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).

"…let us establish standards for discernment — the dignity of the human person, the universal destination of goods, the preferential option for the poor, care for our common home and peace — and let us translate these standards into practices such as responsible planning, the assessment of human and social impact, the inclusion of the most vulnerable, the promotion of digital literacy and guiding research and industry toward justice and peace." (Pope Leo XIV, ***MAGNIFICA HUMANITAS, par 14)***

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 the use of 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 that facilitates interactive information-sharing. Examples of platforms include: Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, TikTok and Pinterest. Social media platforms differ from non-interactive websites, which limit users to the passive viewing of presented information.
- **Social Media Account (or Page):** An account or page, created by a user on a social media platform, enables the user to interact with others, change site content, post reactions to content, share the site's content with others, or filter content that is visible and/or shared on the platform.
- **Account or Page Administrator:** The user who manages a social media account, either as an individual or on behalf of an organization. The administrator monitors the account regularly

and has the ability to post content, moderate comments before they are published, and delete inappropriate content.

- **Tag:** A tag is created when a user mentions an individual or other entity in a post or comment, establishing a connection to the tagged profile of that individual or entity. On Facebook and Instagram, tagging notifies the recipient and links to the tagged profile.
- **Follow:** A function on social media platforms that allows a user to subscribe to another user's account or page. Following an account enables the follower to receive updates and content in their feed, and may allow for interaction through comments, likes, or direct messages, depending on platform settings and privacy controls.
- **Like/React:** A one-click response that expresses approval or an emotional reaction to a post or comment. Examples include the thumbs-up on Facebook or the heart icon on Instagram and X (formerly Twitter).
- **Share/Repost/Retweet**: The act of redistributing another user's content to one's own audience, either with or without added commentary. Terminology varies by platform.
- **Comment**: A written response or message posted by a user in reply to a piece of content (e.g., a post, image, or video) on a social media platform.
- **Direct Message (DM)**: A private communication sent between users on a social media platform that is not visible to the public or other followers.
- **Handle**: A unique username associated with a social media account, typically preceded by the "@" symbol (i.e. @YourOrganization).
- **Mute / Restrict**: Platform-specific tools that allow a user to limit the visibility or interaction of another user without fully blocking them.
- **Block**: A function that prevents another user from viewing your profile, interacting with your content, or contacting you.
- **Troll**: A user who deliberately posts provocative, offensive, or disruptive comments to provoke reactions or derail conversations. Sometimes a troll will use an alias to hide their identity.

- **Hashtag**: A keyword or phrase preceded by the pound symbol (#), used to categorize content and make it searchable by topic on platforms like Instagram and X.
- **Moderator**: A designated individual who oversees online discussions or account activity, ensuring compliance with community guidelines and policies.
- **Creative Commons:** An international non-profit organization that facilitates the sharing of knowledge and culture in the public interest by equipping them with technical, legal, and policy solutions. A **Creative Commons license** gives content creators a standardized way to grant the public permission to use their creative work under copyright law.
- **Meme:** A satirical visual that is created by an individual or collective for the purpose of politics, general humour, or parody. Memes can be AI-generated in a video, audio, or photo format.
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** A modern software system powered by advanced algorithms that can analyze, learn from, and adapt to data over time. AI is commonly used for tasks such as content writing, data analysis, solving complex problems, automating replies, and moderating online interactions. i.e. *ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Magisterium AI.*
- **Deepfake:** A 'model' powered by artificial intelligence that can acquire an individual's image, voice, and likeness to manipulate or produce audio, video, or images in a way that appears convincingly real.

Procedures:

1.1 Creation, Administration, & Governance of Social Media Accounts:

A social media account is an extension of the ministerial and communications work of the Archdiocese and its parishes. It does not replace the Archdiocesan or parish website. Important information must be accessible on both the website and the social media platform(s).

a) Obtain permission from the appropriate authority (e.g. Chancellor, Senior Lead, Pastor) before creating a social media account in the name of the Archdiocese or any of its parishes or institutions.

- The appropriate authority will evaluate the suitability of the social media platform.

- The appropriate authority will ensure that one or more competent persons is accountable for and assigned to develop, maintain and monitor the use of the social media account.
- Any social media account 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 account. Login credentials must be reviewed at least annually to ensure the information is current.

c) A social media account set up in the name of the Archdiocese or one of its parishes or institutions shall be independent of any individual's personal social media accounts. (see Policy No. 300 Computer and Electronic Communications Usage)

d) Once a social media account is established, the administrators should inform all interested parties about it, and invite their participation.

e) Administrators of a social media account 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) Pictures/images/video of children are not to be tagged in social media posts, as this could direct users to the personal page of a vulnerable person.

g) Administrators must ensure that any social media account created by the Archdiocese or its parishes or institutions is a forum for respectful exchange of ideas. The administrator is to monitor conversations, wall postings, images, and the behaviour of members on a regular basis, and challenge, educate and intervene as necessary. This can be done by:

- Posting a policy on the account stipulating that disrespectful, destructive or abusive communications will not be tolerated.
- Establishing a protocol of moderating comments, so that they are approved by an administrator before being published.

- Deleting inappropriate content.

h) All communication on a social media account used for ministry must be public.

i) Social media accounts must **not** be used to:

- Conduct extended private conversations with users.
- Conduct outside business or engage in unauthorized fundraising activities.
- Defame the character of any individual or institution.
- Cause embarrassment to the Archdiocese or its parishes or institutions.
- Divulge personal information about anyone, particularly children or vulnerable persons that would jeopardize their reputation, safety or well-being.

1.2 Public Engagement, Moderation, & Safeguarding Measures:

Due to the rapid pace and open nature of digital communication, social media platforms have become public forums where a wide diversity of opinions can be expressed, sometimes resulting in tension, conflict, or misinformation. As public platforms tied to the Archdiocese's mission, our social media accounts must uphold respectful dialogue and safeguard the integrity of our ministry.

Administrators are responsible for moderating content and may take appropriate action; including hiding, deleting, or blocking users—when engagement violates community standards, endangers others, or harms the Church's public witness. Clear rules of engagement help ensure our platforms remain safe, respectful, and mission-aligned.

a) **Public disclaimer on account pages:**
Each official Archdiocesan or parish social media account shall include a public disclaimer in the account's "*About*" or description section. This disclaimer must state that the Archdiocese reserves the right to hide, delete, or block users who engage in abusive, harassing, or inappropriate behavior. It should also direct users to the official Social Media Policy available on the Archdiocese's website for further reference. This moderation approach is consistent with platform

specific community standards, including *Meta's* Community Guidelines.

b) **Zero tolerance:** Comments, messages, or content that involve personal attacks, harassment, hate speech, threats, or discrimination of any kind will result in immediate removal and may lead to the user being blocked or reported.

c) **Rules of engagement with disruptive users:** While we value free expression and open dialogue, it must remain respectful. Administrators will take a measured approach in dealing with disruptive users, recognizing that some individuals may be struggling with mental health issues or personal distress.

Administrators should:

- Screenshot and document harmful interactions.
- Engage privately via DM, where appropriate, to de-escalate or redirect the conversation
- Refer the user to our Social Media Policy or appropriate Archdiocesan personnel
- Encourage respectful dialogue and offer clarification where possible.

If these steps fail and the behavior persists, the user may be banned (blocked) in accordance with this policy and platform standards.

1.3 Navigating Artificial Intelligence- Usage and Copyright:

In an age where artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming the digital landscape, social media has become an oversaturated environment. This reality has led to a significant rise in misinformation, manipulated media, and misleading narratives.

As the Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton is rooted in truth, integrity, and the protection of **human dignity**, it is our responsibility to approach the use of AI with discernment and ethical care. This includes being transparent about AI-generated material, safeguarding intellectual property rights,.and prioritizing truthful communication that aligns with our values.

a) **Copyright:**

With advanced algorithms embedded within AI, the ability to generate realistic images, branded materials, and other forms of intellectual property has become widely accessible to the general public. This raises serious copyright concerns, as individuals may inadvertently share or publish AI-generated content that infringes on the rights of original creators or organizations. CAEDM staff and parishes must ensure that any public advertisements, social media posts, or AI-assisted content do not violate copyright laws or misrepresent ownership. When in doubt, original content or properly licensed material should be used and credited. If uncertainty remains, staff are strongly encouraged to consult with the Archdiocesan Communications Team before publishing or distributing content.

b) CAEDM Branding & Logo Usage

CAEDM follows a specific branding rubric for all internal and external communications. The use of the Archdiocesan logo is strictly prohibited without prior approval from the Archdiocesan Communications Team. To protect the integrity and credibility of the Archdiocese, the CAEDM logo may only be used under the following conditions:

- By the Communications Team on official CAEDM platforms
- For approved collaborative events or campaigns involving CAEDM
- In public statements or materials explicitly authorized by senior leadership or the Office of the Archbishop.

Any unauthorized use, reproduction, or modification of the logo, including through the use of AI, is **strictly prohibited**. For access to official branding assets or approval requests, staff and partners must consult the Archdiocesan Communications Team.

1.4 Risk Management:

The Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton is committed to providing a safe and healthy online platform by adhering to its zero-tolerance policy (refer to 1.2-b).

Our platforms will be actively monitored, and strict moderation protocols will be enforced **without hesitation**. Accounts that engage in hostile behaviour, spread false information, or

compromise the safety or privacy of others will be subject to immediate action, including banning, blocking, or reporting to appropriate authorities.

Our priority is to protect the integrity of our mission and the well-being of our communities across all digital spaces.

Caution is to be exercised when posting materials because once information is on the internet, you lose control of it forever. The moment you click "post," "upload," or "submit," ownership of that data shifts from you to the cloud. Even if you delete a post seconds later, automated scrapers, web archives, and other users may have already captured it.

1.5 Prohibited Use of Artificial Intelligence

Due to the constantly evolving rules and regulations surrounding Artificial Intelligence, the Archdiocese will exercise caution in its use specific to social media. While AI offers efficiency and innovation, it also carries risks that can affect the credibility, privacy, and ethical standards of our communications. As such, we will enforce safeguards and restrict any use of AI that distorts facts, impersonates individuals, or compromises integrity. The protection of personal data and the data of the Archdiocese is a serious responsibility and a reflection of our ethical and legal duty to uphold privacy and human dignity.

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 accounts established to advance the ministerial and communications purposes of the Archdiocese, its parishes or institutions.

Nevertheless, employees, and in particular clergy, must be aware that personal communications may be perceived incorrectly by others as reflecting institutional values.

Refer to Policies:

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

Reference: Pastoral Letter on the Use of Social Media
https://www.cccb.ca/justice-and-peace/pastoral-letter-on-the-use-of-social-media/