

1 Amplify Your Message

- Low-Cost Communication Tactics for Grand Canyon Synod Leaders

2 About Brian

- Background in Windom, MN and St. Olaf College weekly newspapers.
- Graphic designer and web developer as a freelancer and for corporate and non-profits.
- Grateful to be here!

3 Today's webinar

- Part 1: Efficient Communication Strategies Based on the Synod's Model
 - Introduction to the Synod's daily blog, Facebook posts, and weekly newsletter system as a model for effective communication.
- Part 2: Implementation and Adaptation for Congregations

4 Part 1: Efficient Communication Strategies

- Daily engagement through Squarespace blogs and Facebook.
- Compilation of posts into a weekly emailed newsletter every Friday.
- Special communications: Year-end wrap-ups, Bishop's letters, holiday greetings.
- Customized direct emails as needed.

5 Part 1: Efficient Communication Strategies

- Consistency: Emphasis on regular timing (e.g., every Friday at 8 am) and uniform design.
- Design Simplicity: Use of a basic, repetitive design to avoid distraction and enhance readability.
 - Proxima Nova as the primary typeface; warm color palette.

- Simple page design with consistent elements (banner, big images, minimal text formatting).
- Automation: How tools like Squarespace automate design and distribution, reducing the need for technical skills.
- Real-World Examples: Review and build current newsletters, blog posts, and the event calendar.

6 Part 1: Efficient Communication Strategies

- Creating a Self-Sustaining System:
 - Building and maintaining a content calendar using tools like Airtable and stickies.
 - Strategy for creating landing pages for events or updates to keep information fluid and centralized.

7 Part 2: Implementation and Adaptation for Congregations

- Understanding Your Needs:
 - Voice and Audience: Identifying the target audience's size and characteristics (e.g., 1,000 to 2,000 engaged Lutherans).
 - Design and Branding: Deciding on typefaces, color schemes, and overall graphic design in line with ELCA recommendations.

8 Part 2: Implementation and Adaptation for Congregations

- Setting Up Your Platforms:
 - Choosing Platforms: Selecting the right social media platforms and other publishing platforms based on congregation demographics.
 - Email Strategies: Best practices for managing and segmenting email lists for targeted communication.

9 Part 2: Implementation and Adaptation for Congregations

- Content Creation and Management:
 - Tips for creating engaging content that appeals to both existing and potential new members.
 - Utilization of free and low-cost tools.
- Building and Managing Your Team:
 - Strategies for recruiting and training volunteers, accommodating various skill levels.

10 Conclusion and Q&A Session

- Resource Sharing: Information on where to find further resources and support.
- Interactive Q&A: Opportunity for attendees to share experiences, challenges, and seek advice on specific issues.

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12 Overview of Grand Canyon Synod's communication strategy

- Daily blog and Facebook posts, which are...
- Compiled into a weekly email newsletter every Friday at 8 am.
- Emailed to self-managing subscriber list.
- Other emails to that list a special year-end wrap-up, occasional Bishop letters, or for Christian holidays.
- Other specific emails we send directly from the office@gcsynod.org address.

- A minimum of printed pieces or images with text embedded in them, for quick communications and maximum accessibility.
- Not a perfect system. We could do way better, but we're going for efficiency.

13 Create a content distribution system that allows you to focus on content, without thinking about graphic design or methods and timing of publication.

**14 Consistency is key.
Consistency of publishing.
Every Friday 8 am.**

**Consistency of design,
no decoding of the delivery.**

15 What we don't do

- Images with text embedded in it.
- Printed pieces as our communications strategy.
 - Exceptions: Handouts at events, ordination cards, thank you cards.
- No extra software.
- Squarespace is our only software program for web site and blog and email campaigns.

16 One primary online source for each project

- Create landing pages or posts for each event or project. Unique URLs.
- Nothing printed, so info is always fluid.
- Change on one page or announcement post.

- No image changes or PDF changes necessary as things move forward.
- All promotion points to the URL, via QR code or links.
- Synod assembly pages as a good example.
- Events with every-changing fliers and images as a bad example.

17 The goal of our approach is to establish a self-sustaining communication system.

- By pre-defining all design and publication choices, you can effortlessly manage incoming content.
- Simply categorize the content into predefined segments.
- Your system should be straightforward enough for anyone to manage, whether you handle it personally or delegate it to volunteers.

18 Part 2

- Implementation and Adaptation
- for Congregations and Organizations

19 Implementation and Adaptation for Congregations

- Determine your voice and audience
- Determine type and colors and graphic design practices
- Determine publishing platforms
- Determine publishing schedules
- Determine your voice and audience
- Build incrementally.

20 Determine your voice and audience

- For the synod, it's between 1,000 and 2,000 engaged Lutherans on a weekly basis.
- In the voice of a small town newspaper.
- Differentiate internal vs external communications. You'll have regular readers, new to the group readers, and the general public who wants to know who you are.
- Create a one-time page and an email welcome message for newcomers or those who are interested.
- The rest of your regular and scheduled content is to the people who are already in the know.

21 Design and Branding

- Deciding on typefaces, color schemes, and overall graphic design
- Hopefully in line with ELCA recommendations.

22 Selecting the Right Website Platform

- Consider Your Needs: Evaluate ease of use, flexibility, and specific features needed (e.g., blog, event calendar).
- Squarespace: User-friendly with beautiful design templates. Ideal for those who prioritize aesthetics and simplicity.
- Wix: Highly customizable with a drag-and-drop interface. Great for beginners.
- WordPress: Offers extensive customization with plugins. Best for those needing specific functionalities.
- Cost vs. Benefit
 - Compare pricing plans and what's included (e.g., hosting, security, customer support).
 - Consider long-term scalability and support for your website's growth.
- Practical Tip: Start with a free trial to explore features before committing to a platform.

23 Choosing the Right Social Media Platforms

- **Assess Your Audience:** Identify which platforms your congregation members use most frequently.
- **Facebook:** Best for a broad demographic. Excellent for community engagement and events.
- **Instagram:** Ideal for a younger audience; focuses on visual content.
- **Twitter:** Great for real-time updates and engaging in broader conversations.
- **TikTok:** Perfect for reaching younger audiences with short, creative video content. Effective for viral challenges and trends that can increase visibility.
- **Content Suitability:** Match the content type (e.g., images, videos, text) with the platform's strengths.
- **Engagement Strategies:** Plan regular posts and interactions to maintain a vibrant community presence.

24 Effective Email Communication

- **Build Your List:** Encourage sign-ups through your website and social media channels.
- **Segmentation:** Organize your list by interests or demographics for targeted messages (e.g., volunteers, parents of Sunday school children).
- **Email Content:** Keep emails concise and focused. Include clear calls to action.
- **Best Practices**
 - Regular testing and optimization of subject lines and content.
 - Respect privacy and comply with anti-spam laws.

25 Creating Engaging Content for Your Community

- **Know Your Audience:** Understand their interests, needs, and communication preferences to tailor content effectively.

- **Content Variety:** Use a mix of formats such as videos, blogs, infographics, and live sessions to cater to different preferences. Example: Live Q&A sessions on Facebook, inspirational quote graphics on Instagram.
- **Storytelling:** Share real stories from within your congregation, such as member testimonials or mission trip experiences, to build connection and authenticity.

26 Creating Engaging Content for Your Community

- **Interactive Content:** Encourage participation through polls, contests, or interactive quizzes.
- **Example:** Photo contest asking members to submit pictures of their home worship setups.
- **Use Clear Calls to Action:** Whether it's inviting comments, sharing posts, or encouraging event attendance, always direct your audience on what to do next.
- **Monitor and Adapt:** Regularly review which types of content perform best and adapt your strategy to focus on what works.

27 Leveraging Free and Low-Cost Digital Tools

- **Graphic Design Tools**
 - **Canva:** User-friendly graphic design tool with templates for social media posts, newsletters, and more. Great for creating visually appealing content quickly.
 - **Adobe Spark:** Another excellent option for creating graphics, web pages, and short videos.
- **Scheduling Tools**
 - **Hootsuite:** Manage and schedule posts across multiple social media platforms from a single dashboard. Helps maintain consistent posting without daily management.
 - **Buffer:** Simplifies the scheduling of posts, analytics, and team collaboration.

28 Leveraging Free and Low-Cost Digital Tools

- Engagement Tracking
 - Google Analytics: Track website traffic and user engagement to better understand what attracts and retains visitors.
 - Facebook Insights: Provides analytics for your Facebook page's performance, including post reach and engagement details.
- Additional Tools
 - Mailchimp: For email campaigns, allows segmentation, automation, and detailed reports on open rates and other metrics.
 - Trello: A project management tool that's perfect for planning and organizing content calendars and volunteer tasks.

29 Creating a Content Calendar

- Define Your Communication Goals
 - Establish what you want to achieve with your communication (e.g., increase engagement, inform about events, outreach).
 - Set clear and measurable objectives for each type of content.
- Identify Key Dates and Events
 - List all important dates including religious holidays, congregation events, and community activities.
 - This helps in planning relevant content that resonates with your audience at the right time.
- Choose Your and Track Platforms Wisely
 - Determine which platforms (e.g., Facebook, email newsletters, church bulletins) are most effective for your congregation.

- Focus on platforms where your audience is most active to maximize impact.
- Develop a Content Mix
 - Plan for a variety of content types to keep the communication dynamic and engaging (e.g., videos, articles, infographics, event announcements).
 - Include educational, inspirational, and community-oriented posts to cater to different audience interests.

30 Creating a Content Calendar

- Utilize Free Planning Tools
 - Use tools like stickie notes, Airtable, Google Sheets or Trello for creating and sharing your content calendar. These tools are free and allow for collaboration among team members.
 - Example setup in Google Sheets can include columns for Date, Content Type, Platform, Responsible Person, and Status.
- Schedule and Delegate
 - Assign tasks to volunteers or staff based on their skills and availability.
 - Schedule posts in advance using built-in tools on social media platforms or other scheduling apps like Buffer or Hootsuite for efficiency.
- Review and Adjust Regularly
 - Monitor the performance of your communications and make adjustments based on what works best.
 - Have regular check-ins with your team to update the calendar and redistribute tasks as needed.

31 Assembling and Empowering Your Volunteer Team

- Identify Roles and Skills Needed

- Define specific roles based on your communication goals (e.g., content creators, social media managers, analytics monitors).
- Match tasks with the interests and skills of volunteers to enhance effectiveness and satisfaction.
- Recruitment Strategies
 - Utilize church announcements, newsletters, and social media to call for volunteers.
 - Encourage members to invite friends or family who have the requisite skills and may be interested in volunteering.
- Training and Resources
 - Provide training sessions to equip volunteers with the necessary tools and knowledge. Focus on both general communication principles and specific tools (e.g., Canva, Hootsuite).
 - Create easy-to-follow checklists, manuals, or video tutorials for reference.

32 Assembling and Empowering Your Volunteer Team

- Foster a Supportive Environment
 - Establish a mentorship system where more experienced volunteers guide newcomers.
 - Regularly acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of volunteers to keep morale high.
- Monitor and Adapt
 - Continuously assess the effectiveness of the team and adjust as needed.
 - Encourage feedback and suggestions from volunteers to improve processes and engagement.

33 Thank You!

- We'll email you this info and

- provide it on our website.