

Social Media and Congregations: *A Tool Kit*

A guide to help congregations use social media with confidence with visual examples, tips and practical tools for purposeful online engagement



Outline

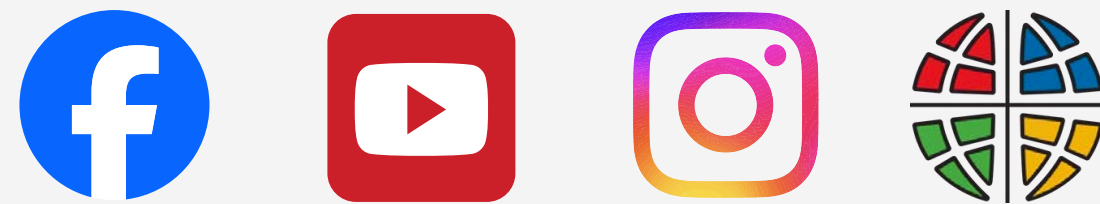
01	INTRODUCTION
05	VISUAL EXAMPLES
11	CONTENT SUGGESTIONS
20	PLATFORM SPECIFICS
23	WHAT'S THE PLAN?
29	ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
34	PROCEDURES
37	POLICY FOR CONDUCT

Introduction

Social media is a dynamic tool that **supports communication, connection and visibility for congregations.** Whether you're livestreaming worship, highlighting service projects or inviting neighbors to events, social platforms help congregations **connect in real time** and extend their ministry beyond the church walls. Understanding how to use social media **with purpose** can strengthen outreach, deepen engagement and **support the church's mission** in today's digital landscape.



**Social media is one of many
communications tools
available to congregations.**



We already have a website. Why would we use social media?

Church websites are great places for information that won't often change, such as service times, church staff and ministries. This kind of content is called "evergreen."

What kind of content is best shared on social media?

Social media accounts are ideal for sharing current news, information about events, and updates in the life of the church.

Visual Examples

Creating visually clear and effective social media posts

Social media is a visually driven space. Posts often rely on photography, short video clips, typography posts or infographics to catch attention and communicate quickly. Because of this, how your content looks is just as important as what it says.

Designing content: Things to consider

Effective:

- High contrast between text and background
- Simple, professional fonts (such as Arial, Helvetica or Proxima Nova)
- Clear, short messages
- Centered or balanced layout
- Relevant images or icons
- Consistent branding (colors, logo, tone)

Ineffective:

- Neon or clashing colors
- Hard-to-read or decorative fonts
- Long blocks of text
- Busy or cluttered backgrounds
- Low-resolution images
- Off-topic, irrelevant or confusing visuals

Here are two examples of how design choices can make or break your message.



Hard-to-read font, all caps reduce legibility, neon colors make the message unclear.

Cluttered layout: hard-to-see illustration placed behind text makes the post even harder to read.

Off-topic illustration (a dinosaur for a choir post) makes the message feel silly instead of informative.



Clear, professional font with strong contrast (e.g. white text on dark background).

Well-placed illustration adds interest without blocking text — keeps the design clean and readable.

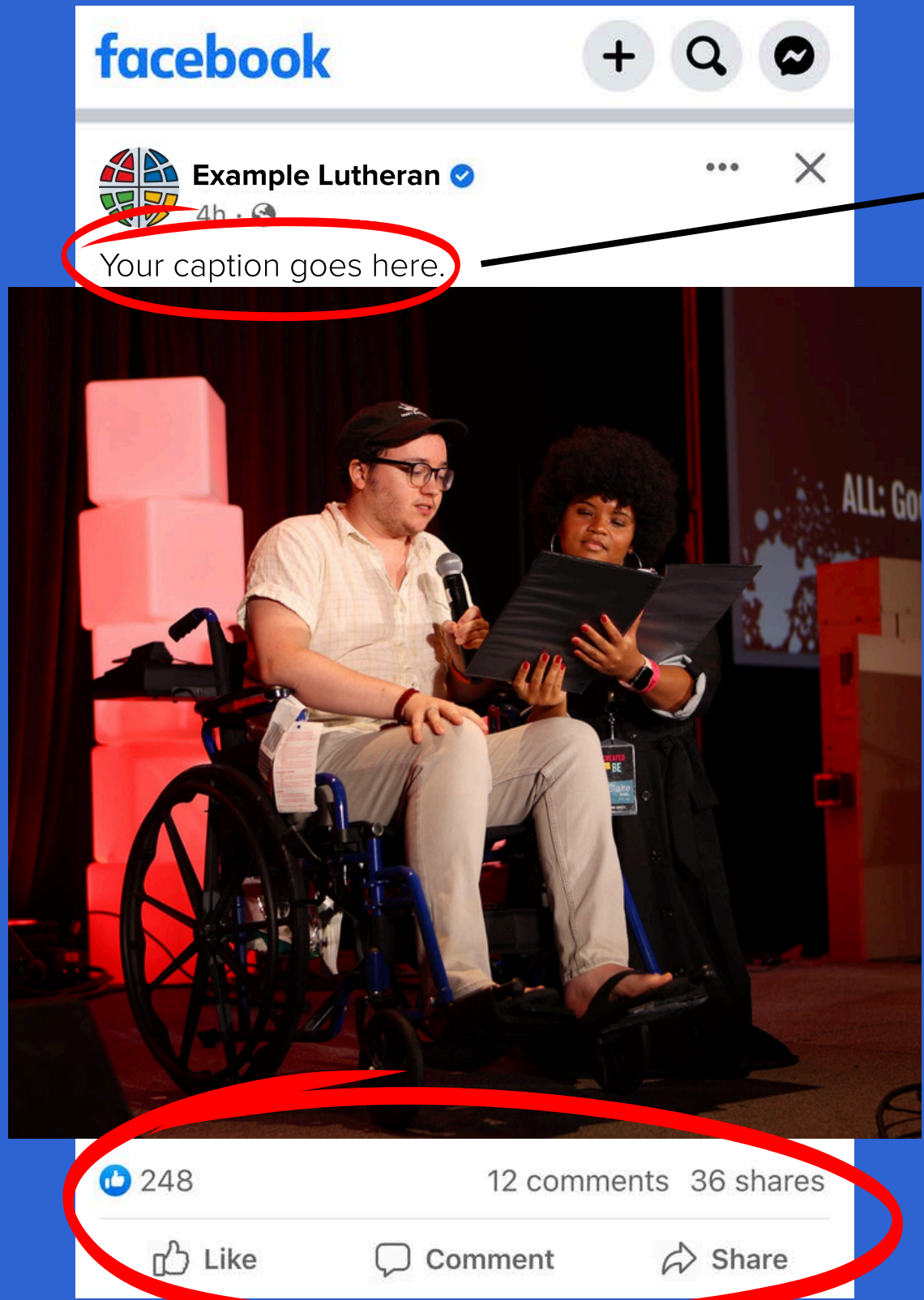
Simple design with relevant illustration (e.g. music notes for a choir post).

Tips for making great posts

- Keep it simple: One clear message per post.
- Use large, readable text. It's helpful for those in your audience who may have visual impairments.
- Try using Canva.com to create your content. It's a free design tool that's easy to use. Canva Pro is free for nonprofits — your church can apply!
- Take photos at church events and of your members (with permission). Real images from your congregation make your posts feel personal and meaningful. They help your community feel seen and connected to the life of the church.
- If you don't have relevant photos yet, you can find free, high-quality stock images at Pexels.com or Unsplash.com to illustrate your message. Be sure to always include photo credits and/or sources.

Content Suggestions

Anatomy of a Facebook post

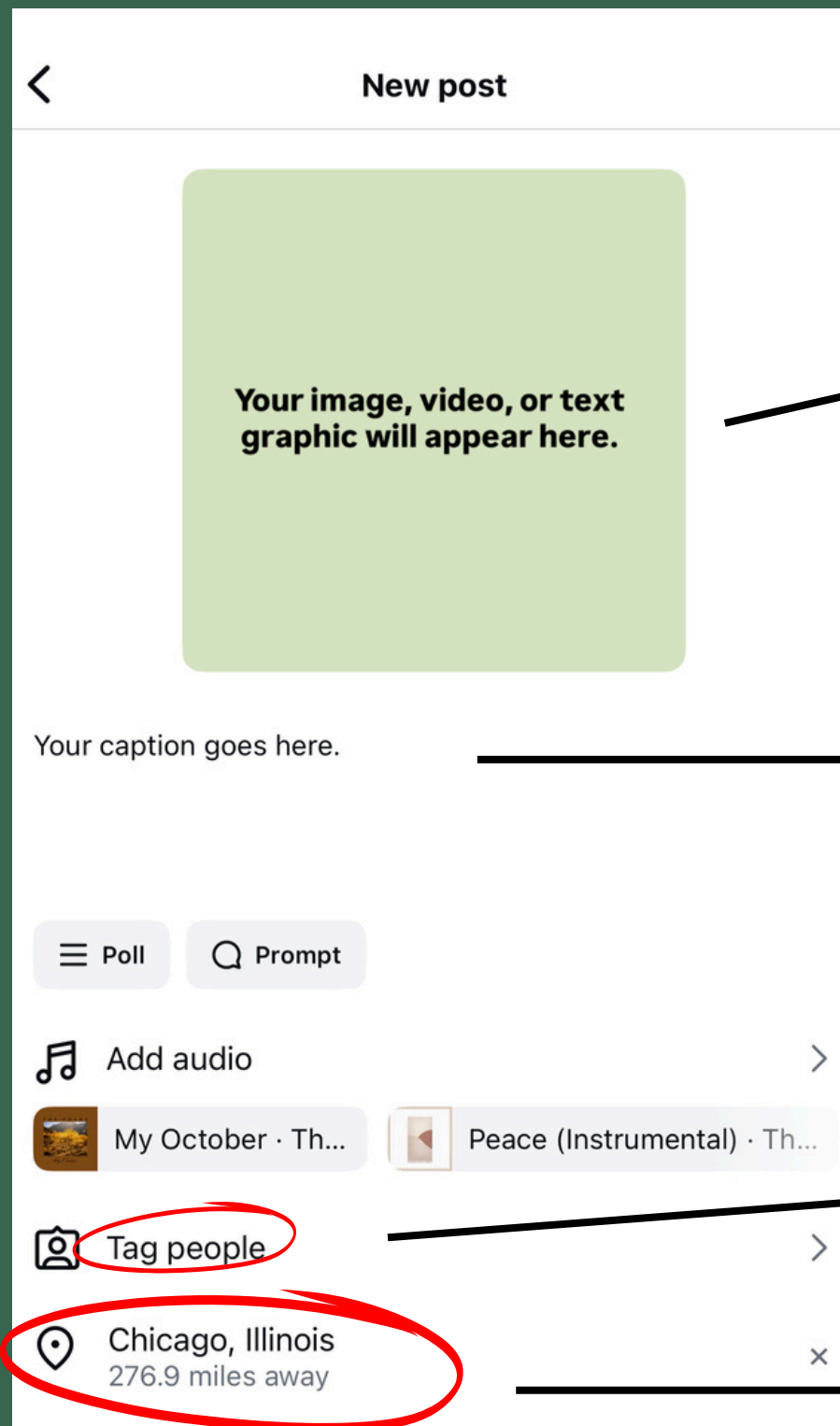


Add a caption that describes or relates to your content. Aim for posts that are inspirational, educational, informative or relevant to your audience.

Upload an image, short video (reel) or text graphic to Facebook.

People can comment on, react to, like and share posts — giving you quick insight into how your audience is engaging with your content.

Anatomy of an Instagram post



You can upload an image, short video (reel) or text graphic to Instagram.

Add a caption that describes or relates to your content. Aim for posts that are inspirational, educational, informative or relevant to your audience.

You can tag other accounts or people who appear in your content, to increase visibility and engagement.

You can add different embellishments to your post such as music and the location of your church.

What kind of content could a congregation share to engage community members?

- Regular congregational happenings
- Holidays, festivals and important occasions in the church year
- Bible verses
- Prayer
- Music

Regular congregational happenings

- Share photos and videos showing what life in your congregation is like: fellowship groups, service events, volunteer opportunities, confirmation, children's and youth ministry, Sunday school, etc.
- Encourage your audience to get involved in a community that will always have a place for them.
- Share your congregation's worship times and invite your audience to join.
- Do you have a different worship schedule in the summer? Regular reminders on social media will help guests know when to visit and members recall what time they should come.
- Share a short story or update from your congregation's newsletter.
- If the story includes engaging photos, graphics, or videos, even better.
- Remind people of upcoming events in your congregation and your community.

NOTE: You can amplify your events through paid advertisements or paid post promotions on specific social media channels — consider setting aside money in the church budget for promotion during central seasons in the church (Christmas and Easter).

Holidays, festivals and important occasions in the church year

- Provide a message of welcome and share your service times.
- Commemorate special days in the church year such as holidays, festival days, saints' days and changes in the liturgical season.
- Celebrate baptisms and weddings.
- Lift up important dates in the life of your church: its anniversary, the anniversary dates of staff members, etc.



Bible verses

- The ELCA uses the New Revised Standard Version (NRSVue) of the Bible. You can find English and Spanish translations at BibleGateway.com.
- The [Revised Common Lectionary](#) offers verses and prayers for each week of the church year as well as special occasions.



Prayers

- ELCA Prayer Ventures is offered as a guide for your own prayer life as together we pray for the needs of the world and give thanks for the ministries of our church.
- “Bread for the Day” is a devotional book of daily prayer and Scripture readings from Augsburg Fortress. The selections of Scripture are drawn from their relationship to the Revised Common Lectionary.
- Sundays and Seasons is a resource for worship planning from Augsburg Fortress. It follows the three-year lectionary cycle and is accessible online.
- You can always offer prayers about timely events in society or in your congregation.
- Remember that social media is public. While holding someone in prayer, don't reveal confidential details about their medical conditions or personal crises.

Music

- Post videos or share YouTube links of your choir or worship band as the congregation sings along in worship.

NOTE: A word on copyright – While you don't need to obtain a performance license to play, sing, perform or present copyrighted music in your congregational worship service, this exemption *DOES NOT* cover copying, broadcasting, streaming, recording or any other use of the music. You must obtain permission from the copyright holder or secure a performance license.

Platform specifics

A word on links: no matter which social media platforms your congregation uses, those platforms want to keep users engaged. They tend to hide posts with links that take viewers off the platform.

- If you want to promote a church event on Facebook, use the Events feature.
- Stories, photos, video and reels perform well across platforms.

The ELCA is currently active on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. Each of these social media platforms has regularly updated help centers, which provide tips and tutorials on how to create different kinds of content and manage your congregation's account.

- [Facebook Help Center](#)
- [Instagram Help Center](#)
- [YouTube Help Center](#)

Social media strategy: Why have one?

A social media strategy offers clear guidance, defines responsibilities and enhances the impact of posts. It also supports those leading the church's social media efforts by making their work more focused and sustainable.

What's the plan?

- Who's on your social media team?
- What is your plan to communicate with members and the larger community?
- Who is your target audience?
- Why do you want to use social media?
- Where will you post?
- How will you continue to meet the communications needs of all members?
- How often will you review and update the strategy?

Who's on your social media team?

- If you don't have a church communications staff member, identify one or two people responsible for maintaining social media accounts and posting regularly.
- Involve key leaders: pastor, other ministry leaders and members who best represent your church's different key groups.

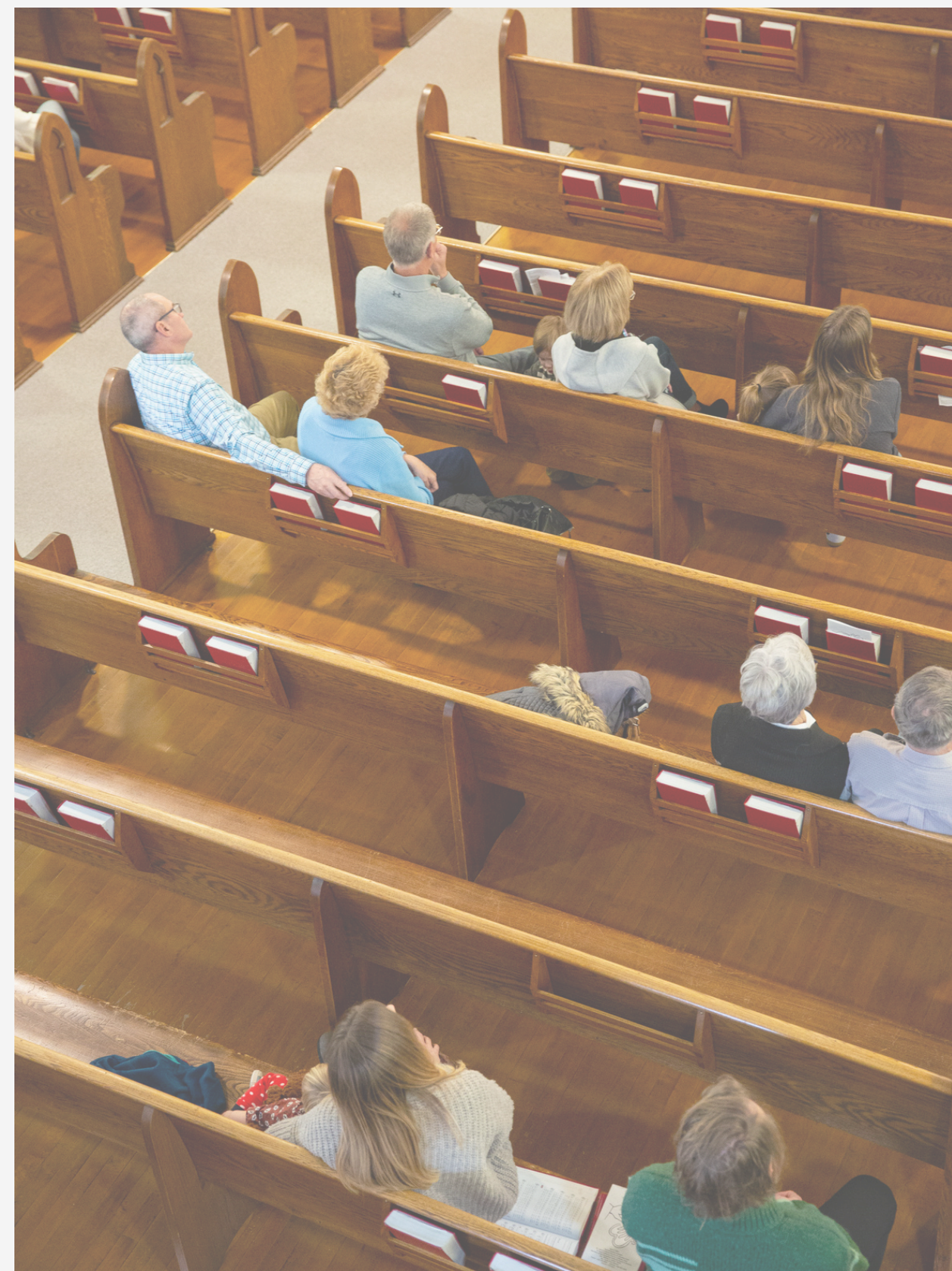


What is your plan to communicate with members and the larger community?

- What are your goals for communicating?
- How does social media fit in?

Who is your target audience?

- Are you primarily trying to reach and connect with current members, or do you hope to reach out to the community and prospective members?
- Describe your audience as thoroughly as possible, to hone what you want to say and show.



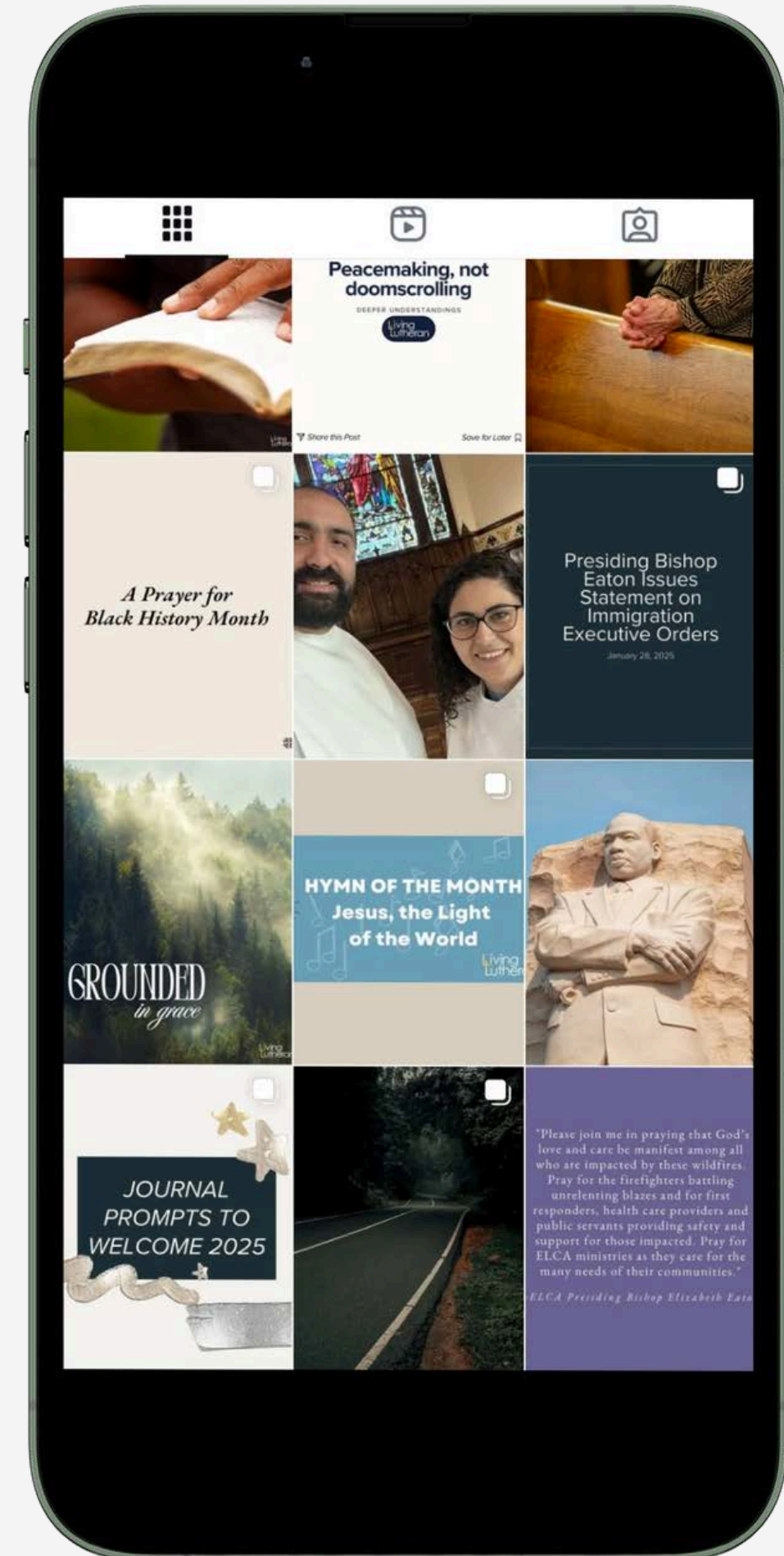
Why do you want to use social media?

- Keep in mind: social media is a free tool and one of the best options to communicate with members and the community outside your walls.



Where?

- What platforms are your members using? Try to go where they are.
- If you're just starting out, start small: get well-versed in one platform before adding another. Grow as your online community grows.
- Social media platforms offer public pages and private groups, and you can choose to have both: a public space for general information and private groups for specific ministry teams or groups in your congregation.



How will you continue to meet the communications needs of all members?

- Continue sharing content from your social media platforms in your bulletin, newsletter and announcements during worship.

How often will you review the strategy and update it as needed?

- We recommend reviewing your strategy at least once a year.



Roles and Responsibilities

- Establish clear roles and responsibilities.
- Content review
- Content posting
- Scheduling content
- Moderating comments
- A word on artificial intelligence (AI)

Establish clear roles and responsibilities

- Who is posting, sharing other posts, responding to direct messages, monitoring accounts, commenting or replying to comments?
- Having clear boundaries can help prevent duplicate posting or confusion about who's doing what.



Content review

- Review posts for message, spelling and grammar. If possible, share content with a colleague or partner before it goes live to make sure that your posts support your communications goals.

Content posting

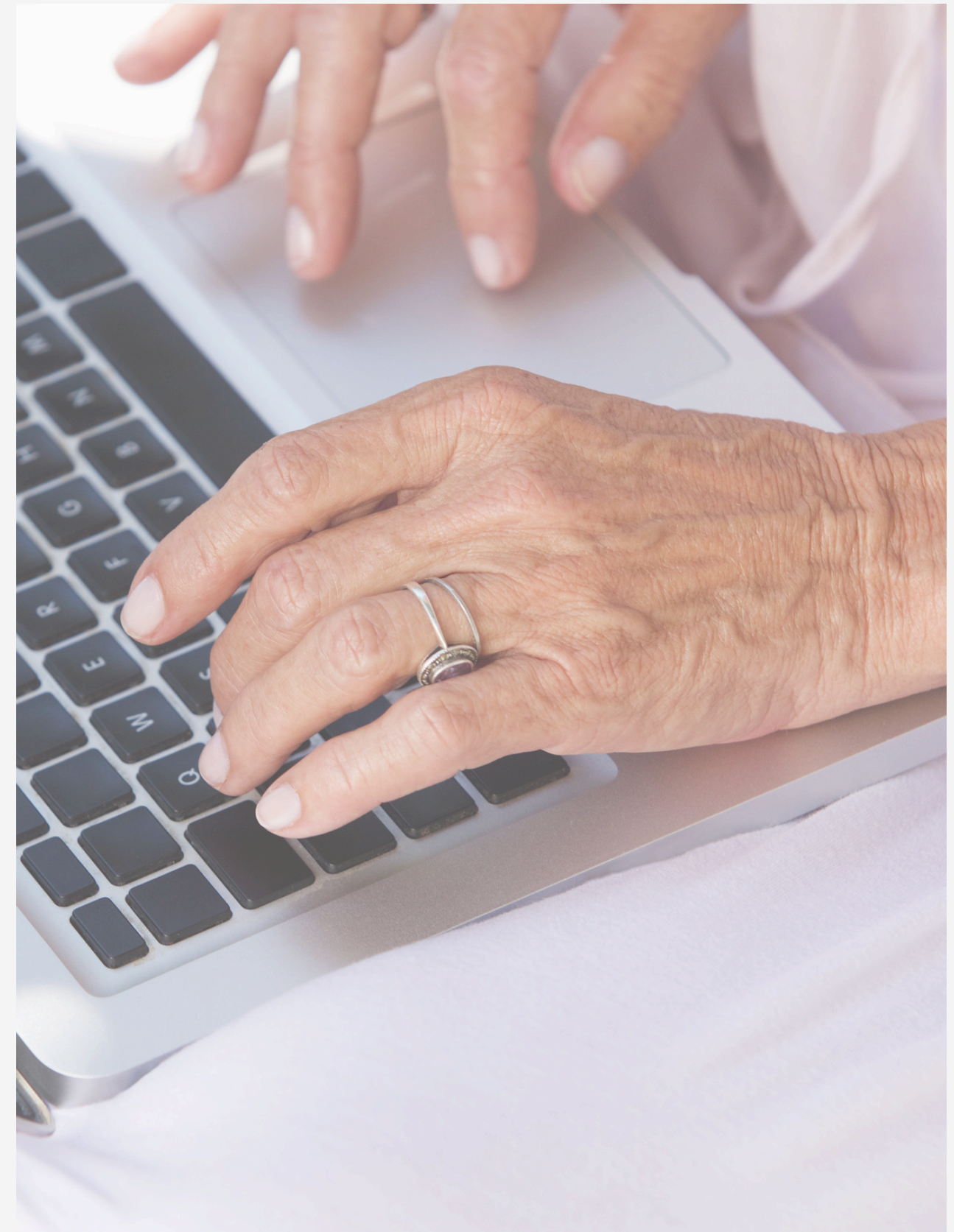
- You can link your social media accounts for seamless sharing. When you share a picture on Instagram, you can also publish it to Facebook.
- “Link in bio” tools such as [LinkTree](#) allow you to organize your online presence — website and social media accounts — into a single link that you can include in your social media profiles.

Scheduling content

There are several tools available to help you plan and schedule posts ahead of time, even across multiple platforms:

- Meta Business Suite is a free tool to manage your posts across Facebook and Instagram.
- Sprout and Hootsuite are pay-for-service social media management tools that enable you to manage all your platforms in one place.

NOTE: In times of crisis or disaster, you may need to un-schedule or reschedule content so you don't appear insensitive to current events.



Moderating comments

- You might need to hide or remove comments that are malicious, offensive, soliciting funds or not relevant to your congregation.
- If personal attacks, hate speech, profanity or bullying persist from a commenter on your page, you have the right to ban them from your social platforms.
- You can select a language filter on Facebook and Instagram to block profanity and other offensive language or topics from appearing on your page.

A word on artificial intelligence (AI)

- When used carefully, artificial intelligence (AI), including generative AI chatbots like ChatGPT, Google Gemini and Microsoft Copilot can help you generate ideas for content. However, exercise caution and use AI responsibly.
- If you use AI information, always double-check that it is correct. AI pulls information from all over the internet and isn't always accurate or current.
- AI sources information from existing published works rather than creating original content. Always verify that any material obtained through AI does not violate copyright laws or use imagery, artwork or intellectual property without permission.
- When you reshare posts from other pages, be on the lookout for AI- and bot-generated clickbait. Don't fall into a trap: check the information on other trusted websites and platforms.

Procedures

How are you going to support and sustain a social media presence?
Here are some topics to discuss with your team and document in your strategy:

- Publication schedule.
- Moderator schedule.
- Following ELCA on social media.
- Evaluating your posts using analytics.

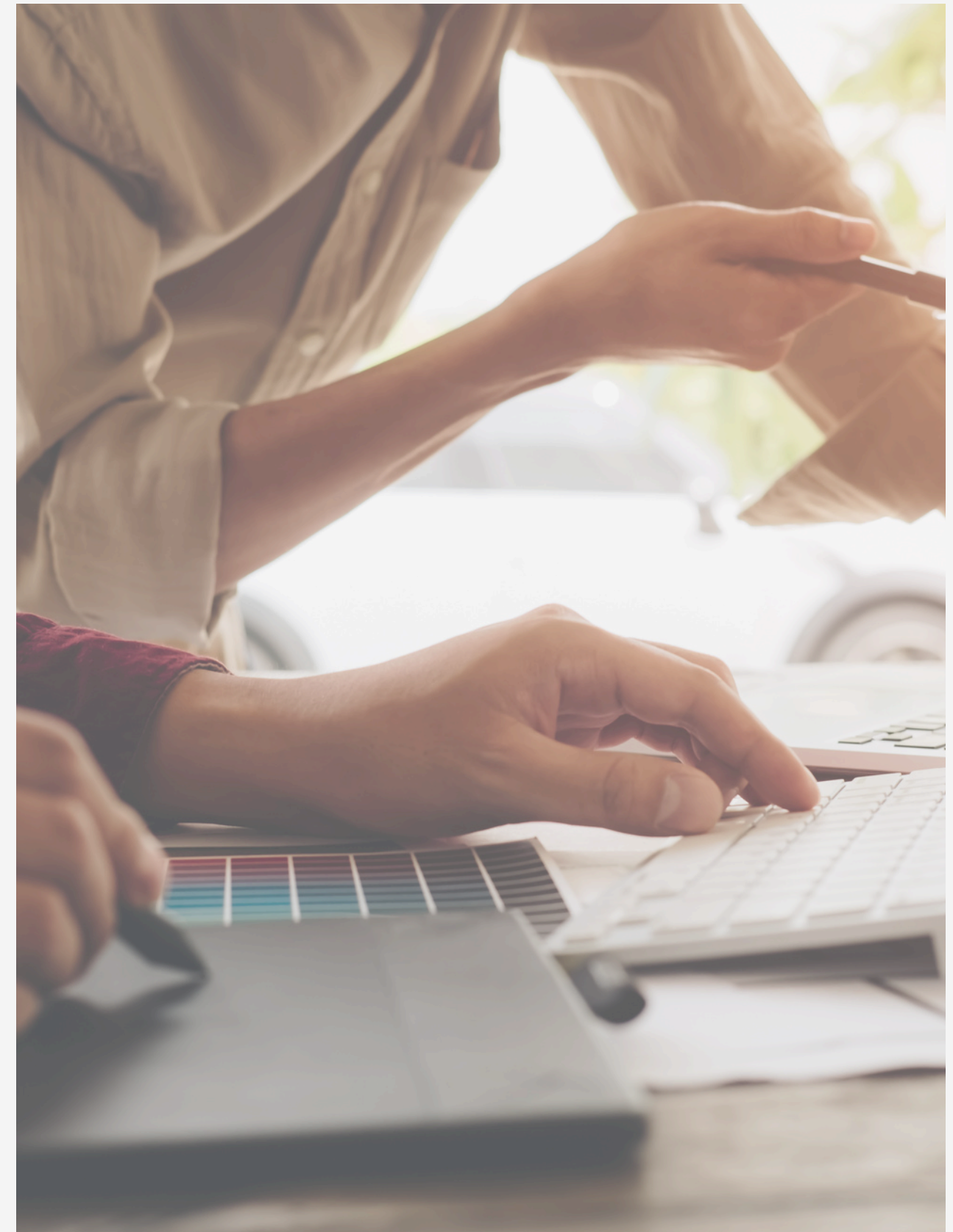
Publication schedule

Establish a plan for how often you will post. Having a regular cadence is essential. We recommend at minimum 1-2 posts a week per platform.

Moderator schedule

Establish a schedule to monitor your channels and check/respond to direct messages regularly. Not all members of the team need administrator rights to remove posts that are spam or offensive, but they need to know how to contact an administrator if intervention is needed.

Exception: if there is a church or community crisis, the team should monitor your channels daily.



Follow the ELCA on social media

Get ideas for posts or feel free to share our content to your social platforms.



facebook.com/Lutherans



instagram.com/ELCA



facebook.com/ELCALivingLutheran



instagram.com/LivingLutheran



ELCA.org/Subscribe



youtube.com/ELCA

Use analytics to evaluate your posts

Most social media platforms have analytics included so you can see how many people were reached by your post, how many engaged with it and how the post performed. Evaluate what's working well and what type of content is popular with your audience.

Policy for conduct

Ensure that social media team members understand proper conduct. Here are suggested guidelines for a social media conduct policy. We recommend reviewing these with your congregation's legal counsel.

Team members should understand:

- They represent the congregation's ministry, and their postings should be appropriate for the mission.
- They will keep all confidential and sensitive information private.
- They should follow the congregation's policies on use of the internet and social media (if applicable).
- If they are uncertain about whether a post or response is appropriate, they should consult with other members of the social media team and church leadership.

Team members should understand (cont.):

- They should not post an image of any child without the consent of a parent or guardian.
- They should use a photo release form to allow people to opt out of having their photo used.
- They should never caption a photo with the full name of any child (even if there is consent).
- They should not post member email addresses, workplaces, home addresses or personal phone numbers.

With these tools, you are equipped to build a digital ministry that strengthens connections between members, congregations and the wider church.

Social media is constantly evolving, so we encourage you to revisit this tool kit periodically. We will continue updating it to reflect changes in platforms and best practices for engaging synods and congregations.

If you need additional help or support, please reach out to us at **communications@elca.org**. We're here to assist you in making your digital presence meaningful and effective.