

BISHOP'S DIRECTIVE FOR CLERGY REGARDING SOCIAL MEDIA

14 March 2026

With this Bishop's Directive, I intend to provide "lawful and honest" instruction to the clergy of the Anglican Diocese of South Carolina regarding online communication. I intend that this will inform and, in some cases, restrict the publication of, and commentary on, social media by the clergy of our diocese. I also intend that clergy will adopt similar policies for staff and volunteers of their congregations. For the purposes of this directive, *social media* refers to any facility for online publication and commentary, including blogs, wikis, social networking sites such as, but not limited to, Facebook, LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube; *content* refers to all material posted on social media, including likes and links to other sites.

The online world is a challenge to navigate well. In a recent letter (18 February 2026), Matthew Soerens, National Coordinator of the Evangelical Immigration Table, wrote, "social media algorithms amplify fights and disagreement—they show me precisely the perspectives that will most outrage me, which keeps me looking at my screen longer (and might also keep me from sleeping well)." Given that, it is worth considering whether social media can, in fact, actually be helpful. Social media creates a false sense of nearness and obligation to problems that may not, in fact, be ours to address.

Social media interactions are, by definition, public and social, and not private. Clergy are held to a higher standard of responsibility in their use of these platforms. Being clergy is an honor, privilege, and responsibility that comes with influence, but also requires discretion and often sacrifice of our rights, obligating us to wise self-censorship and self-control. I expect all social media posts by our clergy to adhere to the highest standard of Christian decorum. All that we do reflects on our Lord, His Church, our Diocese, and our ministry.

To that end, I first offer five (edited) questions that Archbishop Emeritus Foley Beach requires his diocese to ask before posting anything...

1. Is it the truth? Along with that, ask: Why is it *my* responsibility to speak this truth or address this situation?
2. Have I talked *to* the person before I post *about* the person?
3. Will it benefit all concerned?
4. Do my words reflect well on Jesus Christ and on His Church?
5. Will I someday need to apologize and confess what I have written as a sin?

These helpful questions can serve as a beginning point and a filter for online interactions. From there, I offer a few wise policies, developed by my friend and fellow bishop, Alex Farmer, for the clergy of the Gulf Atlantic Diocese. (Again, I have edited these for our situation.)

1. Never post, repost, favorably comment on, or like content that reflects poorly on Christ Jesus and his Church, other clergy, or yourself.
2. Follow the same rules of courtesy and mature behavior you would observe in any face-to-face interaction.
3. Think about consequences and how your message might be perceived before you post.

4. Always protect the innocent and vulnerable.
5. Be careful not to infringe copyrights. Remember that this can be a cause of litigation.
6. Watch your language and tone. Never speak with malice or contempt. Never engage in libel, slander, gossip, or belittling or degrading language or post images (such as memes) that put down or degrade anyone. Never be obscene.
7. Refrain from non-ministry related engagement with social media during working hours.
8. If you would not feel comfortable saying something from the pulpit or seeing something attributable to you in the media, refrain from posting, reposting, favorably commenting on, or liking such content.
9. Never post, repost, favorably comment on, or like content that is derogatory to individuals based on race, color, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, or religion, including, but not limited to, slurs, jokes, stereotypes or other inappropriate remarks.
10. Never post, repost, favorably comment on, or like content that threatens or advocates the use of violence against an individual or group of individuals.
11. Political engagement and social issues represent a difficult area. Many issues have clear Biblical warrant, such as protecting the unborn, racial equality, compassion for the poor, and care for the alien. While it is certainly right to support these issues publicly, great care needs to be taken to speak appropriately without unnecessarily dividing the Body of Christ. Clergy need to avoid partisanship when commenting on such matters. In general, sending emails directly to your congregation asking for prayers or other acts of compassion during social unrest is better than social media postings.
12. Remember, non-Christian seekers as well as unchurched Christians often check out churches and their clergy online before attending to see if they would be welcome.

As my years have passed, I have grown to see social media in an increasingly negative light, but I know that it can be and often is used positively and I don't intend to discourage that. There are Christians and Christian ministries that have developed strategies for effective social media engagement, but if you look carefully, you'll see that they follow St Paul's teaching to "encourage one another and build each other up." (1 Thess 5.11) They avoid engaging with online arguments and debate because they understand that there is little evidence to support the idea that people change their opinions on political or social issues by reading someone's post. Their purpose online is to offer a winsome and engaging depiction of Jesus, his Church, and the life of the disciple. They know, too, that the doors to the church can effectively be closed to seekers by negative online posting by clergy in particular, but all church staff members. Their purpose is to build up the whole Body, not to divide it.

While online disagreements can be acceptable, they should be handled carefully and lovingly, always seeking to understand others before engaging with critique.

This is what I long for in our diocese, and I offer this Directive to that end.

If you have any questions about your engagement with social media, please ask.

Blessings,
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