



## **Mount Tabor Christian Church**

### **Communications Policies & Procedures**

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Mount Tabor Christian Church's Communications Team serves the church and congregation by managing our communications to most effectively and efficiently support MTCC's vision to see communities changed by Christ.

It's also the Communications Team's responsibility to:

- a. Ensure consistent, high quality, and appropriate communications to all members, regular attenders, and the neighboring communities.
- b. Ensure all communications are accurate and appropriate within the context of Mount Tabor's vision and mission.
- c. Effectively utilize the limited budgeted resources for approved communications.

## **1. Team Leader Communication**

### **1.1 Best Practices**

- a. The best way to communicate between ministry teams/groups is interpersonally. Have you ever communicated information about an event on a large scale only to find that some misunderstood the information, some didn't hear it at all, and some didn't realize the information pertained to them? Communicating directly with team members is the best way to alleviate that frustration and ensure clarity within your team.
- b. An even stronger reason to communicate this way is that it creates opportunities for discipleship. Making discipleship a priority in our ministry teams helps us build one of the key parts of our mission. Think about the relationship between a journeyman and an apprentice. In the same way, personal communication demonstrates value to the person being communicated to. The more individual communicating we can do, the clearer the communication will be and the stronger the relationship will be.
- c. This is how Jesus did it. He called each disciple individually, trained them personally, and was a part of their lives daily. This is the culture we want among our teams.

### **1.2 What to Communicate**

- a. Team leaders are responsible for communicating:
  - i. Team meetings
  - ii. Recruitment
  - iii. Scheduling
  - iv. Updates
  - v. All communication of pertinent details within the ministry

### **1.3 Team Support**

Communities Changed by Christ.



- a. To help you in communicating effectively with your team, the Communications Team will:
  - i. Assist in coming up with a plan that will most effectively communicate the need of your team. This may include:
  - ii. Access to Planning Center. Planning Center will provide you with ways to contact everyone on your team through phone, email, texts, etc.
  - iii. Creating a Facebook group under the Mount Tabor Christian Church umbrella if your ministry fits the social media guidelines
- b. For the reasons noted above, interpersonal communication will always be a part of any communication plan.
- c. If you have communication needs that are not specific to a team or group, or you have a special event. The rest of the manual will help you understand how it will be communicated.

## 2. Communication Projects

### 2.1 Communication Project Requests

- a. All Communication requests should be initiated through the Communications Team starting with a Communication Project Request Form. A Request Form link can be found at the bottom of Mount Tabor's homepage, this direct link here: <https://mtcchurch.churchcenter.com/people/forms/230238> or a printed form may be obtained through the church office (812.755.4696 or [office@mtcchurch.org](mailto:office@mtcchurch.org), M-Th 9 AM-2 PM). We try our best to be creative and meet deadlines. Team leaders, request management, and organization is key to that process. Requiring a request form helps us serve you. Here are a few guidelines for submitting requests:
  - i. The Communications Team needs a request before we start a new communications project. Team leaders are welcome to discuss projects with the Communications Team at any time. However, written communication requests help us make sure we're gathering all the right details and assure us that the project we talked about is needed and not just a brainstorming session.
  - ii. Project requests should be submitted at least three weeks prior to the date your ministry needs the communication (at least 6 weeks out from, 3 weeks for completion of a plan and 3 weeks for communication). More complex projects, particularly those that require us to print or create something using an outside vendor, will take longer to produce. The Communications Team cannot guarantee we will be able to meet your requested deadline without sufficient advance notice. Emergencies will be dealt with on a case by case basis by the Communication team.



- iii. Only MTCC team leaders should submit requests. Please do not have volunteers contact the Communications Team directly without a team leader connecting with us first.
- b. Communication requests are just that—requests. The Communications Team will make every effort to satisfy each one; however, limited space and resources may require us to prioritize at times. When this happens, we'll do so in accordance with the priority schedule, and we will communicate all decisions to you as quickly as possible. Thank you in advance for understanding and respecting the church's need to limit the number and length of communication vehicles in order to be good stewards of our church members' time, our environment, and church resources.

## **2.2 Use of Freelancers**

- a. From time to time, the Communications Team may choose to use a freelancer for design, video production, or other work. These decisions will be made based primarily on the schedule of the Communications Team. If you have a freelancer you would like to use for a project, please contact us before contacting the freelancer. All projects should start with Mount Tabor Christian Church's team and the appropriate team member(s) included in the interaction with the freelancer so that policies and branding standards are properly implemented.

## **2.3 Project Schedule**

- a. If you don't receive any project communication after you've sent your request, it can be easy to feel like it has dropped into the void—regardless of whether our team has already gotten started or not. The following generally outlines our strategy for communicating your project's progress.
- b. A Communications Team member will review your request and should contact you within a few days to let you know whether we can get started with what we have or whether we require additional details. If you do not hear back from us in a few days, you can follow up to be sure that we didn't somehow miss your project.
- c. If the Communications Team can get started with what we have, our initial contact will also let you know when you can expect to see a communication plan and general timeline for project completion.
- d. If the Communications Team requires additional details, we'll schedule a meeting or connect with you via email to talk through any needed information. We will let you know at the meeting when you can expect to see a communication plan and general timeline for project completion.
- e. Once a communication plan and timeline has been delivered, you can expect an update once your project has been finished.
- f. If you have questions about your project, you are always welcome to contact the Communications Team.



### 3. Communications Priority Schedule

#### 3.1 Process

- a. After the Communications Team receives a Communication Request, the Communications Team will help formulate a communications plan and identify which channels are most appropriate for the project. To help protect our channels from over-saturation and to help strengthen the value of our most important channels, we will use the following guidelines when creating those plans.

#### 3.1.1 Priority Schedule

Priority Level	Criteria	Possible Channels
ONE	Major church-wide events or announcements that affect at least 75% of congregation or are externally focused	In Service Announcement Announcement Slide Bulletin Blurb Website Newsletter Display (if needed) Social Media
TWO	Key ministry events that reach a majority of that ministry's audience	Ministry Page on Website Event Calendar Email Blast to Ministry List and/or Newsletter Social Media Page (if applicable)
THREE	Ministry event that does not reach a majority of the audience. Recurring ministry event, class, announcement, recruitment, etc.	Ministry Page on Website Event Calendar Newsletter Flyer (using template for distribution within ministry)
FOUR	Personal announcements (Reunions, open houses, weddings, baby showers, events not sponsored by the church, etc.)	Community bulletin board

#### 3.2 What if your event does not fit within the priority level 1-3?

- a. Social events (parties, showers, graduations, community events, etc.) will not be communicated through Mount Tabor Christian Church's communication channels.

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However, they may be displayed on bulletin board in the west hallway. Members are asked to use their church directory or may request an updated address list from the office to personally invite people they know to special events.

- i. Requests must be submitted online through the Communication Project Request Form.
- ii. Submissions are due by noon on Tuesdays.
- iii. Requests may be no larger than 18" x 24" and may be displayed up to three weeks based on content, timeline, resources, space, and availability.

\*paused due to changes with the Building Committee

#### 4. Communications Channels

- a. There are a wide range of channels available for the communication of ministry events and announcements. The following is not an exhaustive list of those channels, but a sample of the ones most commonly used.
- b. After a communications project is submitted, the Communications Team will help formulate a communication plan and identify the most appropriate channels.
- c. A significant portion of our congregation uses smartphones, tablets, and other digital technology. Many of these members of our community are engaged with our social media accounts and our website. These numbers are only growing. Therefore, as MTCC moves forward, while we will continue to use all of our channels for communication, we will be using digital media more and more. Our goal is to communicate most in the channels where our audience spends their time.

##### 4.1 Website

- a. The official website for Mount Tabor Christian Church can be found at [www.mtcchurch.org](http://www.mtcchurch.org). This will be the primary source of detailed information about our church, its ministries, and events.
- b. Our website is designed so that the content is most applicable to a first-time guest (externally focused). Information about our location, services, next steps, vision, mission, values, and sermons will be given space on the home page.
- c. Some ministries have individual landing pages, if there is enough content to warrant the space. Ministries may request events and information be highlighted on their individual landing pages. If no specific requests are made, the Communications Team will use its discretion in deciding what to highlight.
- d. Any requests for domain names or websites separate from the Mount Tabor Christian Church website must be approved by the Communications Team and Senior Pastor.



## 4.2 Social Media

- a. The Communications Team and staff maintain all of Mount Tabor Christian Church's social media accounts, including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. The Communications Team has a basic schedule we follow for the types of posts we share each week. The goal with social media content is that it is applicable to a majority of the congregation and an external audience. As a result, ministry specific events and announcements will rarely be promoted through social media. Below are some thoughts on our social media strategy that hopefully will help you understand our focus.

## 4.3 Social Media Strategy

- a. To fully leverage the power of social media, the content MTCC posts must be interactive. "Content is king" and good content will lead to interaction, interaction leads to affinity, affinity to community. Mount Tabor Christian Church's vision is to see communities changed by Christ. As such, part of our mission to accomplish this vision is to reach the lost, make disciples, and show grace. MTCC sees building a social media community as one part of accomplishing this mission.
- b. To read more about Mount Tabor Christian Church's use of social media, see the Social Media Index on page 14.

## 4.4 Email

- a. The Communications Team sends a Newsletter each week. This highlights the current sermon series and a handful of notable events for the coming week or two. Additionally, Communications will send standalone emails to promote church wide events and initiatives.
  - i. Requests must be submitted online through the Communication Project Request Form.
  - ii. Request should be submitted at least three weeks prior to the date your ministry needs the communication (at least 6 weeks out from, 3 weeks for completion of a plan and 3 weeks for communication).
  - iii. Approval will follow the priority schedule.
  - iv. Requests may be published up to three times based on content, timeline, resources, space, and availability.
- b. For certain ministries, the Communications Team understands there is a need to communicate information more frequently and to a more specific audience than what happens through the normal Communication channels. In these instances, ministries are permitted to use Planning Center to send out such emails to groups connected with their ministry. We would ask that you do this sparingly and strategically. Email sparingly so that your audience doesn't become oversaturated with repetitive emails. Email strategically, communicating the information that is absolutely necessary. All staff members will be asked to follow the style guide and

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formatting rules listed in the Branding Resource Guide to make everything is consistent with Mount Tabor Christian Church's brand. If you are in doubt whether you should send an email through Communications (by filling out a Communication Request) or Planning Center by yourself, please consult Communications Team for guidance.

- c. Additionally, Prayer Chain Requests are sent through the Newsletter list. Submissions for the prayer chain can be made by phone or email (812.755.4696 or [office@mtcchurch.org](mailto:office@mtcchurch.org), M-Th 9AM-2PM), through a link at the bottom of Mount Tabor's homepage, or through this direct link here: <https://mtcchurch.churchcenter.com/people/forms/15675>. In some instances, personal information may be removed from a request in order to protect people's right to privacy. In the event of someone's death, the Communication team will wait until we have heard from the immediate family. Once we have heard from them and services have been finalized, then we will send out an email to the prayer chain. This is to ensure families will have had time to communicate with their loved ones. In no instance do we want to be the first to notify a loved one of their family member's passing through email.
- d. Mass emails should not be sent from your individual email without blind carbon copying (Bcc) the recipients.

#### 4.5 Bulletin

- a. MTCC's Sunday bulletin is distributed during all Sunday services with the exception of some special occasions. Listings in the bulletin will include prayer list, metrics, sermon outline and the most relevant upcoming events. As such, announcements included should be detailed but brief.
  - i. Bulletin requests must be submitted online through the Communication Project Request Form.
  - ii. Requests should be submitted at least three weeks prior to the date your ministry needs the communication (at least 6 weeks out from, 3 weeks for completion of a plan and 3 weeks for communication).
  - iii. Approval will follow the priority schedule.
  - iv. Requests may be published up to three times based on content, timeline, resources, space, and availability.
- b. The Bulletin also includes a prayer list. Submissions for the prayer list can be made by phone or email (812.755.4696 or [office@mtcchurch.org](mailto:office@mtcchurch.org), M-Th 9AM-2PM) through a link at the bottom of Mount Tabor's homepage, or through this direct link here: <https://mtcchurch.churchcenter.com/people/forms/15675>. In some instances, personal information may be removed from a request in order to protect people's right to privacy.

#### 4.6 Stage Announcements



- a. Spoken announcements are very limited. MTCC aims to have two—no more than three—on a given Sunday. These must be requested in advance and will be considered for events that reach a majority of the church body (priority one), those determined to directly relate to the vision and mission of the church, and/or is essential for the entire congregation to hear. The selection of spoken announcements is a collaboration between the Communications Team, and the Senior Pastor. Stage Announcements shall be made by MTCC staff, worship leader or designated replacement.

#### **4.7 Announcement Slides**

- a. Announcement slides will be displayed on screens in our worship service before and after worship services. Some slides are standard each week and some recurring ministries may have slides regularly in the rotation.

#### **4.8 Videos**

- a. In service videos will be limited to storytelling videos or promotional videos for priority one events and announcements at the discretion of the Communications Team, Senior Pastor and Elder Team.
- b. Videos may be posted on the Mount Tabor Christian Church website or shared on Mount Tabor Christian Church's social media according to the priority schedule.
- c. The Communications Team will oversee the production of all in-service videos and website and social media videos. Some of these video production projects may be given to a trusted freelancer. All video requests should come to Communications first.

#### **4.9 Printed Materials**

- a. This category includes but is not limited to brochures, postcards, posters, bulletin inserts, and flyers.
- b. The website is the best source for dispensing information because it can be easily updated, there's more room to put all of the necessary information, and links for sign-ups and other information are easily embedded.
- c. However, the Communications Team knows it is sometimes nice to have something to put into a person's hand when you're telling them about an event or a ministry.
- d. The Communications Team will produce all material to be distributed to the whole congregation or to all of a major ministry (e.g. all women, all men, all adults, all families, all of Student Ministries).
- e. The Communications Team has a streamlined info flyer available for guests at the Welcome Center which pushes the guest toward our Sunday ministries, first steps, and to the website for more information. This flyer is printed in-house in small batches—appropriate to how much they are distributed—and are updated as needed.



#### **4.10 Flyers and Cards**

- a. The Communications Team can help develop a visual look and feel for you to use on a flyer or create a small flyer for you to print yourselves. Please contact us to talk through best practices for flyers before creating your own. We want to help you make it as good as it can be.
- b. From time to time ministries may want to make informational cards to hand out regarding an event or ministry. If you would like to use a card as part of your advertising for an event or ministry, please suggest it in your initial request. Cards are usually printed by an outside vendor and the cost is charged to the requesting ministry.

#### **4.11 Mailings**

- a. Church-wide mailings will be very limited and will require the permission of the Communications Team.
- b. Mailings to an entire ministry are generally discouraged. However, if they are required, material mailed will be designed and produced with the oversight of the Communications Team. The postage cost will be charged to the requesting ministry.

#### **4.12 Signage**

- a. Any permanent interior or exterior signage must be requested through and approved by the Communications Team.
- b. Permitted temporary signs include:
  - i. 36" by 24" foam core signs to be placed on an easel in the foyer.
- c. All temporary banners and signs will be designed and produced by the Communications Team. Printing cost will be charged to the ministry requesting them.
- d. Additional displays are occasionally allowed for the promotion of an event, though MTCC is very limited at this time by foyer space. Approval is based on the priority schedule or if it is a collaborative effort with outside organizations.

#### **4.13 Advertising**

- a. Any external advertising (e.g. in newspapers, community calendars, etc.) will be done for outreach and community focused-events at the discretion of the Communications Team, Senior Pastor, and Elder Team. We will secure advertising space and create all advertising materials when we choose to advertise.



## 5. Calendar Use and Communication of Events

### 5.1 Planning Center Events

- a. MTCC utilizes Planning Center Events for our scheduling. This allows all of staff to be linked together and have the most up to date information immediately. Here are some guidelines:
  - i. Events must be connected to a group.
  - ii. To create an event for a group, you must be a Team Leader (Main or Assistant), Coordinator, or staff member. Please note, MTCC uses some different titles for these roles. Essentially you have to have some leadership rights in the group to create an event; a team member cannot create an event.
  - i. If your event is on campus, request rooms and resources.
  - ii. If you want your event to show up on the calendar for public knowledge, you must request that through your Communication Request.

## 6. Best practices for events

- a. Since all events show on the same calendar on the website, please keep your audience in mind when you name an event. Be clear and specific. Eg. "Lunch for class" or "committee meeting" are not specific. "Pennington Class Lunch" or "Finance Committee: Fall Meeting" is specific.
- b. Write a description of the event with your audience in mind. You want to include pertinent details in the description so that someone can look at it and know what to expect. Don't feel that you have to make the description perfect, but please include the pertinent information and some description of the event.

## 7. Media Relations Policy

### 7.1 Mount Tabor's Media Representative

- a. One of Mount Tabor Christian Church's Elders or Senior Pastor will be the representative when the church office is contacted by local, state, or national media outlets.
- b. Media contacts include but are not limited to radio, television, web broadcasts and podcasts, social networks, blogs, and other Internet outlets. If you are contacted for comment, please direct any inquiries to the Communications Team. We will coordinate a response with the Senior Pastor and Elder Team.

### 7.2 Guidelines for Interacting with Media Contacts:

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- a. You may be asked by our Elder Team or Senior Pastor to comment on a story according to your area of ministry expertise. Comments should be brief, answering only the questions regarding the topic you are given.
- b. As you make your comments, be aware that any portion of what you say may be cut and used in an unintended context. Words should be chosen very carefully and in a manner that makes it difficult to take any bit—no matter how small—out of its intended context.
- c. You should feel free to ask the media contact to send you written questions so you can prepare an answer. If you choose to take this route, please respond promptly—preferably the same day—knowing your contact is always on a tight deadline and may choose to look elsewhere for comment. Prompt response will also establish Mount Tabor Christian Church as a credible and reliable resource for future stories.
- d. At no time should comments made to or conversations had with a media contact ever be considered “off-the-record.” Speak or write to media contacts under the assumption anything said or written can and will be used—regardless of the contact’s assurances to the contrary

### **7.3 Official Public Statements**

- a. All public statements—such as paper and electronic press releases—made on behalf of the church will be coordinated through the Communications Team in conjunction with our Senior Pastor and Elder Team.
- b. Communications about cancellations, closings or emergencies will be made through local new and radio stations, as well as Mount Tabor Christian Church’s website, Newsletter, and social media accounts.



## 8. SOCIAL MEDIA INDEX

### 8.1 Social Media Strategy

- a. To fully leverage the power of social media, the content MTCC posts must be interactive. “Content is king” and good content will lead to interaction, interaction leads to affinity, affinity to community. Mount Tabor Christian Church’s vision is to see communities changed by Christ. As such, part of our mission to accomplish this vision is to reach the lost, make disciples, and show grace. MTCC sees building social media community as one part of accomplishing this mission.

### 8.2 What is good social media content?

- a. Americans are assaulted with thousands of marketing messages per day so the Communications Teams wants our content to stand out. Otherwise, we are just contributing to the “noise.” We don’t want to oversaturate our audience so the focus of our content should be things that apply to a majority of the church. There is still a place to use social media to broadcast information about events and ministries but this should be done strategically and in a way that creates interaction.
- b. So, what is good content?
  - i. **Photos/videos**—Posts with photos/videos are more likely to be seen, liked/retweeted, and shared. This is also a great way to do visual storytelling.
  - ii. **Graphics/Infographics**—Many people are visual learners and graphics are great ways to visually represent quotes, sermon content, and other information.

### 8.3 Church Ministry Social Media Accounts

- a. No social media accounts should be opened in association with Mount Tabor Christian Church or its ministries without the Communications Team’s knowledge. Groups within the church (e.g., small groups or ministry teams) may want to create a private group for sharing information with a particular group. This does not require committee approval
- b. All social media should be used in accordance with Mount Tabor Christian Church’s Social Media policy.

### 8.4 Mount Tabor Christian Church’s Social Media Policy

- a. What is social media?
  - i. Social media is the means of interactions between and among people creating, sharing, and exchanging information and ideas in virtual networks and communities.
  - ii. Examples of social media would be: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Snapchat, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Blogs, etc.
- b. Why use social media?

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- i. Social media is a cultural force. Like it or not, it is here to stay and its changing the way the world interacts. Like anything else, it can be abused and idolized. Conversely, it can also be redeemed. While it will never replace face-to-face community, it can be used to enhance it. Social media can be a place to supplement our mission of reaching the lost, making disciples and showing grace.

## 8.5 Guidelines for Personal Use

- a. You are a representative of the church. While you may view your online presence as a personal project, many readers will associate you and your views with Mount Tabor Christian Church. In light of this, below are some guidelines regarding your personal use of social media:
  - i. **Not just friends but everyone:** As much as your social media account might feel like your cozy home on the Internet where friends stop by to catch up, it's really a public space. People can land on your page from a Google search and read just one post completely out of any other context. And that content? It lives on forever in Google, long after you've forgotten about it. So, think of your web space less like a family room and more like your front yard.
  - ii. **No distractions:** You'll want to be on the lookout for things that will distract from the mission of Mount Tabor Christian Church. You might post about something that is 100% accurate and true to our beliefs that can still draw unwanted attention to the church and take substantial time to manage and explain. In the same vein, MTCC is a body of believers that values unity and freedom so keep this in mind when posting.
  - iii. **When in doubt, throw it out:** A good rule of thumb is: when in doubt, throw it out. You'll rarely be disappointed in the things you DON'T post to social media; most regrets are from the things you DO post.
  - iv. **The Kingdom:** Be respectful to other churches, parachurch ministries, and nonprofits. Social media is not a place to be critical of other organizations, even when in disagreement.
  - v. **Maintain confidentiality:** Ask permission before reporting on conversations or meetings that are meant to be private or for internal use only. Financial information about the church should be kept private other than what is already public knowledge.
  - vi. **Be positive:** Whether you're responding to a snarky comment or trying to decide if you should write about something that's bothering you, you'll never regret taking the high road (and sometimes that road is not saying anything at all.)



- vii. **Be responsible at work:** Engaging in online social media at work for legitimate purposes is understandable. Please use sound judgment and common sense to prevent it from becoming a distraction at work.
- viii. **Your church email:** Please avoid associating your church email address with social media account information (logins, contact address, etc.).
- ix. **Legal:** You cannot post other people's copyrighted material. You assume full legal responsibility for all actions arising from your posts.

## 8.6 Guidelines for Ministry Use

- a. Generally speaking, the creation of social media accounts for individual ministries is discouraged, though pages or groups may be appropriate. The Communications wants to promote Mount Tabor Christian Church's "centralized" social media accounts as much as possible. The reasons for this are the following:
  - i. **Easy for the congregation to keep up with:** Centralized social media accounts make it simple for our congregation to connect with us and be exposed to all the church has to offer.
  - ii. **Easy to promote:** Having one centralized page/account for each social media allows us to have one URL to promote for connecting with us on Facebook, Instagram, etc. Instead of diluting our efforts by promoting multiple pages, we can pour all of our energy into one URL.
  - iii. **Maximizes potential reach:** The church's centralized accounts are going to have more followers, likes, etc. than individual ministries.
  - iv. **Less responsibility:** Having one centralized account per social media is more manageable than several accounts with several managers.
  - v. **Consistency:** For most ministries, there is not a consistent need to communicate information like what social media demands.

## 8.7 Guidelines for Creating Social Media Accounts

- a. There are situations when it may be appropriate to ask for the creation of a social media account, page, or group for an individual ministry. If you would like to pursue creating a social media account for your ministry, please notify the Communications Team to discuss. Criteria for determining whether or not a social media account may be created for a ministry will be based upon the following questions:
  - i. Is your intended audience inside or outside of the church?
  - ii. Does your ministry have enough information/content to communicate to justify the creation of a social media account?
  - iii. Will your ministry be able to post information/content on a consistent basis?
  - iv. Is your ministry willing to allow a member from the Communications Team to be an administrative member on the account (or privy to shared login information)?



- v. Is your ministry willing to abide by the standards set forth by the Communications Team regarding social media?
- vi. Does your ministry have someone in place who can manage this account and maintain the standards and consistency laid out by the Communications Team?