

stuff you wish they taught in seminary



# *5 Things* You Should Never Say During Announcements at Your Church

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Announcements at your church don't have to stink.

This time in your service doesn't need to feel like a miscellaneous catch-all for things that don't fit elsewhere in the service flow!

When done well, announcements can be the part of the service that moves people to action. **Every weekend you have five minutes to move people towards engagement with the church's mission.** What an incredible opportunity!

Often the musical worship at your church is about a transcendent connection to God. During that portion of the service, we are attempting to help people live in full awareness of the fact that they are loved by the creator God! Also, in most churches, there is an opportunity to be engaged with some practical teaching that applies to people's lives. During that portion of the service, we hope to equip our people to live out their faith during the rest of the week. However, the announcement time needs to be seen as the purest form of leadership during the entire service. **You are asking people to take steps towards community and engagement during those precious five minutes.** Don't waste that time because what your church is doing is incredibly important!

Over the years, I've had the chance to host innumerable services and coach a lot of pastors on how to leverage their announcement time for maximum impact.

Here are some common things that pastors say during the announcements that we need to take out of our vocabulary! As always, I'd love to hear your feedback on what else you would add to this list.

### **“Wow! It's a nice day out there today!”**

The problem with this statement is that it's a lazy way to drive connection with your community. **Yes, people experienced the weather as they came in this morning, just like they do every other day.** Unless the weather is actually of historic note, avoid this statement at all costs. This phrase is particularly dangerous because it's a verbal crutch for many leaders and they say it every week. The human mind is a pattern recognition machine, so when you lead with this every week you are helping people tune you out.

Other filler phrases similar to this one could be things like:

- “How about those [insert sports team here] that played again this weekend?”
- “Did you see the traffic on the way in? Wowzers! That's life in the suburbs!”
- “Welcome to First Church! Our mission is to help irreligious people become fully devoted followers of Christ.”

In the first moments of your announcements, you need to grab people's attention and let them know you are headed somewhere.

Think of your announcements like an airplane ride; the take-off and landing are the most important part of the experience. **Craft the first sentence or two as a way to intentionally connect with your community and communicate that you have something important to tell people.** Don't get caught in the verbal crutch of starting the same way every week but look for new ways to grab people's attention.

Some alternative openings to your announcements could include:

- “You are going to be so thankful you came to First Church today because our team has crafted an amazing experience to help you and your family”

- o People are inherently interested in themselves. Leading with how they will personally benefit from the experience will pique their interest.

- “Good morning! If you've been around for a while, then you've no doubt heard us say that we're trying to create a church that unchurched people love. **I want to tell you a story I heard this week about this mission being lived out...**”

- o Two ideas in one for this one. Humans are drawn to stories and they want to hear about other people. Also, when you can tease info as “secret” or for “insiders”, people will listen.

- “Wait, stop. Did you listen to what we were just singing? Do you believe that? Some of us here think it's an amazing truth, but what do you think about it? Our hope is that the music every week makes you think about what you believe.”

- o Being slightly provocative after a shared musical worship experience and asking people to consider their own participation pulls them in. Also, the use of halting, short language can punctuate the flow and force people to slow down and consider what you are saying.

**“In just a moment, our team is going to collect this morning's offering.”**

This one gets on my nerves...big time.



People are being generous and choosing to give to your ministry, and you're talking about it like it's a “collection”! **We aren't the Internal Revenue Service collecting taxes for God. We want to guide people towards generosity, not pass the plate and demand payment.** While it might sound like a small, subtle difference, people are hyper sensitive in the area of finances so language matters here. In fact, we know that people who don't normally attend church have their radars on high alert during this portion of your service. They are looking for reasons to push back on what they are hearing and seeing. This is a simple change to make your services more welcoming to those who might be skeptical.

Some other ways we word this one:

- “Our ushers will be coming forward to get your tithes from you.”
- “As our team prepares to gather this weekend's offering...”
- “We're going to take up this morning's donations from you.”

Our language should be a response to our people's generosity. Our people are generous, so therefore we receive the donations that people are choosing to give to the church. **The people who attend our churches are the first movers in helping advance our mission and we need to acknowledge that.** They are choosing to be generous to God through our church and our role is to be thankful for what they are doing.

Try these alternatives when introducing this part of your service:

- “In just a minute, our team is going to receive this morning's offering from our community.”

- “We know you have a lot of places you could choose to give, so we’re honored that so many people choose to give here!”

- o Sometimes just being honest about generosity is the best option. People have options and they are choosing to give to you. It really is amazing.

- “As a church, we don’t want you to feel any obligation to give. This part of our service is for people who call our church home and want to give to back to the ministry here.”

- o This is a fantastic phrase because in a kind way it lets guests off the hook from feeling pressured to give, while at the same time not telling them not to give. It also subtly reminds people who call your church home that they should be giving.

## “We’re launching small groups this month.”

So many problems are packed into the shortest sentence in this entire list! There are a few things wrong with this sentence that we need to tackle.



**What’s in it For Them?** // I hate to break it to you, but no one cares that you are launching small groups at your church. (Except maybe the people in charge of said small groups.) This phrase is inherently “us-centric” and doesn’t reveal why it benefits our people. We need to phrase and focus our announcements in terms of how that particular event/group/activity is going to help those attending our church. It needs to start and end with how this will help them, not us. Some alternatives for presenting this announcement could be:

- “Are you wondering how to get connected at our church? Great question! Here at First Church, we have a series of mid-week groups where people like you meet with other individuals from the church.”

- o Phrasing the need in the form of a question people are actually asking helps spark interest.

- “One of the things we’ve learned is that you learn best when you are in community with other people. You are missing out unless you have a group of 6 to 8 people you can get to know better while you wrestle with what we’re learning together. Our small groups are all about you growing in your faith.

- o How many times does “you” or “your” show up in that phrase? That’s about the ratio needed to match uses of “our” or “we”.

**Insider Language** // What is a small group? When you search “definition small group” on Google, this is what you get:

Definition of Small Group Teaching. The term ‘small group teaching,’ or ‘small group learning’ as it is often termed, means different things to different people. ... **A lecturer used to taking [on] 400 in a lecture would define 50 as a small group.** As there can be sub-groups within groups, it is hard to define small group. [ref]

You and I know that we’re not talking about groups of 50 but more along the lines of 8 to 12 that meet midweek in people’s homes to discuss the Bible and support each other. You need to slow down and explain that definition to people. This kind of insider language is like a weed growing up in your communication garden that chokes out the meaning you are attempting to get across. Look carefully for these short cuts to communication that ultimately exclude the very people you are trying to communicate with. Here are some other examples of insider language:

- “I’m going to invite a teacher from Uumbaji up in a minute. Uumbaji is our program for children in the 1st through the 5th grades that meets on Sunday morning at church. Uumbaji means ‘creation’ in Swahili and we believe every child is a wonderful creation of God!”

- o Or you could just call it Elementary. Clarity beats cleverness every time.

- “Here at First Church, we’re led by a group of volunteer leaders that we call Elders. This group of leaders is responsible for the long-term leadership of our church. They give oversight and direction to our Senior Pastor as they lead the church.”

- o Talking about church organization stuff is particularly tricky. It’s a double whammy of insider language that most people don’t care about. That being said, there is a small slice of people who really care about it.

## “The men’s hiking club is heading to the state park next month.”

Narrowcasting is when you speak to a particularly small group within the church during the service. It is also a dangerous thing to do. Oftentimes this happens because a vocal sub-group is looking to boost their visibility, so they hound the church leadership to get some “stage time” to highlight their group. The problem with this is if you aren’t in the “men’s hiking club”, or whatever the narrowly focused interest group is, then you just tune out the announcement. The long-term issue with this is if you do this week in and week out, then you are just training people to never listen to what is being said during the announcements. **By narrowcasting certain announcements, you are unwittingly telling people to not pay attention to anything said during the announcement time.** Avoid this mistake at all costs because if it’s left unchecked it will do harm to your church long term.



You need to be able to say “no” to the leaders of sub-groups looking to get “stage time” to promote their efforts.

Here are some alternatives you could suggest that don’t involve excluding the rest of your church:

- **Direct Emails** // Each of your ministry areas should cultivate an email list of people who are interested in their area.
- **Cause Some Lobby Chaos** // Church is fun, right? How could you bring a little piece of the event you are promoting to the lobby on the weekend?
- **Social Media** // How can you encourage your people to talk and share about the ministry program through social media channels?
- **Call People** // Have you heard about this new technology called “the telephone”? It’s amazing! It’s kind of like Twitter but with audio. But seriously, simply just calling people can be effective.
- **Snail Mail** // People typically just get bills and junk mail in their mailbox at home. What if your ministry area came up with a clever piece of mail to send to people?

## “Here are the top 5 ways to get connected...in under 5 minutes. Go!”

You’ve been there. I’ve been there. The person charged with “doing the announcements” gets up and unfolds a legal sized piece of paper, clears their throats and declares that there are “just a few things” that they want to bring the church in the loop on.

You can practically hear people’s brains checking out around the room.

It’s painful.

It happens every weekend at churches all across the country.

Studies have shown that the human attention span is shrinking dramatically:

- People don’t recall more than 1 or 2 two television commercials after watching multiple in a row. [\[ref\]](#)
- Humans now have an attention span shorter than that of a fish. Really. [\[ref\]](#)

You need to ruthlessly focus your announcement time on one, maybe two, things. Take some time to watch the services of very large churches and you'll see that practice in play. **It's not that those churches have less to talk about; rather they are excellent at communicating and focusing the attention of people on what will help them take their next step.** Frankly, in order to effectively do all the strategies we're suggesting in the above coaching, you are going to need to talk about less things in order to give yourself the time and space to make your announcement time as effective as possible.

Another rule of thumb is that if you are feeling rushed during your announcement time, then it is likely you are attempting to talk about too much. **Your audience can sense when you are rushed and will just want you to finish as soon as possible when you are in that state.** Rather than relaxing and taking in the information, their anxiety ramps up and they just want it to be over as well. People mirror the state of mind you are in when you are speaking to them. If you are rushing through all the announcements, then your audience will just be anticipating you finishing rather than engaging with what you are saying.

## What would you add to the list?

I'd love to hear your announcement "no-no's" or "pet peeves" that you've run into. This is such an incredibly important part of our services that I want to encourage us to get better at. Take some time to craft your announcement time into an engaging part of connecting your community with your mission. It's five minutes to move people to action!

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