



Facebook now has over 1 billion accounts, and over 600 million users per month making it the number one social networking site. If you aren't using Facebook, you may be missing out on a wonderful opportunity to communicate with your congregation through a channel many people use every day. More importantly, you might be missing out on an opportunity for your church to reach others in the community.

Facebook Accounts

There are three primary account types:

- **Personal Profiles – for individuals**
 - Personal Profiles are the standard account for Facebook users.
 - Facebook policy requires each user to be at least 13 years old
 - Facebook policy also states no person should have more than one Personal Profile
- **Group Profiles – for networking within the church, or within church groups**
 - Private Groups – cannot be found by searching Facebook. A person can only join a Private Group by personal invitation by someone else in the group.
 - Closed Groups – searchable on Facebook. The information shared in the group is restricted to members approved by an administrator. Non-members can see who is in the group and who the administrator is, and they can request to join the group.
 - Open Group – searchable on Facebook. The information shared in Open Groups is viewable by all on Facebook, both members and non-members. Non-members must request to join the group.
- **Fan Page – for networking with the community at large**
 - Fan Pages are public pages for all on Facebook. Any Facebook user can “Like” a Fan Page and subscribe to all updates stemming from the page.
 - Fan Page communication tends to receive less publication than Group Profile communication. However, if a Fan Page is receiving a lot of post interaction, the communication is given more publicity.
 - Anyone, including non-fans, can post on a Fan Page unless an administrator edits the Fan Page settings.

Wall posts

Wall posts are meant to allow others to share in your life's journey, which will have its ups and downs. Everything you say, do, “like,” share, and click is made public on Facebook. Avoid the temptation to share daily frustrations, vent about church issues and members, or discuss situations best kept private. Even if you adjust the privacy settings to restrict the access to your wall, your comments may be re-posted or read in a way you did not intend. Before posting anything, consider how others might read and interpret the post. United Methodist Communications has on its website (<http://umcom.org>) a brief *Social Media Etiquette Handbook* to help you steer clear of some common pitfalls and embarrassing situations when using Facebook and other social media.

Post often

To keep traffic going and keep interest high, post daily or sometimes twice a day. Posting more than twice a day may reduce (there's a law of diminishing returns). Stay current, but avoid being obnoxious. Pictures and videos draw more interest than text posts. Vary the type of posts, including serious posts like prayer requests, and uplifting posts like celebrating achievements.

Avoiding the overuse of Facebook

Facebook can easily be abused by posting status updates too often, commenting on others' status updates or pictures too frequently, and repeatedly «liking» or «poking» others. It can easily become a distracting and potentially addictive waste of time. Facebook was designed for staying in touch with others and supplementing relationships, it is not to be used as a primary avenue of communication. Use Facebook as a supplementary way of keeping up to date with people you care about, but never as a substitute for face-to-face ministry.

Maintaining boundaries

While some users create multiple accounts, trying to separate a personal and professional list of friends, this is against Facebook policy. A successful alternative is to maintain a single Personal Profile and create multiple Friends Lists. By creating multiple lists of friends, you can determine which groups will see what types of postings, or if communication will be excluded altogether.

Friending church members

Becoming friends through social media with members of the church can be tricky. Friending only certain church members can cause division in the congregation. Learning to use Friends Lists can help alleviate the tension with your decision, and allow you to friend all church member requests without having to share your personal information with them all.

Pastoral transitions

Just as your personal relationship must change, your contact through social media sites must change as well. It is often considered a Facebook sin to unfriend someone. Learning to use Friends Lists can also help with transition, allowing you to block communication from members of previous churches without having to unfriend them.

Important Facebook Terms

- **Account Settings:** Use your [account settings](#) to manage basic account preferences. You can edit your name or email info, change your notifications preferences, turn on extra security features and more.
- **Chat:** Chat is a feature that lets you send instant messages to online
- **Messages:** Your messages and messages inbox house your ongoing conversations with people on Facebook.
- **Friend:** Friends are people you connect and share with on Facebook.
- **Like:** Clicking Like is a way to give positive feedback and connect with things you care about.
- **Notifications:** Notifications are email, onsite, or mobile updates about activity on Facebook.
- **Timeline:** Your timeline is your collection of the photos, stories and experiences that tell your story.
- **News Feed:** Your News Feed is an ongoing list of updates on your homepage that shows you what's new with the *friends* and *pages* you follow.

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