

Publications in the Small Congregation

some pointers

Your Order of Service (or Order of Worship), newsletter, and any brochures are very important – they are one of the first introductions to your congregation that guests may have (especially shy guests who'd rather read than talk).

Therefore, your publications and documents need to be as welcoming as every other aspect of your congregation. Publications need to be well laid out and interesting so that they are actually read by guests and long-time members alike. Also, your publications should provide a flavor of who you are as the fabulous small congregation that you are – they don't need to be the same ol' dull pieces of paper that you find in many small UU churches.

And now, some advice on how to have your Order of Service, Newsletter, and other documents be the lovely vibrant welcoming documents described above.

over...

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Layout

Many many books have been written on the subject of nice layouts. I highly recommend THE NON-DESIGNER'S DESIGN BOOK by Robin Williams. Buy a copy and give it to your newsletter editor and/or documents person. It will inspire him or her to more beautiful, interesting publications, I guarantee. You will not regret it.

But in the absence of that wonderful book, here are some pointers on layout:

Contrast— Do draw readers' eye into the article/notice/list of 7 principles/whatever by making your headlines bold and big. At least 6-8 points larger than your body copy (the smaller font that your article is put in). **Don't** ever make your headlines ALL CAPS or underlined. They are much more difficult to read that way. (And in ALL CAPS, each letter takes up more space, meaning your headline must be made smaller to fit, and therefore isn't jumping off the page like you thought it would.) Bold & big instead.

Fonts— Please **don't** use Times, Arial, Helvetica, Chalkboard, or Comic Sans as the body copy (the main text) of your newsletter. They are all much too overused and, in the case of the first three, boring fonts. Comic Sans and Chalkboard are simply over-used... try using them in a small notice, but not as the primary font. **Do** use a serif font for your body copy (like Palatino, Baskerville, Garamond, Bodoni...) in a newsletter, and either a bigger and bolder version of that serif font for headlines, or a bigger and bolder sans serif font, (like Stone Sans, Futura Condensed, Myriad Pro, Gadget, Gill Sans, Arial Black (if you must)...) or even a slightly (not wicked) crazy decorative font (like Chalkboard, Luna, Papyrus...). Order of Services can be either serif or sans serif, but remember – no ALL CAPS. **Don't** have more than one serif font and don't have more than one sans serif font in the same document. (you can have more than one if they're in the same family, ie Futura Condensed, Futura Bold Condensed) Two different serif (or sans serif) fonts will look similar, but be noticeably different as to be annoying, not contrasting. **Do** have variety, in moderation! Try making a notice about your upcoming sale/supper/dance be a crazy dance-y fun font. It'll look better against your simple serif body copy than it would against lots of party-ish fonts.

Columns— Don't make your congregation's newsletter be a single column, ie articles' lines of type stretch across the whole page. It's difficult and boring to read. **Do** have your newsletter be at least two columns. Even better, make it, say, 7 columns – then you can have some things go across 4 columns, other things go across 3, others be 5 column articles, and others be 2. And your newsletter will still be unified by those underlying 7 columns. Cool, huh?

Fun stuff— Do put graphics in your publications (especially chalices!). Put an interesting box around a notice in your newsletter or order of service. Try making pull quotes for your minister or president's column. Print out any or all of your documents on lightly colored paper. These things help draw readers' eye, and make your publication more lively and interesting. **But don't** get carried away and put 5 or 6 small clip arts on one page. Oftentimes one or two larger ones will do the trick, and do it in a more stylish and less cluttered way.

Unification— Create a newsletter where, if you looked at, say, page 1 and 3 separately, you'd know they belonged to the same document. Same goes for your order of service and your brochures. This means consistent fonts and font sizes, consistent line sizes, and consistent columns. Try taking it a step further and having a line across the top and bottom of all pages, or having all bullets be the same dingbat (like ★ or ❖).

Simplicity— Remember, all these tips, which may seem quite overwhelming, can be put into beautiful practice in a newsletter that's just a single sheet of paper, or an order of service that's a half sheet. Less is often more.

Content

*Content for Orders of Service, brochures, and newsletters are different, but for all, **assume that the reader is reading this document for the very first time**, perhaps the very first time reading something in a UU church or about UUism at all.*

A word about acronyms – don't have sentences like “the SJC will be meeting at FUUP with the NED of the UUA to talk about YRUU, UUSC, and the AIWs and SAIs that the UU-UNO and UUJEC are bringing to GA.” Is this really understandable? Spell out every acronym the first time it's used in an article or notice, like “the Social Justice Committee will be meeting at First Unitarian Universalist Parish with the Northeast District of the Unitarian Universalist Association...” There, much better.

Orders of Service should include:

- 🌸 The name of your church, the date, the topic/ name of the service, and the names of people leading any element of worship, all in some sort of heading. If you're a Welcoming Congregation or a Green Sanctuary, put that in there too.
- 🌸 Hymn or reading numbers or words to songs and readings printed directly in the order of service (even if it's the same doxology you've sung for 65 years).
- 🌸 When to stand up, usually denoted with a dingbat (☉, ★, etc) and a “please stand as you are willing and able.” or something along those lines.
- 🌸 Names of your staff.
- 🌸 A welcome to guests, with an invitation to sign the guestbook, pick up a guest packet and newsletter (with info on where to find such things), and an invitation to come to social hour (with info on how to find that/ where it is, and what it is).
- 🌸 Names of social hour hosts and greeters, and religious education leaders, including a thank you to them!
- 🌸 Information about where the bathrooms are, where the large print hymnals are (if you have them – and you should!), and any other technical stuff like that.
- 🌸 What the service will be next Sunday.
- 🌸 Optional: Brief information about church events that will be happening. Make it brief, though, not 2 extra pages stuffed in your order of service of sheer announcements. Event, date, time, brief description, name and phone number of person to contact for more info is good.

🌸 Explanation of any features of your sanctuary that need explaining.

🌸 A brief description of who your congregation is, and what Unitarian Universalism is. This only needs to be a couple of sentences or so, but it's important. Again, all this may seem overwhelming, but all this info can easily be implemented into a one-page Order of Service.

And a note about layout – consider making the order of worship part of your order of service at least 14 point type for people who can't see so well.

Newsletters should include:

- 🌸 Newsletter name, and date.
- 🌸 Your church name, address, phone number, e-mail (if you have an e-mail address that's checked regularly), and how to find you.
- 🌸 A brief description of who your congregation is, and what Unitarian Universalism is. The 7 principles are a great newsletter item.
- 🌸 A list of Board Members and their phone numbers or e-mails.
- 🌸 A list of staff and their phone numbers or e-mails.
- 🌸 A list of the services that month, including time of worship, who's speaking, who's hosting social hour/ greeting, and the topic or theme.
- 🌸 Monthly columns from:
 - 🌸 Your minister (if you have a minister),
 - 🌸 Your board president (who can write about what the board's been doing so you don't have

over for more...

to publish the minutes of board meetings... which are often quite boring to read)

✿ And your Director of Religious Education or RE chair or other person involved with RE.

✿ Information about the canvass and pledging, when it's happening.

✿ A calendar of church events (this can be a traditional calendar or a list of What, Where, When).

✿ Information about church events – and not just in the calendar. Flesh out information that there might not be room for in a calendar. Make your events sound like the fun exciting things they are! Include full names and phone numbers of people to contact.

✿ Information about the newsletter itself – who lays it out, when the deadlines are, where to send submissions, etc. This is also a great place to thank people who submitted stuff for that issue.

✿ You may wish to have other things (either published on a regular basis or just once or twice), such as...

- ✿ Follow-up articles after events
- ✿ News from other committees/task forces
- ✿ Church history
- ✿ New member/long time member bios
- ✿ Humor, jokes, and puzzles – keep it fun and interesting!
- ✿ Inspirational quotes or poems

I would advise against a “gossip” or news about members column – such columns have a tendency to keep small churches small and inwardly focused.

Brochures

You need to have a brochure about your congregation – not just about UUism, but what makes your congregation special. Things to put in such a brochure:

- ✿ Your congregation's mission statement
- ✿ Why your congregation exists; what you do for the larger community; your Social Action
- ✿ Information about worship and Social Hour. You can put in this part what particular sort of UU congregation you are – do you have a Pagan/Humanist/Christian/Buddhist/whatever focus? Are you musical? Does your congregation especially love prayer? silence? social hour?
- ✿ If you are a Welcoming Congregation or a Green Sanctuary, a statement/explanation about that
- ✿ Information about Religious Education, child, youth, and adult. You may choose to just write a short statement about RE, then have another brochure explaining your programs for the current year in greater detail
- ✿ Who to speak with about membership
- ✿ Any special projects you do that you want to highlight
- ✿ A listing of your staff members, and your congregation's address, phone, and website

You may also want to have... a brochure about RE... a brochure about Small Group Ministry... and/or a brochure about your building or any special features of it.

Look at your publications with the eyes of a first-time guest.

Remember – your publications should be about...

- ✿ **information,**
- ✿ **celebrating the great things about your congregation,**
- ✿ **and reaching out to the larger community.**

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