

Little River United Church of Christ

Communications Manual

Spring 2006



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Introduction

The Communications Advisory Team offers this Communications Manual to help boards, committees, and other church leaders use the many communications options that can inform members, friends, the public, and the media about events at Little River United Church of Christ and about opportunities for outreach to our community and the world.

The following pages offer in-depth information on the purposes and best uses of many options. The final page of this manual is a quick guide that provides an overview of some of the communication options and tips on their use. Engaging multiple options to promote an event or topic, as appropriate, will maximize the chances that your information registers with potential participants!

Addenda to the manual include the newly adopted Internet and Publication Privacy Policy, photographic release forms for adults and children, and a memo describing use of the Social Hall bulletin board.

The Team welcomes your questions, suggestions, and participation. We are a group of folks – some with professional communications skills – eager to help you plan how best to articulate or promote your group’s work. Please contact the Team via our mailbox in the church office or at cat@lruc.org.

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Currents

The church's official newsletter, *Currents*, is mailed to all church member households, resident and non-resident, as well as to church friends who request it. In addition, the most recent newsletter is sent each LRUCC visitor after the first visit, and to other UCC churches and organizations on request.

Currents also is e-mailed to those who sign up for such delivery. A public version of *Currents*, minus personal phone numbers and other sensitive information, is posted on the LRUCC Web site.

Publication Schedule

Generally *Currents* is published every two weeks from September to mid-June, and monthly from late June through August. The schedule may be adjusted to coordinate with Christmas, Easter, Monday holidays, and LRUCC annual meeting dates.

The newsletter deadline is noted on every mailed and e-mailed issue of *Currents*, and at the church Web site (lrucc.org/lrusched.htm). Early submissions are encouraged, especially to avoid missed communication in case the editor needs clarification or corrections are needed.

Normally, the newsletter is produced following close-of-business on the deadline day (usually a Thursday) and posted to the Web site. The e-mail edition is sent over the weekend, and the print edition is prepared on Monday and sent by bulk mail on Tuesday for delivery Thursday through Saturday. Recipients for whom bulk mail deliveries are delayed are encouraged to request first-class delivery.

Effective Uses of *Currents*

Please use the church newsletter in the following ways:

- Publicize your events so readers are informed at least a month prior to the event. A hold-the-date notice could run first, followed by the full notice in a second issue. Keep the delivery schedule in mind as you plan.
- Report group activities or share useful, church-related information, such as a stewardship update or conference report.
- Disseminate church-related appeals of general concern, such as Mission of the Month or special offerings.
- Disseminate news of general church member interest, such as new or special member recognition, UCC positions on current events, or direct-debiting for pledge donations.
- Air thoughtfully considered concerns of general interest or importance, such as thanking the congregation for prayers and aid, or rebutting Clergy Column views.

Currents is not suited for the following uses:

- Publicizing an event planned for the next weekend.
- Running a notice more than twice.
- Distributing information of limited interest.

Currents Submissions

Material submitted to *Currents* is subject to editing and correction. Remember that some readers of *Currents* are very new to our congregation; make no assumptions about prior knowledge.

Please include the following information, as appropriate:

- Contributor's name and contact information.
- Date, time, and location of all events.
- Names of organizations and persons, correctly worded and spelled (do not use acronyms or initials).
- Accurate Web site addresses.
- Proper attribution for any quotes or additional information, and contact names for publication, if relevant.
- Adequate explanation for readers unfamiliar with the group or activity.

Please avoid the following:

- Unneeded words, extraneous information, and unexplained references.
- Information that has not been prepared or cleared for publication by the affected parties.

Ways to deliver your items to the editor:

- By e-mail, which is preferred, as a simple message or attachment, to currents@lrucc.org. Electronic attachments may be in MS Word, WordPerfect, PDF, RTF or plain text. E-mails are acknowledged upon receipt.
- By placing diskettes or other electronic medium (ZIP disk, CD) in church office *Currents* mailbox. Diskettes and CDs will be returned.
- By placing "hard copy" on paper in the church office *Currents* mailbox.

Note: You may submit the same material for *Currents* and the church Sunday bulletin. Send by e-mail to both office@lrucc.org, and currents@lrucc.org, or mark as "Bulletin and Currents" and place in appropriate boxes.

Sunday Bulletin

Along with the order of worship, the Sunday bulletin includes brief, timely announcements and the coming week's calendar of events. A copy also is attached to each cassette tape and compact disk recording of the services.

Effective Uses of the Sunday Bulletin

The Sunday bulletin may be used to publicize, briefly, LRUCC events of general interest two weeks in advance or less and to list calendar events (with time and, if known, room) for the next seven days. Remember that some readers are very new to our congregation, so material should not require "insider" knowledge. Spell out acronyms and include phone numbers.

The bulletin is not suited for announcement of non-LRUCC events, except those of high or unusual interest to the congregation. It also is not meant to publicize items more than two weeks in advance or for extensive write-ups more suited for the church newsletter, *Currents*.

Bulletin Submissions

All items should be submitted as early in the week as possible, and no later than close of business on the next-to-last business day of the week (normally 4:30 p.m., Thursday; 2:30 p.m. during the summer).

E-mail is preferred, to office@lrucc.org. (The office uses WordPerfect, but can handle Word.) Otherwise, submit in legible writing and place in the box on the corner of the church secretary's desk. Phone and oral submissions are discouraged for sake of accuracy. Be sure to identify yourself or another contact person on the submission in case the office has a question. The submission may be edited for length and style.

Little River Web Site

The church's Web site at <http://www.lrucc.org> is its Internet face to the world, as well as a church member resource. Because it is the world's window into Little River – and increasingly we hear of visitors who choose to attend because of our Web presence – it is essential that our Web site be attractive, accurate, up to date, and easy to navigate. Church leaders can assist by making sure that the information pertaining to their area is current.

Effective Uses of the Web Site

New ways of using this vast resource are being explored. Currently, the Web site provides the following:

- Information for potential visitors and others about our church and its programs. The Web site functions as an expanded brochure about LRUCC including information about worship times, directions, staff biographies, and special events.
- Information about special, one-time programs, such as concerts, lecture series, or special worship services, can be presented in more detail than in the church newsletter, *Currents*, or the Sunday bulletin.
- Information that is useful to members, including *Currents* deadlines, worship and choir schedules, and youth event schedules.
- Spiritual resources such as past sermons, a link to a common lectionary, and other worship aids.

Web Site Submissions

If possible, submit material as a "text" document or in the body of an e-mail message to web@lrucc.org. If graphics or photos are to be included, and they are already digital, send them under a separate e-mail (note caveat below*). If you wish to generate html, please contact a member of the Web team beforehand.

If you have no computer or e-mail access, provide written copy to the Web site box in the office.

If appropriate, include the date when the information should be deleted.

Note: LRUCC's Web team often is small, voluntary, and often very busy. If your submission is urgent, be sure to communicate that fact.

* Remember, the Web site is very public. Members' street or e-mail addresses, phone numbers, or other personal information are never included. For example, death notices and related memorial service information are posted only if previously announced publicly. Photographs of church members and others may only be posted only if those in the photographs have given written permission on forms provided by the Communications Advisory Team.

News Articles

News items and articles are provided to newspapers or other communications media to publicize Little River activities and events, such as First Friday, Lenten series, film series, Advent activities, guest speakers, youth programs, and our recent 50th anniversary.

The Washington Post publishes a weekly Religion Notes section in the Fairfax section on Thursdays and a more comprehensive religion page in the Metro section on Saturdays. *Virginia Connection Newspapers* publish a Faith section. Other local newspapers, such as the *Journal* and *Washington Times*, do not have separate religion sections.

Effective Uses of Press Releases

“Getting the word out” through the media is an effective tool for informing others about LRUCC. For example, a press packet assembled by the communications team to announce our 50th anniversary resulted in an extensive article in the *Connection Newspapers*.

Announcements of activities of interest to the public are appropriate for submission to newspapers. Worship-oriented events rarely are covered in the media.

News Article Submissions

In general the newspapers require that news items be submitted at least two weeks in advance of a particular event. Advance notice of at least a month is recommended for a more reflective piece. Therefore, information on your event must reach the publicity chair three weeks before your event to allow time for clarification and preparation of the press release. Currently, Robert Lingo serves as publicity chair; he can be reached at rslingo@verizon.net or via the church office. He will review, edit as needed, and submit the copy to appropriate publications.

The standard journalistic items to include in any news item are "who, what, when, where, and why." Keep in mind that the audience may not be familiar with Little River. Announcements of events should be kept short and concise. Longer news articles may call attention to a particular

subject and pique a reporter's interest in the topic. The Communication Advisory Team can help you prepare your announcement.

Brochures

One of the goals of the Communications Advisory Team is to help our boards and committees achieve a unified, well-put-together look for Little River's brochures. If your group is considering publishing a brochure, please take advantage of the Team's expertise and advice. On a case-by-case basis, limited design assistance is available.

The Board of Christian Education publishes its *Educational & Enrichment Opportunities* brochure twice a year. If your group plans to offer a seminar or series of classes or special event that is educational or enriching, remember to provide the necessary information to the church office by June or December for inclusion in the following semester's publication.

Posters and Flyers

The Communications Advisory Team endeavors to assist groups with posters and flyers to promote specific events or education series. At this writing, our skill set in this area is limited, and we would welcome additional volunteers to assist with this type of publicity. A basic template for a flyer is available by e-mail. Contact the Team by e-mail or through the church office to discuss your group's needs.

Flyers may be posted in the relevant area of the Social Hall bulletin board, but not on windows, walls, or doors, please. Groups achieve the best results when the flyers are passed out proactively during coffee hour or in the atrium.

Bulletin Boards

Bulletin board space in the Social Hall is limited and very public during coffee hours and other events. It is important that we "put our best face forward" and manage the space to everyone's advantage. A memo describing how each board and committee can define and use its "home base" is included in this manual. Contact Kent Rogers at kentrogers55@aol.com or via cat@lruc.org for clarification or assistance.

E-Mail Services

Mail lists are addresses that automatically send out e-mail to groups. There are three kinds at LRUC: public announcement lists, board and committee lists, and the Streams discussion list. These lists offer virus- and spam-resistant ways to send group information.

Currently, two such e-mail lists are used as public announcement lists. *Currents* is sent via e-mail to church members and friends who request it, and the Alerts service advises subscribers of weather closings or other significant events such as a death within the congregation. Only the pastoral staff and a limited number of church leaders can initiate e-mail to these lists.

There also are numerous committee lists that allow the groups to communicate regarding committee minutes, meeting times, and other information. Some committees vote via e-mail, and many use e-mail to expedite committee business.

Requesting E-mail Services

Contact Julie Holm or another member of the Web team to subscribe to church e-mail services – *Currents* or Alerts. You may do so via e-mail at julie@lrucc.org or web@lrucc.org.

To request or update committee lists, obtain e-mail addresses from each committee member and provide the addresses to Julie, either via e-mail or in her church office box. Be sure to update committee lists after each election.

Little River Streams

Little River Streams opens up a new method of electronic communication among church members and friends who have e-mail access. This service is an online, e-mail-enabled discussion group that can debate or announce topics of interest such as aspects of church life, current social issues, or national and international concerns.

The difference between LR Streams and existing whole-church lists – *Currents* and Alerts, which are one-way lists – is that any subscriber may post messages to LR Streams and respond to others' messages. A complete description of LR Streams is available upon sending an e-mail request to infostreams@lrucc.org.

There is no "moderator" for the service. No one approves e-mails before they are sent, but there are efforts to manage any abuse of the list.

To sign up for LR Streams, e-mail a message from your e-mail address to majordomo@lrucc.org. In the subject line, note "Streams." In the body of the message, note "subscribe streams." Then, follow the instructions, and you will receive a welcoming message explaining how to use the list. Save the welcoming e-mail.

LR Streams offers the potential for more specialized lists – youthstreams, musicstreams, socialactionstreams, and so forth. The Web team can help establish additional Streams upon request.

Quick Guide to Communication Options

What	Page number	How far ahead?	Whom to contact?	What information?	What announcements are best suited?
<i>Currents</i>	2	If possible, about a month, with deadlines Thursday before Monday publication.	Hube Beckwith, currents@lrucc.org or office mail box	Standard newspaper questions: Who, What, When, Where, Why	Anything pertaining to or of interest to the Little River community.
Sunday Bulletin	3	A week or two before the event, up to the week of the event. Deadline is Thursday before the Sunday publication	Jane Johnson, office@lrucc.org or call the office	Varies, similar to <i>Currents</i> , but very brief.	Items with near-term relevance to the Little River community.
Web Page	4	At least a month, up to many months, before an event as soon as you have solid information.	Julie Holm, Web@lrucc.org or office mail box	Everything you have. Photographs and graphics highly desirable.	Ongoing information, series of events, classes, items of interest beyond the LR community. A description of what your committee does. Note that items printed in <i>Currents</i> automatically go into the Web version of <i>Currents</i> .
Outside publications/ local newspapers	5	At least a three weeks ahead. Longer if it is a major event or if you want a press release prepared.	Robert Lingo, Rslingo@verizon.net	Standard newspaper questions: Who, What, When, Where, Why	Items of interest to the community at large.
E-Mail Lists/ Streams	6	Any time.	Julie Holm, for setup, committee mail list, or Streams, Julie@lrucc.org	Anything that is interesting to the select group that you are targeting.	Committee information and discussion items. Special interest items for Streams.

Remember that using multiple options may best serve your needs. And, always include YOUR contact information, so someone can get back to you if there are questions!

Addenda to Communications Manual

Internet and Publication Privacy Policy – as of July 13, 2005

Little River United Church of Christ (LRUCC) maintains a presence on the Internet and provides mail services and mail lists for members, friends, and staff.

Therefore, we must be concerned with Internet privacy issues. It is the intent and desire of LRUCC to take reasonable steps to respect and maintain the personal privacy of those individuals who expressly request such privacy. This document describes Little River's privacy policy with regard to personal information, Web links, and Web-displayed photography.

Personal Information

Normally LRUCC does not share personal information such as e-mail address, home address, phone numbers, or other personal information with anyone outside the church, with the following exceptions. Members' addresses are shared with United Church News for the purpose of receiving the national newsletter. On rare occasions, such information may be shared with the UCC Potomac Association, Central Atlantic Conference, and the United Church of Christ's national office for the purpose of contacting congregational leaders or providing the names of high school juniors to UCC colleges. However, a request for the church to share information by the owner of that information is honored. For example, a request to include a phone number or e-mail address as a contact in *Currents* or the Sunday Bulletin is considered a request to divulge that information in that manner. Otherwise no external use is made of personal information.

Personal information that appears in the Passages section of *Currents* is published *only* in the print edition and the e-mail edition circulated to church members. Passages information is never included in the Web-based copy. Personal phone numbers or addresses also are never included in the Web-based version of *Currents*.

Specific information on the deaths of members and times of memorial services is published on LRUCC's Web site on the Announcements Page, usually for no more than a week or so. This information is considered public information and is published on LRUCC's Web site as a service to members, to inform and allow them to attend memorial services. However, requests by family members to refrain from posting this information are honored.

Web Links

Web links to individual e-mail addresses on the LRUCC Web site are limited to the online publication of *Currents* and to links requested by committees, members, or staff for communication purposes. E-mail addresses in the Web-based version of *Currents* are presented in a format that is difficult to be automatically "scraped" from the screen (for use in spamming). However, since "scraping" is not impossible, the LRUCC Web team offers the option, upon request, of providing an alias email address at lrucc.org to anyone whose e-mail address will appear in the Web-based version of *Currents*.

Photographic Images

Little River plans to make increased use of photographic images to add interest and information to its Web pages. However we are aware that there are concerns about privacy that arise from the use of photographic images on the Internet, and in response we affirm the policy stated below. Please note that the policy differs with regard to children (persons under 18 years of age) and adults and with regard to historical photographs (at least 5 years old) and current photographs.

The policy applies to photographic images where a person is clearly and unambiguously identifiable, usually meaning that some portion of the person's face is visible in the photograph.

Current Photographic Images

Current photographic images of children will be posted on LRUCC's Web site only if express written permission is provided by the parent or legal guardian of the child depicted in the photograph in question.

Current photographic images of adults will be posted only after gaining the permission of the adult in question. This permission may be verbal or written.

Historical Photographic Images

For the purpose of this policy, historical photographic images are defined as those photographs five or more years old.

Historical photographic images of children will be posted only if express written permission is provided by the parent or legal guardian of the child depicted. This permission will be sought if the person in the photograph currently is a child, but not necessarily if the person was a child at the time of the photograph but is no longer. Therefore photographs of children from the founding days of the church will not be treated in the same way as pictures of children from five years ago who are still children.

Historical photographic images of adults may be posted without permission, depending on the ability to contact those adults at the present time. An attempt will be made when reasonable, depending on the age of the photograph.

For all Photographic Images

If a request is made to remove a photographic image posted on LRUCC's Web site by a person depicted in that photograph, the request will be honored as soon as is reasonably possible. This applies whether or not the individual has previously given permission, and whether or not the photograph is current or historical.

One can provide blanket permission to use your image at any time, or one can decline to have one's image used, ever. The church will maintain a record of all permission information.

Subject to obtaining all necessary permissions, all information and photographic images posted on LRUCC's Web site become and remain the copyrighted work of LRUCC subject to any limitations on such rights by third parties.

Little River United Church of Christ

Release form for adult photographic subjects

I hereby give permission for the Little River United Church of Christ (LRUCC) to use my photographic image in any of their publications, including, but not limited to, the LRUCC Web page, brochures, and newsletters. This permission extends to all photographic images in which it was intended that I recognizably appear, subject to any limitation listed at the bottom of this form.

I understand that I may rescind this permission at any time, and that upon notification, LRUCC will take all reasonable precautions not continue to use my photographic image in any future publications unless expressly authorized by me. I understand that it is the intent of LRUCC to use any and all photographic images for the sole purposes of LRUCC activities.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Signature: _____

_____ LRUCC may use any photographic image of me in their publications.

_____ LRUCC may use photographic images of me subject to the limitations below:
[Please state limitations regarding both which photographs are included or excluded and which publications are included or excluded.]

Date: _____

Little River United Church of Christ

Release form for child photographic subjects

I hereby give permission for the Little River United Church of Christ (LRUCC) to use the photographic image of my child, _____ in any of their publications, including, but not limited to, the LRUCC Web page, brochures and newsletters. This permission extends to all photographic images in which it was intended that my child recognizably appear, subject to any limitation listed at the bottom of this form.

I understand that I may rescind this permission at any time, and that upon notification, LRUCC will take all reasonable precautions not continue to use my child's photographic image in any future publications unless expressly authorized by me. I understand that it is the intent of LRUCC to use any and all photographic images of my child for the sole purposes of LRUCC activities.

Parent's Name: _____

Address: _____

Signature: _____

_____ LRUCC may use any photographic image of my child in their publications.

_____ LRUCC may use photographic images of my child subject to the limitations below:
[Please state limitations, both which photographs are included or excluded and which publications are included or excluded.]

Date: _____

USE OF THE SOCIAL HALL BULLETIN BOARD

The purpose of this bulletin board is to foster communications within the church and to present an interesting and attractive display for visitors as well as members. In order to be sure that all groups have access to this limited area while still maintaining an attractive and organized space, we would like users to follow these guidelines:

- This bulletin board is primarily for church-related notices. Notices of community events of general interest can be placed on the "Community Notices" section. Other notices can be displayed on the bulletin board outside the kitchen.
- Each group should define the area of its display with a "home base." This should be a piece of poster board or a similar piece of colored paper or other background material (14" x 22", larger if necessary) with a label, in letters at least an inch high, identifying the group. The labels can either be made by computer or hand lettered. Materials for display can be pinned on the background or spill out around it, or they can be attached by overlapping or by other background material, by yarn, or whatever.
- Groups can place their displays wherever there is room. If there isn't enough room for what you'd like to put up, please don't move or remove the displays of others, but contact a member of the bulletin board committee (Kent Rogers: 703-941-6686, Sue Leathers: 703-250-7913, Jane Wallace: 703-569-2454), who will make a space for you.
- Groups are requested to remove their own items or displays that are outdated or have been up too long. Otherwise, the committee will remove them and place them in the appropriate box in the office or in an identified box in the storeroom.
- "Home bases" will be moved around so that no one group will always have the best spot. People looking for a certain group should be able to find it because of the color and/or design of its "home base," just as the Deacons' Bench is readily identifiable now.
- "Home bases" can be taken home when not needed or stored in the bulletin board box in the storeroom.
- Appropriate additions to the "Members and Friends," "Wider Church," and "Volunteer Opportunities" displays are welcome.

We hope this plan will help facilitate communications within the church and we ask everyone's cooperation in maintaining an informative as well as an attractive space. Please let any member of the committee (Kent Rogers, Sue Leathers, Jane Wallace) know if you have questions.

February 2006