

Policies and Procedures for the Indiana-Kentucky Conference Website and Social Media

Section One: *A theological underpinning for the use of electronic and social media.*

A definition of Electronic Social Networking (ESN) is the act of using the internet and other mobile technologies to turn digital communication into interactive dialogue through widely accessible and scalable web-based applications. These applications allow for the creation of an exchange of user-generated content.

A common thread running through all definitions of social media is a blending of technology and social interaction for the co-creation and sharing of content through various modes of communication. This social interaction has become one of, if not the most effective modes of, human connectedness. ESN serves our need and feeds our desire to reach out to others.

But, as with anything we, as a church do, we must be willing to ask ourselves why we are doing what we are doing? Specifically, how is electronic social networking related to the church's incarnational role in the world today? How might electronic social networking contribute to the church's role of fulfilling our incarnational duties as the living body of Christ in the world today? How might this new technology allow us to engage the world incarnationally?

It is in our gathering that we become united as one body in Christ so that we might be better able to fulfill the gospel lessons taught to us by Jesus of Nazareth; namely to serve a world who cries out in desperate need of a relationship to the Divine. In recognition of the servant-hood aspects of this role, how might we, as Christians, use electronic social networking to enhance Christ's presence, through us, in the world? How might we use this virtual Meeting House, if you will, to engage and connect each other within the context of how we relate to Creation, one another, and the Divine?

Dwight Zscheile, in his article for ***Word and World***, entitled "*Social Networking and Church Systems*" states, "*The early church process of growth and discovery as it took root in multiple cultures reflected the basic principle of incarnation – the body of Christ's transformation of particular locations of human life. The changing nature of Western culture in the early twenty-first century calls for fresh incarnations of the church and its organization. Historically, the church's organization has always reflected the cultures in which it is set; that is intrinsic to its incarnational character. What, then, does church look like in a network society?*"

As technology evolves, what it means to be incarnational changes. Throughout history, humanity has modified, as cultures have advanced, from needing to be face-to-face with each other in order to reach out, to the written word from the written word to Morse code and the telephone, from the telephone to audio and video technology, and now to digital technology that allows us to reach out to others around the world in an instant through

video and audio and texting technologies. As the boundaries of communication are broken down and people allowed a greater and freer ability to openly communicate with each other, how might the church place itself in the midst of the conversation? In response to these questions and the desire to be incarnational within the context of social networking, we have established a set of policies and procedures that we believe will guide us as we continue to be incarnational in the twenty-first century.

Section Two: *Content Policies for the Indiana-Kentucky Conference Website and Social Media.*

1. All website content and selected social media must comply with the mission and vision of the Indiana-Kentucky Conference and that of the United Church of Christ.
2. All content (*as defined below*) to be posted on the website of the Indiana-Kentucky Conference must be reviewed and approved by the Office Coordinator and the Conference Minister.
3. Content is defined as information that is independent of graphics and design. This includes text documents, instructions, announcements, terminology, and policies and procedures. It also includes photos, data, sounds, links, and forms.
4. Information or content for the Website can be initiated by local UCC congregations, pastors, lay leaders, IKC Covenantal partners, the National Offices and Conferences of the United Church of Christ, Ecumenical partners, U.C.C. related institutions, and approved mission partners of the United Church of Christ and the Disciples of Christ (DOC), and the Chairs and/or Committee members of an IKC approved committees, but all content must be approved by the Office Coordinator and the Conference Minister.
5. All content must be submitted at a reasonable amount of time prior to posting.
6. Requests to post must also include relevant information. Please fact check, spell check, and grammar check all documents prior to submission. The Office Coordinator and the Communication Coordinator reserve the right to edit content as necessary and appropriate.
7. The content will not infringe upon third party intellectual property rights, including copyright or trademark.
8. Acronyms, abbreviations, and church-speak should be avoided. If necessary, such words or phrases should be defined and/or explained.

Section Three: *A Working definition of “Social Networking”*

1. How shall the IKC define electronic “social networking?”
Social networking is defined as the use of specific Website or online service to connect and communicate with other members by posting public messages, photos, videos, etc.
2. What electronic “social networking” do we believe will best fulfill, enhance, or reinforce the current vision of the IKC?
The social networking that fulfills the vision of the IKC helps share news of the IKC and the denomination of the United Church of Christ quickly, while providing

strong privacy and security settings, thus making communications accessible for those who choose to use it.

3. What protocol will we use to decide and expand the use of specific sites technologies?

Regular meeting/review of the IKC Communication and Technology Committee to decide if new, emerging technologies are worth investing in and also to review current technologies to see if they are effective enough to warrant continuing use of those technologies and/or sites currently being used.*

*We are mindful that such a committee does not exist at this time, but a recommendation is being submitted to the Board of Directors for their evaluation and recommendation.

Section Four: *Policy regarding employees, congregations, UCC personnel, and members of the IKC of the United Church of Christ.*

1. Information or content for the Website can be initiated by local UCC congregations, pastors, lay leaders, IKC Covenantal partners, the National Offices and Conferences of the United Church of Christ, Ecumenical partners, U.C.C. related institutions, and approved mission partners of the United Church of Christ and the Disciples of Christ (DOC), and the Chairs and/or Committee members of an IKC approved committee, but all content must be approved by the Office Coordinator and the Conference Minister.
2. All website content regarding employees, congregations, UCC personnel, and members of the IKC, United Church of Christ will follow the criteria set forth in Section Two, "Content Policies for the Indiana-Kentucky Conference Website and Social Media."
3. Any advertisements displayed on the IKC Website will be subject to review by the Office Coordinator and the Conference Minister and must be consistent with the vision of the Indiana-Kentucky Conference and the United Church of Christ. The Office Coordinator and/or the Conference Minister reserve the right to refuse advertising for any reason without explanation and require that the advertising should not:
 - a. Cause harm to the IKC reputation and/or create negative public opinion.
 - b. Appear to be designed in whole, or in part, to affect public support for a particular political party.
 - c. In the reasonable opinion of the Administrative Assistant be inappropriate or objectionable.
 - d. Be likely to subject IKC to prosecution.
 - e. Have overtly sexual "tone" or appear to promote illegal behavior and/or a lifestyle that is not conducive to generally held beliefs of the United Church of Christ.

4. Displaying an advertisement does not mean that the IKC endorses it or recommends the reliability of the product or services offered but we will never knowingly run an advertisement that is untrue or fraudulent.
5. I-K Conference of the United Church of Christ does not encourage the use of cookies or any other mechanisms that collect, sort and analyze details of visitors to the Conference's website beyond user name, name, and password.
6. IKC will not publicize non-IKC sponsored advertising. Neither will the IKC advertise events for local congregations or post local church flyers. However, IKC will provide links for local churches and the United Church of Christ to advertize church events, resources, Continuing Education opportunities, or opportunities to serve.
7. Links to blogs and/or bloggers that are germane to the IK Conferences and the United Church of Christ may be posted and/or linked to our site.

Section Five: *Managing inappropriate and thoughtless comments, confidential information on our Web Site and our social networking sites.*

Part One: What is considered inappropriate for posting on Website or other social media:

- In the use of IKC-sponsored blogs, other forms of instant messaging, Facebook groups, Twitter accounts or other social media tools used by IKC to which others are invited to contribute, inappropriate comments, images, or other content will be removed as soon as it is discovered.
- Inappropriate wording, questionable references, commentary, or graphics will not be permitted.
- Posting of confidential information such as birth dates, social security information, personal identity references, and references to potentially embarrassing or compromising situations dealing with legal or relationship issues, re not to be addressed at all in use of IKC media sites.
- Commentary on transactions between congregations, between congregations and pastors or lay leaders, or discussion of the official business of any particular congregation.
- Contributors must be careful to identify their remarks as factual, opinion, or as inferences which go beyond factual knowledge.
- Profanity, language which condemns, inflames or ridicules, references which include name-calling or which are demeaning or threatening.
- Using the IKC media sites to harass, bully compromise, intimidate, threaten or release personal information without permission of the subject, is strictly forbidden.
- Use of phone numbers, including cell phone numbers, addresses, email addresses, financial information, and other personal or private matters is limited to postings by the owner of the information.

Part Two: How inappropriate material will be managed by the IKC Staff:

- All material to be posted to IKC-managed sites must be approved by the Office Coordinator, the Conference Minister, and/or the Communication Coordinator and consistent with the agreed upon content. *(See Section Four)*
- In the event that inappropriate material is submitted to any media or social network, the responsible staff person will consult with the offender and work with the offender to edit material appropriately for reposting.
- If satisfactory editing cannot be achieved, the material will be refused or removed immediately.
- When materials are removed, the Office Coordinator and/or Communication Coordinator will contact the contributor with an explanation of why the material was deemed inappropriate. Mutually agreeable editing may allow the material to be re-posted. The judgment of the Office Coordinator or Communication Coordinator will be final.
- The arbiter in matters of taste, personal preference and regarding potentially confidential information, will be the Office Coordinator and/or Communication Coordinator.
- In the event of harassment, bullying, intimidation or other hostile and hateful acts or comments, the material will be removed at once and the person(s) responsible for the posting will be informed that their permission to use the sites has been withdrawn.
- A repeat breach of reasonable standards for presenting viewpoints, opinion, information or other content to IKC-managed media sites could result in a ban on any future postings by the same contributor. If necessary legal action will be taken.

Section Six: *Managing Relationships between individuals using social media and other electronic communication*

- Any activity must be done using a person's actual identity and no pseudonyms or aliases.
- Adults shall not initiate social media relationships (e.g. Facebook "friending") with minors.
- Interactions with minors should take place in a publicly-viewed forum, such as a Facebook Group page or publicly-viewable Blog entry.
- Adults should not communicate with minors through text messages or emails, unless they are simultaneously copied to a third party, such as another adult staff-member, trusted peer or parent.
- In order to protect yourself, we recommend that adults retain a copy of any communication with minors.
- Forums for groups such as church camps or other mixed-aged groups that may contain the ability to have photos are to be setup as invitation-only, or similar protocols that require confirmed authorization to join the forum. (An example is a closed Facebook Group)

- No minors should be identified in photos regardless of whether access is public or private.
- All forums must have at least two administrators or leaders with full access to monitor.
- In order to protect yourself, IKC, and Merom, we advise that adults keep a copy of all conversations with minors
- Adults will not tag pictures of minors

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