

The United Church of Canada
West District, Newfoundland and Labrador Conference

Communications Committee

Social Media Guidelines

What is 'Social Media'?

'Social Media' is a form of communication to potentially any and all persons globally who use the Internet. It is increasingly popular and becoming a means by which people can keep in touch, share ideas and opinions, as well as discuss and/or visually demonstrate any topic under the sun. This includes social media websites (ex. FaceBook, Twitter), blogs, video sites (ex. YouTube), forums, Wiki-sites, file-sharing (ex. Limewire), etc., etc. There is a great deal of good that can be created by this connectivity, but as with all things, there are dangers associated with it.

What's to worry about?

There have been a large number of recent articles detailing the hazards of social media. These include such things as suicide due to 'cyber-bullying', breakdown in marriages (one newspaper article from the UK cited 1 in 5 marriage breakdowns were due infidelity via FaceBook- link below). Then there is the issue of identity theft, stalking, and so on not to mention that some employers now do background checks on individuals using social media. While this may be considered an ethical concern in relation to privacy, compromising photos, videos, and social statements once posted on the Internet may potentially be considered public information and may be accessed by anyone.

What can I do to protect myself?

There are a number of universal tips that you can utilize to maximize your experience and reduce the risk to yourself and others.

1. **Be informed and interesting... and listen**
2. **Always be respectful and be polite when disagreeing**
3. **Be responsive** (noting kills a conversation more than not talking)
4. **Know the line between professional and personal**
5. **If you are representing the church in any capacity online, be authorized and official**
6. **Attribute all content you use** (if it isn't your idea, give credit)
7. **Use discretion at all times** (confidentiality concerns)
8. **Transparency, honesty, and integrity are paramount** (don't misrepresent yourself)
9. **Report violations of inappropriate comments or content**
10. **Practice ethical behaviors**

11. **Admit and correct your mistakes** (it's hard to remove content, but correcting it goes a long way)
12. **Keep opinion separate from fact** (because you think it's right, doesn't mean it is)

The Final Word?

Much of this may be considered common sense, but when a family member finds out about a family death via FaceBook, concerns can be warranted. We need to be informed about protecting our private information and ourselves. What is published on the Internet is widely accessible and search engines like Google have a long memory!

Other Questions and/or Concerns?

Contact the Chair of Communications, or personnel from the UCC Conference offices.

Please note that these guidelines were adapted from:

Association of Fundraising Professionals

<http://www.afpnet.org/files/ContentDocuments/SocialMediaGuidelines.pdf>

Shift Communications

<http://www.shiftcomm.com/downloads/socialmediaguidelines.pdf>

Daimler AG

http://www.daimler.com/Projects/c2c/channel/documents/1895107_Social_Media_Guidelines_eng_Final.pdf

Bibliography

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/facebook/6857918/Facebook-fuelling-divorce-research-claims.html>

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