

St. James United Church Version 1.1

Our Social Media Policy

“Built with respect and understanding of the congregation”





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1.1 Policy Updates

2021-05-03 Updated Section 1.9 to reflect the Online Service changes Post Covid-19

1.2 Purpose of Guidelines

Facebook. Twitter. Blogging. Broadcast online. Social media is more than a communications tool: it is an amazing, accessible, and exciting platform for building and maintaining communities, getting information out, reaching out to new audiences, and connecting with the congregation. Although these may be new tools and media for you, the same "rules of engagement" apply regarding relationships, boundaries, and ministry practices that ensure a safe and spiritually nourishing environment.

This policy is meant to help provide parameters in order to guide church staff, committee members, employees, volunteers, church leaders, and the congregation when social media tools are used on behalf of **St. James United Church** or when **St. James United Church** becomes part of a social media dialogue. The content of this document is an extension of the laws set out by the government and in no way is meant to override the laws of the land. **St. James United Church** assumes no liability in connection to this policy. It expects all mentioned to comply with the regional laws and respect members and the community when interacting via Social Media.

1.3 Scope of Policy

Within this document, the language and narrative apply to all aspects of social media, including but not limited to Facebook, YouTube, Live Stream, blog, a community post, and email.

1.4 Social Media Policy Committee

It is the responsibility of the St. James United Session to regulate, arbitrate, and interpret the content of this policy. Upon adopting this policy, the session will create an external committee, to be known as the **Social Media Policy Committee**, solely responsible for this task. The committee should be made up of a majority of session members but may include members of the congregation and/or board of management.

1.5 Social Media Tips

1.5.1 Be Selective

There are a variety of digital platforms available. Use the right medium for the message. For example, don't use a Facebook post to communicate sensitive or private information. (i.e., e.g., a notice of death in advance of an obituary).

1.5.2 Be Smart

A blog, community post, or social media post is often visible to the entire public and can/will be shared by others in various ways that cannot be controlled at any level. Be extremely wise with all content posted to the web. Your personal and Church reputations are on the line.

1.5.3 Use Grace

Always use Biblical wisdom when utilizing social media. For example, if someone has offended you, consider speaking with them privately on the matter. Do not post offensive responses. Use statements that do not portray a bias, good or bad. This becomes important when referring to a wedding, funeral, or any other event when speaking as a church member.

1.5.4 Ask us!

In areas where this policy does not directly answer how members of our community should answer social media questions, please check with **St. James' Session** before speaking as a representative of the Church.

1.5.4.1 *Lines between a person's personal and Church media*

Lines between a person's personal and Church identity are often blurred in social media, so readers don't necessarily distinguish between "official" comments you might make in social media for work and comments you post on your personal pages and sites. Given your association with the Church, you may be seen to be speaking for the Church.

1.5.4.2 *Everything posted on the Internet is public*

Everything posted on the Internet is public. Even if you remove a document, posting, or article, traces of it remain on the Web.

1.5.4.3 *Your are accountable*

You are accountable for everything you say and do.

1.6 Use of Social Media

- All of St. James United Church's policies, including harassment, confidentiality, and software use, apply in the use of social media.
- The misuse of St. James United Church's social media resources, in ways that violate the law or other ministry policies, will result in immediate remedial action by our Social Media Policy Regulator Committee, which may include the loss of social media posting access.

1.7 Guidelines

- Congregational members who are interested in representing St. James United Church must commit to adhering to the social media policy.
- Social media postings should never disclose sensitive or confidential information. This includes but is not limited to personal and/or medical information.
- Posting photos of individuals or identifying those individuals on St. James United Church's social media pages without their written consent prior to posting is forbidden. It is the responsibility of the individual or group posting to gain permission. (i.e. e.g., If the Dinner Theatre wanted to post pictures, it would be their responsibility to gain permission from the group).
- Copyright and Fair Use Laws must always be respected. Feel free to point or link to another individual's site.
- If any posted material concerning St. James United Church seems to be illegal (e.g. child or elder abuse, etc.), team members should immediately contact church leadership and the appropriate authorities.
- When communicating, especially with youth via social media, members must adhere to St. James United Church's policy. Additionally, employees and volunteers serving in the children and youth ministries must always keep their professional image in mind.
- Online conduct, comments, behavior, etc., affect this image. St. James United Church discourages staff members and volunteers from accepting invitations to "friend" youth group members within personal networking sites. Social contact outside the St. James

United Church's youth page may create serious risks for the ministry workers and negatively alter the dynamic between a youth leader and a student.

- Team members and employees are solely responsible for the content they publish online, including content from their own social media pages. It must be absolutely clear that all views/posts do not reflect **St. James United Church** but are reflective of themselves.
- As a team member or employee of St. James United Church, remember that your online presence and posts can have the potential to affect the ministry of St. James United Church. For this reason, you must conduct your online interactions following the United Church volunteer policies, St. James United Church's Statement of Faith, and the United Church Code of Conduct. If you have any questions in this area, inquire with the leadership team Social Media Policy Committee for clarity.
- When in doubt, be positive! Whether someone has posted something mean, rude or distasteful, always take the high road.
- In the event of a crisis, contact church leadership prior to responding to any posting or comments relating to the crisis.

1.8 Public Relations Guidelines

- Church communications may not be used for partisan political messages or paid advertising.
- St. James United Church may designate one or two main employees to facilitate all external communication channels on behalf of the Church. Only authorized employees people such as the Minister, Communications Staff, and Departmental Directors Session or Board members, may coordinate communications with members of the media on behalf of St. James United Church.
- Any external communication from the St. James United Church office regarding serious/unexpected incidents must be approved by church leadership (Social Media Policy Regulator) and follow St. James United Church's guidelines.
- Always use St. James United Church's official name and logo. These branding items must be approved prior to official use.

1.9 Broadcasting Guidelines

All broadcast or streaming of worship services will be done within the St James United Church Facebook group and posted to YouTube when available.

1.9.1 Church Services

- (1) A church service is a place of worship where the minister and the congregation create a bond. Streaming the service needs to be nonintrusive for those attending, and for those viewing the service online, it needs to include enough so that they feel like they are there. The streaming experience needs to consider that many of the shut-ins look forward to the service, and it may be their only connection to the community. Streaming needs to consider the privacy of the congregation and the importance of our remote worshipper.
- (2) That all said, we need to adhere to the following
 - a. Post a notice that the service is being broadcast in the church entrance and in the bulletin
 - b. The camera should be positioned only to show the minister, choir, and front stage area.

1.9.2 Baptisms

Although baptisms are a general part of the Sunday service, it will be up to the guardian or parents to approve the broadcast. The parent's wishes will take precedence in regard to the position of the camera and the inclusion of the child.

1.9.3 Weddings

It will not be the practice of St. James United to broadcast weddings.

1.9.4 Funerals

If requested by the family, a funeral may be broadcast, but only by special arrangements in advance of the service.



1.10 Where Do These Guidelines Apply?

This policy applies to all online and mobile platforms for sharing content and information, whether hosted by **St. James United Church** or hosted by others. "Social media" refers to social networking services, short message services, message boards, wikis, podcasts, image/video sharing sites, and other methods for sharing real-time information among users. This policy applies to all new social media platforms.