

The Church Bulletin Board
For AGM Maritime Conference
Christian Life and Growth Committee 2009

The Scene: Since the space is limited, this can be done with the narrator at the microphone and Rev. Betty at the table with a bunch of papers around her. Mrs. Smith can come in and out. I've just used 3 people but there could be more written or things changed if there are more people who would like to be part. Also gender can be changed if needed for the parts.

Narrator: Rev. Betty is seated at her desk in the office of the church she has recently come to. She is surrounded by mounds of papers. She's sort of muttering to himself:

"What am I supposed to do with all this stuff. Look at the stacks of pamphlets, info packs and the pile of emails the secretary printed off. Who looked after all this stuff before I got here? I didn't think dealing with all this paperwork was going to be part of my work in ministry!! "

A knock at the door. The church secretary, Mrs. Smith comes in.

Mrs. Smith: "Hi, Rev. Betty, I have some more email notices that have come in and I'm wondering what you want to do with them? By the way, there was a call this morning from Mr. Brown. He...um...well...you don't know the folks here that well yet...and the kindest way I can say this is that Mr. Brown often finds things about the way the church is run that need improvement in his opinion. This time he "was concerned" about the 3 pages of notices in the bulletin and didn't really like you taking so much time "reading all that stuff that didn't have anything to do with our worship service". He said you spent so much time yesterday that it crowded the rest of the service and your sermon, according to him, was only 8 minutes long."

Rev. Betty: "Thanks for filling me in, Mrs. Smith. There's so much information I think is important for the congregation to know about. I believe it's part of connecting to the community and beyond when we know what's happening beyond the walls of this building. As well, there are notices from Conference and Presbytery and General Council I really feel folks need to know about. The question is how to relay the information in ways that everyone can read or see without taking such a chunk out of our worship time. Hmm...was my sermon really only 8 minutes long? I could have sworn it was at least 20. It took 4 days to write it!"

Narrator: Rev. Betty thought about the communication problem. She wanted to deal with this herself. She was new to this church and felt she "had to prove himself". One day she had a brainwave...

Rev. Betty: "I know what to do...I'll just sort all the material out in groups that make sense. Let's see, Christian Life and Growth stuff goes here, Stewardship stuff goes here. This is so much easier...now what to do with it and how to show it to people...I know..I'll put it together on a bulletin board."

Narrator: So Rev. Betty got to work and before long the lovely bulletin board at the main entrance of the church was tastefully arranged with all manner of notices, pamphlets and materials. She was sure the problem was solved. Instead of spending so much time at the first of the worship service reading notices, she directed people to check out the bulletin board.

Mrs. Smith: "Rev. Betty, I really appreciate all your hard work fixing up the bulletin board. Ummm....I just had another phone call from Mr. Brown. This time he's saying that he couldn't find what he was looking for on the board. And he also said that he doesn't come in the front door of the church and he's not as spry as he used to be and finds it "a little difficult to have to climb up the steps to the front part of the church".

Rev. Betty: "This is getting to be an issue that's taking way too much time. I guess it's time to enlist some help. I'm going to call in the chair of the Worship committee, someone from the building committee, outreach committee, one of the stewards for a meeting. Would you mind helping with this as well, Mrs. Smith? You seem to have "your finger on the pulse of the congregation, so to speak".

Narrator: At the meeting the group talked about the dynamics of the congregation and the way people related to each other and the worship space. They realized that no matter where a bulletin board was placed it wasn't going to be seen by everyone, and further to that some people wearing bifocals and glasses might have difficulty reading small print on a pamphlet posted a few feet away. They also realized that perhaps there had been an information overload, too much stuff to read. They did an informal survey of the congregation asking the members to advise what ways of communication worked best for them.

Rev. Betty: "I'm wondering if we had several little bulletin boards and maybe some brochure racks, if we could get the information out more effectively that way. I see by the responses of the survey that most people in the congregation have and use email. That might be another way of reaching people with important notices.

Mrs. Smith: "I could set up a group phone list. That would reach everyone in the congregation. There are a few who don't have email."

Narrator: The group was enthused, and several other possibilities were named, such as a newsletter which could be distributed on Sunday mornings or sent by email, and using Public Service announcements over the local radio station. Someone even came up with the idea of a new sign in front of the church. The group felt they had finally solved the problem.

Mrs. Smith: "Good morning, Rev. Betty. Ummm...I really appreciate all the enthusiasm of our group and all the good ideas about getting the information out to the congregation. Mr. Brown just called again. Now don't get upset...he wasn't being critical this time. He was just wondering how all this information comes in and how it gets where it needs to go."

Rev. Betty: "okay, please call the group and let's meet at the Fair Trade Café on Main Street to talk about this."

Narrator: So the group met and discussed the issue and all agreed it would be a wonderful thing if someone from the congregation would be willing to co-ordinate all this information.

Mrs. Smith: "I know someone who would be perfect...Mr. Brown's son, John, has just retired and he did this sort of organizing as part of his past work life. If you'd like me to, I'll call and ask him if he is willing."

Narrator: John Brown agreed to become what was to be called Communication Co-ordinator for the church. He met with Rev. Betty and the group and together they worked out all the bits and pieces of the communication puzzle including the needs of the congregation. After lots of trial and errors, a system evolved which worked for most of the congregation. Even Mr. Brown was pleased. Rev. Betty still sorts stuff out on her office floor, but now at least, she has something to do with it. The system they evolved isn't perfect, but she was pleased that people were open to change and adapting when they needed to. There was interest and even excitement in the congregation as they became more familiar with the workings of the church locally and beyond. Outreach was increasing as well. There are still bulletin boards around, but they are just a part of something much larger.

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