

VUU Email Policy

I. Purpose

The purpose of this email policy is to support the needs of the VUU Church community in communicating on a timely basis about issues of importance.

II. Types of Email Uses

Email can be used for general announcements, urgent announcements, and as a tool by committees for communicating with each other and reviewing documents and other material.

III. Guidelines

Email is a valuable tool for communication but also has many downsides as well. The following guidelines should be read and understood by anyone who is using email to communicate church business.

a. Why do we need email guidelines?

We wish to maximize the good and minimize the bad that comes with email. Any growing human organization of VUU's size faces the concomitant challenge of maintaining effective communication among its members. Our increased numbers are accompanied by a greater tendency for what could be referred to as information entropy---a seemingly natural drag on information timeliness, accuracy, and pervasiveness throughout the community. Email is a great means to overcome such problems.

But we recognize that email may come with problems of its own. Our words on the screen are not accompanied with the gestures, inflection, or other signals that humans use to interpret the message. As such, the possibility of miscommunication is increased, and with email the miscommunication can get to a greater audience faster. This also holds for messages that might be embarrassing, sent without the filter of second thought, intended to hurt someone's feelings, or otherwise inappropriate. In any such event, the result could range from mere irritation to creating fissures in the community. We also must address concerns about privacy, confidentiality, and security that attend the use of email.

b. Use of Email

The overarching rule is that email should be used primarily as a means to announce, organize, make inquiry, and provide supplemental information for sanctioned church meetings, business, or activities. It should not be a

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substitute for face-to-face interaction or meetings, as it is not the proper forum for dealing with church issues, be they simple or complicated.

Messages may also relate to meetings or activities that occur outside the church, but should be reasonably considered of interest to the whole church community and not a special interest group. This is not a bulletin board or a soapbox.

If you wish to have a message broadcast to the VUU community, send your request to the church office for review and forwarding.

c. Caution is in order when using email.

Our words are immortalized once the SEND button is pushed, so assume the world will read your message, because it may. Or in other words, if your message is something you would not like to hear read from the pulpit someday, do not send it.

Without face-to-face communication, attempts at humor, irony, sarcasm, and wit are often misinterpreted. Some may view your joke as an insult or criticism, which is never allowed. If this should somehow happen, hopefully the recipient of the perceived slight will consider another medium of communication such as the phone, and not fire off a hasty response that often exacerbates the situation. Both sides should remember that, unlike personal conversations that fade with time, impulsive (and permanent) email responses can be printed, circulated, stripped of context, and acquire a meaning that was never intended. So, figuratively speaking, do not attach emotion to your email.

d. Best impressions are lasting impressions.

Begin with a clear and meaningful subject line. The text should be concise and to the point. Always use correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure, as this is an important means of communicating what is intended and lessens the possibility of your message being misconstrued. Also, carelessness in this regard may convey a poor impression of you and our community.

e. Be responsible about use of the email system.

This is in particular regard to sending attachments that may have a virus, but also avoid attaching unnecessary or very large files. If you receive a message intended for another user, forward it with a brief explanation. Do not just ignore it.

Be thoughtful and judicious about the use of the "REPLY ALL" button and to whom you send a copy of your message. Unless there is an explicit call for action on the part of the recipient, ask yourself if they really need the information you are about to send.

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f. An incomplete list of “don’ts”.

- Do not send personal information (address, phone number) without permission.
- Do not send spam.
- Do not send virus warnings.
- Do not harvest email addresses for spamming or sending advertisements.
- Do not insult or criticize via email.
- Do not forward chain letters.
- Do not use offensive language.