

Church Magazine Awards 2005

Here it is! The long-awaited competition for the ACE Church Magazine Awards is being launched with this issue of *The ACE*. It looks different! It is different! And it represents a new challenge to everyone involved in producing church magazines.

This is our most ambitious awards idea so far. Based on experience gained in earlier competitions the concept of The ACE Awards 2005 is aimed at highlighting recognition of achievement. In addition to three ultimate awards there will be a series of diplomas to acknowledge good practice in the production of church magazines.

Perhaps the best attraction for entering is that this time there will be several more opportunities to win recognition. "News" headlines, use of photographs, cover design, articles from Church members, articles on faith and editorials on community affairs will all be reasons for winning a diploma.

No matter how large or small your resources and budgets there are opportunities for your magazine to win an award. So don't be shy, enter your magazine and join in the fun. You never know, it might be you who wins one of the major awards.

ACE is planning an awards presentation ceremony to be held in November this year. Of one thing you can be sure, there will be no announcements about winners until the then so do come along if you want to be among the first to greet the winners.

A leaflet providing full details of the awards and an entry is available from the website or from Lesley Barrett. Please ask for further copies for friends or if you can pass them on to another magazine.

ACE AGM Creates and Restores

Three new officers were elected at the 6th Annual General Meeting held Saturday 12 February 2005, at The Saracen's Head, Kings Norton, Birmingham. Together with the Old Grammar School, it forms the Church Centre in Kings Norton.

The two buildings won the BBC TV Restoration Award for 2004 and plans are well advanced for carrying out the restoration in a sensitive manner while meeting the requirements of current legislation. Members were treated to an interesting guided tour of the two buildings. This was a one-off treat from which we learned how the TV programme had been put together and more about the history and structure of the two buildings.

After the presentations of the annual report and accounts, the meeting moved to the elections. This year was unusually important. The previous officers, Keith Wood, Mary Coombs, Andrea Jackson, and John Dempster, had all, coincidentally, expressed their wishes to stand down as officers because of other commitments or for health reasons. So we had to elect a completely new team.

Sydney Bryson was elected Chairman. An ACE member for the past four years, he was Editor of Knowle Parish Magazine for many years and is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations.

Bernard Stradling was elected Vice Chairman. He edits "Outlook", the magazine of the Bethesda Methodist Church in Cheltenham and helped to organise the conference in Gloucester last year.

Previously Membership Secretary, Lesley Barrett is now the Association's Secretary. Among many interests, Lesley assists the Gloucester Cathedral "Newsletter" team.

Board members elected are Valerie Carroll, Andrea Jackson, Rosemary Spencer, John Dempster, Michael Jameson, Mike Walpole, Keith Wood and Margaret Wood.

Sydney Bryson expressed the Association's appreciation for all the hard work and contributions towards the management of the Association's affairs that the previous officers had put in over the past three years.

As there was no nomination for a new Treasurer, Keith Wood offered to look after this job. The officers subsequently accepted an offer from Rosemary Spencer.

Andrea Jackson has taken over the Membership Secretary mantle.

The meeting was then given a rundown on the proposed ACE Church Magazine Awards for 2005 proposals. Mike Walpole and Sydney Bryson certainly gave us something to think about.



From the Chairman

Going Forward Together

As your new Chairman, my objective for the year is to review our present situation and, importantly, to come up with a plan of action which will give us the overdue much needed kick-start towards becoming a truly successful national organisation.

Since our very first AGM in St Albans, where ACE was conceived by Michael Jameson, ACE has changed from an original local idea. It suddenly jumped into the national arena when it staged its first Local Church Magazine Competition.

There were 300 entries and, as a consequence 300 members. Unfortunately, within the year that followed, the numbers dwindled. This may have been because members only joined to take part in the competition. Or, in my opinion, they possibly lost interest because the 'value for money' they expected did not materialise.

However, our first Annual Conference at Birmingham University in 2002 was a great success – something like 100 members came. Our second Competition in 2003 attracted about 70 entries. And our 2004 Conference at Gloucester Cathedral was also a major success.

The good news is that our membership is again steadily increasing. Your Board is beginning to give more attention to 'services' – value for money and all that – and we hope members are already making use of our Members' Handbook. Mike Walpole, Handbook Editor, always welcomes a feedback of ideas for possible inclusion (m.walpole@ac-editors.co.uk).

Although there is still some way to go, our ACE website – www.ac-editors.co.uk – has been cleaned up. Surprisingly, whilst there was a flurry at the beginning of the year by members seeking advice in the Members Only section, the number of enquiries has tailed off. We encourage all members to use the website.

Mike knows this. He is a trained journalist and is providing a useful 'consultancy' service – gratis at that! – by meeting members' individual approaches for advice. He has been rewarded with many e-mails of appreciation.

Our local ACE Group meetings have also tapped the urgent need for advice. An example was a letter from a brand new member (enclosing her subscription!) who attended an ACE Birmingham Group meeting just to see what ACE is all about. She wrote, "Thoroughly enjoyed the meeting and found it very informative ... I was catapulted into the role of editor at very short notice ... however, the ACE meeting has inspired me to start thinking of a new approach to our magazine ... at last I no longer feel on my own!"

For me, I will always remember the members pouring out of the last session of our first ACE Conference at Birmingham University – the air was electric with intense enthusiasm to put all the knowledge gained into immediate practice! It was the same at last year's Gloucester Conference.

This getting together to exchange and learn is indeed our trump card – if only members would play it by gathering from time to time in their own local areas. Look up how to get a Local Group going on our ACE website!

We, the Board, desperately need your input from the grass roots. You need us to take the lead – WE NEED EACH OTHER!


Chairman

Alarm Bells Ring

A recent TV programme asked whether the Ten Commandments were still relevant today. Anyone involved in publicity and Christian Witness should be sitting up wide-eyed and bushy tailed at that. It includes all members of ACE.

Was the programme tasteless? I didn't watch it, did you?

Whatever your thoughts, one fact remains. Several of the Commandments were overturned by the voting audience. That's when the alarm bells should start to ring and we need to take notice.

Apparently the command to "Love God" was conspicuously absent. But the audience did say "Treat others as you would have them treat you." So perhaps all is not lost. And that thought may be somewhat reinforced by the fact that by the wish of the audience to protect family, children, the vulnerable and the environment while prohibiting theft, killing and violence.

In many areas weekly church attendances are falling. Don't we all wish we knew why one special church in an area is outstanding in bucking the trend? It may be because they are busy and are using their magazine to tell everyone what they are doing and why.

What this programme apparently did was to highlight the real sense of disconnection between life as it is lived and the religious idea - not just Christian but embrace other faiths too because they set also out to define how we should live in harmony with each other.

The Church of England was particularly picked upon for looking inward upon itself, attempting to ostracise certain groups of people such as women and homosexuals from its senior ranks while failing to understand the needs of its congregations and, more importantly, the community at large.

As editors of church magazine we have an important role to play in helping to overcome these problems. We can, and should, use our special knowledge to advise our Minister how to reach out to the congregation and beyond. Without this working together the Church may fail to reach out to its potential members.

Church Magazines

A Preview of the ACE Survey

Mike Walpole

The ACE survey to find out what equipment editors use to produce magazines is revealing some fascinating information – not least the way editors feel about the job. The survey also reveals strong ecumenical and evangelical progress.

A Bedfordshire magazine editor notes that Anglicans, Methodists and Roman Catholics work together to produce their 800 circulation ten times a year (almost monthly), saying: "Working together to produce it has been immensely rewarding. The December/January issue was delivered to 4000 local homes in every parish covered – a huge increase and task given its usual circulation. Copies are left with estate agents for newcomers to take."

What do you do if there is too much material? Add more pages, says the editor of a 330 circulation monthly. About 200 regulars and members of the church have their own address labels prepared and collect them from a dedicated stand. The remainder are for visitors and the general public to pick up "when using our busy premises." Others go to the waiting rooms of doctors, hospitals, dentists and vets.

Another editor also makes the size fit the material available. His readers collect from the back of church, and about 60 are posted to friends and past members.

A much smaller newsletter is produced three times a year and distributed to over 2000 readers encouraging them to come to special services at Easter, Harvest and Christmas.

A Leeds magazine survey found that many readers read the first page comment piece, written alternately by the Methodist Minister and Anglican Rector. Most of the 1300 copies go to people who never go to either church apart from weddings, baptisms and funerals.

One editor is training an assistant to take over in 2 years.

Another says the greatest problem is getting the vicar's letter on time – usually days after the deadline. The same editor comments on a tendency to use the same contributors too frequently because of the lack of new ones.

There are plenty of examples of large teams and of editors working alone. Husbands or wives (or a neighbour in one case) are proofreaders. One magazine is produced entirely by a husband and wife team – from editing, through printing, collation and folding.

Several editors mention using humour and lightheartedness to communicate the Christian message.

The team of six producing and distributing a 700-circulation bi-monthly delivers free copies to every road and village over the year as they are prayed for specifically in church each Sunday. A Parish Church Council grant covers this outreach when needed. The same magazine has 36 pages, including 11 of advertisements, and, on average, 12 photographs.

One response shows that the typewriter is still used to produce a magazine which is sent to the USA as well as around the UK.



Still used to produce a few Church Magazines!

At least one editor is in his 80's, and has been editor for eight years. Longest editorship in the survey is 26 years.

Another editor whose magazine is mostly photocopied, but who also has access to a colour laser printer to produce the cover and some pages at the Presbytery, says: "The objective is to produce an informative and entertaining local magazine within the parish and the local community." He adds: "I report to the Parish Church Council monthly and am accountable to them. They are very supportive but leave all the 'work' to me!"

An editor with a total of 12 years editorship in three previous parishes has agreed to take the job on during an interregnum. The last vicar's wife was editor – and she hopes the new person/wife may want it back!

An editor with four years under his keyboard, and whose wife proofreads his output, sums it all up this way: "I enjoy the task and feel justifiably proud in the end product!"

I am still populating the database ahead of analysis, and intend publishing a full report, including notes on the technical aspects of the survey, to ACE members soon.

It is not too late to return the survey to Mike at the address on the bottom of the form.




News from Local Groups

Chips with “Everythink”

When twelve ACE Birmingham Group members (*anything to do with the twelve apostles? Ed*) met recently at St Nicholas’s Roman Catholic Church in Sutton Coldfield to talk shop, three of the ‘friends’ subsequently decided to join ACE.

Previous meetings had been held during the evenings. But this event, held during the morning, proved to be more attractive, perhaps because people preferred to travel during daylight. It’s timing also meant that it could lead to a ‘fish and chip’ lunch!



The meeting was organised by Mary Daniels who lives in the Sutton Coldfield area and is typical of what can be arranged by a group of people who live reasonably local to each other can do to help each other improve their own magazine by discussing their skills with other like-minded editors.

Sydney Bryson, tel: 01564 772100, e-mail: s.bryson@ac-editors.co.uk

Church Editors – Vital Links!

Members and other who attended a recent Gloucester ACE Local Group meeting were told that they were an important part of the religious communication network.

Recently appointed Gloucester Diocesan Communication Officer, Hannah Curry, said that although she is aware of the gaps in the communication network, she sees church magazine editors as a resource that she and other at her level can use to move information through to the local church communities.

The Group also got down to some practical work. Lesley Barrett reports, “Having tabled several copies of the same magazine (not one published in our patch!) we ventured to take it to bits! We looked at the cover design, the best use of back cover for advertising income or for directory purposes and the use of external editorial services such as Parish Pump”.

Design and layout is the plan for the next meeting on Friday 9 June.

Lesley Barrett, tel: 01452 521062, e-mail: l.barrett@ac-editors.co.uk

Subscriptions

All subscriptions were due on 1st of January. This is important for all members because if you do not pay your subscription very soon then your membership will be deemed to have lapsed. Reinstatement of membership and its privileges will only take place when your subscription has been received.

The subscription is £20 and this should be sent to the Treasurer, Rosemary Spencer, 23 Berkeley Road, Kenilworth, Warwickshire, CV8 1AQ. Please make the cheque payable to “The Association for Church Editors” and please make sure your own name is included with it. We have had instances where the cheque has come from the church’s managing committee and we have not been able to link this with the editor!

The views of any contributors to this newsletter may not necessarily be those of the Association for Church Editors nor can the Association accept any responsibilities in connection with any companies or organisations mentioned.

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The Association for Church Editors

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