Just Get Started: Media Releases

You've been asked to write a media release. You're not sure of the process: what format should I use, and once written, what do I do with it? Here are some tips to just get started.

Writing the Media Release

When submitting news or stories from your congregation to the media, follow industry standards by organizing your information using a media release template.

When writing your release, keep in mind that editors are looking for stories that will be of interest to their audience (subscribers, readers, listeners, viewers) and that fit their definition of what is newsworthy. Thinking about the question "Why should anyone care about this?" before you begin writing can be an effective way of helping you craft your release.

Keep in mind that:

- Your headline should be compelling. You have one chance to have your release read all the way through.
- A good release should be one page or less. If the reporter is interested and needs more information s/he will contact you.
- Get to the point quickly and right at the beginning (in the first sentence).
- Use simple language and short sentences, avoid church jargon and define acronyms.
- Always be certain your information and facts are correct.
- Proofread, proofread, proofread! Good grammar is important.
- Write in the objective third person, no "we," "ours," or "you."

Media Release Template

Date

Type of Media Release (Click here for list.)

For Immediate Release (this indicates that the information you have provided is available for publication right away)

For More Information Contact:

Name of Primary Contact:

Office Phone:

Cell Phone:

Headline:

City, State — The body of the release should consist of several paragraphs that are short and concise, with the most important content at the beginning.

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Boilerplate: This is the basic information about your church that should include a brief history, perhaps a bit about your priest, and types of services you offer.

Where and How to Send Your Media Release

Who are you trying to reach with your message and how do they get their information? Keep these points in mind:

- Decide which publications/media are important to reach your local audience.
- Start small – local newspapers, magazines, trade journals, radio stations, television news stations. A helpful website to find local media is www.newslink.org.
- Be selective – send the release only to people who write articles or make editorial decisions (i.e. business editors or general assignment reporters, not advertising executives or publishers).
- Look for reporters' and editors' e-mail addresses and phone numbers on the publication's website or call the publication and ask for them.
- Contact the media person first by phone and find out how they prefer to receive media releases. Confirm that they are the correct person for your stories.

E-mail your media release to each person on your media list, one outlet at a time, remembering to:

- Include a clear and concise subject line.
- Embed the release in your e-mail. If photos are available, note that at the end of the

release. You should not include any attachments to the release e-mail.

- Send the release to all contacts on the same day.
- In the media contact line, always include both an e-mail address and a phone number, and check messages regularly.
- Personalize e-mail when possible. Use the reporter's name and familiarize yourself with the topics he or she covers.
- If the media contact you listed on your media release is going to be out of the office, check to see if he or she has an automatic e-mail reply or voicemail message listing an alternate contact.
- Choose key reporters to call and follow up on the release; make sure they received it, explain to them why the news would be of interest to their readers, and offer them an interview.
- Return calls promptly with relevant information or risk missing the chance to be mentioned.

For additional resources: http://www.ecfvp.org/vestrypapers/communications-tried-true-new/the-how-and-why-of-press-releases/.