



Dear Sisters and Brothers,

One of the joys of life in the Diocese of Christ our Hope is our shared commitment to “think theologically” and “connect Gospel and culture” with integrity. In that regard, we certainly have plenty to think and talk about. Seeking to speak and live the Gospel with confidence, clarity, and charity in a fast-changing, highly politicized, polemical world calls for our best work. We are committed to keeping at this work as “a way of life.”

However, added to the challenge of “Gospel and culture,” we increasingly face the challenge of brothers and sisters who are themselves wrestling with historic orthodox Christian views, or trying to do their own “Gospel and culture” work, in ways we disagree with. These may be people we have served, walked with, admired, or learned from in the past. The work of speaking about difficult issues with confidence, clarity, and charity is not just with those outside the faith: it is often with those “in the faith.”

In this context, you scarcely need me to call your attention to the need for stewarding our presence and participation on social media. Christians, especially Christian leaders, should be guided in all their communication efforts by the admonition of Saint Paul:

*Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:29-32)*

Sadly, in today’s volatile political and ecclesiastical climate, many overheated and uncharitable tweets and posts have come from clergy and laity in our Province. Theological and cultural debates have been waged through social media, across diocesan boundaries, between individuals who have never once actually talked to one another. The language and tone violate biblical injunctions for how to talk to, or about, one another. Comments and postings regularly move from statements about issues to judgments and verdicts about people with whom the writer(s) will spend eternity.

In June, 2021, Archbishop Beach responded, calling the Church to exercise renewed responsibility and self-discipline in its use of social media. I now bring that call to exercise renewed responsibility and self-discipline from the Province to the Diocese of Christ Our Hope, and particularly to you, its clergy.

**Let me hasten to say I am not acting to correct a problem.** I am profoundly grateful that (as far as I know) clergy in our Diocese have exercised the very discipline called for by the Archbishop in their use of social media. To my knowledge, you have lived in keeping with Ephesians 4: 29-31. Nevertheless, it is time to formalize our commitment to a Christ-honoring social media presence. To this end, we are well-served by following the **Social Media Directive for Bishops and Clergy of the ACNA and Affiliated Ministries** distributed earlier this year by the Archbishop’s office. In addition, I urge you to reflect actively on the practical wisdom of **A Christian Code of Ethics for Using Social Media** in your posting activity. (These documents follow this letter.)

I only repeat my earlier stipulation that clergy of our Diocese in no way comment on ongoing disciplinary investigations of the Province through social media. Logically, that also applies to diocesan issues requiring godly discernment, not polemical venting.

In addition, please take the time to read these wise words from Ray Ortlund, newly named Catechist and Canon of the Diocese of the Western Gulf Coast:

*The media we now have offer us a tremendous advantage for getting the gospel out. I think of the parable of the sower in Mark 4. He was not dropping one seed at a time along a little row, the way we do in a modern garden. He was throwing handfuls of gospel seed out there. Lots of waste. But also growth . . .*

*The dark side of our media, obviously, is that the sins of the tongue have never had more opportunity. The book of Proverbs speaks clearly about the impact of our words. With our media, we can now harm and embarrass and stigmatize people with greater force than ever before in human history. We don't have to be political heavyweights to wield that power. Any blogger will do. Self-restraint has never been more important.*

*A failed tweet displays Self. A successful tweet displays Christ. Who cares about the details of my daily life? I hardly care myself. But I think we can all agree on this: we must decrease, but he must increase. What I aim at in using the media is another person being able to click in and click out quickly, with maximum benefit to their souls. Everyone is so busy. But everyone matters. I want to ask little of them, and add much to them. I am there to serve, not to demand or impress, by giving them more of Jesus.—*

From "Serving Up Tweets: An Interview with Ray Ortlund on Social Media"  
(Desiring God blog, March 9, 2012)

I realize that someone may have a different practical understanding of what it means to follow the attached directives than the understanding that I, and our diocesan leaders, share. **If you have any question at all about the appropriateness of something you're inclined to post, check with me, another bishop, or one of the canons of the Diocese before moving ahead.** (However, there should be no "gray" about the stipulation I added to the ACNA Directive and the Code of Ethics.)

I am deeply thankful for the eloquence and passion with which you all communicate the gospel in all kinds of settings. I pray that you will be encouraged by the Spirit to display the same warmth, conviction, clarity, and Christlike charity in your social media presence.

To God be the Glory!

Bishop Steve Breedlove

## **Social Media Directive for Bishops and Clergy of the ACNA and Affiliated Ministries**

**To:** All Bishops and Clergy of the Anglican Church in North America

**RE:** Social Media Directive for Bishops and Clergy of the ACNA and Affiliated Ministries

The ACNA and its related ministries is issuing the following directive for all Bishops, ordained Clergy, and staff of any parish or related ACNA ministry. ACNA and its representatives (which includes all Bishops, Priests, Deacons, Ordained Lay Ministers, and employees of any parish affiliated with the ACNA or its Diocese and Jurisdictions) must understand that we are all first, and foremost, representatives of Christ Jesus and His Church in the public domain. Consequently, there is no exclusively “private” speech that is publicly aired.

Social media has been a tremendous gift in advancing the Gospel of Jesus Christ all over the world. Like all tools, it can be misused and inappropriately applied. As clergy of the ACNA, our primary mission is to represent Christ to a lost and hurting world. When using social media to advance the Gospel becomes eclipsed by using social media as a platform to sow division, internal discord, and portray a negative public image of the Church. These actions not only harm the public perception of our Lord Jesus Christ and his grace, the mission of the Church but also the public witness of all Anglican clergy and ministries.

As representatives of the ACNA, careful thought and consideration must be given on what is posted and how that post could be perceived. Any posts or comments made from a social media account will be subject to review and disciplinary action by diocesan or provincial authorities if such posts are deemed to be harmful or injurious to our Lord and His mission or the Church generally or ACNA or any other GAFCON member Church specifically. Such comments include but are not limited to statements contradicting the position of the College of Bishops, the Archbishop, the Anglican formularies, accepted liturgical practices or orthodox Anglican theology.

All representatives of the ACNA must first and foremost consider the priority of contributing towards a positive public witness on behalf of the Lord and the Church on social media before offering their own commentary or public opinion on any social platform. Private communication channels exist for grievances, concerns, and complaints and these channels should be used for such purposes. Such private communication should be treated as private and not rebroadcasted on social media.

## **A Christian Code of Ethics for Using Social Media**

Most of us have done it. We have posted something on the Internet when we had thought, incorrectly, that we had heard all the facts. Or we have written something slamming a brother or sister in Christ personally without talking to them in person first. Or we have written something when we were in the flesh and not in the Holy Spirit that caused heartache and pain to some innocent victim of our written words. Or we have spoken prophetically only later to have wished we had shared the comments in person.

The following is a simple code of ethics (5 Questions) for the follower of Jesus to consider before one clicks the “enter” button. It is intended for the follower of Jesus to remember that even in cyber-space we are witnesses (either for good or for bad) for Jesus Christ modeling a life which is supposed to emulate him.

### **1. Is it the truth?**

Or is it gossip, slander, or unverified hearsay? Our responsibility is to speak truth, yet speak it in love (Ephesians 4:15). Why is it my responsibility to speak this truth, or to be judge and jury? What gives me the right to write this or post this?

### **2. Have I talked to the person before I talk about the person?**

There is a difference between writing about what someone has said or done and writing about the person. It is easy to speak out of our own anger and emotional needs without going to the person first. As followers of Jesus, it is not right to say anything about another person unless it is flowing from God’s love within us, and he has given us a process to do this – Matthew 18:15-20.

### **3. Will it benefit all concerned?**

This is what love does. Speaking truth to another can bring benefit and repentance, but slander, hatred, and meanness bring destruction, hurt, and divisiveness in the Body. The Scriptures exhort us to avoid these kinds of things. Colossians 4:6 – Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt; Ephesians 4:31 – Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other as God in Christ has forgiven you.

### **4. Do my words reflect well on Jesus Christ?**

As followers of his, this is what our mission is about – sharing Jesus Christ so that others may worship Him, too. Can people see Jesus in my comments, pictures, and online activity? Do they see the fruit of the Holy Spirit being manifest in my words? 1 Corinthians 5:14 – It is the love of Christ which compels us. Am I reflecting the aroma of Christ?

### **5. Will I have to confess what I have written as a sin?**

If so, then why write it or post it? Flee the temptation to sin.