



FREE CHURCH COMMUNICATIONS *Handbook*

COMMUNICATION POLICIES,
PROCEDURES, & PLANNING

REVISED 2026

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PURPOSE & APPLICATION

PURPOSE

Communication is a valuable ministry resource. Because communication opportunities are limited, not every request will receive the same level of visibility or promotion. This handbook establishes the principles, processes, and authority by which communication decisions are evaluated, prioritized, approved, and implemented across the ministries of Free Church.

This handbook exists to:

- Promote clear and consistent communication practices.
- Establish clear communication expectations, processes, and standards.
- Clarify communication roles, responsibilities, and authority.
- Steward communication opportunities wisely.
- Support the mission and ministries of the Free Church.
- Reduce confusion, duplication, and miscommunication.
- Support staff, ministry leaders, and volunteers in communication planning and decision-making.

APPLICATION

This handbook primarily governs communication intended for the broader Free Church congregation through church-wide communication channels.

Ministry-specific communication directed toward existing participants, volunteers, leaders, or families (such as parent emails, volunteer communication, ministry newsletters, scheduling updates, and routine ministry correspondence) generally falls under the authority of the respective ministry leader and does not require review through the church-wide communication process.

Ministry leaders are encouraged to maintain communication that is accurate, aligned with the mission and values of Free Church, and consistent with applicable church policies and procedures.

COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES

Church communication intentionally helps people know what matters, understand why it matters, take a next step, and celebrate what God is doing in and through the Free Church of Cañon City.

Our communication should support the mission of the church by helping people engage with what God is doing in the life of Free Church and encouraging them toward participation, discipleship, and community.

Before selecting a communication channel, we should first determine what we are trying to accomplish. Most communication serves one or more of four purposes:

AWARENESS

Helping people know something exists.

UNDERSTANDING

Helping people understand what something is and why it matters.

PARTICIPATION

Helping people take a next step in discipleship, community, service, or mission.

CELEBRATION

Helping people recognize and celebrate what God is doing in and through the Free Church.

COMMUNICATION AUTHORITY

The following roles are responsible for communication-related decision making and approvals, and should be exercised within the parameters outlined below.

MINISTRY LEADERS

Responsible for:

- Submitting communication requests.
- Providing accurate event and ministry information.
- Meeting established communication deadlines.
- Communicating ministry-specific needs and goals.

Ministry Leaders may:

- Request communication support.
- Recommend communication methods or timing.

Ministry Leaders may not:

- Determine communication channels.
- Determine announcement placement or scheduling.
- Determine communication priority.
- Guarantee promotion through any communication medium.

COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

Responsible for...

- Communication strategy, implementation, and stewardship.
- Approval of standard communication requests.
- Channel selection and communication placement.
- Communication scheduling and prioritization.
- Communication calendars and timelines.
- Design standards and communication consistency.
- Sunday announcement planning and coordination.

The Communications Director has final authority regarding:

- Communication methods and channels.
- Timing and duration of promotion.
- Communication priority and placement.
- Announcement scheduling and content standards.

EXCEPTIONS & APPROVALS

Certain communication requests fall outside established communication tiers, guidelines, or approval pathways and require additional leadership review.

All communication requests should be submitted through the established communication process. When a request requiring additional leadership review is identified, the Communications Director shall refer the request to the Lead Pastor for review.

Requests received directly by the Lead Pastor, Elder Board, staff members, or ministry leaders should be routed through the Communications Director prior to communication planning and implementation.

LEAD PASTOR

Responsible for:

- Reviewing requests that fall outside established communication guidelines, ministry structures, or approval pathways.
- Providing pastoral guidance regarding communication priorities and exceptions.
- Determining whether a request should advance for Elder Board review.

Requests not advanced by the Lead Pastor shall not proceed further in the approval process.

ELDER BOARD

Responsible for:

- Providing final review and approval of non-standard requests advanced by the Lead Pastor.
- Providing guidance regarding communication matters requiring broader leadership discernment.

Notes

Non-standard requests are not a separate communication tier. Rather, they are requests that require additional leadership review due to their nature, visibility, audience, partnership, or communication implications.

Approval of one non-standard request does not establish precedent for future requests. Each request shall be evaluated independently based on its unique circumstances and alignment with the mission, values, and priorities of the Free Church.

COMMUNICATION TIERS

Communication tiers indicate the level of communication visibility and channel access available to a request. They do not reflect the importance or value of a ministry, event, or initiative.

A ministry, event, or initiative may generate communications that fall within different communication tiers depending on audience and communication purpose.

Requests may utilize communication channels available within their assigned tier and all lower tiers.

Higher communication tiers have access to a broader range of communication channels and visibility opportunities. Lower communication tiers utilize more targeted communication channels appropriate to their audience, purpose, and scope.

Communication tiers are determined based on audience, purpose, mission alignment, and communication needs.

Most communication requests fit within established ministry structures and are evaluated according to the tiers outlined below. Requests requiring additional leadership review follow the Exceptions & Approvals process described in this handbook.

The Communications Director is responsible for assigning communication tiers and determining the most appropriate communication channels for each request.

TIER I Congregation Wide Communication

TIER II Ministry Promotion & Awareness

TIER III Ministry Operations & Participant Communication

TIER IV External Resources, Opportunities, & Awareness

TIER V Community Bulletin Board Communication

TIER I

CONGREGATION-WIDE COMMUNICATION

Appropriate when a communication has broad relevance to the Free Church congregation and serves a churchwide purpose.

This includes churchwide initiatives, church meetings, schedule changes, significant celebrations, and major ministry opportunities with broad congregational relevance.

Available Communication Channels

- Side Street Banners & Exterior Signage
- Church Wide Mailings
- Church Wide Emails
- Church Wide Text Messages
- Website Homepage Features
- Website Banners & Alerts
- Push Notifications
- Additional communication channels available within lower tiers

Notes

Placement within Tier I communication channels remains subject to communication priorities, scheduling considerations, and available communication resources.

TIER II

MINISTRY PROMOTION & AWARENESS

Appropriate when a communication supports an established ministry of the Free Church or a Missions Board-supported initiative, and seeks to inform, invite, recruit, or engage participants beyond an existing ministry audience.

This includes ministry events, discipleship opportunities, recruitment efforts, and Missions Board-supported initiatives that do not require congregation-wide communication.

Available Communication Channels

- Website Ministry & Landing Page Features
- Sanctuary Slides
- Quarterly Newsletters
- Special Campaign Emails
- Facebook Events
- Additional communication channels available within lower tiers

Notes

Tier II communication is intended to promote participation and engagement in the ministries of the Free Church.

Communication directed toward existing participants, volunteers, leaders, families, or ministry teams generally falls within Tier III and should be communicated through ministry-specific communication channels.

Placement within Tier II communication channels remains subject to communication priorities, scheduling considerations, and available communication resources.

TIER III

MINISTRY OPERATIONS & PARTICIPANT COMMUNICATION

Appropriate when a communication is directed toward existing participants, volunteers, leaders, families, or ministry teams connected to a ministry of the Free Church.

This includes operational ministry communication such as ministry updates, volunteer communication, scheduling, parent communication, team coordination, newsletters, and routine correspondence intended for individuals already connected to a ministry.

Available Communication Channels

- Ministry-Specific Emails
- Ministry-Specific Text Messages
- Ministry Messaging Platforms
- Ministry Publications & Newsletters
- Sign-Up Sheets & Online Registrations
- Additional communication channels available within lower tiers

Notes

Tier III communication is intended to inform, equip, and coordinate individuals who are already participating in a ministry. Communications intended to recruit, promote, or broaden awareness beyond an existing ministry audience generally fall within Tier II.

Tier III communication generally does not require review through the church-wide communication process unless it is being promoted beyond its intended ministry audience.

Placement within Tier III communication channels remains subject to ministry leadership oversight and applicable church policies.

TIER IV

EXTERNAL RESOURCES, OPPORTUNITIES, & AWARENESS

Appropriate when a communication raises awareness of external ministries, organizations, programs, or community resources that align with the mission, values, and ministry priorities of the Free Church.

This tier includes community resources, external ministries, service opportunities, advocacy initiatives, and programs operating outside the ministries of the Free Church.

Available Communication Channels

- Website & App Events Page
- Social Media | Facebook & Instagram
- Bulletin
- Lobby Slides
- Welcome Center Displays
- Brochures & Handouts
- Printed Publications
- Lobby Signs
- Stall Signs
- In-Building Posters, Displays & Signage

Notes

Tier IV communication is intended to inform and connect individuals with ministries, organizations, and resources operating outside the ministries of the Free Church.

Approval of a Tier IV communication does not imply sponsorship, ownership, or operational oversight by the Free Church unless otherwise stated.

Communication support for Tier IV requests is typically limited to the placement and distribution of materials provided by the requesting organization. Design, content creation, printing, and campaign development are generally reserved for Free Church ministries and approved church initiatives.

Tier IV communication is intended to promote awareness and engagement but does not function as operational communication for organizations outside the ministries of the Free Church.

Placement within Tier IV communication channels remains subject to communication priorities, available resources, and alignment with the church's mission and values.

TIER V

COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD COMMUNICATION

Appropriate when a communication provides general community information that may be of interest to members of the Free Church but does not warrant active promotion through church communication channels.

This tier includes community events, local organizations, public notices, school activities, fundraisers, and other informational resources that have not been designated for promotion through higher communication tiers.

Available Communication Channels

- Foyer Community Bulletin Board

Notes

Tier V communication is intended to make information available, not actively promote participation or engagement.

Placement on the Foyer Community Bulletin Board does not imply endorsement or sponsorship by the Free Church.

Space on the Community Bulletin Board may be limited and remains subject to church policies, available space, and administrative discretion.

SUNDAY MORNING ANNOUNCEMENTS

Authorized by the Communications Director in accordance with the Announcement Guidelines.

PURPOSE

Sunday morning announcements are intended to help people engage with the life and mission of the Free Church through timely invitations, ministry opportunities, celebrations, and essential updates. Because announcement time is limited, not every ministry, event, or opportunity will receive verbal promotion.

Announcements should complement (not replace) other communication channels and should generally be reserved for information that benefits from a personal invitation during gathered worship or requires timely communication to the congregation.

ANNOUNCEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

When evaluating announcement requests, the Communications Director should consider the following questions:

- What action do we most want people to take this week?
- Does this help people take a meaningful next step?
- Is this broadly relevant to the congregation?
- Does this align with the mission, vision, and ministries of the Free Church?
- Is this time-sensitive?
- Can this information be communicated effectively through another communication channel?
- Are the necessary details readily available elsewhere?
- Does available announcement time allow this communication to be presented well?

When prioritizing multiple qualified announcements:

- Events occurring that Sunday or during the coming week receive greater emphasis.
- Opportunities that encourage participation and discipleship typically receive greater emphasis than informational updates.
- Stories celebrating God's work often have greater impact than additional logistical details.

ANNOUNCEMENT GRID

The Announcement Grid identifies the primary categories used to evaluate whether a communication is appropriate for Sunday morning announcement consideration.

Meeting one or more of these categories does not guarantee a Sunday announcement, but provides the basis for evaluation in accordance with these guidelines.

Every Sunday announcement should fit within one or more of the following categories.

INVITATION

Helping people take a next step

Examples:

- Baptism
- Membership
- Family Night
- Prayer Gatherings
- Serving Opportunities

MOBILIZATION

Inviting participation in a specific need or opportunity

Examples:

- Volunteer recruitment
- Outreach initiatives
- Disaster response
- Community partnerships

CELEBRATION

Sharing stories of God's work

Examples:

- Testimonies
- Ministry impact updates
- Outreach reports
- Volunteer appreciation

HOUSEKEEPING

Necessary logistical information

Examples:

- Schedule changes
- Event reminders
- Facility updates
- Time Sensitive Reminders

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

Announcement Requests & Considerations

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Announcement Grid

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Communications Director Evaluation

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Sunday Announcement

EXPECTATIONS

The Communications Director seeks fairness across the course of a ministry season rather than equal platform time each Sunday.

Not every ministry, event, or opportunity will receive verbal promotion, and approval for communication does not guarantee use of every communication channel.

Final announcement selection, scheduling, editing, presentation, and delivery remain at the discretion of the Communications Director. Approved announcements should be delivered as approved. Unplanned or ad-lib announcements should not be added without prior authorization.

The goal of Sunday morning announcements is not to communicate everything happening, but to communicate the right opportunities, at the right time, in a way that invites people to engage more deeply in the life and mission of the church.

COMMUNICATION PLANNING

PURPOSE

Effective communication requires thoughtful preparation. Adequate planning provides time to develop a communication strategy, create supporting materials, coordinate logistics, and promote ministry opportunities in a clear, intentional, and effective manner.

COMMUNICATION REQUESTS

All communication requests must be submitted through the Communication Request Form once the essential details of an event have been finalized.

Communication planning begins after a **complete** request has been received.

RECOMMENDED PLANNING TIMELINES

Recommended lead times reflect the entire communication process. Adequate time allows for planning, content development, design, review, registration, scheduling, and meaningful promotion prior to the event.

Church-wide initiatives, conferences major outreach events	6-8 Weeks
Events requiring new branding, graphics, printed materials, registration, or significant promotion	6-8 Weeks
Recurring Programs, events, classes, volunteer opportunities	4-6 Weeks
Schedule changes, reminders, or simple updates	2-3 Weeks
Emergencies	As Needed

LATE REQUESTS

Requests submitted after recommended lead times will be accommodated whenever reasonably possible but may receive limited communication due to production timelines, competing ministry priorities, and available staff capacity.

Thoughtful planning creates opportunities for thoughtful communication. Early planning benefits both ministry leaders and the congregation.

HANDBOOK REVIEW

This Communication Plan is intended to provide consistency while remaining flexible enough to support the evolving ministries and communication needs of the Free Church.

The Communications Director will review this handbook periodically and recommend revisions as ministry needs, communication practices, and church priorities evolve. Significant revisions should be approved through the appropriate leadership process.

Questions regarding this Communication Plan should be directed to the Communications Director.