



Communications Report 2019-2020 To the General Assembly of Priests

Respectfully submitted
by Jennifer Hatt, Communications Officer

Introduction

June 1, 2020 was the 5th anniversary of the position of Communications Officer. This permanent part-time position (25 hrs/week) reports to the Bishop. Priorities of this position include:

1. Use, promotion and upgrade of communications tools
2. Visioning and planning
3. Collaboration as requested with the Bishop, diocesan staff and ministries, and parishes

2019-2020: A Year Unlike Any Other

Our Communications systems were tested this past year by several major events:

- Appointment of Bishop Brian Dunn as Coadjutant Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth; announced in April 2019, taking effect July 2019
- Appointment and Installation of Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick, Winter 2019-20
- Evolving protocols to address the public health crisis of Covid-19, resulting in the closure of churches from March-July 2020 and closure/cancellation of most diocesan and parish offices/events. The Communications Officer continued to work from home throughout.
- Reopening of our churches in July 2020, but still under provincial state of emergency and changing protocols

Each of these issues required (and continue to need) an integrated approach to communications, with the Communications Officer working with the bishop(s) and staff to develop and distribute information to internal and external audiences. Work put into our website, Facebook, MyParish App and subscription email list during the past four years provided a system ready for the challenges presented by these major events. The early weeks of the pandemic, when churches were closed, increased the demand for online information and worship. Even though churches are now able to open, the continued need for distancing, masking and extreme care for those in fragile health means the video and livestream Masses, video meetings, and engagement via email and social media are no longer nice-to-haves, but necessities in the 'new normal.' Our challenge in the year ahead will be to help build content and audience for our enhanced online systems, while ensuring those without internet access remain included and connected to our diocesan community and their faith.

Highlights

175th Anniversary

The Communications Officer serves as a member and Recording Secretary of the committee, while developing promotional materials for Anniversary events and coordinating distribution via online systems. The Communications Officer also participated in the 175th Anniversary Holy Land Pilgrimage Sept. 1-14, 2019, led by Archbishop Dunn, providing photographic and social media coverage, and blogging daily to the diocesan website for those to 'pilgrimage from home.'

Year of Eucharist

Although the Congress was cancelled due to the pandemic, the committee met from October 2019-March 2020. Communications led the creation of posters, prayer cards, a 2020 calendar, brochure of our shrines and a video on Creating a Prayer Space in the home;; assisted in production of Pause programs for Advent, Lent and Ordinary Time, and created/posted content for Facebook and the website.

Our website www.antigonishdiocese.com

was skilfully and prayerfully redesigned and built in a new WordPress platform by Cletus Ori, a graduate of NSCC's information technology program. The Communications Officer served as project manager from initial design in May through soft launch on June 14, 2020. The new website has the features and capacity to grow with the 'new normal' of increased online services.

On April 30, 2020, Deacon Art Riley retired as webmaster, a position he held for five years. We remain grateful for the countless hours and many talents Deacon Art invested in our original website and the redesign of 2015-16. On May 1, 2020 we welcomed our new webmaster, Deacon Shawn Bigley, who was instrumental in launching the new website project in May. The webmaster position remains an appointment by the Bishop, and works collaboratively with the Communications Officer for website operations and updates.

Monthly and weekly newsletters

Our email list has 400 subscribers (up from 340 at the start of the year) , with numerous notes of appreciation from recipients who appreciated the information and links to the Bishop's letters, Masses, videos and other content. Thank you to all contributors, and keep it coming! We encourage all parishes to submit photos and story ideas.

Diocesan Facebook Page www.facebook.com/antigonishdiocese

Now has 700 followers, and has reached more than 5,000 with sharing of popular posts. Our Youtube channel was active in the early weeks of lockdown, offering Mass for Shut-Ins until the season ended in May. With the new website, we also have an Instagram and Twitter accounts. Plans are being developed now for best practices, and both should be in use by the end of the summer.

Communications Strategy

This continues to be updated with the vision of our new Bishop, lessons learned in the past year and inclusion of our new tools. A Social Media Usage Policy nears completion as does a Social Media Plan for the remainder of this year

Communications Team

Members are Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick, Irene Khattar (chair), Fr. Conrad Edwards, Connie Morrison, George Paul, Cathy Walsh and Sarah MacRae. Their commitment and input are invaluable to the work of the webmaster and Communications Officer. Much gratitude to them, all of you, and our Deacons and parishioners who continue to share news, photos, opinions, and suggestions.