

# United Methodist Church of Geneva Communications Policy Draft

April 7, 2014

## Introduction

The United Methodist Church of Geneva (UMCG) is a Great Commandment Church. We seek to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Clear, concise, appropriate communications are necessary in the pursuit of our mission to make and nurture disciples of Jesus Christ who serve the community and the world.

## Purpose

This policy establishes guidelines for communications within UMCG and is intended to:

- a) Ensure consistent, timely, effective and appropriate communications to all members, attendees, guests and the community.
- b) Protect the privacy of all parties.
- c) Identify the infrastructure (people & responsibilities) for UMCG communications.
- d) Maximize the impact of the budgeted resources approved for communications.

## Scope

This policy should be applied to any communication created by a staff member, committee member, ministry leader, UMCG member or regular attendee, or any external organization representing UMCG and its mission and ministry.

## General Guidelines

- All proposed communications shall be copied to the UMCG Director of Communications (DoC) by hard copy or email via **communications@genevaumc.org**. This group email address is sent to the DoC, Director of Administrative Ministries (DoAM) and the Administrative Assistant.
- Prior approval may be required for some forms of communication as outlined in this policy.
- Communications should be in keeping with the mission and vision of UMCG.
- Construct communication pieces using the style guide and templates provided by the UMCG Communications Committee to ensure consistent appearance.
- Deadlines for and timing of communications vary by type of media and are defined within each section.
- Legal, proper, church name:
  - United Methodist Church of Geneva
  - UMC of Geneva
  - UMCG

## Prioritization of Communications

In order to effectively utilize our limited resources of space, time and funds, communication requests may be denied, postponed or communicated in a different way than requested.

Prioritization of all communication requests will occur in the following order.

1. UMCG events, studies, meetings, worship, committee and ministry information prioritized by timeliness as determined by staff.
2. UMCG ministry partners.
3. United Methodist events or information from conference, national or global levels.
4. Ministries or events supported by UMCG members and regular attendees, but not necessarily endorsed by UMCG will be promoted at the discretion of UMCG staff.\*
5. Community happenings and other requests from outside organizations will be promoted at the discretion of UMCG staff.\*

\*When promoting Non-UMCG information:

- The DoC, in consultation with staff and/or Communications Committee when necessary, will determine what is appropriate for communicating each request as it relates to the values and mission of UMCG.

# United Methodist Church of Geneva Communications Policy Draft

April 7, 2014

## **Privacy**

UMCG is committed to maintaining every individual's privacy.

- Our secure database of members, attendees and guests is referred to as ConneX. Each profile may contain administrative information and indicate a person's areas of interest and involvement within UMCG.
  - All reasonable measures will be taken to safeguard the confidentiality of information which includes, but is not limited to names, home addresses, phone numbers, e-mail listings, and other contact information.
  - All such information may be used only for communications related to the activities of the church, staff, committees, or sponsored groups. It cannot be used to communicate events or activities which are not church-related.
- Photographs of children and youth will be used only if a parent/guardian has indicated permission on the Children's Ministry Registration form or otherwise given permission. Additionally, further specific permission is required to use the names of children/youth.

## **General Office Phone Message**

- Definition: Outbound message and instructions which callers receive when reaching the church telephone system by calling the general number.
- DoC and DoAM will oversee a quarterly audit and test of the general phone message and prompts that redirect callers to a specific extension.
- DoC and DoAM will make joint decision on any changes needed to message's content quarterly.

## **ConneX**

- The ConneX system is our database which includes member, attendee and guest contact information and has features such as an online directory, calendar and groups.
- There are private administrative, committee, ministry and school age groups within ConneX which contain the individuals associated with these specific areas.
- These groups are accessible only by the church staff and members of that specific group.
- Committee and ministry leaders are encouraged to utilize their ConneX groups to communicate with their ministry volunteers and participants in the following ways:
  - Send a mail merge or group email and/or print out a mail merge letter and mailing labels.
  - Schedule their meetings or events, request meeting space and resources, and take advantage of the RSVP feature within the group's event calendar.
  - Committee chairs and ministry leaders should use discretion regarding the frequency of messages sent. DoC, Communications Committee or staff may rescind this privilege if deemed necessary.
- For orientation and training on how to use these features, contact the DoC at [communications@genevaumc.org](mailto:communications@genevaumc.org).

## United Methodist Church of Geneva Communications Policy Draft

April 7, 2014

### Verbal Announcements During Worship

- The intent of verbal announcements during worship is to highlight to the congregation important opportunities and to connect a person with that opportunity.
- As a rule verbal announcements will be limited to three per worship service.
- All announcements shall be submitted in writing either via email to [communications@genevaumc.org](mailto:communications@genevaumc.org) or by submitting a hard copy to the office.
- First three requests receive priority. (Exceptions at the discretion of pastors and staff.)
- Length of announcement – 30 second maximum.
- Communications Committee shall provide each committee and ministry leader with guidelines on how to make an effective, appropriate verbal announcement in a worship setting.
- DoC and Communications Committee will conduct a quarterly audit of verbal announcements. Adjustments made as needed.
- Deadline: Wednesday at noon.

### Bulletin Announcements

- Announcements and general information for the congregation may be included in a brief article in the weekly bulletin announcements.
- Brief articles shall be submitted in writing via email to [communications@genevaumc.org](mailto:communications@genevaumc.org) or a hard copy delivered to the office, attn: DoC.
- Articles will be edited for space constraints and/or varied audiences.
- Information shall be included in the order it is received. Staff will consider exceptions according to our aforementioned priorities and timeliness of event/ministry information.
- Deadline – Wednesday at noon.

### E-Newsletter

- The weekly e-Newsletter shall be sent to all registered UMCG recipients on Thursdays under the supervision of the DoC.
- Announcements and general information may be included in the e-newsletter.
- Requests for information to be included in the weekly e-news shall be sent to [communications@genevaumc.org](mailto:communications@genevaumc.org) by Wednesday at noon.

### Monthly Newsletter

- Worship schedule, event details, ministry announcements and personal stories of God's work through the people of UMCG are appropriate for the monthly newsletter.
- Submit article and details via email to [communications@genevaumc.org](mailto:communications@genevaumc.org) or hard copy delivered to the office, attn: Dir. Communications.
- Messenger limited to 12 pages. Exceptions at discretion of DoC, e.g. September newsletter requires additional pages to include fall program information.
- Priorities determined as outlined earlier. Prioritization of space may be subject to the inclusion of general interest faith sharing stories at discretion of DoC.
- Page(s) of Messenger may be devoted to general community events, if space allows.
- Deadline – Generally the third Wednesday by noon. However, deadline varies each month. Please check UMCG calendar for exact deadline.

## United Methodist Church of Geneva Communications Policy Draft

April 7, 2014

### Bulletin Boards

Bulletin boards are anchored to the interior walls and are located throughout our building. The bulletin boards should illustrate the relationships within the UMCG community and between the UMCG community and local or global organizations. Images of people enhance their impact and help tell our story.

### Committee or Ministry Specific Bulletin Boards

- Each committee or ministry may be assigned a specific bulletin board to use for its communications and publicity purposes.
- Decisions on what information will be posted on a specific committee / ministry board are at the discretion of the chairperson or leader of the specific committee / ministry.
- Communication Committee shall make an annual audit of bulletin board use and allocation of space and may designate which committees and/or ministries use which bulletin boards.

### General Bulletin Boards

- Bulletin boards not designated for a specific committee or ministry are referred to as general bulletin boards and will be utilized under the direction of the DoC and the Communications Committee.
- Communications for placement on the general bulletin boards shall be submitted via email to [communications@genevaumc.org](mailto:communications@genevaumc.org) or a hard copy delivered to the office, attn: DoC and shall be approved by staff prior to placement on general bulletin boards.
- Communications placed on the general bulletin boards may be posted for three weeks.
- An **In-the-News** bulletin board shall be designated by the Communications Committee for the purpose of sharing newspaper or other media clippings of individuals from our congregation. Postings shall be approved by staff.
- A **Community Happenings** bulletin board shall be designated by the Communications Committee for the purpose of sharing information regarding non-UMCG events and organizations. It will clearly state that the information posted is not officially endorsed by UMCG. Any information posted:
  - Shall be approved by the staff and may remain posted for three weeks.
  - May include events or activities supported by, or of interest to, a UMCG member or regular attendee.
  - May include events or activities which community organizations have asked UMCG to promote.
- Deadline: Wednesday at noon to receive staff approval for communication piece to be placed on bulletin board for the following Sunday.

## United Methodist Church of Geneva Communications Policy Draft

April 7, 2014

### Posters / Flyers

- Posters and flyers used to communicate UMCG events, ministries or announcements both on UMCG general bulletin boards in our building or in community businesses shall be approved and stamped by a staff member prior to posting.
- Poster and flyers for non-UMCG events and organizations shall adhere to our prioritization as outlined above and be approved by staff for placement on our Community Happenings bulletin board.
- Posters and flyers may only be placed on bulletin boards and not directly on the walls. Exceptions at the discretion of staff and/or Communications Committee.
- Posters and flyers promoting an event or soliciting donations or resources shall be posted for no longer than three weeks.
- Committee or ministry areas are responsible for removing their posters / flyers within a week after the event has occurred.
- No poster or flyer will be permitted to be placed on the glass at the building entrances.
  - Possible exception - emergency, temporary signage, such as an alert regarding a canceled event or change in location or schedule. These temporary signs may bypass staff approval.

### Brochures

- Printed brochures are useful for guests and those not familiar with UMCG.
- Brochures should be filled with photos that depict UMCG and our congregation, use minimal text, and direct the reader to visit the website at [www.genevaumc.org](http://www.genevaumc.org) for further information.
- Committee or ministry specific brochures shall be designed according to the style guide and templates set forth by the Communication Committee.
- Brochures may be distributed at the discretion of staff, committee chair or ministry leader.

### Website

- The UMCG website is a first stop for guests and shall be designed with the non-UMCG person in mind.
- The website is also useful to UMCG insiders. It houses our calendar as well as current bulletin announcements, downloadable forms and event details.
- UMCG's Web Team, under the supervision of the Dir. of Communications and the Communications Committee, shall maintain the UMCG website.
- Committees and ministry leaders may request information to be included on the website by sending an email to [WebTeam@genevaumc.org](mailto:WebTeam@genevaumc.org) or [communications@genevaumc.org](mailto:communications@genevaumc.org). Please allow for a one week lead time for the information to be posted on the website.

## United Methodist Church of Geneva Communications Policy Draft

April 7, 2014

### Newspaper Press Release

- Press releases provide event information to press and media outlets to communicate event or other information to the general community beyond UMCG.
- Venues for press releases include printed papers as well as online papers.
- To maximize the likelihood of the information being printed, press releases should be submitted at least four weeks prior to the event or desired publish date.
- Committees or ministry areas that submit a press release to media outlets shall copy the DoC by email or hard copy.
- The Communications Committee is available to provide assistance in submitting press releases to local press and media outlets.

### Congregational Mailing

- Congregational mailings can be personalized letters to the whole congregation or a targeted subset.
- Currently limited to pastoral letters plus stewardship materials and communications.
- Additional congregational mailings shall be evaluated for appropriateness by the DoC and the Communications Committee on an as needed basis.

### Youtube Story Project

The Story Project has its own infrastructure and guidelines under supervision of Associate Pastor. Story Project consists of one-on-one interviews designed with three goals in mind:

1. To communicate individual's connection to UMCG.
2. To communicate God's transforming work in their lives.
3. To convey a faith story.

Story Project is NOT a commercial and is not intended to solicit support for ministries or events. More information is available from the Associate Pastor.

### Social Media

Currently, the use of social media is limited to staff on a case by case basis using the "Three Simple Guidelines for Social Media" developed by UMCG's Staff Parish Relations Committee. *See attachment.*

At this time UMCG's use of social media is in its infancy and experimental. We recognize social media can be effective as a broader ministry which needs its own set of acceptable use guidelines as well as its own team of capable, trained volunteers to manage the rapidly changing nature of social media. As interest in this area arises, additional policy work will be needed.

## Three Simple Guidelines for Social Media

The United Methodist Church of Geneva

We, the staff and lay leadership of the United Methodist Church of Geneva, acknowledge and support the use of social media as a valuable tool for ministry. We affirm these guidelines and will support and promote the responsible use of social media. Through social media, we support a common purpose to positively represent the UMC Geneva, the Gospel, and Jesus Christ.

<b><i>Do No Harm</i></b>	<b><i>Do Good</i></b>	<b><i>Love the Lord</i></b>
<p>One of the benefits of social media is that it provides the opportunity to share views, thoughts, joys and concerns about all areas of life. Our social media contributions can be very effective tools for ministry if we are careful to apply caution before we post. We will be careful that our posts are not “doing harm” by insulting or damaging the reputation of others. We will make sure our posts are respectful and in good taste. And we remember: Everything we post – status updates, comments, tweets, blogs - becomes public immediately after we hit “send” (even if we’re using a limited access setting). Once sent, we can’t take back comments that we’ve made so we’ll use common sense and discretion with everything we post.</p> <p><b>Consider this:</b> Is the post “doing harm” to the reputation of the church, Christ or another person or organization?</p> <p>Can the post be interpreted as harmful, age-inappropriate, offensive, rude, or distasteful?</p> <p>If the post is intended as an outlet to vent, is there a more productive or less public way to do so?</p> <p>Are my online contributions of an appropriate length, tone and frequency so not to inadvertently annoy others?</p>	<p>Social media is one of the most effective methods of church networking and communicating today. When used properly, it can have a significant encouraging influence on our readers and become a powerful tool for delivering the Gospel message to a large audience that extends beyond our contact list. It is a great tool for networking and providing the world with news about our church and ministry. It is also a very useful tool for obtaining feedback and ideas from our audience and can be used to gain insight for sermons, Bible study topics, worship times, needs of the community, etc. The “good” and positive uses of social media are endless.</p> <p><b>Consider this:</b> Can the post be described as “good”?</p> <p>Does it make and nurture disciples of Christ? Does it support UMC Geneva’s commitment to open our hearts, minds and doors to all?</p> <p>How will the post be perceived by non-believers or people of different cultural or faith backgrounds?</p>	<p>Social media is a great way to find meaningful devotional materials, thought provoking blogs, inspiring worship videos and media resources, as well as current articles and tools to support our church work. Users have reported that their social media usage helps keep them informed and enthusiastic about their ministries. While social media can definitely help us focus on our love of God, it can also become very distracting. We will make sure our use of social media does not occupy so much of our time that we are no longer engaging in meaningful devotion, study, conversation and worship times. Social media can serve as a tool to aid and promote studies and devotional times but should not be our primary source of interaction with the world.</p> <p><b>Consider this:</b> How is social media helping me foster my love of the Lord? How is it hindering me?</p> <p>How am I helping others stay in love with God by my social media contributions?</p>

### R E M E M B E R

**Our character and faith are reflected in each post we make.  
If we’re not sure about something, we won’t post it.**