



Anglican Diocese of
— Edmonton —

Social Media Guidelines

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How can nonprofits use social media?

Social media — websites and apps that let users create, share and network — allows organisations with even the most limited budgets to reach a wide audience in a quick, cost-effective way. These platforms allow you to tell your organization's story.

What social media channels are most popular with nonprofits?

A recent survey of more than 9,000 small-to-medium-sized nonprofits in the United States and Canada showed that the majority of nonprofits list Facebook as their primary social network. Twitter is the next most commonly used platform. Other popular channels include YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest and Instagram.

While it might seem tempting to try to get your message out on as many platforms as possible, it's smarter to determine what platforms your target audience uses and go from there. Doing a great job of reaching out to current and potential supporters in a couple of platforms is smarter than doing a mediocre job on six or seven platforms.

What is Social Media?

Social media tools are powerful channels of electronic communication that often invite their audience to participate in a conversation. Examples include, but are not limited to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr, blogs and videos posted online.

Social media is a public way of enabling us as Christians to live out our calling to share the good news of Jesus Christ. This opportunity comes with a number of downsides, however, if users do not apply the same common sense, kindness and sound judgement that we would use in a face-to-face encounter.

Purpose and Scope of these Guidelines

The purpose of the Diocese of Edmonton social media guidelines is to encourage electronic communication that promotes our mission and ministry, always reflecting our beliefs and values as followers of Jesus Christ.

The guidelines are divided into three sections: principles and values that apply to all content posted on social media accounts run by the Diocese of Edmonton and those who engage with them; requirements applying to diocesan communication, including the use of social media; and guidelines for individual parishes and ministries within the diocese.

Section 1: Principles and values.

By engaging with social media accounts operated by the Diocese of Edmonton, we all agree to:

- **Be safe.** The safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults must be maintained at all times.
- **Be respectful.** We do not post or share content that is sexually explicit, inflammatory, hateful, threatening or otherwise disrespectful. We do not disparage others or engage in gossip.
- **Be kind.** Treat others how you would wish to be treated and assume the best in people. If you have a criticism or critique to make, consider first whether you would say the same thing in person and, equally important, the tone you would use.
- **Be honest.** Don't mislead people about who you are or whom you represent.
- **Take responsibility.** You are accountable for the things you do, say and write. Text and images shared can be public and permanent, even with privacy settings in place. And not everything found online is true or accurate. Always question the source of any content, which will be amplified if you share it. If you're not sure, don't post.
- **Be a good ambassador.** Personal and professional life can easily become blurred online, so think before you post. If you are known to represent the diocese, but are expressing your personal opinion, be sure to make that clear.
- **Disagree well.** Some conversations can be places of robust disagreement. It's important we apply our values in the way we express our opinions. Healthy debate is encouraged, but if you take issue with a post by the diocese or a colleague consider engaging that person directly via a private message or phone call.
- **Credit others.** Acknowledge the work of others. Respect copyright and always give credit where it is due.
- **Be considerate.** Be careful not to release sensitive or confidential information.
- **Follow the rules.** Abide by the terms and conditions of the various social media platforms themselves. If you see a comment that you believe breaks their policies, please report it to the respective company.

Section 2: Requirements applying to diocesan use of social media.

Only members of the Diocese of Edmonton communications team will have administrative access to diocesan social media accounts. These personnel will endeavour to always apply the values and principles described above. Furthermore, these personnel will:

- Post and share content that is relevant to and in accordance with the aims of mission and ministry within the diocese. They will avoid posting, sharing or linking to partisan political statements.
- Post content that remains professional in tone and reflects the values and high standards of integrity held by Diocese of Edmonton staff and members.
- Redirect followers of social media accounts to the [Anglican Diocese of Edmonton website](#) whenever possible, as the primary source of news and information for the diocese.
- Take action if they receive complaints or spot inappropriate, unsuitable or offensive material posted to diocesan social media accounts. This may include deleting comments, blocking users or reporting comments as inappropriate.

Section 3: Guidelines for parishes and ministries within the diocese.

Individual parishes and other groups within the diocese are encouraged to use social media to promote engagement with their mission and ministry. The following are provided as guidelines and helpful hints:

- **Make a plan.** Decide the purpose of your communications; choose which social media platform(s) suit your purposes considering the audience you are trying to reach; agree upon the type of information you want to share and the regularity with which you want to share it; choose the person(s) who will be responsible, understanding that only the incumbent, or a person designated by the incumbent, may have administrative control over parish social media accounts; make choices that will be sustainable over time, as keeping up with digital communications is somewhat labour intensive.
- **Be honest and transparent.** While being appropriately cautious about the privacy of individuals, do be open and honest about aims and activities and the parish or ministry involved.
- **Be relevant.** Post links and information relevant to the ministry. Remember your audience and the reasons you want them to engage with your ministry or parish.
- **Be current.** The greatest strength of digital communications is its immediacy, so post regularly, using tools such as Hootsuite as needed to set up posts in advance. Outdated posts will turn away the people with whom you seek to connect.
- **Strive for accuracy.** Make sure to check facts and review content for spelling and grammatical errors before posting. If you make a mistake, be upfront about it and correct it quickly.
- **Develop a voice.** Consider the tone of communications coming from your parish or group. Work at maintaining a consistent tone in keeping with your vision, mission and ministry.
- **Link back to your website.** Every parish and mission/ministry group within the Diocese of Edmonton is encouraged to have a functioning, up-to-date website. Social media channels should redirect followers to that website whenever possible as your communications hub.

- **Be aware of the use of your online identity.** There is little to stop an individual from opening a social media account and saying it is the parish or mission/ministry page when, in fact, it is not. This might be done with good intentions, but it is important to be watchful for any social media accounts that appear to represent the parish or ministry.
- **Be wise when responding to negative feedback.** Never respond to a negative post while you are angry. Answer with kind words and an understanding tone. Your goal should be to diffuse negativity, rather than escalate it. Is your reaction likely to prompt a more intense response? If so, refrain from commenting.

Where do I go for further advice?

The Diocese of Edmonton communications department can be contacted at churched@edmonton.anglican.ca or by phone at 780-439-7344.

Sources: Church of England Social Media Guidelines: <https://www.churchofengland.org/terms-and-conditions/our-social-media-community-guidelines>

Why Social Media Matters to Nonprofits: <https://www.missionbox.com/article/118/why-social-media-matters-to-nonprofits>