

Plainfield United Methodist Church

Social Media Use Policy

Social networking is quickly becoming integrated into everyday life. Electronic tools aid us in communication, relationships, and information sharing in ways that were never before conceived as possible. The use of social media and networking often also causes lines to blur between work, personal life, and church relationships. In general, what you do in your personal time is a personal decision. However, activities during or outside of church work that are shared via social media may have adverse effects on your church relationships, leadership ability, and witness of Jesus Christ, and need to be considered carefully. By simply identifying yourself as a volunteer or staff of Plainfield UMC (PUMC), either directly or as a part of your user profile, you are creating perceptions about what it means to be a part of PUMC.

As such, this policy is offered to provide official guidelines for social media use for all volunteers and staff of PUMC. It is the expectation that all who participate in social media use will understand and follow these guidelines.

As a child of God, a member of the church universal, and as a volunteer or staff of PUMC, I covenant and agree to use Facebook and other similar social media in ways that bring honor to God and show respect for self and for all others who might view my posts.

In particular, I covenant to (initial each bulleted item in the space after you have read and agreed):

- Recognize and respect that my behaviors and actions online are also a reflection of how other Christians and people associated with PUMC may be portrayed. _____
- Recognize that all my posted words, images, and links are reflections on me individually, as a disciple of Jesus Christ, and as a volunteer or staff of PUMC. Recognizing this, I will refrain from posting anything regarding inappropriate conduct, such as drug or alcohol use or any item that contains profanity, degrading humor of any kind, ethnic or racial slurs, personal insults, obscenity, vulgarity, nudity, or pornography. _____
- Obey the laws governing defamation, discrimination, harassment, and copyright and fair use of proprietary or confidential information. _____
- Work within my assigned ministry to establish appropriate boundaries[†] especially as related to building relationships online with children, youth, parents, and other constituents of PUMC. _____
- Be very careful not to be a hindrance or cause harm^{††} to the staff, pastors, members, or ministries of PUMC. _____
- Speak respectfully in my online posts and communications of and to all persons; and I will refrain from negative or disrespectful posts. _____

Plainfield United Methodist Church

Social Media Use Policy

- Respect confidentiality and personal privacy. In the event I receive confidential or private information regarding a person or family involved in PUMC, I will not disseminate that information without receiving direct express consent and permission to do so. _____
- Respect differences, appreciate diversity of opinions, and speak and conduct myself in a professional and ethical manner at all times. _____
- Remember that everything I post online is discoverable and can be seen and shared for a very long time. _____
- Seek advice from my ministry team leader before posting anything if I have even a small doubt about the reasonableness of the post. _____
- Regularly monitor the amount of time I spend on social media, the ways in which I am utilizing social media, and its effects on my ministry and service in Christ's name. _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

†“appropriate boundaries:” Through depersonalized text and images on a screen, the complexities of life can too easily lose appropriate and healthy context for sharing with others. Personal challenges and emotional life situations are best ministered to through encouraging face-to-face relationships and conversations in places of community that foster confidentiality, safety, and respect.

Be mindful of the time of day, weekends/time off, message frequency, and appropriate method for your communication with church members, staff, and especially youth. State to others your preferred method of digital communication and boundaries and ask others what is their preferred method and boundaries. For further guidance refer to the “3 Simple Rules for Social Media.”

††“hindrance” and “harm:” Words and images on the Internet are frequently taken out of context and twisted or otherwise misused, consciously and unconsciously, to denigrate individuals or groups. Use careful and judicious judgment in sharing any past or present experiences or behavior; children and youth are especially susceptible to misunderstand and be confused by your experiences, even more so if they are shared through humor, sarcasm, innuendo, or irony.

Please refrain from all negative commentary and critique of PUMC programs and people via social media, email, and texting. Direct, in-person communication with the person or people in charge of a ministry that is the subject of your critique is the ideal mode of providing feedback. For further guidance refer to PUMC policy regarding conflict transformation. Engage with fellow church members and leaders in ways that allow us to build up one another, rather than demoralize, criticize, or demean.