



How to ...

Publish a great parish magazine

Creating the best impression with your parish magazine is vital. By delivering it to every household in the parish, you will be reaching more people in your community than any other form of communication your church produces. People won't read it if it looks unprofessional. Fortunately, there are a number of easy ways to make it more readable.

Image and branding

- If you have a logo, make sure you use it in a prominent position. It makes your publication instantly recognisable and will help to promote your church in the community
- Think about whether your parish vision is communicated through the magazine
- Consider your parish's community and whether the articles you are publishing will be interesting to them i.e. articles for young families, elderly people, teenagers etc
- Make sure you include clergy contact details and other useful telephone numbers i.e. church wardens, readers, magazine team information
- Include details of how the reader can get further information on each story

Finding news

- What makes news?

It needs to be one or more of the following: informative, interesting or entertaining. It is important to differentiate between what is news-worthy and what isn't. So a story about major changes to the building is news; the monthly flower rota is not. Try to keep the stronger stories closer to the front of the magazine.

- Who makes news?

We like hearing stories about people. No matter how interesting a story might be, we want to know about who it affects. Try to get a human perspective on stories – find out about the faces behind the news. There are plenty of people in churches doing interesting things; find out who they are.

- Keep it local

A parish is a small community and people want to know what is happening near them. There are plenty of media outlets people can use to find out what is happening nationally so let them know what is happening on their doorstep. This might be the only way your community can find out what is going on locally.

- Include others

There are plenty of other groups in the area who may want to get their own messages out there. Don't be afraid to use them – they can be a good source for stories and will appreciate the chance to publicise what they are doing. Remember, the magazine is a great way of building a community, and by including others you will help to make it a richer place to live and work.

- Don't be afraid to edit

Sometimes the hardest part of putting together a parish magazine is editing. We don't like turning stories down or even cutting down the articles we receive. But the magazine should

look coherent; don't be frightened of being brutal with the cuts or rejecting articles. If you don't want to read something, chances are nobody else will either.

Style

- Clear text makes your magazine easier to read and can help make it more accessible to those with limited eyesight
- Limit your word count to no more than 300 words per A5 page
- Use a font size of 12 or larger
- Avoid underlining as this can confuse people with limited eyesight
- Avoid using brightly coloured paper as it reduces the contrast between the writing and paper, making it harder to read
- Avoid block capitals as they are harder to read
- Break down lists into bullet points
- Keep sentences and paragraphs short and concise
- Use good quality, clear images. Photographs, even in black and white are preferable to clip art
- Try to break up dense sections of text by using boxes, columns etc.
- Don't be afraid of white spaces – they can make text less oppressive
- Your magazine is an outreach tool and should engage non church-goers as well as your congregations, so use simple English without church jargon
- Always use people's full names to avoid confusion for those who do not attend your church regularly

Design and layout

- Use an eye-catching image on the cover
- Include a contents page at the front of the magazine to make it more user-friendly.
- Keep your contents consistent so that people know where to look for specific information
- Every magazine should have a message from a member of clergy
- List service times including special services i.e. Christingle Services, Remembrance Day Service etc
- Think about having a theme for each edition, to help promote specific messages/special events
- Dedicate at least a page to advertising your church's events as the magazine is a great promotional tool
- Have consistent deadlines and make sure they are published in every edition of the magazine

Printing

There is no point putting together a fantastic magazine if the office photocopier is going to make it look shabby. If your own printer is not up to the job, consider sending it to be printed professionally. You could always consider including paid-for adverts or charge a small cover price to help towards the cost.

Written by Ben Evans, Diocesan Communications Officer