

Communications Commission Report for 2008

Goals: The Communications Commission assists the diocese:

1. Inform the community of faith on a broad range of concerns that affect the life and ministry of the church.
2. Represent the life of the church and its ministry in the public sphere.
3. Support parish communication initiatives and activities in ways that build mutual support among congregations and diocesan officials.

Membership:

The Rev. Phillip Haug, retired, Chair

Ms. Kay Collier McLaughlin, Diocesan Communications Officer, press officer, news editor

A year of transition:

Following up on recommendations of the 2008 Task Force Review, 2009 was marked by a continued shift toward increased use of the internet and refocusing the use of printed communications.

Printed Communications

Since Bishop Hosea revived a diocesan newspaper when he became Bishop Coadjutor of the Diocese of Lexington in 1970, THE ADVOCATE has been the primary means of communicating the stories of our diocesan and parish life, within and without the diocese. THE ADVOCATE has been a much-awarded newspaper, with a reputation for a good balance of local, national and international coverage. For many years, THE ADVOCATE was published monthly. While budget constraints had forced a reduction in the number of pages and reductions in the number issues over the last several years, the goal of keeping communicants in touch with life in this global communion has remained a top priority. During 2009, seven 12 page issues of THE ADVOCATE were published and mailed. Under the new communications plan, THE ADVOCATE is planned as a 16-page quarterly publication.

The Internet and Web

For the past ten years, the diocese has had a web presence, initially established and administered largely by volunteer efforts. Members of the Communications Commission recognized a number of years ago that the time would come to make further development of the web site and usage a top priority. The past ten years have seen developments of several fronts: emerging conventions for effective and attractive web site design, improved web authoring software, and most importantly, the emergence of web services for news casting, social networking and fund raising. Further, it seemed clear that such developments would likely necessitate a redistribution of available funds between print and electronic communication. As 2009 concludes and the new year begins, the shift is indeed, an actuality.

During 2009, our web presence was particularly effective in keeping the people of the Diocese of Lexington informed during General Convention, even as we struggled with decisions about both design and function. In consultation with the Bishop, the Canon to the Ordinary, the Diocesan Administrator and the Financial Officer, new hosting services were considered, and web professionals were interviewed to assist with the transfer and updating.

In early 2009, Cindy Centers, long-time graphic designer for THE ADVOCATE, was engaged to work out graphic design standards for a new web site. During the same period, an overall design strategy was laid out by the Commission. Simple matters of page color, home page layout, and choice of photos seem small, but need be chosen carefully as they convey the character of the church and its mission.

In late 2009, Siobahn Byrns, a recent graduate in web design, was engaged to further refine the design in keeping with the capabilities of ASC Extend Platform services and to construct a working web from essential contents of the old web. Altogether, the old site included some 200 folders containing over 5,000 files, many of which were no longer needed. The redesigned site came on line in November.

Monica Burden has since been hired on a contract basis to assist diocesan staff with maintaining the web with daily and weekly updates and to develop additional pages as needed.

Our goal has been, and continues to be, to provide the best overall communications possible throughout the Diocese, and to do so with both print and electronic presence which in their design and execution carry a common “brand” that is recognizable as The Diocese of Lexington.

Director of Communications

The Director of Communications also functions as the Public Relations office for the Bishop, receiving requests for interviews, working with other media to disseminate information, responding to inquiries from media for the Bishop.

In addition, the Director of Communication serves as resource to congregations for local communications issues, assisting in such areas as newsletter design or re-design.

A Word of Appreciation

Bill Sprague, long term member of the Communications Commission and professional web master and administrator, has contributed immeasurably to the benefit of all for the past ten years. In particular, he has tended the arcane details of web administration and security, tasks that most take for granted and few understand. He is no longer able to provide those services. We will miss him.

Respectfully Submitted,
Phillip R. Haug, Chair, Communications Commission