



## **PRESBYTERY OF EAST IOWA**

### **Social Media Policy**

### **(Draft for Operational Use)**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Hebrews 13:8 affirms that Jesus Christ remains a constant in a world of change. As the church in the world, we are challenged by change to live out our missional calling in transformative ways using dynamic, effective modes of communication. The apostle Paul embraced the technologies of his day to spread the gospel: he travelled on foot, by animal, and by ship; he employed scribes to pen his words and readers to speak them to people he had never met; he even learned to write himself in “what great letters” to build up the Body of Christ.

As Reformed Christians, we share the following essential tenants:

- The majesty, holiness and the sovereignty of God
- The election of God’s people for service as well as salvation
- Covenant life, marked by a disciplined concern for order in the church according to God’s Word
- Faithful stewardship that shuns ostentation and seeks the proper use of God’s gifts in creation
- The recognition of the human tendency to idolatry and tyranny, which calls people to work for the transformation of society by seeking justice and living in accordance with God’s Word

These essential tenants serve as guideposts for using social media to accomplish the goals of the church. Additionally, it is important to understand the framework, legal liabilities, and social responsibilities to communicate using social media. Certain assumptions should remain clear about the use of social media. For example, items

posted anywhere in social media are NOT confidential, all content contained under the name of the Presbytery of East Iowa will follow all applicable laws and regulations, including mandatory reporting, and the Presbytery reserves the right to remove any inappropriate content. For these reasons, the following policy provides clarification of implementation of the use of social media by all entities associated with the Presbytery of East Iowa.

This Social Media Policy applies to all online and mobile platforms for sharing content and information, whether controlled by PEIA or hosted by others, on which members of the PEIA community engage in discussions or activities relating to PEIA. The term “social media” refers to social networking services, blogs, short-message services, message boards, wikis, podcasts, image- and video-sharing sites, and other methods for real-time information sharing among users. Because this is a constantly evolving area, this policy applies to all new social media platforms whether or not they are specifically mentioned in this policy.

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## **CORE VALUES**

In areas where this policy does not provide a direct answer for how our community should answer social-media questions, users should use their best judgment and take the most thoughtful and prudent action possible, bearing in mind PEIA’s need to preserve accountability for the use of its name in all social media and the core values of this policy:

- ***Be selective*** – there are a variety of digital platforms available. Use the right medium for your message – a blog or social network might not be the right place for messages intended only for a small group, and email, text message or other more targeted media might be best.
- ***Be responsible*** – social media are individual interactions, not official church communications. Persons who publish on social media under the Presbytery’s name are personally responsible for the content they publish. Official policy statements must be communicated by or through the Stated Clerk.
- ***Be smart*** – a blog or community post is often visible to the entire world, and can be shared by others in ways that we cannot control. Remember that these kinds of writings are public, and will remain public for a very long time (perhaps permanently). Be respectful to our community.

- ***Be identified*** – authenticity and transparency are driving forces behind social media. Use real identities to the greatest extent possible rather than anonymous posts and comments. For example, a post on a social media site such as Facebook could include the Original Poster’s initials or first name at the end of an entry.
- ***Respect the privacy of others*** – do not publish the personal information of others in the community without their permission or, in the case of children under 13, written permission of their parents.
- ***Be respectful*** – PEIA is a covenant community that encourages free expression and values civil debate. Express disagreement with others with civility. Respect your audience, express your views with appropriate language, and be respectful of the Church and its teachings.
- ***Be trustworthy*** – respect the confidentiality of matters that are shared with you in confidence, or that are meant to be kept confidential by the nature of your work, ministry or volunteer mission.

## **DUTIES OF OWNERS AND MODERATORS**

Moderators of official PEIA social media are responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy. All comment and response areas should be moderated if possible and content should be consistent with the goal of the forum. Leaders responsible for such areas should review and approve comments prior to posting, and should not post any comments that do not meet standards for civility, that misrepresent the position of the Presbytery, or that include profanity, defamatory language or speech that is otherwise inappropriate or off-topic. In an unmoderated forum, leaders should delete any comments or content that does not meet the standards of this policy as expeditiously as possible. Anonymous comments should be avoided except in circumstances where anonymous or pseudonymous speech is essential to the protection of the identities of the vulnerable. All moderation functions should reserve the right to ban repeat offenders.

## **Transparency**

Users’ social media communications are made in their personal capacity and not on behalf of PEIA. Statements made by members of the PEIA community should not be taken as expressing the formal position of PEIA unless the speaker is specifically authorized to do so by the Pastor or the Pastor’s designee.

## **Copyright Laws**

Users must comply fully with copyright law when posting and uploading materials. Any posting of materials to official PEIA social media must be limited to materials in which

the copyright is owned by the party seeking to post the information, or in which the owner has consented to the sharing of the materials. Images and other materials from PEIA shall not be copied and uploaded to other forums without the prior written consent. This policy should not be construed to limit discussion of matters using the PEIA name, and it should not be interpreted to limit users' ability to link to PEIA sites.

### **Privacy**

Users of social media must comply with the PEIA Policy. All users of social media within the community should take care to safeguard the privacy interests of other community members. In particular, personal information (that is, information that can reasonably identify a particular person, including name, phone number, address or email address) should not be disclosed without the prior written consent of the person identified. In cases where a user has consented to the publication of such information, appropriate privacy settings and levels should be utilized.

### **Children**

Any site operated by PEIA that is directed toward youth between the ages of 13 and 18 should be designed to limit access to authorized members, and leaders of such sites should take steps to ensure that unauthorized users will not have access to the site (by use of password protection or similar methods, if available). Registration for such a site must require the use of a legal name and valid contact information, such as an operational email address. Users of such a site may not post images of children under 13 without the prior consent of a parent or legal guardian of any minor depicted.