

# Effective Communication: A Guide for Congregations

## Bulletin Boards

### General Guidelines

- Hang bulletin boards and posters in well-lit areas. Choose a spot where everybody goes by, but out of heavy traffic patterns so people can stop and read without impeding others.
- If you want a bulletin board in the narthex and it's dim, install a spotlight that will shine on it.
- Get a 5'2" person who wears bifocals to choose the height.
- Assign a person or committee to make sure notices are removed as soon as events take place, and to oversee the "clutter factor."

### Ideas for Narthex (and Other) Bulletin Boards

The theory behind all these boards is this: People identify with people, not with places or things. The more faces and names you display as being involved in your congregation, the more chance visitors or inactive members have of seeing someone with whom they can identify.

#### **"I Am the Vine and You Are the Branches"** -

Cut "vines" out of green construction paper. Twine all over the bulletin board and even off onto wall space. Cut up an old copy of the church pictorial directory; attach the pictures all over the branches. Finish off with a hand-lettered sign with the Biblical quotation.

**"Once Upon a Time"** - Take pictures of all present congregation council and staff. Collect baby photos from each as well. Buy an odd lot of wallpaper or use leftover stuff to drape at odd angles over the bulletin board to give the impression of an old wall. Without putting holes in the baby pictures, hang them randomly on the wall, with a number on each. Give members of the congregation about four Sundays to submit their guesses as to who is who. It helps to post a list of present council and staff whose photos are included. After all entries have been submitted, hang the present pictures on an adjacent board, and connect the old and new pictures by means of draped yarn or ribbon. Award a church-related prize (like a church hot plate) to the winner.

**"Calendar Frame"** - Set up a permanent bulletin board in a prominent location where there's lots of

traffic. Have one person (probably with some talent in art) take responsibility for maintaining the board. Use one or two large pieces of poster board. Cut out small squares going down the left, aligned with larger rectangles on the right -- you'll probably get about four sets per piece of board. Use the small squares for simple line drawings or other graphic representations of upcoming church events, which are then written up, very briefly, in the corresponding rectangle to the right. Update this board frequently, and keep moving events up in the frame as they get closer. The best way to put them in the frame is from the back, so that they can then be removed easily without leaving tape marks.

**"Welcome Back to Sunday School"** - Several weeks before the start of the new Sunday school year, hang a bulletin board showing who's teaching what. The best way is to take "head and shoulders" shots of individual teachers at their first planning meeting. Use a large sheet of poster board on which you've traced the appropriate number of ovals. (An Easter egg cookie cutter works well, or you might use a biscuit cutter.) Use an X-acto knife to cut the ovals out. Without cutting the actual pictures, simply center each in one of the cut-outs and tape it from the back. Use rubber cement to fasten the teachers' names and grades under the pictures. (Rubber cement means they can be pulled off without damage later.) Attach the year's theme and/or logo with cement so that the whole frame can be reused next year

**"Spotlight on ..."** - Set aside one bulletin board for use as a permanent "Spotlight" board. Identify various groups within the congregation which you want to spotlight, then set up a schedule to rotate them onto the board, perhaps teaming up various groups with specific events or appropriate times of the year. (E.g., Memorial Gifts Committee board at Christmas time to encourage people to give to the church as an "alternative" Christmas gift.) Have someone not on the spotlighted group make the bulletin board -- those not involved have a better perception of what others might like to know about the group. Have bulletin board makers contact the scheduled groups for assistance with providing pictures or information, however.

**"Our Members in the News"** - Stencil a piece of poster board with that heading and hang it up. Have one or two members of the church whose permanent job it is to scan local newspapers and

magazines for mentions of church members and friends. As items appear, highlight the appropriate name with marker and hang on the poster. As with all bulletin boards, change items frequently to keep people coming back to look!

**"Getting To Know You"** - Use this approach with confirmands, new member classes, etc. Take "head and shoulders" shots of each confirmand (or whoever). Use the same technique to prepare a poster board as described in "Welcome Back to Sunday School" so that the board can be reused with each group that comes along. Leave more room between cut-outs on this board, however, and do a brief write-up of the people involved. An easy way to approach this is to do a survey sheet to be distributed to each person. (Sample items for new members: birthplace, hobbies, job, neighborhood, why they joined church, etc.) Set the items up in the same survey format for presentation on the board, thus eliminating the need for a lot of rewriting.

**Project or Event Sign-up** - When your congregation is asking for a major commitment from its members, try to represent their involvement visually as a way of acknowledging their contribution and encouraging others to sign up. For instance, when asking for people to commit themselves to "New Ventures in Bible Reading," construct a large Bible from construction paper and hang on the bulletin board. As each person signs up, have him or her write his/her name on a bookmark and place it in the Bible so that it's visible. When seeking volunteers for a work day, draw the church's outline on poster board. As each one volunteers, the put name on a paint brush, mop or rake and hang it on the church picture.

## More than just bulletin boards

### Church Council Project

This is an example of how several public relations approaches can be coordinated within a single project. The purpose of this project is to acquaint church members and visitors with their elected leadership, to educate them about how the church works, to give them an easy way to make connections with concerns or questions, and to celebrate the commitment the council members have displayed.

**Groundwork:** Take "head and shoulders" shots of each council member. Distribute survey forms

which ask not only for background about each, but also for information about the work group to which he/she is assigned. Ask someone with writing skills to go through the completed forms and either write the information in paragraphs or edit the information to be published in survey form.

**Nametags:** Use a computer or a calligrapher to generate permanent council member nametags, showing the person's name and work group to which he/she relates. The nametags should be stored somewhere, perhaps in council mailboxes, to be worn each time the member is in the building. (You'll be amazed at the number of people who will come up with a question for a person with a nametag!)

**Newsletter:** Divide the council into groups of three or four. Run the finished write-ups (see "Groundwork") and appropriate pictures over the course of several newsletters.

**Bulletin board:** Set up a more-or-less permanent bulletin board with pictures of council members and their write-ups. You may or may not want to include council members' phone numbers and e-mail addresses in the display, but definitely include the work groups to which they relate and information about when and where the work groups meet.

(Special thanks to the Delaware-Maryland Synod for sharing these creative ideas for bulletin boards)

