



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
W I N T E R P A R K

**Crisis Communication Plan
Version 2 – March 2020**

Contact Dr. Sarah Skidmore,
Director of Marketing and Communications
with questions.



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Summary Overview

[\(Reference\)](#)

The following procedures are to be implemented any time an incident occurs with the potential of diminishing trust in the church and its ministries or of damaging the church's reputation in the community.

Use this template before a crisis occurs to chart a clear course through the troubled waters that crises bring. Note, this Crisis Communication Plan is only one part of the church's Management Plan.

Examples of situations in which these procedures are to be implemented include incidents involving:

- Church leaders, members or constituents participating in an event or ministry on church property;
- Church leaders, members or constituents participating in a church-sponsored event or ministry at a site other than the church (examples: youth trip, seniors' outing, mission trips, children's field trip)
- People served by a ministry of the church - even if the church's involvement in the ministry is limited to providing space
- Clergy, staff or lay leadership potentially facing criminal or civil charges
- Criminal activity that damages church property
- External events – Community, National or Global

This plan will allow the clergy, staff and lay leadership of First UMC of Winter Park to:

- Provide compassion, concern and care for the victims of the crisis and those impacted by the crisis;
- Provide means for meeting the needs of media covering the crisis;
- Provide and enhance a positive image of First UMC Winter Park.



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Crisis Type

There are two critical elements of this crisis communications plan: internal crisis and external crisis.

| Crisis Type | |
|---|---|
| <p>Internal Crisis</p> <p>Qualification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On Campus/Property - Preschools - Mission Trip - Off-Campus Ministry Event - Any Ministry Activity - Any crisis that may involve staff, lay leaders, FUMCWP property. | <p>External Crisis</p> <p>Qualification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Winter Park/Orlando Area - National - Global - Any crisis that does not directly involve FUMCWP |

When leadership and staff receive a media call, the statement should be similar to this:

“At this point, we are aware of the situation involving the church/pre-school, etc. We are very concerned about the potential impact on everyone involved and will diligently work to gather the facts and respond quickly and responsibly. I am certain you have deadlines to meet. Our spokesperson will get in touch with you.”

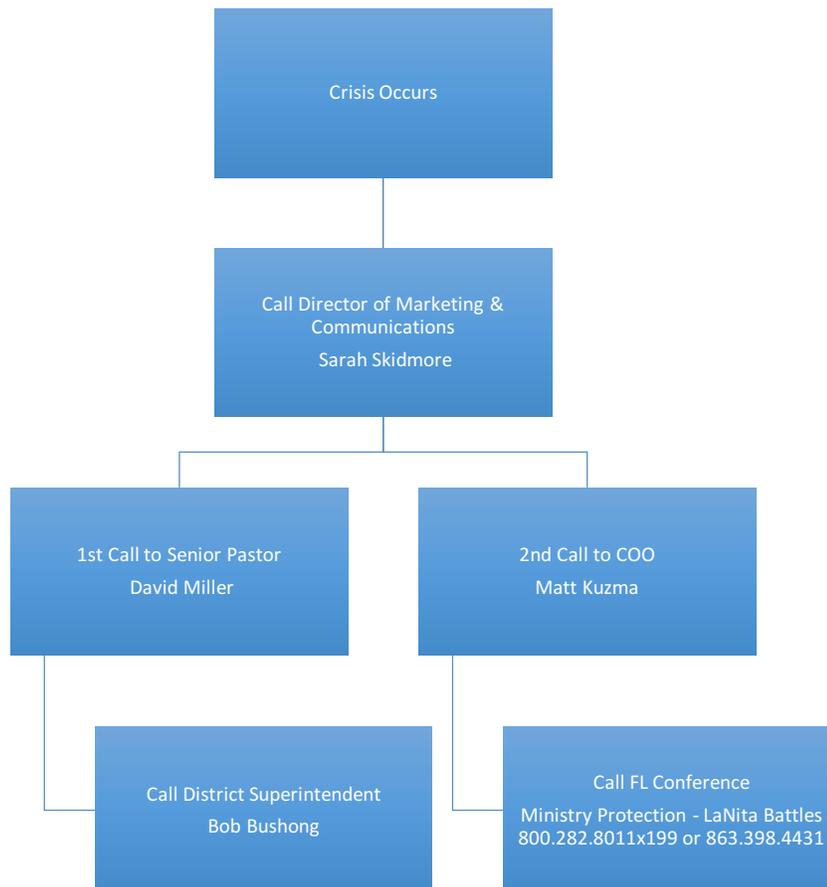


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Internal Crisis - Course of Action



Internal Crisis - FIRST ACTION: Notification Tree





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Internal Crisis - SECOND ACTION: Develop the Plan & Message

As timing and crisis conditions vary, a task team is to determine the appropriate messaging and approach to handling the appropriate community to our church family.

Task Team:

- Director of Marketing and Communications, FUMCWP (Team Lead)
- Communications Representative, FL Conference
- Ministry Protection Representative, FL Conference
- Senior Pastor, FUMCWP
- Marketing and Communications Lay Chair, FUMCWP
- Marketing and Communications Lay Member, Kate Howell
- ER Task Force Lay Leader
- COO, FUMCWP

Based on the direction from the FL Conference communication and legal representatives, the Director of Marketing and Communications is to lead the strategic approach to communicating to the various audiences.



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Internal Crisis - THIRD ACTION: Inform the Church Family (as relevant)

Based on the work of the Task Team in the SECOND ACTION, Director of Marketing and Communications to lead the communications initiatives and work with relevant team members to ensure the church family is informed.

| Potential Means of Communication | |
|---|--|
| <p>Written Options</p> <p>Qualification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Send mass email to the church family - Send email to staff - Post on social media outlets - Send message on Realm | <p>Experiential Options</p> <p>Qualification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integration into weekly worship services - Creation of prayer Groups - Recognition of Marcy Chapel availability - Development of special gathering or service on Campus |

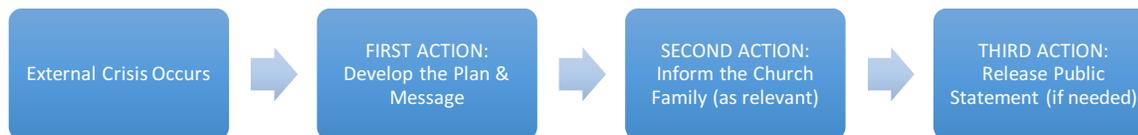
Internal Crisis - FORTH ACTION: Release Public Statement (if needed)

Based on the work of the Task Team in the SECOND ACTION, Director of Marketing and Communications to work with Director of Connectional Relational at the Florida Conference to implement the appropriate media response; including all media interactions.



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External Crisis - Course of Action



External Crisis – FIRST ACTION: Develop the Plan and Message

As timing and crisis conditions vary, a task team is to determine the appropriate messaging and approach to handling the appropriate community to our church family.

Task Team:

- Director of Marketing and Communications, FUMCWP (Team Lead)
- Senior Pastor, FUMCWP
- Marketing and Communications Lay Chair, FUMCWP
- Worship Ministry Representative, FUMCWP
- COO, FUMCWP

Based on the direction and response from the FL Conference communications and overall theme from the United Methodist Church, the Director of Marketing and Communications is to lead the strategic approach to communicating to the various audiences.



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External Crisis – SECOND ACTION: Inform the Church Family (as relevant)

Based on the work of the Task Team in the FIRST ACTION, Director of Marketing and Communications to lead the communications initiatives and work with relevant team members to ensure the church family is informed.

| Potential Means of Communication | |
|---|--|
| Written Options Qualification: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Address in the Thursday at Three- Acknowledge on social media- Acknowledge on the text platform- Send message on Realm | Experiential Options Qualification: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Integration into weekly worship services- Recognition of Marcy Chapel availability |

External Crisis – THIRD ACTION: Release Public Statement (if needed)

Based on the work of the Task Team in the FIRST ACTION, Director of Marketing and Communications to follow the lead of the FL Conference and United Methodist Church to implement the appropriate media response.



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Best Practices – MEDIA PROCEDURES FOR CHURCH STAFF

Handling Telephone Calls from Reporters

- Take a written message (don't transfer to voicemail without taking message)
- Get reporter's name, media outlet, direct phone #, and deadline
- Ask for topic of story
- Explain that church spokesperson will return call
- Don't answer questions yourself
- Be polite, but firm
- Keep a log or written record of media calls

"Hold Response"

"I want to make sure we give you the most accurate and up-to-date information. Our (*conference communicator*) or (*pastor*) or (*appropriate person*) can best help you. If you give me your contact information, deadline and topic that you're calling about, I'll have that person return your call as soon as possible."

Handling Reporters On-Site

- Refer questions to pastor, conference communicator or district superintendent
- Don't be hostile
- Don't give your personal opinion
- Don't speak "off the record"
- Don't use the term "no comment"
- Be polite, but firm

Handling Casual Conversations or Questions about a Crisis

- Don't speculate, repeat unconfirmed information or express personal opinions
- Don't feel like you have to answer questions
- Do respond with a brief, positive, general statement



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Best Practices – TELEPHONE LOG

Crisis Communications Plan Telephone Log for Media Calls

1. Duplicate this sheet, so a new page is available for logging every media call related to the crisis.
2. **Every** call from the media related to the crisis is to be logged using one of these sheets. An electronic log may also be used, but it is recommended that a paper log be maintained for the convenience of those returning calls.
3. Copy the completed log sheet before giving it to the spokesperson, and place it in a file to be maintained throughout the crisis.
4. Complete this log before transferring the call to spokesperson or designee.
5. *Never transfer a call to voicemail without completing this log.*
6. Remember, do not answer the reporter's questions yourself, but decline *politely* and refer the reporter to the spokesperson.



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**Crisis Communications Plan
Telephone Log for Media Calls**

Name/Location of person taking message _____

Date of Call _____ **Time of Call** _____

Reporter's Name _____

Media Outlet _____

Telephone Number _____

Reporter's Deadline _____

What information does the reporter want? _____

What information does the reporter already have? _____

Other Notes: _____

Person to Whom the Reporter Was Referred: _____