



Communication Manual

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SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

In every organization, effective communication is a vital factor for success. Churches are no different in this respect. Kirk in the Hills constantly seeks to maintain and improve a comprehensive system of communication to enhance our effectiveness as a faith environment. For initiatives to be successful, the Kirk's committees, departments, and programs must be connected to their ideal audiences through the communication methods that are available to the Kirk.

Communications are directed toward two different audiences:

- Members of the congregation, leaders, and recognized Kirk groups (i.e., internally directed)
- the community at large and outside organizations (i.e., externally directed).

To reach these audiences, the Kirk uses several primary modes of communication, including but not limited to:

- kirkinthehills.org
- @the-Kirk
- Bulletin Inserts
- Congregational Mailings
- Congregational Emails
- Social Media
- Pulpit Announcements

Additional modes of communication include advertisements in local media (radio, newspaper, etc...), posters, signage, digital monitor images, and more.

The Kirk both promotes and governs all forms of its communication through the Communication Team, which consists of:

- Kirk's communication staff, including the Communication Specialist and Social Media & Website Manager.
- Communications Committee, which is a committee of Session.

The purpose of this manual is to help anyone within the Kirk's committees, departments, and staff understand the most appropriate and effective manner to connect with their target audiences to promote, advertise, or inform their target audiences. This manual contains the current procedure for communication at the Kirk. Here, you will find detailed information about our modes of communication, how to use them, and the people to contact for communication approval.

SECTION 2. PRIMARY MODES OF COMMUNICATION

Kirkinthehills.org

kirkinthehills.org is a comprehensive website that includes a wealth of information on everything happening at the Kirk. It includes weekly broadcasts of worship services, a media library of past online offerings, a calendar of upcoming events, news, updates, descriptions of ministries, small groups, and more.

Our website is managed by the Kirk's Website & Social Media Manager, who works hard to keep it continuously updated and relevant. Success, however, is highly dependent on the input of committees and departments. Unlike other publications, there are no fixed monthly deadlines. The site makes the information available to those who are in the habit of accessing it online, but unlike other forms of communication such as posters and letters, it does not actively place the information in front of them.

Content areas of the site which are particularly useful for getting out information include:

- **Homepage** - the landing page of the website links to and provides a brief look at other portions of the website. The homepage is rarely the proper place for standalone marketing of a single event or announcement.
- **Featured Events** - These will show up on the homepage, on the events page on the website, and on the calendar. The Kirk is a large organization that has a lot of programs, and only a handful of key events can become featured at one time. Whether or not an event should be featured is determined by the communication staff.
- **Events** - A calendar of all kirk events is accessible under the Events tab. Often, this is where the majority of information about an event is held including descriptions, contact info, and registration links. Other modes of communication will reference back to the event page.
- **Groups & Classes** - Recurring small groups, classes, and bible studies that are not events can be found here. This page is similar to the event page, but groups and classes will not show up on the event calendar.
- **News and Updates** - This page is where all announcements and articles are posted. Copies of @the-Kirk, congregational mailing, congregational emails, and the Monthly Minute are regularly published here.
- **Ministries** - Each Ministry area has its own page. Content can always be posted under the appropriate ministry; Formation, Outreach & Mission, or Congregational Care.

The Website & Social Media Manager has the final say on which information/events will be posted and where the best place is to host it. Editing for content, clarity, and consistency with the adopted site format is the responsibility of the communication staff. In general, initial material should be provided for review and submitted to the Webmaster at least 2 weeks prior to the date you are requesting that it appear live on the website (the earlier, the better). The communication team can be incredibly helpful in crafting a persuasive and engaging message, please contact them directly if you need help with creating initial content material.

@the-Kirk

@the-Kirk, is a weekly newsletter that is distributed with the Sunday service bulletins. It is very useful for short notices and announcements that generate interest and reference a place where the reader can find more information. Space is limited, so preference must be given to items of the most general interest and close to the event they are publicizing.

- Submissions must be made by Tuesday at noon prior to the date of publication. Initial content can be submitted to the Communication Specialist for approval.
- Announcements and event descriptions must be less than 65 words in length. If longer promotional content was given, whether to be posted on the website or it just exceeded the length requirement, the communication staff will edit it accordingly for @the-Kirk.
- Be sure to include the basic facts: who, what, when (date and time), and where, as well as any registration deadline.
- Precede the content with a short headline or title of no more than four words.

Due to the short turnaround time of this weekly publication, content cannot be revised after it is submitted. Please review and revise the content prior to submission.

Photos, banner images, and large graphics are rarely used in @the-Kirk. Reports on past events can be submitted for the Monthly Minute.

Congregational Emails

This Sunday at the Kirk - Weekly Email

Every Friday the Kirk sends an email newsletter to the congregation. It contains information for the upcoming Sunday, including who is preaching, the scripture passage(s), links to the livestream, and a link to the bulletin. Under the section on worship, news and updates are posted. This content is similar to what is in @the-Kirk but can include links, graphics, and other diverse content. Space is not limited in the same way as @the-Kirk, but the information must still be short and to the point. This email does put registration links and pathways to additional content right in front of the reader, and that is especially helpful when registration is required.

Content for the weekly email is due before Thursdays at noon to be included the same week.

Monthly Minute

The Monthly Minute is another standing email that the Kirk publishes on a regular basis. This is a recap of all of the exciting things that the Kirk was involved with in the past 30 days. Each entry includes a photo or video and a description of what happened and how it was impactful, exciting, or informative.

Submissions for the Monthly Minute can be made anytime after the event, program, service, or offering to the Social Media and Website Manager.

Standalone Emails

Other emails can be sent out to the congregation by the communication staff to note funerals, memorials, event cancellations, event promotions, important news, staffing announcements,

fundraising, and more. Congregational emails are one of the quickest ways to inform the congregation. Content can vary widely and contain a diverse set of resources.

The Kirk tries to keep the number of standalone emails to the entire congregation from becoming incessant or overwhelming. When it comes to emails, less is more. If too many email communications come from the Kirk it can be seen as digital clutter and overall our emails become less impactful. Clear, concise messages from the Kirk, to the right subsection of the congregation is ideal.

Contact the communication staff to request a congregational email.

Mailings

Congregational mailings are another way to inform the congregation. These are hard copy mailings that can go out to every member at Kirk in the Hills. Each department, committee, or ministry area is responsible for paying for its own direct mail marketing. This includes postage, printing, envelopes, labels, and any other mailing-related expenses. Paper mailings can be expensive, costly, and have a long turnaround time, while receiving about the same amount of engagement as other modes of communication. **In most cases, a congregational email is a better use of resources than a hard copy direct mailing.**

Bulletin Inserts

Bulletin inserts are typically one-third-page flyers on a single topic that are included in the worship bulletin alongside @the-Kirk. They can include photos, infographics, and other design materials that are beyond the scope of @the-Kirk. Generally, inserts are reserved for the Kirk's most impactful events, offerings, and communications.

Initial content and details should be provided to the communication staff at least 2-3 weeks prior to the requested date of publication. The communication staff will try to accommodate every request, but they have to consider the entire slate of communication before they decide on the ideal date of publication for an insert.

Social Media

The Social Media and Website Manager maintains several social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Vimeo, and youtube. If event content is submitted for the website, @the-Kirk, or the weekly email, the Social Media and Website Manager usually posts it on the most appropriate social media channels. Social Media is a great way to keep information "top of mind" or to share what your committee, group, team, or department is working on.

Paid social media is one of the best tools for reaching people who are not affiliated with the Kirk. With a relatively small budget, social media can be used to reach a large number of people. Paid social media campaigns can be used for the Kirk's larger offerings.

Please contact the website and social media manager to request a paid social media campaign.

Pulpit Announcements

Sunday announcements are made during worship services on Sundays and are intended to be ones that involve the entire congregation rather than a specific target audience, and have the greatest prominence in the life of the Kirk. A limited amount of time is available for these announcements to minimize disruption to the worship service.

- Limit the content to the basic facts of who, what, where, and when, and include any registration deadline, and your preferred contact person (with prior permission from that person). Ideally, the announcement will be less than two sentences. Contact information should be listed in @the-Kirk.
- The deadline for submission is 12:00 p.m. Thursday, prior to the Sunday it will be announced.

SECTION 3. HOW TO PROMOTE

A publicity campaign for an event or program may involve the coordinated use of some or all of the publications described above, together with various kinds of special media. The first step to promoting your initiative is scheduling a discussion with the communication staff about how your campaign can be shaped and scheduled.

What to know when planning a project, class, offering, or announcement:

- Substantial lead times are required in order to get promotional material (both print and digital) into production, because of many other priorities, such as completion and printing of Sunday bulletins, @the-Kirk, newsletters, and other ongoing tasks.
- All communication expectations should first be discussed in concept within your group and be followed by a conversation with the communication staff for approval and further planning.
- All messaging should be carefully crafted and proofed to ensure an appropriate, professional, and favorable image of the Kirk in the eyes of our members and the public at large.
- The Kirk strives for a consistent and high-quality presentation in all forms of media. Typefaces and layouts have been selected with this goal in mind. Graphics are of simple, modern, and consistent design. *Graphics are designed by the communication staff at Kirk in the Hills.*
- The Communication Team has the final say on all communication and cannot be bypassed to communicate on behalf of Kirk in the Hills.

Revisions, Drafts, and Proofs

- The communication staff will revise initial content draft as much as is necessary to achieve a polished and professional end result.
- Some content like submissions for the weekly email, website, @the-Kirk, and other short pieces will not be returned as a proof after they have been revised by the communication staff. Other designed content like bulletin inserts, standalone emails, letters to the congregation, press releases, video scripts, poster flyers invitations, and other large communication pieces will have a proof returned to the group, committee, or person that submitted it.
- Proofs can be revised only once. After the group, committee, or person submits revisions for the proof, we assume that there are no more revisions to be made and your project is marked as completed.

SECTION 4. ROLE OF THE COMMUNICATION TEAM

Kirk in the Hills has countless events, ministries, classes, groups, and offerings. It can be overwhelming for a member of the congregation to keep track of everything that's happening. It is the role of the communication staff and committee to keep the congregation and outside community informed about what at the Kirk is most relevant to them.

Role of the Communication Committee

1. The Communication Committee is a committee of Session. It functions as a support ministry for the Kirk in general, and for the benefit of other key groups.
2. The Communication Committee and its individual members provide advice and assistance for communication to the Kirk's communication staff. The Committee Members use their collective experience and familiarity with the Kirk's systems as a resource and knowledge base to help those with communication responsibilities.
3. The Committee is available to advise other committees on the current state and functions of the Kirk's communication capabilities and staff responsibilities. In addition, it helps to retain an "institutional memory," such as past communication successes and failures, and what techniques tend to work best.
4. The Committee works with the staff to respond to communication needs beyond the scope of the Kirk's other groups; these needs could be identified by committee chairs, Kirk staff, or others. As such, the committee can help to design overall communication campaigns for maximum effectiveness.
5. To support all of its functions, the Committee may also collect information and data which can be useful in properly framing and targeting particular messages, and collaborates with the pastors and staff to create new and innovative methods for communication.

Role of the Communication Staff

1. The communication staff are employees of Kirk in the Hills who report to the head of staff/senior pastor. They communicate on behalf of the Kirk, its groups, and committees on a day-to-day basis.
2. The communication staff are responsible for the long-term communication strategy of Kirk in the Hills. They use their professional expertise to oversee and execute the promotion of events, the announcement of information, and collection of feedback.
3. The staff work with the communication committee to advise key groups on communication best practices and optimize all communication coming from the Kirk.
4. The staff works with the communication committee to respond to communication needs beyond the scope of the Kirk's other groups; these needs could be identified by committee chairs, Kirk staff, or others. As such, they can help to design overall communication campaigns for maximum effectiveness.
5. The staff is responsible for the collection of information and data that will help inform future communication decisions.