Social media is inescapable. It has become an integrated part of most people's lives. Most of us have some sort of online presence - even if it's just an email account. Social media can be a great tool for engaging others and developing and deepening existing relationships. Social media can also show the human face of an organisation or church.

However, the improper use of social media can have consequences. The intention of this document is to help keep you and your volunteers safe while using social media.

With this in mind, these are some recommended guidelines to help churches engage with others through social media.

Please note that while we can provide guidelines, it is recommended that each parish develop their own Privacy and Social Media Policy to fit their unique context and needs.

General Guidelines

1. Remember who you are representing
2. Treat everything as public
3. Keep records of your online conversations
4. Be gracious and loving in your conversations
5. Remember that social media is there to help facilitate relationships, not replace them
6. Keep personal information private, don't post phone numbers, full names or addresses of minors.
7. Make sure you have parental permission to post photos of children.

Online Behaviour

1. Regardless of how private your profile is, only post what is appropriate. Do not post anything that could be seen as offensive, abusive, pornographic, disrespectful or compromising.
2. Consider the language you are using when you post, the groups or causes you align yourself with and the kinds of posts you "like".
3. Take sensitive conversations offline. If a discussion or conversation becomes too heated, offer to talk face to face. It can be a great tool to help to develop relationships.
4. When in doubt, remain silent. If you're unsure of what to say, it can be best to say nothing or to seek counsel first. Be wise in what you say and remember Colossians 4:6 "Let every word you speak be drenched with grace and tempered with truth and clarity. For then you will be prepared to give a respectful answer to anyone who asks about your faith."

Helpful Links

Here are some helpful links that may assist in helping you to craft a Social Media Policy for your parish.
- PYM: Guidelines for Youth Leaders
- Church Marketing Sucks: How to Create a Church Social Media Policy
- MinistryTech: 12 Guidelines for Church Social Media
- LifeChurch: Social Media Training