

# 2020 General Conference

## Talking Points for Handling the News Media Prior to General Conference

### Possible Messaging

- “We have defined a process for making decisions together.”
- “We are a diverse church with geographical, generational and cultural differences.”
- “We will continue in our mission.”
- “Our local church is focused on making disciples, reaching out to our community, caring for one another...”

### Possible Hold Statements

- “I understand that you want as much information as possible, but we don’t have all the answers right now.”
- “I can tell you what we know as of now, but I can’t speculate about what will happen next.”
- “It’s too early to know all the details, but here’s what I can confirm right now and I’ll get back to you.”

### Possible Bridge Statements

- “Here is what I can tell you...”
- “The key thing to remember is...”
- “It’s too early to talk about that but here is what we do know...”
- “The bigger issue is...”
- “What we’re focusing on the most at this time is...”

### Possible Flagging Statements

- “The bottom line is...”
- “The most important thing to know is...”
- “If there’s one piece of information I’d like for you to walk away with it is this...”
- “Let me summarize...”
- “One of the strengths of our church is that we are a diverse and global church and as such we have different opinions.”

### Opinion Questions

If you are asked a personal opinion, you could say:

- “I am speaking for the organization, not myself, and here’s what we believe...”

### Hypothetical Questions

If you are asked a hypothetical question, you could say:

- “I couldn’t speculate about that but here’s what I can tell you...”
- “I can’t answer a hypothetical question but here’s what I can say...”
- “We will cross that bridge if we come to it, but right now we are focused on...”

## **Perspective Questions**

If you are asked perspective question, these are the best opportunities to get your key messages in the story.

- Make a story more interesting
- Explain, provide insight or a different perspective
- “What does it all mean?”

## **Chatty Questions**

- Everything you say is on record
- Not a conversation
- Make sure your answer can stand alone

## **Tough Questions**

- Conflict and controversy fuel news
- Adopt a reporter’s mindset
- Anticipate tough questions ahead of time and prepare
  - What is the question you would least like to answer? Know what you will say when you get it.

## **Negative Questions**

- Do not repeat the negatives even to dispute them
- If you disagree with the reporter, do not let the false premise stand
- “We see that differently...”
- “I can’t agree with you...”

## **Questions You Can’t Answer**

- If you don’t know specifics, talk about process

## **Repeated Questions**

- Questions you have already answered
- Stick to your answer
- “I believe I’ve answered that question already.”

## **Follow-Up Questions**

- Don’t bring up new subjects
- Directly answer the questions
- Relate the key message
- Always bring it back to the mission of the church

*\*\*If you are contacted and are not comfortable talking with the media, you can simply say: “I want to give you the most up to date information possible. Let me take your name and number, and I will have our conference director of communications get back in touch with you.” You can then contact Kelly Roberson at 912-270-6172 or [kelly@sgaumc.com](mailto:kelly@sgaumc.com), and she will work with you on a response.*