



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH

Social Media Policy

This Policy governs the publication of and commentary on social media by employees of The Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth, its related clergy, congregations, ministries, and lay leaders ("the Diocese"). For the purposes of this policy, "social media" means any platform for online publication or comment, including blogs, wikis, social networking sites including (but not limited to) Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Whatsapp, Tiktok, Flickr, Instagram, and YouTube.

With the privilege of being a diocesan leader comes the obligation of mature self-censorship and self-control. It is the policy of the Diocese to require all social media posts by clergy, congregations, ministries, and lay leaders to adhere to the highest standard of Christian decorum. This includes (but is not limited to) the requirements and expectations outlined below.

This policy applies to social media accounts associated with a particular church or ministry **as well as the personal social media accounts of clergy, employees, or ministry representatives.**

No unauthorized persons may speak for the Diocese, its churches or ministries. When engaging in social media individuals should take care not to speak for anyone but themselves or the ministry, complying at all times with this Policy.

Violations will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination for cause. Clergy will be disciplined by the Bishop under the Diocesan Constitution and Canons. Lay employees will be disciplined by their employers, in compliance with local labor law. Violations by volunteers will be reviewed by the parish or ministry leadership and appropriate action will be taken. Diocesan officials may be consulted during any such review. Suspected criminal activity will be reported to the proper authorities.

Requirements and Expectations

- Social Media should be used to build up others and equip them for ministry; offer praise, encouragement, and examples of Godly living. When recommending outside resources, these should do the same.
- Slow down. Think about consequences and how your message may be received before you post. Review your message before you share it. Perhaps you should trim it... or just delete it without posting.

- Use a ministry account to promote events, share good news, or make other commentary for the good of all concerned.
- A post that potentially damages the reputation of the Diocese of Fort Worth, its churches or its ministries is prohibited.
- Follow the same rules of courtesy and mature behavior you would observe on the phone or in a letter. Observe all laws and regulations governing operations of your congregation or ministry.
- Check all facts. Proof read for mistakes in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Try to make your message error-free.
- Do not endanger minors. Avoid revealing names or other personal information that might allow a predator to target or stalk a child either online or in person. Do not give the impression that children are without adult protection. Always protect the innocent and vulnerable, no matter the age.
- Don't infringe copyrights. For example, publish a link to a great blog post rather than copying it to your own page. Never offer someone else's work as if it were your own. If you extract a quote, acknowledge the author and source. Don't use graphics obtained without permission. Remember that this can be a cause of litigation.
- Stay away from controversies. Correct mistakes (especially your own) and make apologies when appropriate. Offer clarifications when these are helpful.
- Don't heat up an argument. Disagreements involving Christians should be handled according to New Testament standards of humility and gentleness.
- Don't use your position to settle a score or to promote your own interests or those of a group of insiders.
- Do not speak with malice or contempt.
- Do not engage in libel, slander, gossip, or belittling or degrading language or post images (such as memes) that put down or degrade anyone.
- Do not be obscene.
- Do not stalk others. Don't "hang out" on Internet pages simply in order to disagree.
- Do not reveal private information or knowledge you may possess. Don't publish embarrassing, immodest, inappropriate, or unflattering photos or commentary. Even if you have the permission of the person in the photo/comment, consider whether it is appropriate for your audience and consistent with your congregation or ministry's overall mission and message.