



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

This document represents the intention of Central United Church (Central) with regard to the use of social media. For the purposes of this policy, the term “social media” includes websites, interactive online accounts such as, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Google, LinkedIn or Pinterest; photo-sharing accounts such as but not limited to, Flickr, Instagram, Picassa, video-sharing accounts such as YouTube, Livestream or Vimeo, online blogs, podcasts, and discussion forums.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND BELIEF

Social media provides many opportunities for connecting people to each other and to the wider world in a positive manner. It also creates a profile of Central that can be shared with interested persons throughout the world, building networks for engagement, education, and spiritual growth. It allows members and adherents to participate in church activities when travel, illness, work commitments, and other factors prevent them from attending in person. Additionally, social media promotes the core values of Central and the mission of Central, as well as the programs and services it provides.

The same social norms which govern respectful interaction and discourse between and among human beings guides our use of social media at Central. At all times, boundaries and ministry practices that ensure a safe, respectful, and spiritually nurturing environment must be maintained. In all things, we seek to replicate the loving, respectful ministry of Jesus.

Social media sites are monitored by a Moderator who has been given full authority to monitor such sites by the Board.

POLICY

This portion of the document refers to all paid accountable staff, including contract staff. It also defines volunteers as people who carry out tasks as part of the ministry of Central, but who are not paid for such work.



CONDUCT OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

All staff and volunteers posting to any social media related to Central must adhere to the following principles of conduct.

- a) Act professionally, responsibly, and respectfully in all forms of communication.
- b) Refrain from posting any confidential information, personnel matters, workplace conflicts or personal grievances.
- c) Post only what is public information, recognizing that everything posted remains forever in the public domain and is never completely confidential.
- d) Keep messages affirming rather than combative, controversial, or derogatory.
- e) Consult with the duly appointed Moderator if there is any question, uncertainty, or concern about a particular posting.
- f) Honour the privacy rights of current and former staff members and volunteers by seeking their permission before writing about or displaying internal church information that could be considered a breach of their privacy and confidentiality (e.g., marital status, family information, criminal convictions).
- g) Provide usernames and passwords for any church social media account to the Office Administrator or the site Administrator who will keep a record on file of this information. This information must be kept in a secure place. (e.g., a password-protected computer).
- h) Recognize that any social media contacts, including “followers” or “friends” that are acquired through accounts, including, but not limited to, e-mail addresses, blogs, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, or other social media networks that have been created on behalf of the church, are the property of Central.
- i) Recognize that usernames and passwords must not be given to any unauthorized person.
- j) Guard the security of passwords to mitigate hacking and identity theft.
- k) Contact the Moderator if a social media account has been hacked. The Moderator will, in turn, contact Central’s social media provider to receive instruction for a plan of action to deal with the situation.
- l) Acknowledge that posts to the social media accounts of Central are subject to the oversight of the Board.
- m) Recognize that posts that are deemed unsafe, disrespectful, and not spiritually nourishing can be removed at the direction of the Moderator or the Board.
- n) Safeguard the privacy of children and youth by not publishing contact information on any social networking profile when ministering to children and youth.
- o) Obtain written permission for social media contact with groups of children (e.g., Sunday School) and youth (e.g., youth group) from parents or guardians or designated legal authority.
- p) Respect copyrighted material.
- q) Engage in rigorous fact-checking before posting information to any social media platform.



- r) Respond to comments on our social media sites with respect, transparency, timeliness, and a commitment to providing factual information from credible sources.
- s) Exercise caution when using “emojis” or clicking “Like” in response to a post, recognizing that such information is harvested by data-gathering firms for purposes not necessarily approved by the church. Recognize that confusion about intent can also result from such usage.

REMOVAL OF POSTS

Recognizing that it is not possible for Central to control all comments made on our social media sites, Central nonetheless reserves the right to remove a post if:

- a) it is disrespectful in tone and content.
- b) uses derogatory language or profanity.
- c) it provokes discrimination or hatred toward the church, individuals or specific groups of people.
- d) posts are libellous or otherwise unlawful, abusive, immoral or contain obscene comments.
- e) criminal charges are warranted under existing legislation, and
- f) the stated values of corporate followers or “friends” are not consistent with the values of Central (e.g., pornography sites).

TRANSPARENCY AND DISCLOSURE

- a) If the information that is beneficial to another party (e.g., promoting an event or product for another religious organization or secular business) is shared publicly on a Central social media platform, caution must be exercised in order to protect Central from misrepresentation.
- b) Accepting money to endorse a commercial product online must be authorized by the Board.

LEGAL LIABILITY OF STAFF AND APPOINTED CHURCH LEADERS

- a) Central must comply with all federal and provincial laws that apply to the operation of a religious organization. Anyone using social media on behalf of the church is responsible for understanding and observing these laws.
- b) Each person on staff or in a duly appointed leadership role at Central is personally responsible and may be held legally liable for the content he or she publishes online. Breach of privacy and confidentiality, use of copyrighted materials without permission, unfounded or derogatory statements or misrepresentation of the church in any way may result in legal action.



PRIVACY AND PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE PERSONS

Our Privacy and Confidentiality Policy shall govern our communication with vulnerable persons in our Community of Faith (COF).

- a) Names of adults, their addresses, e-mail addresses or telephone numbers must not be posted without prior written consent.
- b) Only assigned e-mail addresses can be used in the conduct of church business.
- c) The paid, accountable staff of Central and volunteers in leadership roles must not communicate with individual children or youth through a personal social media site without permission from parents or guardians or designated legal authority.
- d) Group communication is allowed with the prior written consent of parents or guardians or designated legal authority. Such group communication must be copied to the parents or guardians or the designated legal authority.
- e) Central social networking groups for youth must be open to parents or guardians or designated legal authority.
- f) Adult leaders of youth who leave the employ of Central must relinquish their status as Administrator of Central media sites. The church will inform parents of this change in status. Continuing contact with youth on social media sites after an individual has left the employ of Central is discouraged and remains the sole responsibility of the individual. Central accepts no liability or responsibility under the law for such continued contact.
- g) Any personal information collected must be used only for the purpose for which it is intended and must not be shared without the prior written consent of the persons involved.
- h) Information from Central sent via email must include specific instructions on how to unsubscribe from receiving further emails.
- i) Any material on any site, whether affiliated with Central or not, which raises a suspicion that a child or youth is in danger of abuse, neglect or exploitation must be reported to the proper legal authorities. If such material is posted on a church-affiliated site, that material shall be documented and reported to the proper legal authorities.

RECORDING AND LIVE STREAMING OF SERVICES AND OTHER EVENTS

- a) Signs must be posted on entranceways to the church that state: **Please note that portions of this worship service or program are being recorded;** or alternatively, posted on screens.
- b) Recordings must be preceded by an announcement, written or digital, that displays the name and logo of the church, the title of the service or program in progress and the date.



- c) Children and youth participating in a Sunday worship service must not be identified without the prior written consent of the parents or guardians or designated legal authority.
- d) Permission to record or live stream adults must comply with the United Church of Canada's (UCC) *Copyright Guide for Congregations*.
- e) Performing groups must also comply with the UCC's *Copyright Guide for Congregations*. Copyrighted music may not be recorded. If a song or piece of music is not copyrighted by the author, but the author gives us permission, either verbally or in written form, to use what they have written, it can be recorded.
- f) Outside groups live streaming or videotaping a presentation must acknowledge the church in the opening credits to the production. A sample slide will be provided. The wording will include: **"Presented by (organization) at Central United Church (with the display of our logo), Calgary, Alberta. The views and opinions expressed in this event do not necessarily express those of Central United Church."**

ADMINISTRATION

This policy is overseen and administered by the Board.

This policy document is a living document and can be changed at any time, with the consent of the Board.

The Board must inform the congregation about the policies that have been established by the Board and shall seek ratification of each policy change at the next Annual Congregational Meeting.

Final Draft approved by the Board, September 1st, 2018