

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

Advocate using television and radio



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Lutherans everywhere stand up to help their neighbors. It's important that we share with our communities that we are doing our part to work for the common good, while reminding elected officials that our governments can do their part as well. Local newspapers, bloggers, and radio and TV stations can help you communicate this message.

Reaching out

- The first time you pitch a story, call the station. Introduce yourself and briefly describe your story. After you work with a reporter directly, make sure you obtain his or her contact information. (Mornings are good times to reach TV and radio staff—morning editorial meetings are often where stories are pitched and assignments are made.)
- Be timely: respect deadlines, return calls promptly, reach out in advance
- Be relevant. Responding to recent or national news is the best way to increase your chance of the story being selected. You can also capitalize on events or anniversaries.
- If this is for TV, remember the visual element—what would be an image that would capture an audience's attention?
- Line up potential interviewees ahead of time

When you've landed the interview

- Be brief, but thorough. Practice your answers to anticipated questions.
- Let your personality come through—smile and think of ways to connect to your audience. (Remember, the reporter is not your audience.)
- Provide accurate information. If you don't know the answer to a question, tell the reporter you will follow-up. Never lie—the reporter and his or her team are trained in finding facts and you want to maintain your reputation as a credible source.

See below, *"Interview Tips and Techniques,"* for additional support

After the interview

- Don't be afraid to call them if you forgot something important. The reporter usually has a few hours (or even days) to edit the package before it airs.
- Expect edits in the final production.
- Once the piece has aired, request a copy of the story on DVD. Send this, with a personalized note, to your elected officials' district or state office.

INTERVIEW TIPS & TECHNIQUES

This information, prepared by the ELCA Public Relations Department, can help you prepare for a media interview.

Know your message

- Practice, practice, practice
 - Be concise and don't feel like you need to fill silences
 - Anticipate tough questions and rehearse your response
 - Review your facts, know them well
- Don't volunteer negative information
- Correct false statements
- Avoid "inside jargon"—remember your audience is new to this story.
- Be yourself—let your personality shine through the interview. And smile. 😊

Be prepared for questions

- Always deliver your message in a positive way
- Watch out for a question framed as a hypothetical:
 - *How likely is it...*
 - *Had you done something differently....*
- When responding to a difficult or negative question, keep in mind these five steps:
 1. Listen carefully
 2. Reframe the question in your own words. Use a phrase like, "I think what you're asking is..."
 3. Answer your reframed question using the key messages you've prepared and reviewed
 4. Support your answer with facts, figures, or concrete examples.
 5. Close on a positive note

Bring emphasis to your key messages and use quotable language

- Flag your messages with phrases like
 - "The most important thing to remember is..."
 - "Let's be clear about..."
 - "The bottom line is..."
- Always use complete sentences
- The best sound bites are:
 - Analogies, comparisons, and contrasts
 - Short, direct, and emphatic