

Making the most of media opportunities: Quick tips

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What the Anglican Network in Canada does is often of interest to the media. This means that the media may wish to talk to those who take leadership – both nationally and in your community.

Being interviewed by a reporter presents a terrific opportunity to communicate to the public – and other Anglicans – what your church is doing and why. Remember, if we don't explain ourselves to the public (and to other Anglicans in Canada), someone else will try to tell our story for us – and we likely won't agree with how they portray us.

Who should speak to the media?

- Nationally, the Anglican Network in Canada has appointed spokespeople: Bishop Donald Harvey, Canon Charlie Masters and Cheryl Chang. Unless specifically authorized, others should not speak on behalf of the Network.
- Locally, you should select an official media spokesperson (and back-up spokesperson) to speak on behalf of your church/parish. Please communicate whom you have selected (with contact information) to the Network communications advisor.
 - In selecting a church spokesperson look for someone who is well-briefed, well-spoken, gracious and savvy. (Clergy are not necessarily the best spokespeople due to their vulnerability.)
 - Once your spokespeople are selected, make sure other members know who they are. If someone other than the official spokespeople chooses to talk to the media, they have an obligation to make it clear to the reporter that they are speaking only on their own behalf, not on behalf of the congregation.

What help is available?

- If you wish, you can refer media requests to the Network communications advisor who will find an appropriate spokesperson.
- The Network communications advisor is also able to provide counsel, information support and training materials.
- The Network website contains a wealth of resource and background material.
- Regular reading of the Network newsletter ensures you are knowledgeable.

Some tips to keep in mind when talking to the media:

- **Be courteous and responsive.** Reporters are often on a tight deadline. Avoiding the media is the worst strategy. It just means that your side of the story won't be told – or, worse, will be told by someone who doesn't share your perspective.

- **Be prepared.** To be confident in an interview, you need to do your homework. Know what you want to say – and what you don't want to say. Write down in advance the key points (key messages) that you want to get across. While you want to respond quickly, you can negotiate a time that is mutually agreeable.
 - For example... If the reporter is calling unannounced, you can ask if it would be possible for him/her to call back in a few minutes or at a mutually agreeable time. This allows you time to gather your thoughts and prepare your key messages.
- **Understand the needs of the media.** Broadcast news media (radio and TV) need short, nine second “sound bites” (concise, quotable quotes). Print media are able to take a little more time to understand the issues, but still need quotable quotes. Professional media people will be fair in reporting both sides of a story; the best you can ask for is a “balanced” story.
- **The reporter has a job to do – get a good story.** You have a job to do – communicate your story. As nice as most reporters are, an interview isn't a chat between friends. Assume everything you say is “on the record”.
- **Take a proactive approach to the interview.** Don't just respond to questions. Instead, look at each question as an opportunity to say the things you want to say. You don't have control over the questions, but you have control over your answers. Listen carefully to the reporter's question; think about your answer; keep your response simple and brief.
- **Focus on the person to whom you are really communicating** – not the reporter but the person who will be reading the newspaper, listening to the radio, watching the TV.
- **Say only what you would feel good about seeing in tomorrow's paper or hearing on the news.** You can't control the final newspaper/radio/TV story, but you do control the words you say, your body language and your attitude.
 - Frame your answers positively.
 - Don't use words that you don't want to be quoted saying.
 - Use language the general public understands. Avoid Anglican/Christian jargon.
 - Don't speculate. It's usually better not to answer “What if ...” questions.
 - “No comment” answers come across negatively. Instead, you could briefly explain why you're unable to respond.

For support or advice, please contact:

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