeks by Monday at 3pm. If in doubt, ask.
- Limitation: Submissions are not guaranteed to run in the bulletin. Space restrictions and multiple submissions require priorities to be made. The decision of the Director of Communications is final on these matters. Note: Bulletin submissions will run for a maximum of 2 weeks, with the potential of 3 weeks if space permits. The Director of Communications will gladly talk with you about which weeks would be best for running your announcement.
- Submissions should be made to the Church Secretary, Devon Key, secretary@engagegodfirst.org and the Director of Communications, Kerry Leeper, communications@engagegodfirst.org

The Monthly Church Newsletter:

- Purpose: The primary function of the newsletter is to communicate the upcoming happenings of the church, as well as to recap events and ministries that have taken place throughout the recent month.
- Deadline for submissions: All newsletter articles must be submitted by the 14th of the month prior to the month in which an article is requested to run. For example, to submit an article for the August newsletter, the article must be submitted by the 14th of July.
- Limitation: Submissions are not guaranteed to run in the newsletter. As much as we would like to publish all submissions, space restrictions and multiple submissions from various ministry areas require priorities to be made. The decision of the Director of Communications is final on these matters.
- Submissions should be made to the Church Secretary, Devon Key, secretary@engagegodfirst.org and the Director of Communications, Kerry Leeper, communications@engagegodfirst.org

Advertising in External Publications:

If you or your ministry team wish to have an event advertised in an external publication, you will need to submit a request to the Director of Communications. These publications include and are not limited to Newspaper, Magazine, Websites, Community Calendars, etc.

Weekly Email Blasts:

- Purpose: The primary functions of email blasts is to communicate events and happenings that are upcoming, to provide a way for people to connect to and volunteer at First Church, and to provide a way for church members to share easily with others what is happening at First Church. Thus, email not only informs, but it also invites people to join and connect to the church. Email is easily forwarded and shared, and it can link to other mediums such as the church website, so it is an excellent tool to meet these functions.
- Types of Email: There are two primary email blasts that will be sent each week, as well as other email blasts that will not run every week. Here is a list of the types:
 - Monday morning emails will be sent. These emails are intended to communicate the happenings and events of the church. These can include a variety of announcements and volunteer opportunities. Think ministry events and needs as well as general announcements and invitations when considering submitting for the Monday email blast.
 - Invitation to Sunday (Invitation to Worship and Mission) emails will be sent Saturday each week (occasionally they will be sent on a Friday). These emails will outline and highlight the events of Sunday morning (Worship and Christian Formation), and seek to communicate one mission opportunity through which people can become involved.
 - Ministry specific emails: Some ministries send ministry specific emails. For example, youth ministry, family and children ministries, and Anchorage all send ministry specific emails to pre-defined groups they have established. Ministry leaders can build their own email groups and develop a useful way of connecting to and communication with their constituencies through these types of email.
 - Occasional email blasts communicating single news announcements, events, etc., will be approved and sent solely at the discretion of the Director of Communications.
- Deadline for submissions: Email blast submissions may be made any time. However, they must be submitted a minimum of 5 days prior to the time you want your material to appear in an email. For example, to have an announcement appear in the Monday email, the submission must happen no later 9:00 am the previous Wednesday.
 - Note: Ministry specific emails must be submitted for editing to the Director of Communications 2 days prior to their scheduled send date.
- Submissions should be made to the Church Secretary, Devon Key, secretary@engagegodfirst.org and the Director of Communications, Kerry Leeper, communications@engagegodfirst.org

Sunday Morning Announcements:

- Purpose: Sunday morning announcements are intended to point to a few upcoming and important events or opportunities to serve in or through the church. These announcements should direct people to other places, such as, the church bulletin, the website, etc. for more information.
- Submissions should be made to the Senior Pastor at jdipaolo@engagegodfirst.org no later than the Thursday prior to the Sunday in which something is to be announced. These announcements are solely at the discretion of the Senior Pastor.

Facebook:

- Purpose: The primary function of Facebook (FB) for the church is to communicate events, messages, and other brief announcements that people can easily connect to and share with others.
- Types of FB posts: FB posts can be wide ranging in nature. They can include posting a prayer, Scripture passage, event, a link to volunteer or connect to an event, announcement of needs for a ministry, among many other kinds of posts. Posts should be brief and be reflective of the mission of the church.
- Submissions should be made to the Church Secretary, Devon Key, secretary@engagegodfirst.org and the Director of Communications, Kerry Leeper, communications@engagegodfirst.org

The Church Website:

- Purpose: The website's purpose is comprehensive and is intended to communicate to all constituencies of First Church. Therefore, the website has the following priorities: (1) to communicate to those seeking a church and to provide enough information for them to easily find our physical location as well as make informed choices about the kinds of places they want to intersect with First Church; (2) to communicate the ministries, missions, worship and learning opportunities, events, and happenings at First Church to church members, potential members, and guests; (3) to help church members connect to one another; and, (4) to help people find avenues through which they can volunteer and serve in and through their church community.
- Deadline for submissions – Website submissions must be submitted a minimum of 10 days prior to the time you want your material to appear on the website.
- Limitation – Website submissions are not guaranteed for posting. At times, website submissions could be deemed inappropriate for the church website. If that is the case, the person who submitted the post will be informed.
- Submissions should be made to the Director of Communications at communications@engagegodfirst.org

Annual Report:

- Purpose: The primary function of the Annual Report is to communicate to recap events and ministries that have taken place throughout the previous year. This should report is intended to accurately reflect how the mission of First UM Church was accomplished in the previous year. Ministry team leaders should be reflecting on the mission of the church and writing a recap of those events in order to be added to the Annual Report.
- Deadline for submissions: November 15 each year.
 - Exceptions for deadline: December 30 is the deadline for all events and reports that happen between November 15 and December 30. January 12 is the deadline for the end of year Financial Review.
- Submissions should be made to the Church Secretary, Devon Key, secretary@engagegodfirst.org and the Director of Communications, Kerry Leeper, communications@engagegodfirst.org