



Interpretive Bulletin on Social Media

“Yet,
in love,

the one eternal God seeks relationship.

So God creates the universe

and with it the possibility of being and relating.” (A *Song of Faith*, 2006)

At the heart of our triune God is relationship. Our practices of deep spirituality are about nurturing our relationship with God—Creator, Christ, and Spirit. Our work of daring justice and bold discipleship is often about fostering relationships with others. The 1988 report *Membership, Ministry and Human Sexuality* notes that, “God’s intention for all human relationships is that they be faithful, just, loving, responsible, health-giving, healing, and sustaining of community and self.” For ministry personnel, the engagement with social media is about covenantal relationship and includes accountability as religious office holders.

Ministry personnel have administrative responsibility to

f) support and encourage the use of appropriate digital technology to effectively manage administrative duties¹

Social media is an effective tool for timely, engaging, and inspiring communication, but it also involves risks. The purpose of this interpretive bulletin is to demonstrate how the Ethical Standards and Standards of Practice for Ministry Personnel can guide effective engagement in social media.

The Standards of Practice for Ministry Personnel identifies the appropriate use of digital technology, including social media, as an important part of ministers’ administrative and leadership responsibilities. Most ministry personnel use social media in both their personal and professional lives. For ministry personnel serving in a recognized ministry, their employer may also have staff policies on using social media.

Since situations on social media are often nuanced, you use your best judgement guided by the Ethical Standards of Practice. Based on those standards, before you post or repost, consider how your words, images, or videos

- promote effective leadership (1.f, 6b);
- encourage faith, community outreach, or social justice (2.f);
- help you stay current with issues in theology, ministerial practice, community or world events (3b);
- connect your community of faith with ecumenical and multi-faith activities (4c, d, e); and

¹ [The Standards of Practice for Ministry Personnel](#) - Administration

- may affect those with whom you have a duty of pastoral care (7a, b).

Also consider giving yourself permission to disengage from a conversation or to disconnect from a social media platform to “maintain your own physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being” (8a).

For ministry personnel, the decision to engage in social media involves consideration of the ethical practice of ministry.² Three sections of the [Ethical Standards for Ministry Personnel](#) highlight the importance for ministry personnel to use social media in appropriate and careful ways.

Ministry personnel come to their work adequately prepared to fulfill the positions to which they are called or appointed.

In these positions, they are called to

- c) establish, maintain, and communicate appropriate personal and professional boundaries

Ministry personnel are aware of and attentive to the possible impact of their words and actions in caring for the emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of persons who seek their help. In all relationships, ministry personnel are called to

- d) use the power and influence of their office appropriately

Ministry personnel are called to exercise good judgment and maintain a level of self-awareness that enables them to

- f) be aware of the visibility of their position and consider how their conduct may be experienced and perceived by others.

If these ethical standards are breached, concerns may be shared with the Response Committee of the Office of Vocation and the allegations of misconduct, ineffectiveness, or incapacity of the ministry personnel may lead to a review or investigation. The process of oversight, review and discipline of ministry personnel is outlined in the [Office of Vocation: Structure and Responsibilities](#) resource.

If you have questions or concerns, you can contact or speak with your vocational minister.

Whatever you post can influence the health of your pastoral relationship and ministry.

² The [Pastoral Relations: Ministry Personnel](#) resource also offers guidance on how to disengage from social media as part of the transition of ending a pastoral relationship.