

Press Release Guidelines

Communications primer: How to write a news release

When and What to Write:

Plan releases in advance; brainstorm with others on what is news. Include the pastor.

Keep in mind your congregation's news profile over time: Are the releases you have sent over a period of time collectively giving a balanced impression of your congregation's ministry or are they skewed toward one dimension (e.g. always a fund raiser, craft fair, one social issue, etc.)?

Use Tip sheets: A set of brief story ideas, often with a sentence or two about issues, upcoming events, and individuals in congregation who have a story (for reporters and feature writers to consider).

Phone contact with reporter will always help. In working with television or radio, it is usually essential.

Writing a release that will be printed:

To begin: Press releases must answer the questions: Who?, What?, When?, Where?, How? and perhaps Why?

Write crisp sentences and employ active, strong verbs.

Writers often describe a release as an inverted pyramid; large issues to smaller details.

Important facts come first and early in the release. Details follow. If the story is shortened or edited (rarely is this not the case), you want to emphasize the most important information up front.

Consider the angle of the story. Often, news writers identify a "peg" or a particular perspective that helps establish why the story is of interest or important. This should factor in the lead sentence. Examples: New twist to an old idea, major event, well known person involved, human interest angle, a key local event connected to larger national, social or religious issue, a unique program, etc.

Avoid jargon, technical and other "insider language" in writing for the public. Even if writing for the church's media, jargon is undesirable.

(Just the facts, please) Never editorialize:
"Twelfth Lutheran Church really took a leap of faith last

What is news?

- new group or ministry begun
- new staff person
- local link to national issue, concern, actions
- related church school event
- social ministry initiative
- rewrite a churchwide release with your own local comment, lead
- regional or national figure coming to preach or present
- major gift
- ecumenical event
- special study
- worship events
- confirmation
- dedication of new building or significant item
- delegates chosen for synodical or churchwide event

week as Pastor Deinst called for a vote on an exciting new building program

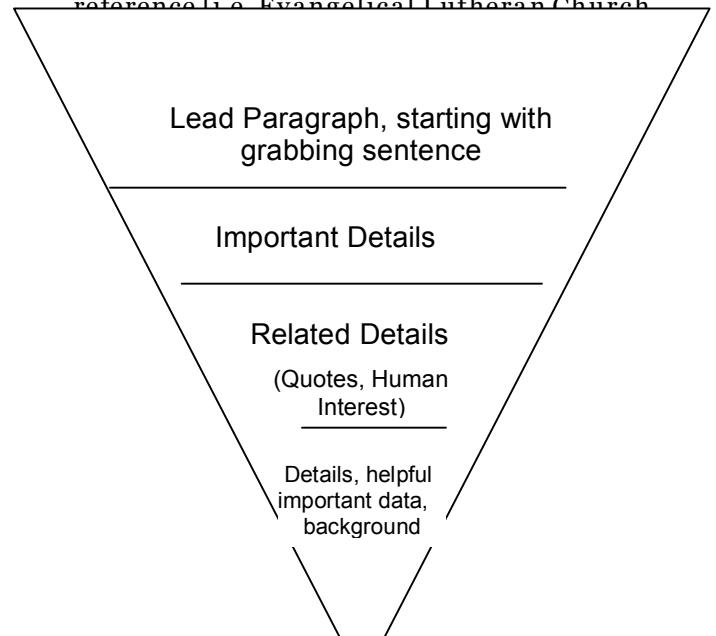
Headlines should be strong and clear. Avoid any double entendre.

Photos are helpful, important, or essential. Digital is O.K. if the quality is good.

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End the release with general information: Don't forget to include information in what's called the "cut-off" position at the very end--extra info about the church, such as size, denominational affiliation, location, unique identifiers, historical information, other tidbits--just on the chance that the paper is short of copy and can give you some space.

No acronyms, except after spelling out the reference like *Evangelical Lutheran Church*



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