



# LUTHERAN WEEK 2023

## LUTHERAN WEEK 2023 WORKSHOP

### *Effective Parish Communication*

#### **Session 1: Principles and Theories**

Join us in this transformative workshop with the Deacon Andrew Ames Fuller and the NALC Communications Team in the first part of our two-part series. The *Principles and Theories* workshop is an immersive exploration into the profound theological foundations of communication. Learn to unlock the potential of both traditional and digital channels in strengthening your parish's connectivity. Grasp the pivotal principle that "everything speaks" and learn how to let your parish's vision and values resonate through every interaction. Delve deep into the art of crafting compelling messages, balancing your communication with your internal and external audiences, and navigating through crises. Embrace leadership principles to foster a collaborative and respectful communicative environment.

#### **Session 2: Applying Principles and Solving Real-Life Problems**

The second part of our series, *Applying Principles and Solving Real-Life Problems*, invites you into an interactive forum for exploring real-life communication issues within your parish. Harness the knowledge from our first session, bring your questions and concerns, and be prepared to engage in vibrant, problem-solving discussions. Learn from your peers, gain new insights from their experiences, and apply communication principles in real-world situations. This hands-on, collaborative workshop will help you navigate through actual communication challenges, with the guidance of our seasoned NALC Communications Team. Join us and contribute to the creation of congregations that communicate in a way that fosters shared identity, unity, and testimony across the North American Lutheran Church.



# LUTHERAN WEEK 2023

## **SESSION 1:**

### *Effective Parish Communication: Bridging the Gap in the North American Lutheran Church*

The Rev. Dcn. Andrew S. Ames Fuller, NALC Director of Communications

#### **The Theology of Communication**

"In the Christian faith, communication has deep theological roots. We see in the Trinity - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit - an ideal of perfect communication and community. This relational nature of the Godhead underscores the importance of fostering a sense of community through effective communication within our parishes."

"The Word, Christ himself, is the ultimate communicator who brings the life-creating Gospel to humanity. We, as His followers, are called to proclaim this Gospel in our words and actions, thereby participating in God's communicative action."

"Reflecting on our Lutheran history, Martin Luther himself was an excellent communicator. His Ninety-Five Theses were a transformative message that ignited the Reformation. He recognized the power of the emerging printing press and used it to disseminate his teachings widely."

"From this, we learn that effective communication is more than a mere tool – it's a theological mandate, deeply embedded in our faith and tradition."



# LUTHERAN WEEK 2023

## **Why Communication Matters**

"Communication forms the bedrock of any relationship, and that includes our parish. It enables understanding, builds trust, promotes transparency, and fosters a sense of community."

## **The Two-Way Street**

"Remember, communication is a two-way street. We don't merely broadcast messages, we also listen, absorb, and respond to the needs and concerns of our congregation."

## **Channels of Communication**

"Multiple channels exist for parish communication - from traditional methods like newsletters and bulletins, to modern platforms like emails, websites, and social media. Effective communication requires leveraging the right mix."

## **Traditional Channels – Pros and Cons**

"Traditional channels foster a sense of familiarity and reach those less inclined to use digital platforms. However, they may limit accessibility and timeliness."

## **Digital Channels – Pros and Cons**

"Digital channels offer immediate, widespread reach and accessibility. They are cost-effective and environmentally friendly. However, they can sometimes exclude those less technologically adept."

Here's a table chart that categorizes different communication channels, outlining their key features, advantages, and potential challenges. This chart could be included as an



# LUTHERAN WEEK 2023

extension to the slide discussing channels of communication.

<b>Communication Channel</b>	<b>Key Features</b>	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
<u>Digital (Email)</u>	Direct and personal, allows for attachments, can be automated	Speedy, cost-effective, easy to track	May be considered as spam, not all congregants may use email
<u>Print (Newsletters, Bulletins)</u>	Tangible, traditional, flexible in terms of design	Accessible for those less tech-savvy, personal touch	Time-consuming to produce, not environmentally friendly
<u>Web (Website, Blog)</u>	Central source of information, allows for multimedia content	Easily updated, available 24/7, wide reach	Requires regular maintenance, needs digital literacy to access
<u>Video (Online Streaming, Recorded Sermons)</u>	Engaging and dynamic, allows for visual storytelling	Appeals to visual learners, can be shared online	Requires resources and skills to produce, may be challenging for some to access
<u>Press (Local Newspapers, Radio)</u>	Extends reach to the broader community	Reaches those outside the parish, boosts visibility	May require writing press releases, uncertain control over the final message



# LUTHERAN WEEK 2023

<u>Social Media</u> (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)	Interactive, timely, enables two-way communication	Encourages engagement, instant updates	Potential for negative comments or misuse, requires regular monitoring
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*This chart provides a visual overview and comparison of different communication channels. It serves as a helpful guide when deciding which channels might be best suited for your parish's specific needs and context.*

## **Audience Assessment**

"Knowing your audience is crucial. Understand their communication preferences, accessibility, and demographic factors. This helps in deciding the right channel mix."

## **Vision, Values, and Branding - "Everything Speaks"**

"Every aspect of our parish life communicates something, whether intentionally or not - this is the principle of 'everything speaks'. Our buildings, our worship style, the way we welcome newcomers, even the cleanliness of our facilities, all these 'speak' to our congregants and visitors. They all contribute to our overall brand as a parish."

"The consistency between what we say and what we do, between our messages and our actions, is crucial. As parishes, we need to ensure that our vision and values are clearly articulated, not just in our verbal and written communication but also in the entirety of our parish life."

"In essence, our parishes themselves are a form of communication. They should clearly and consistently reflect the Gospel we proclaim, the love of Christ we share, and the faith community we aspire to be."

## **Creating Clear and Effective Messages**



# LUTHERAN WEEK 2023

"Clarity, brevity, and relevance are key. Make sure your messages reflect the values and vision of our faith community. Always provide context and make information actionable."

## **Balancing Internal and External Communications**

"Internal and external communications serve different yet equally vital roles.

*Internal Communications* focus on facilitating dialogue between staff members, church councils, and lay leaders. It fosters a collaborative, well-informed environment. Ideas for improvement may include regular staff and leadership meetings, an internal newsletter, or a shared online platform for collaborative work and discussion.

*External Communications* engage not just our parishioners but also visitors and wider community members. It shares our parish's mission, values, and activities beyond our immediate congregation. Ideas may include community outreach programs, maintaining an up-to-date and informative website, or leveraging social media platforms for wider engagement."

## **Inspiration, Information, Invitation: A Communication Triad**

"Effective communication incorporates three key elements:

- *Inspiration* motivates and moves people emotionally, creating a desire for involvement or change.
- *Information* provides the necessary details to transform that inspiration into actionable understanding.
- *Invitation* extends a call to action, inviting the community to participate, contribute, or engage based on the provided inspiration and information."

## **Leadership Principles in Communication**



# LUTHERAN WEEK 2023

"Leadership in communication requires wisdom and discernment. It involves managing expectations, providing clear direction, and being receptive to feedback.

The principle of *'Leadership is the art of disappointing people at a rate they can handle'* reminds us that we cannot please everyone all the time. Changes and decisions may not always be popular, but they are necessary. The key is to communicate these decisions with care, explaining the rationale and listening to concerns.

*'Always give a yes with a no'* encourages us to provide alternatives when we have to decline a request or idea. This shows respect for others' input and fosters a positive environment, even when we must say 'no'."

These principles guide us in communicating our parish's vision and values in a leadership role.

## **Encouraging Feedback and Participation**

"Invite your congregation to participate in the communication process. This could be through parish meetings, suggestion boxes, or online platforms. Listening and responding effectively is a key part of communication."

## **Crisis Communication**

"In times of crisis, communication is pivotal. Be transparent, timely, empathetic, and clear. Regular updates can help maintain trust and unity in our community."

## **Professional Development**

"Seek opportunities to enhance your communication skills. This could be through workshops, webinars, or communication-focused conferences."



# LUTHERAN WEEK 2023

## Conclusion

"Effective communication is not a one-size-fits-all approach. It is a continuous process of learning, adapting, and improving. Let's strive to make our parishes places where everyone feels heard, valued, and informed."

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION, LEARNING, AND STUDY:

### Leading Platforms/Resources:

1. Digital (Email): MailChimp, Constant Contact, Substack.
2. Print (Newsletters, Bulletins): Microsoft Publisher, Adobe InDesign, Canva.
3. Web (Website, Blog): WordPress, Wix, Squarespace.
4. Video (Online Streaming, Recorded Sermons): YouTube, Facebook Live, Vimeo.
5. Press (Local Newspapers, Radio): Local press contacts, HARO (Help a Reporter Out), Press Release Jet.
6. Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter): Buffer, Hootsuite, Later.

### Communication Channel Outline:

1. Digital (Email)
  1. How to ensure emails don't land in spam?
    1. Ensuring emails don't land in spam can be achieved by using a reputable email service, avoiding spam trigger words, and ensuring your email list is clean and updated regularly (Radicati, S., & Hoang, Q., 2011).
    2. **Illustration:** Think of a postman who delivers your emails - a reputable email service is like a trusted postman who ensures your mail gets to your recipient's mailbox, not in their trash.
  2. How to measure the effectiveness of our email campaigns?
    1. Email campaign effectiveness can be measured by monitoring open rates, click-through rates, and conversion rates (Cruz, D., & Fill, C., 2008).





# LUTHERAN WEEK 2023

2. **Illustration:** Imagine an email as a fishing line - open rates show you how many fish noticed your bait, click-through rates tell you how many were hooked, and conversion rates reveal how many you successfully reeled in.
3. How can we ensure our emails are accessible to all?
  1. Emails can be made accessible by using clear and simple language, providing alternative text for images, and ensuring a logical reading order (W3C, 2018).
  2. **Illustration:** A clear and simple email with alt text for images is like a universally accessible building – everyone, regardless of their abilities, can get inside and find what they need.

## 2. Print (Newsletters, Bulletins)

1. **How can we make our print materials more visually appealing?**
  1. Visual appeal in print materials can be increased by using consistent and complementary colors, balancing text and images, and using white space effectively (Williams, R., 2008).
  2. **Illustration:** A well-designed print material is like a well-organized room – it's pleasing to look at, easy to navigate, and efficiently utilizes space.
2. **How can we make our print materials more environmentally friendly?**
  1. Environment-friendly practices for print materials include using recycled paper, limiting colors which require more ink, and considering the size and number of pages (EPA, 2020).
  2. **Illustration:** Environment-friendly print materials are like planting trees while creating a garden – you achieve your goal while caring for the environment.
3. **How can we ensure our print materials are accessible to all?**
  1. Print materials can be made accessible by using large print, clear fonts, and providing alternative formats like digital versions or audio recordings (CDC, 2020).
  2. **Illustration:** Accessible print materials are like multiple versions of a book, available in standard print, large print, digital, or audio formats – everyone can choose what suits them best.

## 3. Web (Website, Blog)

1. **How can we improve the navigation of our website?**



# LUTHERAN WEEK 2023

1. Website navigation can be improved by using clear labels, limiting the number of menu items, and ensuring each page is accessible within three clicks (Nielsen, J., 2012).
2. **Illustration:** A well-navigated website is like a well-planned city – no matter where you are, you can find your way to your destination easily.
2. **How can we ensure our website is accessible to all?**
  1. A website can be made accessible by ensuring compatibility with assistive technologies, providing text alternatives for non-text content, and offering multiple ways to navigate the site (W3C, 2018).
  2. **Illustration:** An accessible website is like an inclusive playground – everyone, regardless of their abilities, can play and enjoy.
3. **What type of content should we be posting on our blog?**
  1. Blog content can vary widely but should always be relevant to your audience, timely, and offer value, such as educational resources, event updates, or spiritual guidance (Halligan, B., & Shah, D., 2020).
  2. **Illustration:** A good blog post is like a meaningful conversation with a friend – it's relevant, timely, and adds value to your life.
4. **Video (Online Streaming, Recorded Sermons)**
  1. **How can we improve the quality of our videos?**
    1. Video quality can be improved by using good lighting, clear audio, and stable camera work (Hofman, H., 2019).
    2. **Illustration:** A high-quality video is like a scenic viewpoint – clear, stable, and allows you to fully take in the beauty. 4.2. Engaging videos are like your favorite movies – they tell a compelling story, they're the right length, and they keep your eyes glued to the screen. 4.3. Accessible videos are like a movie theater with closed captioning and audio descriptions – everyone, including those with visual or hearing impairments, can enjoy the show.
  2. **How can we make our videos more engaging?**
    1. Videos can be made more engaging by telling a compelling story, keeping it short, and including visuals that support the message (Guo, P., Kim, J., & Rubin, R., 2014).



# LUTHERAN WEEK 2023

2. **Illustration:** Engaging videos are like your favorite movies – they tell a compelling story, they’re the right length, and they keep your eyes glued to the screen.

### 3. How can we ensure our videos are accessible to all?

1. Videos can be made accessible by adding captions, providing transcripts, and describing visuals in the audio for those with visual impairments (Foley, A., 2015).
2. **Illustration:** Accessible videos are like a movie theater with closed captioning and audio descriptions – everyone, including those with visual or hearing impairments, can enjoy the show.

## 5. Press (Local Newspapers, Radio)

### 1. How can we build relationships with local media?

1. Building relationships with local media can be achieved by regularly sending them press releases, inviting them to events, and being available for comments or interviews (Harcup, T., 2015).
2. **Illustration:** Building relationships with local media is like cultivating a garden – it requires regular attention, nurturing, and care.

### 2. How can we write an effective press release?

1. An effective press release is clear, concise, newsworthy, and includes all necessary details like who, what, when, where, why, and how (Harcup, T., 2015).
2. **Illustration:** An effective press release is like a clear, concise map that guides the reader to all the important points – who, what, when, where, why, and how.

### 3. How can we handle a negative story in the media?

1. Handling a negative story in the media involves staying calm, preparing a response, correcting any inaccuracies, and learning from the situation for future improvement (Coombs, W. T., 2007).
2. **Illustration:** Handling a negative story in the media is like sailing through a storm – it requires calmness, preparedness, and lessons learned for future voyages.

## 6. Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)

### 1. How can we increase our followers on social media?



# LUTHERAN WEEK 2023

1. Increasing followers on social media involves regular posting, engaging with followers, and sharing relevant, high-quality content (Zarella, D., 2010).
2. **Illustration:** Increasing followers on social media is like growing a tree – it requires regular care, engagement, and nourishing content.
2. **How can we handle negative comments on social media?**
  1. Handling negative comments on social media involves responding promptly, being polite, addressing the issue, and learning from the feedback (Huang, Y. H., & Bashir, M., 2017).
  2. **Illustration:** Handling negative comments on social media is like handling a customer complaint in a store – you need to be prompt, polite, address the issue, and learn from the feedback.
3. **How can we ensure our social media posts are accessible to all?**
  1. Social media posts can be made accessible by using clear and simple language, providing alternative text for images, and avoiding the use of text in images (W3C, 2016).
  2. **Illustration:** Accessible social media posts are like a party invitation that everyone can read, understand, and appreciate.

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# LUTHERAN WEEK 2023

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# LUTHERAN WEEK 2023

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