

Parish Mag Editorial Styles and Policy

Version dated 13 Mar 2024

1 Emails relating to the Parish Mag

All emails relating to the Parish Mag must contain the letters parish mag somewhere in the Subject field. The Editors will not accept responsibility for the omission of material sent that do not comply with this rule (although they usually can cope).

2 Advertisements and graphics in the Editorial Section

The Editors of the Parish Mag are well aware of the value of advertisements for local events, and will normally publish them, subject to the following policy:

- Advertisements are only accepted in respect of events that are charitable or are for local public benefit. Other advertisements may be placed in the advertising section of the Parish Mag, subject to space and payment of a negotiated fee.
- Acceptance of advertisements in a particular edition is at the sole discretion of the editors, particularly in respect of events that are to take place more than a month after the month of issue.
- Event advertisements in the form of graphics will not normally be accepted if the event takes place within the first week of publication (typically before 4th of the month). A textual reminder of the event may be substituted at the discretion of the editors.
- The editors may reduce the size of any advertisement, at their discretion, possibly omitting some of the detail supplied.
- Other graphics may be sent for publication to the editors, but their inclusion in any issue is solely at the discretion of the editors.

These policies are unrelated to the commercial section of the Parish Mag.

3 Reservation of space

No space is reserved in any issue, unless (exceptionally) acceptance has been requested by email and acceptance by email has been provided by the editors. There is no automatic reservation for articles, other than those that are normally in every issue.

Contributors of other articles may not assume that space has been reserved, other than by explicit email agreement.

Late submission of material, even for articles normally present, may cause omission of that material for the month. See also below: 4 Draft publication.

Contributors of non-regular material for multiple issues should email a short reminder to the editors, to ensure that the material will be included.

4 Draft publication

If possible, we will publish a draft version of the parish mag in preparation on the Wednesday or Thursday of the week before collation. Corrections must be small-scale, and after publication of the draft no new material will normally be accepted. The following Saturday morning is the last time in which corrections can be accepted.

If something really urgent comes up, these rules may be discarded.

5 Deadlines

The basic deadline for all material is the 10th of the month preceding the magazine's date.

Some flexibility comes from the normal publication policy:

- The Web edition is published on the second-last Sunday of the month;
- The printed edition is published on the last Sunday of the month;
- The draft magazine is sent for review on the Wednesday or Thursday preceding the second-last Sunday of the month
- The primary deadline is the Saturday prior to that (i.e. 8 days before the second-last Sunday of the month), and no material will be accepted without agreement with the editors after midday on the following Tuesday. (i.e. 5 days before the second-last Sunday of the month), and no material will be accepted without agreement with the editors after midday on the following Tuesday

The plan for each month will be put on the Parish Mag webpage.

6 Style

The Editors always welcome contributions to the mag. More detail is given below, but the basic requirements are that contributions must be original, pertinent and of interest to our sort of reader, and approachable in style (see below).

A consistent style gives a good-looking document. If material supplied to the Editors could comply with our style, it would save the editors a lot of time and effort!

6.1 Size

To be fair to editors and contributors, articles should not normally exceed 400 words in length (one page on A5), except by agreement with the editors, and it's better if they are more like 200 words. Please respect this, as cutting down an article is painful, and a real chore for the editors, assuming that they have the spare time to devote to making cuts. Larger articles may also be acceptable, if what they contain justifies the size.

6.2 Text Style

We prefer a writing style that readers can relate to: short sentences, clear expression, idea-words that stand out, economic (but not too compact) use of language, logical in structure. The general writing style should be informal, and never formal. Here are some suggestions:

- Material should be presented with immediacy; that is, readers should be able to relate quickly to what has been written;
- Come to the point quickly and interestingly, or you will soon lose your reader;
- Sentences should be short, without nested dependent clauses;
- If possible use the active ('I did it') rather than the passive mood ('it was done by me'). Thus, 'we suggested that ...' is better and livelier than 'It was suggested that ...', and it is often much more interesting to know who did it;
- Often 'that' is a better-sounding relative pronoun than 'which'. 'There are many things which bother me' could better be: 'There are many things that bother me'.
- People we know should normally be identified by their Christian name (plus surname for the first reference). Other notes like this will be added as instances are encountered.

6.3 Punctuation

Try using commas when the ideas expressed within a sentence change direction, or in delimiting short parenthetical phrases that do not warrant round brackets.

At the end of a sentence or clause that could stand as a sentence, use a full stop or semicolon, or but use a colon where the following clause is a logical consequent.

Be sure that questions use question-marks; use double exclamation- or question-marks only in need.

Never, please, split words with hyphens if they are not normally hyphenated (except in really exceptional cases): text layout will normally be different in the mag to your text.

We will always consider punctuation, and correct to match standards.

6.4 Single and double quotes

We will use double quotes for reported speech only, and single quotes for other purposes, particularly words or short phrases that need special identification as an entity.

6.5 Abbreviated Titles

Abbreviations of personal titles will never be followed by a full stop or abbreviation mark, and apostrophes will not be used within abbreviated titles. Thus, we will use:

Mr Mrs Revd St Dr

6.6 Dates & Times

Times will always be in the am/pm system, omitting 00 minutes and leading 0s. Minutes and seconds will be separated by colons. Thus:

1pm 11-12am 4:45pm 12noon 3:02pm

It is a great help to submit material complying with this style. Other styles found in submissions will be converted to our style, but this does cause us unnecessary time and effort.

We will follow St Peter's parish mag in using the compact form of dates as '3 November'.

6.7 Spaces

Although we have no aesthetic objection to double spaces after full stops, for consistency we will normally use a single space after a full stop, but double spaces are OK. Double (or multiple) spaces will be converted to single spaces. This permits simple automation.

6.8 Justification and layout

Text will normally be left-justified (only). Full justification is less easy to read (because of the variable spaces between words), and is appropriate to more formal documents. Layout in articles submitted will normally be lost or adapted for inclusion in the Parish Mag, by converting material to plain text. This avoids inadvertent importing of text styles and disrupting the standard style used in the parish mag.

6.9 Pictures and other graphics

Pictures can be very valuable in submissions, but we must use them economically as they take up space. We will publish carefully, and may crop or reduce size when appropriate.

This refers also to material that is provided as a graphic. In general, such graphics will be enclosed within a simple border.

Graphics containing text must have text in a font-size compatible with publication in an A5 page. (E.g. not smaller than 11pt when printed.)

Photos may be provided in colour as this is good in the web version. The rendition of photos in print is not so good, and if we have to print in black and white, a great deal is lost, except in line-drawing graphics. However, this is not a primary current issue.

Graphics with busy backgrounds other than plain often cause difficulties, and should be avoided.

We will not normally police style in graphics supplied as an image or pdf.

6.10 Manuscript

We do not like receiving large hand-written manuscripts. We are not professional typists, and typing takes time that we often cannot spare. Keep manuscript to the minimum, please. We do have OCR with our scanner, so can usually handle clear typescript on paper.

7 Content

Generally, the Editors wish to include material in the Parish Mag that is well written, topical, makes sense, and is likely to be of interest to readers. We are open-minded on subject matter, liberal in outlook, and quite happy to publish material expressing views different to our own personal ones.

1. We will retain a high standard of courtesy and grace in written material.
2. We see the following as particularly within scope:
 - Local news and events;
 - National news having a general relevance and interest to local people;
 - Commentary on ethics and religious matters of particular interest to lay people, without going much beyond treatment in the national press or in church sources;
 - Articles of general interest based on research on history and practices, particularly to do with religion generally;
 - Commentary on abuse of religion or power or privilege, or of gross negligence;
 - Devotional material, particularly poetry;
 - Humorous material, if not too unkind;
 - Promotions of local charities and local events. In general we will NOT promote national charities or their related events, except when we have a strong local link to them.
3. We will support our Vicar (when we have one) and the PCC, and their ecclesiastically superior bodies, and will respect their authority, and will accept material representing their views for publication, while retaining the right tactfully to question and comment.
4. We do not accept control of the editorship by Vicar or Minister or PCC, or anybody else, but will consider their viewpoints. We particularly ask that people do not ask the Vicar or Minister or PCC to act on their behalf to the Editors, as this puts him/her/them in an embarrassing position. Write to us about it – but bear in mind that such correspondence may be published. We do not wish to censor other's views!
5. We will always be respectful of religions outside Christianity (particularly Judaism and Islam), and, when appropriate, make readers aware of common strands and related traditions.
6. We will not write about or express our own opinions related to:
 - Party politics, or issues of major contention between political parties that are likely to affect voting in elections;
 - Matters of sexuality unless delicately handled. Gender issues should be avoided in the current climate
7. We will not attack, or be judgmental about, individuals, particularly local people and political figures, both local and national, although we may question views that they are reported to espouse.

8. We will avoid inappropriate 'political correctness' while aware that readers, particularly outside the normal scope of readership, may be offended or may violently disagree with us. Views expressed by these readers as 'letters to the editors' may be published if within the scope described above.

9. We will not publish material that we believe to be inaccurate or incorrect.

10. In general, we will accept relevant articles and views from anybody, provided that these materials fall within the scope described above, and that they are relevant to their intended subject. We reserve the right to amend and cut, while staying within the author's intentions.

Margaret-Anne and Anthony Hodson, Editors
13 March 2024