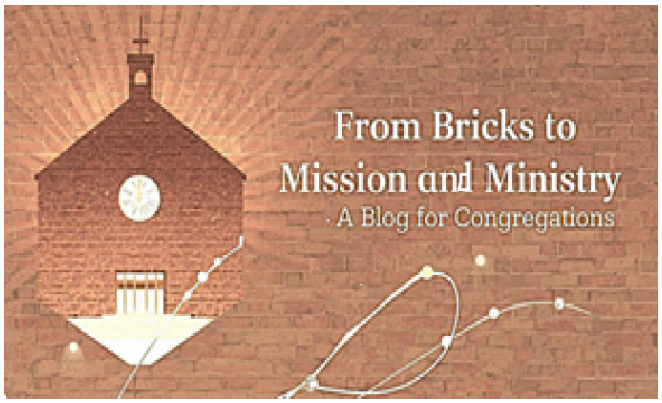


Tell Your Story

Why Communication About Church Buildings Matters More Than Ever

By Katja Brittain

Your church building already tells a story.



It tells of baptisms and funerals. Of potluck dinners and late night committee meetings. Of neighbours finding warmth, food, music, silence, or support. Yet outside the congregation, very few people know this story. Many do not know what happens inside your walls. Many do not know that your space might be available for their needs.

This is not primarily a marketing problem. It is a hospitality question.

How we communicate about our buildings shapes who feels invited, who feels excluded, and how our neighbourhood understands the church. Communication is one of the most practical ways congregations live out their mission in public.

In February, I will be leading a workshop on Communication Strategies for Church Buildings. This January blog offers a glimpse into why this work matters and how congregations can begin preparing for it.

Your Website Is Your Digital Front Door

Before anyone visits your building, they visit your website. For many, this is the only contact they will ever have with your congregation. What does your digital front door communicate?

Clear and accessible information matters. Your address, worship times, and contact details should be easy to find immediately. Information about community use or space rental should not be hidden several clicks deep. Many people search for space while standing on a sidewalk or riding a bus. Mobile accessibility is not optional.

Visuals matter just as much. People trust what they can see. Clean, well lit photos of rooms, entrances, parking, and accessibility features help visitors imagine themselves in your space. Photos of real activities matter even more. A hall filled with people tells a stronger story than an empty room ever could.

Keeping information current is an act of respect. An outdated website suggests that no one is listening. Regular reviews build trust with neighbours and potential partners.

Visibility Beyond the Screen

Not everyone discovers a church online. Physical presence still matters.

Exterior signage, message boards, and banners quietly communicate whether a building is alive or dormant. Clear signage that names worship times, events, and community use signals openness. Interior signage does the same. When people can find washrooms, meeting rooms, and exits without asking, they feel at ease. Wayfinding is pastoral care in physical form.

Local notice boards, libraries, cafés, and community centres remain powerful communication tools. Simple posters that explain what is happening and where to learn more can reach people who never search for a church website.

Social Media as Relationship Building

Social media does not need to be overwhelming. It works best when it is relational.

Consistent, modest posting builds familiarity. Photos of events, short stories about what happened in the building, and shared posts from groups using your space tell a story of connection. Tagging partners extends reach and strengthens relationships. Responding to comments and messages signals presence and care.

This is not about perfection. It is about showing up regularly and truthfully.

Stories Carry Mission

Facts inform. Stories invite.

A room description tells people what exists. A story tells them why it matters. When congregations share stories of community meals, support groups, rehearsals, or celebrations, they communicate values without slogans. These stories reveal how the Gospel is lived through space.

Testimonials from users help others imagine their place in the building. They also help congregations see their own ministry with fresh eyes.

Mission and Money Belong Together

Building communication always sits at the intersection of economics and theology.

Rental income supports sustainability. Mission shapes discernment. Clear communication helps congregations attract partners whose values align with their own. It reduces conflict, clarifies expectations, and supports long term stewardship of both people and property.

Environmental responsibility, accessibility, reconciliation with Indigenous neighbours, and social inclusion can all be communicated through how a building is described and used. These are not side issues. They are part of the story the building tells.

This Work Does Not Belong to One Person

Communication work does not have to fall on the same few volunteers.

Teenagers, retirees, professionals, and family members often have skills that fit this work well. Because much of it can be done flexibly, it opens doors for people who cannot commit to weekly meetings but want to contribute meaningfully.

Inviting others into this work is itself an act of community building.

Communication as Witness

How we speak about our buildings reflects how we understand church.

When stories remain hidden, the building appears closed even when doors are unlocked. When stories are shared, the building becomes legible to the neighbourhood. Communication becomes witness.

It says: there is room here. There is care here. There is life here.

This is not optional work. It is part of faithful stewardship of space, story, and relationship.

Join the February Workshop (19 Feb)

The February workshop will offer practical tools, shared learning, and space to reflect on how communication, mission, sustainability, and hospitality intersect in your own context.

January is a good time to start noticing the stories your building already tells. February is a good time to learn how to tell them well.

Every square foot carries meaning. It is time to let it speak.

What does your building mean to you? – Check out the exercises to help congregational members reflect on what their building means to them—spiritually, socially, historically, and practically.

I'm Katja Brittain, both a theologian and an MBA, with over ten years of experience helping congregations navigate the often-complex questions around church building management. In my current role, I serve the Eastern Synod of the ELCIC on a half-time basis, while the other half of my work is supported by a generous donation from Charitus. This allows me to offer workshops and a monthly blog across all Synods, sharing insights and practical tools to help congregations align their buildings with their mission.



Upcoming Workshop – January 15, 2026 | 7:30 p.m. (ET)

Every Square Foot Counts: Financial Stewardship and Church Buildings

Join us on Zoom for the February session of the *Every Square Foot Counts* workshop series, a monthly offering supporting congregational leaders across the ELCIC in faithful and responsible church building stewardship.

This session will feature **Charitus**, offering a comprehensive overview of the financial tools and services available to congregations. The presentation will introduce Charitus' work across **investments, revenue generation approaches, and charitable programs and services**, with attention to how these resources can support congregations as they make decisions about church property, long term sustainability, and mission alignment.

The focus of the session is informational and exploratory. It is designed to help

congregational leaders understand the range of financial options available to them and how these may relate to building stewardship, governance responsibilities, and capacity planning, without adding new burdens to already stretched volunteer structures.

Key takeaway:
Faithful stewardship involves informed discernment, realistic financial planning, and aligning economic decisions with congregational mission and values.

The session will take place within the established *Every Square Foot Counts* Zoom format. It is intended for council members, property and finance committee members, clergy, and lay leaders involved in church building and stewardship decisions.

Date: Thursday, February 19, 2026
Time: 7:30 p.m. Eastern
Format: Zoom
Open to: All members of ELCIC congregations

Registration: please register here