

Notice sheets and newsletters are important to get right - a sheet that is full of unhelpful jargon and laid out without due care and attention could be off-putting to visitors to your church. Here, Baptist Men's Movement President and journalist, Phil Creighton explains how to produce a notice sheet that will be attractive and interesting to read.

### **What information has to go in?**

Start by deciding what essential information should go in your notice sheet. It's usually details of that day's service, a note of welcome and a diary of the church's coming week. Then there's space for some more detailed notices, such as which guest speaker will be at the women's fellowship or which passages the home groups will study. Often, there is news from the fellowship, giving prayer pointers. Some churches also offer a short introduction to the day's theme via a minister's letter. Finally, there may be space for note taking.

### **Work out the format**

Most notice sheets are a folded A4 sheet, resulting in four A5 pages. Some churches use an A4 sheet folded into three, producing a pamphlet. If using this format it must be clear to the reader which order the pages go in. If they are hand folded, they will take more time to produce. A local printer might be able to machine fold them for a modest fee, possibly discounted for a contract agreement with them for a set period of time. Other churches offer a single sheet of A5, produced on an A4 sheet of paper and then cut in half. The choice you make will depend on the amount of information you have to fit in the notice sheet each week.

### **Work out how you want to say things**

At first glance, this might seem like a strange heading: it's obvious – you want to say '10am Morning worship' and '6.00pm evening Worship'. Well, to a degree. Deciding on a house style will help plan the way the notice sheet is to be designed. Try to present information in a style that is to the point and easy to read quickly. For example:

*Thank you for joining us as we worship God! These are details of today's services.*

*10am – Morning Worship led by the Revd Joe Soap*

*Genesis 1:1-17: A new beginning*

*Children will study the parable of the Good Samaritan.*

*Please join us for refreshments after the service (servers: Jenny Sugar and Thomas Milk)*

*6pm – Evening Worship led by the Revd Joe Soap*

*John 17:20-25: Praying for unity*

*Need prayer? Members of our prayer team will be at the front of the church after each service, just walk up and ask them to pray with you.*

*Today's flowers have been provided by Gertrude Arranger. They will be distributed after the service. If you know anyone who would welcome a bunch then please tell a steward on your way out.*

### **Contact details**

Ensure that there are relevant contact details. Remember, this is a document that anyone can have access to,

so you might prefer all enquiries to come through the church office. You should certainly never print the phone number and address of the church treasurer if they keep money from the collection offering at home overnight before taking it to the bank the following morning!

Most churches have now adopted the policy of only printing telephone numbers of their pastors and directing correspondence to the church office.

### **Get your timings right**

When describing events in your notice sheet make sure you set the times as am or pm. While most people will be able to work out that an 8.00 prayer breakfast will be in the morning, it's a different matter for an 8.00 prayer meeting. Is that an early breakfast or a late tea? Don't leave things to chance. Also decide on a format for times – is it 8am, 8.0am or 8.00am?

### **Make things clear**

If you have similar sounding activities during the week (eg a coffee morning one day, a pop-in another and a Café Church another day) that are directed at different audiences make sure there is an explanation so people are aware if it is for them or not:

*9.30am-noon – Coffee Stop. A chance for new mums to enjoy a cuppa and get advice from a midwife.*

*12.15pm-1pm – Time of prayer focusing on missionaries supported by the church.*

*7.30pm – Bible study in the church. A focus on Philemon, led by our pastor.*

Alternatively change the name of the activities to make them more obvious. If they are for mothers or pensioners, then they could have been called 'new mums pop-in', 'pensioners' coffee stop' and so on. It doesn't take much to be clear and concise, but it makes the world of difference.

### **Have a formula**

For announcements in the notice sheet, you need to have a formula. You could consider group things under topics: youth matters, women's meetings, prayer meetings, matters for prayer and so on. Make sure that each notice is clearly explained and also concise. Don't let people waffle.

### **Decide what goes in, what is left out**

Be very clear about what should go into the notice sheet, and what should go into the church magazine. Remember that both are public documents, read by different sections of the community. Ensure that the notices are news, and not any old thing that just happens to be there. Keep things fresh and up to date.

### **Beware the double entendre**

Church notice sheets are often the source of unintentional humour. Watch out for double meanings in concise notices, like these examples found on the Internet:

*'This being Easter Sunday, we will ask Mrs Jones to come forward and lay an egg on the altar.'*

*'The 2003 Church Retreat will be hell May 10 and 11.'*

*'Weight Watchers' will meet at 7pm in the church hall. Please use large double door at the side entrance.'*

### **Work out the design**

Having decided on both the format and the content, you can then work on the design. Before making your

decision about design or font, check what it looks like when printed and when photocopied (if this is how your church produces your notice sheet). You'll also have to think of the needs of the fellowship: if you make it too small people won't be able to read it. If you make it too large, it will start to look amateurish. Ensure that there are a few large print versions of the notice sheet with the stewards. These will be invaluable for those who need them. To create these sheets, you'll usually need to use a photocopier, enlarging up in proportion – either A5 to A4, or A4 to A3.

**Phil Creighton** is Features Editor of the Reading Post , a deacon at Wycliffe Baptist Church and President of the Baptist Men's Movement. This article is adapted from his bestselling book How To Be Heard in a Noisy World – Church Publicity Made Easy. Signed copies of the book are available from [http://shop.thesheepdip.org.uk/index.php?\\_a=viewProd&productId=40](http://shop.thesheepdip.org.uk/index.php?_a=viewProd&productId=40)