

South Carolina Conference Communications Policies/Guidelines

Policies/Guidelines Purpose: To provide guidelines and resources for expressing information related to our faith, our mission, and our programs internally and externally. *These guidelines are to be used by all persons responsible for any communications to ensure that a uniform code is followed.*

Editorial Board: The Director of Connectional Ministries and the Director of Communications shall act as the editorial board for day-to-day decisions regarding the policies and guidelines.

1. Guidelines for Print and Electronic Communications

Conference Communications, print or electronic, are designed to announce and report on issues and events of interest. Content in publications, print or electronic, should be true, accurate, thoughtful, readable, relevant, significant, and give evidence of being based on the values of care, compassion, community, civility, and UMC theology.

All publications, print or electronic, should be proofed by a second person for grammar, spelling, typographical errors, and accuracy.

I. Specific Guidelines for eLink E-mail

A. Purpose

The purpose of eLink e-mail is to highlight news, announcements, and event updates related to the ministry of the South Carolina Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

B. Content

eLink e-mails will convey news or information in the following general areas. When possible, these items will provide web sites, e-mail addresses, or telephone numbers to contact for further information.

- Late breaking news
- Information about Conference events that need extra attention
- Brief announcements from the Conference
- Information about events and or trainings that are open to ALL South Carolina United Methodists.

Criteria:

Items must be of general interest to a significant portion of South Carolina United Methodists, and should be as brief as possible, giving a contact person/church/group and a method of contacting them (e-mail, website, and/or phone number). **Only for a rare need will attachments be permitted.**

Procedures:

1. Requests for items to be included must be e-mailed to mbrodie@umcsc.org.
2. eLink e-mail will be sent from the Conference Director of Communications.
3. The subscriber list created for eLink will be used only for these express purposes. The addresses on this list will not be sold or given to any third party.
4. Recipients will be given instructions on how to unsubscribe if they choose to do so.

Exceptions

1. In case of an emergency, as determined by the Bishop, Director of Connectional Ministries or the Director of Communications, special eLink e-mail related to a specific situation will be sent

out of the Conference Office to the distribution list, as soon as the basic information has been verified.

Examples of what constitutes an “emergency”:

- Weather-related cancellations/postponements
 - Disaster at the Conference Center or a local church or involving the greater church
 - Death of a staff member or other significant church figure
 - Event of national or international, church-related significance
 - *If there is a disagreement over whether or not the situation warrants a special broadcast, the decision will be made by the Director of Connectional Ministries.*
2. eLink e-mail requests that are for a special target audience or considered not to be in the general interest will not be sent.
 3. The Director of Communications or Administrative Assistants will provide guidance to appropriate committees and staff members in the establishment of additional contact lists.

II. Specific Guidelines for Conference Website: www.umcsc.org

Deadlines and Expirations

1. Postings/information for the web site must be submitted electronically to the Director of Communications.
2. Items with a specific deadline will be removed within a few days following the designated date or when removal is requested.
3. United Methodist employment opportunities will be removed after a hire or as advised.

Guidelines for Submissions

1. Items submitted for posting on the South Carolina United Methodist Conference website should originate from a committee or staff member.
2. Items requiring a committee’s approval should be directed to the chair of the appropriate committee before submission.
3. The preferred submission method: E-mail as plain, unadorned, unformatted text with graphics included as attachments.
4. Clip art graphics should be GIF format at 72 dpi resolution. Photos should be in JPG 72 dpi resolution and should be in full color. Prior to submission, submitter should ascertain that the clip art’s and photography’s copyright is licensed for publication on the Web. (All Microsoft clip art is licensed.)
5. Any additional links to resources or websites are subject to rules of the following section.

Editorial Responsibility and Policy Decisions

In general, the website is maintained by the Director of Communications.

In addition:

1. The Director of Communications, Director of Connectional Ministries or the Director of Information Technology is authorized to deal quickly with any items that could be damaging (e.g., libelous, abusive, or obscene material).
2. Links to other web pages will be restricted to those items of interest to United Methodists.
3. Links to other websites featuring advertising banners of an offensive nature will not be included.
4. Liability concerns require taking all reasonable steps to minimize legal liability to the church from the use of the internet as a means of publication. This includes copyright issues, personal contact information, and appropriate image releases.
5. Selected documents of South Carolina United Methodist Conference boards, agencies, and committees that are public **may be** published on the web site.

Other

1. Individual street addresses, phone numbers or personal e-mail addresses may not be published without permission. **Inclusion of a street address or an e-mail address in a submission will be considered implied permission.** (A submission to *The South Carolina United Methodist Advocate* may also be published on the web.)
2. The Conference Journal is published and updated annually. All information in the Journal is considered public and will be published on the web.
3. All photographs of children and youth (or artwork by them) submitted for use on the website must be accompanied by a release form signed by the youngster's parent or guardian.
4. No information about any visitor to the web site is stored or sold.
5. A copy of this policy is available on the website.

III. Guidelines for Conference brochures, pamphlets and flyers

A copy of brochures, pamphlets, or publications approved by committees should be provided to the Director of the Communications prior to being sent to the Print Shop for publication. All print publications should be proofed by a second person for grammar, spelling, typographical errors, and accuracy. All materials of this nature should be focused on the purpose and attractive to the reader.

Committees and staff must make advance arrangements for placement of materials into other forms of media with the Director of Communications or an Administrative Assistant.

Materials requiring a special mailing should be scheduled with an Administrative Assistant several weeks in advance to assure adequate postage, envelopes, labels, and volunteers are available.

IV. Guidelines for Conference On Hold Messages

The Conference Center utilizes an on hold messaging system that plays when callers are on hold. On hold messages are updated once every quarter (four times a year).

1. Inclusion in the on hold messaging is free.
2. All requests for inclusion must be made to the Director of Communications.
3. Deadlines for quarterly submissions are: February 1st, May 1st, August 1st, November 1st.
4. The on hold system at the Conference is to be used for communication of conference events, resources, and important announcements that are of general interest to the South Carolina United Methodists.

V. Guidelines for Press Releases

Committees seeking to place press releases in newspapers, radio, or other media for a special event are encouraged to produce at least the first draft of the material they intend to send to the media.

Committees are encouraged to draft a communications volunteer. When writing:

1. Use the words: For Immediate Release or "For Release ___date___".
2. Include the most important information in the first paragraph.
3. Be sure who, what, when, where, how and why are included.
4. Submit material electronically when possible (otherwise use Conference letterhead to mail or fax), identify yourself and your role within the church, and any other contact person.
5. Put the word "MORE" at the bottom of a page when more pages follow.
6. At the end of the release, type "30" or ### or type the word END.
7. All outgoing press releases should be submitted to the Director of Communications for approval and distribution.
8. Contact the Director of Communications for resource information.

VI. Conference Calendar

An up-to-the minute church calendar is maintained by the Director of Communications, the Administrative Assistants and the receptionist. Access is available to the public through the conference website at http://umcsc.org/data/cal_index.php

Committees or persons wishing to schedule a church event should:

1. Check the other events the same day.
2. Check events the day before and the day after to ascertain set-up or take down issues.
3. Check the calendar for the month to assure there are no conflicts.
4. When ready to book an event, contact the Administrative Assistant who will put the event and location on-line. Be prepared to give details as to dates, location, addresses, contact name, and event description.
5. Chairmen must contact the Administrative Assistant of changes or cancellations of meetings or events.

VII. Guidelines for publication in the South Carolina United Methodist Advocate

1. The South Carolina United Methodist Advocate is not under the Office of Communications.
2. All submissions are subject to the policies of the Advocate.
3. For information about submission policies and guidelines, contact the Advocate editor Jessica Connor – jconnor@umcsc.org (803) 786-9486 ext. 338.

VIII. Guidelines for Photos on the web

1. Images posted online must be licensed for use, stock images, or original photography.
2. All images of people used in commercial works must have a signed model release. Images of minors should only be posted online with permission from a parent or guardian. No child under the age of 18 will be identified by name.

VIV. Guidelines for creating local church websites

- A. The conference office offers two levels of website hosting.
 1. The first level is a free site that is created and hosted by the Conference for ALL local churches in the South Carolina Conference.
 - I. This site will also be the site for the find-a-church page.
 - II. Information will be automatically populated with information from a local churches charge conference reports.
 - III. A small text area will be provided to churches to write in additional information.
 2. The second level is a free FTP site that the local church must create and upload to conference servers. These sites are fully maintained by the local church. Local churches wishing to have a custom domain (www.mychurch.org) must purchase that domain from a domain provider.
 3. The South Carolina Conference will not create, host, setup, or maintain a 3rd party site.
 4. The South Carolina Conference will not provide software to create a website.
 - I. Local Churches wishing to create sites may look at any 3rd party company to provide hosting, maintains, and support.