

Shir Ami Communications Guidelines
Draft for Board Review
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The Calendar

What platform do we use for the Calendar?

Shir Ami uses Google Calendar for scheduling and publicizing events, meetings, etc. Updates made to the Google calendars are displayed on our website. The calendar can be viewed as one integrated calendar or as four separate calendars: Worship, Shir Ami School, Community, and Life-long Learning.

Who can add or change Calendar items?

To avoid scheduling conflicts, only three people have access to update the Calendar: two Webmasters and one Communications Committee member.

What events have priority in scheduling?

Scheduling priorities historically have been as follows:

1. Worship
2. Shir Ami School
3. Community or Life-long learning

How do events get on the Calendar?

Most events are submitted by the committees responsible for each separate calendar as part of their annual planning. To add a new event, prepare an email with all the details described below. Be sure to check for any schedule conflicts before you plan your event. Send your email to webmaster@congshirami.org.

What information should a submitted event include?

Every entry must include:

- Title
- Date
- Start and end times
- Location
- Contact info (email alias)
- Brief description (if applicable)

What if several events are scheduled back-to-back?

For an event composed of multiple parts—for example, Children's Service, Potluck, Regular Service—each part should be a separate event entry on the calendar and include all the above information.

What if we need to change a Calendar event?

When a change needs to be made to the established calendar, it is important to consult and inform all affected parties, including the owners of any related events. For example, if a Rabbinic intern's visit is rescheduled to a different weekend, the following might be affected:

- Shabbat service schedule
- Adult education schedule
- Intern host
- Oneg host
- Shir Ami school
- Building cleaning schedule
- Weekly event reminder editor
- Bulletin editor

How do I make a change to a Calendar event?

All the following steps are important!

- Make a list of everyone affected by a change in this event and related events.
- Consult with everyone affected to ensure that resources are available to support the change. [Email aliases](#) can be helpful in reaching the key players.
- Once everyone agrees, describe the event change(s) in an email, including all the necessary details. Make sure to update all related events.
- Send the email to all resources involved as well as to the Communications Committee – communications@CongShirAmi.org. The Communications Committee will ensure that the Google calendar is updated and an email goes out to notify the Community.

Email Communications

What are email blasts?

One of the ways that the Congregation communicates with the community is through wide-distribution emails, affectionately known as “email blasts.”

Email blasts are relatively easy to create and send, they reach a large number of people quickly, and they are easy for recipients to review, act upon, and/or delete.

We use two distribution lists to send our informational blasts: one for members only and another for all contacts.

What do we use email blasts for?

The Shir Ami Events Reminder is the most common email blast. It is usually sent weekly, on Sunday, and includes all events scheduled the following week, along with links to the Shir Ami website, when available.

Email blasts may also include any of the following, which can be sent as part of the weekly Shir Ami Events Reminder or as a separate email:

- Monthly Bulletin publication link
- Committee updates (example: Social Action)
- Meeting announcements (example: Annual or Special Membership meeting)
- Upcoming event details and deadlines (example: Special event date and RSVP deadline)
- Volunteers needed (example: oneg, special event, cleanup day)
- Caring Community announcement (example: visitors, meals, rides needed)
- Death of a congregant, funeral, shiva
- Event announcement or event update (event planned on short notice and so not in the weekly update)
- Security bulletin affecting the local community (example: from Federation or ADL)
- Community event announcement (example: wider Jewish Community, Eden Church, South Hayward Parish, etc.)

What are some values we apply to email blasts?

To ensure that our communications are welcomed by and useful to recipients, they should be:

- Accurate and relevant, with a clear call to action (links tested)
- Succinct and focused, respectful of the reader's time and attention
- Positive, welcoming, and inclusive (not desperate, whiny, or scolding)
- Limited to a reasonable number in a given day (one or two?) and week (three or four?)

Who can create an email blast?

Most reminders of scheduled events are automatically included in the weekly Shir Ami Events Reminder. However, if an event has been changed, was planned on short notice, or could benefit from greater publicity, a blast may be useful and may be initiated by a congregation member.

Who sends the email blasts?

The Sender is a designated Board member (or delegated person). Whenever possible, people submitting content should give the Sender 36 hours lead-time to send blasts.

Who checks the content of blasts?

The Sender is responsible for screening content and checking all blasts for alignment with the values described above. All content submitters agree to abide by the Sender's editorial discretion. If in doubt about the appropriateness of copy, the Sender consults with the President and/or a Communications Committee co-chair.

What goes in an email blast?

Blasts should be brief, about 150 words maximum. They should have a Subject line that indicates the topic. They should end with a clear call to action, such as an email address (alias) to reply; a link to a website with more information; a phone number to call; or a date, time, location, and cost to attend an event.

Do we send out blasts for non-Shir Ami events?

Non-Shir Ami community event notices are sent at the discretion of the Sender. Priority is given to notices from organizations that Shir Ami sponsors, or where Sender is aware of specific interest in the Shir Ami community (examples: job seekers workshop, interfaith family event).

How do we protect privacy?

Any email that contains private information, such as rosters, budgets, school details, security procedures, membership meeting notices, etc., should be sent only to the members list. Some of these items are posted in the members-only area of the website, and the blast contains a link to find it there.

What if an email expresses opinion?

An email that expresses opinion should ideally be sourced from the URJ or other identified third party, and should be signed by the author so that it doesn't appear to represent the position of the Board or the Congregation. Distribution is at the discretion of the designated Sender.

What are email aliases?

The Shir Ami Webmaster maintains a list of email aliases to protect the identity of volunteers and to make it easier for people to reach Committee leaders. For security reasons, these aliases should be used widely in place of personal email addresses, especially on fliers and Web pages.

Many of our aliases are listed in the [Lay Leadership](#) page of the Shir Ami website.

Who responds to inquiries sent to an email alias?

When there is more than one forwarding address associated with an alias, such as co-chairs of a committee, the parties should discuss and agree who will reply to incoming emails.

In the case of info@congshirami.org, which forwards to numerous other aliases and thus to a number of recipients, a Membership co-chair is designated as the person to either reply to the message or forward it to another person asking them to respond.

Everyone else receiving a message addressed to info@ should consider it an FYI only and not reply unless directed by one of the Membership co-chairs.

Bulletin

What is the Bulletin?

The Bulletin is one of the ways that Congregation Shir Ami communicates with the community. The Bulletin is a public face for Shir Ami and may include:

- Shir Ami's street, PO Box, and website addresses
- Events calendar
- Congregation President's message
- Rabbinic Interns' message
- Hebrew and Religious school information
- Adult Education schedule
- Event information details (this can be as a PDF flier)
- News and events about Shir Ami groups (examples: Rosh Chodesh/Sisterhood, Social Action, etc.)
- News and events about Shir Ami members
- Photographs

How is the Bulletin published?

The Bulletin is published monthly.

- The Bulletin is emailed on the first of the month to congregation members and to additional people on the email list.
- A few Bulletins are printed and mailed through the postal service each month to those who do not have email access.

How do I access a link to view the Bulletin?

The Bulletin can be accessed several ways:

- Go to the Shir Ami website, www.congshirami.org, and click on the link to the Bulletin. (On the home page, scroll down to the Get Connected section and click on the word "Bulletin.")
- Click the link in the Bulletin email blast sent on the first of each month

If I want to refer to the Bulletin throughout the month, how do I find it?

In addition to the two methods listed above

- You can download the Bulletin and save it on your computer
- You can print a copy

How does information get into the Bulletin?

Much of the Bulletin content is submitted regularly on a monthly basis. This includes items such as messages from the President and Rabbinic Interns, and Rosh Chodesh information.

Other content from congregants is also welcome. Note that submitting an event to the Bulletin doesn't get it onto the Calendar. You need to follow the steps outlined in the Calendar section of this FAQ.

How do I submit content for the Bulletin?

- Submit email Bulletin content to editor@congshirami.org by the 20th day of the month preceding the publication date (example: April 20 for the May Bulletin).
- The subject line of the email should contain the word BULLETIN and indicate the topic (example: BULLETIN, President's message; BULLETIN, A's baseball game; BULLETIN, family game night).
- Content should be submitted "ready for publication." The editor has authority to alter the content or format, but is not expected to write the article.
- Content may be in Word format or it may be sent as a flyer (PDF or JPEG).
- Content should be brief and readable and contain all information that may be useful to the reader in following up: date, time, location, cost, an email address (alias) to reply; a website link with more information; or a phone number to call.
- Bulletin content is generally limited to Shir Ami news and events. Information from affiliated organizations and information that might be of interest to Congregation members may also be included.
- Bulletin Editor and Board President have final discretion for content approval.

Does Shir Ami accept paid advertisements in the Bulletin?

No. Shir Ami does not accept paid advertisements in the Bulletin.

What are some values we apply to the Bulletin?

The Bulletin is published on the web. As such, it is a public document. We want the Bulletin to be

- Positive, welcoming, and inclusive
- Useful for the reader
- Protective of the privacy of individuals
- Accurate and relevant
- Succinct and focused, respectful of the reader's time and attention

How do we protect privacy?

Because the Bulletin is published on the web, we are cautious about listing personal information such as email addresses and telephone numbers.

- The Shir Ami Webmaster maintains a list of [email aliases](#) to protect the identity of board members, committee members and other volunteers while allowing easy access to reach Committee leaders.
- Personal telephone numbers should be used with care.

What about photos?

Photos are an important part of the Bulletin. Our policy is to use photos without names. In particular, photos of children should not have names. All children who are enrolled in Hebrew or Religious School should have a photo release form on file. Any

requests by specific individuals not to have their photo published should be strictly respected.

What if an article expresses opinion?

An article that expresses opinion should ideally be sourced from the URJ or other identified third party, and should be signed by the author so that it doesn't appear to represent the position of the Board or the Congregation. Distribution is at the discretion of the Bulletin editor.