

## *Holy Trinity Church*

*446 Hamilton Street*

*Southbridge, MA 01550*

*508-765-9559*

*holytrinitysouthbridge@gmail.com*

*www.holytrinitysouthbridge.org*

### **Social Media Policy for Holy Trinity Church**

#### **Summary and Purpose**

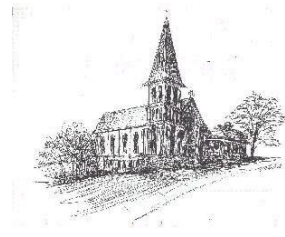
This policy provides a vestry-approved guideline for social media and internet communications involving Holy Trinity Church, Southbridge, Massachusetts.

#### **Guidelines**

- What communications vehicles are subject to these guidelines?
  - The Holy Trinity Church website.
  - Email communications on behalf of Holy Trinity Church or from a computer belonging to Holy Trinity Church.
  - Any social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or any other social networking or communications website, on behalf of Holy Trinity Church.
- Who is subject to these guidelines?
  - Clergy and Wardens of Holy Trinity Church.
  - Employees who receive a wage or salary from Holy Trinity Church.
    - Employees may send emails in the name of the parish as part of their job. Their personal emails are not subject to these guidelines unless they originate from a computer or device owned by Holy Trinity.
  - Volunteers.
    - Administrators.
    - Editors.
- Who gives permission to post to Holy Trinity's website and Facebook?
  - Clergy and Wardens of Holy Trinity Church
- Are there special guidelines for Clergy, those in leadership or employees of Holy Trinity pertaining to their personal blogs and websites?
  - Clergy will be seen by the public as the "face" of Holy Trinity and will be asked to adhere to the special guidelines for social media found in section "Communication Standards" of this policy.
  - The leadership, especially the vestry, will also be seen as key figures representing Holy Trinity, and they and other designated persons will be subject to the special guidelines for social media found in section "Communication Standards" of this policy.
  - Employees are prohibited from discussing parish concerns and policies on their blogs and websites.
  - It is expected that the confidentiality of the parish, parishioners and of people seeking any assistance from Holy Trinity will be protected.
- Change of policy:
  - Holy Trinity Church may change the content of this policy without notice, and it is recommended that this and other church policies be reviewed periodically. Current copies of this policy may be obtained at the church office or online.

#### **Communications Standards**

- Let the two great Commandments be your guide – Mark 12:28-31
  - Represent God and not yourself in all your communications on behalf of Holy Trinity Church.
  - Ensure your communications are above reproach and will not be misinterpreted.



## Holy Trinity Church

446 Hamilton Street

Southbridge, MA 01550

508-765-9559

[holytrinitysouthbridge@gmail.com](mailto:holytrinitysouthbridge@gmail.com)

[www.holytrinitysouthbridge.org](http://www.holytrinitysouthbridge.org)

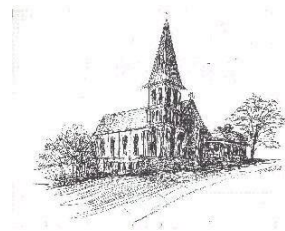
- Be Yourself and Be Transparent – Philippians 2:3
  - If you are subject to these policies, you will be judged as speaking on behalf of Holy Trinity Church – even if you are speaking or writing as an individual. If you blog or discuss topics or activities related to the church, be up front and explain that you work or volunteer at Holy Trinity; however, you are required to include the following disclaimer on your blog or posts: *"The opinions and views expressed on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent those of Holy Trinity Church, Southbridge, MA."*
- Keep calm and carry on - Proverbs 29:11
  - The purpose of social media is to create a dialogue. If you don't feel that you can respond in a way that is Christ-like, refer the interaction to the attention of church leadership who will decide whether a response is needed.
- Keep up to date and timely - Proverbs 15:23
  - Respond, update content, and correct information in a timely manner.
- Uphold Holy Trinity's values – 1 Corinthians 14:12
  - Linking to articles, pictures or any other content may be seen as an endorsement. Take care.
  - Avoid creating competing web properties. For instance, if you have a personal blog as a representative of Holy Trinity, maintain consistency by making sure that content posted on a personal blog is also posted on the Holy Trinity website.
  - Report misuse of Holy Trinity's images, documents or website to the Clergy or Wardens.
- Protect Confidential Information and Relationships - Acts 20:28
  - Respect your audience. Remember that frustrations with individuals are best expressed in person, and sarcasm does not often translate well. Be careful with humor. Do not use personal insults, ethnic/racial/economic/sexual or gender-related slurs, profanity, or publish any conversation that someone might reasonably expect to be confidential.
  - Online conversations and postings are not private. Know that what you post online may be around for a long time and may be shared with others. Therefore:
    - Make yourself aware of any special privacy rules that the social media vendor may have. Periodically check to see if any of these privacy rules have changed. When possible, secure the information in such a way that posts intended only for parish members are not seen by others.
    - Other than via specifically authorized emails, avoid identifying and discussing others, including church members, visitors, or staff, especially pastoral details such as hospitalizations, deaths, health concerns, or counseling engagements.
    - Obtain permission before posting pictures of others or before posting copyrighted material. Please see our photography policy below.
    - Take proper care not to purposefully or inadvertently disclose or distribute any information or intellectual property that is confidential or proprietary to Holy Trinity Church.
    - Press inquiries: Postings may generate media coverage. If a member of the media contacts you about a posting on your personal blog, social network, or on an official church blog, please contact our Clergy, Senior Warden or Junior Warden.

### Photography and Photographs

The following guidelines for sharing photos and videos are meant to help our parish use images in a positive and thoughtful way.

- General group or crowd photographs:
  - Holy Trinity reserves the right to take photographs or video recordings at worship services or any other church-related activities in which individuals are not prominently featured and no identifying information is presented, and to use any of these photos or recordings for fellowship or promotional purposes in media such as, but not limited to, brochures and flyers, the church website, and online photo galleries, without seeking or requiring the consent of each person represented.

Revision 10-11-13/pn  
Revision 10-12-13/tl  
Revision 10-17-13/sh  
Revision 11/19/13/pn  
Approved 12.9.13



## Holy Trinity Church

446 Hamilton Street

Southbridge, MA 01550

508-765-9559

[holytrinitysouthbridge@gmail.com](mailto:holytrinitysouthbridge@gmail.com)

[www.holytrinitysouthbridge.org](http://www.holytrinitysouthbridge.org)

- Church-related activities include gatherings at other locations such as parks, sporting events, mission sites, etc.
- Any individual who objects to being photographed as part of a Holy Trinity activity should notify an usher or event coordinator or the photographer as soon as he/she becomes aware of such photography.
- Any individual who sees himself/herself or a family member in a group photo online and would like it removed may follow the photo removal procedure given below.
- Adult individual or small group photographs:
  - When adult individuals or a small group of individuals are photographed, whether posed or candid, each person will be asked for either written or verbal consent before any use of the photographs is made.
  - Verbal consent will be deemed sufficient to use an adult individual or small group photo that contains no identifying information. Written consent will be obtained for any photos that contain any identifying information.
- Photographing minors:
  - When children under the age of 18 are photographed (except as a part of a general group or crowd photo as outlined above), the consent of at least one parent will be obtained before their photo will be used in any way. In addition, the following guidelines will be enforced:
    - Under no circumstances will any identifying information (first or last name, family members, email addresses, school names, etc.) of anyone under 18 years of age be included in or associated with any photographs or videos displayed, posted, or published in any way.
    - All registration forms for events, activities or programs, such as youth group, choir, VBS, etc., will contain a reference to this policy, a permission request to allow the participant to be photographed in accordance with the policy, and a clear method to allow the signing parent or guardian to "opt-out" of inclusion in any photographs or video recordings. Note that opting-out via an activity sign-up form will apply only to that activity, not as a "blanket" request (see "Opting-out", below).
    - Any event-related photos including minors must have already occurred. For example, a photo of a prior-year camping trip could be posted or published; while a photo of youth who are signed up for a future camping trip cannot be posted or published.
    - Opting-out: Parents/guardians who do not wish their child's photo or video to be potentially posted online or otherwise displayed, regardless of the context, should send a written note or email to the church office, and Holy Trinity will make every effort to exclude the indicated minor from any individual or small group photography. Please note that children may still be included in general group or crowd photos without identifying information; however, you may always request that any photo be removed from display.
- Requesting removal of a photograph or video:
  - Any individual who appears in a photo/video (or whose minor children appear in a photo/video) that has been posted online may request that it be removed for any reason, even if prior permission had been granted, by sending a written note or email to the church office. Please indicate the person or persons involved and the photo or video in question, and it will be promptly removed from the website or other display where it is found.

### Social Networking Sites – Relationships

- Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Interactions with Children and Youth
  - Adults involved in ministering or supervising children or youth need to use very stringent privacy settings on any social networking profile. Individual personal profiles are to be used to interact with real friends, family and peers. Adults should not submit "friend" requests to minors or youth. Youth may not be able to decline such requests due to the disparity of power between youth and adults. Youth may ask to be "friends," and adults should discern the level of contact they want to maintain with youth prior to responding to these requests.
  - If an adult chooses to accept friend requests from minors or youth who are associated with our community of faith, other adult leaders must have full access to all aspects of that adult's profile and correspondence.
  - Adults who want to connect via a social networking website with youth to whom they minister are strongly encouraged to set up a closed group account, along with a second adult. Youth requesting to "friend" an adult can then be invited to join this group rather than be accepted as a friend on an adult's personal profile account. The

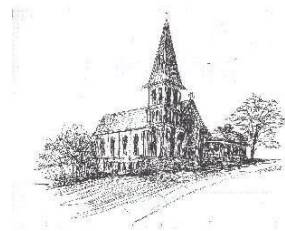
Revision 10-11-13/pn

Revision 10-12-13/tl

Revision 10-17-13/sh

Revision 11/19/13/pn

Approved 12.9.13



## *Holy Trinity Church*

*446 Hamilton Street*

*Southbridge, MA 01550*

*508-765-9559*

*holytrinitysouthbridge@gmail.com*

*www.holytrinitysouthbridge.org*

purpose of these two separate accounts/profiles is to create a line of privacy and maintain healthy boundaries with youth and real family, friends and colleagues.

- Any revelation disclosed of child abuse, neglect or exploitation through social media, should be reported to our Clergy. Proper action will follow the guidelines set forth by the Diocese of Western Massachusetts. Safe Church training for social media personnel and social media users may be suggested.
- Any material on any site (whether affiliated with the church or not) that raises suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited should be immediately reported to the clergy and/or the Department of Children and Families (DCF). If the material is on a church-affiliated site, that material should be documented for church records and then removed from the site after consultation with DCF and/or police. The DCF hotline is 1-800-792-5200.
- Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Interactions with Adults
  - Clergy are strongly encouraged to set very stringent privacy settings on any social networking profile to shield both adult and youth members from viewing content that may be inappropriate.
  - Individual personal profiles of clergy are to be used to interact with real friends, family and peers. Clergy should not submit “friend” requests to parishioners and others to whom they minister. The disparity of power may not give the other person the ability to decline such request.
  - Clergy who want to connect via a social networking website with parishioners are strongly encouraged to set up a group account that all parishioners may join. The purpose of having a personal profile and parish group is to create a line of privacy and maintain healthy boundaries with parishioners and real family, friends and colleagues.
  - Clergy should consider the impact of declining a “friend” request from parishioners. These encounters may create a tension in “real world” relationships. Clergy can direct “friend” requests from parishioners to the parish’s group page.
  - Clergy who work directly with you are encouraged to establish church-sponsored digital communications groups to maintain contact with youth members.
  - When a cleric’s ministry at a parish or other ministry setting ends, the cleric should remove parishioners as “friends” or contacts in all forms of digital communications.

### **Consequences of Non-Compliance**

Violations of this policy by Holy Trinity’s clergy and staff may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. Violations of this policy by external users may result in the removal of relevant posts from social media channels up to limiting leadership opportunities or experiences for the poster.