

EPC Presbytery of the Pacific

Attached is a sample social media policy that was shared by David W. Tyra. David is a Ruling Elder in the Centerpoint Community Church in Roseville CA, a practicing attorney in the Sacramento area, and currently a member of the Permanent Judicial Committee of the EPC General Assembly.

Members of the EPC Presbytery of the Pacific,

Please note:

This is a sample or template policy only. Churches should be sure to revise or amend to meet their own needs as appropriate.

Also, because I do not practice in jurisdictions other than California, I may be unaware of laws in other jurisdictions impacting the adoption of such a policy by a church. Churches should be sure to consult with individuals familiar with local laws that may have an impact on this subject.

The above having been said, I am happy to consult with churches regarding the adoption of this or a similar policy should any church feel they need.

David W. Tyra

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

[Insert Church Name] SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

1. Introduction/ Purpose.

- 1.1. [Insert Church Name] is adopting this policy to discuss and establish guidelines for employee use of social media while using [Church]'s computer or internet resources and/or acting on behalf of [Church]. Social media encompasses a wide variety of online communication and networking activities.
- 1.2. [Church]'s internet and network resources, including any employee use of social media on the [Church's] internet and network resources, are intended for ministry and business use only. Therefore, during business hours, employee use of social media is to be for ministry or business purposes only. Any employee use of social media sites on the [Church]'s computers, networks or internet systems is subject to review by [Church], with no right or expectation of privacy in any use.
- 1.3. [Church] understands also that employees may wish to use social media in a personal context outside of work hours and while not using [Church] computer, internet or network resources. [Church] respects the rights of all of its employees to personal expression and views any social networking done outside of work and not utilizing the [Church] technology, network or equipment as a personal project. However, employees must be cognizant that any employee's personal social networking can involve and impact the [Church] and the employees' professional role and image. As such, no employee's personal use of social media shall contain content that is inconsistent with the mission, ministries, and values of [Church].

2. Definition of social media.

While the definition of social media varies widely, and is subject to constant change, social media can be defined as internet based media that engages with a collective community and allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Social media encompasses a wide variety of online communication and networking activities, including but not limited to, social networks, blogging applications, professional networks, microblogs, social bookmarking sites, media-sharing sites, social reviewing sites, and user generated content sites. This policy applies to all types of social media, but presents only a limited, non-exhaustive, list of the types of social media currently available. New types of social media become available all the time, and this policy applies to any newly developed or available social media. Employees should contact the [Designee of Church] or his or her designee if there is a question regarding social media sites or content.

3. [Church] Resources.

- 3.1. [Church]'s network, associated Internet capabilities, computer system, and any and all [Church]-issued or owned mobile computing devices are the property of the [Church]. Since the use of the Internet, network, computer system, any and all computer devices and any and all [Church]-owned mobile computing devices is intended solely for use in connection with [Church]'s ministries and business, [Church] employees have no right or expectations of privacy in the [Church]'s network, email system, computer system, or any [Church]-owned equipment. No employee should have any expectation of privacy in the use of [Church] technology, including, but not limited to, Internet, network, computer system, any and all computing devices and Church Owned mobile computing devices. [Church] reserves the right to monitor any Internet activity on the [Church] network or computer systems, including any use of social media, at any time without prior notice for any legal purpose including, but not limited to, record retention and distribution and/or investigation of improper, illegal or prohibited activity. [Church] reserves the right to recall and/or restrict access to [Church]'s technology without prior notice. (This is a generic privacy section. This section should be edited to contain any special technology or network held by the Church.)
- 3.2. The use of the [Church]'s technology or computer resources to interact with social media in any way constitutes the employees' specific consent to have the content of that social media monitored and/or recorded. No employee shall have any expectation of privacy concerning social media content created by using the [Church] technology, including but not limited to the [Church] computers, networks, internet resources, and mobile devices. (If employees will be using social media as part of their job, this should be addressed in this section. If employees will be using social media during the work day, it is very important to provide guidelines for that use that are tailored to the Church and particular ministry in which the employee is involved.)
- 3.3. All passwords created for use of [Church] technology, including, but not limited to computers, network systems, Church-owned devices, Church-owned social media sites, Church email, and/or documents are the sole property of [Church]. The creation or use of a password by an employee on [Church] technology does not create a reasonable expectation of privacy.

4. Guidelines for The Use of Social Media With [Church] Technology And/or Network or Computer Systems.

- 4.1. **Other [Church] Policies.** This policy is written with the understanding that it will be read in conjunction with other [Church] policies, including, without limitation, the [Church]'s Internet Policy. Any activity that would be prohibited by the Internet Policy is, therefore, also prohibited by this policy. (This is generic language. Any other policy maintained by the Church that is relevant should be incorporated here.)
- 4.2. **Prohibited Content:** Employees are prohibited from using the [Church]'s resources or technology to post, comment, review, download or disseminate in any way on social media the following content:
- Material that is contrary to the Christian faith or to [Church]'s mission, ministry, or values.
 - Material that is violent, abusive, vulgar, discriminatory, libelous, defamatory, obscene, sexually explicit, harassing, intimidating or pornographic.
 - Material that is related to the conduct of an employee's personal business for economic gain (e.g., placing ads, advertisement of items for sale, etc.). (The economic gain portion is included to prevent this provision from accidentally barring the exchange of union information.)
 - Material that infringes on copyright, license trademark, patent or other intellectual property rights of another.
 - Material that violates any civil or criminal law.
 - Material that violates other [Church] policies and practices.

4.3. Professional Responsibility and Privacy

- 4.3.1. Certain [Church] employees may be subject to different ethical obligations, privileges and duties of confidentiality. Any employee use of social media must be in full compliance with all applicable duties and ethical obligations. Questions regarding the use of social media should be directed to the Head of Staff or his or her designee.

4.4. Permission, Attribution and Identification.

- 4.4.1. A [Church] employee shall not speak on behalf of [Church] or give the impression he or she is speaking on behalf of the [Church] without explicit permission from [Church.]
- 4.4.2. Employees should not post and/or share the social media comment, post, picture, video or other content of any other [Church] employee related to [Church] business without explicit permission from the original poster.
- 4.4.3. Personal material published on personal sites should not be attributed to the [Church] and should not appear to be endorsed by or originate from the [Church], without prior permission from the Head of Staff or his or her designee.

5. Review and Amendments

- 5.1. This policy will be reviewed as appropriate by the [Church] Head of Staff.
- 5.2. This policy may be amended only by the Head of Staff acting with [Church]'s Session.

6. Ownership of Social Media Sites.

- 6.1 Church maintains various social media pages or sites. All postings and/or information posted to [Name of page or site] belong to [Church]. This includes all posts from followers, fans, or contributors to these pages or sites.