

[Congregation Name] Lutheran Church

Social Media Policy

Adopted: [Date]

This policy governs the use of social media by [Congregation Name] Lutheran Church, its employees, officers, volunteers, rostered workers, leaders, and members. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all online communication reflects the confession and mission of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS), complies with Florida law, and protects the congregation from legal and reputational harm.

This policy applies to all official congregation social media accounts and websites, all employees, rostered workers, and volunteers who post on behalf of the congregation, and all officers, leaders, and members where posts reference or reasonably appear to represent the congregation, its ministries, or the LCMS. It also applies to accounts operated under pseudonyms or false identities when such accounts are used to post content that refers to the congregation, its ministries, or the LCMS.

Ownership of official accounts rests with [Congregation Name]. Administrative access must be maintained by at least two designated leaders, such as the Pastor and the Council President. No individual may create or operate a social media account in the name of the congregation without Council approval.

Posts made on official accounts must confess and uphold the doctrine of the LCMS as set forth in the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. They must protect the confidentiality of members, employees, and records, use images of children only with prior written parental consent, respect copyright laws, and reflect charity, truth, and respect in keeping with the principles of Matthew 18. While recent IRS guidance now permits churches to make candidate endorsements in the context of worship services without losing tax-exempt status, this exception does not apply to digital platforms or public media. For that reason, all official congregation social media channels, including websites, livestreams, bulletins, and electronic communications, must continue to refrain from partisan endorsements or oppositional commentary regarding political candidates.

Employees, rostered workers, officers, volunteers, leaders, and members are not permitted to present personal opinions as official statements of the congregation, disclose confidential or privileged information, or disparage the congregation, its members, or the LCMS. They must not use pseudonyms or false identities to criticize, disparage, or misrepresent the congregation, its members, or the LCMS. Leadership, including Council members, Elders, Board members, teachers, ministry heads, and rostered workers, are expected to model faithful and respectful use of social media consistent with their offices of trust. Content that publicly undermines the doctrine of the LCMS, disrupts the unity of

the congregation, or brings scandal to the name of Christ may be addressed through pastoral care, admonition, and if necessary, discipline under the congregation's constitution and the LCMS Handbook. When speaking on personal accounts, individuals should use disclaimers such as "Views are my own and not those of [Congregation Name] Lutheran Church.

Violations by employees are subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination, consistent with Florida law. Violations by volunteers, leaders, or officers may result in removal from office or position under the LCMS Handbook and the congregation's bylaws. Violations by rostered workers may be addressed through congregational bylaws, ecclesiastical supervision, and when appropriate, referral to the District President. Violations by members may result in pastoral care, admonition, or formal discipline consistent with the congregation's constitution and bylaws. Pastoral oversight applies in all situations where doctrinal concerns are implicated.

Official congregation accounts will be reviewed quarterly by the Pastor and the Council President or their designees. This policy shall be reviewed annually and updated as needed to ensure continuing compliance and effectiveness.

All staff, rostered workers, officers, leaders, and designated volunteers are required to sign an acknowledgment of receipt and agreement to comply with this policy.

Social Media Policy Acknowledgment Form

I acknowledge that I have received, read, and understand the Social Media Policy of [Congregation Name] Lutheran Church, adopted on [Date]. I agree to comply with the standards and requirements set forth in the policy. I understand that this policy applies to my use of official congregation accounts, as well as my personal use of social media when such use references or reasonably appears to represent the congregation, its ministries, or The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod.

I understand that violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action as outlined in the policy, including removal from office or position, termination of employment, referral to ecclesiastical supervision, or church discipline as applicable. I further understand that questions about the interpretation or application of this policy should be directed to the Pastor or the Council President.

By signing below, I confirm that I accept the responsibilities and obligations set forth in the Social Media Policy and will abide by them.

Printed Name: _____

Position/Role: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Witness (Pastor, Council President, or Designee):

Name: _____

Date: _____