Melrose Social Media Policy – for employees, board members and volunteers

Why Have a Policy?

The explosion of social media (for example Facebook, twitter, blogging) is not only changing the way we communicate with each other but transforming the way Christian Ministries spread the gospel and create and build relationships . Social media has benefits but also creates risk for individuals and churches so it is important to make wise decisions. Our social media policy is intended to provide guidelines and clarity so we can all feel confident and avoid pitfalls.

Remember, as an employee or leader at Melrose you may be perceived as speaking "for" Melrose.   For that reason, this policy applies to both Melrose sponsored social media (for example if you are posting on the Melrose website) and personal use as it relates to Melrose (for example if you are tweeting about something which happened at Melrose).

The following best practices and guidelines aim to provide you helpful, practical advice-and also to protect both you and Melrose Community Church.

Security and Permission

Melrose's website, Wi-Fi and Facebook page are password protected. Passwords are regularly changed and they are managed by Deacons. This is to protect Melrose from liability issues arising from misuse. Password security and management will be in place as we add in additional social media. The Board will delete any posts which are felt to be inappropriate or unhelpful.

No new social media platforms should be initiated on Melrose's behalf without explicit permission of the Board. The Board must have the passwords for all platforms.

What You Should Do

Use good judgment: Remember that what you write is public. You should always assume that it will be read by your boss, your co-workers, church volunteers and attendees, other church leaders, your parents, your children, your spouse, and the attorney for the person who doesn't like you. Ask yourself if you are comfortable with all of these people reading what you plan to post.

You Represent Melrose: Whether offline or online, you are representing Melrose Community Church at all times. Please keep this in mind as you interact, create and share in the digital world.

State That It's Your Opinion: Unless authorized to speak on behalf of Melrose Community Church please state that the views expressed are your own.   ' Authorized' means you have explicit permission from the Board of Deacons.

Be Yourself: Write as yourself. Use your real name if you give a name. If you choose to identify yourself as connected to Melrose Community Church or to discuss anything related to Melrose, be clear about your role.

Remember Internet Permanency: What goes on the Internet stays on the Internet. Google has a very good (and very permanent) memory. Think about this before sharing anything online.

Protect Yourself: Be safe when online. Don't give out too much personal information about yourself, your location, your surroundings or your home address.

Have Fun: The social web is an amazing place to connect with old friends, meet new ones and strengthen connections with other worshippers at Melrose and around the world.

Honor Our Differences: Live the Scriptural values that we abide by. We love others because God loves others. All people bear his image and are worthy of the dignity inherent in that identity. Be careful that what you write would not impair your ability to work with your staff team, lead your volunteer teams, speak with credibility to other churches, or represent us in the community. Remember that frustrations are best expressed in person. Sarcasm does not usually translate well, so be careful how you use humor.

Communicate appropriately with Minors: communication should focus on events and updates. Counseling or pastoral care should not take place through text messaging. Contact should not be private one to one unless it is time sensitive and focused on logistics such as the address of an event or pick up time.

Obtain written permission before using close up photographs of individuals: include a permission form for camp registrations and other registration. Use far away shots for group activities unless written permission has been granted.

Report any inappropriate posts/comments or online 'chatter' that you observe: things can 'blow up' fast on the internet so let's all play a part in noticing what is happening. Please alert the Board if you notice Melrose being discussed on line in a manner that causes concern or notice comments that may be unhelpful.

Don't

Ignore a Hesitation: If you hesitate before clicking the mouse, chances are it's a bad idea to share whatever you've just written and/or created.

Air Personal Grievances: Social networks are never a good place to air personal grievances with others. Unfortunately, social networks are breeding grounds for passive-aggressive behavior. Rise above that. If you have a conflict with someone, please respect yourself (and them) enough to work through it in person.

Solve Conflict Online: If conflict arises in an official Melrose-sponsored social network, never attempt to prove a point in a public forum. Ask clarifying questions if you need to, but if someone is upset by something you've shared, contact them personally and resolve it in a private manner.

Disclose The Numbers: Non-public financial or operational information. This includes strategies, budgets and most anything with a dollar-figure attached to it. If it's not already public information please don't broadcast it.

Give Out Personal Information: Never share personal information about our staff, members or adherents or yourself. This includes phone numbers and email addresses.

Post Someone Else's Material: This includes illegal music sharing, copyrighted publications, videos etc. These may be copyright and we could be sued. Even a poem might be copyrighted if used without permission.

Remember: protect Melrose Community Church, protect yourself.