



Media Relations: Best Practices for Congregations

Building good relationships with the media and influencers who write stories and cover events in your city or region is an important element of congregational communications. Reporters and writers want to hear stories about your congregation and how you're making a difference in your community.

Not only will you have contacts to pitch your events and activities; media outlets will consider you a good resource to interview during newsworthy events happening in your area that might impact your congregation, the ELCA or our global partners and ministries.

How to Cultivate Positive Media Relations

- Depending on your congregation's size, designate a staff member or volunteer to research media in your area.
- Develop a media contact list of area newspapers (print and digital), magazines, TV stations and radio stations.
- If possible, arrange an in-person meeting with reporters and editors to introduce yourself and your congregation. Ask them about the types of stories they want to cover.

Create a congregational media policy for noncrisis situations.

- Establish what staff members can respond to reporters' calls immediately.
- Determine what information can be given by anyone on staff (a person's title or the spelling of their name; attendance numbers; calendar information).
- Establish a protocol for notifying other staff members that a reporter has contacted the church.
- Be proactive in providing good news tips to media in the community.

Methods to Engage the Media

Press release

Press releases can help you get attention, raise awareness and inspire action about big moments in your congregation's life, including:

- Launch of a new program or ministry.
- Updates to existing programs or services.
- Introduction of new partner or donor.
- Achievement of a fundraising milestone.

- Announcing large events, such as “God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday.

Media advisory

Media advisories are short blurbs that invite reporters to attend and cover events. They use a few sentences to cover the event basics — who, what, when, where — and persuade the media to come to your exciting program.

Examples

Below are examples of a press release and media advisory to help with your congregation’s media outreach:



HEADLINE

[ELCA congregations lend their hands in service to their communities]

[Insert your city, state abbreviation] (date) — [Insert your congregation’s name, city and state] is one of nearly 8,400 congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) with the opportunity to participate in the “God’s work. Our hands.” day of service on [date]. Across the country thousands of ELCA members will engage in service work to make a positive change in their communities, build and deepen relationships, and share God’s love.

Members of [congregation’s name] are [describe your service projects and share the location of your service work (if it’s beyond your church building), the organizations and agencies you’re partnering with, and other details that communicate the positive impact on your community].

Since the ELCA was formed, it has been deeply rooted in faith and in sharing its passion for making positive changes in the world. [Congregation’s name] joins with other ELCA congregations across the country to boldly participate in God’s work in the world — restoring and reconciling communities and pursuing peace and justice.

“[Insert a quote or two from your members describing why the dedicated day of service is so important. Tell why members are excited about their participation],” said [first and last name], a member of [congregation’s name].

More information is available [here](#). [You are encouraged to add your congregation’s website or GWOHS webpage].

About the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

The ELCA is one of the largest Christian denominations in the United States, with 2.7 million members in more than 8,400 worshipping communities across the 50 states and in the Caribbean region. Known as the church of “God’s work. Our hands.,” the ELCA emphasizes the saving grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ, unity among Christians and service in the world. The ELCA’s roots are in the writings of the German church reformer Martin Luther.

For information contact:

[Name]

[Phone number and/or email where media professionals can reach you]

[Your congregation’s website]



MEDIA ADVISORY

Yehiel Curry to be Installed as ELCA Presiding Bishop

WHAT: Church leaders, special invited guests and members of the public will gather to celebrate the installation the Rev. Yehiel Curry as Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)., Curry, bishop of the ELCA Metropolitan Chicago Synod, was elected as presiding bishop July 30 in Phoenix and will take office Oct. 1. He is the first Black presiding bishop of the ELCA.

WHEN: Saturday, Oct. 4 at 2 p.m. CDT

WHERE: Central Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, Minn.

WHO: ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton will preside at the installation. Members of the ELCA Conference of Bishops and other invited leaders will vest and process. In celebration of the ELCA’s many partnerships, several ecumenical, inter-religious, and global partner representatives will be invited to vest and process.

This is a public worship service, open to all who wish to attend. The service will also be available via livestream. Links will be provided.

Reporters interested in attending the installation should contact Candice Hill Buchbinder at Candice.Buchbinder@elca.org or 708-220-6119. More information about the installation service is available [here](#).

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For information contact:

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