

SECTION 4 - General

Origin: Territory Administration Committee

Status: Policy

Distribution: All Parishes

Approved: Coordinating Council

Date: 22 November 2019

4.5 Social Media

- 4.5.1 Introduction
- 4.5.2 Purpose
- 4.5.3 Definitions
- 4.5.4 Parish/Ministry/Territory Websites, Blogs and Social Networking Accounts
- 4.5.5 Personal Social Media Accounts
- 4.5.6 Logos/Trademarks
- 4.5.7 Inappropriate Language and Images
- 4.5.8 Right to Review
- 4.5.9 Protection of Children and Vulnerable People
- 4.5.10 Electronic Communication with Children and Youth
- 4.5.11 Enforcement
- 4.5.12 Contact Information
- 4.5.13 Principles
- 4.5.14 Guidelines

4.5.1 Introduction

Social Media Tools such as blogs, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and other similar services enable us to communicate with each other in a number of different ways via the Internet. The technology is evolving quickly, and while it offers wonderful opportunities to communicate the Word of God, it also poses significant challenges. We, as part of the Territory of the People, want to ensure all social media tools are used thoughtfully, and with due care and respect for our ministry and those we serve.

Social media is being used by many members of the clergy, church staff and parishes. The number of tools (platforms) continues to expand rapidly; this policy is intended as an introduction to the policy guidelines of the Territory of the People. Any specific questions about any social media issues should be directed to the Bishop.

The intent of these guidelines is to help employees including clergy and laity, as well as volunteers (collectively referred to here as “church personnel”) of the Territory including its parishes, committees and programs, to understand the place of social media in the church.

Nothing here is new in the treatment of public communication which might impact the Territory or its representatives. We are all accountable for our speech and actions. However, despite the rapid increase in the use of technology to communicate, there continues to be widespread unfamiliarity with technology for many who use it. People may use social media carelessly, or not realize how much of what they communicate may become public, whether intended or not, and the degree to which such information may spread rapidly and do damage.

“Social media” refers to interactive forms of electronic communication which facilitate the creation and sharing of information or ideas via online communities and networks. When this document refers to social media, it is referring to public-facing social media

accounts managed on behalf of the Territory, as well as public-facing personal social media use which identifies the person as associated with the Territory, either as an employee or volunteer.

This policy does not apply to private social media use, anonymous or pseudonymous public communication, or using personal social media accounts or other electronic communications tools to communicate privately. There is potential however, for even private social media use, as with other forms of electronic communication, to be made public without the originator intending to do so, either through improper use of technology, the actions of anyone who can see those communications or unauthorized access (e.g. hacking or surveillance).

It is never acceptable for confidential information to be shared without permission via social media or any other form of insecure communication.

It is our goal for church personnel to use social media responsibly, and to recognize it is a powerful tool which can support the Territory's vision and to proclaim the Good News to the world.

WE ACKNOWLEDGE ...

- Social media does not replace meaningful and engaging dialogue which is best encountered through face-to-face communication.
- Anything published on social media feeds/pages should be considered as public as a homily from the pulpit, press release issued by the Territory, notice in the parish bulletin, or interview with a radio, television or newspaper reporter.
- Our intention, whenever engaging in public discourse is to build up, not tear down.
- Once commentary or other discourse is created on social media, it is no longer in control of the individual or organization sponsoring these interactions. Use of the Internet is pervasive, open and most difficult to ensure the material created on social media is being given the respect it deserves.

4.5.2 Purpose

To help church personnel interact safely and responsibly online, all are required to comply with the following policy regarding the use of social media.

4.5.3 Definitions

“Church personnel” means clergy, wardens, treasurers, PWRDF representatives, Safe Church representatives, church administrators/secretaries, and any additional volunteers the incumbent of a parish identifies as church personnel.

“Territory” means the Territory of the People Anglican Church.

“Social media site” means any website, blog or social networking site.

4.5.4 Parish/Ministry/Territory Office Websites, Blogs and Social Networking Accounts

The Territory encourages parishes and ministries to produce social media sites as educational, informational and evangelization tools.

Each parish or ministry which operates outside of a parish context, will appoint a supervisor who will provide permission for an individual to create content for social

media sites on behalf of the relevant parish or ministry. The supervisor is responsible for monitoring that specific account's activity and content. The supervisor must be given the username and password to access, update and make edits to the content on any social media site, if applicable.

Parish/ministry/Territory social media sites must not be used for:

1. conducting outside/personal business
2. defaming the character of any individual or institution
3. discrediting the Territory or our partners
4. disclosing any confidential information related to the Territory

4.5.5 Personal Social Media Accounts

Church personnel may maintain personal social media accounts unrelated to the Territory, to be used mainly for communicating personal information with friends and associates. Because content published on a personal social media site may become visible to the general public, owners of these accounts should provide truthful information and be accountable for mistakes.

Church personnel must avoid sharing any information which inappropriately causes or has the potential to cause harm to the Territory (including its parishes and personnel) or its reputation.

The use by church personnel of their personal social media sites to conduct parish or Territory work must be approved by their supervisor, and the website, blog or networking site may be monitored by the supervisor.

Personal social media sites owned by church personnel must not be used for:

- a. defaming any individual or institution
- b. disclosing any confidential information related to the Territory

If on a personal social media site church personnel identify themselves as being associated with the Territory, or would reasonably be understood to be associated with the Territory, they must place the following notice prominently on their social media site:

“The views expressed on this (website, blog, etc.) are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Territory of the People Anglican Church.”

4.5.6 Logos/Trademarks

Church personnel may use Territory or related logos and official photographs on social media sites that have an official affiliation with the Territory and are subject to review by a supervisor. Church personnel may not use Territory or affiliate trademarks or logos on their personal social media sites in any way which suggests or implies approval, endorsement or oversight by the Territory.

4.5.7 Inappropriate Language and Images

Church personnel will not post any obscene, sexually explicit, harassing, offensive, derogatory, defamatory or otherwise potentially harmful comments, links or images, or material which discredits or harms the reputation of the church, the Territory, or its personnel.

4.5.8 Right To Review

If there are reasonable grounds for believing the social media policy is being violated, on the personal social media site of any clergy or paid staff member, at the request of the Bishop, the clergy or paid staff member will provide access to the social media site so it may be reviewed.

4.5.9 Protection of Children and Vulnerable People

Attendance at publicly held church events (worship and other parish celebrations) may result in photographs/video recordings which may be broadcast or shared in any number of media, including local parish websites or other communications tools.

Wherever possible, church personnel should make every reasonable attempt to obtain verifiable consent from participants.

Church personnel are forbidden from posting or distributing any personal identifiable information, including photos and/or videos, of any person under the age of 19 without verifiable consent of a parent or guardian.

Personal identifiable information includes full name, photos, home address, telephone number, email address or any detail which would allow someone to identify or contact a child or youth.

Verifiable consent can be a release/permission form, an email from a parent or guardian, or spoken permission by a parent or guardian with at least two other adults present. If oral permission is used, the particulars of the consent must be written down and signed by both adults who received the consent. The written record of any form of consent will be conserved by the parish.

It is recommended that, for any event/ministry requiring a registration/permission form, a clause be included seeking permission to post photos/videos from such activities on a parish website or other social media channel. A statement with a simple check box is sufficient for this purpose. A release/consent form which may be used in the parish or other Territory ministry is available on the Territory website www.territoryofthepeople.ca under Resources, Policy Manual, Form 5.18 or from the Territory office.

Church personnel will not post or distribute the personal identifiable information of any individual whose capacity to give informed consent is diminished. Personal identifiable information of any other person over the age of 19 may only be posted or distributed after having obtained consent of that person.

4.5.10 When Communicating with Children and Youth Using Social Media or Other Electronic Communication

1. For official ministry communication to anyone under the age of 19, there must be at least two adults with administrative rights for each social media account.
2. Personal social media accounts may not be used for ministry communication.
3. The primary purpose of such communication shall be for providing information related to a ministry or event and not for socialization or other personal interaction. Counseling of children through electronic methods, such as social media, is not permitted.

4. Adults must not be in electronic communication with children or youth unless a parent/guardian has authorized such communication. Parents must be notified of the methods of communication which are used in each particular ministry and must be granted access to such communication if requested at any time. Parent authorization must identify the type of communication (e.g., email), the youth's specific contact information (email address) and contact information for parents/guardians.
5. When using a ministry social media account, adults must not initiate "friend" requests with children but may accept "friend" requests from children who are involved in the particular ministry.
6. When children or youth form their own personal social mediasites, adults may not join these groups, nor have access to these sites.
7. As a general rule, neither personal nor ministry social media sites should be used to contact children individually. If children contact individual adults engaged in ministry (other than a "friend" request), the ministry social media site should be used to reply by sending a group message (e.g., when the personal contact was for information relevant to all in the group). When the contact is such that a group response is not appropriate, the adult may not use a personal account to respond. The adult should contact the individual face to face or using email if that has been approved by the parent or guardian of the child or youth. In those unusual cases where the ministry social media account is used to respond to the individual rather than the group, the adult must maintain a hard copy of all such messages.
8. Communication outside of the acceptable hours may be used only in emergencies.
9. Other than emergency situations or to communicate time-sensitive information related to the ministry or ministry-related event, communication with children or youth via other electronic communications must be undertaken between 8am and 9pm.
10. Church personnel will not participate in online "chatting" with children or youth.
11. It is strongly recommended minors not be "tagged" in photos posted to social media sites.

4.5.11 Enforcement

Failure by church personnel to adhere to this policy will be grounds for disciplinary action.

The Territory reserves the right to make changes to this policy at any time, and at its sole discretion to interpret and administer the policy in light of changing circumstances, technologies and events.

4.5.12 Contact Information

For questions or more information on this policy, or to notify the Territory about social media or website-related issues, please contact the Territory by email at: office@territory.anglican.ca or by phone: 778-471-5573

4.5.13 Principles

The fundamental principles we should keep in mind for Internet communications are really just variations of the long standing principles of all Church communications.

Firstly, we have always respected the right of every member of the Church to express their own views, but we have also recognized that the Bishop is the person who speaks on behalf of the Territory.

Secondly, as members of the Anglican Church, we respect the fact we will sometimes hold differing views, each of us must be free to express our own views, and we will respect the positions of others.

Lastly, we remember all communication, and everything we do - whether on the Internet or not is always about ministry.

4.5.14 Guidelines

The following guidelines are based on principles of common sense and good judgement. Essentially, you should participate online in the same way you would in any other public forum. Your actions should be consistent with your work and Christian values and you are responsible for the things you do, say or write.

1. Don't rush in

The immediacy of social media is one of its benefits - we can respond quickly to questions, correct misunderstandings, give our perspective about a breaking story in the news media. Responding quickly doesn't mean doing so without due consideration.

Before posting always think:

- Is this my story to share?
- Would I want my mom to read this?
- Would I want God to read this?
- Would I want this on the front page of a newspaper?

This point applies even before you start posting your own content. Spend a while listening to others, getting a feel for the tone in that particular forum, giving thought to how you might participate.

2. Transient yet permanent

Social media updates are immediate and will outdate quickly BUT they can have a more lasting impact and you should assume anything you post is permanent. Even if you delete it later on, it may have been seen and re-published or referred to elsewhere.

3. You're an ambassador

Like it or not, if you are ordained, are a leader, or are employed by the Church, others will see you in your public role as a representative of the Church. If talking about a church matter, make it clear these are your personal opinions and not those of the Anglican Church of Canada or the Territory.

4. Don't hide

Anonymity and 'hiding' behind aliases when using social media is frowned upon. It's also at odds with what we consider the main reason for using social media networks.

How can anyone really connect with an alias? On any social media platform, if you choose a username or profile different to your real name, include brief personal details in the about section. And never assume an alias is anonymous.

When the account is a shared one, for example a Facebook page for your parish, ensure people can easily find out who is responsible for the content.

5. Be responsible

You are personally responsible for the content of anything you publish on-line, whether it is on a website, a blog, Facebook page, Twitter feed or other platform. Remember - something you send to a friend or colleague may be forwarded on or posted elsewhere.

6. Blurring of public/private life boundaries

In everyday ministry, the distinction between public duties and private life is difficult to draw. It is no different online. There are risks associated with personal opinions being seen as public statements, a minister's private life being invaded and the difficulties of detaching from work. Consider setting up different accounts for ministry and personal use to help set definite boundaries. Use privacy settings wisely.

If you are providing any comment - for example on a blog - about anything like current events or issues, government policies or actions, or any church policy or actions, it is important you identify your views as your own. Comment these are your views and are not necessarily the same as those of the Territory of the People. For example, you might use a disclaimer like: "The postings on this website are my own and do not necessarily represent the views of the Territory of the People, the Bishop, or the Anglican Church of Canada."

7. Maintain healthy boundaries

Social networking sites are often built around groups of friends or followers. Many of us have Facebook pages, and are "friends" with a variety of people on Facebook. While we may want to connect with parishioners as "friends", we must also be aware that adults and persons in positions of authority have more power than people with whom they have a pastoral relationship, and we may inadvertently put a vulnerable person in an awkward position. For example, a teenage member of a youth group might feel uncomfortable rejecting a "friend" request from their parish priest, and equally uncomfortable accepting the request.

8. Safe Parishes and Safe Places

The informality social media encourages can mean it might be harder to maintain the professional distance required when working with children, young people and the vulnerable. Communicating directly online with someone, for example with private messaging, is like meeting them in private. You're advised to send messages to groups, rather than individuals, or share them publicly.

Territory policies for safe parishes and safe places apply on-line just as they do in person. We must respect the privacy of those to whom we minister. This means we must be careful not to post or disclose any information relating to the private lives

of parishioners and in particular any information relating to vulnerable parishioners. This includes in particular information or pictures of seniors, members of youth groups, or children. Be aware some parents may object to the posting of pictures of their children. It would be wise to ensure you have the consent of any individual before posting anything about them.

9. Child safety and reporting

Clergy who receive information a child is being abused, or is at risk, have a legal obligation to report the information to the appropriate authorities. This duty applies regardless of the means by which the information is disclosed - including via social media. If you are in doubt, call the Bishop.

10. Stay within the legal framework

While sharing thoughts and reflections with friends or followers via social media can seem personal and private, it is not. By law, if one or more people can access it, content is classed as published, in the public domain and subject to legislation around libel, defamation, copyright and data protection. If you wouldn't say something in a public meeting or to someone's face or write it in a newspaper or on letterhead- don't say it online.

Be aware all standards for professional conduct, Territory policies and the discipline canon apply to your social media activities.

11. Confidentiality

Use of social media does not change the Church's understanding of confidentiality. Within the life of the Church there are private meetings and conversations, particularly in terms of pastoral work. Breaking confidentiality is as wrong as it would be in any other context. Arguably, it is worse as via social media a broken confidence could spread rapidly and be impossible to retract. Remember: Is this story mine to share? If in doubt, don't. If you would not post something on your parish bulletin board, don't post it on-line! And presume the Bishop is going to read your "bulletin board"!

12. Use common sense

Respect your audience. Don't make ethnic jokes, personal insults, or use unacceptable language. Something which you intended as a joke may be misunderstood by someone who doesn't understand your particular sense of humour. This doesn't mean we have to give up our sense of humour, but remember - on the Internet everything is public.

13. Keep up to date

Monitoring of websites is crucial. If you have a blog, forum, Facebook page or any other platform which allows comments or messages, then you must monitor the comments on a regular basis. Nothing should be allowed to be published on a parish Facebook page which is in any way inappropriate.

14. Be careful

Be prepared - not everyone on the Internet acts in good faith. The Internet provides us with a wonderful means of communicating about the Christian faith, but we must

be mindful forums or networks may take on a life of their own and may evolve in a way which we had not anticipated. If you are going to have a blog or other network site, make sure you have a plan to build an on-line community in a safe and appropriate fashion. When abuse occurs over social media, report it to the platform provider.

15. Be mindful of your own security

Don't overshare personal information. Never publish detailed personal information such as yours or someone else's address or telephone number, unless in a private message to someone you know and trust. Check photos you publish to ensure there is no personal information visible in them. Be aware GPS co-ordinates can be embedded in photo files taken with smartphones.

Be particularly aware of the potential for inadvertent publishing of personal or private information such as telephone numbers which go in printed bulletins and which then may be posted online.

Further information:

If you have serious concerns or problems - call the Territory office.

These guidelines have been drawn from a variety of sources and we are particularly grateful to the Dioceses of Edmonton and British Columbia. We welcome suggestions for resources on faith based use of social media tools.

See Form 5.18 – Media Consent Form