



## General Guidelines

[streetpastors.org.uk](http://streetpastors.org.uk)

# General Guidelines

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## Street Pastors Media Guidelines

### Making the most of the Media - Handy Hints

*'I keep six honest serving-men  
(They taught me all I knew);  
Their names are What and Why and When  
And How and Where and Who.'*

– Rudyard Kipling 'The Elephant's Child'.

If the media approach you about a sensitive or controversial matter, the best response is to politely explain that you will need to contact the press office of Street Pastors' parent body, The Ascension Trust. Ask the caller's name and phone number and assure them that someone will get back to them quickly. It will help if you can ask them if they are working to a deadline and note that information. Then you need to call The Ascension Trust on 0208 330 2809 explaining that you need to speak to someone urgently about a difficult media enquiry.

The following 'tips' are offered for use by Coordinators and management committees in situations where they are reasonably confident that nothing is likely to be publicised which would harm the reputation of the Street Pastors movement or any individual connected to it.

### Speaking to the press – planned verbal communication

- ❖ Be prepared; know your story and the key messages beforehand.
- ❖ Think of an 'angle'.
- ❖ Anticipate any possible criticisms and prepare responses. Never appear angry or offended.
- ❖ Have any case studies, spokespeople, quotes and literature available before you contact the media.
- ❖ Keep to the point.
- ❖ Summarise what was discussed so you can clarify any misunderstanding; you will rarely be given the opportunity to proof read copy.
- ❖ Never assume a journalist is 'off the record' or that a previously sympathetic contact will put your interests, or that of your organisation, before a story.

### Speaking to the press – unplanned verbal communication on a negative story

- ❖ Get all the facts.
- ❖ Be helpful and sound keen to assist, do not come across as angry.
- ❖ Find out the print/broadcast deadline, the story will probably go ahead with or without you, so it is vital you know the time-scale.
- ❖ Explain that you will almost certainly need to discuss the matter with a colleague and get their name and number so that you, or someone else, can call them back. Call Ascension Trust immediately on 0208 330 2809. The Ascension Trust will provide all Street Pastors initiatives with an "out of office" telephone contact number in due course.

- ❖ Say nothing until you have something to say, but never say 'No comment'. If you cannot answer, explain why not (probably because you need to consult a colleague). 'No comment' is perceived as an 'admission of guilt' in media circles.
- ❖ Remember journalists are often economical with the truth and will try to bamboozle you; it is their job! If they state they have spoken to your colleague and they said X and Y do not be tempted to say more than you should. Any journalist worth their salt will be happy for you to come back to them with a considered response.
- ❖ Unless you are 110% sure you are the right person to give a comment, seek a response from a more senior colleague, who will usually be a senior member of staff at Ascension Trust. If you get it wrong, it will be in print for all to see.
- ❖ If you're at all unsure, buy yourself some time and offer to call the journalist back. Or, if in a face-to-face situation, make an excuse to leave the room for five minutes so you can check your facts or rehearse your response.
- ❖ If you are in a live situation and asked a 'hot' question, reply by saying 'That is not what I am here to talk to you about today, what I am here to talk about is...' or 'I am sorry I do not know the facts so I cannot possibly answer that question, but it is important that you get a response, so I will find out and get back to you.'

### Live interviews

Please check with Ascension Trust before you undertake any live interview, even if it is just a 'sound bite'. We will then be able to guide you specifically, taking into account the audience and the interviewer and we will advise you of any issues you need to be aware of.

### Style and 'brand' – written communication

- ❖ Is what you want to say really 'News'? Does it have 'appeal' and is it important to the public; have you chosen the right audience and appropriate media?
- ❖ What has your story got over and above the others that a newspaper or journalist will receive hourly?
- ❖ Remember the Rudyard Kipling rhyme above when preparing all your communications. If you can, get all the key details in the first paragraph, then go into detail and add in any relevant quotes, statistics and interesting facts in the remaining paragraphs.
- ❖ Use short sentences and keep each paragraph no more than four sentences in length.
- ❖ Use one-and-a-half line spacing.
- ❖ Use Ariel 11-point font or larger for the main text; Try not to use 'busy' fonts like 'Comic Sans' or 'Edwardian Script'. Other simple fonts are 'Tahoma' and 'Century Gothic'.
- ❖ Try to keep to a maximum of two pages; if a journalist is interested they will contact you for more information.
- ❖ Use plain English, as fancy, pretentious writing will obscure your message and turn a journalist off.
- ❖ Avoid internal jargon and explain any abbreviations.
- ❖ Put the date at the top of any communication with the media.
- ❖ By typing -ENDS- after the last sentence you will show you have finished and there are no additional pages.

- ❖ Include 'notes to editors' with basic national and local facts about Street Pastors. See suggested paragraph marked \*\* below.
- ❖ Ensure the contact details are correct; give mobile phone numbers if possible as well as landlines to enable journalists to contact you or other key spokespeople who are well briefed. Make sure your spokespeople are available, as journalists may not try twice.
- ❖ Remember to be timely, don't put out reams of press releases about very little; target the right journalist and don't put a story out on a busy news day, as you will look like you don't know what you are doing.
- ❖ Know your contacts' deadlines; firstly, make sure you meet them; and secondly, do not call to 'sell in' a story when you know they are busy.

*\*\*Street Pastors is an initiative by Christian Churches in over 200 towns and cities across the UK. Volunteers 'patrol' late at night to listen, care and provide practical help to anyone in need of their assistance. It was pioneered in London in 2003 by the Rev. Les Isaac, CEO of The Ascension Trust. It has seen some remarkable results, including drops in crime in areas where teams have been working. Each project is set up by The Ascension Trust and run by a local coordinator with support from The Ascension Trust, local churches and community groups in partnership with Police, Council and other statutory agencies.*

Visit our ever-growing website to find out what Street Pastors are doing across the United Kingdom... and near you - [www.streetpastors.co.uk](http://www.streetpastors.co.uk)

### **Photocalls**

More and more local newspapers are happy to accept digital photographs taken 'in-house' so these tips may help your picture get into the newspaper.

- ❖ Carefully consider the image being presented – is it vibrant, youthful and culturally relevant?
- ❖ Know your deadline and what format the photo is needed in – 'jpeg' format is usually the most appropriate.
- ❖ Provide more than one choice; some newspapers won't feature 'certificate' or 'cheque' presentations.
- ❖ Avoid a "line 'em up and shoot 'em" or 'handshake' shot, as invariably it will not make the paper.
- ❖ If there is no alternative keep the numbers to 3, 5, 7 or group shots.
- ❖ Have interesting props.
- ❖ If you are physically short, stand on some steps or up a hill, it gives a better shot.
- ❖ Organise the group in a tight block and never a straight line.
- ❖ Use chairs or get people to kneel if it helps.
- ❖ Be aware of your surroundings; trees sticking out of people's heads, signage and other obstructions may stop your picture being used.

- ❖ Do not be tempted to change the image; newspapers like to crop, lighten or darken an image themselves.
- ❖ Make sure the 'brand' is central to the picture and cannot be cropped out. This can be anything from a Street Pastor in part or full uniform, to standing in front of an Ascension Trust roller banner making sure the words 'Street Pastors' are clearly visible.
- ❖ Remember a picture speaks a 1000 words; don't let newspaper photographers underline stereotypes or undermine the Street Pastors image. Be confident to suggest other shots or if need be, say 'no'.
- ❖ If a professional photographer attends a photocall, let them set up a photo then quickly snap the same shot, and remember what you see for use next time.

The Salvation Army's Press Office has produced a handbook to guide its members through the media maze. It has all the key messages we also seek to put across and also sets out the current protocol they follow. It is available on-line rather than in hard print as it has 24 pages and is periodically revised. You can find the handbook at:

**[www1.salvationarmy.org.uk/mediahandbook](http://www1.salvationarmy.org.uk/mediahandbook)**

*These guidelines were produced by Adrian Prior-Sankey, Taunton Street Pastors*

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## **Guidance To Street Pastors Initiatives In The Run Up to Elections**

Ascension Trust and the Street Pastors movement are politically neutral organisations and it is important that they are always perceived as such by the general public. It is therefore necessary to establish guidelines for how The Ascension Trust and Street Pastors management committee members, coordinators and volunteers operate in their formal and organisation capacity during election periods. In doing so, we recognise that many among the Street Pastors community will, in a personal capacity, be actively engaged in local or national politics.

These guidelines seek to ensure that when acting in a formal capacity, whether in uniform or otherwise officially representing the Street Pastors movement, extreme care is taken to ensure that there are no actions which could lead others to question the political neutrality of Street Pastors or The Ascension Trust. Furthermore, all efforts should be taken to avoid the Street Pastors' name and brand being used for furthering party political purposes.

During an election period, i.e., from the date an election is called until the election takes place, Street Pastors management committee members, coordinators and volunteers should observe the following **when acting in a formal capacity on behalf of Street Pastors:**

### **The Guidelines**

- A. They should not take any public part in the election campaign; they should not, for example, accompany any MPs on campaign visits, brief the press or give public speeches and briefings on election related party political issues;
- B. They should not issue any publicity relating to any councillors or candidates (including quotes) or which identifies specific policies or proposals with individual councillors or political parties;
- C. They should not allow themselves to be photographed with any of the candidates (if such photos are re-printed in a party political leaflet, it could be seen as an endorsement of the candidate by the Street Pastors movement);
- D. Invitations to events, public speeches, briefings and all other requests from local/ national politicians, MP's private offices, local Councillors etc (including requests to go out on patrol as observers) should be carefully considered. Street Pastors initiatives should not issue invitations to members of just one political party to attend or speak at events without inviting all political parties;
- E. They should not undertake any other activity which could call into question the political neutrality of the Ascension Trust or the Street Pastors movement.

If you have any questions, please contact the Legal and Policy Adviser on 0208 330 2809 or at email address: [legal@ascensiontrust.org.uk](mailto:legal@ascensiontrust.org.uk)