

the LEADER

FIRST QUARTER 2012

A PUBLICATION FOR GUIDEONE INSURANCE CHURCH POLICYHOLDERS

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS

on safeguarding your ministry, or questions about any of the articles in this newsletter, call the GuideOne Center for Risk Management at 1-877-448-4331, ext. 5118, or visit our website at GuideOne.com

TO REPORT A CLAIM,

call the Guideline® toll-free at 1-888-748-4326 anytime – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION,

Please read this newsletter, initial below and route to others within your organization:

- Pastor
- Trustee chair
- Treasurer
- Children's coordinator
- Administrator
- Youth coordinator
- Board chair
- Secretary/Office



CHURCH SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES AND PRACTICES

NOT ONLY IS IT THE FASTEST GROWING FORM OF COMMUNICATION IN THE UNITED STATES, SOCIAL MEDIA ALSO IS QUICKLY BECOMING A USEFUL TOOL FOR ALL GENERATIONS.

As churches begin to embrace social media, they are finding it to be a practical way to communicate not only with members, but also the communities in which they serve. In many ways, social media has allowed people to get a feel for the church, its culture and its personality from the comfort of their own home.

Social media can connect volunteers, church personnel and members in ways that were previously impossible. Members who have questions or who want to continue their studies outside of their regular classes, or volunteers who need to discuss details of an upcoming event can now continue their conversations from home. It also can be a powerful form of evangelism, helping churches get their message out to the world. And, social media provides these services at very little cost.

Develop a Plan

With all of the benefits and opportunities social media has to offer, it should not be entered into lightly. Having a well thought out plan is key to creating a successful social media effort. While stepping into the social media pool may seem like a daunting task, it should truly be an extension of your current communication strategy. Keeping this in mind will make it easier to get started and keep your plan in line with the goals you've already set for your organization.

Define Your Audience

Identifying your audience will be important as you decide on which platforms you should be using to get your message out. Think about the information your audience will want to receive, how often they will want to be updated and the best way to deliver that information to them. Make sure your audience is receiving the information in a format useful to them and maintain regular contact.

Identify Appropriate Platforms

Once you have established your audience, you will be able to decide which platforms are appropriate for you to use. However, just because there are numerous platforms available and free to use, does not mean a church has to incorporate all of them into their plan, or begin using them all at the same time. These dynamic sites require constant monitoring and input to be effective. The best way to be successful with social media is to use the correct platforms for your message and objective, and remain consistent.

Define Your Process and Policies

It has been said before, but social media is not an area to jump into lightly. If it is a vehicle your church decides to move forward with, treat it like you would any other communications or building plan and create a well-defined roll out plan and communication process. Decide how much time you and your staff have to devote to social media, and if you are finding it

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hard to fit time into your current schedule, then it may not be the right time for your church to begin a social media push.

Because these sites are open to the public, anything can happen. Users can post negative comments about your organization or you could accidentally post a broken link or incorrect information. While we hope this never happens, establishing guidelines and having a policy in place will help keep everyone on the same page and aware of what is expected from them. Be sure to define what is acceptable, not only for those who are following, but also for staff members who are allowed to comment or create content for the platforms. Be clear in defining your consequences for violating these rules.

Measure Your Results

The true purpose of entering the social media realm is to grow your audience and increase awareness of your organization. As you begin to develop your social media plan, it is imperative you include a way to measure your success. It is important to keep in mind there is no proven way to measure your return on investment with social media like there is with standard advertising, and success can mean different things to different people.

Obtain Support From Your Congregation

Social media is a broad term and can be overwhelming or even scary to some. Getting your congregation on board and excited about your new plans to engage in this arena may be difficult, but it is critical to making the campaign a success. By showing them how social media will benefit the church and each individual, it may help your members get involved. Gaining a loyal core group of followers who are engaging in conversations on your platforms has the potential to interest outside users to begin following you as well. With so many active users, social media offers visibility to an organization that wasn't previously possible and may help your organization grow in ways you never imagined.

More information is also available on SafeChurch.com



SLIP AND FALLS PREVENTION FOR THE WINTER MONTHS

SLIP AND FALLS AT CHURCHES FROM SNOW AND ICE COVERED WALKING SURFACES ARE A COMMON CAUSE OF INJURIES TO CHURCH EMPLOYEES, MEMBERS AND GUESTS.

Churches are faced with the added exposure of people coming and going at all times during the day, seven days a week, increasing the need to monitor snow and ice conditions. To reduce the slip and fall exposures with snow and ice, formal procedures should be put in place to address snow and ice removal, including the following:

- Designate someone to monitor snow and ice conditions. This individual will be responsible to coordinate snow and ice removal operations.
- During the months when snow and ice will be a concern, monitor weather reports daily. This will give you advanced warning of approaching weather.
- Snow and ice removal equipment should be available and ready to go, including shovels, ice melt, snow blowers, etc.
- Snow removal should occur when one inch or more of snow has fallen or if ice conditions are present.
- Walkways in front of entrances should have de-icing products applied.
- Snow and ice will melt and water can accumulate inside the building at the entrances from foot traffic. These areas should be monitored closely for wet conditions. Make sure mats are in place and replaced if they become water logged. Consider providing additional ushers or volunteers to assist the elderly at the entrances.
- Look for ice conditions that could develop on walking surfaces from runoff from roofs, downspouts and other areas.
- Isolate problem areas by closing them to the general public, or install signs warning of the potential slip hazard. Make sure that by closing an area off, you are not redirecting foot traffic to other slip and trip hazards. (For example, re-routing sidewalk traffic that requires a user to step off the curb into a parking lot.)

For more slip and fall tips, visit SafeChurch.com

THE IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYEE BACKGROUND CHECKS

Anytime a child is violated, shock, horror and blame follow. When such an incident happens while that child is in the care of a church or religious organization, the impact to both the victim and the organization can be emotionally, financially and legally devastating.

Due to the emotion surrounding such crimes and the unfavorable publicity for religious organizations, it is recommended every organization have a written and followed child protection plan that includes a provision for background checks. These checks should be conducted on every employee and volunteer

who works with, or has contact with, children or youth. The purpose of background checks is to protect children and youth who are entrusted to your care and to preserve the mission and ministry of the organization.

GuideOne customers receive discounted pricing on national background checks with Shepherd's Watch, which is powered by one of the nation's largest screening organizations, LexisNexis. For complete screening information, go to SafeChurch.com and select Background Checks or call 1-877-446-3247.