

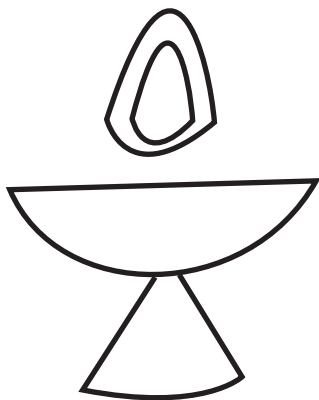
# Small Talk

strengthening the small  
Unitarian Universalist  
congregation

December 2004

**What's the first point** of contact for most new people arriving at our door? While it may be the greeter, what happens if the greeter is busy greeting someone else, gathering materials that may be in short supply at the greeting table, helping someone find the religious education directors? Then it is the order of service that becomes the first point of contact.

—Jane Haskell,  
Member of the UU church of  
Belfast, ME — from her monthly  
newsletter column, *SMALL IS RIGHT!*



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## Publications for the Small Congregation: Part Two

by Dana Dwinell-Yardley,  
Layout and Design Editor of *SMALL TALK*

“Okay,” you say, “Last issue – Part One – focused on layout [making your publications look good]. Now my congregation’s newsletter and order of service are really spiffy, but I have no idea what we should really publish in there.” Do not despair! This issue – Part Two – will give you some ideas and guidelines for what sort of things should go into the publications of small congregations.

If you read Part One, you may remember that your order of service and newsletter can, and 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. Also, publications can be wonderful without long hours of difficult work, complicated programs, and squinting at a computer – if you have an eye for detail, a passion for your congregation and Unitarian Universalism (UUism), and a willingness to welcome the stranger, you can make wonderful publications.

Remember – your congregation’s publications can be important and exciting tools for growth and vitality!

### “The NED of the UUA will talk about UUSC and AIWs ...”

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 Unitarian Universalist church or about UUism at all!

We Unitarian Universalists love acronyms – but don’t have sentences in your publications like “the SJC will be meeting at FUUP with the NED of the UUA to talk about YRUU, UUSC, and

**Publications**  
*continued on page 2...*

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# About Small Talk

**Small Talk** is a newsletter published monthly by the Small Church Specialist of the Northeast District.

SMALL TALK is devoted to strengthening the small Unitarian Universalist congregation through informative articles, resources, and good ideas.

**the Rev. Jane Dwinell,**  
*Content Editor*

**Dana Dwinell-Yardley,**  
*Layout and Design*

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If you have questions, comments, or good ideas for future issues...

If you'd like to publicize your small church's events...

Or if you'd like more information...

Please contact the Rev. Jane Dwinell, Small Church Specialist, at:

[sky@vtlink.net](mailto:sky@vtlink.net),  
802.229.4008, or  
1 Liberty Street  
Montpelier, VT 05602

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If you would like to receive Small Talk electronically, please e-mail [sky@vtlink.net](mailto:sky@vtlink.net).

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*This is Volume Two, Issue Four.*

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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. Now, on to the nitty-gritty!

## **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.
- ⊙ Church address, phone, and e-mail/website (if you have one). Guests will often pocket an order of service, even if they don't make it to the table with your brochures.
- ⊙ 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 it/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 special features of your sanctuary.
- ⊙ 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.

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All this info may seem overwhelming, but it can easily be implemented into a single page, back to front, Order of Service. Really.

And a brief layout note – 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/website (if you have a website or an e-mail address that's checked regularly), and how to find you. (i.e. "We're the purple building on Main Street just after the park.")
- ⊙ A brief description of who your congregation is, and what Unitarian Universalism is. The Seven 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 could write about what the board's been up to and make it more reader-friendly than Official Board Minutes),
  - ✧ 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 simple list of What, Where, When).
- ⊙ Information about church events – and not just

**Having good, solid, fun, welcoming publications is one of the building blocks of a strong, healthy, small congregation.**

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. Plus, they can be awfully embarrassing, whether you were included, or left out.

Don't forget to give a big thank-you to the person who creates your congregation's publications (If you *are* the person who creates your congregation's publication, thank you!).

Congratulations! Having good, solid, fun, welcoming publications is one of the building blocks of a strong, healthy, small congregation. They will help your bright beacon of liberal religion to blaze even warmer and brighter than before!

### **Contribute to SMALL TALK!**

Let me know if you have stories or concerns to share for future issues of SMALL TALK. Email me at [sky@vtlink.net](mailto:sky@vtlink.net), or snail mail to 1 Liberty St. Montpelier, VT 05602.

## What's Happening in December and January!

### Northeast District Events

| When?                    | What?                       | Where?        |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| January 29 <sup>th</sup> | Board Meeting               | Belfast, ME   |
| February 5 <sup>th</sup> | Winter Meeting on RESOURCES | Brunswick, ME |
| March 12 <sup>th</sup>   | Board Meeting               | TBA           |



### Small Church Specialist's Calendar

| When?                                      | What?                              | Where?            |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| January 26 <sup>th</sup> -27 <sup>th</sup> | N. Atlantic District Staff Retreat | Senexet House, CT |
| January 28 <sup>th</sup>                   | Staff Relations Meeting            | Brunswick, ME     |
| January 29 <sup>th</sup>                   | Board Meeting                      | Belfast, ME       |
| January 30 <sup>th</sup>                   | Worship and Meeting                | Edgecomb, ME      |

### Join the smalltalk email chat list!

An email chat list, through the UUA, has been started for lay leaders, DREs and ministers of small (less than 150 members) congregations.

If you like email conversations, and want more ideas for your small congregation, then sign up at <http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/smalltalk>.

**The Rev. Jane Dwinell, Small Church Specialist, is happy to meet with your congregation!**

Just give her a call at 802.229.4008, or send her an e-mail at [sky@vtlink.net](mailto:sky@vtlink.net).



## *Small is Beautiful!*

### Resources and Networking for Small Congregations

August 26-28, 2005 ✧ Ferry Beach Camp and Conference Center ✧ Saco, ME

Small is Beautiful is open to anyone from a small congregation (less than 150 members) from anywhere in the world.

Put this conference on your calendar – last summer's *Small is Beautiful!* was fun, mellow, and a learning experience for all. Next summer will be even better!

There will be more information in future issues of SMALL TALK.