



RENEWING
Ministry

Mission through the Media



Introduction

Who this toolkit is for?

This toolkit is a practical guide for Area Vicars and any other ordained or lay person within a Mission and Ministry Area who wants to help move the mission field of the MMA into the media at a local level.

Although designed for use in a MMA scenario, much of the information and suggestions can be used by anyone with a heart for mission.

The mission opportunity

Of the 'Five Marks of Mission' (approved at the 1998 Lambeth Conference, see below), all of them can be actioned, publicised or reported about in the media:-

Tell: Proclaiming the good news of the kingdom

Teach: Teaching, baptising and nurturing new believers

Tend: Responding to human need by loving service

Transform: Seeking to transform unjust structures of society

Treasure: Safeguarding the integrity of creation

With such huge audiences on the receiving end, it is a mission opportunity too valuable to miss.

Mission through the secular media is easier than one might expect. Journalists and broadcasters are hungry for news on a daily basis and welcome any contributions from all sections of the community. The skill is in providing journalists with what they want while communicating a particular message at the same time. That message can speak powerfully of God's Kingdom, giving many thousands of people the opportunity to hear it.

The message can be 'heard' from a photograph, a news or feature article, a radio soundbite, or more lengthy broadcast interviews. Many of us complain about the negative effects of media images and words, but it is within our control to redress the balance by feeding different messages into the system.

Getting started

What journalists want

Understanding the needs of journalists is the first step in getting started with effective media relations.

All local journalists want:

- A **good story about local people** (you have to be doing/saying something interesting to get coverage. You can even create a story by planning to do something especially with media reporting in mind)
- Reliable contacts who will make their lives easier (*see next section 'One contact'*)
- Press releases that are well written in a user-friendly format

- A familiar contact to call for queries and follow-ups
- Their copy deadlines to be respected. Simply call the media contacts in the area and ask them when their copy deadline is. You will then know how far in advance you have to send stories in to ensure the reporters have time to follow it up.

Radio journalists want all the above plus:

- 'Sound bites' or a debate style conversation that will entertain and engage the listener

TV journalists want all of the above plus:

- Something visual to film

One contact

Journalists like to have local contacts who they can build relationships with. It means they have a phone number of someone who can find things out for them, answer questions, and find appropriate spokespeople for comment. It helps them a great deal to have a named person with whom they can liaise. In a MMA, it may be possible to have one press contact for all the churches in that area.

In the first Communications Toolkit (*Communicating within a MMA, issued May 2005*), it is recommended that MMA's try to recruit someone who could help direct the internal Communications across the MMA. Part of that person's role might be to build a team of their own and an 'MMA Media Relations Officer' could be part of that team. This role, however, is in dealing with audiences outside of the church, but they will need to have good links into the internal systems in order to know what news stories may be worth reporting, and to know who to contact across the MMA in relation to press enquiries.

If there is someone in the MMA who has a heart for this type of mission, the Diocesan Communications Officer can help them with providing lists of media contacts and their phone numbers/e-mails for a particular area. The DCO can also provide advice and training in media relations to get the best results. Some of that advice is in this toolkit, but a more thorough, formal training is recommended.

Facts & Myths

Media relations can be an extremely positive thing to do as part of our Christian discipleship, yet many hold fears about doing it. Some fears stem from a general misconception about the motives and nature of journalism and may be formed through reading 'bad' stories about the church in the national newspapers.

For a single church, and even several churches in a Mission and Ministry Area, a national story will be rare. National and local reporters have similar needs but the national journalist's approach differs. This toolkit is focusing on the media at local levels, which addresses the most immediate audiences in your local community.

Local reporters have a positive agenda and through them, good media relations can...

- Be a form of Outreach
- Attract people into Church
- Be a means to motivate people 'out there' to think about faith

And...

- Involves an element of risk, so requires courage (but doesn't all mission?)

Do not let any fears about the press prevent you from achieving great things with God through the media!

Understanding what makes a good news story

The press are not proactively looking for sensational 'bad' stories, (but they will report on them if they are in the public interest). The following are examples of the kinds of things they are looking for that will still engage their audience but are all 'positive' and could say something about the Christian life.

- Something that is about to happen or has only just happened today or yesterday (anything that happened before that will not be news)
- Local people doing interesting things
- The unusual and unexpected
- Things that could impact on lots of other local people
- Conflict between individuals or groups (this can be a positive thing for the church - sometimes it is a church campaign against injustice or anti-Christian projects that makes a good 'conflict' story.)
- Stories about humanity: triumph over adversity, emotional stories, good overcoming evil, injustice/justice, life and death, extreme courage, extreme kindness, etc
- An opportunity for the media to be 'a voice for the people', i.e. campaigning for change. Make Poverty History is a tremendous example of this.
- Activities of children, charities, teenagers and the elderly often make good photos and stories
- VIPs (including Bishops!) and celebrities
- Anything that warrants an interesting photograph

Compare this list with the five marks of mission mentioned in the Introduction of this Toolkit. They resonate very strongly. There are many things happening in the lives of people in the Church that would make excellent news stories and photo opportunities.

If you are reading this toolkit and would like to discuss whether or not a particular situation in your MMA is newsworthy, please feel free to contact the DCO for advice.

Writing a press release

The following steps will help you to write a useable, clear, professionally presented press release

1. Ensure it really is a story before you write it - see above section 'Understanding what makes a good news story'
2. Lay it out professionally. Type it on a word processor, putting the date and 'for immediate release' in the top right hand corner. Put the headline in a larger font, centred. Put the text in double spacing. Do not put any text on the reverse of the page and try not to write a release longer than one side of A4. An additional half side should be your maximum. If you do need to go onto a second page, write 'more follows' at the bottom of the first. There are examples of how to lay out a press release in Appendix 1, attached.
3. Create an eye-catching headline but do not try to be too clever. See example press releases in the Appendices. The sub-editors of the newspaper will think of 'jazzy' headlines if need be.
4. Sum up the story in 1st paragraph. The headline and the first sentence will be the deciding factor of whether your press release ends up in the bin or not. Make sure it is succinct but informative. Do not embellish your writing with highly descriptive language. Keep it simple and factual.
5. Include a 'quote'. Further down the press release, a relevant comment from a spokesperson will really help you get the mission message into the media. If you keep the language accessible to secular audiences, it is much more likely to get used. See next section on 'The Importance of language' for more advice on this.
6. Provide contact details for the journalist in case of queries. Right at the end of the release, add a name and phone number.
7. At the end of the example press releases you will notice the word 'Ends'. This tells the editors the point at which the text intended for publishing ends. The 'Notes to editors' on some of the examples provide editors with background information. It is not intended for publishing but sometimes it does get published if the editors think it helps with the story.

The importance of appropriate language

Churchy language will put off newsrooms from using a press release. As an example, say a press release contains the following:

'A Eucharist service to celebrate the completion of an ecumenical social responsibility project in the deanery of Erewash will be held this Sunday at 7pm in All Saints Church, Ilkeston.....'

The news editor is unlikely to understand what this means unless he is on the local deanery chapter! When compared to the paragraph below, it is easy to see how language can act as a barrier to a good news story (and effective mission):

'A special church service to celebrate the completion of an important furniture recycling project for Derbyshire Housing Aid will be held this Sunday at All Saints Church, Ilkeston, at 7pm. Christians of all denominations within and around Ilkeston have worked together for two years to ensure underprivileged people in the area have access to basic furniture. Communion bread and wine will be served at the service and all are welcome ...'

It is easy to assume most people understand what a particular word means, so it is a good idea to let others read your press releases to detect any jargon.

Issuing a press release

Once your release is written, it is important you send it to named reporters and copy in the general newsdesk as well. If possible, send it by e-mail, as you will be able to send it to all the relevant media in one go with no postage cost, and it will get to the recipients much faster. Some newspapers and broadcast media may not have individual e-mail addresses for particular people, but they will always have a general newsroom e-mail.

If you can't send it by e-mail, make sure you post it in good time for the news story. Ensure the reporter has at least 24 hours to deal with the story. If you're publicising an event and you think a reporter and photographer would attend it, send them the press release at least two days in advance.

HANDY TIP

It is highly advisable you follow up the issuing of your press release with a phone call. This may seem like extra effort, but it could be well worth it. Newsrooms receive hundreds of press releases every day. They may not have time to look at them all, or some may simply get lost among the others. If you ring the newsdesk a couple of hours after you have sent the release and ask them if it has arrived, it is an opportunity to make sure your story gets to the top of the pile. Do not think reporters will be irritated by this. Most are not, and in fact will be glad of someone to talk to about something that could be a good story.

Setting up a photocall notice

Writing a photocall notice is similar to writing a press release, except the desired end result you want is that a photographer accepts your invitation to come and take a photograph. You therefore have to persuade the photographers that there is something worth taking a photo of.

Some stories naturally lend themselves to photos. Some stories are told by the photo itself with a caption, such as the unveiling of a special painting, or statue.

When writing a photocall notice, you can be a little more descriptive in your language to explain what the photographer can expect to see. See the Appendices for an example.

The other crucial thing to highlight in the photocall is the date, time and place where the photo opportunity is going to happen.

Being interviewed for radio checklist

Being interviewed for radio is a particular skill. It is recommended that anyone who is likely to be a regular spokesperson for a parish or MMA receives media training in this area. Contact the Diocesan Communications Officer for details of forthcoming courses, locally and in London.

In the meantime, for straightforward, ad hoc interviews the following may be helpful hints:-

Before the interview:

- Find out who will interview you, for what show, whether it's live or pre-recorded and whether it be just you being interviewed or whether someone else will be interviewed with you. This will help you put the whole interview into context.
- Ask what the very first question will be and an idea of the areas the interviewer wants to discuss.
- Identify 2-3 key messages you want to get across and try to work these naturally into conversation. This requires practice but it can be done.

During the interview

- Relax and be confident about your subject.
- Stick to the subject you have been asked to comment on.
- Keep your answers as succinct as possible but do not be afraid of the occasional "er" or "um" because this sounds more natural than off-pat answers.
- Similarly to written press releases, avoid churchy jargon words.

Being interviewed for TV checklist

Again, it is advisable to receive training in this area before attempting a TV interview, but for straightforward stories, it is the same advice as for radio with the added suggestions below. Some of these may seem obvious but are easy to forget when you might feel flustered about being interviewed:

- Do not look at the camera, even for a glance.
- Smile in a relaxed manner at the interviewer (but only if it is appropriate to the story)
- Make sure your hair is tidy.
- I would recommend women wear a little make-up in natural colours. This creates a well-groomed, professional appearance and ensures your face does not look washed out by camera lighting.
- Wear understated, smart, neutral clothes that do not detract from what you are saying. Avoid stripes particularly.
- Use conversational hand gestures to emphasise the points you make.

Dealing with a negative media story

Very occasionally, there may be a situation in a parish which is likely to cause a media sensation locally, or even more rarely, nationally. If you are aware of any situation like this, it is advisable to discuss it with the DCO so that statements can be pre-prepared and the best way of handling it can be planned in advance. It is much easier to deal with a negative story in this way than to scramble for spokespeople and statements when the press are already investigating it.

The following tips may help if you are faced with a negative story:

- Remember: You do not have to answer a journalist's call immediately.
- Take their name, telephone number and the name of the publication/programme they're calling from.
- Ask them exactly what their enquiry is, what they want from you and by when.
- Tell them you will call them back - then call DCO for advice if necessary.
- Be as polite and helpful to journalists as possible but do not engage in casual chit-chat - consider everything you say as 'quotable'.
- Avoid saying 'No comment'. On the majority of issues a statement can be provided. Even a very short statement is better than saying nothing at all.
- If you feel the issue can be handled by you or a designated spokesperson, offer a truthful, succinct comment that does not embarrass or blame others.

Useful contacts and information

Diocesan contact

Ruth Green
Diocesan Communications Officer
Derby Church House
Full Street
Derby
DE1 3DR

Tel: 01332 388680

E-mail: ruth.green@derby.anglican.org or
communications@derby.anglican.org

Office hours:

The Communications Office is staffed every weekday except Wednesday. Ruth Green works part-time and is available all day Monday and Tuesday and Thursday afternoons.

Faithworks information

An excellent media guide is available from the Faithworks web site: www.faithworks.info. Click on the 'Resources' section and choose 'Faithworks Resources' from the menu. In the list that appears you can select and download the media guide. Much of the information is similar to the content of this toolkit but there may be additional material of use.

Appendix 1

Example of a good press release 1

**Press Release
For immediate release
May 12th 2005**

CHAPLAIN'S CHARITY BIKE MARATHON

A senior chaplain from Derby is to take a month off his duties to cycle from Land's End to John O'Groats in order to raise money for the Derby Night Shelter.

The Rev'd Canon Cedric Blakey, who is chaplain to the Bishop of Derby, is taking on the challenge between May 20th and June 14th and hopes to raise at least £1000 through sponsorships for the homeless refuge centre in Boyer Street.

A keen cyclist, Canon Blakey is building up his stamina in the weeks running up to the trip so he is fit enough to cope with the daily strains of cycling the length of the British Isles.

"I'll probably have just a couple of days off en route to help my aching muscles recover, but for most of the time I will be cycling on a daily basis. I'm really looking forward to the physical challenge, the spectacular scenery and the peace of being on the road alone for while," he said.

Mr Blakey will send occasional diary reports of his journey via the Anglican Diocese of Derby's web site, www.derby.anglican.org, where those who have sponsored him can keep track of his progress. Anyone wishing to support the fundraising can send a cheque made payable to: C. Blakey, marked Derby Night Shelter on the back, and posted to: Derby Church House, Full Street, Derby DE1 3DR.

ENDS

For further information, or to arrange a photograph to support this story, please contact:

Ruth Green
Communications Officer/Bishop's Press Officer
Diocese of Derby
(The Church of England across Derbyshire)
01332 388680
www.derby.anglican.org

Notes to editors re: correct modes of address

It is not correct to say 'The Rev'd Blakey' in your reports. The correct modes of address for a Canon of the Church of England are:

- The Rev'd Canon Cedric Blakey or
- Canon Blakey or
- Mr Blakey

DERBYSHIRE CHURCHES APPEAL TO HELP INDIAN FRIENDS

Derbyshire Churches have launched an Appeal to help rebuild church communities in the Indian islands of Andaman and Nicobar, devastated by the Asian Tsunami on Boxing Day 2004.

Derbyshire Churches, including Anglican, Methodist, Baptist and URC churches, have a long-standing partnership link with the Church of North India, and since 1977 have enjoyed exchange visits with bishops, pastors and lay people. Friendships have naturally built over the years and so the news of the tsunami, which devastated the Diocese of Andaman and Nicobar, has shocked and saddened the Church community here.

While still encouraging people to donate generously to the international aid agencies which are attending to the communities at large in these areas, Derbyshire Churches aim to specifically help the Church of North India rebuild its diocese, a task which will doubtless be a long term process.

Of the total population of the Andaman and Nicobar islands of around 35,000, over 10,000 are said to have been killed. In the churches:

- 8 of the 52 clergy have been killed
- 18 of the 33 churches were washed away, and the others are all badly damaged
- the Diocesan Office, Library and Printing Press have all been badly damaged, and the Bishop's House has collapsed

The Church of North India has set up a Disaster Management Committee, and the Diocese of Kolkata (Calcutta) has already provided emergency funds and relief materials. These are working with four other Christian relief organisations operating from Port Blair.

More follows....

Church in India 2

The Rt Rev'd Jonathan Bailey, Bishop Derby, and one of the presidents of the Derbyshire Churches/CNI Partnership, said: "The Church of North India responded immediately and energetically to the disaster in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, where the devastation was huge - the islands were relatively close to the epicentre of the earthquake. I can hardly begin to imagine the scale of this catastrophe.

"The relief effort will now turn into a longer term reconstruction programme, and the Church of North India will have much work to do in rebuilding churches and helping communities to cope with the enormous loss of life and destruction of livelihoods. The Appeal being organised by the Derbyshire Churches is designed to help our brothers and sisters in India at this time of great need and tremendous sadness, and I hope that it will meet with a generous response."

To donate to this Appeal, **cheques are payable to "Derbyshire Churches/CNI Partnership a/c" and should be sent to the Treasurer of the Derbyshire churches CNI Partnership, Mr John Spray, 6 Onslow Road, Mickleover, Derby DE3 9JJ. There are three web sites where updates and information on the situation in the Andamar and Nicobar islands cane be found: www.cnitsunamirelief.org, www.ddwdf.org, or www.derby.anglican.org**

ENDS

For further information please contact any of the following:

The Rev'd Ted Ager
Chair of the Derbyshire Churches/CNI Partnership
01332 346715

The Rev'd Christopher Harrison
Diocese of Derby World Development Adviser and
Vicar of Alsop, Fenny Bentley, Parwich,
Thorpe and Tissington parishes
01335 390226

Ruth Green
Communications Officer/Bishop's
Press Officer
Diocese of Derby
(The Church of England across Derbyshire)
01332 388680

Appendix 2

Example of a good photocall notice

Photocall Notice
August 8th 2005

HUGE CHEQUE FOR DERBY NIGHT SHELTER

A giant-sized cheque for more than £5,000 will be presented to the Derby Night Shelter, a homeless refuge centre in Boyer Street, Derby, on Tuesday August 9th at 6pm, by the Rev'd Canon Cedric Blakey, who raised the cash by cycling from Land's End to John O'Groats during May and June.

Canon Blakey pedalled the full length of the British Isles through mostly wet weather between May 20th and June 15th. The original fundraising target was £1000, but the generosity of friends, colleagues and strangers' contributions along the route have secured five times that amount.

He said: "The journey was tough at times, but a wonderful trip I would recommend to anyone. I covered 1,062 miles and camped in over 20 different places. I'm very grateful everyone who encouraged me during the trip, but most importantly, gave their money to this vital charity."

Derby Night Shelter resident Ed Higgins, 20, agreed the centre had been invaluable to him. He said: "The Night Shelter's been an extreme help to me – I would have got very wet the other night without it. It's also nice to know I've got help on hand for things like life skills and housing."

Mr Blakey's daily diary reports throughout his challenge can be read on the Diocese of Derby's web site, www.derby.anglican.org. Anyone wishing to continue to support fundraising for Derby Night Shelter can still send a cheque made payable to Derbyshire Housing Aid.

ENDS

For further information, please contact:

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