

Crisis Communications Best Practices

ELCA Strategic Communications

The ELCA churchwide organization offers strategic partners who can support synods, congregations or other ELCA-affiliated ministries during a time of crisis.

Initial Questions When a Crisis Emerges

- Who is impacted by the situation?
- What is the worst-case scenario? Can you handle that?
- Do you need to call a lawyer?
- Do you need to reach out to the churchwide organization?
- Who on your team needs to be part of discussions/planning and execution?

Crisis Communication Planning



Recommendations

- Maintain a credible relationship with the news media to help you in a crisis; not having one can hurt you in a crisis.
- Avoid rumors and nonstrategic remarks and actions.
- Offense not defense, whenever possible.
- Identify one spokesperson. Provide a clear, consistent voice.

Possible Crisis Team Members

- A strong communicator experienced in messaging and talking points
- Synod bishop or key synod office leader/s
- Congregation council president or leader/s in a congregation
- Head pastor/pastors of a congregation
- Lawyer if/when needed

Resources

In all crisis communications, we stress the importance of being prepared for all outcomes. Here are several resources that will be helpful as you consider how your own communities might be impacted by possible unrest or violence.

1. DHS' Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's [Protecting Houses of Worship resource page](#).
2. [FEMA's Guide for Developing High-Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Houses of Worship](#)
3. [LDR's Congregational Disaster Preparedness Guidebook](#)
4. [Mitigating Attacks on Houses of Worship Security Guide - Spanish Translation | CISA](#)
5. The [ELCA Risk Management](#) webpage has several resources for synods and congregations.