

New England Conference
Appendix to Candidacy Guidebook
(Answering the Call, 2016)
#10 Social Media Session

Homework:

- (1) Become Facebook friends with your mentor.
- (2) Read "3 Simple Rules of Social Media"

by Eric Seiberling

This text begins on the next page of this document and was borrowed from
<http://www.umcom.org/learn/3-simple-rules-of-social-media>

Mentoring Session:

- (1) Discuss "3 Simple Rules of Social Media" (text on the next page) with your Mentor
- (2) Open your Facebook page and discuss its contents with your mentor



3 simple rules of social media

By Eric Seiberling

In his book [Three Simple Rules: A Wesleyan Way of Living](#), retired United Methodist Bishop Rueben P. Job uses John Wesley's three general rules to give Christians a guide for living a faithful life. The book is published by the United Methodist Publishing House.

The rules from Wesley, the founder of Methodism, are simple: "Do no harm. Do good. Stay in love with God." These rules also apply to how we live our online lives in social media. The Rev. Dan Gangler, director of communications in the Indiana Conference, expanded on Job's ideas in his article

[“3 Simple Rules for Social Media.”](#) Michael Rich, communications coordinator in [Western North Carolina Conference](#), did the same in his article [“Social Media – 3 Simple Rules.”](#) Both advise ways to follow the rules when using social media.

Rule #1: Do no harm.

Job writes, “To do no harm means that I will be on guard so that all my actions and even my silence will not add injury to another of God’s children or to any part of God’s creation.” Doing no harm means respecting the cultures and life situations of those with whom we minister.

When we engage with others online, we may forget that living, breathing people with thoughts and feelings are on the other end of the digital conversation. With almost 70 percent of all communication being nonverbal, we may easily misunderstand what someone is trying to convey or how another interprets our intentions. It is easy to focus so much on proving a particular point that we cause unintended harm.

When engaging in social media activities, take the time to discern both the intention and the potential consequences of online engagement:

What is the intent of the post? Does it show Christ’s love or does it focus on judgment and condemnation?

Do I speak disparagingly about anyone involved? Do I try to use facts and opinions to manipulate others to my viewpoint?

Could this post “do harm” to the reputation of Christ, the church or another person or organization?

Could someone interpret the post as harmful, offensive, rude or distasteful?

Does this interaction recognize each person involved as a “loved child of God – a recipient of love unearned, unlimited and underserved – just like myself”?

Rule #2: Do good.

Job writes, “My desire to do good is in response to God’s invitation to follow Jesus, and it is in my control. I can determine to extend hospitality and goodness to all I meet.” Doing all the good we can means to engage others proactively in a way that “nourished goodness and strengthens community.” Assess every word and act to determine if it brings God’s grace and goodness to others.

Whether it is Facebook, Instagram or something else, social media very quickly embeds us in other people’s lives. How we engage online can have a profound effect on the people with whom we connect. Use social media to extend hospitality and goodness to all or to demonstrate God’s love to digital neighbors.

Whether engaging as an individual or as a representative of your church, think about every status update, comment or post as an outlet of “doing good.”

Would you describe the post as “good”? Does it reflect God’s interest or your own self-interest or will? Does it serve the good of the community and those in it?

Will it help God’s reign and fellow believers? How will those outside the church perceive it? How will people of different cultural or faith backgrounds receive it?

Do you communicate effectively by asking questions and providing information?

Rule #3: Stay in love with God.

Job writes that as we stay in love with God, we "find our moral direction, our wisdom, our courage, our strength to live faithfully from the One who authored us, called us, sustains us, and sends us into the world as witnesses who daily practice the way of living with Jesus."

Social media can be a powerful channel to “re-present” Christ to the community outside the church building. Stories can show how God transforms lives, communities and the world. Social media provides ways to share those stories that help all of us to “stay in love with God.”

Social media, like other ministry, can lead to emotional burnout and exhaustion. We can overextend ourselves in too many people’s lives or engage in too many concerns. We must find a balance between sharing God’s love and sustaining efforts over time.

What stories can you tell or share online to help others stay in love with God?

How does social media help you to stay in love with God? How does it hinder you?

How can your social media contribution help others stay in love with God?

Handle with care

Social media is another channel to minister to those around us, but it must be used carefully. Words or comments posted online can go viral in a matter of hours. Focusing on “doing no harm, doing good and staying in love with God” can help ensure that we make a positive impact in the world.