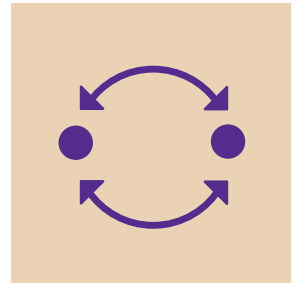


MESSAGES



LISTEN REFLECT REVIEW SHARE

a resource for parishes

Prepared by the Diocesan Communications Office

The contents of this document may not be reproduced in whole or in part without the written permission of Gloucester DBF, Church House, College Green, Gloucester, GL1 2LY



DIOCESE OF
GLOUCESTER

Content

Introduction.....	Page 4
An overview of the Messages process.....	Page 5
Flowchart of sections and resources	Page 6
Section one: Listen	Page 7
Section two: Reflect	Page 21
Section three: Review	Page 24
Section four: Share	Page 32
Appendix one - Communication in the Bible.....	Page 38
Appendix two - Communication in context.....	Page 39

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**

We recognise that churches will have different levels of engagement with their communities. We also recognise that the size of a church team varies enormously from parish to parish. The materials in this guidebook have been produced so that a church team of any size can work through the resources, choosing those appropriate for their situation.

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 internal communication structures. Churches are busy places, with clergy, lay members and volunteers often stretched to their limits. Reviewing your internal structures will help you to 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 community you must find out who they are and what they think. You need to know how you sound to them – are you communicating well? Are you noisy or so quiet you can't be heard above daily life?

It is also important that you listen to one another in the Church. All clergy, volunteers and employed officers bring experience, thoughts and opinions. All should be listened to and valued. If the Church can do this more effectively we will be better able to work together with a common purpose and be heard much more clearly.

2. Reflecting

Once you have listened you need to reflect on the information you have gathered. How well does the life of your church serve both the needs of your church congregation and the wider community?

This is also the time to reflect on your internal communication structures. As a church team are you communicating as effectively as you can and do people feel informed and involved? When people feel involved they become more engaged.

This part of the process also involves reflecting on what your church's communication priorities will be.

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.

In this process you need to review all your communication channels and look at ways in which you could change and improve them. It is also an opportunity to discover new ways of communicating.

4. Sharing

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

This is also the time to share your ideas with the wider family of the diocese. It is a chance to share ideas and experiences and to learn from each other.

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.

Question

Suggestion

Resources

	Question	Suggestion	Resources
Listen	Do we know our church and wider community well?	Identify the profile of your church and wider community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community profile pie chart <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community profile Community questionnaire Church activity pie chart Church questionnaire
	Do our internal communication structures work?	Identify strong and weak areas of your communication networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercise 1: What went wrong? Exercise 2: Communication web Summary questions
Reflect	How well does the life of our church serve the needs of our church and wider community?	Compare provision with needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Questionnaire summary questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparing pie charts Participation and contact questions
	How do we ensure we meet the needs of our whole community?	Bring together findings and form priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forming priorities Resources and gifting skills
Review	How well do our current communication channels work?	Review all current methods of communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'How to...' resources
	Are we using all available communication channels?	Research new forms of communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opening the channels: information and resources
Share	How do we deliver our priorities?	Plan how you remain at the heart of your community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication planning guide Communication timetable
	How do we share and learn with others in our diocese?	Share your experiences with the Diocesan Communications Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diocesan website showcasing ideas, experiences and practical tips

LISTEN



Listening to your community

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

- **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. **See page 12: Exercise 2.** For explanation of the four areas of the Church's work see page 11.
- **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 in your parish. 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 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

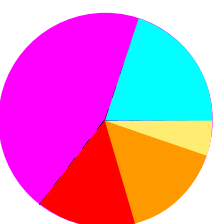
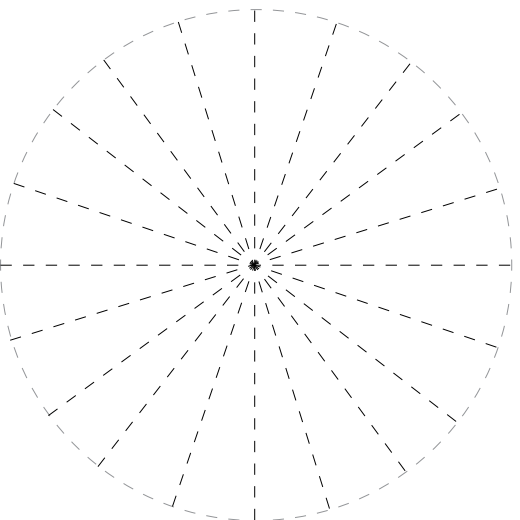
Community profile pie chart

Parish of: _____

Age Range	Census Data		Average =(A+B)/2	Comparisons	
	A	B		Diocese	England
0-4				5%	6%
5-15				14%	14%
16-29				13%	18%
30-59				45%	42%
60+				24%	21%
				100%	100%

Pie-Chart of Our Parish

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



England:

The four areas of the Church's work

Exercise 2: the *Community activity pie chart*, divides the activities of the Church into four areas. In this document we explain what the four areas are and which symbols represent each area.



Worshipping Together – Enabling people to encounter God's presence



Sharing our Faith and Values – Enabling people to grow in a relationship with God



Serving the Community – Putting faith into action through loving service



Valuing the Buildings – Providing special places to encounter God and grow as community

Breaking the Church's work into these four areas can be easier than trying to think about all the different services and activities we offer individually.

An example of which activities would fit in each area is below -





<p>Worshipping Together: Sunday 8am service Friday 6pm family service Weddings Funerals</p>	<p>Sharing our Faith and Values: Open the Book Alpha courses Bible study Wedding preparation</p>
<p>Serving the Community: Youth groups Home visits Charity work Coffee mornings</p>	<p>Valuing the Buildings: Use of church/ hall for community run activities Church tourism tours Church open all day</p>

For more information please contact the Diocesan Communications Office on 01452 835515 or communications@glosdioc.org.uk

Exercise 2

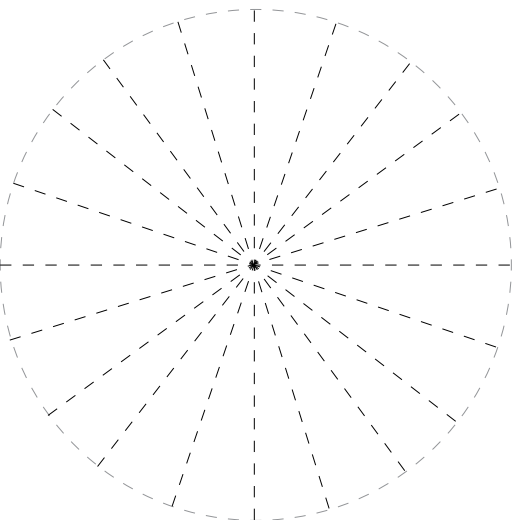
Community activity pie chart

Parish of: _____

Activity	Age Range				
	0-4	5-15	16-29	30-59	60+
					
					
					
					

Pie-Chart of Our Parish

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



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

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 activities, messages and mission, both to each other and to the communities in which we live. Sharing a common message helps to bring us together:

Like every organisation, a church is made up of individuals. Even if all these people are working towards the same goals and have the same motivation, they do not necessarily know what other members of the group are doing at any particular time.

Imagine a building site where none of the builders know what the other team members 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. When we work together, we need to share information so that we do not end up doubling up on tasks or forgetting to do some things completely.

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 intentionally or not our churches are constantly communicating.

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

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

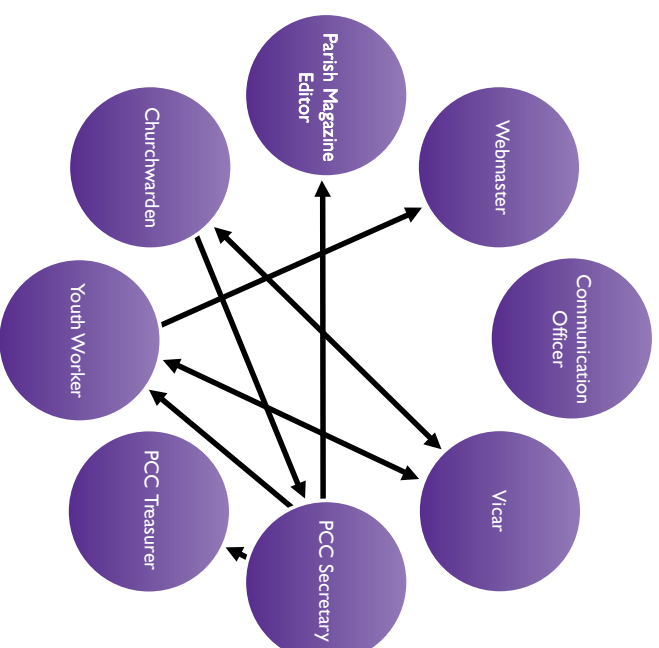
Read the following scenario and try to work out what went wrong.

- 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 and inviting people to come along.

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.

Analysing the situation



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 but the teenagers don't read the magazine because they think it is 'boring'.
- The teenagers checked the website instead of the magazine
- The webmaster and the parish magazine editor did not compare information.

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 that 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.

Communication web

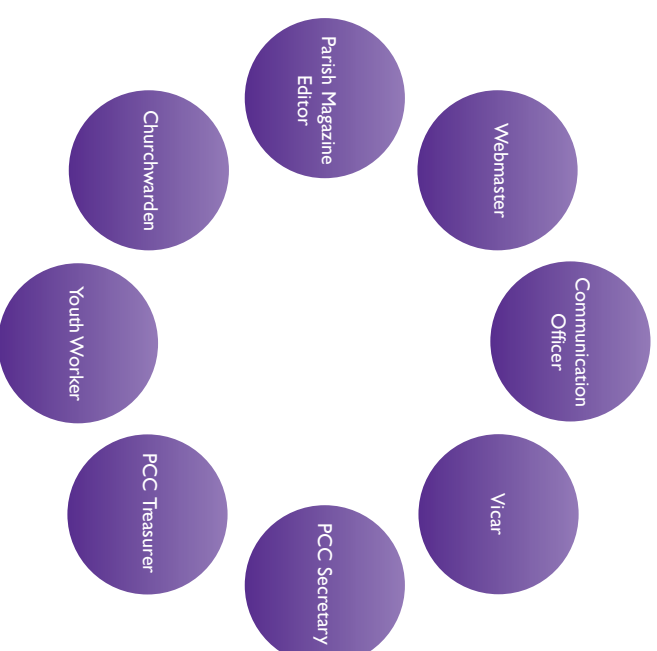
For good communication, it is important that all members of a group talk to each other to help promote and organise the life of your church community. The first step to building an effective communications network is to take a closer look at the links and resources already available to you and to analyse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

Listed in the exercise below are some of the more common jobs 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. As a group, look at the diagram and draw connecting lines to show which individuals regularly communicate information with each other.

Use arrows to show the direction of information flow. You can adapt 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.



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 there certain individuals who act as a magnet for information? Some people are naturally at the centre of communications networks.
 - 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

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

A **communications officer** is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the right messages are distributed to the right people, at the right time.

Having a communications officer means that everyone knows where to go if they have a message that they want to send out to the community. All members of the congregation, clergy, etc should email any news and events to your communications officer. This person will then make sure that the information is distributed to the right people and places.

The communications officer will be aware of all the different forms of communication available to the parish. This means that he or she will be in an excellent position to direct the message to the right people.

Remember...

Each individual who has a role in producing literature/publications needs to take the information and ensure it is presented and written in a way that is clear and concise and will be understood by its audience.

The role of the communication officer does not need to be filled by a new volunteer. It could be that the weekly notice sheet editor or the vicar feels able to take on this role.

Their responsibilities might include:

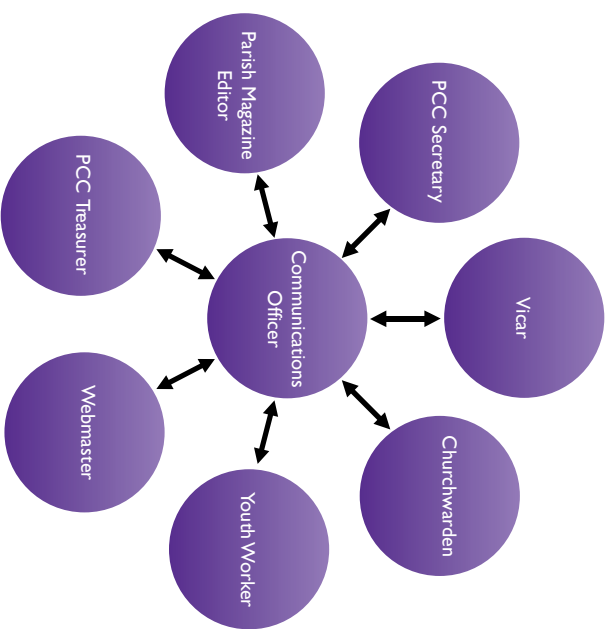
- Sending out accurate calendars of events to colleagues and congregations
- Updating the noticeboards
- Making sure the correct people have the right messages
- Receiving event information from church officers and congregation members.

Communications team

To support the communications officer, you might like to create a small communications group. Members should meet monthly in order to review planned messages and make any necessary updates in line with writing the monthly parish magazine.

Putting this structure in place should help your congregation know how to contact you and distribute information as well as making your internal church communications more coordinated, planned and consistent.

A healthy communications network might be structured like the diagram on the next page, with the communications officer acting as the hub of all interactions.



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.

REFLECT

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

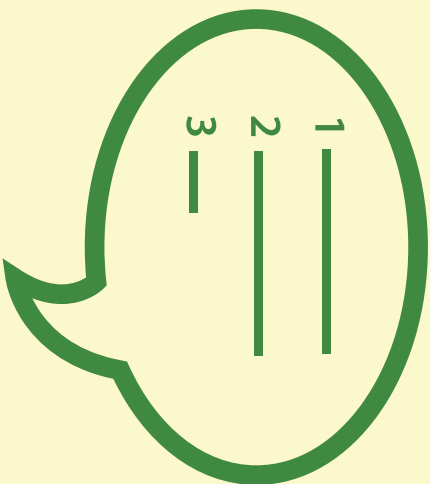
1. Do people know that your church exists?
2. Why and how have people heard about you?
3. What can you do to reach the people who haven't heard about you?
4. Are your methods of communication engaging with your audience?
5. Do people who do not attend church have access to any of the church's messages? If not, why not? Are you providing the right information in the right format?
6. If your publications are not getting to your audience, could you access methods of communication that are?
7. Would it be helpful to change the format and content of any of your publications to make them more accessible to different audiences?
8. Do your church's activities meet the needs of your wider community?

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

1. Do people think the church is welcoming and active?
2. Do people see and read your church and diocesan publications?
3. What does your church congregation want to hear more about?
4. Are there any services and activities that people would like to be offered by the church?
5. Do you have lots of volunteers giving more time than you thought and if so are they being thanked?
6. Do you have people wanting to do more for the church?
7. Looking at the responses for the types of media people read and listen to, do you think you need to change the style and tone of your church communications?

REFLECT

For further help on the reflecting process contact the Communications Department on 01452 835515 or email communications@glosdioc.org.uk



REVIEW

Reviewing your communication channels

This section will help you to review your current methods of communication. Often it seems simpler to continue using the same communications 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.

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.

All of these were ways in which the faithful 'spoke' about their faith. Christians need to put the same care and craft into speaking about their own faith.

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.

Vision

Everything you communicate should have the church's vision at its heart. You should aim to demonstrate what you believe, what brings you together and what you are working for. You want to inspire people with your vision.

Audience

When you are writing or producing a message, you should always make sure that you are thinking about the people who will receive it. What is their level of knowledge of the subject? How formal should this document be? Will people understand all the words you are using? As a general rule, things written for the public should be made simple enough for a ten year old child to understand. This ensures that you are as inclusive as possible.

Audit four of the most common communication channels using the 'How to...' questions over the next few pages.

For more communication channel audits, you can find a large selection of 'How to...' documents on the website. Visit www.gloucesterranglican.org/resources/commresources

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 through 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?

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. Have a template that can be updated every week to save time for the compiler. Simple designs can be more effective than fussy, complicated layouts.

- 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 submitting items for the next edition?
- Are sentences and paragraphs short and concise?
- Is the writing jargon free and in simple language?
- 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...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

REVIEW

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

REVIEW

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?
- Do you have a small, regularly updated, parish news section?
- 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?

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 evangelism and can encourage non church-goers to feel that the Christian community is relevant to their lives. This will not be a quick job, but is an ongoing process with a lot of work involved.

- Does your website look clear and uncluttered?
- Is information current and up to date?
- Are pictures of a good quality and do they reflect the life of the church?
- Is your website easy to navigate (for church-goers and non-church-goers)?
- Are your church's vision and values communicated?
- Do you show clear directions to your church, with address and postcode?
- Are contact details current and relevant?
- Are service times listed clearly?
- Does the content reflect the daily life of the church community?

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

REVIEW

Need more help?

The Communications Department has produced a leaflet called *How to...design a website*. It will help you make your notice board more accessible. Find it at www.gloucester.anglican.org/downloads/1550.pdf

REVIEW

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

30

REVIEW

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 and churches 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@glodloc.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 clip art is generally best avoided.

When planning promotional material, you should make sure that it looks attractive and professional. Excellent messages can be lost because messy presentation and fussy layouts becomes a distraction to the reader.

You will also need to think about how your publication will be produced and distributed. If you are producing a large number of copies, it can often be more economical to have them printed professionally. How will the publication be distributed is another vital question to be asked.

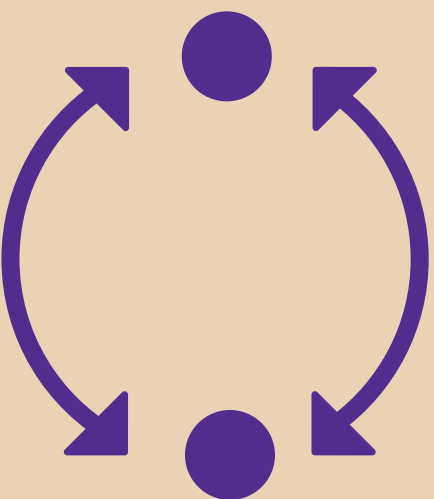
Need more help?

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

31

REVIEW



SHARE

Communications planning

Now that you have worked out your priorities it is time to put these ideas into practice.

Planning communication is vital to making sure the messages you want to express get to the right people at the right time. It helps your congregation to absorb information more easily and planning in advance releases more time for recruiting volunteers, coordinating diaries and scheduling meetings. A good communication process will often mean your message will have a bigger and better impact.

Good communication planning takes some of the pressure off those who are responsible for delivering the church's message. You need to make sure that the messages you are promoting say something about what your church is and how you want to be seen.

A basic outline of a communications plan

- Your vision
- Aims of communication plan
- Who are your audiences - who do you communicate with?
- Which communication channels do you use for internal and external communications?
- Communication priorities for the year ahead
- What financial and human resources are available to you?
- Timetable to deliver priorities.

To support you to produce a full communication 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 communication plan. If this is the case then it's still a good idea to take your communication priorities and break them down into actions using a simple timetable.

Before you start...

- Information should be communicated at least three months in advance of any event to maximise effectiveness i.e. you would need to start publicising Easter events in January
- You should think about using all your communication tools to express the same message in different ways for a set period
- In addition to your priorities your church will also provide ongoing activities and services that need to be communicated to your parish. Ensure these are constantly communicated and review the communication every six months

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.

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

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.

Communications timetable for the church office

Church officers and volunteers need to be aware of your church's priorities. You should also make them aware of deadline and distribution dates for publications to ensure good internal communications. To do this 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.

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

Communications Planner

January	
February	
March	
April	
May	
June	
July	
August	
September	
October	
November	
December	

36

SHARE

Sharing experiences

It is good to share examples of best practice, new initiatives and innovation with the rest of the Church family, so that others are able to build on your experiences. Successes and challenges should be communicated after an event or an initiative, to the whole parish, deanery, diocese and national Church as appropriate.

You should also be in frequent contact with neighbouring parishes within your deanery to share skills and ideas. If you are trying to set up a new initiative, speak to representatives from other churches in your area that have been through the process already. You may find they can help you overcome hurdles by sharing their experience.

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 that the best way to build on our shared experience is to provide a forum where people can inspire their peers, share concerns and build links with other churches in similar situations. This can ensure that we are all working towards the same goals and are supporting all members of the Church. For more information on how you can submit an idea or activity please contact the Communications Office on the details below.

Diocesan Communications Office 01452 835515
 or communications@glosdioc.org.uk

37

SHARE

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 can read this writing and tell me its interpretation will be clothed in purple.”

Daniel 5:7

“I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech.”

Zephaniah 3:15

“And this good news of the Kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world.”

Matthew 24:14

“Do you have eyes and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear?”

Mark 8:18

“Whoever listens to you, listens to me.”

Luke 10:16

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

John 1:1

“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.

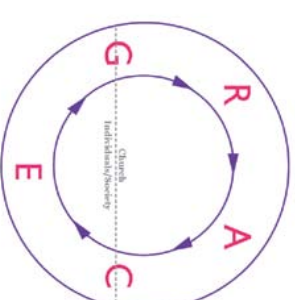
It has also been designed to complement and support the GRACE cycle, which is a way of explaining and understanding various aspects of church life and how they interact.

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 enables 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 that need... Communicating



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 truly engaged with the Church.

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

If any part breaks down the whole thing falters.

If we have poor quality giving, resources, activities or communication we will sooner or later see the Church contract.

How does this help?

The GRACE cycle illustrates three things:

1. You need to make sure you are doing the right activities before you communicate them
2. Good communication is essential to a thriving Church
3. Only by communicating the right things in the right way will you engage with people in a meaningful way.

HAVING A VISION BEFORE YOU START COMMUNICATING IS ESSENTIAL

