

Summary & Purpose

Holy Trinity Episcopal Church (HTEC) is increasingly exploring how online community through social media can empower the HTEC Family to be witnesses of the good news of Jesus Christ as church members and Christians. We believe it is in the best interest of HTEC and our church family to be aware of and participate in the sphere of online community, interaction, and idea exchange to find opportunities to share the life change that comes through Jesus Christ. The following best practices and guidelines aim to provide you helpful, practical advice-and also to protect both you and Holy Trinity Episcopal Church itself, as the church seeks to embrace social media.

Guidelines

As an employee or Vestry member of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, you are seen by our members and outside parties as a representative of the church. Therefore, as in all areas of daily life, a church staff member's personal website or blog is a reflection on the church, whether or not the church is specifically discussed or referenced. If you choose to identify yourself as a Holy Trinity Episcopal Church employee or Vestry member or to discuss matters related to the church on your website or blog, please bear in mind that, although you may view your site as a personal project, many readers will assume you are speaking on behalf of the church. Therefore, we ask that you observe the follow guidelines to preserve the Christian witness and effectiveness of both yourself and the church.

1. **Live the Foremost and Second Commandment** - Mark 12:28-31

- Represent God, not yourself.
- Invest in others rather than 'broadcast yourself'.
- Make sure your communications are above reproach.

2. **Be Yourself and Be Transparent** – Philippians 2:3

Even when you are speaking or writing as an individual, people may perceive you to be speaking or writing on behalf of HTEC. If you blog or discuss topics or activities related to the church, be upfront and explain that you work at HTEC; however, include the following disclaimer on your blog or posts: ***"The opinions and views expressed on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent those of my employer, Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, Bowie, MD"***

3. **Keep Your Cool** - Proverbs 29:11

One of the aims of social media is to create dialogue, and people won't always agree on an issue. When confronted with a difference of opinion, stay cool. Express your points in a clear, loving, and logical way. Don't pick fights and choose your battles wisely. Correct mistakes when needed and ***if you encounter disparaging remarks about the church, please let our Social Media Team know ASAP***. They will gladly review it and determine if an official response is needed.

4. **Don't Be a Social Schizo**

Multiple personalities don't work well in social media. If you confuse, you lose. If you are ministry expert one day (posting best practices in your area of ministry), a personal blogger the next, and a church marketer after that (promoting church events, media, or news), people will ultimately stop connecting.

5. **Stay Timely** – Proverbs 15:23

Part of the appeal in social media is that the conversation occurs almost in real time. So, if you are going to participate in an active way, make sure you are willing to take the time to refresh content, respond to questions and update information regularly, and correct information when appropriate. As a reminder, any time and effort spent on your own personal blog or other social media should be done on your personal time and should not interfere with your job duties or work commitments.

6. ***Uphold HTEC's Values & Its Brand*** - 1 Corinthians 14:12

- Always demonstrate loyalty to the church and to each other.
- Be sensitive to linking to content. Redirecting to another site may imply an endorsement of its content.
- Avoid creating competing web properties with the church's official web presence. For example, ***posting official HTEC media or communications on your site without publishing it on HTEC's official web presence.***
- Report any misuse of HTEC's trademark logo.

Only those authorized by Holy Trinity Episcopal may use the church's logos, so be sure not to include them in your personal blogs or postings, even if it is used as a link to one of HTEC's official web properties.

7. **Protect Confidential Information and Relationships** - Acts 20:28

Online conversations and postings are not private. Know that what you post online may be around for a long time and potential shared with others. Therefore,

- Avoid identifying and discussing others, including church members, visitors, or staff - *especially* any pastoral details such as hospitalizations, deaths, health concerns, or counseling engagements.
- Obtain permission before posting pictures of others or before posting copyrighted material.
- You must take proper care not to purposefully or inadvertently disclose or distribute any information or intellectual property that is confidential or proprietary to Holy Trinity Episcopal Church. Be sure that what you are sharing has been published in some other official form of communication.

Press Inquiries: Postings may generate media coverage. If a member of the media contacts you about a posting on your personal blog, social network, or on an official church blog, please contact HTEC's office.

These policies are adopted from: <http://www.equipthem.info/social-media-policy-for-church-staff/>

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