



Know Your Seven Key Messages

1. God's call to stewardship.
2. Your parish vision and goals.
3. Your achievements and accomplishments.
Try to tell stories, not just facts and figures.
4. Appreciation and recognition for gifts already given.
In parish's words and the words of those who benefit.
5. Your financial information.
% of increase in costs (3-4%)
% of increase in giving (1-2%)
Budget reductions
6. Your needs and plans.
7. The ways people can help.
Include Lay Witnessing from donors.
 - ✓ **Offertory giving**
 - ✓ Volunteering
Parish want ads
 - ✓ Participating in special events
 - ✓ **Remembering the parish in a will
or other planned giving**
 - ✓ **Making a gift of stock**
 - ✓ **Making an end of the year gift**
 - ✓ **Memorial or tribute gifts**
 - ✓ **Adopt-A-Student**



Assessing Your Parish Communication Efforts

Steps to Conducting a Communications Audit

1. Take an inventory of all the existing ways that your parish uses to communicate with parishioners. (Review “Forms of Communications.”)
2. Gather together as many samples of these communication tools as possible.
3. Examine them for quality, uniform appearance and consistent messages.
4. Determine if they project the image your parish wants to project or if there are improvements that need to be made.
5. Determine how your key stewardship and development messages can be integrated into **each** of these communication tools.
6. Determine if a consistent look and message would be helpful. For example, should all parish communication tools use the same image of the church with a tag line that reflects the parish’s stewardship spirit and/or mission. Such a tag line might be: “*St. Mary Church – Bringing our gifts to do God’s work.*”
7. Determine if these existing forms of communication are adequate to convey your seven key messages to **ALL** parishioner groups or audiences. If not, you may want to consider adding or adapting one or more forms of communications.

REMEMBER: Only 40-50% of parishioners are at Mass on any given weekend. If your only forms of communications are only available at Mass you are missing half of your audience.



Forms of Communications

- ✦ Weekly Bulletin
- ✦ Parish newsletter (*Donors' most preferred form of communications*)
- ✦ Specialized newsletters – school, leaders', senior citizens, young adult, etc.
- ✦ Annual and/or quarterly reports
- ✦ Informational brochures
- ✦ Time and Talent catalog
- ✦ Intention (pledge) cards
- ✦ Weekly Offertory envelope
- ✦ Bulletin boards
- ✦ Letters to the home
- ✦ Segmented letters for special groups; i.e. senior citizens, school parents or new families
- ✦ Outdoor parish sign
- ✦ Posters, banners, small displays and signs
- ✦ Stewardship information table in the back of church
- ✦ Materials available in the parish library or pamphlet room
- ✦ Informational meetings
- ✦ Booths at the Festival of Ministries
- ✦ Pulpit talks or announcements by parishioners
- ✦ Personal visits
- ✦ Phone calls
- ✦ Stories in the local media
- ✦ E-mail
- ✦ Web site
- ✦ Video
- ✦ Advertising “give-aways” – buttons, magnets, pens, etc.



Communicating Well with Donors

Write for Readability

- ♦ Write at 8th grade level
 - Check through Options in Spelling and Grammar for Flesh-Kincaid grade level
 - ✓ Short words – no more than 25% of words over five letters
 - ✓ Short sentences
 - ✓ Short paragraphs
- ♦ Write like you would talk. (*Like talking to a friend - not writing an essay.*)

Give the Reader What He/She Wants

- ♦ **Put yourself in the reader's place.** Picture a real reader. **What do they care about?**
- ♦ Be exciting! Be enthusiastic! Don't bore them.
- ♦ Involve the reader. Put them first.
- ♦ Use more 2nd person or 1st person plural rather than 3rd person or 1st person singular.
- ♦ Provide the four kinds of information the four different kinds of readers want:
 - ✓ New information – pizzazz
 - ✓ Facts and figures – lots of reasoning
 - ✓ Heart-warming stories
 - ✓ Bottom line – How does this impact me? **What do you want me to do?**

Design for "Scannability"

- ♦ Use lots of bullets and lists.
- ♦ In newsletters:
 - ✓ Use long headlines and subheads (25 – 35 words okay in a newsletter)
 - ✓ Put most important information in the first paragraph.
 - ✓ Use pull quotes.
- ♦ In letters:
 - ✓ Reiterate most important message in the P.S.
- ♦ Avoid
 - ✓ ALL CAPS
 - ✓ San serif body copy
 - ✓ Reverse type
 - ✓ Fonts smaller than 12 point in full page letters, smaller than 10 point in columns.

Don't Forget A "Call to Action"!!!



Tips for Preparing a Quality Document

Ask yourself some tough questions.

- ♦ If you charged a subscription fee would anyone pay it?!
- ♦ According to Vatican II, a parish community reveals who God is to the world. What do your parish communication tools tell the world about God?
- ♦ Do your communication efforts show that you care?
(If you don't care, how can you expect parishioners to care?)

Don't just pull something from last year or another source without reviewing and updating it.

Proofread!

1. Don't rely solely on spell check.
2. Read forward and then backward. Mistakes are easier to spot when you start at the bottom of the page and just read the words from right to left instead of reading sentences.
3. Read out loud. Mistakes jump out when you read the words out loud.
4. Proof from a paper copy, not on the computer screen. Mistakes are easier to spot on a printed page.
5. Be sure to proof headlines, captions, and other stand-alone text.
6. Double check all numbers – dates, phone numbers, times, and addresses.
7. Proof again after you have made a correction.



Communicating Stewardship In Your Bulletin

Weekly:

- ◆ Weekly stewardship bulletin reflections. www.archstl.org/stewardship/whatis/inserts.
- ◆ Weekly ministry highlight.
- ◆ Report on gifts given (Offertory) and bills paid.
Be sure to include Electronic Offertory gifts in the report.
- ◆ Children's stewardship column – a report on the time, talent and treasure kids give through their Offertory envelopes.

Monthly:

- ◆ Monthly tithing question. www.archstl.org/stewardship/whatis/faqs.
- ◆ Monthly stewardship witness from a Parish Council member.
- ◆ Year-to-date budget update.

Quarterly:

- ◆ Tithing report, if the parish is tithing part of its income to other organizations.
- ◆ Update and reminder on stewardship pledging, comparing actual to pledged.

Periodic:

- ◆ Periodic filler columns on stewardship. www.archstl.org/stewardship/whatis/articles.
- ◆ Reminders to remember the parish in your will and other planned giving vehicles.
- ◆ References to stewardship in the pastor's column.
- ◆ Notes of appreciation for gifts given.
- ◆ Want ads – Opportunities to give time or talent.



Your Web Site As A Communications and Development Tool

The Facts

For Offline Giving

- 65% of donors now say they usually check out an organization's web site before making a gift.
- 40% of donors say they will not make a gift until they check out the organization's web site.

For Online Giving

- In 2004, more than 12% of donors made their gifts online.
- The number of online donors increased 58% last year.

Steps to Success

Communicate on the Web

- Make sure your web site includes all the basic information a donor might want – phone numbers, directions, dates and events, etc.
- Make sure all communications messages are on the web.
- Have an updated annual report on the web.
- Educate your donors about the information they can find on your web.
- If mailing the annual report is too expensive, put it on the web. Then mail all donors an announcement that they can access the report on the web.

Encourage Offline Giving on the Web

- *Tell potential donors how to give offline.*
- Consider including a downloadable Word document giving form (similar to your giving envelope) that a donor can print off, complete and mail back to you.
(**Alumni identification form, too!**)

Encourage Online Giving with the Archdiocesan USBank Link

Collect Email Addresses through Your Web Site



Starting A Stewardship Newsletter

Benefits of Newsletter

1. Parishioners will often read this new form of communication even if they have become bored with the bulletin.
2. A stewardship newsletter shows that the parish is serious about stewardship.
3. A stewardship newsletter keeps the concepts of stewardship before all parishioners and extends a regular invitation to parishioners to make a stewardship commitment.
4. A stewardship newsletter could be mailed to all homes showing even those who do not attend Mass regularly that great things are happening in your parish and that your parish wants them to be involved.
5. Living a life of stewardship is a constant challenge. A stewardship newsletter can support parishioners in their journey and acknowledge the efforts made by all parishioners.

What to Include

- ✦ Several short articles that will draw the reader in, such as “Quick Facts,” “Did You Know,” “Here’s A Tip,” etc.
- ✦ Pictures of parishioners giving time and talent.
- ✦ Expanded profiles of parish organizations.
- ✦ Stewardship related drawings from the grade school students.
- ✦ More in-depth reflection on stewardship scripture quotes.
- ✦ Comments from parishioners regarding stewardship.
- ✦ More in-depth profiles of parishioners who are living stewardship. Include thoughts from those who have taken on leadership roles, those who give above and beyond tuition, those who have been consistent in sharing time and talent for many years and those who have remembered the parish in their wills or other planned giving. (Basically published lay witness talks)
- ✦ An ongoing history of the parish with the role stewardship has played throughout various stages of the parish’s growth and development.
- ✦ Story of the stewardship of your parish’s patron saint.
- ✦ A quarterly book review or reading list – concentrating on books that call us to live our faith more fully.



- ✦ Details and reports on the stewardship educational program – especially new initiatives that have come about because of someone’s new gift of time or talent or because of comments written on stewardship intention cards.
- ✦ Letter from pastor or other staff. (Only one letter per 4 pages of newsletter!)
- ✦ A report from the Stewardship Chairperson on the current activities of the stewardship committee.
- ✦ Detailed information on how to make planned gifts, such as will bequests, trusts and gift annuities to the parish. For assistance in writing this kind of material contact the Planned Giving Department of the Office of Stewardship and Development at 314-792-7212.

Where to Start

- ✦ Search for creative volunteers with communications, writing, graphic design, photography and desktop publishing skills. (Web design, too, if you want to post your newsletter on your web site.) Invite them to join the “Communications Ministry.”
- ✦ Find one volunteer to serve as editor.
- ✦ Create a standard template and columns so you are not starting over with each issue.
- ✦ Start folders for each standard column so that you can regularly collect story information.
- ✦ If budget is a problem, look for a parishioner or small business to donate printing or underwrite the cost of the printing.
- ✦ Start out small. Four pages is adequate for starting.
- ✦ Make mailing a priority in your planning.
- ✦ If postage costs is a concern, try to plan your newsletters so that they can be combined with other mailings. For example:
 - ◆ January – Winter newsletter with your parish giving statements
 - ◆ April – Spring newsletter with Easter or picnic mailing
 - ◆ July – Summer newsletter with back to school information
 - ◆ October – Fall newsletter with Annual Stewardship report
- ✦ Quarterly is a good goal, but if once or twice a year is more realistic start there.
- ✦ As interest and support grows you may expand to eight pages and or every other month, but never let the newsletter become a burden to staff, volunteers or readers.



Creating Mission-Based Communications

The Mission

St. Joseph School is a Catholic community dedicated to serving students and parishioners. Our purpose is the spiritual, intellectual, physical and social development of our students in a Christian value-based environment. The school strives to achieve educational excellence through school-home partnerships which recognize parents as their children's first and most influential teachers. The goal is that our students are confident, life long learners who are prepared in daily life and are prepared for future educational and career endeavors and for lives of stewardship.

Newsletter Features

Serving Our Parishioners – Students helping with parish activities, parish use of school

Spiritual Development of Students – Sacramental preparation, liturgy and prayer

Intellectual Development of Students – New textbooks, science lab, mentor program

Physical Development of Students – Need for new playground/gym equipment

Social Development of Students – Recess schedule, big brothers/sisters program

Educational Excellence – Testing results, teacher certifications

Parents As Teachers – Homework hotline, parenting info, parent-teacher conferences

Looking to the Future – Career day, “Students want to be...,” high school news, alums

Future Stewards – Service projects, children’s envelopes, Student Council



Determining Your Communications Plan

1. Begin files for all seven major messages.
2. Determine which parish communications vehicles will be used for which messages.
3. Plan to incorporate the following:
 - ✓ Weekly stewardship scripture reflections
 - ✓ Monthly stewardship lay witness from a parish leader
 - ✓ Weekly highlight of a parish organization
 - ✓ Periodic bulletin articles on various aspects of stewardship and development
 - ✓ Weekly offertory reflections
4. Determine a timeline for integrating the right messages into the right vehicle.
5. **Schedule and plan your communication contributions!**
6. Plan a meeting with parish leadership if issues of quality, consistent message, tag line (branding) etc. need to be addressed.
7. Begin efforts to introduce new communications vehicles as needed.



Your Communications Grid

Message/ Medium	The Stewardship Message	Vision & Goals	Achievements/ Accomplishments	Appreciation	Finances	Needs	Ways to Help
Weekly Bulletin							
Parish newsletter							
Annual and/or quarterly reports							
Special Brochures							
Time and Talent catalog							
Bulletin boards							
Letters to the home							
School newsletter							
Senior Citizen newsletter							
Welcome packet							
Segmented letters for special groups							



Message/ Medium	The Stewardship Message	Vision & Goals	Achievements/ Accomplishments	Appreciation	Finances	Needs	Ways to Help
Outdoor parish sign							
Posters, small displays and signs							
Stewardship information table in the back of church							
Materials available in the parish library or pamphlet room							
Informational meetings							
Booths at the Festival of Ministries							
Pulpit talks or announcements by parishioners							
Personal visits							
Phone calls							
Stories in the local media							
E-mail							
Web site							
Video							
Give-Aways							



The Annual Report

Why?

- ◆ Accountability (*75% of parishioners want more accountability*)
- ◆ US Catholic Bishops call for it
"These reports should be prepared in a manner that promotes understanding of the relationship between the ministries of the Church and the financial affairs of the parish..." - Stewardship and Development in Catholic Dioceses and Parishes Resource Manual
- ◆ A celebration of all that has been accomplished
- ◆ Powerful communications tool
- ◆ Engenders trust
- ◆ Creates a sense of community
- ◆ Honors parishioner giving
- ◆ *"As the level of their giving increases, parishioners become more concerned about how church leaders are spending this significant amount of money."*
- Fr. Joseph Champlin, **Sustaining and Strengthening Stewardship**

What to Include? (*The Seven Communications Messages!*)

- ◆ A Theme – Particularly if one has been used throughout the year
- ◆ A Spiritual Dimension
- ◆ The Financial Report
- ◆ Explanation of Financial Report
 - ✓ Big expenses
 - ✓ Comparison to previous years
 - ✓ Per child school subsidy
 - ✓ Cost per parishioner
 - ✓ Major concerns or trends
- ◆ A Letter from the Pastor - *Most frequently read part of report*
 - ✓ Tell the story of the year
 - ✓ Highlight the Mission or Vision
 - ✓ Give thanks



- ◆ Your Parish Mission or Vision
- ◆ Achievements and Accomplishments of the Past Year
- ◆ A Facilities Report
- ◆ A Summary of All Major Fundraising Activities and the Dollars Raised
- ◆ A Listing of All Parish Organizations and Ministries and the Number of People Involved or A Commission Report from Each Commission.
- ◆ A Statistics Report (Status Animarum) - # of Baptisms, Marriages, Funerals, First Communions, Confirmations, Students in School and PSR, families in parish, total parishioners, new families, etc.
- ◆ An Offertory Report – envelopes used, average gift, % pledging, etc.
- ◆ A Tithing Report (if your parish tithes to other needy groups)
- ◆ A Report on the Endowment Fund
- ◆ A Listing of Planned Gifts or Members of Your Planned Giving Society
- ◆ A Listing of Memorial Gifts
- ◆ Quotes from parishioners about what the parish means to them or why they feel called to be involved.
- ◆ Key Personnel – Staff and Leadership Team Members (Parish Council, Finance Council, Stewardship Committee)
- ◆ People Photos of Parishioners Being Involved in the Parish

Do Not Include

- ◆ History of Parish
- ◆ Old news from previous years
- ◆ Standard pictures – pastor, church front, etc.
- ◆ Extensive future plans



Who Is Responsible?

- ◆ IT MUST BE A TEAM EFFORT!!
- ◆ Pastor
- ◆ Parish Council
- ◆ Stewardship Committee
- ◆ Finance Committee
- ◆ Parish Staff

What Do You Do with It?

- ◆ Release it as close to end of fiscal year and Stewardship Sunday as possible – *(Ideally 2nd Sunday of September. Not Labor Day weekend!)*
- ◆ Mail it, along with a cover letter from the pastor, to every family (or all donors, or all members of your Planned Giving Society)
- ◆ If distributing it at a weekend Mass, have the pastor speak about it.
- ◆ Display it with pride and prominence at the back of church.
- ◆ Make it available at other places where parishioners gather:
 - ✓ In the gym
 - ✓ At school
 - ✓ Bride's Room
 - ✓ At the monthly "Coffee and Doughnuts" Sunday
 - ✓ At your Festival of Ministries
- ◆ Distribute it at monthly meetings of your major organizations.
- ◆ Include copies of it in your new parishioner welcoming packets.
- ◆ Keep copies in your pamphlet room or vestibule.
- ◆ Send it home to school and PSR families through the students.
- ◆ Post all or parts of it on your parish web site.