

Social Media Primer For Presbytery Mid-Atlantic, EPC

We hear so much about social media. But do you understand it well enough to utilize and harness its power to support our gospel message? Hopefully this quick tool will get you started.

1. Understanding platforms
2. About Administrators
3. Use and Conduct
4. Frequently Asked Questions

1. Understanding platforms

Here are some key terms to know before we get too far.

User – the individual looking for or utilizing information.

Content – information posted.

Tag – a key word that is utilized by search engines to point users to content.

Tagging in Facebook identifies individuals involved with the subject of a post or found in an image.

There is so much on the internet about social media platforms and trying to help everyone understand them. Most of the information is from marketing organizations trying to help businesses understand the tools and how they can be best utilized. Not all platforms benefit all businesses.

Hootsuite is a fabulous application whose company has a blog post that describes 10 different types of social media. Please visit <https://blog.hootsuite.com/types-of-social-media/> for more in-depth information on each of these listed below and to understand the others out there.

For our purposes we will focus on four(4) of them.

Social networks

Examples: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#)

Why people use these networks: To connect with people (and brands) online.

Allows instant information sharing and encourages connections beyond your building. Understanding the difference between a page and a group is important. Find that below in the FAQ.

Media sharing networks

Examples: [Instagram](#), [Snapchat](#), [YouTube](#)

Why people use these networks: To find and share photos, video, live video, and other media online.

Blogging and publishing networks

Examples: [WordPress](#), [Tumblr](#), [Medium](#)

Why people use these networks: To publish, discover, and comment on content online.

Websites and blogs are very easy to create with the help of these tools. No prior experience needed to get started!

Bookmarking and content curation networks

Examples: [Pinterest](#), [Flipboard](#)

Why people use these networks: To discover, save, share, and discuss new and trending content and media.

Sites like Pinterest allow us to create repositories of helpful links available to anyone such as study links, teaching suggestions, favorite rainy day activities, etc.

Important Note: Each type above serves a definite purpose. When considering what your church may use, be sure you understand its purpose and how you plan to use it. And then commit to doing so. *Not using a system you claim to use speaks volumes to those who actually use it and desire to hear from you.*

2. About Administrators/Moderators

The administrators and moderators of your social media systems have a very important role to protect the identity of your organization as well as support timely and appropriate communication between users.

Administrators have the highest set of permissions. They can do absolutely anything with settings, change images, allow and block users, delete inappropriate posts, etc. They represent the mind of the organization and ensure everything is well online.

Moderator permissions are a bit limited. They may be able to allow and block users, delete inappropriate posts, and will also represent the organization in an official capacity.

3. Appropriate Use

While it may feel like a waste of time, every organization must have a written set of rules and expectations for online communications. Those rules must be posted and available in each system so that when rules are not followed, appropriate action can be taken quickly. Public pages especially, where anyone (including those not directly affiliated with the church) can post need guidelines.

They can be as simple as “Don’t be mean,” and a statement about a moderator’s authority to delete a post if they deem it inappropriate. But be careful not to moderate the page into uselessness. Your moderators must be able to balance the conversation with the church’s integrity.

Our General Assembly office has a draft policy that can help your efforts if you need assistance. Contact Brian Smith at the General Assembly office for that resource.

4. Frequently Asked Questions

Why should I have a website or use social media?

A website is the first glance of your church for many people. Instead of going to a phone book, people go to the internet. They are looking for things “near them.” The face you present online is a tell-tale sign (to some) of what they will experience Sunday morning.

A website allows you to share specifics that will set you apart from other churches in your area such as your beliefs/denomination affiliation, accessibility accommodations, and opportunities.

Is Facebook/Twitter/Instagram really important for my church?

These tools are primary tools of communication for many people. Letters, phone calls, and even email have been replaced by texting, and instant messaging from within those programs. If you desire to get your word out to a growing part of the population, you need to utilize these tools.

How do I record and share our messages online?

You may have a system within your website tool specifically for loading and sharing messages. If you do not, here are two tried and true options.

You Tube – Record it, clean it up, add a welcome at the beginning and a closing at the end, and post it. Adding information about the scripture reference or a quick synopsis will help other’s searching.

Facebook live – on your public PAGE. If you only have a closed group, only those in the group will be able to see it and it will be an individual hosting – not the organization.

What’s the difference between a Facebook Page vs. a Facebook Group?

A Facebook page is meant to be an online “face” (no pun intended) of an organization. It is created by the organization with a group of administrators with permission to post and make changes to the page.

- At least one administrator log-in should be maintained by permanent staff so it is not “lost” when folks move on to other things.
- Utilize the events feature and campaigns to advertise opportunities to your local community.
- ONLY Administrators and Moderator are able to post in the main feed.

A Facebook group is a communication portal for all participants. Choice of privacy level should be carefully considered based on the users and subject matter.

- Privacy settings include
 - Public – anyone can see members and the posts
 - Closed – the group can be found via a search, members are public, but posts can only be seen by members. May be important if you are sharing pictures with children or discussing other “internal” business not necessarily for all eyes.
 - Secret – the group cannot be found without a direct link or invitation, and all membership and post information is private. May be important for certain kinds of conversations where privacy is super important
- All participants may post and share information for all members to see.
- All groups require member approval by either an admin or group member depending on the group's settings.
- People not logged into Facebook may see the names and descriptions of public and closed groups. They may also see posts in public groups. This detail is important for those who have members without Facebook accounts. A public group would still allow them to access information.