

MEDIA RELATIONS MANUAL

*Regional Assembly
of Jehovah's
Witnesses 2016*

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COLLABORATING WITH THE MEDIA

Contacting the Media

Prepare information about the convention and send it to the media, preferably for the attention of a specific contact. It is not necessary to wait to get the Media Relations Manual before trying to contact the media. If the media is informed far in advance of the event, it will have bigger and better coverage. Some media outlets have a web page with contact information; however this may

not be up-to-date. Therefore, it may be better to contact the editor-in-chief or chief editor of local section. You can ask this person who is in charge of topics like education, human rights, social issues, family and religion; it all depends on the theme you want to portray.

Here is a suggestion on how to approach the topic: "I have news worthy information about a Jehovah's Witness convention that will be held here. There will be thousands attending from this and neighboring states. Who handles news stories at your station/channel/paper? Get the person's email address.

Keep in mind that on weekends there may be a different editor-in-chief and journalists.

Make a detailed list of all media outlets in the convention's region. This list should include the following:

- **News channels.**
- **Newspapers (including small communities and weeklies)**
- **Radio stations.**
- **State or regional offices of national television or radio networks.**
- **Independent newspapers**

For each media outlet, make a list of contacts containing the following:

- **Name of outlet.**
- **Address (including web site address).**
- **Name of contact.**
- **Telephone numbers (office & cell, if possible)**
- **Email address.**

The most common way to come into contact with someone is through email or phone. If possible, ask or otherwise find out the person's contact preference. Attempt to contact everyone on your list. Keep detailed notes or logs about the most useful contacts. Also, save any reports that the journalist may have produced about us or our conventions. If you can contact the same journalist the following year chances are better that the outlet will once again produce a story about the convention.

Preparing the media spokesperson

A journalist may want to speak with an authorized representative that will make official statements about the convention. The convention's media spokesperson must be prepared for this task. If a journalist wants to interview other brothers, for example the Regional Convention Committee Coordinator or the program overseer, these brothers should inform themselves so that they can represent the organization in a dignified way. It is expected that these brothers dress appropriately.

Other suggestions:

- Keep in mind a key message that can be expressed in 2 or 3 sentences. Emphasize key ideas by repeating them in various ways.
- Answer questions with simple sentences.
- Avoid words or theocratic expressions that those who are not Witnesses will not understand.
- If you do not understand a question, ask for it to be repeated.
- If you are doing a televised interview, avoid fancy clothes or accessories, as this can distract the audience. Make moderate gestures. Look at the interviewer, not at the camera.

Negative situations

If a question is asked about negative or controversial topics, it is best to avoid using the phrase: "No comment". Usually, people conclude that one who gives such an answer is guilty. If you do not know the answer, say with sincerity, "I do not know". And if they make a negative statement, do not repeat it. Respond positively with a brief comment and then return to the topic that you want to emphasize.

Example 1. A reporter asks: "Why do so many dislike the Jehovah's Witnesses?" A positive response would be: "Jehovah's Witnesses are peace-loving, law-abiding people and we try to be model citizens and good neighbors in our communities. Although some may not agree with our beliefs, we imitate Jesus by sharing with them our positive message, and the conventions' program will explain the reasons".

Example 2. A reporter asks: "What can you tell us about some former members of the religion that are protesting outside?". The best answer is something positive like: "We respect the rights of others to their own opinion. But we are meeting here to learn how to strengthen our personal relationship with God." After giving this response, steer the conversation back to the convention.

Example 3. If asked about 1975, you could say: "Jehovah's Witnesses look forward to the fulfillment of biblical prophecies. And although we recognize that we do not know the exact date when these events occur, we remain on the lookout, because that is what Jesus advised his disciples". Then the brother can direct the conversation back to the convention.

If the interviewer asks or talks about anyone involved in any congregation judicial cases, you should never comment about them, nor should you give any opinions on hypothetical situations.

Be wary of programs that have the public calling in and/or informal interview programs. Be quick to notice if an interview is becoming argumentative or the facts are being twisted, which might project a negative image about us.

Finally, remember Philippians 4:5: "Let your reasonableness become known to all men. The Lord is near". At all times be patient, honest, friendly and positive.

Preparing other Brothers for interviews

After getting official statements, most journalists will like a human touch to their reports. The following is a list of what they may be interested in:

- Candidates for baptism, especially the young and old (visual effect).
- Entire families (with their members singing and sitting together).
- Children, teens and young adults interested in spiritual topics (and why they came to the convention).
- Dramatic representation (visual appeal of the costumes).
- Sessions in foreign languages.

If the journalist asks to interview someone, tell him/her that you know someone that he/she can interview. The selected Brothers for interviews must be exemplary. They should be trained or prepared for interviews without telling them exactly what to say. By selecting someone in advance, you can avoid having the journalist pick someone else that does not meet the requirements to be interviewed, or that will not represent the organization well.

No one should be forced into an interview. Only willing brothers and sisters should be interviewed.

Get familiar with the convention venue. Think about good places for interviews. We have have a bigger impact if, in the background, you have the platform, big screens, the baptism pools, volunteers working or convention attendees entering the venue. Do not take the interview to private offices or isolated areas.

The spokesperson and the brothers being interviewed should avoid harsh, critical or self-righteous comments, particularly with regard to those that are not Witnesses. For example, non-Witnesses should not be called “worldly”; expressions that denigrate other religions should avoided, and no one should make disparaging remarks about the city where the assembly is held, hotels and administration or restaurants.

General Suggestions

Designate at least one capable elder - and with authority to access convenient locations - to accompany the news team, answer questions, etc. Such a brother must keep in mind that anything he says can be recorded, even if they assure him that it will not.

Freely use press releases, informational videos and other resources that appear on jw.org. Come regularly to the Press section of jw.org to see the latest updates.

If the news team does not have a photographer, you can give them photos you may have of the convention.

When speaking with journalists, do not use a tone that may imply that they are being preached to. We must understand the difference between answering questions in the field ministry versus answering a journalist's questions. Be wary with offering publications to journalists; avoid giving the impression that an attempt is being made to "convert" them. The following can be useful as a guide:

When in field service	When we report
The objective is to show that this is the truth, touch the heart or help people convince themselves of the fact.	The objective is to convey true information about Jehovah's Witnesses.
Communication is more emotional because the intent is to touch the heart.	The way to communicate is more expressive, because the intent is to convey objectivity.
We speak to everyone.	We speak with journalists so that they get to know us well and they can convey to the public accurate information about our activities.
Conversations revolve around the Bible.	The purpose of the conversation is to touch on our activities and beliefs objectively.
We hope people come to accept the truth.	We wish to eliminate prejudice and have positive objective news reports on us. This will make it likely that people will accept the good news when we visit them in the ministry.

QUICK IDEA GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWS

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

- What news outlet does the journalist work for?
What type of program or article is it? (e.g., news, entertainment, etc.)
- What is the journalist known for?
- What is the focus of the interview going to be?
- Will the interview be live?
- Will this be a one-on-one interview? Or will this be a group discussion?
- Will the audience participate?

UNEXPECTED INTERVIEWS

WHAT TO DO

- Before answering any questions, ask for the journalist's name and ask for a business card. (The journalist catches you off-guard and tries to provoke a confrontation that may lead you to make an unfortunate comment. Ask for a name and a business card, thereby focusing the attention on the journalist. This will eliminate the element of surprise. This will give you time to think.)
- Tell him/her that you'll take the interview at a more convenient time.
- Keep walking.
- Keep calm and be polite.
- If the journalist and his team insist, politely ask them to leave.

WHAT NOT TO DO

- Do not stop and talk.
- Do not say: "no comment".
- Do not feel obligated to answer any questions.
- Do not argue.
- Do not answer anonymous accusations.
- Do not get upset.
- Do not attempt to grasp or block the camera.

BASIC BELIEFS OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

INFORMATIONAL PAGE

Who we are	<p>Jehovah's Witnesses are an international Christian organization that actively spreads information about God, whose name is Jehovah, and his Son Jesus. They view the first century Christians as a model for imitation. They believe following bible principles not only brings the person closer to God but gives meaning to life, helps strengthen family bonds and makes for good productive members of society.</p>
The Bible	<p>The Word of God is inspired and infallible and we base our beliefs on it. Some passages are to be understood figuratively or symbolically (2 Timothy 3:16; Revelation 1:1).</p> <p>The Word of God gives unequalled practical advice on topics like marriage, family life, treatment of others, the pursuit of happiness, among others. (Ephesians 5:33 - 6:4; Matthew 5:3; 7:12). Jehovah's Witnesses believe the Bible to be the only divine guide (Psalm 119:105; John 17:17).</p>
God	<p>Jehovah is the name of the only true God, the creator of all things. As such, He deserves our worship and devotion. His most notable qualities are love, justice, wisdom and power (Psalm 83:18; 1 John 4:8; Revelation 4:11).</p>
Jesus	<p>Jesus is the Son of God. He descended from heaven and gave up his perfect human life as a ransom sacrifice. His death and resurrection allows for those who put faith in him to be saved and obtain everlasting life. Currently he reigns as King of the heavenly Kingdom of God, which will soon bring peace to earth. Jesus never claimed to be equal to God; he is not part of a trinity (John 3:16; 14:28; Revelation 11:15)</p>
Holy spirit	<p>The Holy Spirit is God's active force, which he uses to bring about his purposes and to direct his servants. The Holy Spirit is the most powerful force there is. Jehovah used it to create all things, living and inanimate (Psalm 33:6). Also he used it to transmit his message to biblical writers (2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:20, 21)</p> <p>Christians ask for and follow the Holy Spirit's guidance in their personal lives and in the ministry. The way they treat others is proof of this (John 16:13; Galatians 5:22, 23)</p>
Relations with the community	<p>Jehovah's Witnesses come from all sorts of social and economic classes. They do not isolate themselves from those that do not believe like them; they live, work and go to school with people of other faiths. At the same time, they follow Jesus' example of not being part of the world, avoiding prejudices and controversial topics that divide humanity today and that are against the principles of Christianity (John 17:15, 16).</p>
Young people	<p>Jehovah's Witnesses are genuinely concerned with the well-being of young people, Jehovah values their worship and would like them to be happy (Psalms 110:3; Ecclesiastes 11:9, 10). Jesus also showed sincere interest in young people (Matthew 19:14). Jehovah's Witnesses see happy, young people as role models (1 Timoteo 4:12).</p>
Website	<p>For more information, please visit our website at: www.jw.org .</p>