

Social Media Policy

These suggested practices for social media use in the Episcopal Diocese of Hawai‘i are intended to raise awareness, not to be hard and fast rules. This Social Media Policy should be reviewed and updated at least once a year in light of the changing landscape of social media. This is a pastoral document, not a legally binding one. When legal advice is necessary, the church’s attorney should be consulted.

“Social Media” is defined as the interactive computer mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks.¹ Simply, they are platforms and applications individuals and congregations use to communicate information. They are your websites, social networks, text messages (SMS, Twitter), comments, digital photos and videos and other data generated through online interactions with individuals or groups via mobile devices, desktop computers, websites or applications (Facebook, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, Vimeo, Flickr, are just examples).

Guiding Beliefs:

1. We believe our time together is dedicated to building relationships, establishing community, strengthening our faith and discovering Christ in one another.
2. We strive to embody these principles in thought, word and deed: Christ is present in all our gatherings; respect is the cornerstone of our community; kindness is paramount.
3. We acknowledge that there is a time and place for technology, that our phones are important, that social media is ever-present in our lives, and that technology connects us to one another.
4. We endeavor to use technology in a way that does not keep us beholden to a device, does not distract us from our community, respects our time together, enables our hands to serve, captures the memories being made, and shares the good news of our gathering.

Use of Social Media should at a minimum:

1. Have healthy boundaries, and adhere the principles of Safeguarding God’s People. The mutuality of friendship cannot exist when there is a disparity of power. Clergy members and lay leaders tend to have more power than laity. Be aware and use your power responsibly!
2. Communicate with people during daytime hours, approximately 8 a.m. until 9 p.m. If someone texts/calls after hours, wait until morning to reply. It’s not an emergency.
3. Digital communications are not confidential. If you don’t want it reprinted on the front page of the *Star-Advertiser* or your island’s newspaper, do not write/post it. Everything you post online is public and part of your witness.
4. Do not post on social media under the influence of alcohol, or any substance.
5. Use social media platforms that can be archived or printed. For example, use Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr. Social media with disappearing media, such as Snapchat, should not be used.
6. Know your voice. The voice of clergy and lay leaders is often considered the voice of the

¹ Kietzmann, Jan H.; Kristopher Hermkens (2011). "[Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media](#)". *Business Horizons* (Submitted manuscript). 54 (3): 241–251. doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2011.01.005. This policy is based on a model originally developed by The Episcopal Diocese of San Diego.

church. Speak in first person with your own voice on your personal page, but speak in the voice of the church when posting to a church or ministry page. Be sure you have permission from church leadership to post on behalf of the church or ministry, and have a conversation about the tone of that voice: official, reserved, informative, declarative, pastoral, etc.

7. People must be fully clothed in all photos you post.
8. Monitor your pages. Post relevant, stimulating content. Engage with posts, questions, comments. Check for inappropriate comments or tags. Anything that would not be acceptable to say during coffee hour at church should be removed.
9. Inform participants when recording services or church activities that may be distributed online. Church buildings are not necessarily considered public space.
10. Have fun and experiment with gentle, clean, respectable humor. Note that sarcasm is hard to “read” and may be misinterpreted.

Ten Commandments for Social Media Use with Youth

1. Create youth group accounts to communicate with youth. Personal social media accounts should not be used to generate youth group invitations.
2. Do not generate or accept friend or follow requests from youth on your personal account.
3. Two adults who have completed Safeguarding God’s People and the parish administrator should have both the login information and passwords for all social media accounts. This protects adults as well as kids.
4. Use social media platforms that can be archived or printed. For example, use Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr. Social media with disappearing media, such as Snapchat, should not be used.
5. Have your youth group’s photo release signed by youth, parents and a youth leader. A photo release must be signed for youth before posting their photos on social media.
6. With a signed photo release, you may use youth’s first names in a post. Last names should not be used and youth should not be tagged in pictures. With a signed waiver, youth may tag photos of themselves, but not others.
7. If you wish to geo-tag a photo or post it, do it after the event is finished. Do not tag the location while the event is in session.
8. Youth and youth leaders (everyone) must be fully clothed in all photos posted on social media. E.g., do not post photos of kids or adults in swimsuits at the beach.
9. When texting with you, always have a parent or another adult on a text message, unless it’s a group text with four or more youth.
10. Monitor your pages. Ensure your content is relevant and stimulating. Engage with the posts. Edit the comments. Check for inappropriate content. If you find anything that would not be appropriate for coffee hour at your church, remove it.