

# ***Web and Email Policy for OUUF.org***

## **1 Purpose**

The purposes of the web site and email lists include:

- 1.1 to provide current information about OUUF's mission, organization, ideas and events, activities, and opportunities to members, potential members, friends, visitors and the larger community
- 1.2 to facilitate internal communication of Board and administrative decisions to members and friends (defined here as regularly-attending and /or giving non-members)
- 1.3 to provide external communication to others who are subscribed (those planning on moving to the area, visitors, friends of the Fellowship, other congregations in our community or District) so potential members can observe what we stand for and what our collective personality is
- 1.4 to provide historical documents for review (growth planning, archives/history, committee reports, Board Minutes, bylaws, previous budgets, newsletters, etc.)
- 1.5 to provide social opportunities and community-building

## **2 Email Policy**

Email Lists are inherently not private. For those with concerns about email privacy, using an alternate or "throw-away" email address that does not reveal one's name is a possibility for subscriptions to email lists.

- 2.1 Create an alternate email address with Gmail or Hotmail (links)

<http://www.gmail.com>, <http://www.hotmail.com>. Certain officers may also use addresses in the ouuf.org domain, such as [minister@ouuf.org](mailto:minister@ouuf.org) or [dre@ouuf.org](mailto:dre@ouuf.org), which can be set up to forward email to one's personal address. This is primarily intended for community use, so the minister may be subscribed to an Oberlin area mailing list without our having to change or update such a list should the minister change.

- 2.2 Application for new email list for your committee (link)

OUUF uses Google Apps for Non-Profits for its email and lists. New email lists (Google Groups) can easily be created for your committee. Email [webmaster@ouuf.org](mailto:webmaster@ouuf.org) with details on the purpose of the mailing list, who will be responsible for updating list membership, whether everyone should be permitted to send to the list or if it is closed to list members only, and if the list is for a temporary purpose, when it expires and may be deleted.

- 2.3 Roster of local OUUF email lists currently in use, and summary of purpose (link)

<a href="mailto:Associates@ouuf.org">Associates@ouuf.org</a>	Worship Associates team discussions
<a href="mailto:Board@ouuf.org">Board@ouuf.org</a>	Board of Trustees only
<a href="mailto:Chalice@ouuf.org">Chalice@ouuf.org</a>	Newsletter distribution list
<a href="mailto:com@ouuf.org">com@ouuf.org</a>	Committee on Ministry

<a href="mailto:communications@ouuf.org">communications@ouuf.org</a>	Communications Committee
<a href="mailto:council@ouuf.org">council@ouuf.org</a>	Committees Council
<a href="mailto:CRT@ouuf.org">CRT@ouuf.org</a>	Class and Race Team
<a href="mailto:Forum@ouuf.org">Forum@ouuf.org</a>	Discussion group on Forums (?)
<a href="mailto:Friends@ouuf.org">Friends@ouuf.org</a>	Like Info, but temporary
<a href="mailto:Info@ouuf.org">Info@ouuf.org</a>	Pink Sheet distribution list
<a href="mailto:Mailbox@ouuf.org">Mailbox@ouuf.org</a>	Incoming eMail
<a href="mailto:Minsearch@ouuf.org">Minsearch@ouuf.org</a>	Ministerial Search Committee
<a href="mailto:officers@ouuf.org">officers@ouuf.org</a>	BoT, leadership, other team leaders
<a href="mailto:socjust@ouuf.org">socjust@ouuf.org</a>	Social Justice Committee
<a href="mailto:welcong@ouuf.org">welcong@ouuf.org</a>	Welcoming Congregation Committee

- 2.4 Newsletter and Announcements email lists - The largest email list goes to ~100 members and friends, but every time they feel abused (translation: more than one message a week), there is at least one comment or unsubscription. Thus, you may ask for extra messages to go out either due to importance, errors in the original, or due to forgetting to put it in the Pink Sheet, but there is a "cost" and the editor may refuse to comply after weighing those costs.
- 2.5 We can send the newsletter to our blind members in RTF format upon request, so their screen-readers (a computer program that reads the newsletter aloud to them) can read it. (Some PDFs are readable, others are not.)
- 2.6 Email "Netiquette" (adapted from [philsego.com/listserv.htm](http://philsego.com/listserv.htm))

Good email manners are as important as good social skills. As email has developed quickly, many people aren't aware of the small subtleties that have developed in email-based communications. This guide isn't a list of commandments; it's just a partial list of social expectations. People won't (usually) harass you if you violate netiquette.

The role of the list manager is to make the vast majority of the subscribers happy; losing subscribers is a last resort. If it's unmanaged, it's more difficult, as just like in "real life," it's considered rude to correct people for netiquette violations. Habitual offenders of netiquette will typically wind up in people's "bozo" filters.

### **Don't use obscure "insider" abbreviations or obscure smilies**

Most people know LOL (laughing out loud), TIA (thanks in advance), ROTFL (rolling on the floor laughing), FWIW (for what it's worth), IMHO (in my humble opinion), BTW (by the way). But don't assume that everyone knows them.

### **Asking a question of one person - and cc'ing others**

If your message can be answered by one person, cc'ing others is considered bad netiquette. Are you doing it because you don't know who has the correct answer - and therefore asking/interrupting a zillion folks for *your* convenience? Are you tired of "Bob" ignoring your emails and you believe if you cc others that Bob will be *bullied* into

replying? Either reason may feel valid to you - but interrupting others for your personal convenience is just not cool.

### **Look your best**

Without visual cues, people will view your grammar, spelling, and punctuation just as people view your attire and hygiene. Be sure your text is clear and logical without misspellings. But remember that it's possible to write a paragraph that contains no errors in grammar or spelling, but still makes no sense. If you have language difficulties, compose offline and use your word processor's spell/grammar checker. If English is not your first language, do your best. Other posters will respect your efforts.

### **Volume of email**

Recognize that many people (like me) get 100+ emails a day. It's therefore considered rude to pack people's email boxes with unimportant materials.

### **Should I really say that?**

Never say anything in an email that you don't want to see in tomorrow morning's newspaper.

### **Who will receive my email?**

In *Real Life*, one would never publicly say something nasty without first looking up to see if the object of your criticism is in front of you. But people often reply to emails without checking who's in the cc line. This doesn't only apply to criticism - it also applies to company secrets, private matters, and privileged communications.

### **Forwarding something you got via email**

**NEVER NEVER NEVER pass along email that was sent to you privately.** The only exception would be email sent by a public official or office *and done so IN AN OFFICIAL CAPACITY*. It is wrong to post a private source's email address without their permission. Giving credit to your private source ("from 'M' who works in the White House") is good form - but NOT their whole email address. Your error can cost someone their job - or worse.

### **Plagiarism is wrong**

If you pass along someone else's post as your own, you are plagiarizing. Briefly credit your source. Don't list their entire email address unless they've posted it to this group (see above) or they are a public official. If someone sends you an unattributed lengthy and beautifully written 'column', consider doing a quick web search before posting it. You may find that it was written by Dave Barry or another columnist, and has copyright protection.

### **Don't use ALL CAPS**

All-caps translates as SHOUTING. To emphasize a word or phrase, enclose it with \*asterisks\*.

**Adhere to the same high standards (or higher) of behavior online that you follow in real life.**

In real life, most people are fairly polite and law abiding. The same rules of behavior are expected on any list.

### **Quoting messages**

It is bad netiquette, for example, to quote a 50 line message with only a few words of original text. It is also bad form to fail to quote a message on which you are commenting. And lastly, it is bad form to delete sections or text from a message to which you are responding - unless you use the device [snip], [cut], [text deleted], an ellipsis (...) or something like that.

### **Don't use vague subjects**

Use descriptive and specific subject lines. This helps others decide whether your particular words of wisdom relate to a topic they care about. Likewise, don't just reply to any old message to start a new discussion without changing the subject line as well.

### **Know what you're talking about and make sense**

Pay attention to the content of your writing. Be sure you know what you're talking about -- when you see yourself writing "it's my understanding that" or "I believe it's the case," ask yourself whether you really want to post this note before checking your facts. You can always ask "is it true that...?"

### **Adding names**

Never add people to a mailing list without their consent. Not only is this a violation of netiquette, it is a violation of your ISP's (Google Apps) Acceptable Use Policy and could wind up having your account revoked.

### **Adding recipients to an ongoing discussion**

If you're in the midst of a discussion with a handful of individuals, adding names of people outside the company, club, school, or social circle is bad netiquette. If/when you do add someone, note it at the beginning of the email, like "I've added Bob to this discussion." Why? Because someone could accidentally say something nasty about Bob, not realizing that you put in his name.

### **More on adding names**

If the list is 'ad-hoc' (just a bunch of folks in the "to" and "cc" fields), it is generally bad netiquette to add names to the distribution during discussions. This could be for a variety of reasons: perhaps somebody said something unkind, perhaps something confidential is being discussed. Adding names in this way can be done IF it's a generic discussion within a company *AND* everyone agrees that it's okay to widen the circle *AND* you check the replies that you're forwarding to be sure that nobody said anything unkind *AND* nobody has placed a "do not forward" note in their message.

### **Deleting Names**

If you're a list manager (or part of an ad-hoc list), and someone on the list asks to be deleted, you must be vigilant in removing their name. If your ISP receives a bonafide complaint that you have violated this, you could very likely have your email account revoked.

**Divulging Email Addresses**

Most listservs block the retrieval of the subscribers' individual emails. If they allow it, spamming the list for an off-topic purpose is considered very poor manners. Don't ask the list manager to supply you with the subscriber list.

**Post on Topic**

Lists are very specific about what subjects are and are not appropriate, and posting an irrelevant message is considered rude. If your list is one that deals in painting technique, it is most likely considered improper to use it to sell your equipment, discuss gallery openings, or anything else that the group is not 100% on topic for the group.

**Avoid Lengthy Intros or Sigs**

(A sig is the stuff that people automatically insert at the end of their email.) Intros and lengthy sigs are bad netiquette. While possibly funny the first time, it can result in people skipping your post. Think of it like this... imagine how tedious it would be if *\*every\** comment someone made in a live conversation were prefaced with a lengthy introduction and ended with a lengthy sig?

**Think before you speak (lurk before you post)**

If you don't, the readers will probably think you are goofy, stupid, and/or thoughtless, not to mention all kinds of other nasty things. Before you post, read some others' messages. Get a sense of who the people are. Look to see if information you're about to post has just been posted by someone else. Then go ahead and post.

**Respect the culture**

Most posters to discussion groups look down on those with poor manners. Always be civil, don't use profanity. Don't be lewd, abrasive, argumentative, or rude. Don't dictate, be pushy, or give orders.

**Don't crosspost**

Crossposting to more than one list is usually seen as improper.

**Don't post photos or attachments**

Pictures are not permitted in most discussion groups. Attached files in Word format (or excel, WordPerfect, etc) are either not permitted or blocked by spam filters. And NEVER send big files to a list! Put the text in your email.

**Top post? Bottom post?**

Many techie groups will expect you to bottom post - placing your reply at the END of the message. Non-geeky groups probably won't care. Some will expect you to reply line-by-line. Just do what everyone else does in the group and you'll be fine.

**Should you respond to the group or directly to the author?**

If you have a comment intended for one person, tell them via private email. Generally speaking, unless it concerns the entire group, you should reply ONLY to the author. This is not only a netiquette issue, it also helps cut down on email traffic.

**Don't post personal messages**

If you have a message for one or two posters, use private email.

**Watch the Return Address**

Many lists, including most of the OUUF lists, set the "reply-to" address to the list, as this facilitates discussion. But if you wish to make a side comment to one person, correct the recipient line to be sure your reply doesn't go back to the entire list! This could prove embarrassing.

**Be forgiving of other people's mistakes**

If someone makes a spelling or grammatical error, errs in the title of a song, misstates a minor "fact", or makes some other typo or error, don't post just to correct them. If you feel you must educate people, do it by private email. Everyone makes mistakes -- be kind about it. Having knowledge doesn't give you license to correct everyone else. Assume they just don't know any better, and never be arrogant or self-righteous about it. **Pointing out a netiquette violation is, in itself, an example of poor netiquette!**

**How to Correct People**

Use Real Life as an example. One would never grab the microphone at an event simply to inform your audience that Bob ate his entree with the salad fork (gasp!). After you've read the above paragraph ("Be forgiving...") and feel that you **MUST** correct someone else's seemingly bad manners, ask the moderator or list owner to do it. And if there is none, and you still must correct Bob for this terrible transgression, do it privately. Or better yet, don't.

**Don't post questions to the list managers**

It's okay to ask the list managers questions. It's not okay to \*post\* these questions. Use private email to ask the questions.

**Don't harass the managers**

If you disagree with a list manager's decision, bring it up in the appropriate forum. It is perfectly acceptable to question a decision. List management is not omniscience nor possessing Solomon-esque judgement capabilities. It is volunteering to do one's best. The workload in managing a list is a significant commitment of one's time. Please be nice to them, they're human and they do make mistakes.

## **3 Not Acceptable on the website**

- 3.1 Commercial endorsements
- 3.2 Endorsements of a political candidate or party
- 3.3 Letters to the editor
- 3.4 Controversial essays by members
- 3.5 Private street addresses except by explicit permission
- 3.6 Outside advertising
- 3.7 Personal events or family news (health, family visits, travel news, recipes...)

- 3.8 Copyrighted content without permission from the owner
- 3.9 Content that is abusive, insulting, threatening, obscene, hateful, racially, or ethnically objectionable or that contains inappropriate personal or embarrassing information
- 3.10 We do not identify photos of children by name on the website

## **4 More guidelines for web posting:**

- 4.1 Application for a new web PAGE on the church's web SITE:

New pages can be created on the website as required. Such pages should comply with this policy. Please send an email requesting a page to [webmaster@ouuf.org](mailto:webmaster@ouuf.org), including the purpose of the page, who will be responsible for making updates to the page, and how often such updates can be expected. The webmaster will suggest an appropriate location for the page in the menu system, internal links, and other such furniture.

- 4.2 if text is in a graphic, it absolutely must also be in plain text on a webpage, or captioned on the Pink Sheet or Chalice. Using the "Alt" tag is a minimum requirement.
- 4.3 keep the tables of contents/sitemaps up to date
- 4.4 committees and groups are encouraged to update their pages with current information on a regular basis
- 4.5 the webmaster retains the authority to shut down pages (or de-link them) when sufficiently out of date as to be misleading
- 4.6 we encourage proper Netiquette (link)

## **5 Working with the Board**

- 5.1 The webmaster seeks to serve the Board and to help the Board to communicate with the congregation. To those ends, the webmaster needs certain specific information and oversight in a timely fashion from the Board Secretary. This could include (but is not limited to):
- 5.2 Minutes submitted for the website within eight days of the next Board Meeting
- 5.3 Camera-ready (=no further editing necessary) updates for policies, Bylaws, restructured committees, committee members, committee charges, and any PR needed for Congregational Meetings and other larger events.
- 5.4 The Secretary (or other Board designate) is encouraged to add such items directly to the website, but the webmaster stands ready to assist.

## **6 Membership**

- 6.1 Cooperate with the Membership Committee to keep both email list and membership lists and Directory up-to-date. The Membership Committee will keep track of visitor dates for receiving the newsletter, and inform the list managers and membership of changes and withdrawals. To the extent they are comfortable with the process, the Membership Committee is encouraged to

update email lists and other online databases directly, with assistance from the webmaster as needed.

## **7 Privacy Policy of the Oberlin Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Ohio (OUUF).**

This policy governs the use of personal information of members, friends and visitors by OUUF in regular operations, on our website at ouuf.org, and for purposes of publicity both online and in print.

### **7.1 General Policies**

7.1.1 The media that may be used may include written documents, posters hung in the Sanctuary, the OUUF monthly newsletter, the Chalice, the weekly announcement sheet (aka "The Pink Sheet"), Ministerial Search Packets, documents and flyers cosponsoring events in the community, local newspapers such as the weekly Oberlin News-Tribune or the Oberlin College Review or daily newspapers such as the Lorain Chronicle-Telegram or the Elyria Morning Journal. Many of the preceding documents may also be used in electronic media, such as the OUUF website, [www.OUUF.org](http://www.OUUF.org), e-mail or social media such as Facebook. When we say "web pages" we include any of these public forms of announcement.

### **7.2 Personal Information**

7.2.1 The Oberlin UU Fellowship respects the privacy of its members and visitors. No personal contact information will be placed on the congregation's public web pages without prior permission. Personal identifying information about our members and friends, such as email addresses and other contact information, is collected on a voluntary basis. Any information that we collect and that you provide is strictly used to extend the ministry of our church. We do not sell, lease, or distribute any information to any commercial entities.

7.2.2 If you are or become a member of our congregation, your contact information will be shared with the Unitarian Universalist Association to enable your free subscription to UUWorld magazine. You may opt out by informing the Membership Committee.

7.2.3 Our website, [ouuf.org](http://ouuf.org), may be visited without submitting any personal identification information. Users may voluntarily submit email addresses or other personal identifying information to take part in an activity via the website, such as to sign up for a mailing list or request information. We will not sell or rent personal information collected via the website to any organization, including UU organizations.

- 7.2.4 The names of members and friends may be mentioned on the website and in promotional materials, particularly in articles in the newsletter. Examples include Board members, committee chairs, Forum presenters, and worship service leaders or participants. In order to protect the privacy of these individuals, personal identification information, such as phone number, address, or email addresses, will not be included with these names without explicit permission. Some individuals or families may have greater needs for protecting their privacy, for whatever reason. One may request that no mention of one's name or photograph appears on the web or in the newsletter or other media. See this form (link) for more information, or contact the webmaster/editor.
- 7.2.5 Heads and/or contact persons of committees or groups may be listed on a webpage or in printed documents by name. Normally, other committee members will not be listed unless they volunteer to be a contact person for an event, announcement, or meeting. Ultimately, the responsibility for privacy in church publications rests with the individual, so those concerned about preserving their privacy should consider the risks before volunteering to become the contact person for a committee or group. [Translation: if you don't want it on the web, don't submit it for the newsletter.]
- 7.2.6 For other committees, it is optional to list committee members who are not the chair or contact person, with permission but without contact information, so that people in the church will know who is participating in the various committees.
- 7.2.7 As always, the Fellowship's central email address and telephone number are listed at the bottom of each web page. Members and Friends have access to the Fellowship Directory for contact information, but this directory will not be placed on the website without being protected by requiring a password for access.

### **7.3 OUUF Policy for Photographs**

- 7.3.1 In seeking to spread word of our mission, ideas and activities, photographs and/or video can be instrumental in showing people who we are and what we stand for. However, we need to balance personal privacy and safety of our members and friends, volunteers and paid staff with usefulness to OUUF, all in a lawful manner.
- 7.3.2 This policy applies to photographs and videos of OUUF members and friends taken by other OUUF members and friends. It is understood that unflattering images will be avoided, based on the judgment of the photographer.

- 7.3.3 Adult members and friends will be asked to fill out a Photo Release form, checking either that the adult gives permission or refuses to do so.
- 7.3.4 Permission for photographing children and youth under the age of 18 may be granted or refused by the child or youth's parent or legal guardian by filling out a Photo Release form.
- 7.3.5 The Photo Release Policy has no expiration date, but signers may revoke permission at any time in a written statement to the OUUF Communications Committee.
- 7.3.6 If you see a photograph of yourself or your child that you prefer not to be included on the website, or if you would like to insure that no photo of you or your child is used for these purposes, please contact us.
- 7.3.7 First and last names of adults may be used in identifying photo captions. But last names of children and youth under age 18 will never be published. No personal information, such as addresses, e-mail addresses or phone numbers will be published but may be requested for church records

## **7.4 Website Policies**

### **7.4.1 Website Use By Children**

If you are under 13, be sure to obtain your parent's or guardian's permission before you send any personal information (for example, your name, address, e-mail address, etc.) to us or anyone else over the Internet. We encourage parents to get involved with their children's online usage and to be aware of the activities in which they are participating. See COPPA (Children's Online Privacy Protection Act).

### **7.4.2 Tracking Website Use**

Our website software automatically gathers information from your browser and may set a cookie to determine trends in peak activity, determine the number of visitors, track the frequency that individual pages are accessed, and to ensure our links are working properly. For each visitor to our website, our website hosting server automatically recognizes the visitor's domain name, IP (Internet Protocol) address, and browser software. It may also recognize the operating system and the site from which the visitor linked to us. It does not harvest email addresses or other personal information. This tracking information is not shared with other organizations.

We do not employ spyware or adware of any kind.

### **7.4.3 Links to Third Party Sites**

This web site contains some hyperlinks to websites operated by parties other than OUUF, for your reference only. The inclusion of hyperlinks to other websites does not imply any endorsement of the material on these websites or any association with their operators.

#### **7.4.4 Information Accuracy**

OUUF will make every effort to ensure that the information presented on our website is accurate. If inaccuracies occur, we will make every effort to correct them in a timely manner. To report any web site inaccuracies or for questions about these policies, please contact us.

#### **7.4.5 Ownership**

This Website is owned and operated by the Oberlin Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, which is entirely responsible for its content. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 Unported License.

This policy is a living document and may be changed or updated from time to time. If you have any questions about our Privacy Policy, you can contact us at: [webmaster@ouuf.org](mailto:webmaster@ouuf.org), by mailing us at P O Box 0354, Oberlin, Ohio 44074 or by telephone at 440-935-3812.