



The Methodist Church of Southern Africa

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MCSA Social Media Policy

Rationale

This Social Media Policy applies to all online and mobile platforms for sharing content and information, whether controlled by The Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) or hosted by others, on which members of the MCSA community engage in discussions or activities relating to the MCSA or organisations and institutions that fall under the umbrella of the MCSA. The term “social media” refers to social networking services, blogs, short message services 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.

This policy provides parameters in order to guide MCSA staff, ministers, members, volunteers, and church leaders when social media tools are used on behalf of the MCSA or when the MCSA becomes part of a social media dialogue.

General recommendations

Our core values as a church include *Doing No Harm; Doing Good* and *Staying in love with God*.

Always answer the following questions before posting:

- What is the intent of the post? Does it show the love of Christ's without judgment and condemnation? Is it in line with our vision of a Christ healed Africa for the healing of nations
- How helpful is the post? Is my aim to inform or to destroy another person regardless of the facts?
- Could this post “do harm” to the reputation of Christ, the church or another person or organization?
- Could someone interpret the post as harmful, offensive, rude or distasteful?
- Whose interest does the post serve? Yours or that of the church of Christ?
- What ‘good’ will come out of the post?
- Does your post show the love of God and or grow the kingdom of God?

Online conduct, comments, behavior, etc. affects the image and reputation of the church and hence our collective witness. Remember the leaders of the MCSA need to give account of anything posted in the church's name.

Some values to always be mindful of:

Be transparent. Be honest about your identity.

Be accurate. Make sure that you have all the facts before you post. It's better to verify information with a source first than to have to post a correction or retraction later.

Be respectful. As a member of the MCSA, you must remember the Church's commitment to respect for the dignity of others and to the civil and thoughtful discussion of opposing ideas. Your reputation, and the Church's,

A Christ-healed Africa for the Healing of Nations

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is best served when you remain above the fray. You are more likely to achieve your goals or sway others to your beliefs if you are constructive and respectful while discussing a bad experience or disagreeing with a concept or person.

Think before you post. There's no such thing as a "private" social media site. Search engines can turn up posts years after the publication date. Comments can be forwarded or copied. Archival systems save information even if you delete a post. If you feel angry or passionate about a subject, it's wise to delay posting until you are calm and clear-headed.

Maintain confidentiality. Do not post confidential or proprietary information about the MCSA, Ministers or any other leaders or lay persons. Use good ethical judgment. If you discuss a situation involving individuals on a social media site, be sure that they cannot be identified. As a guideline, don't post anything that you would not present at a conference.

Be transparent. If you participate in or maintain a social media site on behalf of the Church, clearly state your role and goals. Discuss with your supervisor when you are empowered to respond directly to users and when you may need approval.

Be aware of liability.

You are legally liable for what you post on your own site and on the sites of others. Employers are increasingly conducting Web searches on job candidates before extending offers. Be sure that what you post today will not come back to haunt you.

Don't use the MCSA logo or make endorsements. Do not use the MCSA logo, or any organizational logo or any other MCSA related marks or images to endorse personal endeavors. Do not use the MCSA's name to promote or endorse any product, cause or political party or candidate.

Protect your identity. While you want to be honest about yourself, don't provide personal information that scam artists or identity thieves could use against you.

Remember the human. The golden rule: *Do unto others as you'd have others do unto you.* Treat people online as you would treat them in real life. *Would you say it to the person's face?* When you communicate through cyberspace -- via email or on discussion groups -- your words are written. And chances are they're stored somewhere where you have no control over them. In other words, there's a good chance they can come back to haunt you. *Be ethical*

Do not disclose confidential information: Social media postings should never disclose sensitive or confidential information, unless written consent to share said information is obtained from the individual it concerns. This includes but is not limited to personal and/or medical information or death announcements.

In the event of a crisis, contact church leadership prior to responding to any posting or comments relating to the crisis.

Any external communication from the **MCSA** regarding serious/unexpected incidents must be approved by church leadership and follow **the MCSA's** guidelines. Such communications will always use the official name and logo of the church. These branding items must be approved prior to official use.

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Remember Social media is a channel that we can use to witness! Do no harm, Do good and stay in love with God and help others to do the same!

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