

How do we find the time for social media?

By [Carol Howard Merritt](#)

May 10, 2012

I'm here in Dayton, Ohio at the [Academy of Parish Clergy](#) gathering. We had a great conversation about social media. One question that arose in the midst of studying [Reframing Hope](#) was, "How do we manage the time? Our day is already full, and you're saying we need to social media on top of it all?"

Here are a few strategies for leaders to engage well in the midst of a busy church life.

**1) You don't have to do everything.** Pick one thing (or two, if you must!). There are so many things we ought to be doing—Linked In, Facebook, Twitter, blogs, podcasts, Pinterest—the list grows every day. But if you feel strapped for time, you won't be able to engage in every social media platform, so pick the one that you like doing. What interests you the most?

**2) Do what's fun.** Social media should be enjoyable. If you don't like it or it feels like a chore, then the drudgery will show in your content and your interactions.

**3) Maintain habits or a schedule.** When do you enjoy engaging in social media? Do you like reflecting on your day with a blog post at night? Do you enjoy catching up with Facebook when you're eating lunch? Do you read your Twitter stream when you're waiting for the subway or standing in line at the grocery store? If you don't have time in your day to set aside for social media, then you can always do it while you're doing something else.

**4) Delegate.** If you don't enjoy Facebook, but you have a church full of suburban moms who stay signed in and reading 24-hours a day, then ask one of them to start a page and update it for your church.

**5) Cross-post.** If you have a blog and you feel swamped with creating content, don't forget about the writing that you've already created. If you're a manuscript preacher, then you can extract a couple of stories from your sermon and create two posts. If you still have a newsletter, you can post your newsletter article. With a

blog, you don't have to let writing go to waste. If you had to cut a wonderful illustration from your sermon, because it didn't fit the point of the passage, then put it on your blog.

**6) Use social media as your spiritual practice.** If you have people under the age of 45 in your church, they may not call you to tell you about a major life change or ask for prayer. But they might put it in a Facebook status or a tweet. [Kent Ira Groff](#) taught me this week that engaging in social media can be a time for prayer and reflection as you think about the lives of the members of your church and your colleagues in ministry.

**7) Engage in what's already out there.** You may not be into social media, but that doesn't mean that your church has opted out from the Internet. Do a Google search on your church. Are there reviews on Google maps? Has someone talked about your church on Yelp? Has a recent visitor blogged about his experience? It's good to know what's out there. If you find a bad review, you can counterbalance that with positive reviews (ask members of your church to write good ones). If you find someone commenting about the church, it is vital to engage in loving ways. Even if the person commenting is not being loving, remember there may be a thousand other people watching how you will respond.

**8) Cut off the Internet.** Maybe you have the opposite problem. Maybe you love social media so much that you have a difficult time cutting it off. (That's the camp I'm usually in.) When I'm in a heated blog debate and I don't feel like I can look away, or I'm chatting away with friends on Twitter, but I need to get my work done, I just unplug. I turn off the 'net to write. And it's amazing—the Internet is still there when I turn it back on!

Managing our time is always difficult when it comes to being a church leader. But there are ways to do it, and still engage in social media.