

Give your church bulletin a facelift

From UMCOM.org

Amid the changes in United Methodist churches through the years, one constant has been the weekly bulletin. Perhaps it is time to evaluate your bulletin and look for ways to do it better or differently. Here are some ideas for increasing the effectiveness of your worship bulletin.

Ideas for Improving Your Bulletin

Consider including a monthly “rolling calendar.” In this approach, you print all information and events for four consecutive weeks, starting on the current Sunday. This will give congregants more of a heads up, especially at the end of the month, when a normal calendar would only show a few events.

Include a welcome message: This should be the first thing a reader sees. It should reflect your church’s personality. If your church is casual and contemporary, make the welcoming language reflect that atmosphere. Jon Acuff writes in his blog, “Stuff Christians Like,” about a welcome message he thinks every church should have.

Order of worship: Use a bold typeface to delineate the different parts of the worship service. Make sure to indicate when the congregation is to stand, speak or follow any other special direction. Give those who may have difficulty standing permission to remain seated. “Stand as you are able” is a good instruction to mention up front. Remember that many people, especially youth, young adults or people who have difficulty standing repeatedly, aren’t fond of playing “Simon Says” in worship. Many like to stand or sit as the Spirit moves.

Church news: Make sure any news you list answers the 5Ws: who, what, when, where and why. Give enough information for people to know if they want more. Hold the details that they can find out later. If you have the ability, always include an abbreviated “vanity URL” to your website for details. A vanity URL is a simplified and shorter web address (i.e. yourchurch.com/youth). Vanity URLs are easier to remember and save room in print media. Seek specific instructions for how to create a vanity URL from your IT team or from your content-management system’s technical support. Learn how to create a Facebook page vanity URL.

Have at least two people proofread. This may be difficult for smaller churches, but every church probably has people with the gifts to do this. English teachers may consider this a great ministry opportunity. Unless you want to show up in church-bulletin bloopers, be sure to look at every letter and especially at names.

Be consistent in your template. Once your bulletin design is the way you want it in terms of fonts, layout and margins, keep it consistent. This includes having the same information in the same spot in each issue. People find comfort in consistency because it is easier to find things.

What to Avoid

Abbreviations and Christian jargon. Your congregation may know that CFH is the Cummins Fellowship Hall, but visitors may be confused. And where is the narthex? Is that in the attic?

Too little white space. Avoid the tendency to reduce margins to squeeze in more content. Readers' eyes need to breathe. White space allows this. Set ample margins and live with them.

Too many fonts. Too many fonts can overwhelm the eye. Never use more than three fonts. Two are ideal: one for the headlines or subheads and one for the body text. Serif fonts (such as Garamond or Times New Roman) are more readable because each letter is distinctive. Designers generally recommend using serif fonts for the body copy and sans serif fonts for headlines, which are shorter, larger and, therefore, easier to read. You may want to review more information on choosing fonts.

Too much information. It is not necessary to list every staff member along with his or her title, phone and email information. Select the staff members who people are most likely to contact and save the rest for your website.

Take time at a staff retreat or meeting to review your bulletin, how helpful it is to visitors and its welcoming message. Don't fall into the trap of saying, "but we've always done it that way." Your bulletin, like your church, must evolve.

Resources

[Free Creationswap bulletin templates](#)