

# COMMUNICATION IDEAS

*'Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect'*

*1 Peter 3:15*

These are a number of ideas to help churches communicate well its activities and message -both internally to members and to the community at large.

## COMMUNICATION IDEAS

### 1 CHURCH OUTREACH LEAFLETS



**PURPOSE:** To promote the ministry and activities of your parish to the local community.

**IDEA:** To develop a leaflet that outlines the activities and services that your church offers and to communicate a strong welcome to all. The leaflet could be given to people at local community and parish events, displayed in the church and its halls, included in welcome packs and placed in local hubs such as doctors' surgeries, shops, community centres and so on. The leaflet may contain: A welcome message, a short outline of what the church believes and does, information on the times, contact numbers and the purpose of church activities and services, pictures of various aspects of church life.

### 2 CHURCH INFORMATION WEBSITE



**PURPOSE:** To communicate the mission and activities of your parish online and without the information becoming dated easily.

**IDEA:** To redesign a parish website to focus more on relevant information regarding the church and less on events, blogs, news and so on that need constant updating. Many parishes struggle to keep websites updated with news articles, galleries and so on and it can begin to give the impression that nothing much has happened for some time. However, why not change the primary purpose of what a church website is for? A simpler website with clear information complimented by vibrant and alternating photos can look fresh and only need to be updated 3-4 times per year. Sample pages for an information orientated website could include:

- A home page with mission statement and welcome to new people
- Who we are – staff and key volunteers
- What we believe
- Church services
- Church activities with key information
- Map and directions

### 3 WEEKLY UPDATE E-MAIL



**PURPOSE:** To communicate church activities, announcements and teaching outcomes on a weekly basis to parishioners and others.

**IDEA:** Much of our local community now has e-mail access and this enables regular communication beyond the church announcements on Sunday. If e-mail addresses are collected at church services and church based activities then they can be made into a 'group' that can then all be e-mailed all at once. It means that announcements and promotion for activities can be done directly to people even if they are not at church that week. In addition, a weekly e-mail could also highlight to people what they are going to learn the following Sunday and this may help more people to go that are irregular or monthly attendees.

### 4 CHURCH SIGNS



**PURPOSE:** To communicate the life and activity of the church and encourage new people to get involved.

**IDEA:** Many people have preconceived ideas about church that deter them from getting involved. Perhaps they feel that they need to be Church of Ireland members to attend or simply don't know how to attend. Clear and simple signage that communicates a warm welcome will go some way to alleviate the questions and fears that any potential new person may have. Consider how your signs convey what goes on inside of the church (worship, teaching, activities, relationship, families and so on) to those outside the church. It is important to think about who you want to see each sign and how. If you want the local community to see them where should they be and how many should you have? If they are to convey a welcome to everyone then how should they look? Are they large enough to be seen by a passing car? Remember that, for many, the church sign(s) will be a major influence on how they see the church.

- A main sign that conveys mostly just a message of welcome, with perhaps 1 or 2 service times. It could have one simple message but be complimented with pictures of parish life.
- An activities sign that includes a welcome to all the organisations and their start times.
- A thematic sign that has a welcome but also a topical message for the time of year or for a church event such as a mission.
- A sign with a 'QR Code' printed on it. This means that a passer by can take a picture of the code on their smart phone and it will link them to the church website.

### 5 FACEBOOK PAGE



**PURPOSE:** To communicate parish events, activities and news items online.

**IDEA:** For parishes that would struggle to regularly update a website but still want others to be able to keep in touch with parish activity then a church Facebook page is an option. This has the advantage of already being user-friendly for some within the parish and there may be more options for people with the skills to organise the page. A Facebook page allows interaction such as comments and questions from those that use it and it also means that any announcements, new news items, photos etc are automatically notified to other people in the parish who 'like' your page.

### 6 LEAFLET DROPS



**PURPOSE:** To inform everyone in the parish area of your church's ministry or to invite them to a particular event.

**IDEA:** To send to every home a leaflet on what the church does or else an invite to a mission or new church activities. A team of people could distribute this over a few days or alternatively the Post Office could be paid to deliver it. Or you could make friends with your postman!

### 7 PROJECT THE INVITE



**PURPOSE:** To advertise a service/event by projecting it onto the side of your church or hall.

**IDEA:** Many churches and halls are in prominent places for passing foot and car traffic. For church community events (particularly in the darker months) it may be possible to project an invite (during rush hour) onto the side of the church or hall using a projector set up in a car. Depending on the projector it can be possible to get an image quite large and noticed by a lot of people for the few hours it is up.

## 8 CHURCH SCREENS



**PURPOSE:** To communicate a contemporary engagement with the congregation and visitors to church.

**IDEA:** Screens can be fitted (at a cost) in many churches without jarring too much with the architecture of the building. They can be used to display the words for songs, liturgy, sermon points, presentations and also to highlight, before the service, activities completed in the previous week and announcements for the upcoming weeks. Screens can also help alleviate the fears of those who find it difficult to follow the Hymnal and Prayer Book as well as convey a visual message that your church is engaging with contemporary culture. In addition a screen can be set-up in a church hall welcome area with scrolling pictures of church activities/life and announcements as a way of encouraging other people attending the halls (such as parents of young people) to get more involved in church life.

## 9 VISUAL DISPLAYS



**PURPOSE:** To communicate a Christian message to passers by.

**IDEA:** To use something visual to display a message to passers by. This could be done by simply printing a banner but could also involve lighting up a tree at Christmas or at Easter time a cross could be set up in the church grounds and lit up with different lights at night. The wall of the church or hall could also be used to project a giant shadow on—for instance a shepherds crook around St. Patrick's Day or a candle at advent. If the church buildings have a window easily seen from a road then a T.V. screen could be set-up in the window with scrolling images of church activities and announcements.



## 10 LOCAL PRESS ENGAGEMENT



**PURPOSE:** To work with local newspapers/magazines to promote church engagement with the community.

**IDEA:** Many churches undertake good community initiatives that many people do not know about and a local newspaper can help with this. A partnership with your local paper will not only help you to promote what you do but it can also help promote sales in the local paper. Consider meeting with your local newspaper editor to ask about how you could best work together. What are some of the stories/events that they might be interested in? Would they be willing to attend events to take pictures and what are the contact details you'll need? Would the church be willing to pay for an advertisement at the start of each year/term to promote the various activities it runs?

## 11 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS



**PURPOSE:** To use the annual business gathering of your church as an opportunity to give thanks and share vision.

**IDEA:** While it is important for churches every year to have a business meeting to review accounts and so on why not extend the purpose of this meeting to include thankfulness, fellowship and vision setting? It is a great opportunity for a church meal together where you could perhaps run a slide show in the background of all the events and programmes of the previous year. A short time of praise and prayer could also be offered in thankfulness to God for his provision and the minister and others could set out a vision and goals for the year ahead. This could then be followed by the 'business' part of the annual meeting. It would hopefully mean that more people from church are in attendance for the meeting and that more are therefore included in both the vision and the day to day business of church life.