Communications Survey Results

February 2020
Goal: Improve conference communications

• Understand what current conference communications tools people use
  • What is most useful to them?
  • What can be improved?

• Learn what new tools we could provide to improve conference communications for both clergy and laity
The Process

Focus groups / listening sessions
Conducted November ‘18 – January ‘19

• 19 groups in 5 different locations
  (Fairfax Station, Richmond, South Hill, Staunton, Virginia Beach)

• 98 people, representing 10 districts

• Active and retired clergy, church staff, youth, laity, and leaders serving in local churches, in districts, and on conference boards and agencies
The Process

Written survey

Conducted June – July ’19

- 2,147 people took the survey
- Promoted in the Advocate magazine, weekly e-Advocate emails, on ClergyNet and LaityNet, on VAUMC.org, in 15 district emails, on conference social media channels, announced and distributed at Annual Conference, emailed to the EVC local church leaders and made survey available during AC presentation through number that attendees could text to.
2,147 Survey Participants

Clergy = 440

- Serving in local church: 71%
- Retired: 20%
- Serving in another capacity: 8%

Laity = 1,707

- Retired: 42%
- Employed outside church: 31%
- Employed by the church: 15%
- Not currently working: 9%
- Employed by church nonprofit or school: 2%
- Student: 2%

• Note: “Laity” can be a confusing term
  - Some laity don’t know what it means
  - Others think this only refers to the Lay Leader, or those in leadership positions
Good demographic balance

• Geographical
  • All 16 districts well represented
  • Good mix of urban, suburban, and rural

• Ages
  • Good mix of ages 36+
  • 115 people age 21 – 35
  • 24 people 20 & under

• Church size
  • All church sizes well represented
Conference communications tools

- VAUMC.org website
- Weekly e-Advocate newsletter
- ClergyNet / LaityNet emails
- Social media
- Advocate magazine
- Vimeo / YouTube videos
- Sunday Advocate church bulletin insert
In what ways do you CURRENTLY receive Virginia Conference information including news, event information, ministry ideas, how-to information, and stories? (Please check all that you currently use.)

- Website & email are top tools
- Laity usage of conference communications tools is significantly lower
  - This is partly due to lack of awareness
Desired conference communications tools usage

If the communications tools listed below were all available to you, which ones would you use to get information from the Virginia Conference, including news, event information, ministry ideas, how-to information, and stories? (Check all you would use.)

- **Clergy**
  - VAUMC.org website: 84%
  - ClergyNet / LaityNet: 76%
  - Social media: 68%
  - Conference app: 57%
  - Vimeo Videos: 52%
  - Podcasts: 34%
  - Sunday Advocate: 28%
  - Printed news: 28%
  - Phone call-in: 17%
  - Other: 10%

- **Laity**
  - VAUMC.org website: 67%
  - ClergyNet / LaityNet: 47%
  - Social media: 28%
  - Conference App: 34%
  - Vimeo videos: 18%
  - Podcasts: 14%
  - Sunday Advocate: 10%
  - Printed news: 29%
  - Phone call-in: 23%
  - Other: 5%

- **E-Advocate weekly email is the #1 choice for both groups**
- **Conference app much more popular among clergy**
Top choice - conference communications tool
Which Virginia Conference communications tool would you use MOST frequently? (Pick one.)

**Clergy**
- Weekly E-Advocate: 36%
- ClergyNet / LayNet: 22%
- Conference app: 14%
- VAUMC.org website: 13%
- Podcasts: 10%
- Sunday Advocate: 2%
- Vimeo videos: 1%
- Printed news: 1%
- Phone call-in: 1%

**Laity**
- Weekly E-Advocate: 46%
- ClergyNet / LayNet: 10%
- Social media: 12%
- Conference app: 4%
- VAUMC.org website: 10%
- Podcasts: 9%
- Sunday Advocate: 7%
- Vimeo videos: 0%
- Printed news: 0%
- Phone call-in: 0%

- E-Advocate weekly email is the #1 choice for both groups
- Printed news did not score well, especially among clergy
Current e-Advocate email subscribers

- All clergy are automatically signed up for the E-Advocate through their vaumc.org e-mail addresses
  - Only 72% of clergy reported receiving the e-Advocate
- Many laity are not aware of the e-Advocate
  - 27% of laity reported receiving the e-Advocate
  - 35% of laity said they would be interested in signing up
Desired content in e-Advocate weekly emails

What type of information would you like to receive in the weekly e-Advocate email newsletter? (Check all that apply.)

Clergy

- General VA Conf news: 95%
- Events & training info: 87%
- Messages from Bishop: 77%
- Mission & outreach oppy: 76%
- Local church ministry ideas: 67%
- VA Conf boards news: 67%
- Natl / Intl news: 58%
- Local ministry stories: 53%

Laity

- General VA Conf news: 94%
- Events & training info: 66%
- Messages from Bishop: 69%
- Mission & outreach oppy: 61%
- Local church ministry ideas: 53%
- VA Conf boards news: 52%
- Natl / Intl news: 56%
- Local ministry stories: 50%

- VA Conference news is #1, but all categories scored 50% +
ClergyNet and LaityNet email groups

• LaityNet - 22% of the laity surveyed are currently signed up
• ClergyNet – 76% of the clergy surveyed are currently signed up
• Majority of recipients do not want multiple emails per day
  • Lack of awareness of how to change their email settings

How would you prefer to receive these emails?

- Once daily: 46%
- Once weekly: 33%
- Multiple times per day: 11%
- Once daily, by topic: 4%
- Once weekly, by topic: 2%
Only 8% of those surveyed currently use the Sunday Advocate church bulletin insert.

Lack of awareness of this resource.

26% of clergy and 16% of laity are interested in starting to use the Sunday Advocate.
Screen usage during worship

Does your church have a screen (or wall area) that you use to show videos, slides, or other images during any of your worship services?

- 55% Used weekly
- 7% Used frequently
- 14% Used occasionally
- 6% No, but want one
- 18% No, don’t have one

76% of churches have a screen that is used in at least one worship service.
Church video usage

How does your church use videos? (Check all that apply.)

- Churches use videos in a variety of ways
- 62% + of churches use videos in worship

Clergy:
- Bible study / Sunday school: 55%
- Occasionally in worship: 47%
- Church Facebook page: 36%
- Church website: 25%
- Weekly in worship: 15%
- Never: 13%

Laity:
- Bible study / Sunday school: 45%
- Occasionally in worship: 42%
- Church Facebook page: 18%
- Church website: 17%
- Weekly in worship: 24%
- Never: 14%
Conference video topics

What video topics would you like to watch personally, or use in your church? (Check all that apply.)

Clergy

- Uplifting ministry stories are a top interest area
- Clergy are more interested in an apportionments video than laity

Laity

- Uplifting ministry stories
- Messages from Bishop
- Ministry how-to info
- Apportionments video
- None

Clergy and Laity interest areas:
How often do you listen to podcasts (a digital audio recording you can download to a computer or mobile device like a smart phone)?

Clergy

- Daily: 10%
- Weekly: 25%
- Monthly: 11%
- Very rarely: 29%
- Don't, but interested: 9%
- Never: 16%

Laity

- Daily: 6%
- Weekly: 10%
- Monthly: 7%
- Very rarely: 27%
- Don't, but interested: 12%
- Never: 39%

- More clergy listen to podcasts than laity
- 46% of clergy listen at least monthly
- 23% of laity listen at least monthly
Podcast topics

What podcast (audio recording) topics would you be interested in? (Check all that apply.)

**Clergy**
- Ministry how-to info: 48%
- Uplifting ministry stories: 38%
- Messages from bishop: 35%
- None: 29%

**Laity**
- Ministry how-to info: 28%
- Uplifting ministry stories: 34%
- Messages from bishop: 27%
- None: 47%
If the conference added a section to the website that served as a resource hub for local churches, what type of information / resources would you like to see there? (Check all that apply.)

- Strong interest in a Resource Hub
- #1 - Curriculum recommendations
- #2 - Resource sharing

**Clergy**
- Curriculum recom.: 75%
- Resource sharing: 65%
- Clergy forum: 49%
- General ministry forum: 39%
- Sermon manuscripts: 23%
- None: 7%

**Laity**
- Curriculum recom.: 59%
- Resource sharing: 50%
- Clergy forum: 13%
- General ministry forum: 41%
- Sermon manuscripts: 20%
- None: 18%
Key takeaways

• Clergy are stronger users of conference communications
  • Higher level of awareness, and important for their job
  • Usage of vaumc.org emails is still a barrier for some

• Low laity awareness of conference communications tools
  • Also lack of understanding of the meaning of the term “laity”

• Email is the top communications tool

• Screen and video usage has grown
  • 76% of churches have a screen used at least occasionally in at least one worship service
  • 62% of churches use videos during worship at least occasionally

• Clergy interests
  • Areas where clergy needs / interests are stronger than laity:
    • Conference app – 52% interested vs. 18% of laity
    • Podcasts – 28% interest vs. 10% for laity; 46% of clergy listen monthly vs. 23% of laity
Board of Communications projects

• Increase laity awareness & involvement in conference communications
  • Sign up local church leaders on the EVC & Annual Conference email lists
  • Promote sign ups on the website, in social media, etc.
  • Help reduce barriers and make signups easier

• Resource Hub
  • Investigate the best way to implement this
  • Curriculum recommendations strong #1 interest area, but multiple other areas also scored well

• Sunday Advocate
  • Develop promotional strategy to increase awareness among clergy
  • Review the format & determine if this could also serve as a potential conference outreach tool for homebound members, and those without access to digital communications
Resources

• Want a copy of this presentation?
  • [www.VAUMC.org/survey](http://www.VAUMC.org/survey)

• Want to sign up for conference communications?
  • [www.VAUMC.org/survey](http://www.VAUMC.org/survey)