



# Social Media and Photo Practices

First Lutheran Church leverages guidelines offered by ELCA. Guidelines have been reviewed approved by our council.

Social media is a tool for ministry. Engaging members on social media extends the community that gathers for worship into the rest of the week and integrates "church life" into daily life. Social media is a way to share announcements, photos, videos and prayers in a relevant and timely way. It is a way to tell the story of our church and a way for our congregation to be regularly reminded of Christ's love for them.

Some basic functions of social media include the ability to:

- Listen to what members and others are saying, about our congregation, the ELCA as a denomination, "being Lutheran" and about what is going on in their lives. You can post text, images, sound and video in easily accessible ways, so following online helpful community insights.
- Post useful, inspiring text, images, audio and video on a regular basis.
- Comment on the posts of others.
- Share, point others to information and resources that may be of help to them.

First Lutheran Church of Battle Lake brings all out social media initiatives together in one spot on our website: announcements from Twitter, calendar from Google, posts from a blog, LinkedIn and videos from YouTube.

Social media guidelines are important for our organization. When we use social media like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter etc., it is important to have safeguards and understanding about use. Such sites are usually not private, and even if privacy settings are used, sometimes information becomes public. Because of the widespread use and the ease of copying and forwarding electronic materials, it is very important to make sure we are not exposing the congregation to liability or bad publicity due to improper or unwise social media content.

It is important that all staff and members remember that they are holding out a public witness in their personal life, so they should be careful and prudent on their personal social networking communications. As appropriate, particularly when discussing ministry related issues, we should let it be known that private personal posts are their own opinions and not that of the congregation.

Guidelines we strive to go by:

- Don't post images of children without the consent of a parent or guardian.
- Use a photo release form to allow people to opt out of having their picture used.
- Don't caption photos with full names of children (even if there is consent).
- Don't post member email addresses or phone numbers.
- Make sure that staff and volunteer leaders are using the congregation's computers appropriately.
- As members, I understand I represent the congregation's ministry and my postings will be appropriate to the mission.
- We keep all confidential and sensitive information private and will not post such information.
- If I have a question, uncertainty or concern about the proper nature of a posting, I will consult church leadership before posting.
- All staff and members will moderate postings and report when it's felt that postings are inappropriate. We will remove immediately upon request when valid.

## Guidelines for using photos of congregation members

Photos of congregation members brings our website to life, providing a window into the vitality and friendliness of the community that gathers on Sunday morning and through the week. A common question is how to respect the privacy rights and concerns of members and protect the safety of children pictured.

In most general terms, photos of adults engaged in congregational activities and used to report on congregational events can be used without seeking permission. In these cases, it is always prudent to let the people being photographed know that these shots may be used by the congregation.

- With photos of children (the relevant age is under 18 years old), or with photos that are used outside the immediate activity or news story (e.g. used instead as part of general website design elements), permission should be sought.
- We try not to post anything that would be embarrassing, objectionable or hurtful to anyone in the photo. If we know someone is shy about such things, we ask them before posting the photo.
- We don't put names as captions with photos, except for pastors and other staff or other adult members who have given written consent.
- We will gladly provide credit for a photo if desired by the photographer, and we will honor any copyright wishes or restrictions.
- We will remove any photo immediately upon request.
- Do not publish (whether by photos or stories) private information without permission.
- Do not print any photo without the person's consent
- Do not use any photo of any person for any commercial use (such as advertisements or even for illustrations months after the news event) without permission.

First Lutheran Church, Battle Lake has leveraged ELCA Guidelines here:

- [Social media and congregations: Platforms and content](#)
- [Guidelines for using photos of congregation members](#)