

# Communication and Publicity Ideas for Congregational Youth Ministries

---

## Who, What, Why, When, Where, and How: A Six-Step Process...

Telling your ministry story is a six-step process. To miss one step is like trying to drive a car with only three wheels or trying to bake baking powder biscuits without baking powder!

To help make your congregational youth ministry program a success, try planning your communications right away. It should be first on your list--not last. It doesn't matter if you're planning to attend a youth gathering or servant event in Santa Clara, Atlanta, St. Louis, or Missoula, it pays to talk about communications up front. Maybe your communication plan doesn't center around a program or project; maybe you just want people to know that youth exist and are active in the congregation as ushers, Sunday school teachers, worship leaders, volunteers, committee members, painters, or gardeners.

If you look at communication planning as a game, the six-step process can be fun. Divide your youth into six groups. If you are working with a small group, work as individuals. Have each one take a different word: *Who*, *What*, *Why*, *When*, *Where* and *How*. Each individual or group of 1-3 people takes their word and lets their minds and hearts run wild with thoughts. Write your ideas on newsprint.

After 15-20 minutes, gather again as a large group and share what you have found. Out of the group dialogue, select the one or two ideas in each of the six categories that will work best for your group.

What is your final list of *Who*, *What*, *Why*, *When*, *Where*, and *How* called? It is a *Communication Plan* for your youth ministry. The framework of the plan could look like this:

A Six-Step Youth Ministry Communication Plan
1. <i>Who</i> are we communicating with?
2. <i>What</i> are we communicating?

3. <i>Why</i> are we communicating this?
4. <i>When</i> will we do this?
5. <i>Where</i> will we communicate?
6. <i>How</i> will we communicate?

---

**An Example of a Communication Plan**

Let's say *ONE* of your youth ministry goals in the next 12 months is to serve Christ by being involved in a servant event (working on a house with Habitat for Humanity). Your communication goals include the following:

- 1. To ask adults for prayers, guidance and financial support.
- 2. To invite youth (members and non-members) and communicate that they are welcome and needed to participate in the servant event.
- 3. To inform people in the community and the world that youth are involved in serving Christ through this Habitat for Humanity project and other commitments to ongoing service and learning as Christians.

Being a diligent youth leader, you've applied the six-step communication plan process to each of the three goals described above. You did this with a small group of youth who volunteered (with varying degrees of eagerness) to help with stirring up excitement and interest in the servant event program. The resulting plans for each goal look like this...

---

<b><i>Service Project Goal</i></b>
To serve Christ by being involved in a servant event constructing a house with Habitat for Humanity

## **Communication Goal #1**

*To ask adults for their prayers, guidance, and financial support.*

1. *Who are we trying to communicate with?*
    - Our parents
    - Our congregational leaders
    - Other adults who attend church
  2. *What are we communicating?*
    - The goal of our project
    - Our need for prayers, guidance and financial support
  3. *Why are we communicating this?*
    - We need their support
    - We are part of a larger community in Christ and others will want to join our project as we let them know what we are doing
  4. *When will we do this?*
    - Once a month for the next 12 months prior to the project
    - After the project to describe the experience and say thank you
  5. *Where and*
  6. *How will we communicate this?*
    - Newsletter articles to adults
    - Letters to parents and congregational leaders
    - Bulletin announcements
    - Public announcements
    - At fund-raises
- 

## **Communications Goal #2**

*To invite youth (members and nonmembers) and communicate that they are welcome and needed for the servant event*

1. *Who are we trying to communicate with?*
  - Youth in our youth group
  - Friends at school
  - Youth in the neighborhood
2. *What are we communicating?*
  - An invitation to youth to be involved in this service project
3. *Why are we communicating this?*
  - An opportunity to share our faith and how Christ works through our lives and actions

4. *When and*
  5. *Where will we communicate?*
    - At school and church
    - At sports and music events
  6. *How will we communicate?*
    - Word of mouth
    - Telephone calls
    - Post cards and letters
- 

### **Communication Goal #3**

*To inform people in the community and the world that youth are involved in serving Christ through this service project*

1. *Who are we trying to communicate with?*
    - Community leaders and members (mayor, city council, restaurant owners, homeowners)
    - Church members and leaders in our congregation, synod, region and churchwide
  2. *What are we communicating?*
    - Christian/Lutheran youth are involved in serving Christ through this service project
  3. *Why are we communicating this message?*
    - Because we believe in Christ and living our faith
  4. *When*
  5. *Where and*
  6. *How will we communicate?*
    - Photographs, slides and video
    - Audio tapes of interviews
    - News stories after the project
    - Inviting leaders to visit and see what you are doing
    - Presentation to adults and youth during Sunday School
- 

### **Follow the Six Steps**

Whatever your congregational youth ministry program or individual project involves, work through the *six steps*. Taking the time to do so as a youth group as you begin planning will ensure that you communicate *WHO* you are as Christian/Lutheran youth and *WHAT* you are all about as servants in the world. You must plan for and

take advantage of the opportunities to talk about and communicate visually how you live your faith as servants of Christ-- as young people who know that Christ is alive among us.

Is there a simpler way of doing this? Sure. The key idea is to develop and use a plan or strategy for communication. The advantage of the six-step process is that it embodies what we know to be effective components of communication and applies them in a consistent way. You can go about it anyway you like as long as your communication is planned and consistent throughout your youth ministry program.

The sample forms provided can be used in developing a system that suits your own congregation, youth group and planning needs.

### Communication Plan Worksheet

#### Step 6: How will we communicate?

<i>Written and Visual</i>	<i>Before Event</i>	<i>During Event</i>	<i>After Event</i>
Letters			
Postcards			
Invitations			
Bulletin Inserts			
Newsletter Articles			
Signs and Posters			
Bulletin Boards			
Computer Printouts			
Pamphlets			
Brochures			

Hymnal Inserts			
Photographs			
T-shirts			
Banners			

<i>Audio-Visuals</i>	<i>Before Event</i>	<i>During Event</i>	<i>After Event</i>
Pictures			
Slide Show			
Videotape			
Audio Tapes			

<i>Verbal</i>	<i>Before Event</i>	<i>During Event</i>	<i>After Event</i>
Telephone Calls			
Word-of-Mouth			
Sermon			
Announcements			
Skits			

<i>External Communications</i>	<i>Before Event</i>	<i>During Event</i>	<i>After Event</i>
Radio			
Television			
Newspapers(daily & weekly)			

Magazines			
Bulletin Boards			
News Releases			

<i>ELCA Communications</i>	<i>Before Event</i>	<i>During Event</i>	<i>After Event</i>
Cluster Mailings			
Synod Newsletters			
LYO Newsletter			
The Lutheran (synod supplements)			