

Social Media

Policy No. 909

Social media platforms are the modern equivalent of the open public square, where the exchange of ideas, information and opinions can create new relationships and new forms of community. “These spaces, when engaged in a wise and balanced way, help to foster forms of dialogue and debate which, if conducted respectfully and with concern for privacy, responsibility and truthfulness, can reinforce the bonds of unity between individuals and effectively promote the harmony of the human family.” (cf. Pope Benedict XVI, Message for World Day of Communications, January 24, 2013).

Policy Statement: Social media platforms developed by the Archdiocese or its parishes or institutions must be used in a responsible, respectful and professional manner, reflecting our Gospel values, the teachings of the Church and our commitment to ethical and non-discriminatory practices. The obligation to maintain a safe environment in Social Media is the same as in face-to-face communications and interactions.

Intent of Policy: The Archdiocese encourages and supports social media platforms as important means of communication and a valuable tool in the ministry of evangelization.

Definitions:

- **Social Media Platform:** Any web-based application which facilitates interactive information sharing. A social media site created on such a platform enables users to interact with others to change site content, to post reaction to content, to share the site’s content with others or to filter content being provided by the site creator. Examples of platforms include: Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest and Flickr. Social media platforms differ from non-interactive websites, where users are mainly limited to the passive viewing of information that is provided.
- **Social Media Network:** The collection of individuals with whom one has a relationship through a social media platform. Typically, a social media network is entirely driven by content of its members, who are said to be engaged in “social networking.” Individuals are allowed flexibility in privacy settings, in posting text, photos, video, links and other information, and in level of interaction with other members.
- **Administrator:** A person who manages a social network site, monitors it regularly, and has the ability to post content, moderate comments before they are published, and delete inappropriate content.
- **Blog:** A contraction of the term “web log,” a blog is a specific type of social media platform usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of

events or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. “Blog” can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog site.

- **Tag:** A special kind of link. When a social network user tags someone, they create a link to that person's personal social media network or to other sites on the internet. For example, you can tag a photo to show who is pictured in the photo. A social network user or other internet user can find the photo by searching for the person's name.
- **Friends/Friending:** Individuals associated to one another within a social media network may be called “friends” within the network. The verbal form “friending” refers to the act of accepting an individual's request to be included as an associate within one's social network.
- **Creative Commons:** a nonprofit organization that offers content creators a simple, standardized way to give the public permission to share and use their creative work — on conditions of the creator's choice; e.g., a Creative Commons license may allow a photo to be used freely as long as the photographer is credited and the use is not for commercial purposes.

Procedure:

A social media site is not meant to replace the archdiocesan or parish website. Important information about the ministry must be accessible on both sites.

- a) Obtain permission from the appropriate authority (e.g. Chancellor, Department Head, Director, Pastor) before launching any social media site in the name of the Archdiocese or any of its parishes or institutions.
 - The appropriate authority must evaluate the suitability of the social networking platform as a means of ministry, prior to its being developed as a ministry site.
 - The appropriate authority is also expected to ensure that competent person(s) will develop, maintain and monitor the use of the social media site.
 - Any social media site set up for ministry by the Archdiocese or any of its parishes or institutions must be clearly named to reflect its ministerial focus (include name of the parish, archdiocesan office, camps, etc.).
- b) At least two persons shall have administrator access to a social media site account. Login credentials must be documented and kept on file with the appropriate authority in the office / parish that has primary responsibility for the site.

- c) A social media network account set up in the name of the Archdiocese or one of its parishes or institutions shall be independent of any person's personal social networking account. (see Policy No. 300 Computer and Electronic Communications Usage)
- d) Once a social media site is established, administrators should inform all interested parties about it, and invite their participation.
- e) Administrators of a social media site must secure permission before posting copyrighted information or images. Appropriate credit should be given when using images or other content that carries a Creative Commons licence.
- f) No pictures, images, videos, logos should be tagged or linked without permission. Administrators must have the written permission of parents/guardians before posting pictures/images/video of children, and should never include names or other personal information about the children. Pictures/images/video of children are not to be tagged, as this could direct users to the personal page of a vulnerable person.
- g) Communicating via a social media platform is an extension of the work or ministry setting, and should be conducted with integrity, accountability and transparency. Administrators must ensure that the site is a forum for respectful exchange of ideas. The administrator is to monitor conversations, wall postings, images, and the behaviour of social network members on a regular basis, and challenge, educate and intervene as necessary. This can be done by:
 - Posting a policy on the site stipulating that disrespectful, destructive or abusive communications will not be tolerated.
 - Establishing a protocol of moderating comments, so that they must be approved by an administrator before being published.
 - Deleting inappropriate content.
- h) Communication on a social media site used for ministry must be public and must not be used to conduct extended private conversations with users.

- i) Social media platforms are not to be used for:
- Conducting outside business or engaging in unauthorized fundraising activities
 - Defaming the character of any individual or institution
 - Causing embarrassment to the Archdiocese or its parishes or institutions
 - Divulging personal information about anyone, particularly children or vulnerable persons that would jeopardize their reputation, safety or well-being in any way.

Exception:

This Policy does not apply to personal websites or personal social media accounts established as mediums of self-expression. It applies only to social media sites established to advance the ministerial and communications purposes of the Archdiocese, its parishes or institutions.

Refer to Policies:

- No. 300 Computer and Electronic Communications Usage
- No. 323 Contract for Employment
- No. 802 Electronic Records Management [Pending]
- No. 907 Protection of Personal Information
- No. 908 Website Content

