

Lutheran Open House

Five Essential Steps of Effective Church Communications

Step #1: INVITE

Task: To invite people; to simply get them into the church or to attend a church-involved or sponsored activity. Your communications don't have to do or explain too much, just get folks there.

Communications that invite people to your church include: business and invitation cards, postcards, flyers, door-hangers, direct mail, outreach oriented parts of your website. Developing a logo and identity package is often a foundational step here.

Step #2: INFORM

Task: once you get people there, you need to inform people in complete, clear, and caring ways what is going on at the worship or church event they are attending and what else is going on in the church and what Lutherans believe.

Communications that inform people include: church bulletins, PowerPoint presentations, introductory brochures, communication with visitors, and visitor packets all fit in here. Your visitor package can include such things as a New Testament, leaflet version of Luther's Small Catechism, a brochure about the church, the pastor's business card and a letter of welcome. You can also direct people to various sections (youth, children's, singles' and similar sections) on your website.

Additional notes about this step: This step is incredibly important because studies show approximately 70 percent of people who visit our churches do not return and the communications we give folks when they visit has a lot to do with this. (Often, the first piece of Christian literature an unchurched person sees is your church bulletin—and what does it say to them?) In addition, typically, most church communication drops off considerably after this step, and this is where we should just be getting started in developing a continuing relationship with people.

Step #3: INCLUDE

Task: For people to grow in the faith, they need to be included in more than Sunday morning. It is vital, if people are to mature, that the church communications actively include them in more than the worship service. At this step the church communications shifts from primarily external-focused communications to internal communications. The most deadly phrase that can kill off communications at this point is: "Oh, everybody knows." They don't. To get your people growing, you have to continuously communicate to them what the church office and staff knows.

Communications that include people consist of: the overall church newsletter and ministry brochures that take people to the next step of involvement; PR for small groups, maps, small group descriptions; communications with the intentional purpose of moving people into activities in addition to worship service attendance are important here. Web supported calendars, reminder e-mails, web-based explanations of programs and PR are also important here.

Step #4: INSTRUCT

Task: Once you get them to an event outside Sunday morning, you need to teach them something if they are to grow in their Christian life. People do not grow up in the faith and to become mature disciples without intentional training. This is where Luther's Small Catechism and adult

instruction classes are valuable. An inexpensive leaflet version is available from Concordia Publishing House through Augsburg Fortress Canada.

Communications that instruct people include: the Small Catechism, Bible class outlines, adult instruction/inquirer's materials, take-home study guides, list of verses, memory verse card materials, quizzes, adult and youth Sunday School curricula, teaching handouts; web-based in-depth discussion guides, Lutheran reference materials, referral articles; web blogs on important topics, Lutheran discussion rooms, question opportunities.

Step #5: INSPIRE

Task: Communication at this step goes beyond the "feel good" aspects of inspiration to inspire people with a passion to reach out to a lost world and to live lives of unselfish devotion to Jesus. These communications include things like the brochures, web entries, lists and flyers that form the tangible, touchable, communication of how to help at the local street mission, the list of what is needed at the women's centre, and the schedule for the Habitat build. These inspiration with action.

Communications that inspire include: Brochures that explain mission and outreach opportunities, that clarify qualifications and training. They can also include things like a refrigerator magnet created by and given to class members from a Sunday School class teacher that reminds them every time they open the refrigerator: "Only one life will soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last." Web-based ministry opportunities and links also fit in here.

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