

The Diocesan Times Guidelines for Writing Parish News

Our goal with parish news is to keep it as interesting and readable as possible by providing timely and newsworthy articles and photographs. It is part of our mission to tell Anglicans throughout this diocese what other Anglicans are doing, from Yarmouth to Glace Bay and Montague to Tignish.

But writing for the Times is not quite the same thing as writing for your parish newsletter. You know who "Fr. Gerry" and "Warden Anne" are but people outside your parish don't. To help you let people outside your parish know who you are and what you're doing, here are some guidelines for parish news based on the five Ws of journalism: who, what, when, where and why, not to mention how.

Who

Who can submit news? Anyone can. While many parishes designate a Diocesan Times correspondent, we are pleased to hear from anyone with an interesting news item or photo to contribute. If you do have an active correspondent, it's a good idea to coordinate your efforts to avoid duplication. If you don't have a correspondent, why not become one?

What

What is news? News is something you're doing in the parish that is new; for example, a new outreach program, a new rector, a new fund-raiser, a new parish hall, renovations (Latin for making new) to the rectory, a new stained glass window and so forth.

News can be an unusual or unique element related to a common occurrence. For example, the bishop making his annual visit to the parish is not normally news. But if the bishop is visiting for a special reason such as to mark the designation of a building as a heritage property, that's news!

Give us lots of details to work with: the who, what, where, when, why and how of the story. Tell us what's newsworthy about the item you have sent near the top of your submission. If a new outreach program has been developed, tell us what it's about, who is involved, the goals of the program, why it is unique to your parish, why it was established. You can include a little about the parish itself so people who may never have visited you will get a sense of who you are.

News can be an article, a stand-alone photo with caption, or an article with a photo. Photos with a good caption can often times tell all there is to know: As they say, "a picture is worth a thousand words."

Don't forget the Faithful Servant feature: profiles of people who have contributed significantly to the life of a parish. These stories are not limited to people who have devoted a lifetime to a parish; they may also include newcomers who have revived a flagging parish or established something new in a community.

What isn't news?

Events that take place every year in most parishes: church suppers, baptisms, confirmations, bishops' visits, minutes from parish council meetings, detailed descriptions of services - who preached, what was sung,- names of confirmation candidates, names of new lay readers, news that is months old.

Some contributors send what amounts to a monthly diary of parish life. Such a detailed record is better suited to a parish newsletter, especially in multi-point pastoral units.

A hint: The trick is always to find what is new in the life of the parish. Ask yourself, "What are we doing this year that we didn't do last year?" Is there an unusual element about the church supper that makes it newsworthy; for example, the money being raised is going to be used to help rebuild a house for a family who lost their home in a fire. Maybe the annual confirmation resulted in a candid photograph of a couple of really cute kids munching on cake. Who can resist such a photo? Not us. (Please see Pictures, below.)

Where

Diocesan Times Parish News

diocesantimes@gmail.com

E-mail is the preferred form to receive news as it arrives sooner and there is less room for error as no transcribing is required.

Correspondents who are not on-line should type their contributions. Hand-written contributions lead to spelling errors in names. If you do not type, please find a friend who does.

Provide us with a contact person and a phone number in case we have questions before the story goes to print.

When

The Diocesan Times is a monthly newspaper so parish news must be received no later than the first Friday of each month for publication in the following month's issue. For example, news for the November 2000 Issue must be received by Friday, October 6. Don't forget, there is no Diocesan Times during the summer months (July and August).

Whenever possible, send the news as soon as it has happened to ensure the event or program is timely. No one wants to hear about a Christmas outreach program in April. Send the item in January.

A hint: If you are having a special event such as a fundraiser or reunion, let us know about it well before it occurs. News of an upcoming event can increase the number of people who attend.

Why

As a diocese that stretches across two very diverse provinces, it is important to keep others informed about the news in your parish and to be informed of the news in others. Without contributions from people like you, we have no way of knowing how your parish is helping to spread the good news of Christ in your neck of the woods.

Lacking roving reporters travelling across the diocese, we count on you, the experts in your parish. That's why we want to hear from you!

We can't promise that everything we receive will be published. We do our best but sometimes space limitations in the Times prevent us from doing so. If your news does not get published, do not let this discourage you. Keeping writing and write often.

All news is edited for style, length, tone and so forth in order to maintain a consistent style throughout the Parish News section. After the associate editor receives the news and it has been edited, it is then sent on to the editor who makes the final decision about what is printed.

We hoped we have answered many of your questions regarding parish news, but should you have others, please send them our way and we will do our best to answer them. We look forward to hearing from you.

Pictures worth 1,000 words

A good photo adds immeasurably to a story. Unfortunately, many of the photos we receive involve a group of people lined up at the front of a church smiling for the camera.

What makes for a much more interesting and publishable picture is a candid shottaken in an informal setting. Photos taken outside usually result in better lighting and photos taken close-up of only a few people (one, two or three is perfect) are much more interesting. We don't need to see the entire person from head to toe; it's the faces that count so make those heads fill the frame.

Please identify people from left to right, giving their full names, on a separate piece of paper and number the prints in a corner.

Color prints are best. Don't go to the expense of shooting black and white film and don't send negatives. A hint: Candid, close-up, outside and one to three people!

September, 2000