

Appendix M: Social Media Guidelines

As pastors and church professionals we know that relationships with each other, congregation members, and colleagues in the presbytery and beyond matter. We know that healthy relationships come from good communication and care. In years past the avenues for communication were fewer and the modes much slower than today. With the advent of social media, the modes of communication have greatly changed. Social media affords us great opportunities for positive communication, yet inherent in it are the possibility of great pitfalls as well. To encourage the use of social media among pastors and church professionals to build positive relationships in their churches and larger church community, the Presbytery of East Tennessee adopts this social media policy.

- Social media is to be used responsibly and with care.
 - It is not a venue to vent frustrations about church happenings or church members.
 - It should never replace face to face communication.
 - Postings of a personal nature are to be positive and encouraging, not such things that would call one's character into question.

- Social media – with all its options – has the potential to enslave us. Be mindful of the time spent on social media so that it does not consume one's time such that authentic pastoral care and leadership suffer.

- Social media and the end of a pastoral relationship
 - Great care should be given in whether to remain social media “friends” with former parishioners. If the choice is to remain friends, then:
 - Do not engage in conversations regarding the happenings of the congregation;
 - Do not offer pastoral care in ways that seek to reinforce your pastoral relationship with the congregation;
 - Honor the relationship developing between the interim and/or the newly -installed pastor.
 - Should you choose to no longer remain media “friends” with former parishioners communicate that choice lovingly and pastorally prior to leaving.

The Committee on Ministry will adjudicate complaints about abuses of the letter and spirit of this social media policy.