

Preparing a news release

The purpose of a news release is to alert a journalist to something that is happening and to interest him/her to the extent that they want to know more. This is something that any congregation can do, bearing in mind some simple rules: -

- Identify a newsworthy story. If you're doubtful, apply a simple test. Be completely objective and, if you honestly think that reaction to your story would be 'So What?' don't send it and wait until you have something more interesting and relevant to offer.
- Be creative! Choose a heading that will catch the journalist's attention. Remember that you're competing with all the other news releases that will arrive on the same day.
- The first 10 words of your release have to be effective or, quite simply, the rest will not be read and you will have wasted an opportunity.
- Keep it short and simple and deal with facts. Don't use jargon. What? Who? Why? When? and Where? are the questions that the media will ask and that you should ALWAYS address in the first couple of sentences of your release. If the media want to know more, if they want to put more flesh on the bones, a journalist will contact you.
- Make contacting you easy. Provide as much contact information as possible. Select the best-informed person - whoever knows most about the particular story should be the contact. Ensure that he/she will be available at the number that you give at the time that you say.
- If you are highlighting something that will take place in the future, make that clear and give the journalist as much notice as possible.
- Make it clear that you will be happy for a journalist and/or photographer to attend your event.
- Be prepared to accept that, despite your best efforts, your story might not be used. There can be lots of reasons for this, most of them outwith your control. Of course, it's disappointing but it would be sad if it stopped you from keeping in touch with your local media.
- If your story is published or broadcast, try to identify what it contained that attracted interest and bear that in mind when formulating future news releases.

Sample press release



The Church of Scotland

Communications Department

Nepal missionary takes on new minister role in Edinburgh

A former solicitor who worked in Nepal helping survivors of the devastating earthquake in 2015 has been introduced as the first minister of a newly formed congregation in Edinburgh.

Rev Malcolm Ramsay (60) was recently introduced as the 'transition minister' of Willowbrae Parish Church, a Kirk formed by uniting the two congregations of New Restalrig, and Craigentiny St Christopher's. He will help build the church community at Willowbrae over the next five years.

His appointment comes following a turbulent period in local church life. New Restalrig lost its minister and some of its members in 2014 following their disagreement with the Church of Scotland's decisions regarding ministers in same-sex relationships.

Craigentiny St Christopher's had been in 'guardianship' since then due to its unsustainable size. After a long period of discussions it was decided to merge the two congregations to re-build community-based church life.

Mr Ramsay and his community nurse wife, Cati, spent four years based in Kathmandu working for a Christian development agency. During that time the earthquake which struck in April 2015 claimed the lives of nearly 9,000 people and injured a further 22,000.

Mr Ramsay, who was born in Zambia to Scottish parents, helped console traumatised survivors who had lost families, homes and workplaces. He was working at a retreat when the earthquake struck.

"I came back to Scotland a changed man," he said.

"The experiences of these earthquakes are way beyond what we experience in the West.

"More earthquakes will happen because of Nepal's geological position. There is no stability there really. Life in Nepal is very precarious on many different fronts. To live and work there

made me much more conscious of my need for God's help, and much more aware of the varying ways in which God answers that need."

The father of two, who was ordained in Edinburgh 31 years ago, said: "Willowbrae may be a long way from Kathmandu, but human beings are much the same everywhere. I imagine the wear and tear brought on by long-term transition and constant change will be similar in both places. So although the two situations are utterly different, I suspect the effects of relentless change will be comparable in some respects."

The former minister of churches in Pitlochry and Newton Stewart emphasised the importance of "listening to the needs of his congregation" and said he was "open to new ideas".

He added: "The people have been very welcoming and are glad to have a settled situation now. I'm not arrogant enough to think I have all the answers. There has already been very good Christian work going on in this parish before me. My first task is to get to know the people, and listen to them. I believe that God is present everywhere, so once I have begun to know the folk, our task together is to find out what God is doing in our lives and our church, and then to follow that lead."

For more information please phone [insert phone number] or email [insert email].