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## Social Media Policy

*"Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."—Philippians 4:8*

### OVERVIEW

"Social media" refers to interactive forms of electronic communication that facilitate the creation and sharing of information or ideas via online communities and networks.

Today, nearly four in five active Internet users visit social networks and blogs.

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.

Clergy, staff and volunteers (church personnel) will use social media to conduct work and to communicate with professional and personal associates. 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; proclaiming the good news to the world.

### 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.

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RENEWED HEARTS RENEWED SPIRITS RENEWED PEOPLE

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

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

The Diocese of British Columbia encourages parishes, ministries and offices to produce web content, blogs and social networking accounts as educational, informational and evangelization tools. A supervisor who provides permission for an individual to create web content, blogs or social networking accounts on behalf of a parish, ministry or the synod office 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 web content, blog or social networking account, if applicable.

Parish/ministry/synod office web pages, blogs or social networking accounts should not be used for:

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

#### PERSONAL WEBSITES, BLOGS AND SOCIAL NETWORKING ACCOUNTS

The Diocese of British Columbia recognizes that clergy, staff and volunteers (church personnel) will create personal websites, blogs or social networking accounts, to be used mainly for communicating personal information with friends and associates, unrelated to the Diocese of British Columbia. Church personnel must recognize that anything published on a personal website, blog or social networking account is visible to the general public. Owners of these personal websites, blogs and social networking accounts should provide truthful information and be accountable for mistakes.

Diocese of British Columbia personnel must avoid sharing any information that causes or has the potential to cause embarrassment to the Diocese of British Columbia (including its parishes) or harm our reputation.

If church personnel use their personal website, blog or social networking account to conduct parish or diocesan work, the use of that personal website must be approved by their supervisor. That website, blog or social networking account is then subject to monitoring by the supervisor.

Personal websites owned by church personnel of the Diocese of British Columbia should not be used for:

1. defaming the character of any individual or institution
2. discrediting the Diocese of British Columbia or its partners; or

3. disclosing any confidential information related to the Diocese of British Columbia

In the event that church personnel identify themselves, or is evidently understood to be, associated with the Diocese of British Columbia, they are asked to place the following notice prominently on their website, blog or social networking account:

“The views expressed on this website are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my employer.”

#### LOGOS/TRADEMARKS

Clergy, staff and volunteers (church personnel) may use diocesan or related logos and official photographs on websites/blogs/social media tools that have an official affiliation with the Diocese of British Columbia and are subject to review by a supervisor. Church personnel may not use diocesan or affiliate trademarks or logos on their personal websites in any way that suggests or implies approval, endorsement or oversight by the Diocese of British Columbia.

#### DOMAIN REGISTRATION

In January 2016, the Diocese of British Columbia launched a new website strategy in partnership with Ascend Collective, a Vancouver Island-based web development firm. When fully implemented, this tool will provide a common website platform for all parish websites.

For legal and security purposes, the Diocese of British Columbia will retain ownership of parish websites and make necessary payments for domain registration and hosting, as required. These parish websites will be created, maintained and managed by Ascend Collective.

For parishes not yet utilizing the Ascend Collective 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. Any Internet domain registered on behalf of a parish, should follow 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.

#### INAPPROPRIATE LANGUAGE AND IMAGES

The Diocese of British Columbia will not tolerate clergy, staff or volunteers posting obscene, harassing, offensive, derogatory, defamatory or otherwise potentially harmful comments, links or images, including sexually explicit and material deemed inappropriate, which discredits or harms the reputation of the Diocese of British Columbia.

## RIGHT TO REVIEW

If there are reasonable grounds for believing that the social media policy is being violated, the Diocese of British Columbia reserves the right to review the personal website, blog or social networking account of any clergy, staff or volunteer.

## PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

Clergy, staff and volunteers (church personnel) of the Diocese of British Columbia and its partners will comply with all aspects of our Sexual Misconduct Policy, accessible at [bc.anglican.ca](http://bc.anglican.ca). The policy also outlines the diocesan procedure to report/investigate incidents of abuse or misconduct. It is generally accepted that attendance at publicly held church events (worship and other parish celebrations) may result in photographs/video recorded 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 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 child (under 16) or youth (under 18), 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 another adult present. It is recommended that, for any event/ministry requiring a registration/permission form, a clause seeking permission to post photos/videos from such activities on a parish website or social media channels be included. (A statement with a simple check box should suffice.)

A sample release/consent form is available on the diocesan website [bc.anglican.ca](http://bc.anglican.ca) or from the synod office.

The Diocese of British Columbia will review any alleged violations on a case-by-case basis.

NOTE: Although the foregoing is directed towards the protection of children these same provisions are relevant for anyone participating in the life of the diocese.

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

- For official ministry communication, there must be at least two adults with administrative rights for each social media account. Personal social media accounts must 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 social media groups, adults should not join these groups.
- As a general rule, neither personal nor ministry social media accounts should be used to contact children individually. If children contact individual adults engaged in ministry (other than a "friend" request), the ministry account 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 is to avoid using a personal, social media account to respond. In those unusual cases where social media is used to respond, adults should maintain copies of all such messages.
- Acceptable hours for communication with children or youth via other electronic communications shall be between 8am and 9pm. Communication outside of the acceptable hours may be used only in emergency situations or to communicate time-sensitive information related to the ministry or ministry-related event.
- Online "chatting" with children or youth is not permitted.
- It is strongly recommended that minors not be "tagged" in photos posted to social media accounts.

## ENFORCEMENT

Diocese of British Columbia intends to enforce the policy set forth here and expects all clergy, staff and volunteers to comply. Failure to adhere to the policy will be grounds for disciplinary action.

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

## CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions or more information on this policy, or to notify the Diocese of British Columbia 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.