



## Social Media Policy

### PREAMBLE

The Diocese of British Columbia recognizes the increasing influence and relevance of social media. As part of our communication plan, we use technology to participate in the online dialogue and spread the good news of Christ Jesus.

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 diocese 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 that might impact the diocese 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 that 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 diocese, as well as public-facing personal social media use which identifies the person as associated with the diocese, 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 that it is a powerful tool that can support the diocesan vision and to proclaim the good news to the world.

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## WE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT...

- Social media does not replace meaningful and engaging dialogue that 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 diocese, 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 that the material created on social media is being given the respect it deserves.

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

## 1. DEFINITIONS

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

**Diocese** means the Diocese of British Columbia.

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

## 2. PARISH/MINISTRY/SYNOD OFFICE WEBSITES, BLOGS AND SOCIAL NETWORKING ACCOUNTS

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

Each parish or ministry that operates outside of a parish context, and the synod office will appoint a supervisor who will provide permission for an individual to create content for social media sites on behalf of the relevant parish, ministry or the synod office. 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/synod office 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 diocese or our partners

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4. disclosing any confidential information related to the diocese

### 3. PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

Church personnel may maintain personal social media accounts unrelated to the diocese, 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 that inappropriately causes or has the potential to cause harm to the diocese (including its parishes and personnel) or its reputation.

The use by church personnel of their personal social media sites to conduct parish or diocesan 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:

1. defaming any diocesan individual or institution
2. disclosing any confidential information related to the diocese

If on a personal social media site church personnel identify themselves as being associated with the diocese, or would reasonably be understood to be associated with the diocese, 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 Anglican Diocese of British Columbia.”

### 3. LOGOS/TRADEMARKS

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

### 4. DOMAIN REGISTRATION

The diocese is launching a new website strategy. When fully implemented, this tool will provide a common website platform for all parish websites.

The diocese will retain ownership of parish websites and make necessary payments for domain registration and hosting, as required. Parish websites will be built and technically maintained (security updates, platform upgrades) by the diocese or its contractors. Parishes will be responsible for writing and posting content to their websites.

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For parishes not yet using the diocesan platform and maintaining their own independent websites, the following procedures should be followed. When registering a domain name, there are four fields that must be completed, following the criteria below:

Owner: Anglican Diocese of British Columbia, 900 Vancouver St, Victoria BC V8W 0A4 250.386.7781 tf 1.800.582.8627

E-mail: [communications@bc.anglican.ca](mailto:communications@bc.anglican.ca)

Billing Contact: List your parish contact.

Administrative Contact: List the contact of your web hosting provider.

Technical Contact: List the contact of your web hosting provider.

### 5. INAPPROPRIATE LANGUAGE AND IMAGES

Church personnel will not post anywhere 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 diocese or its personnel.

### 6. RIGHT TO REVIEW

If there are reasonable grounds for believing that 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 communications officer, the clergy or paid staff member will provide access to the social media site so that it may be reviewed.

### 7. PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE PEOPLE

Attendance at publicly held church events (worship and other parish celebrations) may result in photographs/video recordings that 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 that 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 of the adults who received the consent. The written record of any form of consent will be conserved by the parish.

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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 that may be used in the parish or other diocesan ministry is available on the diocesan website [bc.anglican.ca](http://bc.anglican.ca) or from the synod 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.

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### 8. WHEN COMMUNICATING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH USING SOCIAL MEDIA OR OTHER ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

- 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.
- Personal social media accounts may not be used for ministry communication.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- When children or youth form their own personal social media sites, adults may not join these groups, nor have access to these sites.
- 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.
- Communication outside of the acceptable hours may be used only in emergencies.
- 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.
- Church personnel will not participate in online "chatting" with children or youth.

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- It is strongly recommended that minors not be “tagged” in photos posted to social media sites.

### 9. ENFORCEMENT

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

The diocese 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.

### 11. CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions or more information on this policy, or to notify the diocese about social media or website-related issues, please contact the communications officer by email at: [cpate@bc.anglican.ca](mailto:cpate@bc.anglican.ca) or by phone 250.386.7781 ext 249.