



The Church of England
in Essex and East London
Diocese of Chelmsford

Communications Advice for Parishes

Parish Print and Publications

For a magazine editor, editing an engaging and consistent parish magazine can be a challenging job. However, your parish magazine is a great way of spreading the word of what's happening within your local area to a large number of people. Your parish magazine is likely to reach more individuals within your community than any other communication tool your church uses; therefore it is vital that your parish publication is packed full of topical news and events that are relevant to your audience.

Before printing your parish magazine, consider the following:

- Who is your audience? Is the magazine internally or externally focused?
- How does the magazine reach the audience i.e. is the magazine picked up from church or delivered door to door by a collection of volunteers?
- Does the reader purchase the magazine or is it free?
- Have you recently carried out a readers survey?
- Do you encourage feedback?

Planning your parish magazine

- Firstly, put together an experienced editorial team to work on the magazine.
- If you are going to include a message from a member of clergy, make sure you request the message ahead of the print deadline.
- If you are going to commission articles make sure you specify a word limit and a deadline. Consider how you can appeal to different audiences with your parish – will the article that is to be published be of interest to the parish's community i.e. teenagers, elderly people etc.
- Consider the content you wish to include – does the magazine successfully reflect your church's mission?

Designing your parish magazine

- Start by identifying a strong, eye catching picture for the front cover - your magazine must look good or else readers will not pick it up.
- In order to make your parish magazine more user friendly, include a contents page.
- Calculate how many words will fit a page of your parish magazine and stick to it. This will prevent the page looking cluttered and untidy. No more than 300 words per A5 page would suffice.

- To make sure your magazine is accessible to an older audience and those with limited eye sight, ensure that the text is clear and easy to read. The font size should not be smaller than size 12.
- Use the right balance of editorial and advertising.
- Use good quality pictures to break up large areas of text. Avoid using clip art as this can make the magazine look unprofessional.
- Avoid using block capitals and brightly coloured paper which can make the text harder to read. Instead try to keep sentences short and concise.
- Always be consistent with spacing, typesetting and font style.
- Provide contact details for readers who want to find out more about a particular story.
- Make your magazine accessible to your audiences by including clergy contact details and other key members of the church i.e. churchwardens.
- Place the diocesan logo in a prominent position to help make your publications recognisable.
- Remember variety is essential –include new, relevant stories instead of recycling old news.

Common errors

- Always plan your parish magazine well in advance – try to avoid working past the print deadline.
- Take the time to read though the magazine once it has been completed. Proof reading allows you to spot mistakes that can frustrate the reader, i.e. spelling mistakes and missing headlines.
- Keep the content deadlines for the parish magazine consistent and make sure next month's deadline is printed.
- Don't settle for poor editorial - cut down text or change the wording of a submission if you feel it is unsatisfactory.
- Avoid using acronyms, church jargon and first names only as you will alienate non church-goers.

And finally...

- Try to work with your church's other communications channels, e.g. website, press releases, videos etc. If your parish magazine is not available online – why?
- Why not send your parish magazine to your local newspapers and radio stations? Your newsletter may contain an event that is of interest to the media, leading to further publicity for your parish.
- Talk to you your PCC about the potential methods of financing the magazine. Can it be self-funded through subscriptions and advertising? If so make sure your contact details are prominent so that advertisers can run through their requirements with you.
- Review other parish publications as a learning exercise – what are they doing differently that you can apply to your own publication?

Resources

If you require further information there are lots of useful websites that can help:

- [The Association for Church Editors](#)
- [Parish Pump](#)
- www.thesheepdip.co.uk
- [Cartoon Church](#)

The Print Unit at the Diocesan Office in Chelmsford offers high speed copying, digital colour printing and finishing. A range of publications are printed, including parish magazines. For more information please call [Andrea Pannell](#) on 01245 294404.