

NORM 24

Norm Description: The Diocese is to explore more effective ways of communicating to every parishioner, especially new and inactive parishioners, the services and programs offered by the Diocese of Metuchen and the local parish.

Department or Office with Primary Responsibility: Office of Communications and Public Relations

Departments or Offices with Secondary Responsibility: All pastoral ministry departments

Person Submitting Plan: Joanne Ward

Goal: The Office of Communications and Public Relations will coordinate a diocesan-wide effort to determine the most effective means of communicating with parishioners, especially new and inactive parishioners, the services and programs offered by the Diocese of Metuchen and its parishes.

Objectives:

1. In conjunction with the Department of Pastoral Life and the Commission for Hispanic Ministry, the office staff met with representatives of the Hispanic community from throughout the Diocese on June 25, 2008, to discuss communication. As a result of the meeting a survey (in Spanish) was developed and distributed in October to all parishes with Hispanic communities. The results of the survey will be compiled by December 31. By January 30, 2009, based on the results, it will be determined whether we need to develop a newsletter and/or other means of communication with the Diocese's Hispanic communities. (Survey completed January 2009. Discussions are underway regarding the creation of a Hispanic newsletter. Hispanic Ministry has been added to the website.)
2. In conjunction with the Office of Stewardship, a mini-magazine, "Ministering to the People of God," was developed, published, and mailed to 120,000 households in the Diocese. The magazine describes the services and programs of the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Office of the Schools, Office for Vocations, Commission for Synod Implementation, Office of RCIA, Office of Family Life, Office of Evangelization, Office of Hospital Chaplaincy, Office of Prison Ministry, Office of Respect for Life, Office for Catechesis, and Catholic Charities. In addition, a calendar listing some of the events and programs of the Diocese, its departments and offices is listed.

This type of magazine, designed specifically to detail the Diocese's programs and events, will be published twice a year: in the Spring and the Fall.

3. In conjunction with the Office of Information Systems, a completely re-designed Diocesan website was launched in August, 2008. The new website provides viewers with immediate access to diocesan news and events, links to important websites such as the Bishop's Annual Appeal, as well as updated departmental and office web pages. In 2009, a plan will be developed to better publicize the website. (Accomplished May 2009)
4. In conjunction with the Department of Diocesan Planning, a newsletter was developed and distributed through the parishes to 80,000 parishioners in November, 2008. The newsletter was an update on the status of the synod norms and also included information about the new Department of Diocesan Planning as well as changes in the Office for Catechesis. The newsletter will be distributed three times a year with the next issue scheduled for Spring, 2009. (CSI newsletter has been eliminated and replaced by a weekly column, launched in October 2009, in *The Catholic Spirit*.)
5. In January, 2009, partnering with Radio Luz de Cristo.org, the Diocese will serve as the home base for an Hispanic radio program to be broadcast over the internet from our radio studio. (Accomplished August 2009)
6. In January, 2010, a communications survey will be developed to determine the most effective ways of reaching our parishioners, as well as new and inactive Catholics. Based on the results of that survey it may be recommended that the Diocese develop a brochure and/or mini-CD listing all its programs and services, develop an e-weekly newsletter, and explore the feasibility of publishing a quarterly magazine to be distributed to both parishioners and non-parishioners. The survey will also indicate whether the Diocese should venture into cable TV and/or re-establish weekly radio programs. There will be a cost associated with the survey.
7. The diocesan newspaper, *The Catholic Spirit*, is one of the best ways to communicate to all parishioners. Since the number of subscribers to our newspaper is continually declining, we need to change how the paper reaches parishioners. In the Spring of 2009, we expect to present a proposal to the Diocese which would have *The Catholic Spirit* delivered in bulk to parishes where it would be distributed. Instead of paid subscriptions, the paper would be supported by pastors who would be asked to participate in an annual voluntary gift program for *The Catholic Spirit*. (Proposal presented March 2009)

8. Communicating with youth and young adults require different strategies from those used for adults. In the Spring of 2009, the Office of Communications will work with the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry to conduct a communications survey of our young people. Its results will serve as the basis for strategies to be developed and implemented. (Focus groups with youth planned for March and April 2010)
9. The Office of Communications will continue to provide secular newspapers with information on diocesan programs and events for their print editions as well as their websites.
10. For the 2010 fiscal year, a year long program utilizing 30 second or one minute radio spots to inform individuals of diocesan programs and services will be planned and implemented. The estimated cost for this program is \$100,000, but it will be one definite way of reaching inactive and lapsed Catholics.
11. Since the internet is an effective way to reach individuals, in 2011, we will create a blog with weekly guest columnists. This will require an individual dedicated to monitoring the blog and responding to inquiries about it.
12. By the year 2011, the Diocese will offer podcasts announcing upcoming programs and events.