



The Plan



How to develop a communications plan
that works

What is a communications plan?

- An outline to direct communication efforts
- Helps congregations think strategically about goals

R.A.C.E.

- R: research
- A: audience
- C: communication
- E: evaluation
- Other elements: goals, objectives, background, calendar, budget

Why is this important?

- Like a driver to a school bus: it successfully drives the communication and outreach of the church.
- Without one: efforts can be haphazard, unsuccessful, frustrating.

Research

- Characteristics of the church
- Approach strategy: what will work?
- Goals and objectives
- Target audience
- Communication effectiveness
- A bonus: can generate publicity!

Audience

- Target specific audience
- Messages that appeal to general public are not as effective as targeted messages.
- Target audiences help advance church's goals.
- Target audience exercise

Communication

- Implementation of communication tools to reach target audience.
- Examples: newsletter; worship bulletin; signs; advertising; brochures; banners; magnets; t-shirts; business cards

Evaluation

- Critical step to measure the success of the plan by looking at goals and objectives.

A Sample Plan from St. James, Piqua

- City of 25,502 inhabitants
- Average Sunday attendance: 54
- Members active in promoting parish—news releases, articles, print ads, TV services.
- Efforts lacked continuity in messages and visual appeal.

First steps

- Commitment by volunteers
- Willingness to use plan to guide programs, decisions
- Honesty
- Energy

Research: Percept

- Growth – Piqua's growth over next 5 years: 1%
- Diversity – 94% Anglo; 24% projected increase in Hispanic population.
- Lifestyle – Middle American families
- Generational group – Millennials (ages 0-20)
- Education – 7% college degree; 4% graduate

Research: Percept

- Receptive to religious organizations
- 35% not involved in a church=8,750 unchurched people
- Enjoy both contemporary and traditional worship
- Main preference for programming: recreational
- 85% prefer a particular religious tradition

Research: Phone survey

- Volunteers called local residents (randomly)
- 65 responses
- 97% knew very little about the Episcopal Church
- 88% knew very little about St. James
- Those who knew about St. James called it “the church with the red doors.”

Phone survey: results

- Any church should incorporate children in the life of the church; Manifest a solid faith
- Things people didn't like: When a church was unwelcoming to newcomers; When a congregation judged others.

Congregational survey

- 39% raised in the Episcopal Church
- Next biggest category: Other at 22%
- 35% involved in three small groups
- 43% -- biggest amount – had no close friends who attended the church.
- 74% felt it is very important to attract new members.
- 65% said they were willing to work

We have the numbers.

What did we learn?

- St. James cannot rely on population growth to increase membership.
- Middle American families with kids: biggest demographic
- Education is below national average
- Recreational programs popular
- Contemporary vs. traditional worship debate moot. Both styles appreciated.

What did we learn from the phone survey?

- Communications campaign must incorporate tools and strategies to increase visibility.
- “The church with the red doors”
- Children/youth
- Education programs
- Not judgemental or unwelcoming

What did we learn from the congregational survey?

- People see attracting newcomers as a priority.
- People are willing to help.

Target Audiences

- Families with young children
- Individuals preferring rich liturgical/sacramental tradition
- Middle class/educated boomers (ages 40-59)

Goals

- Generate positive awareness of St. James and programs
- Attract new people
- Increase active membership

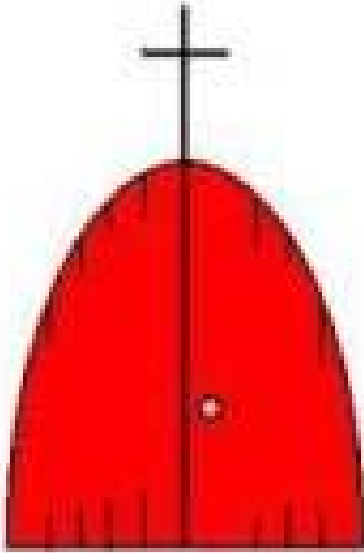
Objectives

- Increase number of families by 10
- Increase visibility in community by 30%
- Increase number of visitors by 100%
- Increase number of participants by five in each level of children/youth education programs.

External Communication

- One logo: St. James' red doors, on all communication tools
- Slogan: tells something about the church, includes the logo, features church's characteristics and target audiences.

Logo/Slogan



***Nurturing the faith of
every generation***

External Communication

- Postcards/door hangers
- Newspaper ads
- Press releases
- Articles
- Novelty items
- Community calendars
- Special events

Informative Communication

- Brochure
- Fact sheets
- Website
- Displays
- Newsletter

Internal Communication

- Visitor parking
- Greeters
- Signs
- Pew pals
- Worship booklets
- Bookmarks
- Welcome table/packet
- Inviting facility

Calendar

- Creating a calendar helps organize a communications plan
- Allows organization to stay focused

Budget

- Low to high end. A lot can be accomplished with a little.
- The most inexpensive communications/outreach tool is also the most effective: Invite someone to church.

Evaluation

- Goals: Were they met?
- Objectives: Was each objective met?
- Audiences: Did the target audiences respond? Do they need to be different?
- Communication tools: Were they effective? Which ones were the best? Which ones flopped?

Results at St. James

- “No one knew who we were in the community.”
- Plan and process of developing the plan gave clarity of vision.
- Congregation had a vision of what they wanted to be but no roadmap on how to get there.

Results at St. James

- Attendance up from 50 to 70
- Use logo on everything: magnets, letterhead, leaflets, worship bulletins, advertising
- Use newly formed worship bulletins – now people can't imagine the old way!
- When they talk about programs, advertising, website, etc., always ask: how does this fit with our goals? Will this help us reach our target audience?

How the diocese can help...

- Resources online: www.episcopal-dso.org, under Ministry Resources, then Communications.
- New Fed-Ex/Kinko's site: <https://docstore.kinkos.com/episcopal-dso>
- Communications director Richelle Thompson, 513.421.0311, 800.582.1712 or richelle_thompson@episcopal-dso.org
- Groundwork: National Church's program
- St. James mentoring