

# COMMUNICATION HANDBOOK

A Practical Guide for Adventist  
Communicators in Mid-America



Mid-America Union Conference of  
Seventh-day Adventists

## WELCOME TO THE TEAM!

As communication ministry leaders, we have the opportunity to advance the mission of Jesus Christ by helping people focus on celebrating and sharing the gospel—good news. Each of us has an important role in this process, and we look forward to partnering with you in telling the Adventist story in Mid-America, North America and beyond.

—Brenda, Hugh and Barb

## ADVENTIST CHURCH OVERVIEW

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, founded in 1863, is a Protestant Christian denomination whose mission is to prepare the world for the second advent of Jesus Christ. With over 21 million members in more than 200 countries, it is one of the world's fastest growing denominations according to Pew Research Center.

### Adventist Church Structure

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has four administrative levels:

- 1. Local Congregation**— individual believers
- 2. Local Conference**—a group of churches and other entities in the same state/territory
- 3. Union Conference**—a group of conferences within a larger area
- 4. General Conference**—all the Union Conferences in the world. Divisions are sections of the GC responsible for particular geographical areas, usually based on continents (currently there are 13 divisions).

### Adventist Branding

See our style guide: [outlookmag.org/resources](https://outlookmag.org/resources)

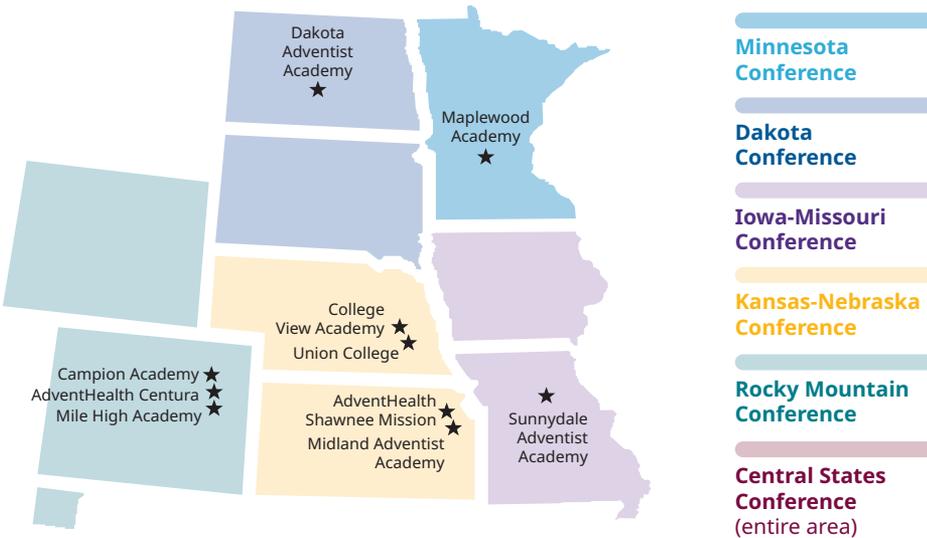
World Church branding: [identity.adventist.org](https://identity.adventist.org)

# MID-AMERICA UNION CONFERENCE

The Mid-America Union Conference was established in 1980 during a merger of the Central Union and Northern Union. The MAUC coordinates the church's work in Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, and San Juan County in New Mexico.

## Who We Serve

From our headquarters we offer administrative leadership and provide governance and support to six local conferences, one college, over 70 elementary and secondary schools, two hospital systems with six hospitals, nine summer camps, and a number of other youth and young adult programs. MAUC currently has nearly 65,000 members in more than 500 churches and companies.



# MAUC COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT

## **Mission:**

To communicate news and inspiration via various media throughout Mid-America

## **Core Values:**

Quality—achieving excellence

Relevance —being timely and meaningful

Missionality—being purpose-driven in nurture and outreach

## **Communication Portfolio:**

Corporate website: [midamericaadventist.org](http://midamericaadventist.org)

News and Inspiration website: [outlookmag.org](http://outlookmag.org)

myOUTLOOK newsletter signup: [outlookmag.org](http://outlookmag.org) (scroll to bottom)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/OutlookMag](http://www.facebook.com/OutlookMag)

Twitter: [twitter.com/myoutlookmag](http://twitter.com/myoutlookmag)

Instagram: [instagram.com/outlookmag](http://instagram.com/outlookmag)

YouTube: [youtube.com/user/MidAmericaOutlook](http://youtube.com/user/MidAmericaOutlook)

# COMMUNICATION TEAM DIRECTORY

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# ROLE OF COMMUNICATION

Communication is the right arm of every effective organization. Whether it's a local church, school, healthcare network, conference or union office, communication is a vital part of organizational success.

As communication director, you are responsible for constructing, monitoring, and safeguarding the identity of your conference and its name within your community and your local churches.

Today it is imperative to employ multiple strategies to foster the Adventist Church's presence in the community. It is equally important to keep church members informed about upcoming activities, and to share conference news with church communication directors and the larger Adventist family.

These realities can help administrators and other non-communicators understand and value your work.

Communicators typically manage many functions and services including but not limited to:

- **Public relations**
- **Media relations**
- **Design/branding**
- **Social media**
- **Advertising and promotion**
- **Strategic planning**
- **Training and mentoring**
- **Media production (web, video, photography, etc.)**
- **Crisis communication**

## Your Main Audiences

- **Your constituents**
- **Your conference employees (pastors/teachers)**
- **Your conference office directors/administrators/executive committee**
- **Your community members and media personnel**
- **Other Adventist entities**

# CONFERENCE COMMUNICATOR ROLES PERTAINING TO MID-AMERICA UNION

- 1. Provide content** for OUTLOOK's page spread from your conference (10 magazine issues per year)
- 2. Report on major elections and events** (print, online, enews)
- 3. Coordinate crisis communication for your conference** (please see p. 12)
- 4. Miscellaneous photography and video production** (if arranged by request)

## OUTLOOK Magazine's Protocol and Process

- 1. Please remember to check themes and deadlines** (schedule available at [outlookmag.org/outlook-deadlines-and-themes](http://outlookmag.org/outlook-deadlines-and-themes)).
- 2. Choose your stories/articles:** *event reporting* (straight news style), *photo caption stories* (less than 200 words), *inspirational* (coordinates with month's theme). We will refer your conference's writers who contact us with stories directly to you.
- 3. Edit according to OUTLOOK's style guide.** Approximately 300-600 words per story, depending on photos. Two or three stories or ads/calendar items are needed per issue.
- 4. Upload content to WordPress Print Stories**, our content management system (see p. 8). We will create an account for you and send the password to your email.
- 5. Review/correct/approve monthly proofs** that are emailed to you.

## OUTLOOK Magazine's Services to Members

**Obituaries:** OUTLOOK is honored to remember the lives of Mid-America church members or long-time residents with a short obituary. A form for submitting this information is online at [outlookmag.org](http://outlookmag.org). Click "contact" and "submit obituary" or [outlookmag.org/contact/#tabpanel3](http://outlookmag.org/contact/#tabpanel3).

**Advertising:** We accept both print and digital advertisements. Classified, display and online advertising space is provided to church and para-church organizations and businesses that provide products or services in harmony with the mission and beliefs of the Adventist Church ([adventist.org](http://adventist.org)). For specifications, visit [outlookmag.org/advertise](http://outlookmag.org/advertise).

**Archives:** To read issues of OUTLOOK since 2011, go to [outlookmag.org/print-edition](http://outlookmag.org/print-edition).



## OUTLOOK Magazine's Services to Conferences

**Free stock images** through [iStock.com](http://iStock.com)

(contact Hugh: [hugh@outlookmag.org](mailto:hugh@outlookmag.org)).

**Professional development** at MAUC year-end communication advisory.

**Communication training** for local church communicators as you request it.

**Design consultation.**

**Social media templates.**

## WordPress Instructions for Submissions

Log in at [outlookmag.org/wp-admin](http://outlookmag.org/wp-admin). First-time users will receive an email with login info from WordPress.

### Submitting a story

1. Click "Add New Story," located on the lefthand side of your screen.
2. Enter title, subtitle (if applicable) and body copy in areas provided.
3. Under "Issue/Section," choose the relevant print edition of OUTLOOK. In the event you'd like us to publish additional stories throughout the month that won't fit in the print edition, we've provided an option called "Web Extra." Feel free to upload these stories at any time for immediate online publication.
4. If you selected a print edition, select the appropriate section of the magazine for your story.
5. If the story you are submitting was not written by you, provide relevant information under "Author Bio." You do not need to utilize this section if you are the story author as your WordPress user account stores your information and it will be displayed on all stories you write.
6. In the "Additional Instructions/Comments" box, enter any special instructions or comments you have, if applicable. If a particular story has priority over others, for example, let us know.
7. Under "Image 1," click "Select File" then the "Upload Files" tab in the upper left to upload an image. Click "Select" at the bottom right (disregard the other details under "Attachment Details"). The image link will now be displayed in the "Select Image 1" field. **Please remember to add a caption and photo credit.**
8. Add any additional images (up to four more) using the "Image 2" through "Image 5" boxes.
9. When you're ready to submit the story, click "Save" in the upper right. Please ensure you see a "Post draft updated" notice at the top of your screen. If not, there may be an issue such as an incomplete required field.

## Submitting an ad

1. Follow the “Submitting a new story” instructions above. Please provide the intended size and a description in the “Title” field (e.g., “Half Page CSC Camp Meeting ad”).
2. If you would like us to design the ad, place all the relevant info in the body copy area. If you will be uploading a file, use the image boxes and place any pertinent details in its corresponding caption field.

## Editing a previously submitted story

1. Click “All Print Stories” in the upper left.
2. Hover over any story title you submitted and click “Edit.” Important: You’ll see several options listed, but please only use “Edit.” Also, please note the “Status” of the post. If it reads anything other than “Draft,” please contact us regarding any necessary changes.
3. Follow the steps for “Submitting a new story” and click “Save” to update the post with your edits.

## Editing your profile

1. Hover over the greeting in the upper right corner.
2. Click “Edit My Profile.”
3. Here you can change your password or update your email address, bio info, and thumbnail image.

**Note:** All meta boxes (“Issue/Section,” “Author Bio,” etc.) are moveable. You may rearrange the boxes as you see fit by clicking the top portion of the box and dragging to the desired location. WordPress will remember your preferences.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions. We are happy to help!

## Establishing Connections with Local Churches

You will be relying largely on local church communicators (and sometimes conference office personnel) to send you stories. But you don't have to reinvent the wheel when it comes to communicating with your conference's local churches. The same principles that make relationships successful in personal life apply here: earning trust, building rapport, and making people feel important.

Thriving conferences use the key elements of asking questions, listening well, sharing relevant information (but not too much), and showing gratitude, even for the little things. Remember to follow up with people and have fun. All this goes a long way toward building trust and cultivating an atmosphere of appreciation.

### More ideas:

[bit.ly/TenWaysChurchesCommunicate](http://bit.ly/TenWaysChurchesCommunicate)

## How to Get Great Stories

This can be one of the most challenging parts of the job! Here are five tips for encouraging people to report on their events and share their stories with you:

- 1. Develop a content strategy** as early in the year as possible by looking at the conference and local church calendars for interesting events.
- 2. Contact event organizers** ahead of time and ask them to write a short article and assign someone to take photos. Give them a desired word count and what "focus" you would like. Ask them to get comments from at least two attendees.
- 3. Make sure they know the submission deadline** and how to submit their story and photos (including photographer's name).
- 4. Always keep your eyes and ears open** for personal stories that are unique and encouraging.
- 5. Remember to sincerely thank every person** who helps you and let them know how their work will make an impact.

# COMMUNICATION TOOLBOX

## Resources

1. **AdventSource Catalog (free)**
2. **NAD Office of Communication Series: 4-book set**
3. **Quick-start Guides for communication ministry and web ministry**
4. **Prochurchtools.com/the-easiest-social-media-strategy-for-churches-ever**

## Resource Centers

1. **AdventSource**  
[www.adventsource.org](http://www.adventsource.org)
2. **Church and School Connect (free websites)**  
[www.adventistchurchconnect.com](http://www.adventistchurchconnect.com)
3. **Adventist Learning Community**  
[www.adventistlearningcommunity.com](http://www.adventistlearningcommunity.com)
4. **NAD Big Data + Social Media Services**  
[www.sdadata.org](http://www.sdadata.org)

## Annual Events

1. **Mid-America Union Communication Advisory**  
November, Lincoln, Nebraska
2. **Society of Adventist Communicators Convention**  
[www.adventistcommunicators.com](http://www.adventistcommunicators.com)  
October, location varies
3. **SonScreen Festival**  
[www.sonscreen.com](http://www.sonscreen.com)  
Spring, location varies

# CRISIS COMMUNICATION

## Communication Responsibilities During Crises in the Mid-America Union

### Natural Disasters

- 1. Local conference communication directors (LCCD)** are the lead communicators during natural disasters occurring in their territories. They are responsible to notify the union conference communication director (UCCD), who in turn notifies the union president. The LCCDs should share their statement with the UCCD, identify the spokesperson and outline next steps, if any.
- 2. The UCCD is available to LCCDs for assistance, upon request.** Both LCCDs and UCCD will communicate with their respective presidents and respective Adventist Community Services Disaster Response (ACSDR) coordinators—local and union—to facilitate the distribution of statements that are both accurate and appropriate for public distribution.
- 3. LCCDs may, at their discretion, accept assistance** from local church communication secretaries while remaining the spokesperson for disaster communication.
- 4. LCCDs will work with local ACSDR coordinators** to ensure all disaster response volunteers, both lay members and pastors, understand what they should/should not say to media reporters who may approach them for interviews. Volunteers should know that because they are serving under the direction of ACSDR, they should not give their own comments but only respond, when approached, with information they have been cleared to share.
- 5. Since Central States Conference spans the entire Mid-America Union,** there are always at least two conferences involved in any disaster. Therefore, the North American Division relies on the UCCD to represent all conferences within our territory and make statements for distribution to the world church. The UCCD will rely on LCCDs to supply remarks from their respective presidents.
- 6. If the disaster is of massive scope/nature** (e.g., major terrorist event), the union president will arrange with local presidents for the union to take leadership of communication for that crisis. In such unusual cases, the LCCDs will then work under the coordination of the UCCR.

## Unexpected Death/Serious Injury

**In the event of a death or injury** (e.g., summer camp drowning, work-related accident of employee) the local conference is responsible to issue a statement. The UCCD is available upon request to assist in crafting a public statement that expresses human sympathy regarding facts already confirmed and appropriate to disclose, without assuming any legal responsibility.

## Human Error

**Regarding situations involving alleged sexual misconduct, lying, embezzlement, etc.**, the same strategy applies as for death/injury. If allegations involve multiple conferences or union employees, the union president and UCCD will work together in producing a statement for both internal and external audiences.

**Brenda Dickerson's cell phone: 402.560.7124**

Please call or text any time of day or night if your conference has an emergency!

## Recommended Communication Resources

### ***Crisis Boot Camp***

*How to Handle Communication  
During Crises*

By Celeste Ryan Blyden

### ***Communication Handbook***

*A Practical Guide for Adventist Communicators & Ministry Leaders*

Celeste Ryan Blyden, Editor

### ***Free Publicity***

*by Jeff Crilley*

# AVOIDING COPYRIGHT VIOLATIONS

Jennifer Gray Woods, an associate general counsel for the GC, shares important tips on how to avoid copyright infringements in this video:

[bit.ly/IsYourChurchViolatingACopyright](https://bit.ly/IsYourChurchViolatingACopyright)

## How to Avoid Violating a Copyright

During the life of a copyright, the copyright owner has the following rights to their works:

- **The right to reproduce their work, such as in printed publications or by creating sound recordings of their work**
- **The right to distribute copies of their work**
- **The right to publicly perform and broadcast their work**
- **The right to make adaptations of their work, such as turning a book or manuscript into a movie**

Ways that ministries tend to violate copyright include:

- **Projecting lyrics on a screen during a church service without permission**
- **Using music or pictures on a website without permission**
- **Changing song lyrics or making an arrangement without permission**

Three things to keep in mind:

- **Materials found on Google (such as pictures and music) are usually *not* in the public domain.**
- **Materials do not have to have the copyright symbol on them to be copyright protected.**
- **Using materials for religious or nonprofit purposes is not a justification to infringe on someone's copyright.**

Learn more about copyright and intellectual property at [copyright.gov](https://copyright.gov) and [wipo.int](https://wipo.int).

## A CHARGE FOR COMMUNICATORS

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The forces of the enemy are strengthening, and as a people we are misrepresented. We desire the people to become acquainted with our doctrines and work. We want them to know what we are, and what we believe. We must find our way to their hearts.

—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 40