



DIOCESE OF AUSTIN

COMMUNICATIONS



DIocese OF AUSTIN

Policy on Acceptable Use of the Internet

Effective 2005

In order to serve the needs of the people of God in the Diocese of Austin and to be responsible stewards of the gifts given to the diocese, the Diocese of Austin issues the following policy:

- I. The diocese's goal in using the Internet is:
 - A. To improve communication among diocesan and parish personnel
 - B. To provide information to a larger audience
 - C. To allow access to the wealth of information available on the Internet to parish and diocesan personnel.
- II. The Internet should be viewed as a tool to further the purposes and goals of the diocese, which is the work of the Roman Catholic Church. It is therefore imperative that members conduct themselves in a responsible, ethical, and polite manner while using the Internet.
- III. The intent of the diocese's Acceptable Use Policy is to ensure that all uses of the Internet are consistent with the purposes of the diocese.
 - A. The policy does not attempt to articulate all required or proscribed behavior by its members. The Internet is an open network in both implementation and spirit. Technical measures could have been invoked to constrain Internet use but they would have limited the utility of the Internet.
 - B. Instead, in any specific situation, each individual's judgment of appropriate conduct is relied upon. To assist in such judgment, the following general guidelines are offered:
 1. All use of the diocesan Internet accounts must be in support of the work of the Church and the diocese.
 2. Any use of the Internet through diocesan accounts for illegal purposes or in support of illegal activities is prohibited.

3. Any use of the Internet through diocesan accounts to communicate threatening, abusive, sexually oriented/explicit, or obscene language or material is prohibited.
4. Any use of diocesan e-mail accounts or websites for commercial purposes is prohibited.
5. Any use of diocesan e-mail accounts or websites for partisan political lobbying is prohibited.
6. No use of the Internet shall serve to disrupt the use of the network by other users.
7. All material viewed on websites should be considered copyrighted and not available for reproduction unless specifically stated otherwise or unless specific permission is granted for reproduction.
 - a. All parishes, schools, and offices operating under the auspices of the Austin Diocese may reproduce all material on the diocesan website: www.austindiocese.org.
8. Diocesan e-mail accounts should be used only by the authorized user(s) of the account for the authorized purpose. Passwords allowing entry into secured sections of the diocese's website should be used only by authorized personnel.
9. All communications and information accessible via the Internet should be assumed to be private property.
 - a. Permission should be received before a user posts information released by other individuals or parishes.
 - b. Users should also make every effort to validate information and sources before posting information and to list sources when passing along information received.
10. Users are strongly encouraged to maintain virus protection software on their computers used for telecommunications.
11. Schools and any other entities that allow children to have access to the Internet must have safeguards to ensure that children cannot access inappropriate material.
12. All diocesan-related conferences (chat rooms) and bulletin boards will be moderated.



DIocese OF AUSTIN

Standards for Website Planning, Setup and Design

Effective 2005

As parishes move online with an e-mail address and a connection to the World Wide Web, some are also considering a website of their own. Others already have a website. Consider following these suggested standards when planning for your parish website. These standards have been adopted by the Diocese of Austin and are recommended to all parishes within the diocese.

I. Website Purpose and Goals

- A. First determine the purpose and goals of your website. Ask yourself questions like:
 - 1. What would be helpful to parishioners?
 - 2. What information is most commonly requested from church staff and receptionists/gatekeepers?
 - 3. Are there any repetitive tasks that can be handled by the website?
- B. Consider how you will evaluate the effectiveness of your website in accomplishing its purpose and goals. For example, time on phone reduced by 50 percent by directing callers to the website for answers to frequently asked questions.

II. Domain Name Registration

A domain name is a unique World Wide Web address, such as www.yourparish.com. A domain name is not required in order to have a website but it is strongly recommended. The cost is minimal, at around \$10 to \$35 per year depending on where you register the name.

A. Naming Conventions

1. The name you want may not be available. Consider using the following names (in this order) when selecting a domain name for your parish.
 - a. yourparish.com, .org, .net, .info
(i.e. stmatthew.com)
 - b. yourparishcity.com, .org, .net, .info
(i.e. stmatthewaustin.com)
 - c. your-parish.com, .org, .net, .info
(i.e. st-matthew.com)
 - d. your-parish-city.com, .org, .net, .info
(i.e. st-matthew-austin.com)
 - e. nameparish.com, .org, .net, .info
(i.e. stmatthewparish.com)
 - f. name-parish.com, .org, .net, .info
(i.e. st-matthew-parish.com)
 - g. namecatholicparish.com, .org, .net, .info
(i.e. stmatthewcatholicparish.com)
 - h. name-catholic-parish.com, .org, .net, .info
(i.e. st-matthew-catholic-parish.com)
2. If the domain name you want is not available by following this procedure and you would like additional assistance, contact the diocesan web master.

B. Register.com

You may register a domain name with one of many companies but the diocese recommends Register.com (www.register.com).

Please follow these steps to register your domain name:

1. Go to www.register.com and enter your desired domain name in the “start” box (i.e. “yourparish” without the “www” and extension “.com.”).
2. Next, select your desired extension from the dropdown box next to the start box (i.e. “.com,” “.org,” “.net,” “.info,” etc.).
3. Click the “go” or “submit” button to see if this domain name is available.
4. If the name you’ve entered is not available go back and enter another name (following the naming hierarchy listed above) repeating the process until you find a name that is available.
5. Setup your Register.com account
 - a. If you are a new customer you will be asked to create an account.
 - b. The name you enter here will be considered the owner of the domain name. Enter the name of someone who is in a permanent position at your parish (i.e. the pastor, a deacon, office manager, or business manager).
 - i. This person will have control over the domain and will be responsible for making any changes to contact information and nameservers in the future.
 - ii. If this person leaves your parish you must update the contact information on your registrar account in order to retain access to the account.

IMPORTANT: Print any confirmation screens during the registration and account setup process and keep them in a file called “website Information.”

- a. You will be asked to create a username and password to access your account later. Please write these down and keep them in this file.
- b. Keep this file in a safe place, preferably with the other parish administrative files, as you will need to find it again later.

6. If you have any questions during the registration process, contact the diocesan web master.

III. Website Hosting

Who will host your website? A web host is a company with a server where your website files will be stored and “served” via the World Wide Web. There are thousands of hosts to choose from, each with their own pricing, products, services, benefits, and caveats. Most web hosts offer e-mail hosting too. This means you may be able to have e-mail accounts like yourname@yourparish.com.

- A. The following features and services are recommended for providers hosting Diocesan websites:
 1. Server O/S – Linux running Apache
 2. PHP, MySQL, phpMyAdmin
 3. 1GB storage (minimum)
 4. 10 e-mail accounts (minimum)
 5. Web-based e-mail access (recommended)
 6. Account management console (recommended)
- B. You may search for a web host online by typing “web hosting” or “website hosting” into a search engine like Google.
 1. If you prefer to use a local web host try adding your location (such as “Austin”) to your search query.
 2. As you search for a web host please choose one that offers the features listed above.
 3. If you have any questions while searching for a suitable web host, contact the diocesan web master.

NOTE: The Austin Diocese also provides minimal web hosting in that you may have your website hosted on the diocesan website at no charge. However, the diocese does not provide e-mail accounts, web-based e-mail access or an account management console. Any websites hosted on the diocesan server will have addresses like www.austindiocese.org/yourparish and will not use a unique domain name.

- C. As with domain name registration, you will be asked to set up an account.
 - 1. Print any confirmation screens during the account setup process and keep them in a file called “website information.”
 - 2. You will be asked to create a username and password to access your account later. Please write these down and keep them in this file.
 - 3. Keep this file in a safe place, preferably with the other parish administrative files, as you will need to find it again later.

IV. Website Maintenance

Who will manage your website after it is launched? Will they need special tools or software to update the website?

- A. If your website is not continually updated with new information it could quickly become irrelevant.
 - 1. It is advantageous if a volunteer offers to help design your parish website but is he or she willing and able to do at least weekly updates? If not, can he or she train someone on your parish staff to do the updates?
 - 2. If you pay a company to design the website, ask about a content management system that would allow you to manage certain content using a web browser or how much their fees are for ongoing maintenance.
 - a. The company may also be able to train a staff person to do basic maintenance tasks.

V. Gathering Content

- A. Content is the most important part of your website. Ask yourself:
 - 1. “What information are people looking for concerning our parish?”
 - 2. If you’re having trouble deciding what content to include on your website, try looking at the “competition.”
 - 3. Do a Google search for the phrase “Austin churches” to see what other church websites are publishing.

B. The Diocese of Austin recommends that all parish websites have at least the following areas of content:

1. About Us

A brief synopsis of your parish, its mission, and/or history, and possibly a little information about the saint after which your parish was named. You may also want to include a little information about your pastor and other clergy or people in leadership positions.

2. Contact Us

Physical address, office phone number and possibly a map showing your location in the immediate area.

a. Do not display an e-mail address but, rather, a contact form.

i. See [§ X: Other Considerations](#) (Page Z-14) below for more information.

3. Mass Times

A list of Mass times, when the sacrament of penance is offered and any other regular services or meetings.

4. Protecting God's Children

A list of EIM¹ workshops at your parish with a short description of the program and its purpose. You may also wish to refer to the Austin Diocese's website for more information on this program.

5. Link to the Diocese of Austin, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the Vatican

a. Include a link back to the austindiocese.org website.

b. This does not need to be a main feature or element in your website template, but could be included in your footer.

c. Also include the USCCB (www.usccb.org) and the Vatican (www.vatican.va) websites.

d. Be cautious of including links to other websites and be sure that your pastor has approved all links.

¹ Policy on Ethics and Integrity in Ministry

6. Report Abuse

- a. This may also be in your footer.
- b. This should be a link to download this document:
<http://www.austindiocese.org/policies/notice-of-concern.pdf>

C. The previously mentioned content areas will probably remain unchanged, or static, for long periods of time but you should also consider including other content areas that would be useful to parishioners and the general public. These content areas will need to be updated more frequently; so, before you decide to include one of these modules in your website, be sure you have a plan for maintaining them:

1. Calendar

- a. Most content management systems will include a calendar module. Ask your designer about it.
- b. A simple list of upcoming events would also suffice but be sure you have a plan for updating it weekly.

2. Resources

- a. This is a place where commonly used forms or documents can be made available to your parishioners (or the general public) to be viewed or downloaded.
- b. Ask your web designer about password-protecting this section or certain documents if necessary.

3. Ministries

This section of your website should include information about the active or ongoing ministries in your parish including a way to contact their leaders.

4. Bulletin or Newsletter

Publish announcements, news, or even an online newsletter. Ask your designer about including this in your content management system.

5. Photo Gallery

Publish photos from special events.

- a. Ask your designer about including this in your content management system or about software options for creating your photo galleries.
- b. See § IX: *Graphics and Images* (Page Z-13) below for more specific information on graphics and photos.

VI. Website Content and Disclaimers

- A. Be careful in placing content on your website.
 1. Web content is accessible to everyone, including the local media and those who may not be sympathetic with the teachings of the Church.
 2. Any content on your website could be perceived as an endorsement by the Roman Catholic Church; use disclaimers often.
 3. See § X: *Other Considerations* (Page Z-14) below for more information on disclaimers.

VII. Organizing Content

- A. Once you have your content gathered, you should organize it in outline format. Break up this outline into main sections and subsections as illustrated in the following example:
 - Homepage
 - Welcome message
 - Sign up for newsletter
 - Announcements
 - Ministries
 - Youth
 - Religious Education
 - Contact Us
 - Etc.
- B. This document is useful to your web designer in organizing your website assets and navigation structure. Please be thorough and descriptive when building this document.

VIII. Template Design

All websites should use a standard layout or template. The purpose of using a template is to identify to the website visitor where they are on the Internet and to provide a point of reference for navigating within a particular website.

- A. Your website template should include several main areas: Header, Navigation, Content, and Footer.
- B. The example below illustrates a sample template which includes these main areas:

Header

Your parish name and maybe a logo

Navigation

Content

- Link 1
- Link 2
- Link 3
- Link 4

This is where the text and other content items will be placed for each page on your website.

Footer

©XXXX² Your Parish Name Here
 Address, City, ST ZIP – Phone
 Austin Diocese – Protecting God’s Children – Report Abuse

- 1. Your website does not have to use this particular layout but it’s a good place to start. Your web designer may have another layout in mind, or they may position these elements differently, but the purpose is to provide a consistent structure to your website.

IX. Graphics and Images

- A. The use of graphics (photos and other art) in your website is an easy way to enhance the user experience, but be careful how they are used.
 - 1. Many computer users do not have the latest and greatest technology at their fingertips when browsing the web and they could become frustrated while waiting for large images to download while visiting your website.
 - 2. Many visitors to your website could be using dial-up Internet connections. Be sure to keep this in mind when including graphics and images on your website.

² Replace “XXXX” with current year.

3. Some visitors may also have small screens (15" monitor with 800x600 screen resolution).
- B. Use the following standards for images on your website:
1. Resolution: 72 dpi (dots per inch)
 2. Dimensions: less than 800 pixels wide
 3. Format: .JPG for photos, .GIF for line art
- C. If you want to include large photos on your website, consider the use of thumbnail images.
- For example, let's say you want to show five (5) photos of a recent youth activity on the youth ministry page. Instead of inserting all five large images directly into the document flow, you should insert smaller thumbnail images which the user can click to view their larger versions. This lets the user decide how their bandwidth is used rather than forcing them to download data they may not have wanted in the first place.
- D. If you have any questions regarding the use of images on your website, contact the diocesan web master.

X. Other Considerations

A. E-mail Addresses

1. Do not show any e-mail addresses.
 - a. This is an open invitation for SPAM and junk e-mail. Once a Spammer harvests your e-mail address from the website, it's virtually impossible to remove it from their lists.

XI. Web Logs, Blogs, Message Boards

As previously mentioned, you must be careful of the content that goes on your website. The use of message boards or web logs (blogs) may streamline the process of communication between certain groups of parishioners, but they also leave you open to a multitude of liabilities.

- A. Any part of your website that automatically publishes user-contributed content must be carefully monitored by an administrator on a regular basis.

1. If any questionable content shows up on a blog or message board associated with your website, someone (preferably your web master and at least one other parish leader) must have administrative access and be able to remove the questionable content immediately.

XII. Disclaimers

- A. Pages with content that could be considered controversial and sections of your website that publish user-contributed content should include a disclaimer message.
- B. It must be made clear that any views or opinions expressed on message boards and blogs are those of the contributors and not of the parish, diocese, or Roman Catholic Church.
- C. The same must also apply to offsite links, making a clear distinction between your website and any others.



DIocese OF AUSTIN

Recommendations for Use of Social Networking Sites in a Parish and Catholic School Setting

January 3, 2011

I. Background

Many people today utilize popular social networking sites with much greater regularity than more traditional e-mail accounts. In fact, the use of such sites has grown so popular among teenagers that it is becoming increasingly difficult to reach a significant demographic in that population without using it. It is therefore becoming more common for ministry professionals and volunteers to use this technology to advertise their events and otherwise communicate with teens in ways that have previously been done in person, print, or even e-mail. As ministry leaders utilize these new ways to reach out to youth, questions arise as to the proper use of such social networking sites, at least as they pertain to ministry with children. In the interest of making the use of this technology a safe place for youth and ministry leaders, the following recommendations have been put in place.

II. Which Site(s) Should I Use?

A. It is clear that, at the time of the writing of this policy, there are only three (3) primary secular social networking sites that are popular enough among youth to warrant consideration as a primary tool for youth in ministry. These sites are MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter.

B. At the writing of this policy, it is also clear that Facebook leaves the user with a much greater amount of control over one's account than MySpace in terms of being able to hide aspects of one's account from certain users, making it possible to limit what youth might be exposed to if they access a site.

C. Recommendation

1. Youth ministry leaders using a social networking site for professional purposes in contact with youth should only utilize Facebook.
2. MySpace is not currently recommended due to its lack of user controls.

3. Twitter can be used in conjunction with Facebook but should not be used exclusively.

III. Separation of Professional and Personal Use

A. There are two types of user accounts on Facebook: individual accounts and group accounts. Group accounts are comparable to static web pages and do not allow for the level of interaction with other users that makes social networking sites useful in ministry. Ministry leaders are therefore forced to create individual accounts to interact with youth. This brings up questions concerning the desire to separate professional use of a networking site from its personal use. The terms of service on Facebook forbid a user to register for more than one account or impersonate another entity which does not allow having one site for personal use and another for professional use.

B. Recommendations

1. Ministry leaders using a social networking site for professional purposes in contact with youth may only use it for professional purposes and not mix personal use with professional use.
2. If ministry leaders choose to also use their social networking site for personal purposes, they are strongly encouraged to familiarize themselves with the many features that allow one to hide certain elements of their site from view as well as set limits on what certain users may access.
3. Ministry leaders must be aware that, if they use their social networking site for personal and professional purposes, they are opening up their personal lives to much greater public scrutiny.
 - a. For this reason, they must be extremely vigilant in maintaining the representation of themselves as a strong Catholic Christian who works as a professional minister in all personal interactions that can be viewed publicly.
 - b. Anything that could cause scandal to the ministry must be avoided. Such things may include inappropriate use of alcohol, advocacy of inappropriate music/movies, inappropriate language, or the expression of opinions that are contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church.
 - i. This includes inappropriate photographs or videos of one's self or others
 - c. The private endorsement of any political candidate or party is also expressly forbidden.

IV. Photographs of Minors

Photographs are extremely common on the web, and are freely posted and passed around by all who use social networking sites. There is sometimes concern that the posting of the photograph of a minor on the Internet may expose that child to a child predator.

- A. To the extent that this is a danger, photographs on a social networking site are actually much safer than on a regular web page because they are always limited to those who have been officially recognized and accepted by the site user, whereas a website is viewable by anyone.
- B. It could be very helpful if youth ministers communicate this to concerned parents.
- C. Nonetheless, a parent always reserves the right to have any photograph of their own child removed from an Internet website.
- D. While it is not possible to control what pictures of youth will be posted by other youth who are connected to a ministry website, the following recommendations are put forth to help keep children safe and give parents the right to determine the use of photographs of their children.

E. Recommendations

1. A child's image should not be used on the Internet without written permission from a parent.
2. Such permission is normally part of the standard permission and release form that parents must sign in order to allow their children to participate in any activity, so that any pictures taken of the child participating in that activity are automatically approved.
3. The standard line already in place on the approved form reads: "I agree that the Bishop or his agents may use my child's portrait or photograph for promotional purposes, website and office functions."
4. Images of children posted on the Internet should not be associated with names unless there is specific permission granted by the parent for that additional connection.
5. Use of the images of children on a website should be limited to the purpose of appropriate advertisement of ministry related events.

V. Other limitations

Despite the best written policies, abuses sometimes occur. Therefore, the following recommendations are in place to assist ministry leaders in maintaining a safe environment:

- A. If a ministry leader is utilizing a social networking site for ministry, even if it is for professional and private purposes, the pastor or his designee must be aware of its use and be provided a way to view the site.
 - 1. This could be as open as giving the pastor the username and password, or it could be as restrictive as the pastor reserving the right to demand being able to view the site in the presence of the ministry leader with no advance warning.
- B. While we encourage pastors to allow use of networking sites in accordance with this recommendation letter, the pastor or his designee reserves the right to forbid a ministry leader from using a social networking site for professional purposes in contact with youth of his parish.
- C. Parents may be given the opportunity to be “friends” of the minister in order to keep abreast of what is going on in the ministry.
- D. Social needs should not be the sole means of communication for those who work with teens. Parish and school e-mail accounts should also be used and parents should be included/copied on e-mails to youth.



DIocese OF AUSTIN

Parish/School Website Guidelines

January 3, 2011

I. Relevant Content

Material contained on a parish or school website should be relevant to the parish or school and their intended audience. [The Policy on Acceptable Use of the Internet](#) (Pages Z-3 – 4) also applies to information listed on a parish or school website. All ministry websites should link to the parish or school website.

II. Approval of Posted Materials

- A. Prior to “going live” on the Internet web page, content must be reviewed by a content administrator who may be the pastor, school principal, or designated person who is appropriately qualified to review such content for the parish or school.
- B. The content administrator should regularly monitor the web pages and initiate any corrections.
- C. The content administrator should approve any new content.
- D. Regardless of who serves as content administrator, final approval to add or remove content on the parish or school website lies with the pastor and/or principal.

III. Photos

- A. Unless express permission is granted, photos or videos of minors should not be accompanied by identifying information (e.g., name or address).
- B. Each parish and school should have a signed parental/guardian multi-media release form on file before placing an image of a minor on a website. A multi-media release sample form can be found on page Z-22 ([Appendix I: Sample Multi-Media Release](#)).

IV. Child Protection

- A. Websites should not be used to collect information from minors (e.g. name, phone number, home address, e-mail address, telephone number, hobbies, interests, or any other information that would allow someone to contact the child).
- B. Parishes/Schools may be subject to the provisions of the Children's On-Line Privacy Protection Act (COPPA):
www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/edcams/kidzprivacy/biz.htm

V. Defamatory Comments

Any inappropriate, defamatory, or harassing content or message on a parish or school website, or one linked to a parish or school, is prohibited.

VI. Posting of Articles from Out-of-House Sources

- A. Prior to posting articles (either from print or another website), permission from the author or copyright holder must be obtained.
 - 1. This includes any articles that appear within the *Catholic Spirit*.
 - 2. Copyright laws prohibit substantial reproduction of another's work in any form (print, broadcast, Internet) without permission of the copyright holder. This applies to music and photographs as well as words. Even when a work has not been formally registered with the Copyright Office, the holder may still claim (and be entitled to exercise) common law copyrights.
 - 3. It is permissible to quote a few sentences, however, being careful to attribute them to the author when known.

VII. Acknowledgement of Parish or School Donors

An acknowledgement page of donors contributing to the parish or school is allowed provided that the school or parish has the donor's permission and does not maintain any links to commercial sites from the donor page.

VIII. Links to Other Websites

If there are any questionable links to other religious or Catholic sites, the pastor or principal will refer the issue to the Diocesan Communications Director.

