



oneLIFE

**12-15 Sep 2019 Bishops' Mission
led by the Archbishop of York**

An invitation to life's
greatest adventure

Working with local media

Local media can help you reach people who will never otherwise come into contact with your church and being in the news helps build your profile in the community, letting people know that the Church is still alive and active in their part of the world.

It's great to hear good stories about your Church and it is a good counterbalance to some of the negative publicity that appears in the media.

News coverage is free and it's not that hard to get your story into the media – newspapers, radio, and TV stations need news, it is soon used up and needs to be replenished on a very regular basis.

So, what makes a news story? At the risk of stating the obvious it is something that is new eg a new minister, a new club for older people etc. It is also something that is unusual: 'church holds harvest festival' is not new or unusual, but 'church holds harvest festival in allotments' is new, and it's also a little bit quirky, which will interest the media.

The first/biggest/oldest/youngest - the media love statistics and milestones. It has to be genuinely local, so national church campaigns are not particularly interesting to the media unless a local church has found an interesting way to engage with it.

A picture is worth a thousand words: Think about picture possibilities to go with your story – the media will be more likely to cover something with a visual angle.

Human interest – the media want stories about people, so look for human interest stories. If your church gets a new font, that is unlikely to attract the media (unless it is truly spectacular). If, however, it was hand-made by a local craftsman who toiled over it for months because his late mother went to the church, you're well on the way.

As well as contacting the local newspaper find out if there is a local news website in your area or a village newsletter that would carry your story.

Writing a press release

Think of a title/headline that tells the story. Make it interesting to grab the attention of the newsdesk (they will be reading many such releases).

Decide what is the most important feature of the story and include it in the first paragraph. Get all the basic facts - What? Who? When? Where? Why? How? - as early as possible in the story.

Write in short sentences and keep paragraphs no longer than a few lines (that's how most of the newspapers do it).

Use quotes. A relevant comment from a person directly involved in an event adds interest and helps the flow.

Steer clear of jargon. If you have to use 'churchy' words, explain them. Avoid flowery language and stick to the facts.

Use a layout with 'news release' and the church's name displayed prominently so that the newsdesk can see easily the source of the information.

Add your contact details and make sure you are available to answer follow-up questions from the media during the day. If you have a website, add the address so that reporters can find more information.

Keep the release to the equivalent of one side of A4 if possible, two at the very most. If journalists need more information, they will contact you.

Check the information with everyone involved before sending it out. Ask someone else to read it through to check for mistakes. Send the release in good time. Send information about an event in the future, rather than an event which has happened.

'The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place'

George Bernard Shaw