

Social Media Policy for Staff – Trinity Lutheran Church

“When you talk, do not say harmful things, but say what people need-- words that will help others become stronger. Then what you say will do good to those who listen to you.”

Ephesians 4:29 (NCV)

Trinity Lutheran Church generally views creating or contributing to social media (websites, blogs, message boards, social networks, etc.) by staff in a positive light. In fact, these tools can be a blessing for ministry when used properly. They can increase communication about life and ministry, as well as build or maintain relational connections. We further recognize the desire by many on staff to be a part of the exchange of ideas and social connection that these resources bring not only for those that are a part of Trinity but also with the broader church and community. In general, social media tools are neutral by nature: they can be used in both a positive and a negative way.

As a part of the ministry team at Trinity you will be seen as a representative of Trinity and its ministry. While you may view your blog or Facebook page as an extension of your personal life, others will associate you and the views you express with the ministry of Trinity. Because of this we require all staff and ministry leaders, both paid and non-paid, to follow the social media policies listed below.

Please also keep in mind that technology changes rapidly, and as a result these policies will need to be changed from time to time. In all things we ask staff to use good judgment when using social media, even if specific actions are not covered by these policies and the principles they express.

- **Notify your team leader if you are presently or plan in the future to write a blog or host a personal website.** They can help you think through the implications of that for Trinity and for your ministry here.
- **If you are ever concerned about any interaction you have with others online, especially those connected to Trinity, let your team leader know immediately.** If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in social media please speak with your team or ministry leader. If you have concerns about the conduct of other staff or ministry leaders on social media, please speak first with them, and then, if necessary with your team or ministry leader.
- **Include a disclaimer.** You should include on your blog, website, or social media site the following disclaimer (or some reasonable version thereof): *The posts and other content on this site are my own personal opinions. They are not approved by Trinity Lutheran Church nor do they necessarily reflect the values or teachings of Trinity.* (If you have questions or concerns about this please talk to your ministry leader.)
- **Maintain confidentiality.** Ask permission from others at Trinity before including things they have said or the results of meetings, especially those that are meant to be for

private or internal use only. Do not post videos, pictures, or other content that is a part of Trinity's ministry without permission. This includes content that WILL BE public but has not yet been released.

- **When you post your personal opinions or repost the opinions of others, remember that those on church staff are to be "above reproach" (1 Timothy 3:2).** In general, social or political opinions may be shared, but only in a manner that exhibits the utmost respect for all opinions, including those that are not your own. Language should reflect the fact that you represent Trinity, and, more importantly, Jesus!
- **Refer press inquiries.** Should something you post generate interest from the press regarding anything that has a connection to Trinity's ministry, refer all those inquiries to your Team Leader or the Senior Pastor.
- **Use good judgment.** Remember that what you write is both permanent and public. You should always assume that what you write will be read by those you serve in ministry, by your boss, by your family, by other church members and leaders, and by the attorney of the person that doesn't like you. Always ask yourself if you are comfortable with ANYONE reading what you have written. Be careful that what you write will not hinder the work God has called you to do... now and in the future.
- **Never post when you are angry, upset, tired, or compromised in any way.** Think twice before you "hit send" and then, think a third time. Remember, once it is out there it cannot reliably be taken back.

Finally, please remember that any action you take, even if that action is during your personal time and in the "virtual world", can be grounds for a temporary or permanent change in your ministry responsibilities at Trinity.