

The United Church of Canada
West District, Newfoundland and Labrador Conference

Communications Committee

Press Release Guidelines

Your news is important, but media editors receive dozens of press releases each day. If your information doesn't catch their eye immediately, chances are it will end up in the recycling bin.

Suggestion

Before issuing a press release, please contact/email please ensure that it has been reviewed by Conference Staff personnel and the Chair of Communications, as a matter of awareness about Pastoral Charge issues and as courtesy to church representatives who are frequently in contact with the media, and may be contacted about the release.

What is a Press Release?

A press release is a concise summary of a news or feature item worthy of wider attention. It does not tell the entire story, but highlights aspects that will be of interest to the media outlet being contacted. A press release includes information on the five Ws (who, what, when, where, why and how) as well as complete contact information (telephone, e-mail, web pages) for major spokespersons.

Purpose

A press release is intended to be sent to journalists and media outlets (newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations, etc.) to encourage any and all of them to develop news stories and articles on the subject. Please note that press releases are generally biased towards the views and positions of the release author. This may be viewed by the media as 'raw' material for story development and creation of new content.

Bear in mind, the purpose of a press release is to reach out to the media and to get them to report on your particular message. Based on this activity the benefit to a particular story is in terms of increased publicity and highlights your story to a wider audience.

Tips for Press Releases

1. Report in the Third Person. Example: "Rev. John Doe of the Anywhere Pastoral Charge, today was awarded..."
2. Press releases are most effective if they are 500 words or less. Essentially two to three paragraphs, preceded by a clear and attention-grabbing headline. REMEMBER this content is intended to be used by the media, so be accurate and detailed.
3. Avoid poor writing. Get it proof-read for grammar and syntax BEFORE submission.

4. Backgrounders are one or more pages of additional information about your subject. A backgrounder could include historical context, important dates, facts and figures or other information.

5. Deadlines. Newsrooms need lead time to plan for and assign stories. Contact the publication for copy deadlines.

6. Make sure you have a contact name and number for someone who knows something about the story. The media may want to interview them about the story for more details, sound bites, etc.

Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Moderator Prays for Mutual Respect

TORONTO, ON (September 10, 2010) - The Moderator of The United Church of Canada, Mardi Tindal, was a guest today at an Eid celebration to mark the end of Ramadan at Toronto's Exhibition Place. She was invited by the Muslim Association of Canada. Ramadan is the month-long period of fasting observed by Muslims around the world, and today's gathering attracted over 10,000 members of the Muslim faith.

Moderator Tindal noted: "There are so many things our two faiths share—a desire for peace, justice, and the integrity of creation—I was honoured to share in this celebration." Recent events have cast a shadow over the relationship between Christians and Muslims, and the Moderator feels it is important now for United Church members to stand with their neighbours and look for opportunities to meet, talk, and work together.

"In my home congregation in Brantford, Ontario, we have a strong relationship with the local mosque, and it's been an enriching experience for both our congregations. I know other churches across the country are also reaching out to our Muslim brothers and sisters to find ways to contribute and strengthen all our communities," she added. "This Sunday, when we are remembering the tragic events of September 11, 2001, I pray that all United Church members and churches will witness to a world where our relationships are guided by love and respect."

For more information, please contact:
Jane Doe Coordinator, Media and Public Relations
The United Church of Canada
Tel: 555-555-1234 ext. 111

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