

Addendum

Social Media Guidelines

Introduction

Social media is defined as technologies used for communication, both synchronous and asynchronous, which include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. The use of social media regarding religion is on the rise. One-in-five Americans (20%) share their religious faith online, and nearly half (46%) of American's view someone's online sharing of their faith, according to a Pew Research survey¹. This survey also found that adults aged 18-29 are about two times as likely to see people share faith online when compared to older-aged Americans (50+). The use of social media allows for outreach without boundaries to people of varied demographics to discuss, communicate, and build community in the name of Jesus Christ.

Digital media has provided an avenue for ministry to take place in a virtual world with an unlimited outreach. Because of the increasing use of digital technologies as a preferred method of communication, it is essential that guidelines are used to provide boundaries for healthy and safe digital communication within social media and other forms of online communication².

I. The goals of our social media presence, as adapted from the Mountain Sky Conference UMC goals³ are:

- A. To increase awareness of the First United Methodist Church (FUMC) in Sheridan, WY and its work on mission and connectional ministry.
- B. To increase awareness of The United Methodist Church and its work on global mission and ministry.
- C. To keep FUMC members, staff, and volunteers updated on news and events in the church community.
- D. To share information and resources from FUMC team meetings, as well as from the Mountain Sky Conference.
- E. To be an extension of our church's website and newsletters.
- F. To develop relationships and bring others to know Jesus Christ.

II. Follow Wesley's general rules:

- A. Do no harm
- B. Do good
- C. Attend to the ordinance of God

¹ PEW Research Center, Nov 6, 2014. "Religion and Electronic Media: One-in-Five Americans Share their Faith Online."

² <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/social-media-guidelines-samples-links>

³ <https://www.mtnskyumc.org/communicationguidelines>

III. As FUMC staff and adult volunteers work with social media, the following guidelines should be followed⁴:

- A. Share positive, connectional news about FUMC to our followers.
- B. Share timely events and seasonal resources to our followers.
- C. Try to include a link, photo or video when posting.
- D. Be interactive when a follower asks a question about posting.
- E. Follow organizations and people who are relevant to FUMC and its missional work.
- F. Ask the communications team chair if you have a question on types of posts or are unsure what to post.
- G. Be willing to educate themselves on privacy settings to support these guidelines
- H. Set strict privacy settings on personal social networking profiles to prevent youth and children from viewing objectionable content. If personal profiles are not properly set to avoid this, it is advised that adult volunteers and church leaders regularly check their personal pages for material that might have been posted by others and deemed inappropriate; if this cannot be done, it is advised to completely restrict children/youth access to their pages.
- I. Remember that your voice on social media represents the church.
- J. Use other methods of communication, such as phone conversations or face-to-face meetings, if responding to emotionally charged communications or pastoral emergencies.
- K. Share any content received that raises concerns or questions with the Pastor and law enforcement where appropriate. Communication that is pastorally sensitive, emotionally charged, or that requires extensive conversation should not be communicated via email. Use of email, however, may be appropriate in legally sensitive matters.
- L. Avoid one-on-one video or chatroom interaction with minors.
- M. Avoid using humor or sarcasm, if possible, as it can easily be misinterpreted.
- N. Avoid submitting a "friend" request or ask to follow children or youth.
- O. Avoid relationships with children and youth via social networking sites.
- P. Avoid adding or inviting children or youth to any groups, events, pages, etc., that are not directly related to children or youth ministry activities.
- Q. Never check-in minors to events or establishments if using location tagging. Be aware and sensitive to tagging others' locations in photos.
- R. Refrain from posting photos or video that can identify **minors** on any online site without the written consent from a parent or legal guardian, which can be revoked by parent or legal guardian at any time (see Appendix A). This consent, or revocation thereof, can be given via email or text in situations when it is not convenient to complete a photo/video release form.

⁴ <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/social-media-guidelines-samples-links>

- S. Only post pictures that are depicting youth in an appropriate and positive nature. No pictures of youth should be posted that will make them feel vulnerable, self-conscious, or ridiculed.
- T. Refrain from posting photos or video that can identify **adults** on any online site without their written consent, which can be revoked by adult at any time (see Appendix B). This consent, or revocation thereof, can be given via email or text in situations when it is not convenient to complete a photo/video release form.

IV. As administrators of official FUMC social media groups, administrators should:

- A. Ensure that a minimum of two administrators, who are not related and are either church leaders or adult volunteers, administrate each of the church's social media sites, group, or page.
- B. Frequently monitor sites, allowing for quick responses in cases of urgent or crisis related posts.
- C. Review the access to the youth closed or secret group account and remove leaders who are no longer actively participating in the youth program.
- D. Be aware of copyright rules and fair use laws before posting any content that is not original.

V. If any inappropriate material is posted to a church-related social media site, group or page, it must be deleted and addressed.

VI. Sheridan FUMC welcomes comments on the posts of our social media site. To encourage respectful dialogue, please be aware of the following simple guidelines⁵:

- A. Stay on topic.
- B. Be respectful.
- C. Be truthful.
- D. No spam.

VII. We retain the discretion to determine which comments violate our comment policy.

VIII. We also reserve the right to remove those violations and to block aggressive users. Dialogue and disagreement are welcome but off topic remarks, and/or abusive language against individuals are not welcome⁶.

⁵ <https://www.mtnskyumc.org/communicationguidelines>

⁶ <https://www.mtnskyumc.org/communicationguidelines>

Appendix A

Minor Photo & Video Release

I, the undersigned, hereby irrevocably agree to give the First United Methodist of Sheridan, WY the right to use any photographs/film/video/audio or other type of recordings taken of my minor children in any and all its publications, including website entries and social media sites. Such grant includes use in advertising in connection with the foregoing, and use in any and all media, whether now existing or hereafter devised, worldwide, in perpetuity. The images may be used with or without my son’s or daughter’s name as Sheridan First United Methodist Church sees fit. I understand and acknowledge that I have no right to inspect any usages made of these images.

I, the undersigned, do hereby further agree and acknowledge that I have not, and will not claim to have, either under this agreement or otherwise, any right, copyright, title, or interest of any kind or nature whatsoever, in any media created by Sheridan First United Methodist Church in which my son or daughter appears. I release Sheridan First United Methodist Church, its successors, assignees or anyone acting under its authority in this matter, from any liability concerning these photographs/film/video/audio or other type of recordings, including that which may occur or be produced in the creation, publication, or broadcast of the images in any and all media, whether now existing or hereafter devised. I further agree not to bring any action or claim against Sheridan First United Methodist Church, or its successors, licensees and assignees, or to allow others to bring such an action or claim now or in the future. I release Sheridan First United Methodist Church, its successors, assignees or anyone acting under its authority in this matter, from any liability concerning the alterations, enhancements or changes of any kind to these photographs/film/video/audios.

PARENT/GUARDIAN:

_____/_____/_____
Parent/Guardian (Please Print) Parent/Guardian Signature Date

MINOR: _____/_____
Minor Name (Please Print) Date

At any time, after having signed this form, I as Parent/Guardian, may revoke this agreement by signing and dating below. This will take effect on the date indicated.

_____/_____/_____
Parent/Guardian (Please Print) Parent/Guardian Signature Date

Appendix B

Adult Photo & Video Release

I, the undersigned, hereby irrevocably agree to give the First United Methodist of Sheridan, WY the right to use any photographs/film/video/audio or other type of recordings taken of me in any and all its publications, including website entries and social media sites. Such grant includes use in advertising in connection with the foregoing, and use in any and all media, whether now existing or hereafter devised, worldwide, in perpetuity. The images may be used with or without my name as Sheridan First United Methodist Church sees fit. I understand and acknowledge that I have no right to inspect any usages made of these images.

I, the undersigned, do hereby further agree and acknowledge that I have not, and will not claim to have, either under this agreement or otherwise, any right, copyright, title, or interest of any kind or nature whatsoever, in any media created by Sheridan First United Methodist Church in which I appear. I release Sheridan First United Methodist Church, its successors, assignees or anyone acting under its authority in this matter, from any liability concerning these photographs/film/video/audio or other type of recordings, including that which may occur or be produced in the creation, publication, or broadcast of the images in any and all media, whether now existing or hereafter devised. I further agree not to bring any action or claim against Sheridan First United Methodist Church, or its successors, licensees and assignees, or to allow others to bring such an action or claim now or in the future. I release Sheridan First United Methodist Church, its successors, assignees or anyone acting under its authority in this matter, from any liability concerning the alterations, enhancements or changes of any kind to these photographs/film/video/audios.

Name (Please Print)

Signature

_____/_____/_____
Date

At any time, after having signed this form, I may revoke this agreement by signing and dating below. This will take effect on the date indicated.

Name (Please Print)

Signature

_____/_____/_____
Date