

Communications Audit Report

Since January 1, our church staff has been gathering information and analyzing data to help improve our internal and external communications. Below you'll discover the key questions we sought to answer, methodology of the audit, and action plan for both internal and external communications for 2021.

Key Questions

What are our current goals and objectives for our internal communications?

1. To effectively give communication in a timely and impactful way to church members and others interested in the life of the church
2. To use a broad range of communications tools (email, website, Sunday bulletin, announcements) to reach FBC members.
3. To produce materials with a high degree of excellence and professionalism.
4. To communicate in ways that are attractive, accurate, grammatically correct, and efficient.
5. To make better use of communication tools at our disposal.

How well are our current internal communications working?

A recent survey suggested that 89% of church members agree that we communicate in a good way. But we also received a ton of feedback on what needs to improve. We have processed this information and developed a series of action steps/responses to the feedback.

We discovered that when sometimes people say, "we need to improve communication," they may be referring to not being in the loop on decisions, feeling uninformed as a leader, or observing that communications between staff, lay leaders, and the broader church needs to be more clear. We also have learned that church members desire greater communication between one another (information shared in a timely way, committees/councils well informed, as well as giving information to other committees/councils).

Are our messages clear and consistent to the congregation?

Generally yes, but not always. Sometimes there is incorrect or out-of-date information. Sometimes the messages are not communicated in a timely way. Other times we hear feedback that we don't explain decisions well.

Do we have a coordinated graphic identity?

We do not. We have multiple versions of the 4-part quatrefoil. Signage around the building does not communicate our identity. We also have a myriad of publications around the building that create a hodgepodge of colors and images. We are not

consistently referring to the style guide which was produced not long ago. This tool could help us quickly align our graphic identity.

Who are our current key audiences for external communications?

We have three groups that could be considered our external audiences: those who watch us on TV, those who check out our webpage (perhaps while seeking out a new church home), and those who see something we produce on Facebook. We have not identified groups in our community to whom we could direct external messages and invitations to engage more deeply (i.e. downtown residents, UT students, senior adults who prefer traditional worship, young adults looking for community).

Do our external communications support our mission of making disciples and baptizing?

No. We don't communicate externally about who we are, what we do, and why it matters. We tend to publicize only events. We don't target particular groups, such as those who prefer traditional or contemporary worship, young adults, etc. We don't externally communicate with the goal of inviting and building relationship.

How effectively are we utilizing resources for external communications?

Not well at all. Our website is very much out of date and hard to navigate. We don't take advantage of inexpensive online advertising. We haven't used dollars to publicize and communicate broadly.

What is our communications goal for the Knoxville community in 2021?

We don't have one. We need one.

Methodology of the Audit (check marks represent action completed)

Gather samples of all of our print and e-communications. ✓

Collect data from staff on means and frequency of communication. ✓

Collect feedback from congregation on how well we are communicating and what suggestions they would offer. ✓

Gather information on TV audience, web engagement, and social media communication. ✓

Conduct SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis on current communications, both internal and external. ✓

Strengths

- Multiple mediums for communication
- Big events forecasted well
- Staff/leaders value excellence
- Logo/style guide already in place
- Branding utilized to some degree
- Congregation engaged, listening
- TV audience
- Physical location/foot traffic that could be used to publicize

Weaknesses

- Volume of content that needs communicating/noise
- Email list has a lot of bounces and unopened emails
- Multiple information systems (ACS, Constant contact, etc.)
- Creativity with graphics (not sufficient personnel, time)
- Big programs with a smaller staff
- TV streaming/online challenges with excellent but weary volunteers
- General lack of online presence
- Generations that communicate differently

Opportunities

- Online/media - the sky's the limit
- Video/content creation can make a big impact
- Build trust with simple improvements
- Use location for more advertising
- Use publicity avenues that the church has used in the past
- CW commercials
- External strategy could reap big dividends

Threats

Cutting through the noise

Finances/giving with an aging population

Volunteer capacity

Political polarization - sustaining the middle

Past hurts that could fester, feeling communication needs not met

Form action plan based on data analysis for internally communicating more effectively in 2021.

1. Communicate findings of communication audit to Church Council, Deacons, and general membership. (March 2021)

2. Create staff/church communications covenant for what the congregation can expect from staff, what the congregation is asked to fulfill. (March 21, 2021)

3. Add additional proofreader for Sunday's bulletin. (Immediate)

4. Utilize First Notes for quarterly church education on leadership structures, bylaws/policies, other processes. (March 1, June 7, September 6, December 6, 2021)

5. Implement staff alignment with church style guide through inservice day, quarterly reminders. (Inservice day: March 22, 2021)

6. Ask monthly in bulletin, weekly emails for members and guests to request being added to the email list. Update list monthly to delete outdated emails. (Ongoing)

7. Create yearly training event when committees/councils begin in order to inform regarding processes and expectations for healthy communication among church leaders. (May or June 2021)

8. Create weekly video content that promotes events and general church ministries. (April 5, 2021 launch)

All items fall under Pastor Brent McDougal's responsibility for oversight except for numbers 6 and 7, which fall under Vanessa Moore, Ministry Assistant, and Pam Neal, Minister of Administration, respectively.

Form action plan based on data analysis for externally communicating more effectively in 2021.

1. Work with staff and church council to develop a central theme for advertising to the community in 2021. (March 30, 2021)

2. Create external communications team for regular brainstorming, feedback, and action steps to engage ways of publicizing broadly in our community. Areas to explore may include radio, billboard, direct mail, etc. (Request participation March 2021, form team by April 15, 2021)

3. Add staff person (part-time; 20 hours/week) tasked with external communications (web, publicity, social media). (May 15, 2021)

4. Implement monthly Google and Facebook advertising for general info on the church as well as special events. (April 1, 2021)

5. Update website. (May 1, 2021) Make preparations for website re-do in Fall of 2022.

6. Utilize Gloop to engage with online community (gloop.us). Gloop offers church access to data that big business commonly uses to connect with the community. Specifically, Insights through the Gloop platform helps churches create marketing campaigns based on data to build a social media audience and foster digital engagement. (July 1, 2021)

7. Create monthly commercials for CW20 viewership. (First commercials created February 2021; ongoing)

8. Hire additional tech person to especially enhance TV video and audio issues. (Immediate)

All items fall under Pastor Brent McDougal's responsibility for oversight except for number 4, which falls under Pam Neal, Minister of Administration, and numbers 7 and 8, which fall under Richard Buerkle, Minister of Worship.