

# 3 Ways Churches can use Facebook

## **Speaker Bio**

Kenny Scott is a parishioner of St George Orthodox Church in Prescott, Arizona. He serves as an alter server, a reader, greeter, parish council member, and lead of evangelism. He has been creating websites since 2007 and entered the murky waters of social media marketing in 2015. He is currently employed as the web developer for his local city government. He is also the owner of the Orthodox web design firm BOTH/AND Design at [bothanddesign.com](http://bothanddesign.com).

## ❖ **Links**

[Parish Website](#)

[Parish Facebook Page](#)

[Parish Facebook Group](#)

[BOTH/AND Design](#)

## **Synopsis**

A discussion on three of the many ways your parish can engage on Facebook, with both your local parish and your local community:

1. Your Church's Facebook page: Making it both active and attractive.
2. Facebook Groups: Practical ways to actively engage with your parish throughout the week by using Facebook groups.
3. Boosting Posts with Facebook: create awareness of your parish in your local community.

## **But first...Rule #1**

Always have two admins! Only having one admin on your Facebook page and group is a recipe for disaster. If this is the case for your page, please fix this issue right away. It will save you heartache in the future. I know many times when groups have lost access to their page because the sole admin was fired, moved, or died. Facebook will not grant you access to a page when this happens. Do not let this happen to you!

Recommendation: Your priest and your council president. If they are not active on Facebook, find two parishioners that are active on Facebook, and will likely attend your parish for a long time.

## ❖ **Links**

[How do I manage roles for my Facebook Page?](#)

## **Section 1: Your Church's Facebook Page**

### ***What is the goal?***

The main goal is to have your Facebook page appear active, and be attractive and interesting. You can do that by posting content that is engaging and that will cause your visitors to keep scrolling through for more. Your goal should be a Facebook page that says our parish is alive and believes that the Orthodox faith is vital, beautiful, and worth talking about!

### ***The Basics***

Your contact info. Make sure you have your phone number, email, address, service hours, and website listed.

If you don't have these basics covered, who cares how your feed looks? The purpose is to go from an engaging, digital feed to a vibrant, physical church. Let them know how to find you!

❖ **Links:**

[Basic Page Information](#)

**What should you post?**

Know your community. You should feel free to post anything you like. However, you should also consider your local community and its particular needs. Besides knowing that your community needs to know Christ and Orthodoxy, what do they need practically? Do they need advice on parenting, finances, loneliness? Post some articles about those things too. They don't necessarily need to be from Orthodox sources, though that is a bonus. Show your community that you care about their day-to-day needs as well as their spiritual needs.

**Quotes/Memes**

People love quotes. They engage with them through "likes". The more likes you get, the more that post is spread through Facebook. And Orthodoxy has a lot of quotes, specifically from the Fathers. Images with quotes can be found all over the internet. I have provided some sources to find them at the end of this section.

**Avoid text without images**

What if you have a quote you like, but you can't find it as a postable image? That is OK too. Post the quote as text and then find any image that is attractive, and post them together. A picture of a monk, a saint, a church, a cross, nature, etc. Avoid posting the text alone, as it will not get noticed as people scroll through their feed. Think, "Will this image cause people to stop scrolling?"

**Sermons**

If you record your sermons, post them. Video of your sermons? Even better. Post those. Don't forget to post the title or theme. Consider adding an engaging quote from the sermon itself.

**Articles, Podcasts, and Videos**

Did you write an article? Share it. Did you come across an article or video you like? Share that too. Bonus points if you include an engaging quote from the article. Let them know what they are in for.

**Photos**

Make an effort to take photos anytime your parish gathers. Liturgies, fellowship times, book studies, etc. Consider designating a few people as church photographers. They don't need to be professionals with high end cameras. Any phone will do the job and these days that is preferred as the photos look "authentic".

Our church has a Google account connected to Google's photo storage. We have a designated folder for photos to get uploaded into. That folder is shared with people who need access for social media and our church newsletter. People with access can upload directly to the folder, others without access need to send the photos to the people who do have access. People with access can then pick and choose what they want to use.

Avoid sharing too many photos at a time on any given Facebook post. 2-5 will do. Save the rest for your group page. There are two reasons for this: 1. People visiting your page will not scroll through too many photos unless they know the people in the photos. 2. Protect your children. In this day and age, it is good to be cautious of posting photos of children to the general public. You are much safer saving that for your parish group page.

## **Events**

Post about all of your events, big and small: festivals, book studies, choir practice-everything. You don't need to post about weekly recurring events each week, but once a month would be a good practice.

## **How often to post**

There is no exact science to this. There are some articles out there that would say there *is* a formula, however Facebook is constantly changing its algorithms to wreak havoc on those theories. If you want to go chasing that dragon, more power to you, but here are some basic guidelines that will keep you on track no matter what the Facebook algorithm throws at you.

Post once a day, Monday through Friday. Weekends can be a time of rest, but daily posting is the goal. You can post more than that, but commit to daily posting first. Then add whatever you like. When you find a great article, podcast, or video that you like, go ahead and post it right away. There is no right or wrong time to add to your feed, if you have already committed to daily postings. Here is the only caveat: If you post 4 times in one day, including your daily posting, it just becomes noise. Avoid posting more than twice *in addition* to your daily post, and you are golden.

### ❖ **Links**

[Is There a Generic Best Time to Post On Social Media Platforms?](#) Have fun!

## **Scheduling**

I personally use the native scheduler built into Facebook. There are other paid options out there with more bells and whistles, but Facebook has enough options for me. And it's free!

I schedule all my daily posts 2 months in advance. So if it is October, I am going to schedule November and December. If November, I'll schedule December and January. There is some overlap in case I don't get started on the first of the month, and it gives me some wiggle room.

This is what it looks for me...

I have a folder of spreadsheets full of quotes, articles, videos, and podcasts that I've collected over time. There are often many months worth of material in this folder. Taking material from this folder, I grab my favorite beverage, play a movie that I like, open up Facebook and get to scheduling posts. I personally schedule them to be posted all at noon. The hope is that people will first see them at their lunch break later in the day.

I plan themes for the day, so I can kinda tell when I am low on a certain item. For example...

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday are for quotes

Tuesday is for an article, video, or podcast about the faith

Thursday is for a convert story

This is what I do to make it simple for me. You can do whatever you like, but it is best to make a plan.

### ❖ **Links**

[Facebook | How do I schedule a post and manage scheduled posts for my Page?](#)

[Hootsuite | How to Schedule Facebook Posts to Save Time](#)

[Buffer | How to Schedule Facebook Posts to Be More Efficient and Get Better Results](#)

### ❖ **Resources for quotes**

Facebook (other Orthodox groups or pages): When you are scrolling through your feed and you see a quote you like, download it, and put it in your quote folder.

Pinterest: [Look up Orthodox Quotes](#)

Instagram: [GrowOrthodoxy](#), [Orthodaily](#), [Y2am\\_official](#), [orthodoxchurchfathers](#), [theartoforthodoxy](#), [creativeorthodoxy](#)

### **Section 1 Summary**

To make your Facebook page active and attractive, schedule months in advance posts for every day, Monday through Friday. In addition, post any relative items as you come across them.

### **Section 2: Facebook Groups**

Facebook loves groups. About two years ago, Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Facebook, spent a year visiting different churches to learn what they did right about building community. He took that knowledge and started pushing redesigned Facebook groups with the intention of building digital communities.

Facebook groups are unfortunately very underused by churches themselves, yet I believe it is the social media secret to keeping parishioners engaged in Orthodoxy throughout the week.

#### ❖ **Links**

[Mark Zuckerberg: Facebook can play a role that churches and Little League once filled](#)

#### **How are “groups” different from “pages”?**

Your church’s primary Facebook page: The church speaking to the local community.

Your parish’s Facebook group: The priest/church speaking to the parishioners, and the parishioners speaking back.

#### **Your parish’s group**

The primary group should be for your entire parish. Take your church name and add “community” to the end of it—that is your church group name.

Facebook has made some recent setting changes that can be confusing. Set your group to “Private”, but make sure the visibility setting is set to “Visible” and not “Hidden”. Hidden means if someone searches for your group, they won’t be able to find it. As you get new parishioners, you definitely want them to be able to search, so they can find your group, and request to join. To ensure that it is only your parish members, you will need to set up a security question. That question is, “Are you a member of our parish?” If they say yes, they get in, if not, they don’t.

#### ❖ **Links**

[How do I create a Facebook group?](#)

#### **What types of things get posted in groups?**

The first thing you need to understand is that it is not just for admins or priests to post, but for the whole community. Your parishioners get to share articles, podcasts, and things they find interesting. It may not have anything to do with the church, like a local event they would like other parishioners to be aware of. For example, I have posted that I was watching a movie at my house and asked if anyone would want to join me. It can be a place for parishioners to actively engage with other parishioners through social media. The dynamic of the group will be determined by the way everyone engages with each other.

## ***Polls/Feedback***

Do you want to know what topic the next midweek study should be on? Ask the community!

Do you want to know the best day to meet? Ask the community!

Polls allow you to ask questions with specific choices and get immediate feedback from parishioners.

### **❖ *Links***

[How do I create a poll on Facebook?](#)

## ***Articles, podcasts, videos***

Did you read an interesting this morning? You can share it. Did you parishioners listen to an interesting podcast last week? They can share it too.

## ***Announcements***

Every parish has a problem with church announcements reaching every person. Record announcements on your phone, then share it in your group.

## ***Mini-sermons/weekly devotionals***

The priest can post a video from his phone talking a bit about Sunday's sermon, or the upcoming sermon. He can ask a question and may get further insight into the sermon, or learn how well it was understood.

## ***Meal Trains***

Out of concern for privacy, Meal Trains or similar requests are not appropriate to share on your Facebook page, but may be appropriate to share in a group (with the recipients' permission).

## ***Limitless...***

What you can post in your parish's group is only limited by your imagination. What about reminders of fasting guidelines? Or reminders to take advantage of confession? Those are things that do not really fit on the Facebook page, but on a group page might be just the nudge they need.

## ***Other groups***

Book studies: Do you have a book or bible study? Create a Facebook group. You can discuss all the details and post readings.

Philoptochos: Do they only get to talk at the monthly meeting? Maybe there would be an advantage for a centralized location to discuss things they are working on.

Catechumens: Create a group where they can post questions and you would be able to answer them.

Choir: Create a group where you can post new music to learn and upcoming practices.

Any groups you currently have in your church can become a group online to encourage more engagement.

## ***Section 2 Summary***

Use Facebook groups as tools to provide the opportunity for daily engagement throughout the week. Your church may not take to it, but you will never know unless you provide them the opportunity.

## **Section 3: Boosting Your Posts & Facebook Advertising**

At my parish we budget about \$3000 a year towards social media advertising. It is a robust campaign that involves trigger ads, funnels, and follow-throughs. It is a complex campaign that I don't have time to go through

today. But feel free to email if you would like to discuss it. However, there is a simple way that you can evangelize your local community right now....

### ***Boosted Posts***

You have likely already come across this. Sometimes when you post something on your page, you will see a message from Facebook asking if you would like to “boost this post”. And you have likely responded, “No, not for me, thank you”. I am asking that you might respond, “Yes please”.

For as little as a dollar a day, you can begin to reach your local community with the truths of Orthodoxy. Boosted posts allow you to choose a post you think is good for your community, and advertise that post to them. If you do it right, this post will only go out to people local to your community and not the Facebook community at large. This simple feature will allow you to place beauty in your local community’s Facebook feed.

### ***How it works***

1. Once a week, you look at what you have posted for the week.
2. Determine which post you think had the most engagement.
3. Boost that post.
4. Then you choose cost and duration.
5. Choose 7 days for \$7.
6. Choose your local community, town, or city.
7. Repeat each week.
8. Next year, double it.

### **❖ *Links***

[Create Boosted Posts](#)

### ***Is it effective?***

Well that depends on how you look at it. We are trying to combat the idea that Orthodoxy is America's best kept secret. The first two years we did not get very many visitors, but what we did get was random encounters in our community. People had seen our posts. Random people would mention that they knew our church existed. “I see you guys all over Facebook”. Our priest ordered firewood and the guy delivering the wood knew of our church because of Facebook. The third year, we started getting visitors...lots of visitors. The fourth year, this year, 25% of our catechumen class is from our advertising efforts! These are complete strangers-nobody in our church knew them before they visited. This year, we have received a grand total of zero new visitors from advertising. There is no magic formula. It takes time. It takes years.

### ***The request...***

Can you go to your parish council and ask for an annual line item of \$365 towards social media evangelism?

### ***Section 3 Summary***

Boosting posts is the easiest way for any parish to start evangelizing their local community for \$365 a year.

### **Closing**

Love it or hate it, this is the new mission field. The social media field is ripe for the harvest, and we are only limited by our imagination in the ways we put can beauty in our social media feeds, and continue to introduce America to the Orthodox faith.