

Guidelines for handling the media at high-profile funerals and memorial services

1. Principles

Whenever a death becomes a news item it is likely there will be media interest in covering the service.

In looking after these events the aim is to balance the needs of, and negotiate a solution with, three different groups:

1.1 To respect the needs and wishes of the bereaved family and community

It is of paramount importance that nothing is done without the understanding and agreement of the next-of-kin. There must be no intrusion by the media.

1.2 To recognise the interests of a wider audience

The conduct of the service and the words of the address can help a wider audience come to terms with the situation.

1.3 To enable journalists and photographers to do their job

Journalists and photographers will often have no alternative but to cover the service. The church should be able to work with the media facilities agreed by the next-of-kin.

2. Roles

2.1 Vicar

The Vicar will:

- 2.1.1 Focus on the pastoral care of the next-of-kin and other people who are bereaved and grieving.
- 2.1.2 Plan and organise the media arrangements in accordance with the wishes of the next-of-kin. The media arrangements may occasionally include a sound feed or a camera inside the church and a relay outside the church if the next-of-kin and the vicar agree and the technology is available. However, the media will not normally be present inside the church during the service unless requested by the next-of-kin. In those circumstances it is preferable to permit only one or two media outlets to be present; for example, a single outlet or one national and one local outlet.
- 2.1.3 Co-ordinate the media arrangements with the Police where they are involved.
- 2.1.4 Appoint stewards who will be present inside and outside the church on the day of the service and will work with the Police if they are present on the day.
- 2.1.5 Liaise with the diocesan communicator (tel 01245 294424) over communicating the arrangements to the media.
- 2.1.6 Designate a position outside the church for the media where they will not be able to take frontal shots of the faces of the mourners and will not impede the cortege, mourners or public. This area should be chosen, where possible, to avoid cameras getting frontal shots of mourners' faces.
- 2.1.7 Be available inside the church for filming and/or sound recording about 90 minutes ahead of the service by arrangement with the media.

- 2.1.8 Give the stewards a hard copy excerpt of the address to pass to the media once the service has started.

2.2 Stewards

The Stewards will:

- 2.2.1 Allow the media access to the church ahead of the service where this has been agreed with the vicar for filming and/or sound recording purposes.
- 2.2.2 Show the mourners to their seats inside the church and show the media to their designated position outside the church.
- 2.2.3 Where a substantial media presence is anticipated, accredit the media by registering them on arrival and giving them ID badges to wear at all times during the event.
- 2.2.4 Stay with the media to ensure they remain in their designated position.
- 2.2.5 Ask the funeral director to provide a human shield between the mourners and the cameras as the mourners get out of cars.
- 2.2.6 Obtain hard copies of the order of service from the undertakers, with the consent of the next-of kin, and give these out to the media at the start of the service together with a hard copy excerpt from the vicar's address.

2.3 Organist

The Organist will:

- 2.3.1 Be present inside the church for sound recording about 90 minutes ahead of the service by arrangement with the media.

2.4 Diocesan Communicator

The Diocesan Communicator will:

- 2.4.1 Respond to the vicar's request for advice on the media handling arrangements.
- 2.4.2 Co-ordinate with the media the facilities agreed by the next-of-kin unless they have appointed their own PR representative, which may be a Police Officer, in which case the PR representative will be responsible for the work of co-ordination.

2.5 Police

The Police may:

- 2.5.1 Cordon off a portion of the churchyard for the safety of the public and the media, possibly with barrier pens, where substantial public and media interest is anticipated.
- 2.5.2 Liaise with local public and transport authorities regarding any necessary road closures or parking restrictions.
- 2.5.3 Act as the PR representative of the next-of-kin at their request.

3. Process

3.1 About 90 minutes before the start of the service

Unless the next-of-kin have good reason for wanting their grief to be seen, they will not want cameras at the service. The best way of ensuring that cameras are not present is to meet the

media's needs before the service starts. This can be done by inviting them into church 90 minutes before the service is due to start.

Ideally they will be able to film the vicar in charge robed and in the pulpit or at the lectern delivering edited highlights of their address. In this way the vicar can reflect on the circumstances, pay tribute to the deceased and say something brief about the Christian hope. Any particularly personal words to the next-of-kin can be omitted at this stage.

The cameramen normally like to film close-ups of flowers, stained glass windows and any other visual features of the church building. The organist should also be present if at all possible and be willing to play a couple of verses of the hymns to be sung and extracts from the music to be used at the beginning and end of the service.

Variations on this approach will be required if the next-of-kin are happy to allow a sound feed or cameras (still or TV) inside the church. However, neither can happen unless the vicar agrees and the relevant technology is available to be used. It will normally be helpful to operate a pooling arrangement, so that there are only one or two cameras.

3.2 Waiting for the cortege to arrive

The cameras will then move outside to the designated area to cover the arrival of the cortege and its departure.

3.3 During the service

If the media are to be present at the service, they should have a 'minder' to ensure they remain in designated positions. In addition to these arrangements, an Order of Service and an excerpt of the Address should be made available to the media just ahead of the service.

3.3 After the service

If no cameras were allowed inside the media may wish to interview the vicar to obtain a description of the scene inside the church.

3.4 Broadcast

The resulting piece on TV will probably show the arrival of the cortege, fade in the music, cross-fade to the Minister's address, show a cut-away, return to another section of the Address, bring back the music over another cut-away and then show the departure.

4. Questions

Please email internalcomms@chelmsford.anglican.org or call 01245 294424.

Communications – Chelmsford Diocese

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