

15 Ideas to Help You Evaluate Your Church Bulletin

Recently I emailed some friends and asked them to grab their bulletins from their weekend services at their church and mail them to me. **I was overwhelmed when just over 100 that arrived in my mailbox or email!** It was so fun looking in at what's going on at so many churches across the country. I asked for this bulletins because I wanted to learn from what other churches are doing to regularly communicate with their people through this channel. I've picked out some of the pieces that stood out to me and provided them here for you to check out as well. **How are you leveraging your church bulletin (or program ... or worship folder ... or whatever you call it) to communicate with your people?** I hope these inspire you to reconsider how you can make it better ... I know it did for me! [[You can download all 17 bulletins in one ZIP file.](#)]

- **It's doesn't have to be in full color.** // You'll notice that a number of the bulletins that I'm going to highlight use color to communicate but good design can go a long way with a black and white bulletin. I like what Beulah Alliance Church did with a custom printed stationary (with a stripe of color) and then the rest of it's in B&W. [[Good design is about thinking through how you place the information in an attractive manner ... color is optional.](#)]
- **The Bigger the Church ... The Smaller the Bulletin** // I noticed that larger churches seem to limit more what is in the bulletin. Although these ministries have a lot to offer their their people ... they narrow the focus of this piece exclusively on what people need to know to take their next step. This is a discipline that I think churches of all sizes should mimic. What actually needs to be in this piece? [[North Point in Atlanta has over 25,000 people every weekend but they have one of the smallest bulletins I've ever seen!](#)]
- **Branded to the Message** // The core of a great weekend service experience is the teaching. Many of the bulletins that caught my eye were designed around the message that the Pastor was giving that weekend. This helps to build anticipation in the people attending as well give a sense where the morning is going right from the moment they come in. [[Check out how Celebration Church branded the bulletin to their Christmas Series.](#)]
- **Make Financials Easy to Understand** // If you are going to communicate where your church is at financially make sure to communicate it in a way that is easily understood by non-numbers people. Many churches have "financial reports" in their bulletins but they aren't clear what they are attempting to communicate. [[Check out how simple Central Church made it to understand where they are at.](#)]
- **Pictures > Words** // We live in an increasingly visual culture. It's not that people can't read ... it's just that they don't. Find ways to add more pictures and images in your bulletin to communicate what you are trying to get across. Find some pictures of people from your church and include them in the bulletin. Use images to draw people's eyes to what you want to communicate. [[Check out how Christ Church of the Valley uses images to communicate!](#)] NOTE: CCV's bulletin is my favorite of all the ones I received. I love the short story about people being impacted by the church ... love how clear what to do if I'm new ... love how simply they communicate next steps.

- **Repurpose Other Design Elements** // Increasingly churches are using slides and graphics to support the announcements portion of the service. Why not take those images and reuse them in your program? If it's a big enough deal to talk about from stage ... it's a big enough deal to take up more space in the bulletin and use that same slide. [[Check out how Christ Community reuses it's slides.](#)]
- **Take the Space to Make it Simple** // Are you trying to introduce your people to something new? Take the space to make it super simple to understand. I noticed a number of churches are trying to get people to move to "Text to Give" services. It can be confusing for people who are doing it for the first time. [[Notice how Christ Fellowship tried to simplify this process with a simple 4 step process.](#)]
- **More is Not Better** // Rampant across many of the bulletins I received was just way too much information. If you are ever thinking to yourself "How small of a font can I use and still have people read it?" ... you have way too much in your bulletin. So many bulletins had literally dozens and dozens of "calls to action" contained within them ... people can't respond to all that! If you make everything "special" and put it in your bulletin ... nothing will be special. [[This was a noble attempt by Creekside church to inform people about everything that is going on at their church ... but I think it gets lost in how many different things are communicated!](#)] I'd be tempted to slip in an announcement in that bulletin that offers to give people a free \$10 iTunes gift card to the first 10 people who read and respond to see if people are actually reading all that. [[Doncaster Church is another example of this issue.](#)]
- **Declare Your Strategy** // Can you articulate your approach to ministry in a straight forward way that makes sense to people who are reading it for the first time? The bulletin is a great place to communicate to your guests how your ministry "works" and what their next steps are. [[I think First Baptist Spartanburg does a great job summarizing their 4 fold strategy in their bulletin.](#)] I love the reflective questions listed ... they engage people in self reflection and invite them into the mission.
- **Perforated Response Cards** // Many of the programs that stood out to me had perforated parts for people to tear off and respond. This is an effective way to follow up with first time guests or collect information on how people are reacting to the service. [[Check out how First Christian has a "week specific" response tear off that lines up with the announcements for that weekend.](#)] They were looking for people to volunteer with transportation and a Christmas project and had a simple check box response form to respond to those asks.
- **Discipleship Embedded Bulletin** // What if the bulletin was a discipleship piece? What if it offered help for people and didn't just try to get something from people? [[I dig how Genesis Church has a Bible reading and reflection plan right in their bulletin!](#)]
- **Don't Have a Bulletin!** // A number of the friends that I asked to send me something told me that they've dropped the bulletin all together. There is a trend of moving away from this printed piece as just sending out a weekly email or maybe hosting it on a blog. Churches are opting out of the bulletin for cost savings, environment stewardship and effectiveness. [[Here is an example from a Harvest Bible Chapel of the email that they send out to their entire database every week.](#)]
- **Best Use of a Beard** // [[I love the cover of Open Door's Bulletin.](#)] Too much fun.
- **Help Your Guests Know What to Expect** // When I was a kid I remember using the "bulletin" to try to figure out how much longer I had to sit through the service .. our

church had the entire order of service printed in it. It seems like most churches have wisely moved away from this sort of “service order” listing in their program ... however there is still value in helping your guests anticipate what is going to happen. Not knowing what is going to happen during the service is particularly nerve wracking for a first time guest! [[Check out how South Point clearly defines what's happening at their service.](#)]

- **Contextual Contact Information** // Who should your guests talk to when they need help at your church? Often churches seem to make it hard to find contact information on the various key leaders that guests should connect with if they have questions. [[I like how obvious Sugar Grove Church makes it to find contact information for various departments.](#)] Help people connect with people ... not departments. Give out contact information for actual people! [[I love how The Meeting House provides the direct cel phone number of their campus pastor right on their program ... that campus is a few thousand people ... and you can call the Campus Pastor directly.](#)] (Try it! Tell Matt I say hi!)

I'd love you to provide a link to your bulletin (or program!) in the comments section. What do you think your piece does particularly well? At [my church](#) we focus our bulletin totally on the first time guests ... I don't think our “regulars” look at bulletin at all. [We used to have this cool “story of us” on the inside of our program every week for about 18 months.](#) I liked that piece because I think it brought people up to speed quickly on who we are. [I also like our current version of “what to expect” ... I think it makes it pretty clear what is about to happen for our guests.](#) I'd love to hear about yours!

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