

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

Additional Guidance Regarding the Election/s

In all crisis communications, we stress the importance of being prepared for all outcomes. In the closing days of the election season through the presidential inauguration, anxiety continues around possible reactions to the presidential election outcome.

Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) has gathered a variety of resources for its Community of Practice. These are groups of people doing disaster work across the church—in synods, social ministry organizations and community-based organizations.

These resources will be helpful as you consider how your own communities might be impacted by possible unrest or violence following the outcome of the election.

We recommend that you develop a plan, connect with your colleagues within the LDR Community of Practice, reach out to your ELCA-affiliated [state public policy office](#), and work with local or state COADs or VOADs, and your local emergency management and public safety offices.

Here are several resources that could inspire and inform your planning:

1. The ELCA's [Civic Engagement webpage](#), which includes a variety of great resources and information from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and links to the [ELCA Advocacy blog](#).
2. [ELCA's Civic Engagement Guide \(available in Spanish\)](#) and information on how to [hold difficult conversations and manage polarization](#), promoting social cohesion.
3. The [Witness and Society's \(ELCA Advocacy\) Election Engagement Update blog](#).
4. AMMPARO's [Sacred Crossroads: The Intersection of Faith and Immigration in the 2024 Election](#) guide ([attached as PDF](#)).
5. DHS' Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's [Protecting Houses of Worship resource page](#).
6. Ready.Gov's [Disaster and Emergency Readiness page](#) and planning pages for [individuals](#) and [businesses](#).
7. FEMA's *Guide for Developing High-Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Houses of Worship* ([attached as a PDF](#)).
8. LDR's Congregational Disaster Preparedness Guidebook ([attached as a PDF](#)).
9. The [ELCA Risk Management](#) webpage has several resources for synods and congregations.

10. Check out your [state public policy office](#) for helpful resources.
11. Further, the potential for election-related violence is real and amplified from elections past. [Life After Hate](#) has compiled a series of resources that can prove helpful in addressing violence and threats of violence. The [communications strategies](#) are helpful resources and guides to lower the volume. The group also provided a section on preparing for the possibility [of election-related violence](#). The [full slate of resources](#) is available to implement and help educate others.