

All Saints Lutheran Church, Bowie, MD

Online Code of Conduct and Social Media Policy

“He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?”
- Micah 6:8 NRSV

Introduction

Our congregation was constituted as a people created by God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, called and sent to bear witness to God’s creative, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the world. As stated in our Constitution (C4.02), to participate in God’s mission, this congregation as a part of the Church shall:

- a. Worship God in proclamation of the Word and administration of the sacraments and through lives of prayer, praise, thanksgiving, witness, and service.
- b. Proclaim God’s saving Gospel of justification by grace for Christ’s sake through faith alone, according to the apostolic witness in the Holy Scripture, preserving and transmitting the Gospel faithfully to future generations.
- c. Carry out Christ’s Great Commission by reaching out to all people to bring them to faith in Christ and by doing all ministry with a global awareness consistent with the understanding of God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of all.
- d. Serve in response to God’s love to meet human needs, caring for the sick and the aged, advocating dignity and justice for all people, working for peace and reconciliation among the nations, and standing with the poor and powerless, and committing itself to their needs.
- e. Nurture its members in the Word of God so as to grow in faith and hope and love, to see daily life as the primary setting for the exercise of their Christian calling, and to use the gifts of the Spirit for their life together and for their calling in the world.
- f. Manifest the unity given to the people of God by living together in the love of Christ and by joining with other Christians in prayer and action to express and preserve the unity which the Spirit gives.

As the Church in the 21st century, our mission field includes not just the geography of Prince George’s County, MD, and the Washington DC metro region, but also the virtual space reached by our online presence on our website and the social media sites in which we gather and fellowship. The commission which we have accepted is as relevant in the virtual world as it is in the physical world, and therefore we recommit ourselves to our responsibilities as disciples of Christ in all worlds and spaces through which we move.

Code of Conduct

The members of All Saints Lutheran Church will be expected to comport themselves in a manner consistent with the commission of Christ which we have accepted, including in their conduct on social media which is associated with All Saints Lutheran Church.

“Do Justice”

When interacting in person or online, the members of All Saints Lutheran Church will:

- Meet human needs, responding to the concerns expressed by members of the congregation or by members of the public who interact with us;
- Advocate dignity and justice for all people, regardless of their station, opinions, affiliations, race, ethnicity, creed, national origin, sex, gender, or sexual orientation;
- Work for peace and reconciliation among all persons;
- Stand with the poor and the powerless and commit themselves to their needs.

When interacting in person or online, the members of All Saints Lutheran Church will not:

- Minimize or marginalize the needs of any person;
- Promote or support the abuse of any person based on their God-given characteristics or identity;
- Dehumanize or objectify any person, or suggest in any way that any child of God does not reflect the face of their Creator;
- Sow division or discord among the people of God;
- Minimize or dismiss the needs of those who are poor, powerless, or otherwise in need of our compassion and solidarity.

“Love Kindness”

When interacting in person or online, the members of All Saints Lutheran Church will:

- Nurture members and friends of the congregation in the Word of God so as to grow in faith and hope and love;
- Exercise their Christian calling in their daily life in person and online;
- Reflect the gifts of the Spirit in their life together: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Knowledge, Fortitude, Piety, and Fear of the Lord

When interacting in person or online, the members of All Saints Lutheran Church will not:

- Engage in or support abusive language or actions against any person;
- Bully, mock, or belittle any person.

“Walk Humbly”

When interacting in person or online, the members of All Saints Lutheran Church will:

- Manifest the unity of the people of God, joining with other Christians on prayer and action;
- Engage in good faith dialogues with people of all opinions and points of view;
- When presenting information which may trigger serious responses in those who have experienced trauma, make efforts to warn anyone in the discussion that your words may trigger such a response with a “content warning” or “trigger warning”;
- Assume positive intent while engaging in discussion;
- Gently point out negative impacts of the words and actions of those who are engaging in good faith discussions.

When interacting in person or online, the members of All Saints Lutheran Church will not:

- Dismiss or abuse any member of another denomination, sect, or branch of the diverse and beautiful family tree of the people of God;
- Attack the personhood or inherent dignity of people with whom they disagree, even those whose views and opinions are difficult to reconcile with their own.

Discipline

As stated in our Constitution (C15.01) “conduct grossly unbecoming a member of the Church of Christ, or persistent trouble-making in this congregation are sufficient cause for discipline of a member”. This includes conduct online in virtual spaces associated with All Saints Lutheran Church. In addition to the repercussions outlined in the Constitution, the following repercussions will be exercised in our online spaces:

- If a member of All Saints Lutheran Church is in violation of this Code of Conduct in their online behavior, they should be admonished by other members of the congregation to remove the offending content voluntarily.
- If the offending member of the church is unwilling to remove the content voluntarily, the Digital Media Team in consultation with the Mutual Ministry Committee will determine if the offending content violates this Code of Conduct, and if so, they will remove the content and will temporarily mute or ban the offending member from the social media platforms which are associated with All Saints Lutheran Church.
- Since the purpose of discipline is always reconciliation, once the offending member of the church has moved through the discipline process outlined in the Constitution and has been reconciled to the church, their privileges to post and comment on social media platforms which are associated with All Saints Lutheran Church will be restored.