

Church Calls for Social Networking Accountability

While many people believe social networking websites are a positive step in reconnecting and staying in touch with friends, a church in Crestwood, Ky., is demanding its clergy to sign a "MySpace, Facebook and Website Disclosure Agreement."

The Kentucky Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church is requiring its clergy members to "agree to allow the Kentucky Annual Conference to examine any and all MySpace, Facebook or other blog and website accounts."

The agreement asks for a MySpace screen name and web address, as well as a Facebook user name. It also asks that the clergy member agree to add "the Kentucky Annual Conference as a friend on these sites."

"I understand that any information of a questionable nature on these sites that are written and/or posted by me, could affect my status as a Candidate/Resident in the Ordination process with the Kentucky Annual Conference," the agreement says.

This disclosure agreement is not the first time a church has attempted to guard or altogether stop its staff from using social networking sites.

In November, pastor Cedric Miller of Living Word Christian Fellowship Church in Neptune, N.J., told his married church leaders to cancel their Facebook accounts or they would need to resign. Just days after his declaration, Miller offered to step down after reports surfaced of his own 10-year-old affair.

According to Miller, he issued the mandate because 20 couples at his church have experienced problems because of misuse of

the social media site. He said he had been counseling couples that have had problems because one spouse reconnected with an old love interest through Facebook.

Although the measure was less extreme, Texas pastors Kerry and Chris Shook arranged a National Facebook Fast in August 2010, an event meant to encourage people to refocus on face-to-face relationships.

Many argue that affairs and other such sinister behaviors have existed since long before Facebook and MySpace. What do you think? *Should pastors and church clergy be required to follow certain guidelines or to delete their social networking accounts?*