



How to ...

Write a story

Every person, event, and gathering has a story to tell—some are more hidden and personal, others are visible and common. All can have a profound impact on readers; awakening their faith and inspiring them to act.

This guide provides insight and guidance to help you to communicate well within your parish. This might include writing about the life of the church for the parish magazine, writing about events that have taken place to be put on the church website or writing a story to be sent to the local newspaper about something the church is doing.

Three underlying principles

Before you tell a story, it is important to have a **target audience** in mind. It is helpful to narrow down who you would like to reach. For example, your audience could be parents and carers, young people and young adults, retirees, or those with housing disadvantages. Understanding who you are speaking to will help inform what you include in your story and how you write it.

People react positively to **value centred writing**. This is when you try to find shared values with your readers. Faith is our primary shared value and can be expressed with other values such as loyalty, family and friendship, spirituality, environmentalism, and social justice.

It is helpful to think about the **call to action** - what should readers do afterwards? This is usually tailored to each story. For example; readers might be asked to attend the next event, think about a question or statement, join a group, share the message, pray, speak to friends and family about this, consider how this might be applied to their ministry context, or enquire about resources and support. These calls to action help the reader take the next step and become further engaged.

The detail

A story should be between 150 and 600 words and ideally have three images associated with it. It's best to write in third person and include quotes from those who attended.

The next step is to answer the following questions, which will help you craft an impactful story.

- Who do you want to reach with this story?
- What values do you share with them?
- What do you want them to do once they've read the story?
- Who is involved in the story; i.e. the event organiser and attendees?
- When will or did it happen? Please include the time and date.
- Where will or did it happen? Try to be specific.
- What is happening?
- Why is it happening?
- How is it happening?



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Once you start, it is important to write concisely in plain and simple English. **Try to avoid duplicate, specialist, long words, or clichés** unless necessary.

Embrace	Avoid
<i>Disciples need time and space to express their faith.</i>	<i>Disciples, both men and women, require room and time to enunciate their faith within the church and the wider secular world.</i>
<i>Our weekly raffle successfully raised over £500 for our exciting bell tower restoration.</i>	<i>The fundraising endeavour was successful and raised some much needed funds.</i>

Keep the stories positive - try to avoid using negative language.

Embrace	Avoid
<i>The parish is excited to announce that its funding application for a new roof and toilets have been approved. Building works will now commence in March 2019.</i>	<i>Due to a lack of funding for many years, the church roof collapsed. Now that we have finally received funding, we will repair the roof and toilets.</i>
<i>The church is excited to announce that thanks to the support and enthusiasm of John and Mary, we will be launching Messy Church. All are invited to the first service in May 2019.</i>	<i>After years of trying to start Messy Church, we have finally roped John and Mary in to make it happen.</i>

Remove extra verbs and words. This may seem odd, however for simplicity and clarity sake it helps to remove extra verbs and words.

Embrace	Avoid
The fund supports the cause.	The fund aims to support the cause.
The church recycles due to their environmental concerns.	The church tries to address environmental concerns by recycling whenever possible.

Word echoes should be removed or rewritten. Word echoes are when, in the same paragraph or sometimes even page, a word or phrase appears more than once, unless it is deemed necessary.

When editing someone else’s writing it is important to try to keep the writer’s voice. It is easy to remove words and phrases, however be mindful to enable them to tell their story – this is a story, after all, not a formal report.



How to ...

Images

Images tell an important part of any story as they help the reader to visualise what occurred and what they might expect if they were to attend.

Clear, focused and vibrant imagery of people in movement and engaged in a task works best.

You need the permission of the people you would like to photograph, firstly to take the photo and then to use it. It is important that those who have their picture taken to know how you intend to use the images you are taking; i.e. online, social media, in a newsletter, or in everything - especially outside of the story it would be linked with.

Permission should always be sought from parents and guardians if you are photographing under 18's. Consent can be provided by asking them to sign a simple photo release form allowing you to use the photo for your communications. Photo release forms can also be used to obtain permission for you to use images of those aged over 18 who you have photographed.

For further information on image guidelines, please visit:

<https://www.bristol.anglican.org/communications-media/>

Some tips for good and easy photography:

- Turn on grid view on your mobile phone camera or digital camera.
- Adhere to the rule of thirds, place the main subject in the middle of the photograph.
- Turn off flash.
- Turn HDR mode on, if available.
- Make sure the subject is in focus.

Example images

Please find a selection of example images below:

