



TOPTIPS

PHOTOGRAPHY AT CHURCH

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We live in an image dominated society. A good photograph can attract people to read your publication, read about your church in the newspaper or visit your website. In this Top Tips we give you advice on photography, sending photos to the media, and taking photos of children.

General Advice

Here are some top tips on taking photographs from Ian Britton, who attends Beacon Lough Baptist Church in Gateshead. Ian is the founder of freefoto.com, an online photo library and regularly takes photos for the Northern Baptist Association and is the official photographer at the Baptist Assembly.

Take your camera with you

You can not capture an image if you don't have your camera.

Put the sun behind you

A photograph is all about light so always think of how the light is striking your subject. The best bet is to move around so that the sun is behind you and to one side. This front lighting brings out color and shades, and the slight angle (side lighting) produces some shadow to indicate texture and form.

The rule of thirds

Divide an image into three parts horizontally and vertically, placing the horizon a third of the way from the top or bottom for impact. Where the horizontal and vertical divisions meet are power points. Use the rule of thirds to add variety and interest.

Composition

Keep it simple. Don't try and include everything. A cluttered image is normally hard on the eyes.

Photographing People

The simplest tip for photographing people is to talk with them whilst you are taking their picture.

Camera Clubs

Join your local Camera Club...there's one in most towns.

If you are ever in Gateshead a warm welcome awaits you at my local camera club

<http://www.gatesheadcc.com/>

<http://www.ianbritton.co.uk/>

Sending to the media

Newspapers, publications and websites are always interested in good photos – often it what sways whether they feature a story or not. Here is some advice adapted from *How to be Heard In A Noisy World: Church publicity made easy* (ISBN: 978-1850787167) by former Baptist Times Deputy Editor Phil Creighton who attends Wycliffe Baptist Church in Reading.

Get the right resolution

Digital cameras usually allow you to choose the resolution for the picture: the smaller the image size, the more photos you can save. If a newspaper is going to use your pictures, it will want the largest possible. Professionals talk in dots

per inch. The more dots there are to an inch, the better the image will be. Save your image in large resolution. More than 300 dots per inch is ideal – known as 300 dpi or the 1MB mark should be fine. If you are emailing the photos do not attach many high resolution pictures in the same email (unless you put them in a zip folder). It will be slower to send and emails with too large a memory are often blocked by some email servers (2MB is often the limit for one email).

Filenames

The filename that you give a file is equally important. Digital cameras give sequential codes, IMG_2876.jpg for example. This will mean nothing to the picture desk of your local newspaper. In this case, if the picture is of some prize-winning dogs, the file could have been renamed StLukes_dogshow.jpg ensuring that the name was directly relevant to the press release sent in.

Mugshots

Another useful tool in your church publicity kit is a good quality set of mugshots, ready to be sent to a newspaper, magazine or website when needed. What is a mugshot? It is a head and shoulders picture of someone, similar to a passport photo, although a good mugshot will resemble the person in the picture. While most mugshots will be edited down to just the face and a bit of the neck, it's always a good idea to keep the shoulders in the picture – it gives the designer more flexibility. Usually you should only need a set of mugshots for the church leaders (ministers, deacons etc). The best time to update mugshots is after the church AGM has taken place and new officers appointed.

Have fun

Photographs, more than anything, will offer a snapshot of what church is like. If we submit boring photographs with a press release, we will continue to reinforce negative impressions of the church. But by sending lively, happy pictures we give the opposite impression. So take time to think about the impact your prints will have – if you have fun taking them, this will show and people will know that it is not dull following Jesus.

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Taking photos of children

Many people these days are scared of taking and using photos of children in case they are misused. It is always advisable to ask parents and guardians for consent before taking photos of their children. This can be done by creating a consent form. Below is the photography policy that Princes Risborough Baptist Church has created and that we recommend that you adapt for your church.

Princes Risborough Baptist Church

Taking Photographs of Children

It is not illegal to take photographs of children (or vulnerable adults). However, it is important to protect children's identities and prevent the misuse of photographic material. Newspaper editors work in accordance with the Press Complaints Commission's Code of Practice and there is an emerging consensus of best practice for other organisations dealing with children. As a Church, we need to be responsible without being over-restrictive. We believe that the following policy will achieve such a commonsense balance.

General Policy:-

(a) Taking Photo's.

- Photographing children should be conducted with sensitivity and courtesy. Children generally like having their picture taken, but there may be moments when they would rather not. Consent of the child is just as important as parental permission.
- Ideally, written parental permission should be obtained. (However, see below for exceptions).
- Photographs of individual children should never be taken without parental consent.

(b) Storage and Use of Photo's.

- Photographic material should be stored safely.
- Any material sent to the press must not give any personal identification.
- Copies must not be distributed to other individuals without parental permission.
- Images must not be placed on any website
 - a) Written, parental/carer permission has been obtained, specifically for that photograph to be used.
 - b) The Children's Advocates have given approval
 - c) No identification of individuals is given

Practical Application of the Policy:-

(a) At Registration of "New" children

When "New" children are enrolled in any of our children's clubs or departments, such as Sunday School, Tiddlywinks and Thursday Club, in addition to the other essential details, including name, address, and contact details of parents/carers, written permission should be obtained to enable photo's to be taken in the future.

The following words should be used:-

I/We hereby give our permission for photographs (or video recording) to be taken of our child. I/We understand that such material may be archived or may be used for publicity but our child will not be identified by name and material will not be placed on the Church website without our additional specific consent. Our permission will continue until our child reaches the age of 18 years, unless we otherwise give notice.

Signed.....Parent/Carer

Date.....

(b) Children already Enrolled

Written permission should now be obtained as outlined above.

(c) Visiting children

If photographs are to include visiting children for whom written permission does not exist, a verbal consent should be sought by announcing that it is the intention to take a photograph, thus allowing parents to act according to their wishes.

(d) Photography at "Open Events"

At certain types of event, it is inevitable that there will be other children around who may very reasonably get "in the picture" but for whom it may not be feasible to obtain even verbal permission. In such a situation, it may still be appropriate to include such children as part of a group, but photographing just one child alone should not be done without parental permission. Any such material obtained should be handled thereafter according to the General Policy stated above.

Approved by the Church Members Meeting 25 November 2008

Special Thanks

Our thanks to Ian Britton, Phil Creighton and Princes Risborough Baptist Church for their assistance with this edition of Top Tips.

Send your photos to us!

Here at BUGB Communications we want to expand our photo library of images from churches in the Union. Mugshots (see above) of people, group shots, be they posed or of activities and events, are welcome. Please email them to James Stamp at jstamp@baptist.org.uk with an explanation of who is who. For advice on sending photos by email see above!