



# Social Media Policy

## Vestry Approval November 18, 2014

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The use of social media (referring to activities that integrate technology, telecommunications, and social interaction through the use of words, images, video, and/or audio tools) has become an intrinsic part of how communities worldwide keep in touch with each other and reach out to others. As a community of faith, we believe it is a tool we can use to further the mission of the Church – "...to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ" (The Book of Common Prayer, p. 855) – through the four guiding principles of St. Martin's Episcopal Church:

1. **Worship** – Through social media, we can offer opportunities for those who cannot physically be present with us to join us in spirit at our worship services.
2. **Stewardship** – Through social media, we can encourage joyful giving by celebrating the impact our tithes and offerings have on our church, our larger community, and the world.
3. **Community** – Through social media, we can connect with other members of St. Martin's on a daily basis, sharing in each other's lives outside of regular services.
4. **Outreach** – Through social media, we can spread information about who we are and what we are doing, so that members of the larger community feel welcome to attend our events and services.

The following best practices and guidelines seek to provide practical advice to accomplish our goals and to protect our community of users and St. Martin's itself.

The purpose of the Social Media Policy is to define expectations of behavior (rules of "netiquette") by laying down guidelines that promote healthy boundaries and apply the concept of "safe church" to social media interactions, leading to a successful integration of these tools into the life and ministry of St. Martin's. The policy will apply to all online or mobile-based tools for sharing content and discussing information, whether controlled by St. Martin's (such as the website) or hosted on other platforms (such as Facebook), on which members of the St. Martin's community engage in activities relating to the church. Because this is a constantly evolving area, the Social Media Policy applies to all social media platforms, whether they are specifically mentioned in this policy or not, and includes (but is not limited to) social websites, blogs, message boards, wikis, podcasts, image- and video-sharing sites, live webcasting, email, and real-time web communities.

### **General Guidelines for all users – Parishioners and Staff**

Official St. Martin's sites through various social media platforms have been established (website/Facebook) and can be accessed for up-to-date information. Although staff members bear responsibility for initiating certain communications officially representing the church, parishioners may and are encouraged to post, comment, and interact, too. Parishioners, as well as staff members, are vital to the well-being of our community of believers, and all should see themselves as communicators of the church. That being the case, the following general guidelines apply to everyone, parishioner or staff member, who makes use of the church's social media sites:

1. **Be Selective** – There are a variety of digital media available. Use the right medium for your message – a blog or social network might not be the right place for messages intended only for a small group, and email or some other means might be best. Make every effort to utilize the "right tool" for the job at hand.
2. **Be Responsible** – Social media are individual interactions, not official parish communications. Members of St. Martin's community are personally responsible for their posts. Posting of official

statements of parish policy, announcements, news, etc. may only be made by the Rector or his/her designees.

3. **Be Smart** – A blog or community post is visible to the entire world. Remember that what you write will be public, and potentially around for a long time. Be respectful to our community. All users are strongly reminded that any information and photos placed on Facebook and other social media sites will be viewable to all – including the public.
4. **Identify Yourself** – Authenticity and transparency are driving forces behind social media. Use real identities to the greatest extent possible. No anonymous posts and comments are permitted.
5. **Guard the Privacy of Others** – Do not publish the personal information of others in the community, with or without their permission.
6. **Do Not Tell Secrets** – Respect the confidentiality of all parishioners, all matters that are shared with you in confidence, or that are meant to be kept confidential by the nature or your work, ministry, or volunteer mission.
7. **Be Respectful** – St. Martin’s is a thoughtful and prayerful community that encourages free expression and values civil debate. If you disagree with others, do so with civility. Respect your audience, express your views with appropriate language, and be respectful of the church and its teachings. “Respect the dignity of every human being.” (The Book of Common Prayer, p. 305)
8. **No Personal Information** – Besides your name, please do not include personal information. Social media sites are public “spaces,” and any information may be linked to your name and published on the Internet and/or used for nefarious purposes by third parties.
9. **No Selling** – Please do not market your wares here, no matter how useful or wonderful.

As a general summary – *Be nice!* Our social media sites should be safe places to engage in conversation. Remember that these outlets are connected to the church, and think of them as places for fellowship. Show tolerance for divergent opinions – no personal attacks or insults will be permitted. We understand that there can be many varied opinions on any issue, and we welcome all views and ideas.

By posting on our sites, you agree to the guidelines outlined here. Although our sites are monitored, we acknowledge that occasionally something inappropriate may find its way through. In most instances, we will send you a notice if we feel that there has been a violation of the guidelines. We reserve the right to remove all inappropriate posts immediately. Subsequent violations can result in being blocked from our site(s) without warning.

### **Specific Policies**

#### **1. Use of Official Name and Logo**

Any use of St. Martin’s Episcopal Church’s name or logo for branding or titling pages, blogs, or other similar elements of social media must be approved by the Administrative Assistant prior to use. Permission to use the name or logo of the church may be revoked at any time at the sole discretion of St. Martin’s. This policy, however, should fully preserve free expression – it should not, for example, be interpreted to limit the ability of members of the St. Martin’s community from using the church’s name to identify themselves in profiles, discuss matters relating to the church, or other similar uses.

#### **2. Interpretation**

In areas where this policy does not provide a direct answer for how members of the St. Martin’s community should answer or respond to social media questions, members should use their best judgment and take the most thoughtful and prudent action possible, bearing in mind St. Martin’s need to preserve accountability for the use of its name in all social media.

3. Duties of Administrators

Only those persons authorized by the Rector or his/her designees are permitted to create social media sites on behalf of St. Martin's Episcopal Church. Responsibilities include security settings, procuring content, appropriate and frequent refreshing of information, and overall management of St. Martin's online presence. Multiple site administrators function as a social media team, mutually discussing and implementing policy, issues, ideas, direction, and growth of the church's digital communication plan, in consultation with the Social Media Committee. As program administrators deem appropriate and necessary, and with the consent of the Administrative Assistant and the Social Media Committee, moderators may be appointed to assist with daily/frequently required administration. Moderators are under the supervision of the respective administrator(s) and responsible for the same high standards of communication and professionalism. Content presented on behalf of the church should be posted using administrator logins – not personal profiles. Parishioners may comment, post, or enhance with additional information or new announcements; statements on behalf of the church, however, should originate from admin logins rather than personal profiles. Administrators should not use the admin logins for the purpose of personal commenting or interaction.

4. Duties of Moderators

Moderators of official St. Martin's social media are responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy statement. All comment and blog response areas must be moderated. Moderators responsible for respective areas must review comments daily. Comments which do not comply with this policy (i.e. inappropriate or objectionable content, statements failing to meet St. Martin's standards for civility, those misrepresenting the position of the church, those that include profanity, defamatory language, or speech that is otherwise inappropriate or off-topic, etc.) will be removed. Anonymous comments shall not be permitted. All moderators should reserve the right to ban repeat offenders. Moderators who permit users to post materials such as documents or photographs should make clear to users that the site will not archive those materials and should delete them after a published period of time (typically 12 months, except in cases where a project needs to be preserved for a longer period of time).

5. Individual Judgment

Even when engaging in social media for personal use, the comments of a member of our community maybe viewed as a reflection on St. Martin's. Users should use their best judgment when engaging in social media activities and should be on guard against actions and discussions that could harm the interests of our community.

6. Transparency

Users' social media communications are made in their personal capacity and not on behalf of St. Martin's. Statements or comments made by members of St. Martin's community should not be taken as necessarily expressing the formal position of St. Martin's Episcopal Church unless the speaker is specifically authorized to do so by the Rector or his/her designee(s).

7. Copyright Laws

Users must comply fully with copyright law when posting and uploading copyrighted materials. Any posting of materials to St. Martin's official social media must be limited to materials in which the copyright is owned by the party seeking to post the information or in which he/she has legally obtained permission to use the material. Images and other materials from St. Martin's shall not be copied and uploaded to other forums without the prior written consent of the Administrative Assistant. This policy should not be construed to limit discussion of matters using St. Martin's name, nor should it be interpreted to limit users' ability to link to St. Martin's sites or "share" a post.

8. Privacy

All users of social media within St. Martin's community should take care to safeguard the privacy interests of other community members. In particular, personally identifiable information (that is, information that can identify a particular person, including phone number, address or email address) should never be disclosed.

9. Minors

Social media maintained by St. Martin's Episcopal Church are not intended for the use of children under the age of 13 without adult supervision. Users of such a site may not post images of minors. Under no circumstances are pictures of any member of St. Martin's community to be tagged with either first or last name; no tagging or picture identification of any kind. Administrators and others authorized by the Rector or his/her designees may post images of minors with the permission of parents or guardians; likewise, those with permission from the Rector or his/her designees may tag individuals in pictures under special circumstances. Although pictures will be scanned for their appropriateness by site administrators or moderators, and will remain untagged/unidentified, some parents or guardians may prefer that pictures of their child(ren) not appear on church sponsored social media. If so, they should notify the Administrative Assistant in writing.

10. If You See It, Report It

Any use of social media that does not comply with this policy should be brought to the attention of the Administrative Assistant and/or the Social Media Committee. They will gladly review it and determine if an official response is needed.

11. Questions and Updates

This policy was drafted by the Social Media Committee at St. Martin's Episcopal Church and approved by the Vestry and the Rector on November 18, 2014. Questions concerning the policy should be directed to the Social Media Committee. This policy may be updated and modified at any time. Users will be apprised of changes in this policy by our posting this policy on St. Martin's website.

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