

Communication in the Church (2/2013, TCP)

Communication can be internal, external (to the neighborhood), and among leaders.

Tools: Website, email, Newsletter, Sunday service leaflet, verbal announcements, posters, signs, advertisements, press releases, audio, video & print publications (electronic or in print), mailings (cards & letters), phone chains, Blogs, Social media (e.g. Facebook), Twitter, etc.

- Multiple points of contact (and print is still important). One method is not enough.
- High visual content, concise text content. Photographs and visual art/design conveys a message much faster. For instance, in Power Point computer presentations, use few words with bullet points in large font.
- Whatever tool you use, make it easy to use, and easy to understand. Avoid “insider language,” especially for external communications—but avoid it for internal communications as well. “Insider” language sets up intangible barriers for newcomers.
- Don’t over-saturate any tool with too much info, or you lose impact (too many emails, handouts, etc (!). Short articles, keep letters to one page.
- There is a lot of help available to develop electronic media.
But start simple and **keep it up to date!!!**

Personal Relationships: The root of the word “communication” is the same as the root of the word “community.” All the best tools in the world mean *nothing* if people do not read them or take a personal interest in what they’re reading. A personal conversation has far more impact than an impersonal communication tool. This is especially true for recruitment & evangelism where personal invitation is by far the most effective method. **In a Christian Community, all the communication tools exist to support the communication of personal relationships!**

- **Face to face:** Take the time and energy to actually speak with someone face to face. Most of communication is non-verbal, and far too much is lost in email.
- **Personal Invitation** is 1000% more effective than posting sign-up sheets.
- **Take initiative** instead of waiting for someone to approach you. True for effective recruitment, invitation and conflict management.

Always Connect to the Mission & Vision of the Church/Parish:

- **Clear, Courteous, Constant, Concise**

Notice that often, **Leadership is Episodic:** little opportunities to interact personally, especially when there is an issue to resolve, will shape how effective you are as a leader far more than the day-to-day. People remember those personal interactions far more powerfully (for good or ill) than the thousands of regular decisions and broad correspondence over the course of the year.

Empathy, Structure, Latitude:

Listen first, seek to understand,

Care about the other person (especially if you disagree) and show you care so that they hear it!
Seek clarity in how you work together and what your purpose, mission and goals are.

Learn what are the needs, gifts and hopes of team members? How can you help respond to them and empower them to be effective? Share decision making and welcome & empower ideas.

Be non-anxious and make it OK to disagree.

Good Committee Norms:

- Clear Purpose related to the Parish Mission (first of all, about God!)
- Clear Leadership
(with a depth of leadership & succession plan and mentoring of new leaders)
- Clear Agenda, published ahead of the meeting
- Reports sent out ahead of time (and read ahead of time!!).
Thus the meeting *responds* to the info.
- Start on time, stay on the agenda, end on time
- Pray, rely on God, and support each other as brothers & sisters in Christ.
- Listen well **and** stay on topic and on track
- Be solution oriented and not emotionally reactive
- No need to re-hash “how the sausage was made.”
Share the decisions but not the internal wrestling that led up to it.
- Openness in the meeting (no “parking lot discussions”)
- Use “I Statements.” State what you think & feel as opposed to “You Statements” which assume what the other person thinks or feels.
- Base your comments on observations and actions, and claim what are your opinions.
Don’t speak based on assumptions.
- Don’t assume or claim for others their motives or intent. Clarify and ask what their motives or intentions are. You can share how you feel (“your words gave me the impression that... is that what you’re after?”).
- Take time to hear from everyone, but avoid endless blathering.
Moderate the extroverts and draw out the introverts.
- Whenever possible (and it is usually possible if you are patient enough with each other and with the Holy Spirit), get **everyone** on board.
- Be sure everyone can articulate how the decision is related to the mission.
- Identify & assign action items (who, what, by when, how, and with what resources).
- Send out notes/minutes ASAP!
 - Next meeting date, time, & place at the top and in **bold!**
 - Action items clarified
 - Fit to one page if possible (put long details in an attachment)
- Personal follow-up between meetings to stay connected, informed and on track.
- Use Email for **information**, and NOT for debate.
Definitely do NOT use Email for dealing with emotions or conflict!
- If an email thread is veering into tricky territory, flag this as an issue to discuss face to face, and then resist the urge to say more, and then MEET face to face as soon as possible.

Others that you can add??