



Communications Standards

How Grace Church should write, speak and
communicate clearly and consistently in all mediums



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If you would like a manual with writing guidelines and styles in it, please ask the Communications Director for a copy.



communications constants

This is what we value:

Use communication strategies that cut THROUGH without cutting IN because bombarding people with our message doesn't make them listen any better.

This promotes niche and personal network communication strategies while de-emphasizing mass broadcast media (all-church mailings, etc.).

Customize communication methods on an individual level whenever possible because it shows that we care about each person.

When John asks to be communicated via email, we shouldn't send him a letter.

Use the same language to refer to those areas most often referenced as church-wide next steps (FOUNDATIONAL and P1 minitreis) so we communicate as clearly and efficiently as possible.

Includes: Series Titles, Grace Church, Next Steps, EQUIP, Volunteer Your Time, L.I.V.E., GraceKids, GraceYouth, ServErie, etc.

Use a business-casual voice because that's the language that our people speak.

DO: "Come out and serve. Bonus: you just might make a new friend."

DON'T: "Please make it a priority to serve with your gifts. It is also vital that you make connections with others."

All communication should be:

Accurate: Make sure the facts are correct, double check names, dates, numbers and spellings.

Brief: Get to the point quickly.

Engaging: Make it interesting. Leave people with something to remember.

Informative: Find ways to reflect our mission, vision and core values.

Consistent: The same language should run through all communication.



promotional principles

Keep these things in mind when thinking about your event in the grand scheme of things:

We don't "push." We connect.

As a ministry leader, it is not your responsibility to promote your event/ ministry. It is your responsibility to create meaningful experiences that people want to talk about.

Fairness and/or equal promotions for all ministries is not a communications priority. Promotions are based on ministry priority, which is determined by the Foundational/Partnership Ministry Matrix and Lead Team.

Niche ministries should focus on niche marketing. Making a global announcement for something that only involves a small group of people clouds the overall messages we are trying to communicate.

It's important to communicate clearly everything that is needed to make events successful. If the Communications Team doesn't know who, what, why, when and how, it will not be communicated effectively.

How To:

1. Check for date availability on EventU.
2. Add your event to EventU at least four weeks prior to the start date.
If you have specific thoughts about promotion methods, include them in the communications section of the form.
3. Promotion plans will be discussed with the ministry leader if needed.

multi-media promotional tools

Guidelines and deadlines for effective communication:

whoisgrace.com

The web site is updated daily. All web needs should be communicated to the Communications Director as needed. Front page ads will be used for appropriate ministries or site features as needed.

E-News

Sent bi-weekly or monthly on Tuesdays or Wednesdays when there is enough info and is organized by scope (inverted pyramid). E-News is for FOUNDATIONAL ministries. Site-specific E-News can include P1 ministries.

Targeted Email Blast

Get Communications Director approval. This is not a safety net for poor planning. Email blasts should be used for niche marketing, and sparingly.

FaceBook

FaceBook will be used for global events and sermon series promotion. If you would like to set up a ministry FaceBook page, speak to the Comm Director. Do not send emails asking the staff to share something you post.

Hint: Post a story on your own wall and "tag" Grace Church with the "@" symbol.

Twitter

Twitter will be used for global events and sermon series promotion.

Instagram

Instagram will be used for behind-the-scenes photos and event promotion, as well as sermon series supplements.

Video/Verbal Announcements

Limited to 2-3 main announcements that are considered FOUNDATIONAL. These are pre-planned, based on the yearly calendar with limited flexibility. Some site-specific verbal announcements will be P1-Level ministries, but needs to be pre-determined before the service (by Thursday at 10:00am).

Text Messaging

These should be used sparingly and will need approval if being sent to more than 50 numbers (unless it is a pre-established, regular communication).

traditional promotional tools

Guidelines and deadlines for effective communication:

Bulletins

Guest and service driven. Will include guest information, connections card, service order, sermon notes and church contact information. Basic upcoming event info is included, based on scope and availability. Changes to static information in the shell must be made one month in advance. The information that is included in the bulletin is taken from EventU.

Ministry Spotlight

The Ministry Spotlight Table is a strategic tool for Foundational and P1 ministries, and is pre-determined by the Communications Director. General look and feel must also be approved.

Lobby Tables

No more than two tables will be in the lobby on any given weekend. Must be pre-approved by the Communications Director.

End-of-Service Verbal Announcements

Reserved for guest information and benevolent offerings. Any additional verbals must be pre-planned and approved by the Communications Director. Verbal announcements will not be a safety net for poor planning.

Snail Mail

Physical mail should be used very sparingly and requires approval by the Communications Director two weeks prior to intended send date. It is the author's responsibility to proofread (another set of eyes would be preferable).

voice mail and email

Making sure your personal interactions carry the Grace Church brand:

Your voice mail message should include your name and title or area of ministry at Grace Church.

All voice mail messages are to be returned within 24-48 hours.

Staff cell phone numbers are confidential. Never give out another staff member's cell phone number to anyone, unless you have specific approval.

Member/attendee information is also confidential. Church Directories will be given out on an individual basis. Never give out your Fellowship One login information to another person.

All email should be returned within 24 hours. Email responses should be set in a simple sanserif font (ex: Arial, Calibri) at 10 or 11pts with no backgrounds.

Email signatures should be consistent with all staff and set at 10 or 11pts. Include your name, title, Grace Church, **whoisgrace.com** and phone number (cell optional). No Images or colored backgrounds. Example:

Jess Burkell
Communications Director
Grace Church
whoisgrace.com
Office: 814.790.4973 x241

Facebook: /jessica.burkell (optional)

Twitter: @jlburkell (optional)

Instagram: @jlburkell (optional)

If your current email signature does not conform to these guidelines, please change it immediately.



proofing and editing

Even the most well-written copy will turn off readers if it includes errors:

- Accuracy:** Double check dates, times and names.
- Audience:** Is the copy simple, and does it communicate to our members and guests? Does it communicate to first time visitors, if applicable?
- The Basics:** Are all the details of the who, what, where, when, why & how included in the copy?
- Style:** Is the copy consistent with the voice and style of writing of Grace Church?
- Spelling:** Double check spelling. Have someone who is not familiar with the document check it.
- Terminology:** Does the copy contain correct Grace Church terminology?
Examples: Next Steps Center, location/site, L.I.V.E.

It is important to proof your copy before it is published and have at least one other person, preferably who is not familiar with the text, proof for errors. This is not the sole responsibility of the Communications Team.



media relations

Effectively establishing and maintaining relationships with the public audience:

If you have something you consider news worthy and would like publicity in local media, please contact the Creative Director.

Please remember that **no news releases should be sent out, interviews conducted or endorsements provided without first consulting with the Communications Director. NO EXCEPTIONS.**

A typical plan for publicizing an event may include:

- Coordinate any pre-event publicity.
- Assemble all event information.
- Distribute press release and media packets (if applicable) to comprehensive media list.
- Scan local press for coverage and maintain press clipping book as archive.

CANCELING MINISTRIES:

As a rule, Grace doesn't cancel ministries unless there is an emergency or we are warned by the government to do so. If you need to cancel a ministry, here are the steps:

- Check in with Aaron Lundberg. If the cancellation is approved, then:
 - Cancel event in EventU.
 - Send an email to attenders and/or the whole church (if whole church, send email through the Communications Director).
 - Make cancellation signage for the facility doors.
 - Make every effort to have a ministry representative at the location 15 minutes prior until 20mins after the start of the event for those who arrive.
- Reach out to the following news organizations with the cancellation information:
 - WJET, FOX & WCTL: <http://www.yourerie.com/weather/closings>
 - WICU & WSEE: <http://www.erietvnews.com>



evaluation

Unless we ask the right questions, we'll just be guessing

Evaluation process for communications efforts:

1. Enter event in EventU. Answer:

- Goal of event
- Target audience
- Numerical goal

2. Have a conversation with the Communications Director to clear up any strategy issues/thoughts.

3. If possible at the event/class, ask people HOW they found out about it and WHY they came. This isn't always possible, but it's helpful to know.

4. After the event/class, send an email to the Communication Director, using the template below. If you are a ministry leader, this is a conversation you can have with your leaders and report back.

- Event/Class Name:
- What was the goal? Was it accomplished?
- What was the target audience? Did you reach them?
- What was your attendance goal? What was the actual total?
- How did people find out about the event? Why did they come?
- What promotional efforts went well? Why?
- What promotional efforts went poorly? Why?
- Any ideas/thoughts for next time?

This process will help us, as a rapidly changing organization, stay on top of trends and culture shifts.