

Report 07 Appendix 7 Vision and Principles of Communications

Vision

Communication is at the heart of who we are as people of faith. We are human beings created in the image of the God who called creation into being. We are people of faith who have been shaped by how our ancestors came to understand God as living word. We are people of this fractured world who have responded to God's good news of reconciliation in Jesus Christ. We are disciples of Christ who have been called to go forth and share that good news with others. Communication is central to our understanding of ourselves and of God.

The God we have come to know and follow is one who communicates with humankind. Communicating is integral to God's nature. Creation itself is an act of communicating. Human beings have been created to communicate with God and we need other human beings with whom to communicate. The prophets give voice to God's self-revelation of love and longing as well as despair and disappointment with God's people. The gospel writer John describes Jesus as God's Word made flesh, an intimate act of communication with and commitment to humanity. Our God is a god who communicates and engages with creation.

Therefore it is not enough for us as Christian people simply to communicate about God. We must communicate in a way that reveals the character of the God whom we worship. We must show who God is by how we communicate with others and with one another. **How** we communicate is as important as **what** we communicate. We might even say that how we communicate is the message of who and what we are as God's people. That is why principles of communication are critical to what we do.

Principles

There are many principles of communication that illustrate the character of God and of God's people. Five are listed here but these are not exclusive of others.

Transparent: Our communication should be clear and understandable. If written, the material needs to be jargon-free with a level of literacy to match the audience for whom it is intended. If non-verbal, the images need to reflect the diversity of God's people so that it is clear that the message is intended for all. In addition to transparency in how the message is given, it is critical that the content be honest and focused on helping God's people to see and understand what is happening in the world, in their community, and in their church.

Timely and accurate: In order to communicate with clarity and integrity, the communication, whatever it might be, needs to be timely and accurate. Accurate information that is received when it is needed will enable people in the church to participate more fully in its life, its ministry and its decision-making. Mistakes, when made, should be freely acknowledged and accurate information given.

Participatory: Since part of the goal of communication in the church is to enable the people of God to be the body of Christ, then clearly communication needs to be

participatory. People within the church must be included in the communication and invited to respond, to converse, to reprove, to add, and to enliven both the process and the product. When our communication is outside the church, the same principles hold true. As God invites response, so do we.

Mission-driven: The church does not exist for itself; rather its purpose is to participate in God's mission, to be Christ's body in the world. How we frame that mission and the particular goals we have in meeting it may change from time to time. Yet at all times, our communication should reflect our current understanding of that mission and be driven by it. Our telling the story needs to be flexible in approach, multi-levelled in expression, and theologically framed. The priorities of what and how we choose to communicate should reflect our mission and God's mission.

Respectful of others: In keeping with God's character, our communication with others, whether within or outside the church, should be respectful of and charitable to others. This holds true both for the audience with whom we are communicating and those whom we depict through the full range of our communication practices including writing, photography or film. Our work needs to be humanely spirited—acknowledging the dignity of those with whom or about whom we communicate.

These principles are not for a communications department alone. Communication is part of the work of all of the General Synod. Therefore, communication and the principles upon which it is based need to be integrated into the overall operation of the national church. ***Integration in itself is an important principle of communication*** because, without it, our message becomes fragmented and diluted.