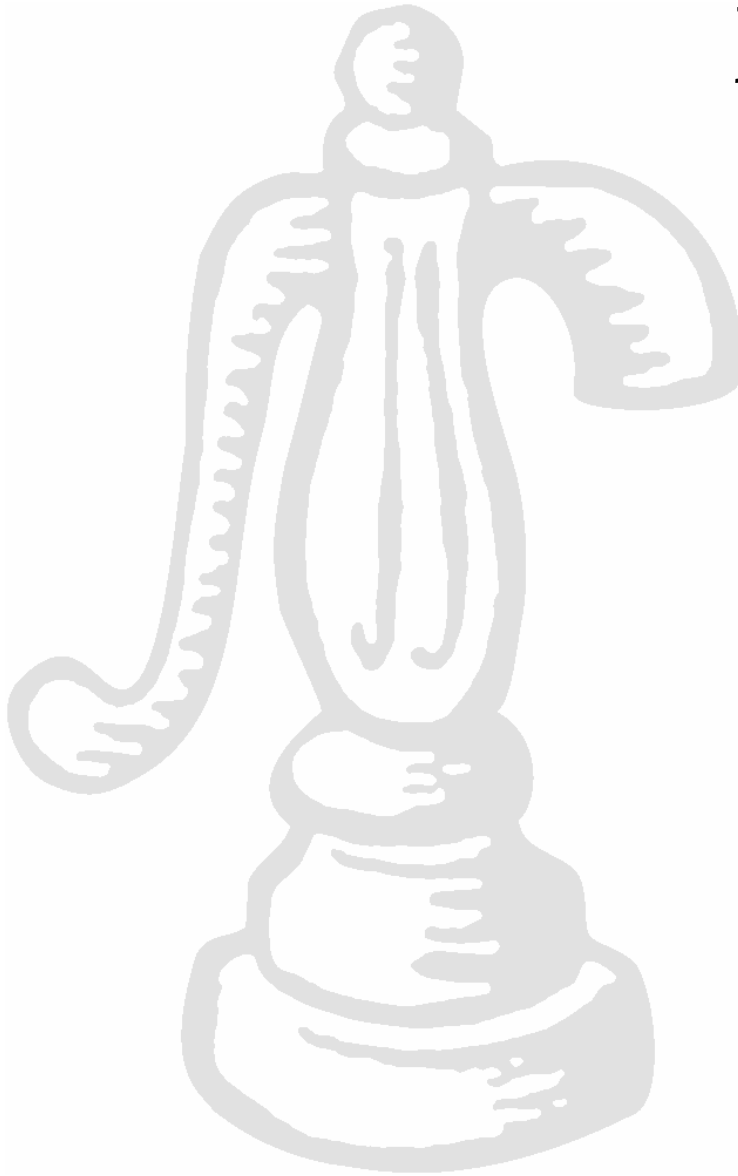


Your Church Magazine

How to make
the most of it



Visit www.parishpump.co.uk
The Essential Website for Church Magazine Editors!

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Introduction

Church magazine editors are special people. They produce so much with so little - for so many – for so long!

Church ministers often have years of training, stacks of books, and lots of other resources to help them preach to the people in their church on Sunday.

Church magazine editors rarely have the same advantages – and yet their Christian witness reaches dozens, if not hundreds more people each month than the minister does.

Church magazine editors help the people in their church to stay in touch with each other, but they can do even more. They can help their church to stay in touch with its community. A church magazine can bravely go through letterboxes into homes where no minister has gone before!

In fact, your church magazine may be the only Christian contact that many people in your community will ever have.

What an opportunity! Here's how you can make the most of it.



Where to begin?

If you are thinking about improving your church magazine, a good place to begin is to take a good look at what you have at present. This involves a simple audit that will help you decide :-

Who are your present readers?

Are they just the members of your church?
Or do they include members of the wider local community?

Who would you like them to be?

Does your current magazine give them what they need?

The majority of the editorial decisions you make about your magazine will depend on your answers to these questions.

Why not ask your minister and your church leaders to think again about WHO they want their church magazine to reach? And WHY?

Audit your present magazine

What have you got in your current magazine? Take a good look by going through the last four issues. List all the different sorts of items you find.

How many of the articles are of interest to just church people? How much space is wasted by 'inside' information which only affects some church people? How many items might interest your community as well? Your findings will help you decide if your current magazine fulfils the role you have in mind for it.



What areas of your church's life at present are not covered in your magazine? Is this intentional, or accidental? Could they be usefully included? Your minister will be able to guide you here.

What areas of your community's life are at present not covered in your magazine? News of special events – from concerts to fetes – can enrich the usefulness of your magazine. Make it a monthly 'must-read'!

Simple survey

Next, why not organise an anonymous survey of your current magazine? This will give you an idea of what people really think!

Ask a variety of people (both in and out of your church!) to go through copies of the past three issues of the magazine and put a '1' beside those items that they found of great interest, a '2' beside items of medium interest, a '3' beside items they wouldn't normally bother to read, and a '4' beside items they thought a total waste of space.



Whatever the results, don't be discouraged. Your findings will be crucial when you come to plan your future issues.

What is your aim?

Churches, their manpower and financial resources vary so widely from area to area that no one type of publication is right for everyone.

But most church magazines should aim to provide:

- a regular expression of your church's Christian presence and witness to the neighbourhood
- a reflection of the social life of the local Christian community (your church!)
- a reflection of Christian beliefs on various issues
- a timetable of events at your church (plus the times and venues)

So here are some things to consider:

Big responsibility

Always remember: you as editor are almost certainly reaching more people each month with a Christian witness than your minister is. People who would shy away from talking to a minister will not feel similarly threatened by a church magazine slipping through their door each month.

Your magazine may be the ONLY contact with Christianity that many of your local people will ever have.

The production schedule

Every church magazine begins with a production schedule. It is simply the dates by which everything must be commissioned, sent in, edited, printed and distributed.

So it's a good idea, at the start of each year, to get out your diary and plan your production schedule.



A sample one might look like this:

1st week in month: editor asks people to write articles for the magazine

By end of 2nd week in month: all copy must be with the editor

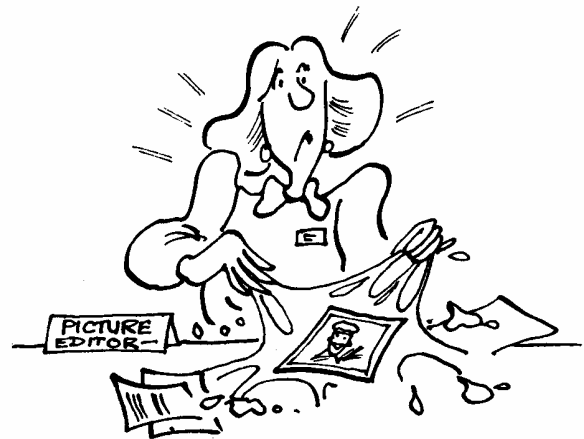
3rd week in month: editor prepares the magazine for production (Make sure you give yourself enough time between the arrival of the copy and when you hand it over to be printed.)

4th week in month: magazine printed and distributed

Your church/community diary

Keep an eye on your church's diary. Ask your minister, church council, Sunday School and any other church organisations at least once a quarter for dates of meetings. Find

out what meetings/events are being planned, and commission someone to write about them well ahead of time. Give them their deadlines, based on your production schedule!



Every editor needs to look ahead at the church year. The annual church calendar will provide you with ideas. Thus for example:

January:	Epiphany
February:	Lent
March:	Lent/Easter
April:	Easter
May:	Rogation, Ascension
June:	Pentecost
July/August:	Church fete
September:	Harvest
October:	Thanksgiving
November:	Remembrance
December:	Christmas

The 'special' Sundays/weeks churches observe today

For example:-

- Any Sunday or week the Church observes on a national basis
- Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- Christian Aid Week – May

The advantage of having such a 'church year' diary is that you can plan well ahead for these special occasions. Warn your minister that you will need special articles on these subjects. **Parish Pump** also provides them each month, as well as notes on the various High and Holy Days.

Finally, keep an eye on local events. Visit your local Tourist Information office. Include a 'What's On' page in your magazine where these can be given a mention. Do you have local charities (Marie Curie?) that you can support once a year? Are there concerts/plays/organised walks planned?

Planning your magazine – month by month

So there you are- with two maps in front of you.

Your production schedule says what issue has to be done when, and your diary/calendar makes sure you won't miss anything.

But – you are still not quite ready to plan an issue. There is one final matter to be decided: your editorial menu.

Think about any national newspaper or even magazine. Whatever the day, whatever is happening, when you pick up a newspaper, you know that the material on offer will follow a certain format.

The front page will have lead stories, and then there will be home news and foreign news pages. There will be some features, and some reviews, some TV, etc. The format helps you to know where to find things.

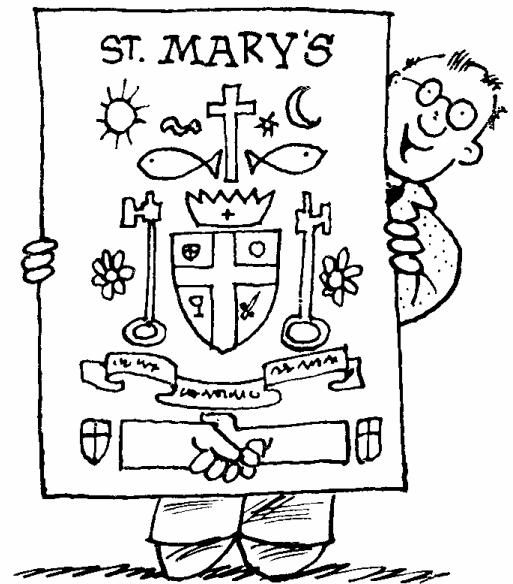
Could you do something similar for your magazine? Planning such an editorial menu is best with the help of something called a dummy. It helps you keep to a certain format each month and makes the magazine feel familiar to its readers.

Sample dummy for a church magazine

- Front cover with: name of magazine; name of church, month of issue
- 2 Useful names & addresses / quotes on the theme of the month
 - 3 Your 'biggest' page – for a lively minister's letter?
 - 4-5 News update – reports from various church groups
 - 6 1st feature on a theme of the month – Christian teaching
 - 7 feature continued or 2nd feature
 - 8 2nd feature – on a mission your church supports, or on a group in your church
 - 9 3rd feature – an interview or vox pop with church people on some current issue
 - 10 'You and yours page': recommended books/ recipes/ shared home experiences
 - 11 'Out and about' page - feature or snippets on some aspect of your community's life
 - 12 'What's on this month' – church & some community events

Of course, churches vary, and so do their needs. But a magazine that has a regular look about it makes readers feel more secure. They know where to go for what they need. As editor, you will need to cut your material to make sure it fits your magazine's overall monthly pattern.

As for where to put things, bear in mind that page 3 and the back page are major pages for your magazine – so put things there that you want most to be read.



Now, armed with your production schedule, your diary/calendar of events, and your editorial dummy, you are in a position to sit down and make a rough plan of at least the next three issues.

You may find it helpful to keep a notebook and have a separate page for each month's issue. Keep a note of each article that you want, who has agreed to write it, how long it is to be (roughly) and whether or not it has come in yet.

Editorial ideas

As church magazine editor, everything that happens in your church and a great deal that happens in your community can be used.

But how? How should you angle your material?

Life for a Christian consists of looking in several directions, and these directions might be a starting point to get you thinking editorially.



Looking at God – articles that help people learn more about God. Also, what the Bible teaches on other subjects.

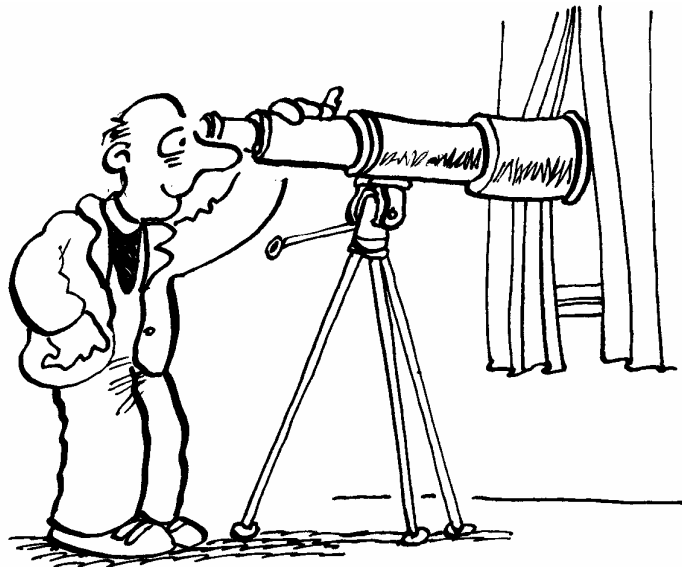
Looking at Yourself – articles that reflect our experience of daily life in the 21st century

Looking at your Church – articles related to other Christians and the Church in action

Looking at your Community – what is happening in the world around us?

These four different ways of 'looking' may be of use to you when tackling various subjects for your magazine.

For example, take gambling. It is a huge issue, and super casinos will change the country. It is a subject that your readers will undoubtedly have views about, but how do you enable them to share those views?



Taking the above list, you could consider:

GOD – what the Bible says about risk taking and money making and getting something for nothing. Your minister might write you a feature along the lines of: What the Bible says about Gambling

YOU - or, you could invite your readers to respond to some simple questions that you could put to them.

For example:

- Do you believe all gambling is wrong?
- Have you ever done the lottery?
- How do you feel about the idea of super casinos dotted about the country? (okay, concern)
- What do you think might be the result? (kids gambling; more addicts; no problem)
- Have you ever personally been to Las Vegas?/would you like to go? (yes, loved it; no, never)

If you then rang up to, say, 20 people, and asked them to respond anonymously, you would get a simple 'opinion poll'. You could then publish your results along the lines of : "Research among members of this church reveals that half of us think gambling is wrong, and the other half is saving up for a trip to Las Vegas!"

Church

Ask around the church and try and find someone whose life has been affected by gambling. Ask them to tell their story. Ask your minister what line he/she and other church leaders have taken on the subject over the years, and ask him/her to set this forth

in the magazine. Or invite people to write letters of concern to their MP.



Community

Do some research. Find out how many betting shops and bingo halls you already have locally. Tell your readers this.

So – one subject can be covered in one or more of four ways, depending on the slant you take.

Having worked out the inside of your magazine – what about the outside?

Size

This can be A5 or A4. Many printers say that A5 is more user-friendly. On the other hand, there's more scope for great layouts on an A4 format.



Title

The title is the first thing that will hit the reader. Try to make it eye-catching and attractive. For names, you could choose some alliterations: e.g. St Marks

Messenger, St Gabriel's Gazette. Or take a theme from your church's name. For a St Peter's, why not The Fisherman? For a St John's, why not The Eagle? (The symbol of the fourth evangelist) And so on.

Front cover

You can use the cover offered on the **Parish Pump** website each month. (Visit www.parishpump.co.uk) Or there are pre-printed covers in full colour printed by the Bible Lands Society.

Or employ an art student to do some simple sketches of your church and neighbourhood landmarks in black and white. Print them in different colours for use throughout the year.

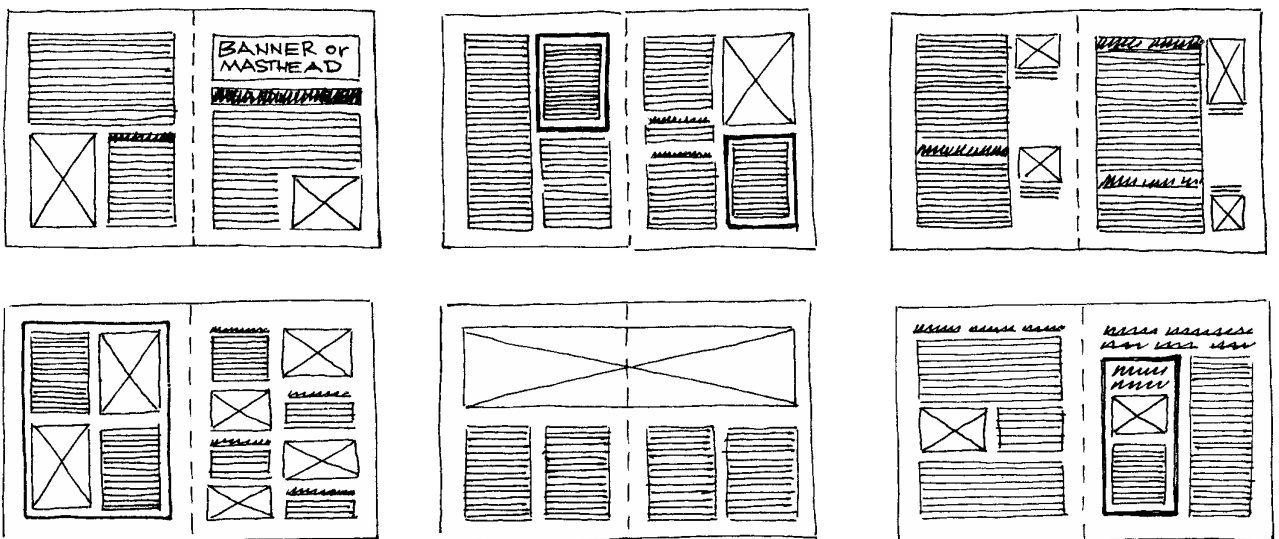
Or don't bother with a front cover. Design a masthead instead – a distinctive motif with the title of the publication, the church, and the address, which need fill only a small space at the top or side.

Preparing the copy

Decide a simple house-style and stick to it. There are endless typefaces available, but to look professional, you should stick to one serif typeface and one sans serif typeface per magazine. Never use two different sans serif or two different serif typefaces – it will look wrong. So for example, you might use Times Roman (serif) with Arial (sans serif) as contrast.

Within the Times Roman family, or the Arial family, you can always use a mixture of **bold**, light, *itals* and condensed – they will 'hang together' in a coherent manner.

Here are some simple ideas for basic A5 and A4 lay-outs. They can be reproduced easily, and may inspire you.

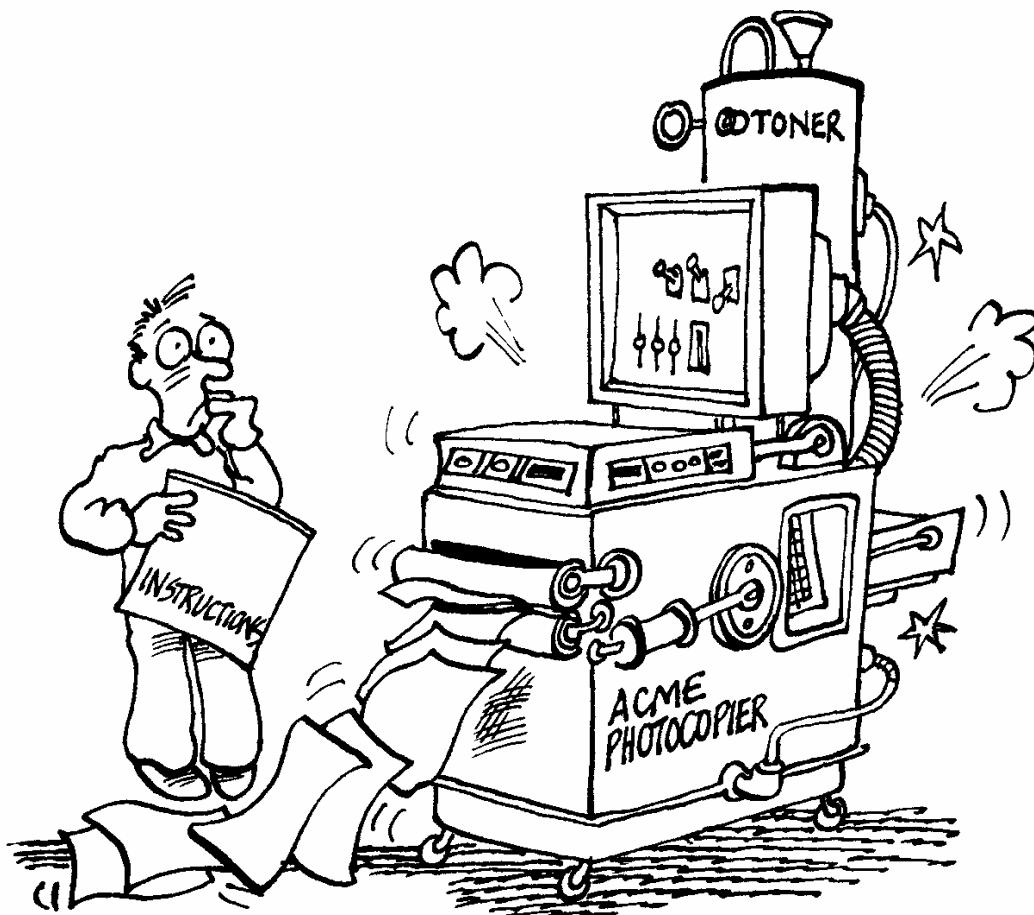


Length

Churches around the country produce anything from two sides to a vast number of pages. If you run to many pages, make sure each page really counts for something. Less is often more!

Printing your magazine

- a. Offset litho: runs up to several thousands of copies. A true printing press, with excellent results. But very complicated to use!
- b. The photocopier: produces clean, excellent copies. Is there someone in your church whose company's photocopier is available to you for a payment?
- c. The professional printer: obviously the best, but the most expensive.



Frequency of publication

This can be: weekly, fortnightly, monthly, or even less frequently. If your church has a weekly pew-sheet, then your magazine could focus on the wider areas of your church's ministry, and need not be monthly.

Price

There are various ways in which churches pay for their magazines.

- The readers pay by annual subscription or a price per copy. This is very fair, but may possibly lose you some intended readers.
- The readers pay, subsidised by advertisements.
- The readers pay, subsidised by church funds. Expensive!
- The advertisers pay, but you must guarantee them a large enough circulation – usually house to house delivery. Invite local trades-people to advertise with you as a gesture of goodwill.



Many churches pre-print ads for a year ahead. They do a set of between 12 and 16 display adverts on two sides of a single 'through' sheet of paper. This becomes four pages when it is collated into the finished magazine. Simple display adverts can often be made by adapting a sample of the advertiser's letter-heading or business card.

Make sure your editorial copy is easily distinguishable from the ads. Use a different typeface, a ruled box, or a different colour paper. Make sure the advertisers receive a complimentary copy of the finished publication.

Help! When you still have pages to fill....

Any editor will soon find that it can be hard to fill a church magazine with interesting material - month after month after month!

Parish Pump can help you here, both with graphics and editorial. We offer a wide variety of material each month from which you can choose.

Graphics

Cartoons by Taffy, a nationally known Christian cartoonist.
Two children's pages with stories and 'things to do'.
A front cover for your magazine, plus a selection of illustrations.
Crossword.

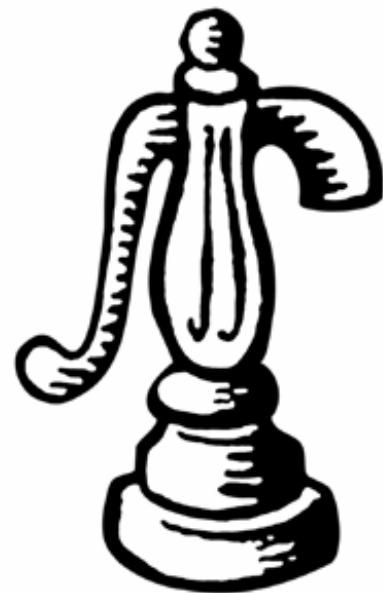
Editorial

We offer you a wide variety of snippets and short articles to fill up those blank spaces in your magazine.

Choose from a variety of current Christian news items, saints' days, devotional pieces, articles on modern life, on the church today, on modern Christians in action, on your community. Then there are book reviews, prayers and poems, humour and quotes of the month.

In all, if you wanted to, you could fill up to 30 A5 pages of your magazine a month with our material alone! With **Parish Pump** to tap into, you won't ever run dry.

Visit <http://www.parishpump.co.uk> to find out more.



If you have found this booklet useful, you may want to visit our website at <http://www.parishpump.co.uk> to get even more help producing your church magazine.

Don't forget though, you can explore the website completely free of charge and without obligation. You can even use the editorial for a full month before you decide whether you think it's worth paying for.

We look forward to seeing you on the website!