



Oxford  
Presbyterian  
Church U.S.A.

## Proposed Social Media Guidelines

September 2016

*“Being in covenant community in the virtual community of social media.*

**The Church of Jesus Christ has always been an epistolatory community.** We are a going and telling faith. The earliest church communicated through the written word – the media of that era – bringing the body of Christ together when worshippers could not be together bodily. We lift up many of the early epistles as scripture.

**Social media can build up community or undermine community.** Like any communication social media can bring people together and enrich the dialogue among those participating. It is also important to be aware that what is written lacks the social nuances of words spoken in person and that thoughts written in haste or even in jest have a life of their own in the internet.”

<https://www.pcusa.org/resource/ga221-social-media-guide>

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### Guidelines

1. Employees and volunteers interested in representing Oxford Presbyterian Church (OPC) on social media must be approved by leadership and abide by the following guidelines.
2. OPC social media postings should not disclose sensitive or confidential information, unless the person that the information concerns has given written consent to share such information. This might include medical information or other personal matters.
3. OPC social media representatives will respect copyright and fair use laws, making sure that they have permission or authority to use content before posting it. Simply giving credit to the author will not protect the ministry from a possible copyright infringement claim.
4. OPC social media administrators will monitor the page at least once per day, removing content that is obscene, embarrassing, abusive, or otherwise objectionable. If any posted material appears to be illegal, social media representatives should contact church leadership and other appropriate authorities.
5. When communicating with youth via social media, employees and volunteers should follow the ministry’s youth communication policy.
6. In addition, ministry workers and volunteers who serve in children and youth ministries should keep their professional image in mind. Online conduct and behavior affects this image. “Friending” youth members, or accepting invitations to “friend” youth is discouraged within personal social networking sites. Contacting youth members outside the ministry’s youth group page may create risks for the ministry workers and alter the dynamic between a youth leader and youth.
7. As an employee or volunteer of Oxford Presbyterian Church remember that your online posts have the potential to affect the ministry, even all posts that you make on a personal level. Employees and volunteers are personally responsible for the content they publish online, including content they publish through their own social media pages.
8. In the event of a perceived crisis, (something that makes you think “how should I respond?”) contact the social media leader and church before responding to any posting or comments related to the crisis.

## Do you need permission to post photos of church members?

Legally speaking, if it's in the public, it's fair game. If you're photographing in public, there's no need to get everyone to sign a release form. They're in public and that's that. But there is more than just the law to consider...just because something is legal, doesn't mean it's right.

- Always be ready to remove a photo if someone asks you to.
- Always ask permission to use close-ups of people.
- When taking photos of children, get permission before taking it.
- Use discretion and always use photos of people looking their best.
- If it's a funny/goofy/silly photo, ask before using it.

Remember, once you've used a photo online, it's really hard to insure that it's been completely removed. Photos can be copied and downloaded easily, so it is better to error on the side of caution.

Of course when you're taking photos of a large group or activity, getting permission is going to be tough. If it's a large church event, most people understand that there are going to be photos flying everywhere, but if you're doing a general photography session of your Sunday school program, you might want to announce it the Sunday before.

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## General tips for effective uses of social media for churches

1. Have a clearly designated point person. Someone—whether paid or volunteer—should be responsible to see that schedules are followed, content is posted, and standards are being met.
2. Integrate social media into the communications plan. Use your church's weekly bulletin and newsletter to shape the content in your social media channels
3. Consider the sharability of the post. Think "if someone sees this, will they want to share it with their friends?" If the answer is no, consider a shift in content or the call to action.
4. Monitor channels for feedback and respond. Social media is not a one-way street. The entire purpose is for social media to be social. This requires dialogue, listening, and responding to questions.
5. Allow people to post to the Facebook page wall—Monitor it so that inappropriate posts can be dealt with. But don't make the Wall page nothing but a bulletin board. Allow people the ability to express a thought or ask a question if they want to.

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Sources not noted in the text:

<http://churchexecutive.com/archives/sample-social-media-policy-2>

<https://churchm.ag/permission-to-post-photos-online/>

<http://thomrainer.com/2015/07/seven-keys-to-an-effective-church-social-media-strategy/>

<http://www.churchleaders.com/worship/worship-articles/154143-how-to-use-social-media-effectively-in-the-church.html>

*Strengthening our communications channels will help us with our mission.*

**Seeking God**  
**Serving Others**  
**Sharing Christ's**  
**Love With All**