

One of the occupational hazards of church communication is over-familiarity. Without thinking, it is easy to assume that everyone knows the people, time, and location of events. But they don't. This newsletter will give you practical tips to help with congregational communication.

## “Communication Tips for Time-starved Audiences”

No matter how busy peoples' lives are, people will find time for what's important to them. For many people the church, their relationship with God, and helping people is **very important**, so help these time-starved people by structuring communications in a manner that is most helpful to them.

*Jackson Westminster mails a **weekly** newsletter. It is always filled with the latest happenings and useful information. One issue included a handy funeral data sheet. The form is available at our web site. Click on 'Communicate.'*

**Mailings** - People need the important information fast, so give them the information or message that is significant to them in a way they can glean quickly. Instead of a newsletter, send a postcard to remind, reach, and inform.

*Rev Paul Tomlinson, Cadillac, has his members reading his emails regularly after sending a brief daily devotion during Advent.*

**Email** - In the subject line of an email identify your organization and a summary of the most important information. For example, Subject: First Church – Mission Opportunities, Food Drive Oct 14. This way people who skim their email will get the message even if they don't open the email. Also, use email to direct people to your web site for more information. Put blurbs in email and link to the content that is at your web site.

**Websites** - Get the most out of your website by keeping it updated with events that are going on and making it easy for people to find the information. A brochure-style website is nice, but most people visiting your website will be looking for information. Help them out by making sure the infor-

*The web event calendar used at the Presbytery web site can be installed on your web server for \$100 (no maintenance fees). Contact Jane for more information.*

### What to include on calendars, bulletins and other event advertisements:

- Name of event - If this isn't clear, clarify it.
- Location (address and directions)
- Contact person (phone number and email address)
- Time and duration
- Cost or contribution

*Papers falling out of your bulletin a problem? Change the paradigm... call it the bulletin folder.*



Lake Michigan  
Presbytery  
Communications  
  
Jane McGookey  
mcgookey@key-web.net

# More Tips...

**Tips** - When you want people to volunteer, advertise the position as if it were a job. "Greeters needed in the Welcome Center" probably won't get a response. Try something like this:

**Volunteer position: Greeter Extraordinaire**

*Team Leader: Amy Johnson, 555-5555, amyj@genericchurch.com*

*Commitment: One month. You pick the month or months you want to serve. if you have to miss a week, we have substitutes.*

*Training: Attend 2-hour Welcome Team Training or Read Welcome Team Training Guidelines Notebook and talk to Amy Johnson, team leader.*

*Requirements: A smile, a handshake, and desire to welcome visitors to Valley Community Church.*

*"Nobody ever reads what we send out" is a common complaint. One church has a great solution—they publish a summary of the important church news, deadlines, updates, etc. each week; print it on 11x17 paper; and then post it in the bathrooms, being sure to have one on the inside of the doors of each cubicle. They call their publication *The Stall Street Journal*, and it's become a very popular and well-read publication at the church.*

**Try printing messages backwards for viewing in the mirror.**

**We only remember about 5% of what we hear.**

Pastor Nancy Tomlinson informs her congregations at Lake City and McBain by emailing "The Clam River Crossings" to them. The newsletter is available in html format for email and as a pdf attachment. See a sample at the Presbytery web site. Click on 'Communicate.'

*Remember that not everyone has email, and some people primarily access it at work. Take periodic surveys of your people to update your email directory and to find out your people's preferred ways of receiving information. For example, your youth coordinator must be able to use instant messaging. Other members prefer phone call reminders. [www.phonetree.com](http://www.phonetree.com) is a system that makes calls for you.*



Successful internal marketing requires repetition and complete details every time. The current advertising theory is that a person needs to see something at least **seven times** to remember it. So advertise repetitively, since most people will not see every promotion product. Make a check list of ways you will advertise. Then check off each item as you do it and how successful each method was.

*The church staff can not do all of the ministry communication work. Begin to recruit current members of the ministries you want to promote and encourage them to send out postcards, emails, and newsletters and do web updates. Keep in mind that although these volunteers can not be continuously supervised, they will try to help believers grow to maturity. Remember, Jesus did not give his disciples too many guidelines.*

**Communication software is available at a discount. Call the Presbytery office or download the order form at [www.lakemichiganpresbytery.org/communicate](http://www.lakemichiganpresbytery.org/communicate).**

**A NOTE TO PASTORS:** You do not have to know how to do all of the tasks in your communications ministry; but you should have a good understanding of the time, skills, and resources needed to accomplish these tasks. If the pastor or church leaders do not understand what is involved in creating communications with desktop publishing and on the web, all kinds of problems take place in misunderstanding, confusing and frustrating expectations, in budget needs, and in unnecessary and unwise costs. To understand these areas, take some time with your support staff and have them demonstrate various tasks.