Graphic Design and Outreach

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Design is using your God-given gifts of common sense, reason, and problem-solving.

When we talk about graphic design, we are really talking about the art of visual communication and how we express that through technology. The very things we produce at a church visually communicate to the churched and unchurched, that ultimately enhance and support the gospel. You do not need to be hip with the latest trends in design in order to impress people. Nor do you have to be creative, that is, reinventing the wheel for the sake of doing so. Graphic design does not come from ideas that we may have, but from trying to solve real problems that exist.

Solving Problems

What are the problems we are trying to address through graphic design?

Readability, presenting content in a logical way, making it understandable to unchurched/visitors... Ultimately, he lack of branding or graphic design or the use of bad graphic design are not the real problems. The problem is the lack of people who know Jesus as their Savior, and then how do we communicate the gospel to those online, our local communities, and in our sanctuaries through the use of good design.

Content

What is the relationship between content and its design?

Design is informed by content. Design always comes last, even though it's tempting to work on it before the content is finished (i.e. function over form). For example, the Divine Service points us to Christ and Christian graphic design enhances the message (i.e., the message drives the design, and the design helps communicate the message). The Means of Grace are the main focus for a worship folder.

Other designs: Your church's mission, vision, and strategic planning will help determine the direction of a logo, website, and other visual communication (namely, your brand).

Some other content considerations when looking to design a service folder:

First thing is to consider the audience of your service folder (or any graphic design project), which will direct the content and how it is presented.
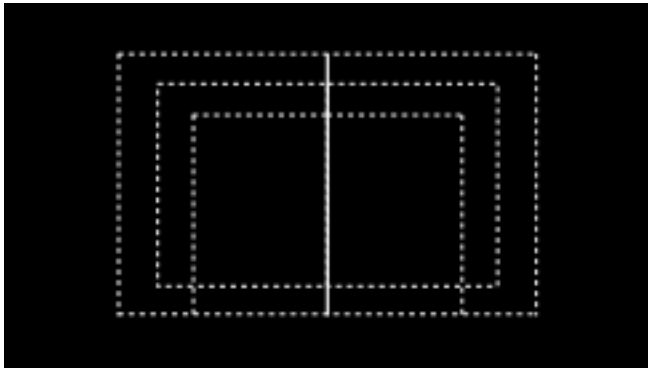
Scripture readings can be printed out in their entirety. You may also omit them to keep people's eyes focused on the reader of the text. Music graphics are useful, especially for visitors. Footnotes/sidenotes can also be useful, although very sparingly. Initials for responses are a fairly modern invention, and responses could easily be represented via bold/regular weight fonts without initials.

The next thing to consider is the home in which the content will live.

In the US, we have three options: Letter, Legal, and Ledger paper sizes.

The paper size you choose will have an influence on the typography.
For example, less content can fit on Letter. Margin sizes and the size of music graphics will become a factor. Legal and Ledger allows text to breathe more. If you can afford it, Ledger is the ideal size, then Legal. Remember that you would scale the font size up by 10–20% from Legal to Ledger. Twice the space doesn't mean double the content per page. Margins, text size, and line height will scale up and therefore there will only be slightly more content per page. The reason for a larger paper size is not to fit more content per page, but to make reading easier for those who use a service folder.

It's how we visually communicate our language.
As we read the liturgy, sing a hymn, or chant a psalm very little of our attention is on the actual shapes of the letters we are reading. We read the words and our brains interpret what those words mean. However, each of those characters that combine into a word, phrase, stanza, etc. visually communicate our language.
It's how words, sentences, images, and the space around them are arranged on a page.
The words on a page do not exist without typography.
It presents all elements on a page in a coherent, logical, and aesthetically pleasing way.
In the same way we want to speak words clearly so to be understood, the words and content on a page should be easy to follow.
It uses fonts suitable for the content.
A service folder has very different types of content than, say, a novel or magazine, but the same typographical rules established over hundreds of years will still apply.
It supports the meaning of the text.
The design is based on the content.

The font, Helvetica, used on the New York City Subway signage by Massimo Vignelli in 1970.

A comparison of typefaces at different sizes. Note the confusion that occurs in with Helvetica's and Arial's i, l, and 1 at smaller sizes. They are intended for large signage and headings.

The Times font (aka, Times New Roman) was intended for newspapers and to fit a lot of text on a page. It became popular mostly due to its ubiquity on computers and software applications. It's often intended to be a placeholder font before another font is applied. The same is said of Helvetica and Arial.

There are many things to take into account when choosing a good font for the right job. Here are 3 main considerations:

1. Contrast: There should be high contrast between the Regular and Bold weights of the typeface.

This is to easily distinguish the text that a minister speaks and that of the congregation. Note the low contrast between weights in the bottom example (Palatino) versus the top one (FF Meta Serif).

2. Width: Not be too wide to take up too much space and not too narrow that reading becomes exhausting or difficult.
Space is limited on a half-Letter or Legal page. This is especially true when using music graphics. Some fonts have "condensed" or "narrow" weights, but those should only be used for headings.

2. X-Height: A large x-height is a key feature of a legible typeface. This means that the lowercase letters are higher than normal.
Since over 95% of the letters we read are lowercase, having larger proportions will usually result in a more legible typeface.

Consider how a font looks when printed: Aim for 10-12 points for text that is read.

Font point size is not an absolute measurement, but can vary between fonts. If you decide to change the main font, print out a test page and compare it to the previous font. Some fonts may look smaller or larger even when they are the same point size.

Note the different relative sizes of Verdana, Times, and Garamond at the same point size.

Story: When field testing fonts for the new WELS hymnal, we had churches submit their worship plans and we would then produce service folders with candidate fonts for them. In a couple instances churches had been using Verdana or Arial, which are naturally bigger fonts than say, Times New Roman at the same point size. When changing to a new font from what they were used to the text appeared smaller — often distractingly so. In those cases, we had to increase the point size by 1 or 2 to make it appear the same physical size that they had been accustomed to.

Good line spacing is 120-145% the fonts point size. For example, a 10 point font should have at least 12 points of line spacing (leading). Some applications will default to 1.5 spacing, which is good. Keep in mind that Single, Double, and 1.5 spacing are not exact and will vary from font to font (e.g. 1.5 spacing will be around 115%–120% the point size). You can also configure the spacing to "Exactly" in your settings and set the point size manually.

Line Length: Shorter lines make a big difference in readability and professional look. Long lines means the eye has to travel farther from one end to the other, making it harder to track progress. Aim for a line length of 45-90 characters: 2–3 alphabets.

Left-align text if possible. If using justified text, be sure to turn hyphenation on, otherwise you get "rivers" of spaces in the text (This is often a problem that can be seen in the text on Amazon's e-readers). Narrow columns of text tend to be more suitable for justified text and more forgiving. Professional applications like Adobe InDesign are one of the few that can do justified text well, but it still takes skill in order to keep the hyphenated words to a minimum.

Heading 1	The Divine Service
Heading 2	The Word
Heading 3	Confession and Absolution

A service folder only needs a couple headings. Try to avoid combining left-aligned and centered headings.

Three headings is about all you would need in most situations. Most books have between 3-5 different types of headings.

Our Western eyes are used to reading things from left-to-right, and so they tend to gravitate to the left margin. Having text and headings left caters to this. A centered heading can be used to draw attention to itself, which is good in some instances, but often in longer materials like a service folder where headings repeat often, it would be good to limit the amount of centered headings.

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Let us pray.

The minister says the Prayer of the Day, concluding with:

...one God, now and forever.
Amen.

Be seated

Rubrics are useful in providing instructions and clarifications throughout the rite (From the Latin word "rubrica", meaning "red ochre" or "red chalk").

Use the same size as body text and italicized (not italics *and* bold) to differentiate it from text that is spoken (it can also be 1 point size smaller too). It's usually the same weight as body text or slightly lighter. Use regular capitalization (no all-caps or small-caps). Limit your use of all-caps in general as this, in today's culture, signifies shouting.

It should also be noted that bold, italics, and underlines signify emphasis. They should be used minimally and never combined with one another. Underlines are the least used and are best served in bibliographies and URLs where they are required for student papers and essays. Bold can be used for headings and congregational text, and italics for rubrics. Bold rubrics tend to come off too strong and will be less distinctive from the congregational text.

Page Margins

Aesthetic reasons:
- Rhythm and balance on the page (established throughout 500+ years). Renaissance typographers calculated the optimal location of text on the page.
- They also keep text and graphics from "falling off the page". The eyes need space to breathe as they go from one line to the next.

Practical reasons:
- Room for the thumbs. This is especially true for larger formats like Legal and Ledger where people will tend to hold service folders with two hands.
- No need for wide inside margins on stapled materials. For most folders between 12–24 pages, a 0.25–0.5 inch margin is sufficient.

Fonts

Lyric size the same size or close to the same size as body text. It's not a big deal if the font doesn't match. Size is more important. You can change fonts out in applications like Sibelius or Finale.
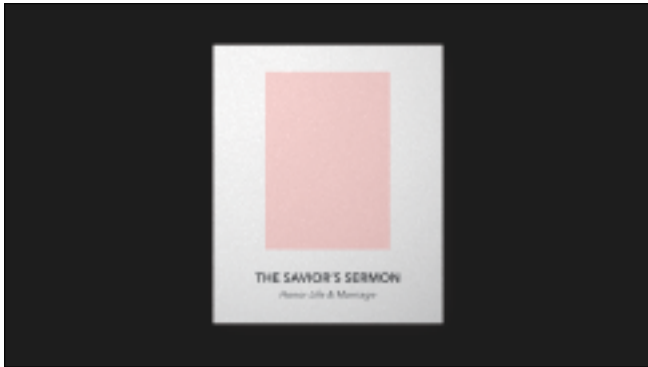
Placement

Align music to left margin if using Letter or Legal paper. Fill to both margins if possible (most music graphics are intended to be 4.5–5 inches wide, so they should fill the page anyway). You may want to center the music on Ledger paper.

Flow

When music must go onto a second page, always have it flow to the top of the facing page. Sometimes music must be placed over a page turn. It's not ideal, but do it for canticles or hymns with only one stanza/verse (no need to turn back a page).

[Note: For prayers and responses: Always have the minister's response be the first thing on the top after the page turn.]

Purposes
- Glorifies God by using the gifts he has given to the Church through artists.
- Supports the spoken and printed word.
- Creates balance by dividing the text.

With service covers, try to keep it focused on the theme. Church and staff information can be placed on the back cover or on the inside of the cover. Remember that this will be the a visitor's/member's introduction to the service and you'll want to state in clear terms what the service is going to be about. They don't need the name of your church, since they are already there. The service folder's main purpose and its design is to create a path straight to the Gospel.

Implementation
- Use it next to the text it illustrates.
- Use it to break up sections (e.g. Service of the Word, Service of the Sacrament).
- Use it to fill in large gaps (final option).

Sometimes you may want to force gaps onto a page so that a section flows a little better. For example, you may have a psalm with a refrain and verses that won't fit on the same page. In this case, it would be better to create a page break with the psalm starting on a new page and leave a gap on the previous page. You can then fill in this gap with art that is related to the service.

Other Examples

Example 1: Campaigns

This was to kick off a drive to raise money for roof repairs. In this case, there's not a great deal of content to add to the materials, which made layout a little easier. Note how the content layout slightly changes between the banner (left) and the brochure cover (right) in order to work within the size of the materials.
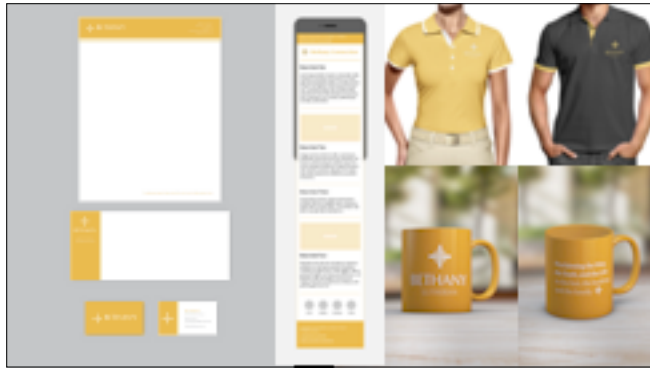
Example 2: Monthly Newsletter

A multi-column layout is ideal for newsletters. Note that the column are left-aligned, but also could be justified. As with service folders, sometimes you have to force content onto another page and fill those gaps with related pictures.

Example 2: Concert Series

This is an example of using the same design aesthetic and using the format of the materials to your advantage. Even though the pictures change from the poster to the program covers, the same theme is present. For some church projects, you may want to carry over the same theme or branding to other things. It's good to keep in mind what content should be omitted or how the formatting will slightly change based on the audience and the type of media where it is applied.

Example 2: Church Branding

It's important to think not only about how you are communicating to the unchurched through your content, but also how that content is presented. Creating a unified look will help people make a psychological connection to you and the message and make it visually recognizable to your members and those in the community.

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