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## **Communications Standards Guide**

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# Introduction and Overview

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This document, created by GUMC's Communications Department in conjunction with the Communications Ministry Team and approved by church leadership, will serve as a guide for the creation and publication of any communications piece associated with Germantown United Methodist Church.

Clergy, ministry leaders, church employees, and members will find in this guide every resource necessary to better promote or communicate their event, class, or program.

## Why a Communications Guide?

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This document will help ensure that all church-related communications, whether internal, external, or both, are **consistent in style, voice, and quality**, and thus help further the official mission of GUMC:

*WE ARE A FAITH COMMUNITY COMMITTED TO: LOVING GOD AND LOVING OTHERS, SERVING CHRIST AND SHARING HIM, TRANSFORMING LIVES AND MAKING DISCIPLES*

## What is the Communications Department?

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The external or internal group that produces and manages all GUMC communications. The department receives content from employees, members, and ministry leaders, and shapes communications pieces that are consistent with the values and mission of the church.

**PIP Printing** currently serves as the external Communications Department of GUMC.

Contact:

PIP Printing

1000 June Rd.

Memphis, TN 38119

901-763-3171

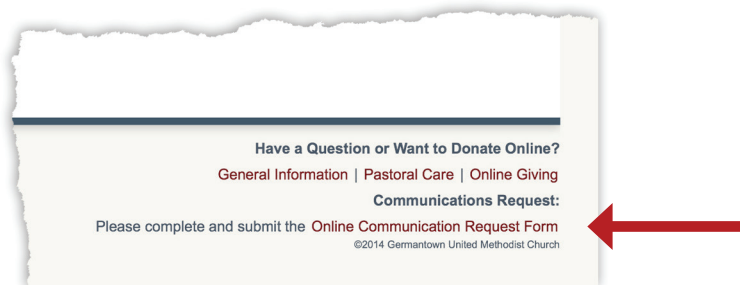
graphics@digitalpip.com

# The Communications Process

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To request a communications item, members should use the Communications Request form system on the GUMC website. Requests received via email will be redirected to submit using the forms.

You can access the forms at [germantownumc.org/request](http://germantownumc.org/request) or by clicking this link at the bottom of any page on the website:



This guide will help you decide which form you need to submit if you're unsure. It will also help you prepare your written copy in a way that will expedite the fulfillment process. **Please pay special attention to the lead time required for each type of submission!** We cannot guarantee that your request will be fulfilled if it is submitted after the suggested deadline.

## Which Form is For Me?

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We have developed 6 different forms to reduce the amount of time you need to spend on your individual request. Examples for what type of event goes through which form are shown beneath the form names on the website. Please keep in mind that Church-wide Events are special requests, usually reserved for clergy and high level church staff - ministry-level events (even those that are open to all members) will typically use the "Announcement or Even" form to submit their copy for Ministry Events, the website, and social media. If you have a print request to supplement your announcement, you must also fill out the print request form. Please be aware of the lead time required for all requests, especially for print.

## Special Requests

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For some events, your ministry may require involvement above and beyond standard ministry work. In these cases, please be advised that you may need to fund the Communication Department's work out of your ministry budget. You can discuss these cases with Brad Gabriel, [bgabriel@germantownumc.org](mailto:bgabriel@germantownumc.org).

# Priority System

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## Audience Reach

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Before submitting a communications request, you should consider the scale of your audience. How many people do you want to attend or participate in your event? Based on this number, the Communications Department will help you determine which communications platforms you should use and on what timeline. Below you'll find a hierarchy by which we'll determine this:

Level	Criteria	Support	Examples
A	Church-wide Event All Departments Involved 1500+ people involved	Graphic Design ME (4-6 weeks) Webpage Facebook Ads Print Materials Email	Advent Easter Endowment Campaign Major Sermon Series
B	Single Ministry Key Event One time (no weekly programming) Entire Department Involved Limited to 2 per year 300+ involved	Graphic Design Webpage ME (3-4 weeks) Print Materials Email	Men's/Women's Retreat Youth Discovery Weekend Clothing Sale Golfing with Joy Edwin's Way
C	Important, but not premiere ministry event Limited to 1 per month 100+ involved	Graphic Design Web Page ME (2 weeks)	UMM Breakfast Older Adults Lunch
D	Regular Ministry Events	Web Page ME (1 week)	Youth Element
E	Miscellaneous Announcements Recurring Events	ME (1 week; recurring, up to 4 weeks)	

There is wiggle room on a per-ministry basis, but not much.  
We will discuss your case individually if necessary.

# Communications Vehicles

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GUMC's communications vehicles fall into two categories: print and digital. Below is a breakdown of all communications platforms and a short description of each, as well as guidelines for how content should be written and/or formatted. Please remember that, even if your request submission falls within the word count, it may be edited for style and accuracy, or simply to fit the formatting (if necessary). We will make every attempt to retain all important information when editing your copy. **The Communications Department has "final cut" when it comes to GUMC's publications.**

## Print Vehicles

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**Please be aware of how the promotional timeline works for each request and each platform.**

**"Promotion Lead Time" refers to the promotional period prior to the event. A 4-week lead time for an item in Ministry News & Events means that the time may appear no more than 4 weeks in advance of the date of the event. ( You are welcome to maximize your lead time, but it is not required. You may only want 2 weeks of promotion - up to you.)**

**"Submission Deadline" refers to the submission of a request - i.e., letting the Communications Department know what you want. For something like a poster, we need the information 4 weeks in advance of the promotion start date to roll it into our workflow. (An extra two weeks are required for outsourced/color printing.)**

**So, to request a 4-week color poster run (lead time) for an event starting April 1, you would need to submit a print request 10 weeks ahead of the event date (January 15). This allows 4 weeks for design and layout, 2 weeks for printing, and 4 weeks for actual promotional use.**

## Print Vehicles

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### **Worship Bulletin** (*Sundays, Weekly*)

The bulletin contains several set announcements and notifications that are found inside the cover. Inclusion of any announcements in this piece will be specially determined by church leadership.

### **Ministry News & Events** (*Sundays, Weekly*)

**Description:** A tri-fold bulletin insert that contains announcements for individual ministries and the congregation at large, including prayer concerns.

**Writing Style:** Copy should be direct and concise (think about "who, what, when, where") with a contact listing or a link to more information on the website.

**Word Count:** 60 max

Promotion **Lead Time:** 4-6 weeks

**Submission Deadline:** Wednesdays by 12 p.m. for the following Sunday

# Communications Vehicles (Cont'd)

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## **Tidings** (*Monthly*)

**Description:** An article-based newsletter that allows space for more information about ministry events, church announcements, and congregational news, as well as accompanying photography or artwork. Tidings articles should ideally tell members “why” they should participate in a church program – i.e., what they will get out of it – to supplement the “who, what, when, where” style of Ministry News & Events.

**Writing Style:** In 2015, Tidings is moving towards a narrative, feature-focused format with longform human interest stories about church events. Interviews, event recaps, and personal narratives should be your focus.

**Word Count:** 700 max (feature article), 350 max (short article).

Promotion Lead Time: 4 weeks prior to event

**Submission Deadline:** The 10th of the month prior (e.g., an item must be submitted by January 10th to be published in February *Tidings*).

## **Posters** (*Ongoing, Visible on Church Property*)

**Description:** Posters, banners, and signage hang on church premises and are publicly viewable by any visitors to the church. These require graphic design by the Communications Department, and color printing will incur special costs.

Writing Style: Posters should be image-focused and attention grabbing, with only the necessary details and a call to seek out more information through a contact or a link to the website (which can be displayed in a QR code for easy access).

**Word Count:** 50 max

Promotion **Lead Time:** 4 weeks prior to event

Submission Deadline: 4 weeks prior (in-house, black & white) or 6 weeks prior (outsourced, color) to start of promotional period.

## **Postcard** (*Single Delivery*)

**Description:** A 4”x6” or 5”x7” graphic with very limited space for copy, postcards are suitable for short-burst reminders for events.

**Writing Style:** Think of a postcard like a teaser. Copy should be kept bare-bones, with only as much information as necessary to direct the recipient to the event or more information. The front of a postcard will contain an image or photograph and will require graphic design by the Communications Department. The back of the postcard houses copy, as well as the recipient’s address, a stamp, and post office markings.

**Word Count:** 40 max

Promotion **Lead Time:** 3 weeks prior to event

Submission Deadline: 4 weeks prior (in-house, black & white) or 6 weeks prior (outsourced, color) to start of promotional period.

# Communications Vehicles (Cont'd)

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## **Mailbox Flyer** (*Weekly, Sundays*)

**Description:** Typically, mailbox flyers are reformatted versions of poster graphics designed to fit in mailboxes. Flyers are a good way to reach an age-relevant audience with plenty of room for information. Because mailbox flyers are smaller and more personal in scope, the Communications Department does not always need to be involved in the design and creation of these pieces.

**Writing Style:** Copy for Mailbox Flyers is largely left to the ministry leaders, but we recommend a healthy mix of “who, what, when” information and a short “why” statement to grab attention and keep interest.

**Word Count:** 100 - 350 (fitting on 8.5 x 11 document)

Promotion **Lead Time:** 2 weeks prior to event

Submission Deadline: 3 weeks prior (in-house, black & white printing) or 4 weeks prior (outsourced, color printing) to start of promotional period.

## **Brochure** (*Ongoing, Available on Kiosks, Tables*)

**Description:** A bi- or tri-fold piece with information about long-term events, e.g. Adult Education class programming. Brochures are static pieces – they must be sought out rather than received by your audience – but they are an excellent way to provide detailed information and can be referred to by Ministry Events. The Communications Department will be heavily involved in production of these items, as they require graphic design and special print fulfillment – we will work with you to determine the size and format of your brochure, including color vs. black and white. Note the significant lead time required for brochures.

**Writing Style:** Brochures are extremely flexible in content, but should leave room for an eye-catching design or photography. A brochure may be detail-oriented (e.g., the Older Adults programming brochure) or narrative/human interest focused (e.g., the Trinity Centre brochure) and may contain a sign-up form or business reply mail envelope.

**Word Count:** Up to 2000 words

Promotion **Lead Time:** 4 weeks prior to event

Submission Deadline: 5 weeks prior (in-house, black & white printing) or 7 weeks prior (outsourced, color printing) to start of promotional period.

## **Special Requests**

In special circumstances, the Communications Department may work with your ministry to provide special items such as T-shirts, videos, etc. Contact the Communications Department to inquire about special requests.



# Communications Vehicles (Cont'd)

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## Digital Vehicles

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### **Website** - *germantownumc.org*

Our website is the information hub of Germantown UMC. Full information about any event or ministry can be published online, with artwork, including online registration. There is no word count restriction or submission deadline for web information. Here are the types of webpages you can utilize – and we will help match your event or program with the appropriate page:

- **Event Page:** For one-off or recurring events, an event page can house all information and a link to online registration. Events can appear at the bottom of the homepage with a thumbnail image, and can be linked to directly with a shortened URL. Events also appear in the relevant ministry section's sidebar. (E.x., visitors to the Youth Ministry page would see current youth events listed on right-hand side.)
- **Info Page:** An info page has all the capabilities of the event page, but is used for general information about a ministry or program, such as Team Read. Because there is no event tied to this page, the page will not expire and would not include a registration link. An info page may or may not be tied to a ministry section.
- **Section (multiple info pages):** Larger events, such as Golfing With Joy, may make use of multiple event pages in their own section. These events would have their own special URLs (e.x. [germantownumc.org/golfing](http://germantownumc.org/golfing)) that lead users to a landing page with relevant sub-pages appearing in the sidebar. The landing page would also be accessible through a thumbnail on the homepage.
- **Ministry Page:** Every major ministry has its own dedicated section of the website, with information about the ministry, its leaders, and upcoming events. Information on these pages may be available in other print pieces, such as the kiosks and ministry events, but would be consolidated online.
- **Special Request:** Special pages with their own design, such as the GUMC Live page, can be created through special requests.

## **Communications Vehicles (Cont'd)**

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### **Email**

Where information **on the website must be sought out by the user, an email comes directly to the audience. Everyone from the Senior Pastor to a ministry leader can send emails to the congregation or specific mailing lists to make announcements or promote events – but the content and design of all emails is approved and published by the Communications Department in accordance with our email style policies.**

**This Week at GUMC: Goes out at noon every Monday and enumerates the events taking place in the coming week. Inclusion in this piece is determined by the church staff and Communications Department.**

**Ministry Emails: Ministries can send directly to their own self-maintained mailing list. Every ministry will have its own email design created and maintained by the Communications Department.**

**Sermon E-notice: Every Friday, an email containing the scripture and a summary of the following Sunday's sermon is sent to the congregational mailing list. On occasion, the church leadership may add a relevant announcement to the bottom of this email.**

**Congregational Concerns: A weekly list of congratulations, concerns, and sympathy for members of the congregation. This list also appears in Ministry News and Events.**

**Special Announcements: For some events with wide congregational appeal, a special one-off email announcement will go out to the congregation.**

### **Social Media**

**GUMC uses its social media platforms to engage church members with information about new members, sermon summaries, and church announcements. Events may be promoted through social media by request. Communication through social media is always supplementary to information that can be found in print or on the website.**

**Facebook: [www.facebook.com/germantownumc](http://www.facebook.com/germantownumc)**

**Twitter: [www.twitter.com/germantownumc](http://www.twitter.com/germantownumc)**

# STYLE GUIDE

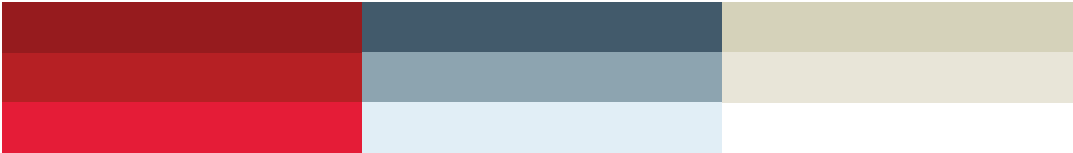
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This page should serve as an at-a-glance guide for the Communications Department. If a member of the church wants to use official GUMC logos or colors in a design, they should contact PIP Printing.

#B62025

#445A6B

#E7E4D8



Futura PT, **Futura PT Bold**

**ITC Franklin Gothic (Header)**

*ITC Franklin Gothic (Title, Pull Quote)*

ITC Franklin Gothic (Body Copy)

Utopia Std, **Utopia Std Bold** (Body Copy)

# STYLE GUIDE

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## Voice

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In order to more effectively communicate as an organization, the “voice” of GUMC should be consistent throughout all written copy in communications pieces. With so many different communications vehicles (see pp. 6-10), it is important to retain a distinctive tone, tenor, and style across all media and to every audience – including church members, staff, guests, and members of the surrounding community. Put briefly, “voice” in communications describes the individual “personality” of the organization delivering the message.

The GUMC voice should be friendly, positive, confident, and appropriately formal or informal. The audience should feel invited and encouraged to participate without pressure or urgency.

Please note that the appropriate voice must be achieved while allowing for format restraints. Copy that is submitted through the Communications Request form may be molded to fit a longform Tidings article, a quick Ministry Events blurb, a bulleted-list reminder email, and a promotional Facebook ad while adhering to GUMC’s voice principals. On page 14, you will find examples of the style of copy you should strive for – and remember that the Communications Department reserves the right to edit your copy to bring it in line with our communications standards.

## Grammar and Punctuation Guide

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Separate from voice and regardless of formality, grammar and punctuation should be accurate in all GUMC communications pieces. This will be checked in the communications pipeline prior to publication, but for those making requests, practicing good grammar in submitted copy can help streamline the process and avoid mistakes.

GUMC follows the Associated Press (AP) Stylebook. Here are some frequently used grammar conventions that should be kept consistent.

### **CHURCH NAME CONSISTENCY**

For external communications, always use the full name (Germantown United Methodist Church) in at least the first instance for clarity. “GUMC” is acceptable in subsequent mentions. For internal communications, “GUMC” is generally acceptable at all times. It may even be redundant to mention the name of the church for some internal usage – use discretion! “Germantown UMC” is acceptable in some formats, as long as you are consistent.

### **OXFORD COMMA**

*Acceptable:* Youth, Children, and Health and Recreation Ministries (*Oxford Comma*)

*Unacceptable:* Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday (*No Oxford Comma*)

Always use the Oxford Comma, the comma before the “and” in a list of three or more items.

# STYLE GUIDE / Written Copy

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## TIME STAMPS

*Acceptable:* 1 p.m., 2:30 p.m., 8-10 a.m., 10 a.m. – 2 p.m., 1 - 2:30 p.m., 4:00 PM (in lists)

*Unacceptable:* 1 pm, 2:30pm, 8 - 10 am, 8 am - 10 am, 8:00-10 a.m., 10 a.m.-2 p.m., noon

(1) Leaving off the :00 for on-the-hour times is acceptable but not required. Be consistent within documents. (2) For a.m. and p.m., use together, lower case, with periods, and with a space before. (3) For time spans that do not cross from before noon to after noon, use a standard dash (-) with no spaces. For time spans that do cross from a.m. to p.m., use an en dash separated by spaces on either side.

## URLS AND EMAIL ADDRESSES

*Acceptable:* [germantownumc.org](http://germantownumc.org), [germantownumc.org/visioning](http://germantownumc.org/visioning), [gumc.co/golf](http://gumc.co/golf)

*Unacceptable:* [www.germantownumc.org](http://www.germantownumc.org)

*Acceptable:* [drroads@germantownumc.org](mailto:drroads@germantownumc.org)

*Unacceptable:* [drroads@](mailto:drroads@), [drroads@germantown](mailto:drroads@germantown)

URLs and Email addresses should never be broken across two lines. For linkings to the GUMC website, forgo the “www” – it is implied and unnecessary to print. You may **bold**, but never *italicize* or underline a URL or email address for emphasis. For digital pieces, URLs and Email Addresses should be hyperlinked (i.e., clickable) and may or may not show a “display text” – so the words “Click Here” would link to [germantownumc.org](http://germantownumc.org). If you are unsure of how to make an email address clickable (mailto:), contact the Communications Department for help.

## MONETARY REFERENCES

*Acceptable:* \$10, \$49.99

*Unacceptable:* \$10.00, 10\$, 10 dollars

Always use the \$ symbol before the figure, never after. Leave off zeros if even amount.

## PHONE NUMBERS

*Acceptable:* 754-7216, (601) 529-1963

*Unacceptable:* (901) 754-7216, 901.754.7216, 601-529-1963

Use the (###) ###-#### format, no periods or extra dashes. For Memphis numbers, leave off the (901). For other area codes, include them.

## FACILITY NAMES

*Acceptable:* Hamilton Building, Mike Wilson Fellowship Hall, Welcome Center kiosks

*Unacceptable:* Hamilton, Fellowship Hall, fellowship hall

Always use full (endowed) names of buildings or areas when applicable, with capitalization. Do not abbreviate.

# SAMPLE LIBRARY

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To best promote your ministry or event, you should tailor your copy to best suit each platform (Ministry Events, Tidings, email, etc). The request forms will instruct you in specific word counts for each entry, and this document should serve as a style guide for the copy itself. Here is an example of an event's promotional copy in several major forms.

## ***Event: Golfing With Joy 2014***

### Ministry Events

**Golfing with Joy.** The Joy Circle's annual golf scramble will take place at Spring Creek Ranch in Collierville on Monday, August 25. \$150 per golfer. Benefits Memphis Business Academy. Register online at [germantownumc.org/golfing](http://germantownumc.org/golfing) between June 1 and August 4. Paper forms available at Welcome Center. Space is limited. Contact Lauren Boswell, 848-0373, [golfingwithjoy@comcast.net](mailto:golfingwithjoy@comcast.net).

*Notes: Notice the condensed, bite-sized sentences containing only crucial information. "Fluff" should be stripped out for Ministry Events to minimize space and optimize readability.*

### Tidings

... The Joy Circle supports MBA in many ways. Throughout the school year members provide volunteer service hours, purchase books for the classroom, provide academic incentive programs, sponsor teacher appreciation events, supply prayer cards for teachers and offer a monthly student birthday recognition program. Students at the school have become very familiar with visits by the members of "Joy." "It has meant a lot to me over the past years. Joy Circle gives me something to aim for every quarter and I truly thank them," says 10th grader Octavia Gory speaking of the academic incentive program offered by the Joy Circle. ...

*Notes: This is a single paragraph excerpt from a 513-word Tidings article that include photographs, pull quotes, and a unique page design. The piece focused on the good work taking place at Memphis Business Academy and then gave information on how a church member can get involved beyond just signing up for the golf scramble. This is an excellent example of using the "Why" factor in a human interest story to galvanize involvement in a worthwhile mission.*

### Website

[www.germantownumc.org/golfing](http://www.germantownumc.org/golfing)

*Notes: Being one of the church's larger annual events, Golfing with Joy merited an entire section (a collection of 6 info pages) on the GUMC website with a custom short URL. In addition to a custom-designed landing page that included all the basic info found in Ministry Events and Tidings, the website contained additional pages with a sponsor list and information about MBA, Joy Circle, and Spring Creek Ranch.*

# SAMPLE LIBRARY

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## Eblast

Annual Golf Scramble benefiting Memphis Business Academy, A Memphis Charter School  
Monday, August 25

### TWO WAYS TO REGISTER:

Fill out a paper registration form (Available at GUMC) - or - [Register Online]

Live Auction, Raffle Drawings, Contests and Prizes, Plus much more!

**Registration is now open! Space is limited.**

*Notes: Notice that this email is more of a bulleted list or billboard advertisement than a paragraph-based communication. When it comes to emails, short and sweet is the goal. A church member might get this email on his or her phone on the go, and will be able to glean the crucial details without combing through the copy. We must have faith that our other platforms (Website, Tidings, and Ministry Events, in which the event appeared for several weeks) have adequately informed the reader and that this email serves as a simple reminder.*

## Facebook, Twitter

Don't forget about the 2014 Golfing with Joy golf scramble! Registration closes Monday! Learn more:  
[germantownumc.org/golfing](http://germantownumc.org/golfing)

*Notes: (This is a theoretical social media post – GWJ did not actually post to GUMC's Facebook or Twitter.) On social media, even more so than in an email, brevity is the soul of success. An image to accompany this post, which is reduced to an immediate call to action, will have the best chance of successfully getting clicks.*