

St Mark's Communication Policy

Please note:

This is intended as a working document to aid in structured communications within, and on behalf of, St Mark's.

This policy has been created by a communications committee of the PCC. Please provide any comments or feedback to David Calvert, Churchwarden.

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Introduction

Our mission as a Church is to be a community of believers in Jesus Christ who are devoted to: loving God, loving others, making new disciples.

As an evangelical church seeking to reach out to each other and to the local community, communication is vital to our mission. How can we love each other and bring people into the Church if we cannot communicate effectively?

Both within St Mark's and in reaching out, communication has to be accurate, timely and relevant, demonstrating transparency and honesty. Active listening and a willingness to enter into dialogue with others is an important part of effective communication and should help us build relationships and engender a sense of community, trust, and belonging.

It is important that we speak effectively, consistently and clearly to the wider world. Using appropriate channels to meet people where they are, we should be as accessible as possible to the parish and wider Leamington community. This is particularly vital for those who are not of a Church background or who may be wary of 'the Church' as an institution.

Where 'corporate' communication for Church activities or structures is concerned, responsibility is held by the Vicar and the Churchwardens, with support from the Administrator(s) and appointed volunteers.

However, it is important to remember that while consistency and an overview is invaluable, the effectiveness of our communication is not solely the responsibility of one person or team. In personal terms we all communicate, we all represent St Mark's, and we are all responsible for the quality of that communication.

This document is designed to help guide those responsible for corporate communication at St Mark's, and help those in the St Mark's congregation to understand the processes and structures involved.

Aims

1. To improve the quality and consistency of communication both within St Mark's, and between St Mark's and the local community.
2. To use this improved communication to:
 - Increase a sense of belonging to, and engagement with, St Mark's
 - Encourage dialogue and engagement with and from the local community

Overview

What do we want to communicate?

We want members of the congregation to know what is going on in their Church, to feel part of a community, and to be able to make an informed decision on what they may, or may not, wish to be involved in.

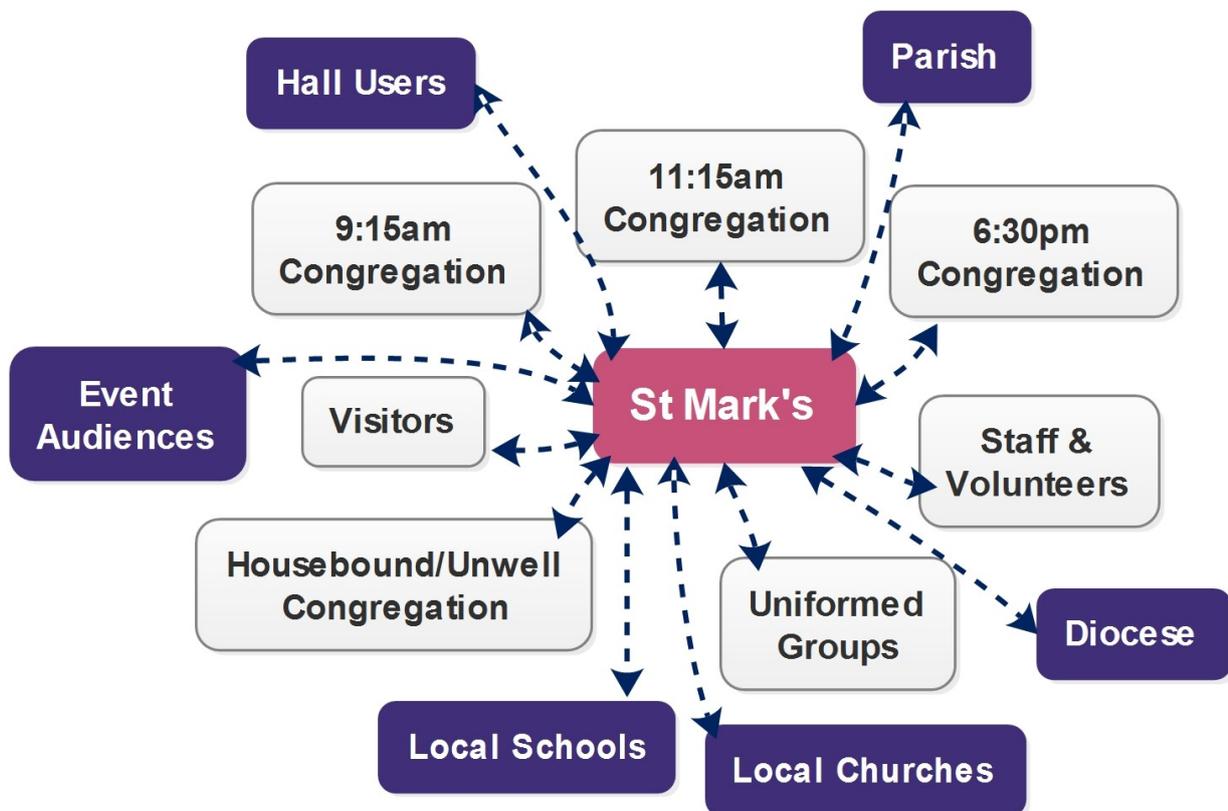
We want those outside the Church to not just be aware of St Mark's, but to feel able to engage with us.

In broad terms, whether individually or corporately, everything boils down to:

- Who we are
 - Where we are
 - What we believe
- AND
- What we are doing
 - Why we are doing it
 - What you can do
 - How we can help
 - How you can help

Who should we be communicating with?

Within these elements there will of course be a number of sub groups and audiences, but broadly speaking:



How do we communicate?

Who is responsible?

The Vicar has overall responsibility for corporate communications, assisted by the Churchwardens. However, tasks may be delegated on a day to day basis to those managing the various communication channels (see table below).

In order to keep a joined up and consistent approach, all formal communication for the wider congregation and the parish should pass through the Church Office. This does not mean the Administrator(s) must deal with each item personally, as often it will require someone else's assistance or fall under another person's remit, but it does enable a wider and more joined up view of the situation to be taken.

Similarly, if you are asked to share information through one channel, i.e. to put something on a notice board you are responsible for, then think about who else might need to know about it, or where else it could go to have added reach, e.g. the St Mark's website or the notice sheet. If in doubt, speak to the Administrator(s).

Methods

Structured communication channels at St Marks are summarised below. The information should help you choose where your message should be communicated and who to contact.

It's important to remember that people are busy, have different preferences for communicating, and won't see every message. Don't rely on one single channel, and it is best to present information more than once, or it is easily missed.

As an example, a poster at the back of Church will only be seen by the morning congregations and visitors to the Church itself. The evening congregation and mid-week visitors come in via the hall and would therefore miss the message.

Channel	Who for?	What for?	Contact
Internal			
Email lists Used as required	Staff and volunteers, St Mark's members	Internal communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urgent messages • Sharing documents • Addressing specific groups 	Administrator(s)
Notice sheet Produced weekly	Congregations and visitors, plus those on email list	What's happening this week and what should people look out for soon? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upcoming services • Church community news and calls to action • Upcoming events • Prayer diary 	Administrator(s) Information to be sent to the office by Wednesday
In-service notices	Congregations and visitors	'Top priority' this week <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Not to be missed' information or calls to action for the congregation • Something that the organiser can speak well/enthusiastically about 	Vicar/Wardens To be agreed before services
Notices on screen before services (3-4 rotating) Monitored weekly	Congregations and visitors	Weekday and social activities, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and families • FIRS lunch • Food bank • Key upcoming events • Information about the Church 	Administrator(s) Information to be sent to the office by Wednesday

Channel	Who for?	What for?	Who's responsible?
<p>Notice boards in Church</p> <p>Checked monthly for out of date information</p>	<p>Morning congregations, visitors, event audiences</p>	<p>Who does what, what's happening, how can people get involved?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome • Staff team • Children's work • Youth work • Mission • Resources • Uniformed groups • Small groups • Diocese • Rotas • PCC minutes • Vision 	<p>Administrator(s), Wardens, or Activity Leaders</p>
Internal Plus Wider Community			
<p>Website</p> <p>Medium to long term information</p>	<p>Congregations, visitors, event audiences, local residents, anyone looking for information on the Church and facilities</p>	<p>A reference point</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More detailed information than can be squeezed onto posters/notice sheet/social media – a place to link to for finding out more • Who we are and what we do • Longer term 'reference' information • Weekly notice sheet is also displayed here 	<p>Hannah Reese</p>
<p>Facebook</p> <p>Updated at least once per week.</p>	<p>Congregation past and present, visitors, event audiences, local residents, anyone looking for information on the Church and facilities</p>	<p>Become 'friends' with St Mark's, get updates in your news feed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This week's services • Upcoming events • News suitable for external audience (i.e. not personal /confidential) • Friendly reminders • Calls to action • Photos 	<p>Hannah Reese</p>
<p>Twitter</p> <p>Updated at least once per week.</p>	<p>Congregation past and present, visitors, event audiences, local residents, local churches and organisations</p>	<p>We are here in your town (joining the conversation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upcoming services • Upcoming events/activities • Sharing information with other churches and local organisations 	<p>Hannah Reese</p>
<p>Notice boards inside and outside the hall</p> <p>Service notices updated weekly, others checked monthly</p>	<p>Evening congregation, hall users, visitors to the office</p>	<p>What's going on in and around the community?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular events/activities in the hall • Upcoming St Mark's services • Upcoming events • Local services and resources 	<p>Administrator(s)</p>
<p>Notice boards outside the Church</p> <p>Updated weekly</p>	<p>Local residents and visitors</p>	<p>We are your local Church</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunday services • Upcoming events • Thought provoking items 	<p>Administrator(s)</p>
<p>Leaflets to the parish</p> <p>Occasional</p>	<p>Local residents</p>	<p>Festivals and holy days</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special events in the church calendar 	<p>Vicar and the Communications Team</p>

How can we be more effective?

Select the most appropriate channel(s)

Is the message for everyone, or just a specific group of people? Does it contain anything that shouldn't be circulated outside of the St Mark's community?

Is the information relevant at this time, i.e. is it too early for people to think about yet other than to save the date, or is it getting closer to an event and people might need reminding?

Is it a time sensitive message/call to action, or longer term reference information?

Quality and consistency

Communications will happen on all sorts of levels and not all require you to be Shakespeare. But it is important that everything is checked for grammar, spelling, and formatting, or you may create a negative impression.

We want to be open and friendly, and to communicate clearly, but we don't want to appear to be careless or unprofessional, as this does not inspire trust.

Be clear, be concise, and be authentic. Use language that everyone will understand. Many people don't have a long background of being part of a Church and, for example, may not know where they can find 'the notice board in the Baptistry', or which entrance is the 'South Door'.

We do not have a paid communications team, but we do have people with skills to help. If you're not sure how to design a poster, or how to write information for the website, then please do ask the Administrator(s), who may be able to put you in contact with someone who can help. It may be possible for you to provide the necessary information and let someone else do it for you.

No designed and printed items for the purpose of representing St Mark's externally should go anywhere unless they have been: a) checked by several pairs of eyes, b) signed off by the Vicar, or in his absence a Churchwarden.

Keep it simple

St Mark's does not have a 'brand' in the full marketing sense of the word, but it is important to keep things simple. There is no need to over complicate either the information, or the design in which it might be presented.

Any design should bear in mind that:

- The Church of England logo is usually portrayed in a light purple
- Arial is the preferred font; it is best not to mix fonts on one document
- One or two key colours may be used if they pick up the design, but keep it simple and make sure it clearly gets across the message you are trying to send
- White space is good
- Shorter sentences are best. If a sentence is more than 20 words it is probably too long. Bullets work particularly well on posters or something which will be read quickly

What should all formal communications contain?

Everything that someone needs to make a response to, or a decision based on, your message.

Asking people to ring for more information can be frustrating to some when they have looked at your message/notice/web page in order to find out what they want to know. If possible, keep any need to go elsewhere to a minimum.

Publicity items or calls to action should always include:

- Title
- Short description – this should convey
 - What is it?
 - Why is it?
 - Who is it for?
- Date, time, location or deadline?
- Any costs?
- Contact details or links to a website for more information (if required)

Printed items

Anything to be printed should first be checked by several pairs of eyes. It is very easy to miss something when you are too close to the information. Always ask someone else to check it through to see if they understand it easily, and to spot if anything is missing or out of place.

Printed items, for example leaflets to the parish, should provide the reader with all the necessary information (correct at time of printing), but it is a good idea to back it up with links back to other St Mark's channels for further/latest information. This might also encourage engagement past the date of the original event.

So, as well as the list above, wherever possible also include:

- Contact details for more information
 - Website
 - Email
 - Tel
 - Facebook
 - Twitter

Advertising external events

These might be visiting choirs or orchestras, events organised by local churches, or information on things happening in the diocese.

Do the organisers have publicity materials we can use, i.e. posters, flyers, a website for tickets, a Facebook page or twitter account for more information that we can reference in our communication about the event? It's best not to 'reinvent the wheel', so where possible use their resources.

St Mark's does not advertise commercial business events.

Interpersonal communication

Think about the intended audience and choose your approach accordingly. Could an email be misinterpreted, or does a sensitive topic need a personal approach?

Would a phone call be quicker and more useful than emailing back and forth?

Be authentic and willing to listen.

Two-way communication between the congregation and those in leadership should be encouraged. Church members should be made aware that they can (confidentially if needed) contact the Vicar, Churchwardens, staff, or members of the PCC on any issue, and it will be considered.

Staff, PCC, and Wardens' details (names and photos) should be clearly displayed at the back of Church and on the St Mark's website.

How can you have input into St Mark's?

If you want to make a comment or suggestion:

- Speak to one of the leadership team, drop a note in the 'office' box at the back of Church, or contact the office directly

If you are concerned about an issue at St Mark's (or something you have heard), and want to discuss it or find out more:

- Speak to the Vicar or a Churchwarden

If you want input into major decisions on the running of St Marks:

- Stand for the PCC at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM), held in April each year

Appendix

Communication team activities, Jan 2015 to date:

Notice boards

A review of the location and content of all boards has been done. David Calvert is now working to identify the 'owners' of each board so that updates can be made to improve content and locations, and to monitor their use more effectively.

Notice sheet

Samples for a new layout have been created to make this easier to produce and clearer to read. These were circulated to the Vicar and Wardens. In the meantime, Amanda di Giovanni has tidied up/simplified the current format to make it easier to read.

A survey of the congregation was conducted in May and a mailing list has been created for those who would rather receive the notice sheet by email on a weekly basis. This is managed by the Administrator(s) and sent out every Friday.

The notice sheet is also being posted each Friday on the 'About Us' section of St Mark's website, with a link to it on the home page.

Rolling screens

An audit of items on the rolling screens was done over several Sundays. The number of items appearing has been reduced to avoid overload, and this is being monitored by Amanda di Giovanni as an Administrator.

Printing facilities

St Mark's has one A4 printer in the Office. Although it does print in colour, it uses a lot of ink/toner. An A3 facility would significantly help with producing posters and other publicity materials. This is to be raised with the PCC.

Website

Paul Mileham had very kindly managed this for a number of years but has now moved away from Leamington. A handover meeting was held with Hannah Reese, Tim Rodham, and David Calvert (in his capacity as Churchwarden) to smooth the transition over the summer. Content has been updated on many of the pages and the menus have been re-ordered to try to improve the navigation for visitors.

In the long term it was agreed by the PCC communications team that St Mark's should use this opportunity to undertake a complete refresh of the site. Tim Rodham (a freelance web designer) has offered to assist with this, with Hannah Reese (a senior marketing officer at the University of Warwick) and possibly others assisting on content. However a budget will need to be set for the technical work. This is to be raised with the PCC.

It has also been suggested that the adding of forms and fee details for things such as hall hire, booking of weddings and baptisms etc would cut down on calls to the office. This has now been done for room hire, but information for weddings etc is still to be finalised.

Social media

Accounts for St Mark's were set up on Twitter and Facebook a few years ago but had not been used in quite some time. Hannah Reese agreed to take these on from April.

On Facebook, the St Mark's page is now being actively followed by 135 people, and posts are seen by an average of 125 people per week. Notices, photos, reminders about Sunday's services etc, are posted approximately twice a week to ensure the page (and the Church) looks active and up to date.

On Twitter, St Mark's has 83 regular followers, including other Churches in Leamington and Warwick, and local organisations such as Myton Hospice, Street Pastors, CPAS, the Children's Society etc. Items posted are only those suitable for external circulation, such as service times, events, and courses running at St Mark's or in association with St Marks, that the wider community might consider attending. It is also used for the sharing of information from other Churches, which is reciprocated – e.g. during the Hope Mission.

Posts have been retweeted in recent months by: All Saints, Dale Street Baptist, Warwick Methodists, Leamington Courier, Myton Hospice, District Councillors, All Things Leamington, Warwick Choristers, and various individuals.