Social Media Use & Boundaries in Your Congregation

Social media has transformed the way we both receive and create information. While news and information used to move much more slowly, now it's accessible 24/7, and we are able to more actively participate in it through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Vine, and Snapchat.

As social media tools and platforms continue to evolve and expand, it will further integrate into our personal and professional lives. Therefore, it is important to think about healthy guidelines when using social media in our personal and professional lives, and develop a protocol for staff to follow.

Understand public versus private

Social media, by its very definition, is a public forum. There is no true privacy in social media, even with the use of security settings – words, photos, and videos can be duplicated and spread very easily & quickly. Take care in what you post.

Consider these questions

What does social media mean to my faith community?

Gather information and people resources to better understand how you can use social media effectively in your context – both on your own personal social media and on your faith community's social media.

What is the purpose of social media in your context & how will I use it responsibly?

Think about your goals and how social media can be used as a tool for your ministry. Will you use it for pastoral care, evangelism, communication, to build relationships? Maybe you don't want to use it for your ministry at all. How will you set up boundaries?

How will others representing my faith community, such as staff, use social media?

Consider developing a social media protocol for staff to follow.

Think before you post

Some questions to consider before posting on a social media platform:

- Will I stand by my posting?
- In 30 minutes, how will I feel about my post?
- Can I stand before my congregation and/or peers and defend my post?
- How might my posting be perceived?
- Have I considered issues of confidentiality?

Tend to issues of security

Check your privacy and security settings (but keep in mind that everything you post has the possibility to be made public). In addition, remember to update anti-malware software and to watch for spam on your wall.

A reminder about healthy boundaries

Understand the need to carefully tend to issues of healthy boundaries in "friending" and interacting with congregational members or peers…past, present, and future. Leave taking should not create a hindrance as the congregation/individuals respond to God's mission in a new time.

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