

WYOMING ANNUAL CONFERENCE



LOCAL CHURCH CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN

When A Crisis Involves a Local Church

When a crisis situation arises in a local church, you are not and should not be alone. This is an area where our shared ministry, funded by congregations' Ministry Shares, provides access to resources that can help.

This plan will allow the clergy and lay leadership of to:

- ' Provide compassion, concern and care for the victims of the crisis and those impacted by the crisis;
- ' Provide means for meeting the needs of media covering the crisis;
- ' Provide and enhance a positive image of The United Methodist Church.

The first step for the leaders of a congregation facing a crisis or upon learning of the potential for a crisis is to contact their District Superintendent. If for some reason the DS is not available, contact the Conference Director of Communications or the Conference Director of Connectional Ministries at the Conference Center by calling 607-757-0608 or 800-799-9664. You can also find contact information at www.wyomingconference.org. Provide the person you contact with as much information about the situation as possible.

If your first knowledge of the situation arises by a question from a member of the news media, be careful of your response.

- ' Politely, but firmly decline to answer questions using a "Hold Response." An example of such a response is: "I want to make sure we give you the most accurate and up to date information. Our Conference Communicator can best help you. If you give me your contact information, deadline and the topic you are calling about, I'll have that person get back to you as soon as possible."
- ' Make a written note including the reporter's name; phone number; media outlet; deadline; information sought; information they already have (whether correct or incorrect); and the time and date of the contact.

When possible, use the "Media Inquiry Log Sheet" to do this. You may duplicate the form in this packet or download it from the Annual Conference website. Look for Crisis Communications under the "Resources" tab at www.wyomingconference.org.

- ' Nothing is ever "off the record." Treat anything you say as if it will be used publicly- even if the reporter says it is "off the record."
- ' Do not give a personal opinion.
- ' Do not use the term "no comment." Instead say something like, "I don't know" or "I am not in a position to discuss that at this time."
- ' Do remember to be polite but firm.

These procedures are to be implemented anytime an incident occurs with the potential of diminishing trust in the church and its ministries or of damaging the church's reputation in the community.

Examples of situations in which these procedures are to be implemented include incidents involving:

- ' Church leaders, members or constituents participating in an event or ministry on church property;
- ' Church leaders, members or constituents participating in a church-sponsored event or ministry at a site other than the church (e.g. youth trip, seniors' outing, VIM or other mission trip);
- ' People served by a ministry of the church-even if the church's involvement in the ministry is limited to providing space (e.g. day care center, hot lunch program, exercise class, AA or NA group);
- ' Clergy, staff or lay leadership potentially facing criminal or civil charges
- ' Criminal activity that damages church property.

The procedures are only necessary when a situation has the potential to damage your local church, the Annual Conference, The United Methodist Church, or to diminish the effect of our ministry.

Of course, there are times you may be contacted by members of the news media when you do not need to follow these procedures.

Some examples of times you do not need to activate the Crisis Response Plan include:

- ' Promoting a mission or ministry of your church;
- ' Promoting events taking place at your church;
- ' Reporters seeking comment on positive ways your church impacts your community;
- ' Honoring members or staff for good things they have done.

Remember that only the General Conference no one can speak for The United Methodist Church. If you receive questions about the denomination's stance on issues, the best course of action is to refer the question to the Conference Director of Communications.

Contacts			
Office	Person	Phone	E-mail
Binghamton DS	Dave Masland	(O) 607-748-0662 (H) 607-722-3321	dmasland1@stny.rr.com
Oneonta DS	Jan Marsi	(O) 607-563-1347 (H) 607-724-8068	janmarsi@aol.com
Scranton DS	Bette Poe	(O) 570-341-9288 (H) 570-341-7819	bjpoe1@msn.com
Wilkes-Barre DS	Greg Myers	(O) 570-654-8064 (H) 570-287-5838	wbdistrict@comcast.net
Director of Connectional Ministries	Mark Marino	(O) 607-757-0608 (O) 800-799-9664 (H) 607-217-7302	m.marino@earthlink.net
Director of Communications	Don Perry	(O) 607-757-0608 (O) 800-799-9664 (C) 570-766-9558	dperry@wyomingconference.org

Media Inquiry Log Sheet

{ Complete and fax or e-mail to the Director of Communications as soon as possible }
{ Conference Center Fax: 607-757-0752 ; Dir. of Communications: dperry@wyomingconfernce.org }
{ Use a new sheet to log every call or contact }

Day & Date: _____

Time: _____

Name of caller: _____

From: _____
<name and type of outlet; e.g. newspaper, TV station, wire service, etc.)

Phone Number: _____

E-Mail: _____

Is follow up required? ___Yes ___No

If yes, be specific:

Summary of conversation:

Signature