

## **Creative Communications**

**July 2018**

### **Thinking Strategically About Church Communications – Part 1**

Nancy Cox Davidge

What's your congregation's approach to church communication? Is it primarily a way to provide information to members; a way to keep people informed about what's going on?

Or, is communications viewed as evangelism? A way to build and nurture relationships and community; a way to touch people emotionally, connecting with their heart or soul?

Perhaps it is somewhere in between.

Many times, when we think of church communication as sharing information, we focus on the what: A special worship service. An adult formation program. The annual campaign.

Often, the results are disappointing. Few people show up for a program or event. Pledge cards aren't returned. People complain that they didn't know. Sound familiar? Your message was in Sunday's bulletin, the last two weekly e-newsletters, on the church's electronic message board, and announced at every service this past Sunday.

In his 2009 TED Talk, "How great leaders inspire action," leadership expert Simon Sinek asks "How do you explain when things don't go as we assume? Or better, how do you explain when others are able to achieve things that seem to defy all the assumptions?"

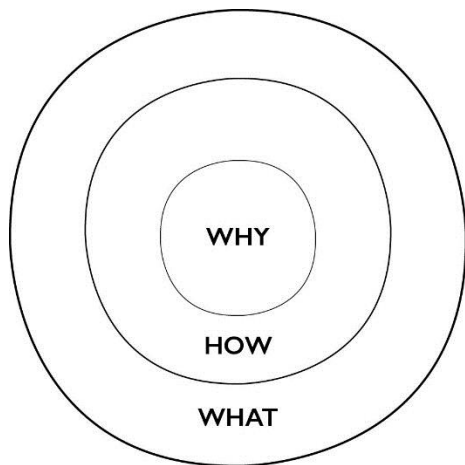
#### **The Golden Circle**

In this time of information overload, are we really surprised when someone can't recall our message? Think about your own behavior. What percent of your mail, email and text messages do you read each day? Which messages prompt you to take action and why?

Might we be taking the wrong approach?

Simon Sinek believes many of us are.

Using examples as varied as Apple, the Wright Brothers and Martin Luther King Jr, Sinek uses his golden circle model to show why some organizations or individuals are able to inspire while others are not:



The outer most circle represents what you do.

The middle circle represents how you do it.

The innermost circle represents why you do it.

Most organizations communicate from the outside in. From clear statements of what they do, to the ‘fuzzier’ messages of how and why.

Sinek advocates reversing this, based on his study of leaders with the capacity to inspire, to make impact in the world.

The pattern Sinek discovered is that inspired leaders or organizations, regardless of size or industry, all think, act and communicate from the inside out. They talk about their purpose, call, belief. Why their organization exists. They share why they get out of bed every morning. In sharing what they believe, their message speaks directly to people who believe – or seek – what they believe.

His message: “People don’t buy what you do, they buy why you do it.”

Reversing our approach to communication

What might it look like if we changed our approach from communication as sharing information to communication as a way to share what we believe? Some examples:

- Presiding Bishop Curry’s sermon at the royal wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle is a powerful example of an inspired leader leading with why. His passionate message, “There’s power in love,” resonated with people around the world, resulting in a surge of interest in him and The Episcopal Church. (My google search for ‘bishop curry and royal wedding’ before writing this paragraph resulted in 6,440,000 results in 0.038 seconds.)
- Across our church, Episcopal dioceses and congregations, anticipating increased interest due to Curry’s prominent role, reviewed their messaging and photos in advance of the wedding, anticipating an increase in site visitors. Here’s the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth’s home page; note their “Reclaiming Jesus” statement.
- The Episcopal Church website: “As Episcopalians, followers of Jesus Christ, we believe that God loves you – no exceptions. We believe in following the teachings of Jesus Christ, whose life, death and resurrection saved the world.” This message is prominent on the home page of The Episcopal Church’s website: “Loving, Liberating and Life-giving.” Visitors clicking on the first topic on the home page (The Episcopal Church) are shown a menu listing: What we believe, What we do and Who we are. Throughout the site, visitors are shown examples of the many ways Episcopalians model God’s love for all – no exceptions.

- St. Mary’s Episcopal Church in Los Angeles models their belief in God’s love for all as one of the first “safe parking” sites in the city. They designate ten spaces each night for neighbors who live in their vehicles in partnership with an organization that organizes the logistics. They’ve shown up at local council meetings to speak about their experience offering shelter, to talk about their neighbors – housed and unhoused – in the light of the gospel. More here.
- The Gospel of Luke also provides us with examples of communicating the why. Throughout his gospel, Luke’s stories include the impact of ministry, revealing the significance of the experiences his gospel describes. Luke tells us how the shepherds were affected by events surrounding their visit to the manger. In “Communications Lessons from Luke,” ECFVP blogger Linda Buskirk writes, “They were so excited they returned to their duties, ‘glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen.’”
- To show how this lesson could be applied, Linda offers a newsletter update on desired renovations to worship space. Rather than saying that acoustics would be improved by replacing the ceiling panels, in Luke’s tradition it might read: “New ceiling panels will make our worship and praise reverberate in our hearts and rise to God in glory, instead of falling flat.”

### **Making the shift**

What’s the first step towards moving towards a communications strategy that starts with why?

A good way to start is to invite church leaders and communications staff or volunteers to both read this article and watch Sinek’s TED talk. Watching his talk as a group is recommended, followed by a conversation exploring these three questions:

- What is your “gut” reaction to Sinek’s approach of starting from the inside out?
- Thinking about your church’s communication style, can you share an example of where you are communicating from the outside in? How might you reverse that? Or, can you share an example of where you are already communicating from the why?
- If the group seems enthusiastic about this approach, invite each participant to share their why. If there are concerns or if the group is mixed, the invitation could be to share their why or the cause of their concern.
- When considering change, it is important to give everyone present the opportunity to be heard, while also honoring an individual’s request to pass. A technique that facilitates this is to sit in a circle, extending an invitation to the person next to the leader to speak, then moving around the circle inviting the next person to speak or pass, before moving on to the next question and repeating the process. Sometimes it is helpful to set a time limit for speaking; using the timer on a smart phone is an easy way to monitor this.

You may want to designate a scribe to record some or all of this conversation. Question 2 might be approached by inviting participants to write their responses on post-it notes, which could then be posted by categories that make sense for your congregation.

Stay tuned for Part 2 of “Thinking Strategically About Church Communications” in the August issue of Vestry Papers. We’ll focus on additional – and realistic – steps a congregation can take to become more strategic in their approach to communication.

*[Nancy Davidge](#), a multi-faceted communicator and strategist, is principal of The Davidge Group, offering strategic marketing and communications services to help organizations and businesses tailor messaging and approaches to their target audiences. The founding editor of ECF Vital Practices and editor of the 2015 revision of the Vestry Resource Guide, Nancy is the recipient of over 30 Polly Bond Awards for her work with both Episcopal Divinity School and Episcopal Church Foundation.*

## Resources

- [Communications for Episcopal Leaders](#) an ECF webinar led by Nancy Davidge, March 6, 2014
- [Something Small but Possible](#) by Anna Olson, ECF Vital Practices Blog, May 8, 2018
- [Small Offerings, Big Fruits](#) by Anna Olson, ECF Vital Practices Blog, May 30, 2018
- [Communications Lessons from Luke](#) by Linda Buskirk, ECF Vital Practices Blog, February 15, 2018
- [Collecting Our Stories](#) by Dan Handschy, Vestry Papers, November 2014

## Podcasting for Beginners

Benjamin Gildas

At the [Priest Pulse](#) podcast we have a motto: “We believe the Church is alive, and we’re keeping our finger on the pulse.”

Anyone who is keeping their finger on the pulse today has noticed an uptick in the presence of podcasts. When we began our foray into the field four years ago, there were very few Episcopal Church specific pods out there. [Easter People](#), from Virginia Theological Seminary, had already laid groundwork, along with some others. *The [Collect Call](#)*, a brilliant liturgy and Book of Common Prayer podcast, was winding up around the same time as *Priest Pulse*, and [Popping Collars](#) was hosting fantastic discussions on pop culture from a progressive Christian perspective (and they still are!). A quick look on the iTunes store or your favorite podcasting app today will show you how many offerings there are — and there are more on the way.

The podcasting community knows it’s getting a bit overcrowded. WNYC, the New York City radio station and veritable podcast factory known for hits like [RadioLab](#), is launching a new kidcast (a podcast for children) called *This Podcast Has Flees*, wherein rival pets, a dog and a cat in the same

household, launch competing podcasts. The explicit joke is that everyone has a podcast these days, even the dog and cat.

While it may be true that the market is becoming oversaturated, there's a reason we are seeing so many Episcopal podcasts pop up. If you're keeping your finger on the pulse of the Church and keeping up with trends in the world, the desire to create relevant content is only natural. In fact, it's essential to our mission as Christians. Throughout history, the Church has used the newest communication technology to spread the good news of Jesus Christ and proclaim the message of love, justice and peace.

When considering your place in digital ministry, focus on this: be yourself. Find your own authentic voice and discern your call to digital ministry. For you, this may not be a podcast. Perhaps your authentic voice is best used blogging, or you have the skills needed to make solid video content or to enter into grand ideas I haven't yet begun to imagine, using platforms I'm not aware of. The internet is constantly evolving and moving on, and the oversaturation of the podcast medium means new platforms and technologies are just around the corner. Actually it means they're already here, we just don't know about them yet.

### **Getting started**

If you feel you are called to enter into podcasting with an idea too important to ignore, I have good news for you: it isn't very difficult. My co-host, Colin Chapman, and I didn't really know what we were doing four years ago when we began *Priest Pulse*, and I knew even less four years before that when I launched my first podcast, [No Avatars Allowed](#) (a video game and theology podcast). With no professional training, I launched the All Ports Open Network, and I produce [The Hive Cast](#). Today the internet offers so much help to beginners in the form of articles and YouTube videos. Here are a few of my own quick tips to get you started:

- First, pick up a solid microphone. You can do this without dropping too much money. I would recommend the [Blue Snowball microphone](#) which will only set you back around \$70. If you're not planning on having group conversations or doing in-person interviews, you could get away with spending a little less on their iCE model, but be warned: it only has one setting for recording. If you want to get a little fancier, purchase a studio boom arm and a pop filter as well.
- Second, find your recording software and start learning. The best way to learn is to play with it. If you use a Mac, you already have an amazing application in Garageband, which will be all you need to make a start. I use a pay-what-you-want program called [Reaper](#), which I highly recommend. Many people use the program [Audacity](#). You do not need to purchase Pro Tools to begin podcasting!
- Third, in order to make a podcast that is easy to listen to, you'll want to make sure your end result is "leveled" well. This means all the volumes are at similar levels. Luckily for us, there's a program that does the heavy lifting, the [Levelator](#). Once you have a final product and you've exported it into .wav format, open Levelator, open your podcast episode in the program, and it actually levels it for you. That little miracle worker puts out a copy of your

file with a .output extension on it that sounds fantastic.

- The last thing you'll need to do is get your podcast to your listeners. You'll need to host your show somewhere, like [Liberated Syndication](#). Libsyn, as it's called, will do the hard work for you. You pay them a modest monthly fee, answer a bunch of questions, upload some podcast art that showcases who you are and what you do, and it creates your RSS feed and connects your podcast to various sources where listeners can find it. You'll need to follow a couple other steps they lay out for you to get your podcast on iTunes. But Libsyn is very user friendly, and I highly recommend them.

### **Content is critical**

The best advice anyone can give you for podcasting is this: the most important thing you need is good content. Content drives everything. If your heart and soul is in your vision for what you are creating and the content is both good and desired by listeners, you're off to a good start. Quality content is more important than an expensive mic or professional production. I bet you know someone with the skills to get you up and running. And there are consultants and producers out there, like myself, who you can hire to help you get started.

If you want to learn by example, there are forays into podcasting and new technology to investigate. [The Hive Apiary](#), a wellness and spirituality website that supports progressive Christian and spiritual women's growth in faith and wellness, offers the *Hive Cast* hosted by the Rev. Dr. Hillary Raining and Ken Raining. The [Episcopal Cafe](#) has a podcast network with incredible offerings like 2FAB—Two Feminists Annotate the Bible. If you want an example of how podcasts can share amazing personal stories of ministry impact, check out [Hometown](#) from Episcopal Migration Ministries. And if your church has been blessed with a large budget and is looking for ideas on how to engage locally in ministry while also sharing the good news digitally, you might want to check out [Theology Live](#) from Grace-St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Memphis.

Everyone in ministry wants to keep their finger on the pulse. This is an exciting time to be a Christian and an Episcopalian, as God's Spirit leads us into new and uncharted territory with opportunities to use technology for evangelism that we never dreamed possible. If you are reading this, then I sincerely believe God is calling you to find your own authentic, missional voice in this digital age. I pray you discern where God is calling you, and that God gives you the courage and boldness to see it through.

*Fr. Benjamin Gildas is Founding Co-Host of the podcast *Priest Pulse* and rector of Incarnation Holy Sacrament Episcopal Church in Drexel Hill, PA, where he lives with his wife and three children. Ben produces *The Hive Cast*, a podcast from *The Hive Apiary* hosted by the Rev. Dr. Hillary Raining and Ken Raining. In 2018 Ben launched the *All Ports Open Podcast Network*, where he hosts several podcasts including *Pod of Love* co-hosted with his wife, Melissa. Ben is a speaker, writer, producer and consultant on technology, podcasting and digital ministry, and he can be emailed at [ben.priestpulse@gmail.com](mailto:ben.priestpulse@gmail.com).*

### **Resources:**

- [Reclaiming Relevance](#) by Lori Mills-Curra, Vestry Papers, March 2013
- [The Ministry of Communications](#) by Richelle Thompson, ECF Vital Practices Blog, February 27, 2012
- [Storytelling as Evangelism](#) an ECF webinar presented by Edmund Harris, May 24, 2016

## **Creating a Visual Identity for the Episcopal Church, Step-by-Step**

Melissa Walker

Before beginning to create the Visual Identity Guide for the Episcopal Church, I needed to find the tone or “look and feel” of the Church. To learn this, I watched loads of Michael Curry sermons. Keywords such as courageous, bold, fun and colorful came to mind. I made a list of many other keywords that reflect the spirit of those sermons.

A keyword list is a first step in the important process of developing an identity system for your congregation or diocese. The list of keywords that you develop will drive the process. Make sure your words are strong, lively and authentic.

### **Build a mood board that reflects the look and feel of your congregation or diocese**

From the list of keywords, I began work on a mood board to show visually what these words might look like. You can create a mood board old school style with magazine clippings, scissors and glue, or you can pull online images and ideas and build it digitally. Make the board at least 17” x 11,” so you can hang it up and refer to it during the design process. I looked at other identity systems that stressed courage, such as the Olympics from 1968 and 1984, and other non-profits that are bold and colorful, like Girl Scouts and World Conservation Society. Then I added book covers, poster designs and other images that represented a fun spirit.

Assemble all the images you collect in a collage or grid, 15-20 per page. Have your team pick one board that is the most successful in telling the story of your identity visually. You may have to take parts of each to make a new final mood board. Keep referring to it to help you make decisions as you move along to the next steps.

### **Design: Start with what you have and move on to typography and color**

Next, I looked over what already existed in the church’s identity, like the logo. This is a good place to start. Our logo needed a little freshening up, so I removed the gradient and updated the typeface, rendering it more modern and giving the typography some context. The type chosen should have some meaning, and I chose Garamond for the serif. It’s highly accessible and in the same lineage as the original typeface used for the Book of Common Prayer. Gill sans was chosen for the sans serif. It pairs excellently with Garamond in overall stature and is also the typeface of the Church of England. A serif and a sans serif typeface will give you more flexibility in creating many voices and moods with your identity.

The color palette is core to bringing all the elements together in a cohesive way. Because bold and colorful were my keywords and not somber and quiet, the choices were obvious. Bright, earthy tones were chosen. The two primary colors of the Church were red and blue from our shield. The bright, secondary colors were orange, green, yellow, light blue and purple. A secondary color palette offers greater flexibility, enabling designers to create individualized looks for different campaigns or organizations while still keeping the look in the family.

This color exploration brought me to the many missions inside the Episcopal Church. There needed to be a system that gave each mission its own identity, while keeping them all in the family. I used color to give them an individual look. The head of each mission was asked what color best represented its work. From there, I made sure the colors looked like a family by trying to keep the mission mark colors in the warm temperature range. The self-appointed colors became each mission's individual identity inside of the Church and could be used as an easily recognizable main ingredient in layouts, presentations and ads. The Episcopal Church shield locks-up within each mission mark to make the connection to the Church immediate.

### **Keep it real with photos**

One thing that stood out to me as a striking aspect of the Episcopal Church were the photographs I'd seen of Episcopalians in action. Real people in real situations — attending a service, making sandwiches for the homeless, marching for a cause, giving ashes out on the street. Images like these speak volumes. That's when I decided that stock photos were out. The Episcopal Church is about real people in action and on the move. We needed images from real cameras, not phone cameras, that were high resolution and print ready. To do that, we are building a library of high resolution images captured at revivals and other events to help tell our story with real people — and with their permission.

Something I learned from working with many different style guides in my career is that the more rules you have, the more difficult it is to do your job. Flexibility and a DIY spirit were necessary to empower congregations of different sizes to use this identity guide. That is why I kept it simple and short, just a few basic directions and a solid core of typography and color. We wanted to help people to make design decisions and keep the look of the Episcopal Church similar in spirit and voice across the world.

View the guide [here](#).

*Melissa Walker is the Senior Graphic Designer on the Presiding Bishop's staff. She created the successful Visual Identity Guide for the Episcopal Church, creating a new look for the Church's identity. Melissa holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Graphic Design from the Academy of Art University in San Francisco, California. In her spare time, she collects original vinyl records and travels the world for design inspiration.*

### **Resources:**

- [15-Minute Marketing: from Picture to Postcard](#) by Richelle Thompson, ECF Vital Practices Blog, April 30, 2012



- [Marketing 101](#) by Peter Strimer, ECF Vital Practices Blog, May 19, 2011
- [TEC's Visual Identity Guide](#)
- [Canva](#): Free digital mood board generator

## **The \$50 Communications Challenge**

Kyle Oliver and Joanne Fisher

*Editor's note: In the \$50 communications challenge, we asked two communicators how far and how effectively they could stretch \$50 to market/communicate/message something in a creative way. We wanted their ideas for using a small amount of money to communicate a message, and more importantly, to learn from what they did in their context. This idea came from Miguel Escobar, a former member of the ECF Vital Practices team. Thanks Miguel!*

### **Communications challenge #1: Kyle Oliver**

It all started with a sermon on John 15:1-8 (“I am the vine, you are the branches”) that was part of a liturgy teaching series. I was asked to use the text to teach about Holy Communion generally, and the Eucharistic prayer in particular. The further along I got in my prep, the more I realized that a march through prayer structure does not a sermon make. Moving to a more appropriate medium and venue made sense. What I needed was something like digital flashcards. And they needed to be visually interesting, because without that dimension the whole topic felt a little dry.

Once the sermon was written, I shared the nine digital cards I'd created for it on [Facebook](#). Many of my colleagues were really into the idea. In addition to providing helpful and detailed feedback, some wanted to buy them—enough that it felt like a worthwhile experiment. Since then, I've been working my way through the Sunday liturgy to complete the set.

When ECF Vital Practices editor Charis Bhagianathan invited me to take the \$50 Communications Challenge, I decided I'd found my ad budget for marketing the set. My goal was threefold:

- Spread the word that [the project](#) was finished.
- Sell enough cards to pay for some of the time I spent creating them.
- Collect information about how they were being received and whether there was interest in buying printed decks.

My strategy was similar to the way I've promoted past content on my website, [Creative Commons Prayer](#).

**Step 1: Preparation** When a post has the potential to do well, I spend a little extra time sprucing up the site. Also, in addition to the post, I created the infrastructure that allowed people to [purchase and download](#) the cards.

**Step 2: Scheduling** I knew I wanted to run my three-day promotion Tuesday through Thursday, so the post needed to go live Monday night. Using a “soft launch” window, I notified my Patreon supporters (who make monthly pledges to support the site and receive bonus content) and the people who had encouraged me to develop the cards in that original Facebook post.

The soft launch strategy is one way that tiny sites like mine can overperform. If you have a ‘direct line’ to a highly interested sub-audience (e.g., Patreon notification emails or a long thread of Facebook commentors who will receive a notification about a follow-up comment), make sure you use it.

For this project, about 10% of the page-views and fully a third of the gross revenue came from these tiny pre-steps that did not cost any additional money or a substantial investment in time.

**Step 3: Promotion.** On Tuesday morning, website subscribers woke up to an automatically generated, full-text email of the post from Mailchimp. Not wanting to annoy people who are double-subscribed, I waited until Thursday to send a single-topic promotional email (my first ever) to everyone who receives my Learning, Faith, & Media newsletter—a much larger audience, but one that I assume is not as interested in Creative Commons Prayer’s approach to digitally mediated spirituality.

I supplemented this email outreach with posts on the website’s social media channels and my own. As always, I catered the text and images for each to the strengths and “native language” of the network, and wrote slightly different copy for my personal posts than for the site’s.



Just one of the ten or so posts received the \$50 “boost” from my advertising budget, targeting people who like my page and their friends (a standard ‘friends of fans’ boost), both on Facebook and Instagram. I spread the budget out equally across the three days of my campaign.

**Step 4: Evaluation.** Besides the insight above about the importance of targeted ‘early outreach’, two key results stand out as I sift through the metrics at the campaign’s end:

(1) Among other engagement results, the \$50 boost resulted in 57 link clicks. That accounts for a bit more than 25% of the website traffic I received from Facebook and Instagram. That’s not nothing, but this relative impact is a further testament to the value of personal relationships; the other 75% of the inbound traffic from Facebook and Instagram likely came mostly from my personal accounts.

(2) About 7.5% of pageviews on my website that week resulted in a click on the purchase link, and about 47% of those subsequent clicks resulted in a sale. That means the traffic from my paid ad was worth about two purchases, for a net revenue of about \$40.

It’s easy to be a bit bummed that the ad didn’t pay for itself. But the parable of the sower reminds us that it’s difficult to know the fullness of the results that come of our efforts to spread the word. The point of the website, after all, is not to help me pay the bills — I’d have to do things very differently if that were the case. The point of the website is to help people engage with their faith and to help others do the same.

***Kyle Matthew Oliver** is an Episcopal priest serving at St. Michael's Church in New York City, EdD student in the Communications, Media, and Learning Technologies Design Program at Teachers College, Columbia University, and 2016 ECF Fellow. You can [find more here](#) to read blog posts, sermons, and sign-up for his newsletter. Previously he was digital missionary and instructor in the Center for the Ministry of Teaching at Virginia Theological Seminary. His vocational heart still belongs to the e-Formation Learning Community.*

## **Communications challenge #2: Joanne Fisher**

A few days ago, I asked an older friend of mine to lead the charge on collecting “missional stories.” I thought the easiest way would be to have everyone post their story on social media and then add a hashtag.

Faced with yet another technological challenge, her good-humored reply was, “I draw the line at hashtags.”

Somewhere between automation and relationship, between baby boomers, millennials and Gen Z, is a technological happy medium. It wasn’t until the end of my \$50 Challenge that I stumbled upon the answer to a question I hadn’t thought of asking before. How can we better bridge the communications gap between young and old?

## **A one-stop shop for websites**

For a little backstory, I discovered a technology gem while listening to a podcast several years ago. It was a commercial for Squarespace. Now I know that there are many one-stop shops for websites, but Squarespace caught my ear first and subsequently earned my business.

The first website I created was for an [annual scavenger hunt](#) that I organize. When we launched the hunt three years ago, I needed a landing page to talk about the race, share the rules, get sponsors, post pictures and register teams. Remembering the Squarespace commercial, I took to the web and managed to do exactly what they promised. I learned the platform and created a live webpage in a single morning. Seriously!

### **Kids helping kids**

But back to the Challenge. For the past 20 weeks, I have had the honor of helping lead a Confirmation class of nine amazing high schoolers. Tasked with creating a service project from start to finish they decided to address “Health Equality.” Their fundraising event, a July kickball tournament, will raise money for scholarships to help kids get active.

By April, there was still one hang-up to their plan. They needed a website, and they needed it quickly. The kids wanted to have a website in place when they presented their plan at the next vestry meeting, and that meeting was only a few weeks away.

I sat down at our planning meeting with cash in hand and spent \$20 on the domain name and \$16 for the first month of hosting. (Spoiler alert: The vestry loved the group’s plan and is sponsoring the next two months of hosting.)

### **Bridging the generation gap**

So how did I spend the last \$14?

On relationship! We didn’t have time at the meeting to really flesh out the website content. So I met up after school with Sarah, the confirmand who had taken on the role of web manager, and we spent the \$14 on edibles. We began work and created a website that looked professional and polished in under two hours. If you hurry, you can see our [homepage](#).

Technology can be an amazing tool for reaching across the generation gap. It’s not about asking someone to do something because they’re young — or thinking that another person will never get it, because they’re old. Technology can offer a perfect excuse to sit down together to enjoy a few laughs, some good eats and create a polished website.

#letsdothis!

*Joanne Fisher is the Youth Missioner and Director of Communications for the Diocese of Easton on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. A lifelong Episcopalian, she served as Events Coordinator at St. James by-the-Sea in La Jolla, CA, after graduating from UC San Diego, and then moved to Easton, MD, to begin her career in Youth Ministry. She served as the Children’s, Youth & Family Minister at*

*Christ Church Easton for 14 years and has served at the Diocesan level for four. She and her husband, Travis, enjoy curling and geocaching with their daughter, Reilly.*

## Resources

- [Social Media Campaigns](#) by Charis Bhagianathan, Vestry Papers, November 2016
- [Facebook for Small Churches](#) by Jenny Shutt, Vestry Papers, July 2017
- [Developing Your Communications Plan](#) an ECF webinar led by Rebecca Wilson and Jim Naughton, December 1, 2016

## Thinking Strategically About Church Communications - Part 2

Nancy Cox Davidge

### Part 2: The Strategic *How* and *Who*

What's the strategic *how* and *who*?

[Part 1](#) of this series focused on the *why* of church communications: moving from sharing information (*what* you do) to *why* you do it. For Episcopal communities of faith, our *why* is: God loves you – no exceptions. At the recent 79<sup>th</sup> General Convention of the Episcopal Church, Presiding Bishop Curry introduced “[The Way of Love – Practices for Jesus Centered Life](#),” a road map if you will, for *how* Episcopalians and Episcopal communities of faith might grow as communities following the loving, liberating, life-giving way of Jesus.

“The Way of Love – Practices for Jesus Centered Life” provides a foundation from which to build church communication. This shared commitment to living a Jesus-Centered life, is our *why*.

### Getting started on the *how* and *who*

The definition of *how*, when used as a noun, is a manner or method of doing something. When thinking strategically, *how* looks at the approach and considers three foundational elements that shape a successful communications strategy: your target audience(s), your value proposition (the overarching reason for someone to become engaged with your church or ministry), and your overall goal (measure of success).

I recently met with a ministry group facing the question: Is it time to disband? Membership was low, with almost half the members contributing financially but unable to participate on a regular basis. Volunteer leaders were burnt out, and no one was stepping forward to replace them. As we talked, it became clear that this group wanted to continue. Their commitment to their ministry was important to them. They were filling a real need in their wider community, and they wanted their participation to again bring joy, rather than a sense of obligation.

After asking each woman to share what had brought her to this ministry and what she valued most about it, ideas started to flow. Mixed in with the tactics (“let’s invite people to a tea,” “we could

hand out flyers”) was the recognition that something was missing. That something was a focus on *who* were the people they needed to reach. *Who*, in their wider community, had already shared or expressed an interest in this ministry? Who might be searching for a place to belong? Looking back at their own experience and what had brought them to the group, it became clearer *who* they were looking for. This led to a more focused conversation on *how* and *what* it would take to keep this ministry going.

Our time together explored all three foundational elements: audience, what this ministry had to offer to new members (value proposition), and what success would look like. The following questions and approaches are designed to help congregational leaders move the conversation away from a brainstorming session focused on a wide audience to a more narrowly defined ideal target and marketing tactics that make sense given your audience, message and available resources.

### **Identifying your target audience**

Who, specifically, are you trying to reach and why? For each audience, spend some time thinking, discussing and writing down. Once you’ve defined your audience, refer to it, revise it and fine-tune it. You can also convert the definition into questions to evaluate prospects.

- Your ideal target audience – document what makes your ideal, ideal
- The challenges they face, what are they seeking
- Their characteristics, attitude, mindset
- Name your ideal target audience so you can picture him/her/them (The ministry group I was working with has a gardening ministry. Their ideal audience was a person who loved gardening or wanted to learn about it; had an interest in the local food movement, food deserts, and/or teaching others how to prepare locally-grown produce; and had time to work with others in the garden.)

Once you’ve defined your audience consider for each:

- Is your audience definition supported by demographic research? Where is the intersection between what you offer and their interests and needs?
- What media are these audiences using?
- Is your content written to speak to this audience?
- Executing your social marketing plan in light of what you’ve learned about this audience.
- Evaluating networking groups, events, opportunities through the lens of audience participation and interest.

### **Articulating your *why***

With your audience identified, the next step in thinking strategically about communication is asking, “why should anyone care about this?” What is the essence of your ministry or program that would connect with your target audiences’ heart? Looking back to [Part 1](#) of this series, we see that people generally don’t choose based on *what* you do, but *why* you do it.

For some, this may be the most difficult step, as talking about our faith or what we believe can be challenging. Resources such as [Invite, Welcome, Connect](#); [Sharing Faith Dinners](#); or the newly introduced [The Way of Love – Practices for Jesus Centered Life](#), each offer Episcopalians



opportunities to grow deeper in their faith and practice speaking about what their faith means to them.

Taking the time to write down your *why* is important. Once you have crafted something you feel is clear, concise and compelling, invite members to read your message. Does your message sound conversational or stilted? If so, make the necessary changes. Invite people from outside your group to listen and give you feedback as to what they heard as your message. Again, consider what you heard and make changes to ensure clarity. And then invite members of your group to practice sharing this message with each other. Become comfortable with extending an invitation to take part.

### **What does success look like?**

This critical part of the strategic planning process may often be overlooked, becoming a missed opportunity to look at what worked and what didn't, evaluate effectiveness, and use the information to hone future communication strategies.

Part of this process is setting realistic and measurable goals. During initial conversations with the gardening ministry group's leaders, the goal was "new members are needed for us to continue and we need more people interested in stepping up into leadership positions." By the end of the meeting with members to explore options and strategies, their goals became more specific and measurable: (1) recruit and retain two active members this first year and two more the following year; (2) over the next two months, review and evaluate all aspects of this ministry in light of available and active members with the goal of making their participation more manageable; (3) review all leadership roles and responsibilities with the goal of eliminating things that no longer support the ministry's primary mission.

### **Next step: tactics**

Once these foundational elements – your *why*, *how* and *who* are in place, the next step is to select the marketing and communications tactics which best fit your audience, message and goals. For the gardening ministry group, tactics center on personal invitation and strengthening relationships with neighborhood groups and businesses. They are reworking their existing ministry brochure so that it focuses on the *why*, *who* and *how* and identifying organizations and businesses where they might distribute these brochures in addition to sharing them with friends and neighbors. At the same time, this group has begun a process of evaluating the scope of their ministry as well as their practices with the goal of "right-sizing" their work to reflect the reality of their present situation and bring back the joy that for some has been missing from their service.

*[Nancy Cox Davidge](#), a multi-faceted communicator and strategist, is principal of the Davidge Group, offering strategic marketing and communications services to help organizations and businesses tailor messaging and approaches to their target audiences. The founding editor of ECF Vital Practices and editor of the 2015 revision of the Vestry Resource Guide, Nancy is the recipient of over 30 Polly Bond Awards for her work with both Episcopal Divinity School and Episcopal Church Foundation.*

## Resources:

- [Who Is Your Audience?](#) by Jeremiah Sierra, ECF Vital Practices blog, June 3, 2014
- [Getting to the Why](#) by Miguel Escobar, Vestry Papers, March 2013
- [Invite, Welcome, Connect Webinar](#), an ECF webinar presented by Mary Parmer, May 27, 2014
- [Why?](#) by Erin Weber-Johnson, ECF Vital Practices blog, July 18, 2013

## Take Better Pictures For Social Media

Kris Vieira

Looking for greater engagement on your social media platforms? Consider enhancing your posts with visual content. Tweets with images are 150% more likely to get retweets; Facebook posts with images produce 650% higher engagement than text posts; and Instagram drives more engagement per post than any other social network.<sup>[1]</sup> Yet many churches struggle to integrate visual content into their communications strategy. Learning to tell a story visually might take a bit of practice, but in many ways it's easier and more efficient than text-based communications.

You don't need a degree in graphic design or photography to create and use images effectively in your communications. In fact, you can take and post a beautiful picture in ten minutes or less using only a smartphone. Here are a few tips for taking great photos for social media.

### **Look for beauty, but look for truth, too**

Contemplate what makes your church attractive. Is it the warmth and generosity of the parishioners? The historic architecture of the church building? The talent of your choral program? Consider how you might tell those stories with a single photo or minute-long video. Imagine someone scrolling quickly through their social media feed on their phone. Does the picture draw them into your story or would they need to read the caption to become interested? Is the image attractive enough to stop them from scrolling? And most importantly, is it telling the truth? Telling the truth about who you are is not what most social media accounts are after. But churches have a unique opportunity to tell the truth in the Gospel by showing how it is expressed in their own place and time. Using a stock photo from another church or an idyllic scene from somewhere else doesn't become true because you put a Bible quote on top of it. Find the unique beauty in your own church and share that with your followers.

### **Take too many pictures, but use only a few**

The best way to ensure taking a great photo is to take too many. Take more than you will ever need or use. Try the same subject from five different angles. There is no reason to limit the number of photos you take when you are using a phone or digital camera. There are lots of options for free photo storage, and you can always use them another time. In fact, keeping a ton of photos in your arsenal means you can post a photo regularly without having to take photos every day. When it comes to posting photos on social media, less is more. It's better to post a single stunning picture than to post an album of 100 average photos. You'll want to take the time to edit your



photos to make them exceptional (more on this later) and you probably don't have time to edit every photo you took at an event. Pick a few or even just one that stands out.

### **Composition is essential, but you can do it later**

Composition is the arrangement of elements in your photo to create balance, symmetry, asymmetry, depth, filled space, negative space, lines, curves and frames, just to name a few. You don't have to be an expert in composition to arrange a great photo. You just need to be aware of the elements of composition and then have fun experimenting. A quick Google search will give you a list of common rules of composition like the "Rule of Thirds" and "leading lines."

You can always adjust the composition later by cropping. It's better to take in more of the subject than you need and crop later than to zoom in. Unless you have a special lens, zooming on a phone lowers the resolution quality of your photos.

### **Get up close and personal or get everything**

Remember that most people are looking at social media on their mobile devices. If your subject is too far away, it's not likely to make an impression. Close ups work great on a mobile device. This means you want to fill the frame with your subject or have a lot of negative space around your subject to direct the eye.

On the flip side, a wide shot of a big scene can have tremendous impact as well. Does a parishioner have a drone that takes pictures? Is there an organ or choir loft that offers a bird's eye view? Get creative with your viewpoint.

### **Use filters to stand out, but build consistency in style**

Finally, taking your photo to the next level means using filters and manual editing tools. We have a darkroom right in our pockets! This is where you can really get creative and develop your church's unique look. You can adjust the color, mood, and detail of an image using a photo editing app. Instagram's built-in editing tools are excellent, but there are also plenty of free apps out there (such as VSCO and Snapseed) with great tools for editing right on your phone.

The simplest way to edit is to choose a pre-set filter, but try manual editing to produce the best possible version of each photo. Adjusting for brightness, color saturation, sharpness and so on will only take a few more moments but will produce the best results. Whether you use pre-set filters or manual editing, it's best to be fairly consistent. Having a cohesive look will create a branding effect. Perhaps your church's photos will always have a vignette effect, a slightly blue tint, or even use primarily black and white photos.

Visual content is sure to increase engagement, and it doesn't have to take a ton of time out of your day. Once you get started looking for stories of beauty and truth in your congregation, not only will your eye become trained to spot it in everything your church does, but you'll also find that the right picture truly is worth a thousand words.

\*Sources: <https://www.techsmith.com/blog/why-visual-communication-matters/>  
<https://ignitevisibility.com/social-media-statistics/>

*Kris Vieira is the Cathedral Administrator and Assistant to the Dean at Cathedral of the Incarnation in Garden City, NY. She has a background in literature and theatre arts, and holds an M.F.A. in Dramaturgy from Stony Brook University. In the two years since joining the cathedral, she has had a hand in creating a new website, a quarterly events newsletter and a new Instagram account (@incarnationgc) for the cathedral. Kris is also an active lay leader at her home parish of Calvary-St. George's in Manhattan.*

#### **Resources:**

- [Wallpaper the Church with Photos](#) by Anna Olson, ECF Vital Practices blog, May 27, 2015
- [Tell-a-vision](#) by Richelle Thompson, ECF Vital Practices blog, April 5, 2013
- [Why Share Stories](#) by Julie Lytle, Vestry Papers, November 2014
- [Sacramental Social Media](#) by Jeremiah Sierra, ECF Vital Practices blog, February 10, 2014

#### **Build your Own Social Media Calendar**

Kjerstin Besser

In our hectic day-to-day work activities, tasks can be delayed, important events forgotten and deadlines missed. However, with proper planning and preparation, and a handy tool or two, your social media tasks don't have to suffer.

When I came aboard at ECF last March, running the social media accounts was going to be just a portion of my job. With that in mind, I knew that I would need a way to organize our social media efforts so that I could be as efficient as possible. I soon came to the conclusion that a social media content calendar was the answer.

Social media content calendars are exactly what they sound like—a way to organize and plan your social media copy and assets across all of your channels. They serve a number of purposes, including, sharing copy (text you have written) with co-workers, keeping track of important days and events, and organizing copy and assets (pictures, graphics or other items to go with your text). This article explores the reasons for implementing a content calendar and how you can create one.

#### **Why use a social media content calendar?**

##### *Keep organized*

We can all use a little more organization in our lives. A content calendar can give you that. If you are the only person with access to your church or organization's social media accounts, it can help keep you organized. If you share access with other coworkers, it can be especially useful as you all work through one document. It will help keep your messages consistent in both tone and timing.

Not only does the content calendar keep your day-to-day posts organized, it can also help your planning for the bigger picture. For example, do you highlight specific programs at different times of the year? Using your content calendar, you can develop a plan for the timing, frequency, etc. of your posts.

#### *Plan for important events*

Have an important event coming up? Write it down in your content calendar and never miss a big day again! Being able to see a big event coming up means you can more effectively plan your messaging leading up to the event as well as day of postings.

#### *Save time*

Planning your content ahead of time and avoiding the last minute scramble for copy and assets saves you time in the long run. If you are the only person who runs the social media accounts, you can plan for the full week, and with the help of a scheduler, like Hootsuite, you can even schedule your posts. This is also handy when you are away on vacation, ensuring that social media does not suffer in your absence.

#### *Build your social media presence*

Building your social media presence requires consistency. Being able to easily visualize your content allows you to see holes in your messaging or a tendency to post too frequently on one channel over others.

It can also help you to create better content. Seeing everything laid out in the calendar, and studying your analytical data, shows you trends in what works well with your audience. Perhaps posts that go out on certain days or at certain times do better. The time you are saving with the content calendar can give you the time to really investigate these trends.

#### **How to make a social media content calendar**

Now that you are on board with having a content calendar, let's discuss how to make one. You can keep it very simple and use an Excel spreadsheet. Here at ECF, I use Google Sheets. I find it works a little better for managing a living document shared by a couple of people.

July Social Media Content Calendar							
	Sunday	Monday 7/16	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
ECF Facebook			https://www.givingsites.com/co... Keep St. John's in Portsmouth	Healthy and vibrant future m... Healthy and vibrant future m...		Did you know that we have a m... Did you know that we have a m...	
ECFVP Facebook		Alan Bentrup contributes our la... Alan Bentrup contributes our la...	When planning communication... In Thinking Strategically About	This month we offer five resou... This month we offer five resou...	Lisa Fischbeck contributes our... Lisa Fischbeck contributes our...		Have you ever considered c... In Podcasting for Beginners
ECFVP Twitter							
Instagram							
Week 4							
ECF Facebook		When planning communication... In Thinking Strategically About	A Donor-advised fund (DAF) is...			SMKB event pics	SMKB event pics
ECFVP Facebook		Linda Buskirk contributes our la... Linda Buskirk contributes our la...	A defined visual identity can he... In Creating a Visual Identity for	Did you know that we have a m... Did you know that we have a m...		What can you do with \$50? We... What can you do with \$50? We...	
ECFVP Twitter							
Instagram							
Program Specific Posts							
EMS							
Fellows							
Capital Campaigns							
Strategic Solutions							
Planned Giving							

Let me walk you through how I made my content calendar in Google Sheets. As you can see here, my calendar is simple—one space for each of my channels and that’s it. I write my copy in the document and highlight it in blue when I schedule it. Since we highlight certain programs at different times of the year, those posts are highlighted in purple. This helps me visualize the timing for posts about these particular programs.

If you aren’t a fan of the idea of building your content calendar yourself, there are plenty of other options. A quick Google search will yield numerous examples, free templates and other resources to guide you. These two examples from [Hootsuite](#) and [Smartsheet](#) provide lists of available templates. There are a lot of helpful things out there!

[Included here](#) is a content calendar for the next three months as a resource for you. Feel free to try it out and see if it works for you and your situation. As you fill in your calendar, remember that working with social media requires you to be flexible. Be prepared to move things around or delete them entirely if the content no longer works.

With a social media content calendar, be ready to become the most efficient social media manager possible!

*Kjerstin Besser is Associate Program Director for Leadership and Communications at the Episcopal Church Foundation (ECF). She assists with the production of the online publication, ECF Vital Practices, and with ECF's educational events and resources. Prior to working for ECF, Kjerstin was the Information & Referral Specialist at the National Down Syndrome Society. She earned a BA in International Relations from Lake Forest College in Lake Forest, IL.*

#### Resources:

- [Social Media Campaigns](#) by Charis Bhagianathan, Vestry Papers, November 2016
- [Social Media Evangelist](#) by Richelle Thompson, ECF Vital Practices blog, April 28, 2015

- [Making Social Media Easy](#) by Jeremiah Sierra, ECF Vital Practices blog, May 29, 2012
- [Episcopal Share: A Book of Common Prayer for Social Media](#), ECF Vital Practices Tools
- [Handling Blowback: When Social Media Gets Mean](#) by Jake Dell, ECF Vital Practices blog, July 8, 2011

### **We're in Jesus' Marketing Department**

Sandra Montes

Communications plays such an important role in the Church. In the past couple of months our own Presiding Bishop has brought the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement into the spotlight. There have been many attempts to use Bishop Curry's newfound fame to bring people to church: life-size cutouts of him, t-shirts, stickers, banners, etc. While it's a great opportunity, the work of communicating goes on as always—and for those of us in Spanish or bilingual communications, it has its own challenges.

#### **Social media and the search for a place to belong**

Araceli Ma says that her life changed when she found the Episcopal Church. She had been searching for a church community when she came across a picture of a mom and her children dressed up as part of a Nativity scene. That photo spoke to her as the mother of two young girls, and she thought, "That is what I want for my girls! I want one of them to carry the cross and the other to wear angel wings at church. I want to raise them in a church that is like a family." She visited the church because of that picture, felt very welcome and has never left. She now works in Latino Communications for the Diocese of Washington.

Araceli says that we can help change people's lives by sharing the spirit of service and love in our churches on social media. At first, she just posted content on the diocesan webpage, but when people began asking if she had a Facebook page, she realized that it could be an evangelism tool. Araceli attended the eFormation Conference at Virginia Theological Seminary, where she heard the Rev. Alex Montes-Vela's presentation on the Facebook page he created for Saint Mary Magdalene in Manor, Texas. He said that after about a year, the Facebook page readers began coming to Saint Mary Magdalene.

Araceli says that many Hispanic people in the U.S. are looking for an extended family, since most of their families are in other countries. She's convinced that we are all in Jesus' Marketing Department, and she encourages everyone to share photos and videos on social media that show that church is family. "Everyone is looking to belong," she says, "and seeing people who are smiling and enjoying church will bring visitors to church."

#### **Evangelism takes funding and a heart for communicating God's love**

The Rev. Edgar Giraldo, Director of Communications and Digital Evangelism in the Episcopal Church in Puerto Rico, says that evangelism is communicating God's word to the world. He says that asking your diocesan bishop to include a budget line for communications is one step toward being able to

do that. While he is aware that this may not be possible for some dioceses, Edgar is grateful that his bishop understands the essential role that communications plays in evangelism.

Edgar also knows that many people think that having a communications director or team requires a lot of money and time, but he says that what you need most is to have an interest in it. He says, “If you are interested in sharing God’s love with others, you will be able to publish very beautiful things. If Jesus were here today, he would use social media to share his word, love, and hope in all the corners of the world.”

A few months ago, Edgar started a video series called [\*Three Minutes with God\*](#) that has become a great evangelism tool. The series shares brief reflections on a Bible passage from people from around the diocese that reflect God’s love and hope. He encourages all of us to use our cell phones to take pictures or record short videos that show God’s love at work in the world and in our lives.

### **Language is a challenge**

Hugo Olaiz is Assistant Editor for Latino/Hispanic Ministries at Forward Movement. He says that we are to be like the angels, prophets and disciples in the Bible who shared good news with others. Even in bad times, we must always share the good news of hope and love, because our sight is on Jesus who often said, “Do not fear.” Hugo says that one challenge in Spanish-language communications is the actual language. Spanish-speaking countries have different words for the same things. “We don’t have one country that has the perfect Spanish,” he says, “although many would vote for their own country.” (I vote for Perú!)

Part of being a communicator in Latino/Hispanic ministries is realizing that there will be times when nobody can agree on the right word to use. The message of the Bible is sometimes hard to understand, and Hugo says that if we are thankful and appreciate what we have and what we receive and then share it with others, we are practicing the Gospel. A firm believer in the power of using digital and social media, he also says that while a great camera and perfect grammar are, wonderful, neither of those will inspire or transform people like the authenticity of our message.

### **Bi-lingual communications are more important in our church than ever**

Paulette Martín, Hispanic Communications Specialist, Diocese of Texas, feels it is important to have a communications team for Spanish language ministries because it addresses the needs of one of the fastest growing populations of the Episcopal Church. “It is crucial,” she says, “for the Hispanic population to be aware of the Church’s stand on issues of immigration and the separation of families.”

She describes publishing content in both English and Spanish as a “fun challenge” that has helped improve her bilingualism. “It forces me to use my brain more,” she says. Her advice for bilingual communicators is to know your audience and to connect with the people when you are trying to get a story. While she knows that there are times when a story can be easily translated from one language to the other, she believes that you need to understand that it may affect congregations or groups in different ways. Paulette says that being a Latina, a former DREAMer and an immigrant

have helped her because she knows and understands a lot of the issues that most Latino/Hispanic church members face and can build rapport with them.

### **A few tips from our experts**

- Keep your webpage or social media pages up-to-date, especially your calendar and contact information.
- Use social media, including WhatsApp, to share the good news easily, inexpensively and in a timely fashion.
- You do not need expensive equipment to start sharing God's good news.
- Watch/read the news—including church news—and stay informed on current events that affect your target audience.
- Read in both English and Spanish to keep your language and grammar current.
- Stay connected with clergy and lay leaders who are part of Latino/Hispanic ministries and be aware of the issues that their members are facing.
- Follow social media pages of Latino/Hispanic Ministries of the Episcopal Church.

*Sandra Montes is ECF's Spanish Language Resources Consultant. She serves the Church as musician, translator, speaker, consultant and writer. Sandra taught for 21 years in public education and has a doctorate in education.*

### **Resources:**

- [God, It's Your Church](#) by Alfredo Feregrino, Vestry Papers, November 2016
- [Evangelism for the 21st Century](#) by Day Smith Pritchartt, Vestry Papers, May 2017
- [God Revealed...](#) by Ema Rosero-Nordalm, ECF Vital Practices Blog, January 4, 2013
- [Mission of Union and Integration](#) by Daniel Vélez-Rivera, Vestry Papers, May 2011

### **Somos el Departamento de Marketing de Jesús**

Sandra Montes

¡Las comunicaciones desempeñan un papel tan importante en la Iglesia! En el último par de meses, nuestro Obispo Presidente puso la rama episcopal del Movimiento de Jesús en el candelero. Han habido numerosos intentos de emplear la nueva fama del Obispo Curry para atraer gente a la iglesia: figuras de él en tamaño natural, camisetas, calcomanías, estandartes, etc. Si bien es una gran oportunidad, la labor de comunicación prosigue como siempre... y para aquellos de nosotros que nos ocupamos de comunicaciones es español o bilingües, tiene sus propios desafíos.

### **Los medios sociales y la búsqueda de un lugar en el que pertenecer**

Araceli Ma dice que cuando encontró la Iglesia Episcopal le cambió la vida. Ella había estado buscando una comunidad eclesial cuando se topó con una imagen de una mamá y sus hijos vestidos con trajes que eran parte de una escena de Natividad. Como madre de dos niñas pequeñas, esa foto la conmovió y pensó: "¡Eso es lo que quiero para mis hijas! Quiero que una lleve la cruz y que la otra tenga puestas alas de ángel en la iglesia. Las quiero criar en una iglesia que sea

como una familia”. Ella fue a esa iglesia debido a esa imagen y se sintió tan bienvenida que se quedó en ella para siempre. Ahora trabaja en Comunicaciones con Latinos en la Diócesis de Washington.

Araceli dice que podemos ayudar a cambiar las vidas de la gente compartiendo el espíritu de servicio y amor en nuestras iglesias en medios sociales. Al principio ella solo puso contenido en la página web diocesana, pero cuando la gente empezó a preguntar si ella tenía una página en Facebook, se dio cuenta de que podría ser una herramienta de evangelismo. Araceli fue a la Conferencia de eFormación del Seminario Teológico de Virginia, donde oyó la presentación del Rev. Alex Montes-Vela sobre la página en Facebook que él había creado para Santa María Magdalena en Manor, Texas. Dijo que después de aproximadamente un año, lectores de la página en Facebook habían empezado a ir a Santa María Magdalena.

Araceli dice que muchos/as hispanos/as en EE UU están buscando una familia extendida, porque la mayoría de las familias de ellos/as están en otros países. Ella está convencida de que todos y todas estamos en el Departamento de Marketing de Jesús y estimula que todos/as compartan fotos y videos en medios sociales que muestren que la iglesia es familia. “Todos están buscando pertenecer”, dice Araceli, “y ver gente que sonríe y disfruta la iglesia atraerá visitantes a la iglesia”.

### **El evangelismo requiere financiamiento y corazón para comunicar el amor de Dios**

El Rev. Edgar Giraldo, director de Comunicaciones y Evangelismo Digital de la Iglesia Episcopal de Puerto Rico, dice que evangelismo es comunicar la palabra de Dios al mundo. Dice que pedirle al obispo diocesano que incluya un presupuesto para comunicaciones es un paso adelante hacia poder hacerlo. Si bien está consciente de que ello puede no ser posible para algunas diócesis, Edgar está agradecido de que su obispo entiende el rol fundamental que desempeñan las comunicaciones en el evangelismo.

Edgar también sabe que mucha gente piensa que tener un(a) director(a) de comunicaciones requiere mucho dinero y tiempo, pero sostiene que lo que más se necesita es un interés en ello. Dice, “Si está interesado(a) en compartir el amor de Dios con otros, podrá publicar cosas hermosísimas. Si Jesús estuviera aquí hoy, emplearía los medios sociales para compartir su amor y esperanzas en todos los rincones del mundo”.

Hace unos meses, Edgar inició una serie de videos llamada *Tres Minutos con Dios* que se ha convertido en una gran herramienta de evangelismo. La serie comparte reflexiones breves sobre un pasaje de la Biblia de gente de la diócesis que refleja el amor y la esperanza de Dios. Estimula que todos nosotros empleemos nuestros teléfonos celulares para sacar fotos o filmar videos cortos que muestren el amor de Dios activo en el mundo y en nuestras vidas.

### **El idioma es un reto**

Hugo Oláiz es redactor adjunto de Ministerios Latino/Hispanos en Forward Movement. Dice que tenemos que ser como los ángeles, profetas y discípulos en la Biblia que compartieron buenas nuevas con otros. Incluso en malos tiempos siempre debemos compartir las buenas nuevas de esperanza y amor, porque nuestra mira está en Jesús, que a menudo dijo “No temas”. Hugo dice



que si hay un reto en las comunicaciones en español, es el lenguaje en sí. Los países hispanohablantes tienen diferentes palabras para las mismas cosas. “No tenemos un país que hable perfecto español”, dice “aunque muchos votarían por su propio país”. (¡Yo voto por Perú!) Parte de ser un comunicador en ministerios latino/hispanos es percatarse de que habrá momentos en que nadie podrá estar de acuerdo en qué palabra es la palabra adecuada para emplear. El mensaje de la Biblia a veces es difícil de entender y Hugo dice que si estamos agradecidos/as y apreciamos lo que recibimos y después lo compartimos con otros/as, estamos practicando el Evangelio. Si bien cree firmemente en el poder de emplear los medios digitales y sociales, también dice tener una gran cámara y gramática perfecta es maravilloso, pero que ninguno de ellos inspira o transforma tanto a la gente como la autenticidad de nuestro mensaje.

### **Las comunicaciones bilingües son más importantes que nunca en nuestra iglesia**

Paulette Martín, especialista en Comunicaciones Hispánicas en la Diócesis de Texas, siente que es importante contar con un equipo de comunicaciones para los ministerios en español porque se dirige a las necesidades de una de las poblaciones en más rápido aumento en Iglesia Episcopal. “Es crucial,” dice ella, “que la población hispana esté consciente de la posición de la Iglesia sobre temas de inmigración y de separación de familias”.

Ella dice que publicar contenido en inglés y en español es un “reto divertido” que ayudó a mejorar su bilingüismo. “Me fuerza a usar más mi cerebro”, explica. Su consejo para los/as comunicadores/as bilingües es conocer a su público y conectarse con la gente al tratar de obtener una historia. Si bien sabe que hay veces en que una historia se puede traducir fácilmente de un idioma a otro, ella cree que es necesario entender que puede afectar a feligresías o grupos de diferentes maneras. Paulette dice que ser latina, ex DREAMer e inmigrante la ayudaron, porque gracias a sus conocimientos y comprensión de muchos de los problemas que enfrentan los/as miembros latino/hispanos de la iglesia, puede entablar una buena relación de comunicación con ellos/as.

### **Algunos consejos de nuestros expertos**

- Mantenga actualizadas su página web y/o sus páginas en medios sociales, especialmente su calendario e información de contacto.
- Use medios sociales, incluyendo WhatsApp, para compartir las buenas nuevas fácil, económica y oportunamente.
- No necesita equipo costoso para empezar a compartir las buenas nuevas de Dios.
- Mire y lea las noticias, incluyendo las noticias eclesiales, y permanezca al tanto de los eventos actuales que afecten al público al que desee dirigirse.
- Lea en inglés y en español para mantener sus idiomas, vocabularios y gramáticas actualizados.
- Permanezca conectado(a) con los líderes del sacerdocio y personas laicas que sean parte de ministerios latino/hispanos y esté consciente de los asuntos que estén enfrentando sus miembros.
- Siga las páginas de los medios sociales de los Ministerios Latino/Hispanos de la Iglesia Episcopal.

*Sandra Montes es asesora de recursos en español de la ECF. Se desempeña en la Iglesia como música, traductora, oradora, asesora y escritora. Sandra fue docente de educación pública por 21 años y tiene un doctorado en educación.*

**Recursos:**

- [Dios, es tu iglesia](#) de Alfredo Feregrino, Vestry Papers, noviembre de 2014
- [Misión de Unión e Integración](#) de Daniel Vélez Rivera, Vestry Papers, mayo de 2011
- [¿Qué está dando a entender?](#) de Anna Olson, Vestry Papers, noviembre de 2014
- [Transformación del Boletín](#) de Susan Elliott, Vestry Papers, julio de 2018