

# Communication Guidelines

A guide for publishing materials within the church, the community, and the world.



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Approved by Cabinet 10/15/08

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# The Newsletter

## Purpose

Our newsletter includes the list of worship services, a pastoral message, a calendar of events, a family page (including births, deaths, prayer list, contributors to special funds, etc.), stewardship report, cabinet report, reports from other boards and committees, and information about upcoming events. It sometimes includes thank you notes to our church family. Our newsletter is published eleven times annually. It is published monthly, except the July and August issues are combined. We mail the newsletter to church members, potential members, and friends of the church. Recipients also include former members and friends who have moved away, but have expressed the desire to continue to receive this publication.



## Responsible Parties

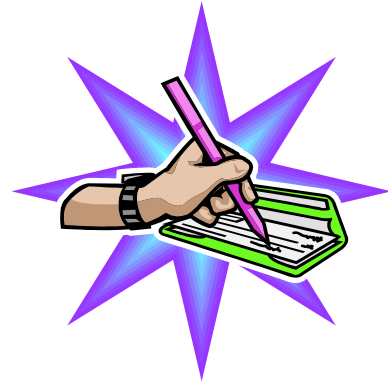
Those responsible for the content of the newsletter include those who submit articles and pictures for publication, the newsletter editor, and the church staff. The editor is responsible for the format.

## Guidelines

- Content should be consistent with our mission as a church. The newsletter should provide spiritual enrichment and should inspire readers to respond to the invitations and challenges the church provides. It should be objective and factual, and should display our church and its members in an inviting manner that allows us to know each other and to build community.
- Addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and photos may be included in newsletter articles, unless we have a written request stating otherwise.
- Submitted materials should include the date and the name of the person submitting the material.
- The author should check spelling of names and spell check the document before submitting it to the editor.
- Individuals in photos may be identified by name in the newsletter, unless we have a written request stating otherwise.
- The editor has the liberty of choosing photos and approved clip art for the publication.
- Materials may be submitted via email to the church office or to the computer specialist, via computer disks or CDs, typed or handwritten. Electronic versions are preferred.
- Respect the newsletter deadline.
- The editor has the right to shorten or lengthen articles, and to correct mistakes in the articles submitted.
- The editor should vary the number of columns, include appropriate clip art and photos to keep the newsletter interesting. Font and point size should be consistent. Usually no more than three fonts should be used.

## Writing Tips

- Remember to include the five “w’s” of journalism: who, what, when, where and why.
- Make sure the facts are correct.
- Try to keep articles short. Use the active voice if possible. *Example: In an active sentence, the subject is doing the action. A very straightforward example is the sentence "Steve loves Amy." Inactive voice is, "Amy is loved by Steve."* Keep in mind that many of the newsletter articles are published on our website. If you think that your article is not appropriate for the web, be sure to notify the editor or submit a substitute piece for web publication.
- If, after submitting your article, you have corrections, please contact the editor regarding the changes. Do not keep submitting corrected articles.



## The Church Web Site

<http://www.firstchurchbedford.org>

### Purpose

The church web site provides our members with activity and programming information, and serves as a resource for those who wish to obtain more information about our church. It is our calling card to the world; our invitation to visit for those who may be looking for a church home. Through the web site we are able to reach out to the homebound and to those who no longer reside in the local area.



### Responsible Parties

Those responsible for the content of the web site include those who submit articles and pictures for publication, the webmaster, and the pastor. There should always be a backup webmaster who is familiar with the software and web guidelines, as well as what is permitted on our website and what is not. The webmaster(s) should be familiar with rules of our internet service provider.

The church secretary is responsible for not letting our URL expire and for renewing it.

### Considerations

We must be mindful that our church web site audience is the world. We must assure the information published does not compromise the privacy of our church members.

## **Guidelines**

- Personal information including address, phone number, and e-mail addresses should not be included unless we have written permission to do so.
- Photographs of staff and office volunteers may be identified by name.
- Other photographs should not identify people or children by name, unless we have written permission to do so. Parents/guardians are responsible for letting us know if photos of their children may or may not be put on the website. The Director of Christian Education is responsible for having parents/guardians of Sunday School children complete a Web Permission Form annually.
- Pastoral approval must be obtained prior to publishing content.
- The webmaster has the liberty of choosing photos and approved clip art for the publication.
- No copyrighted materials will be posted on the web site without written permission from the copyright holder. Notice should be placed on the web page where the materials appear stating that it is reprinted with permission of the copyright holder.
- The webmaster(s) should have a thorough overview of what is being placed on the web site and should check with staff and/or Cabinet when questions arise.
- The website should have a consistent look and feel and be updated monthly.

## **E-Mail**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of sending e-mail notices to our congregation is to communicate news of interest to those on the church e-mail list. Examples are upcoming events, recent deaths and funeral announcements, volunteer opportunities, and special requests. E-mail is a way to communicate between newsletters.

### **Responsible Parties**

Our church secretary, pastor, or other designated employee is responsible for sending any e-mail message directed to the whole church e-mail list. Our church secretary is responsible for maintaining the e-mail list.

### **Guidelines**

- Content should be accurate and of interest to those on the e-mail list.
- E-mail sent to the church e-mail list should always be addressed using the “BCC” so that all e-mail addresses do not show on the message.
- Church policy is that we do not give e-mail addresses to anyone else.\* Cabinet, board, and committee members are responsible for giving their e-mail addresses to the leadership of the Cabinet, boards, and committees. \*Exception: the church secretary may provide e-mail addresses of board/committee members to the board/committee chairs, and to the moderator.

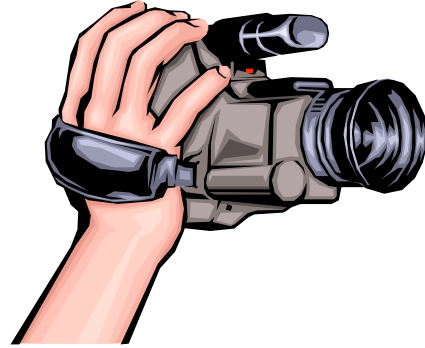


- Board and committee chairs may send e-mails to their boards and committees. The moderator may send e-mails to Cabinet. Any e-mails to the all church e-mail list must go through the church office.

## Videotapes/CDs

### Purpose

We videotape our services live from September through June. Bedford Community Access Television (BCAT) broadcasts live on Channel 10 (Channel 40 for those having Verizon)\*. The service is repeated on BCAT again on Wednesday evenings. Tapes and CDs of these services are also available in our church library. Services in July and August are held in our air-conditioned Music Chapel and are not videotaped. During July and August we broadcast tapes from other services during the year. We also give a CD or videotape of baptismal services to families whose child has been baptized.



\*As of the end of August 2008 Verizon could not yet broadcast our service live, so is showing a tape from the previous Sunday.

### Responsible Party

Our church videographers are responsible for videotaping church services and providing copies to the office and BCAT.

### Guidelines

- Be sensitive to what is going on when during the service and to focus the camera appropriately.
- Get appropriate tapes or CDs to church office and/or BCAT in a timely manner.

## Handouts, Flyers, Sunday Bulletin Inserts

### Purpose

Handouts, flyers and Sunday Bulletin inserts provide additional information and/or reminders about upcoming events or things the pastor would like to communicate to us between newsletters.

### Responsible Parties

Any group wanting to create flyers, bulletin inserts, handouts, should be sure the content is in context with the mission of First Church. At least two to four weeks advance notice would be helpful. Staff retains the option of scheduling/editing requests deemed appropriate and of denying inappropriate requests.



# Annual Report

## Purpose

The annual report contains individual reports submitted by the church boards, committees, church staff, and church officers. The report serves as a reporting tool and as an historical record. The pastor's report should provide insight into both the spiritual and business life of the church. Reports submitted by the various boards and committees provide the church members with a broader and more detailed view of the spiritual life, activities, and business aspects of the church. The report should include a clear sense of the finances and the business structure of the church. It may identify issues important in the year ahead.



## Responsible Parties

Those responsible for the content of the annual report include those who submit articles and pictures for publication, the annual report editor, and the church staff. The editor is responsible for format.

## Guidelines

- The board/committee chairperson or designated individual shall write the report for his/her board or committee. The entire board/committee should review its chair's report before submitting it for publication. *Helpful hint: board chairs should save board minutes in a folder and highlight portions to include in the annual report.*
- The report should be balanced, complete, concise, informative, factual, and friendly.
- Use sensitivity when describing events or issues which may be controversial in nature or may evoke strong differences of opinion.
- Reports should not include phone numbers or addresses.
- Submit photographs if desired.
- The editor has the liberty of choosing photos and approved clip art for the publication.
- Submit the report electronically if possible.
- Write sentences in the active voice if possible.
- Provide interesting details about each event/topic without getting too wordy.

## Suggested Annual Report Outline

- Board/Committee Name
- Names of those on the committee
- Purpose, goal, function of the Board/committee
- Accomplishments during the year
- Financial status at end of the year
- Future goals and recommendations
- Additional issues, concerns, and other topics of interest

## Press Releases and Newspaper Articles

## **Purpose**

Press releases and newspaper articles are communication tools used to reach a wider audience through the use of a carefully crafted message distributed to the press and other mass media entities for publication in newspapers and magazines or announced on radio and television broadcasts and or other communication forums.

A press release should address a specific issue, cause, or event and communicate a key message. Determine what the objective of the release is, who it is intended to reach, and what the message should say. Be simple, clear, concise, positive, and accurate. Make sure the press release is newsworthy.



## **Responsible Parties**

Individuals are responsible for the content and truthfulness of the press releases they submit. First Church press releases should be reviewed and approved by a member of the pastoral staff, the church moderator, or other officially appointed spokesperson. The approved press release shall be submitted directly by the church office.

## **Guidelines**

- Write a detailed outline of the release focused to the target audiences. Develop a headline that sells the story. Make sure facts are correct, timely, and relevant to the target audiences. The writing style should be simple, declarative, and understandable to the audience.
- Get written permission to use names with any photographs submitted for publication.

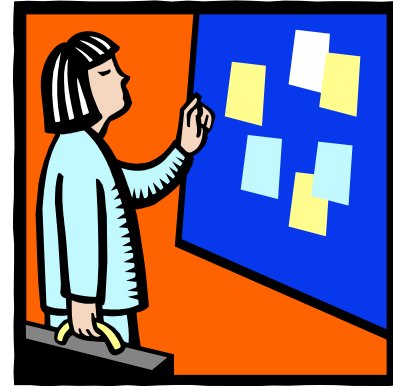
## **Meeting with the Press**

- Call the newspaper or television station and ask the editor if they might be interested in writing an article or covering an event.
- The press release should be developed before you call them. They may want it right away. You need to be prepared.
- Give the press a day or two to read a news release. Call them to ask if they received it and if they have any questions.
- Be positive when dealing with the press. Get excited when talking about your story, article or event.
- If the reporter has done a particularly good job, send them a thank you note.

## Bulletin Boards and Reception Area

### Purpose

The table located in the reception area outside the church office is a distribution point for hand out material relevant to church activities that may be of interest to church members, potential members, and friends. Examples are recent newsletters, annual reports, brochures from various boards and committees, brochures describing our church, etc.



Our bulletin boards on the upper level are posting places for informative flyers, notices about matters of interest that interact with our congregation's activities and volunteer opportunities, photos from church events, thank you notes to church family, sign up sheets for coffee hours and retreats, etc. Bulletin boards on the lower level are for information targeted for Sunday School and youth participants and their families. Both upper level and lower level bulletin boards are posting places for church events..

### Responsible Parties

Church staff are responsible for ongoing monitoring.

### Guidelines

- Items included will generally have appeared in approved format elsewhere in our church. They must clearly relate to activities consistent with the church's operations, outreach opportunities, community activities, etc. The reception area and bulletin boards must be maintained in current and neat order by the church staff.
- There should be a clearly visible note indicating that permission from the church office is required for items to be posted or displayed.

### Acknowledgements

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