

Tips and tricks for making your bulletin more **dynamic and welcoming**

Amid the challenges and changes of the COVID-19 pandemic, one constant remains: The weekly bulletin. In addition to making bulletins electronically available, we can also make them more effective, especially for visitors who are returning to Mass after the pandemic. Updating our bulletins, especially with the audience in mind, is a concrete way we can “welcome the stranger” in parish life. Here are some ideas to consider for the weekly bulletin:

Cover: What does your cover look like? This is the first thing people see when looking at your weekly bulletin. It’s not a book. It doesn’t require a fancy or full-page graphic. Consider a welcoming message. This will make everyone, especially visitors and those who stumble upon your weekly bulletin, feel more at home and welcome. How can you, using your weekly bulletin cover, invite everyone to come meet Jesus?

First inside right page:

This is the second most important page of the bulletin. Most people have a natural inclination for their eyes to drift here. This is where the most important information should go. But DON’T OVERWHELM PEOPLE! If there is too much on the page, people will ignore it. What is important is different to each community. The most important things found in your weekly bulletin should go here. Is it the Mass schedule? The calendar? The collection information? The prayer chain?

Weekly bulletins need to breathe:

Margins and space are a bulletin editor’s friend. They allow the pages of the bulletin to look clean. White space makes it easier on the eye to read.

Be consistent:

Once you discern what goes where in the weekly bulletin, things that appear each week should always be found in the same space.

Parish staff: Consider NOT listing the parish staff on the cover. While who does what in official capacities at the parish is important information, this does not necessarily need to be on the cover or on the first inside right page.

Discern and discriminate:

This can be hard. Not every event is as important as the next. Not every bake sale is bulletin worthy. Space is limited. It is not possible for everything to make the cut.

Consider giving some or all the pages headings and names:

For example: “How can we help you?” at the top of the page that has the list of parish staff or “Stewardship of time, talent and treasure” at the top of the page with minister schedules, finances and so forth.

The power of story and color:

The bulletin also can be a tool of evangelization and community building. When we promote our parish life not just through events, but also through the stories of how they bring people closer to God, we have a more effective outreach. Consider asking ministers and parishioners to share first-hand about why a certain ministry/festival/fundraiser matters to them. Include a color photo of them; the more we connect names and faces, the more a parish will feel like a family.

The 5 Ws: When posting news and events, answer “who, what, when, where and why.” Give enough information for people to want to know more. Hold back details that people can learn later.

Fonts: The weekly bulletin should be easy on the eyes. Consider only using two fonts: one for headlines and one for text. Make sure the print size is large enough. Nothing stops a reader faster than print that is hard to read.

Where are you? Make sure the physical address of the church, phone number, fax number, parish email address, parish website address, parish Facebook page, parish Twitter account and every other social media used is listed in the bulletin. Young people will usually look for this information first.

Proofread, proofread, proofread:

Consider having at least two sets of eyes revise the bulletin before publication. No parish community’s office and staff should appear foolish because there are mistakes in the weekly bulletin. Masses and events found in the weekly bulletin may have a significance to a parish member that no one else knows. A mistake in information, no matter how simple, can unintentionally cause great offense.