MESSAGES

LISTEN

REFLECT

REVIEW

SHARE

a resource for parishes

Prepared by the Diocesan Communications Office
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Introduction

What is communication and why is it important to the Church?

Communication is the art of connecting people. Successful communication requires knowing what you want to say, using the right medium and saying it clearly in a way that is heard and understood. Saying something without connecting with your audience is just noise.

Good communication is essential to delivering the gospel message and engaging all sections of your community with it. In today's society people are less likely to attend church out of habit or because of their social upbringing. In the past people would automatically belong to a particular church, regardless of the quality of activities and resources. Now churches have to work hard to attract and then hold onto people.

If a church is not meeting the needs of its community and is not communicating in a way that is understood by its audience, a possible outcome could be a decline in church attendance.

What is Messages?

The purpose of this booklet is to help you communicate more effectively. It does not tell you who you are or what you should say, but it does help you and your parish discover more about the people who live in your community and what their thoughts are. It will support you to communicate in a way that they will see, hear and understand.

It is also designed to help you review your internal communication structures and parish communication channels. All this will help you form communication priorities. It offers a step by step guide, with a number of supporting resources, built around four common processes:

1. Listening
2. Reflecting
3. Reviewing
4. Sharing

How can Messages help?

The benefits that come from working through this guide are extensive. The resources and ideas in Messages can help churches evaluate what they currently offer, identifying areas of weakness and strength. It helps churches gain a better understanding of how their congregation and the wider community think and feel, so that priorities can be clarified. All this leads to clearer communication, greater engagement and a more fulfilling church life.

The guide can also help shape effective communication structures. Churches are busy places, with clergy, lay members and volunteers often stretched to their limits. Reviewing your internal structures will help you work well as a church team, to clearly communicate, to plan ahead and to work towards the same goals. All this enables the smooth running of your church.

An overview of the Messages process

1. Listening
   - The first step in effective communication is listening. To engage with your audience you need to know who they are, what they are thinking, and what they need from you.

2. Reflecting
   - Once you have listened you need to reflect on the information you have gathered. How well do you communicate your needs to your congregation and the wider community? Are you communicating effectively? What are your strengths and weaknesses?

3. Reviewing
   - Before you start communicating your messages, you need to ensure that your channels of communication are appropriate and that you are making the best use of them.

4. Sharing
   - This part of the process is when your messages are communicated to your audience. You need to plan how you will communicate them and which methods you will use.

To help you visualise the start and end of the Messages process we have produced a flowchart on page 6. This will help you to establish where in the process your church needs to start.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Listen | Do we know our church and wider community well?                         | Identify the profile of your church and wider community                   | • Community profile pie chart  
• Community profile questionnaire  
• Church activity pie chart  
• Church questionnaire |
| Reflect | How well does the life of our church serve the needs of our church and wider community? | Compare provision with needs                                                 | • Questionnaire summary questions  
• Comparing pie charts  
• Participation and contact questions |
| Reflect | How do we ensure we meet the needs of our whole community?              | Bring together findings and form priorities                                | • Forming priorities  
• Resources and gifting skills |
| Review | How well do our current communication channels work?                    | Review all current methods of communication                                | • ‘How to…’ resources |
| Review | Are we using all available communication channels?                       | Research new forms of communication                                         | • Opening the channels: information and resources |
| Share | How do we deliver our priorities!                                       | Plan how you remain at the heart of your community                          | • Communication planning guide  
• Communication timetable |
| Share | How do we share and learn with others in our diocese!                   | Share your experiences with the Diocesan Communications Office             | • Diocesan website showcasing ideas, experiences and practical tips |
Today’s society is in action 24 hours a day and seven days a week. The Church touches people’s lives at unpredictable times, not just when we want them to notice us. It is important to be aware of all points of contact with the local community and also how your church appears to others. These points of contact are not simply the vicar and Sunday services, but the churchyard, the notice board, the church school governors etc. Not being, doing or saying something is also a message, good or bad.

But how do you know what people are seeing and hearing of you? The only way to discover the messages you are giving out is to ask your wider community.

It is also important that people within the church can have a say in its mission and values. Regular congregation members might appreciate the chance to express views in a safe and confidential setting, without risk of confrontation.

Some of your congregation may have the chance to give their views at PCC meetings, management committees or the Annual Parish Meeting. However, there may be people in your church community who have very little concept of your church’s processes and vision.

Listening resources

- Community profile pie chart: This is a tool that helps you visually establish who lives in your community. As a group you need to fill in the percentages of those in different age ranges you think live in your community. The Communications Office will then provide you with census data, or you can visit the national statistics website (www.statistics.gov.uk). You can then compare your perception with the statistical data. See page 10: Exercise 1

- Church activity pie chart: This simple tool is a way of establishing which activities and services you currently provide for different age groups. The chart is divided into age ranges and the four areas of the Church’s work. The purpose of the chart is to establish whether your activities meet the needs of your community. You need to ask your wider community what they think is important and ensure these priorities are reflected in your Church’s work. The Communications Office will help you to organise your community involvement. Also you need to find out in which areas your community wants to see more involvement and development. For explanation of the four areas of the Church’s work see page 11: Exercise 1

- Community profile: Compile a profile of your neighbourhood. Include information about local organisations and amenities to build up a picture of the types of businesses and people who live in your area. Visit www.gloucester.anglican.org/downloads/1952.doc for this resource.

- Community questionnaire: This is for use with those who seldom or never come to church. It is a way of finding out what they know about the Church and how. It’s also a good way to discover what involvement, if any, they would like with your church. It will help you evaluate what forms of communication work best and why. Visit www.gloucester.anglican.org/downloads/1953.doc for this resource.

- Church questionnaire: This sample questionnaire is a great way of listening to your church community to discover what they value about the church and what they might want to do differently or not at all. It helps you build up a picture of the strong and weak areas of church life. Visit www.gloucester.anglican.org/downloads/1951.doc for this resource.
Exercise 1

Community profile pie chart

Parish of: ________________

Pie-Chart of Our Parish

Note:
Each segment = 5%. Colour in segments to nearest 5% using colour of age category from table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Census Data</th>
<th>Our Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-15</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-29</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-59</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparisons
Diocese
England

0-4
5-15
16-29
30-59
60+

Exercise 2: the Community activity pie chart

In this document we explain what the four areas are and which symbols represent each area.

The four areas of the Church’s work:

- Worshipping Together – Enabling people to encounter God and grow
- Serving the Community – Providing faith and values through loving service
- Sharing our Faith and Values – Enabling people to grow in relationship with God
- Valuing the Buildings – Providing special places to encounter God and grow

For more information please contact the Diocesan Communications Office on 01452 835515 or communications@glosdioc.org.uk
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Community activity pie chart
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Pie-Chart of Our Parish

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<th>16-29</th>
<th>30-59</th>
<th>60+</th>
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<td>LISTEN</td>
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Try the exercises we have provided over the next few pages to think about how well your church communicates.

Listening to your church network: how do you work now?

Try the exercises we have provided over the next few pages to think about how well your church communicates.

Within our church, God calls us to act as the body of Christ, working together towards the common goal of bringing the Kingdom into being. As one body, we all need to be moving in the same direction.

In order to do this, we need to communicate our strategies and mission plans to each other. In order to do this, we need good communication between the different parts of the church.

Listening to the communities in which we live: sharing a common message helps to bring us together.

We should also think of the impression that our communication can have on the people that we meet.

When we work together, we need to share information so that everyone knows what everyone else is doing.

Imagine a building site where none of the builders know what the other builders are doing. All of them know that they are supposed to be building a house, but without communication you may have three people trying to put in a front door, or no one remembering to put in windows.

We need to share information so that we do not end up doubling up on tasks or forgetting to do anything.

We should also think of the impression that poor communication can have on the people that we interact with outside the Church. Churches do not exist in isolation; they are located in communities and our presence or our absence can communicate something.

People in your community will be forming impressions of the Church and of Christianity each time they encounter your church. If we are confused or disorganised in the message we are sending out, this can imply that the message of Christianity is not consistent and that the Church is careless.

Try the exercises we have provided over the next few pages to think about how well your church communicates.
Exercise 1: What went wrong?

A church youth group decides to put on a talent show to raise money. On 5 June a group of parishioners and volunteers turn up at the church hall to see the talent show. The youth worker and performers are nowhere to be seen.

Read the following scenario and try to work out what went wrong.

• The vicar and the youth worker talk about arrangements for the talent show and agree the outline of the event which will take place on 12 June at 7pm.
• The youth worker decides to pass on information to the webmaster, so the event can be promoted to local teenagers.
• A large number of teenagers see the event on the website and sign up with the youth worker to perform.
• The vicar discusses seating, lighting, sound systems, hall booking and staging with the churchwarden. The date of the event has to be changed to 5 June at 7pm because the hall is already booked. The vicar goes on holiday.
• The churchwarden decides to tell the PCC secretary so members can volunteer to help with refreshments.
• The PCC secretary passes on information to the PCC treasurer and the rest of the PCC. Several people volunteer including the parish magazine editor.
• The PCC secretary confirms with the youth worker that volunteers are available to help at the event but no date is discussed.
• The parish magazine editor writes a report for the magazine, telling the parish about the event.

Confused? When we don’t communicate as a team, this sort of situation can easily occur.

To help you understand the situation, you can follow the flow of information over the page.

The arrows show who was giving information to who.

The change of date was not communicated to the youth worker.

The youth worker was unaware of the change of date and continued to send out the message of the talent show as originally agreed.

The webmaster did not know the change of date.

The parish magazine editor did know the change of date.

The webmaster and the parish magazine editor did not compare information.

Analyzing the situation

LISTEN
When information passes between individuals in an unstructured and informal way like this, it can be confusing and hard to understand. People can get stuck in a web of conflicting messages. Unless you are able to follow the information trail and work out who knows what, you will be unable to fix problems.

- What impression might this situation give to the people in your community about the church?
- Do you think that people are likely to come to another church event?
- What impact might this confusion have on the young people who were supposed to be performing?
- How could this impact on the long term life and mission of the church?

Sending out accurate information and working as a team means we need to be aware of:

- How information is distributed
- Who it is getting to
- Whether the message is consistent
- How to update people on changes to information.

If someone wants to promote an event and there is no standard way to do this, individuals will need to speak to each parish officer in turn to make sure their message gets out to the wider community.

When a group of people have no central communication hub, then one break in a communication chain or one change in arrangements can mean total communication collapse.

The next exercise will look at the people that are currently sharing messages within your church community and how this network could be more efficient.

**Communicate web**

For good communication, it is important that all members of a group talk to each other to help promote and organise the life of your church. The first step to building an effective communication network is to take a closer look at the links and resources already available to you and to identify how they work.

Listed in the exercise below are some of the more common roles in a church. You may or may not have people in all of these roles. Some people may fill more than one of the roles.

Exercise 2: How do we communicate?

This exercise will help you to look at the way that you are currently communicating with each other.

Using arrows to show the direction of information flow, you can draw the diagram to fit your church team. If a role is vacant, leave it out of the web, or if you have extra roles add in a circle.

- How could we promote an event and ensure that everyone is aware of it?
- How do we communicate effectively?
- Where is the message supposed to go?
- How is information distributed to the people in your community?
Once you have completed the diagram, think about the following questions:

• Is information getting to the right people?
• Is one person relied on too heavily to distribute information?
• Is one person dealing with the majority of the communication work?
• How easy would it be to replace this individual in the event of illness?
• Is there a two-way flow of information between people?
• Are certain individuals missing out on vital information? How might this be resolved?

Communication webs with this type of informal structure can break down easily. This can cause problems with the flow of information. To discover a solution see the next page.

The solution

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

- Receive and forward information from church officers and congregation members.
- Make sure the correct people have the right messages.
- Update the noticeboards.
- Send out relevant communications to the congregation and congregation members.

Their responsibilities might include:

- The team of the communication officer does not need to be filled by a new volunteer. It could be filled by the current Sunday School teacher. Each individual who has a role in producing the monthly newsletter would need to be informed and ensure that the information and various messages get to the right people.

Remember...

- Each person should make sure that the months and dates are appropriate. This can cause problems with the flow of information. To discover a solution see the next page.
- Communication webs with the type of informal structure can break down easily. This can cause problems with the flow of information.
- Are there two-way flows of information between people?
- How easy would it be to replace this individual in the event of illness?
- Is there a communication officer in charge of the communication work?
- Is information flowing to the right people?
- Is the communication officer responsible for ensuring that the right messages are correct and concise?

Providing a central person who will manage communications can make this network far more effective and efficient.

A communications officer is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the right messages are correct and concise. The role of the communication officer does not need to be filled by a new volunteer. It could be filled by the current Sunday School teacher. Each individual who has a role in producing the monthly newsletter would need to be informed and ensure that the information and various messages get to the right people.

PROVIDING A CENTRAL PERSON WHO WILL MANAGE COMMUNICATIONS CAN MAKE THIS NETWORK FAR MORE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT.
REFLECT

LISTEN
Reflecting

You will have now gathered a substantial amount of feedback and information, through listening to God, each other and the communities you serve. It is really important to take time to reflect on this information properly. You can only share messages about your church and the Kingdom effectively if you have spent time reflecting on what you are trying to communicate and to whom.

Sorting all the information into material that can be broken down and understood by all involved is important. In this section the resources will help you to analyse your questionnaires and consider and reflect on activities and participation levels. Once all this information has been gathered it will help you form priorities for your church.

Resources for reflecting –

Some can be found on the diocesan website. Follow links as indicated

• Comparing pie charts:
  You can now compare your two pie charts - the Parish population pie chart and the Church activity pie chart. This is an easy way to see if you are providing the right amount of activities for the right age groups.

• Participation and contact:
  You may discover that your church’s life and activities correspond well to its mission opportunities. Are participation and contact levels as expected? If not, why might this be? Use the provided questions to help guide you to support resources.

See www.gloucester.anglican.org/downloads/1955.doc for this resource.

• Form priorities:
  Now you have gathered the above information, you can start discussing your priorities. Form achievable communication priorities for your church that will help you engage more effectively with your audience.

See www.gloucester.anglican.org/downloads/1954.doc for this resource.

• Resources and gifting:
  Consider the people and skills that will be needed to accomplish your priorities. Will local partners need to be involved? Who in the church community might take this forward? What else might be needed? Do your plans relate to the gifts people have? What financial resources are needed? Your response to these kinds of questions can help decide which ideas should be taken forward and which laid aside – at least for the moment.

• Questionnaire summary questions:
  These questions will help you summarize both the community and church questionnaire responses.

See the next page.

Looking at the responses you got from your community questionnaire and think about the following questions.

1. Do you think the church is welcoming and active?
2. Have you found that your church’s life and activities correspond well to its mission opportunities?
3. What does your church perceive is happening in the community?
4. Are there any factors and activities that people would like to see more often?
5. How do your church’s life and activities differ from other churches or other groups?
6. Do you think the church’s life and activities differ from other churches or other groups?
7. Would you be willing to engage in different forms of communication if you were provided with the right information?
8. Do you think the church’s activities meet the needs of your wider community?
9. Are you aware of any barriers to accessing or using church communications?
10. Are you aware of any barriers to accessing or using church communications?
11. Are you aware of any barriers to accessing or using church communications?

Looking at the responses you got from your church questionnaire and think about the following questions.

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For further help on the reflecting process contact the Communications Department on 01452 835515 or email communications@glosdioc.org.uk
This section will help you review your current methods of communication. Often it seems simpler to continue using the same communication resources in the same way. However, established methods of communication need to be reviewed to make sure they are still appropriate for the task.

After reviewing your communication channels, you may want to go back to your priorities list made in the reflection process and add or change existing priorities.

**Audience**

Think about who your audience is. Does your message reach them? Are your communication strategies effective? Is your message clear and concise?

**Vision**

Everything you communicate should help the church's vision to be heard. You should aim to inspire people with your vision. You need to be clear about what you want to communicate.

**Style**

When you go into a bookshop to browse, why do you pick up a particular book to look at from the thousands on display? Often it will be because of a recommendation or review, or familiarity with the author. If you don't have some sort of introduction through one of these routes, it will be because of the way the book is displayed and what is on the cover that interests you.

So how do you reach those who haven't got an introduction to the Church? Literature needs to be well displayed, look interesting and be well presented. It won't become a bestseller if the content is poor, but it won't get a readership at all if the first appearance is disappointing.

There is a strong tradition of quality and craftsmanship being an expression of faith across all Christian traditions; the simple elegance of Shaker furniture, the music of Charles Wesley, the brilliance of stained glass windows.

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Good quality production and presentation in all work, from liturgy to leaflets, is an essential mark of respect for faith and respect for the audience.

**Process**

In the reception process and on change or improve products.

After reviewing your communication channels, you may want to go back to your priorities list and make necessary adjustments to your communication strategies. Often it seems simpler to continue using the same communication resources in the same way, however, established methods of communication need to be reviewed to make sure they are still appropriate for the task.

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Parish magazine

Editing a consistent, clear and engaging parish magazine is a challenging job and sometimes a thankless one for hard pressed magazine editors. However, your parish magazine plays a vital role in the life of your community. Your magazine will probably reach more people in your local area than any other form of communication your church produces, so it is a fantastic outreach tool. Your magazine should always be a top priority.

- Is your church logo/identity clearly displayed on your publication?
- Is there a contents page?
- Is there a theme for each edition?
- Do you use a consistent font and format throughout the magazine?
- Is your font size always 12 or larger?
- Are sentences and paragraphs short and concise?
- Is the writing jargon free and in simple language?
- Are consistent deadlines published in every edition of the magazine?
- Are stories of interest to the whole community, not just church-goers?
- Do all stories include contact details for further information?

Need more help?
The Communications Department has produced a leaflet called How to…create a parish magazine. It includes handy tips and hints to make your magazine more reader-friendly. Find it at www.gloucester.anglican.org/downloads/1548.pdf

Weekly notice sheet

Welcome sheets are a way of keeping the regular congregation up to date with what is happening in your church as well as being a handy reference point for visitors and newcomers.

A notice sheet is one of the first things that people receive, with their order of service, when they come into the church. The format it appears in and the information it includes says a lot about the sort of church you are. A simple, clean design can be more effective than a busy, complicated layout.

- Is your church logo/identity clearly displayed on your publication?
- Does your notice sheet welcome people to the church?
- Does the layout look clean, clear and uncluttered?
- Are all font sizes 12 point or above, with a larger size for headings?
- Do you include contact details for key people i.e. clergy, churchwardens?
- Do you provide information on how to submit items for the next edition?
- Do events listings always cover what, who, where, when and why?
- Do you avoid phrases written entirely in capitals? (It can be harder to read.)

Need more help?
The Communications Department has produced a leaflet called How to…write an effective notice sheet. It includes handy tips and hints to make your magazine more reader-friendly. Find it at www.gloucester.anglican.org/downloads/1547.pdf
Notice board

Churches are striking buildings. They are often historically or architecturally interesting or in a prominent location. These factors make them eye-catching places to display information. Advertisers pay huge amounts of money for billboards in a central location, but our churches often have this resource for free.

Use your notice board to spread the word about what a welcoming church you are. If your notice board looks cared for then it will give the impression that you are a church that wants to communicate with the community. Make someone responsible for its upkeep.

- Does your notice board look clear and uncluttered?
- Are notices regularly checked for date and relevance?
- Does your notice board have a cover to protect posters?
- Is your church’s name clearly displayed on the board?
- Do you welcome people to come in?
- Are your service times and contact details displayed?
- Are up to date contact details for clergy and churchwardens displayed?
- Do you tell people when the church is open for visitors?
- Is your vision statement clearly displayed?

Need more help? The Communications Department has produced a leaflet called How to…make the most of your church notice board. It will help you make your notice board more accessible. Find it at www.gloucester.anglican.org/downloads/1552.pdf

Website

Your website needs to be a constantly changing and adapting resource that is genuinely useful to your community. For people to use your website, it needs to offer them clear, useful, up to date information which can be found easily.

A website can be a fantastic tool for communication and can encourage non-Church-goers to feel that the Church community is open to them. This can be a quick job but is an ongoing process. Communication happens in many ways through the Church community and your website is one way to communicate with the community. Make someone responsible for it.

- Does the content reflect the daily life of the church community?
- Are service times listed clearly?
- Are contacts details current and relevant?
- Are notices regularly checked for date and relevance?
- Is your website easy to navigate (for church-goers and non-church-goers)?
- Is your website user-friendly and does it reflect the life of the church?
- Is it information current and up to date?
- Does your website look clear and uncluttered?
- Does your website look clear and uncluttered?
- Are your church’s vision and values communicated?
- Do you show clear directions to your church with address and postcode?
- Are your church’s contact details clear and contactable?
- Are your service times and contact details displayed?
- Are your church’s name and contact details clearly displayed?
- Do you have access to a mobile phone to come in?
- Is your church name clearly displayed on the boards?
- Do you post your board, leave a clear instructions poster?
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Opening the channels

You will now have had a chance to reflect on your current communication channels. However, you may not be taking full advantage of all the communication resources available in your community. Local newspapers, TV and radio stations

Journalists are always searching for good stories about their community and their papers often reach a wider audience than parish publications. The majority of people living in the UK today are not churchgoers, so most will get their knowledge of Christianity and the Church of England from what they see, hear and read in the media.

It is therefore important to work with the media to highlight the positive work you are doing. Frequent appearances in the local media can do a lot to raise your church’s profile in the community. You will need to build good relationships with local journalists and remember to tell them about events in good time, so that they can build your event into their timetable.

Newspapers are often more likely to cover a story that is exclusive, so direct your press releases carefully. Newspapers also like to photograph events with plenty of bright colours and local faces, so try to include good quality pictures or an opportunity for a photograph in the press release.

Television news programmes usually cover a wider area than newspapers and have fewer story slots. This means that it is more difficult to engage them with your event. If you think you have a story that is likely to be covered by television news stations, you might want to speak to the Diocesan Communications Office for advice.

Radio stations will need to speak to someone engaging and interesting for an interview. If you are being interviewed for the radio, make sure you are briefed on what will be asked and what the focus of the story is going to be. You can speak to the Diocesan Communications Office for advice on how to give a radio interview.

Need more help?

Writing a good press release can help to get your story noticed. The Communications Department has produced a leaflet called How to…write a press release. Find it at www.gloucester.anglican.org/downloads/1556.pdf

How to…use the media is also available at www.gloucester.anglican.org/downloads/1555.pdf

Diocesan publications

Inspires, the diocesan magazine, is published four times a year at Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. This magazine is distributed to every church in the Diocese of Gloucester and is also available online at www.gloucester.anglican.org (click on the inspires icon to the left of the page).

Parishes can submit information and pictures about planned and past events for the Around our diocese… pages. There is also space for video and audio clips.

The diocesan website (www.gloucester.anglican.org) has an events listing service where parishes can tell people about their activities at no cost.

Our Diocese of Gloucester Bulletin is a monthly newsletter, produced by the Communications Department which is sent to all parish magazine editors. This is distributed a month in advance of publication to give magazine editors a chance to include it in their publications.

All submissions should reach the Communications Department by the 5th of the month before you want it to appear (i.e. 5th January deadline for February Bulletin). This publication includes a ‘What’s on’ list of information submitted by churches and is a great chance to invite people from other parishes to your event.

To find out more information on all of these publications and to submit news and events contact the Communications Office on 01452 835515 or communications@glosdioc.org.uk

Promotional material

Posters, leaflets and flyers can be a simple and effective way of telling your community about events, initiatives and organisations. When you are creating promotional material, you should ensure that it displays your church identity, so people will realise where it comes from.

This form of communication should be simple and should display the who, what, where, when and why of each event clearly, so viewers can assess the message at a glance. Artwork should be high quality and should be a simple and effective way of telling your community about events.

If you need more help, the Communications Department has produced a leaflet called How to…produce a printed publication. Find it at www.gloucester.anglican.org/downloads/1893.pdf

Need more help?

When producing a publication there are many things that need to be thought through. The Communications Department has produced a leaflet called How to…produce a printed publication. Find it at www.gloucester.anglican.org/downloads/1893.pdf

Diocesan communications centre

St. Mary’s Church
The Cut
Gloucester GL1 1RR

Telephone: 01452 835515
Email: communications@glosdioc.org.uk
Website: www.gloucester.anglican.org
Now that you have worked out your priorities it is time to turn these into communication actions. We have provided an example of how to turn a priority into a communication action on the next page. We believe that to communicate effectively you must:

- Define your message and ensure it is clear.
- Choose the right channels to communicate your message.
- Ensure your message is timed correctly.
- Ensure your message is supported by other messages.
- Ensure your message is reinforced by other messages.
- Ensure your message is reviewed on a regular basis.

Before you start...

- Information should be communicated at least three months before any event.
- You should think about using all your communication tools to express the same message.

A basic outline of a communications plan

To produce a full communications plan consider the following:

1. Your vision
2. Aims of communication plan
3. Who are your audiences?
4. Communication channels for internal and external communications
5. Communication priorities for the year ahead
6. What financial and human resources are available to you?
7. Timetable to deliver priorities.

If you need support to produce a full communications plan, contact the Diocesan Communications Office on 01452 835515 or email communications@glosdioc.org.uk.

A simple communication plan to get you started

As time and people resources can often be limited in church life, you may find that you won't immediately be able to produce a full communications plan. It is important to develop a simple timetable to help you prioritize your communications.

Before you start...

- Information should be communicated at least three months in advance of any event.
- You should think about using all your communication tools to express the same message.
- In addition to your priorities, your church will also provide ongoing activities and services.
- In different ways, the same message can be expressed.
- You should think about using all your communication tools to express the same message.

A basic outline of a communications plan

To produce a full communications plan consider the following:

1. Your vision
2. Aims of communication plan
3. Who are your audiences?
4. Communication channels for internal and external communications
5. Communication priorities for the year ahead
6. What financial and human resources are available to you?
7. Timetable to deliver priorities.

We have provided an example of how to turn a priority into communication actions on the next page. We have used Back to Church Sunday as an example of a priority.
## Communications Timetable for the Church Office

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Timeline</strong></th>
<th><strong>June</strong></th>
<th><strong>July</strong></th>
<th><strong>August</strong></th>
<th><strong>September</strong></th>
<th><strong>October</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parish magazine</strong></td>
<td>Brief mention, including date and short description.</td>
<td>More details about how people can get involved.</td>
<td>Update on process so far and a reminder of details.</td>
<td>An invitation to people to take part.</td>
<td>A review article of the day, thanking all those who came.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pew sheets</strong></td>
<td>Brief mention including date and short description.</td>
<td>Details and an invitation to take part.</td>
<td>Message of thanks to those involved in the planning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Website</strong></td>
<td>Basic summary of event.</td>
<td>More detailed information about the event, plus ways to find out more.</td>
<td>Post any downloads/publicity material/forms.</td>
<td>A front page announcement that it is taking place and an invitation for people to take part.</td>
<td>A review of the day, thanking all those who came.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Press releases</strong></td>
<td>Speak to your local media, tell them it is taking place and ask what sort of thing they would like to cover.</td>
<td>Give the press accurate dates and times for the event.</td>
<td>Send out a press release with information about the event and any photographs/filming opportunities they might like to use.</td>
<td>Case study of someone who came back to church. (This could be done after some time.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Posters</strong></td>
<td>Order BTCS posters and other marketing materials.</td>
<td>Place posters on church noticeboards.</td>
<td>Strategically placed posters with key information can spark people’s interest.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leaflets</strong></td>
<td>As above.</td>
<td>Make sure leaflets are available to the congregation.</td>
<td>Send out BTCS leaflets to people in your communities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clergy speak</strong></td>
<td>Tell the congregation that the church has signed up and ask them to keep the initiative in their prayers over the coming months.</td>
<td>Ask each member of the congregation to think of someone they would like to invite back to church.</td>
<td>Remind each member of the congregation to think of someone they would like to invite back to church.</td>
<td>Each week, pray about the people we might be planning to ask to come to church and encourage everyone to take part. Message for parish magazine.</td>
<td>Follow up those who came to the service, by letter or visit. (This could be done in a few months time.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Church notice board</strong></td>
<td>Posters up on noticeboard.</td>
<td>Review noticeboard to ensure BTCS is main message.</td>
<td>Welcome people back to church with marketing materials.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Calendars</strong></td>
<td>Add event to church calendar so internally people know it’s a priority.</td>
<td>Send out details to all your local free listing pages to try to generate maximum interest.</td>
<td>Contact media with the event details and ask them to add it to their events listings and to come to service to take pictures.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Communications Timetable for the Church Office**

Try filling in the calendar overview for the coming year with your communication priorities and events.

**Church officers and volunteers need to be aware of your church’s priorities.** You should also make them aware of deadlines and distribution dates for publications to ensure good internal communications. To do all you need is a main church timetable that can be accessed by everyone. The calendar can be available in hard copy and online if you have that option.

On this calendar you should highlight all your major events/priorities plus deadline dates for your parish magazine and other marketing material. Your parish magazine and other marketing material. Your parish magazine and other marketing material.

**Remember:** Once prepared and underway, it is vital that your plans are monitored both for what is going right and what is going wrong. Review your plans regularly. Make sure that subject areas within it are placed on PCC agendas for discussion.
It is good to share examples of best practice, new initiatives and innovation with the rest of the Church family. Sharing experiences can build links with other churches in similar situations. The Diocese of Gloucester is dedicating a new section of its website to showcase ideas, experiences and practical tips from people working at parish level. We feel these are best way to build on our shared experience of providing a forum where people can inspire, share and overcome hurdles.

<table>
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Diocesan Communications Office 01452 835515 or communications@glosdioc.org.uk
Appendix One
Communication in the Bible

The Bible and the Church are essentially agents of a message. Communicating is what we are here to do. Here are some simple quotes to help you reflect on this and the place of communication in our Church.

"God said ... ."
Genesis 1, nine times

"They are one people and they all have one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose will be impossible for them."
Genesis 11:26

"'I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant: but I am slow of speech and tongue'. Then the Lord said to him 'Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak."
Exodus 4:10-11

"Whoever listens to you, listens to me."
Luke 10:16

"And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native tongue?"
Acts 2:8

"If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal."
1 Corinthians 13:1

Appendix Two
Communication in context

This document has been produced in response to a growing number of parishes asking for help in reviewing and developing the areas of communication.

It has also been designed to complement and support the GRACE cycle, which is a way of explaining and understanding various aspects of church life and how they interact.

The Grace cycle

When you are communicating the message and work of your church effectively, people will be engaged and motivated to be a part of that church. These people will want to support the life of the church through their giving, which will enable the church to fund more resources (buildings, money and clergy) which will in turn provide more activities. This leads to raised levels of church attendance and the church's importance in its community.

In other words:

Good communication leads to engaged people, who want to give, funding more resources, which enables more activities.

Graphically this can be shown as a cycle of GRACE:

All parts of this cycle need to be well managed to ensure our congregations and communities are growing.

Having a vision before you start communicating is essential.

1 Corinthians 13:1

"If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal."

Acts 2:8

"And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native tongue?"

John 1:1

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Luke 10:16

"Whoever listens to you listens to me."

Mark 8:18

"And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native tongue?"

Acts 2:8

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How does this help?

Church contexts:

If we have poor quality resources or communication we will lose or alienate a section of the Church.

If they are all done well then the Church becomes a virtuous circle.

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